



The Valleys Locality Plan Summary

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Executive Summary of the Plan

Area Profile

The Valleys is the largest geographical locality in Kirklees, covering 40% of the District and situated on the fringe of West Yorkshire. It shares a border with Derbyshire to the south, Greater Manchester to the west and Calderdale to the north. It is a largely rural area with a high quality environment, good green networks, low population density and pocketed with a variety of settlements each with their own distinct history, character and identity. Its city region location between Leeds, Manchester and Sheffield offers a unique combination of economic, social and environmental opportunities for a sustainable future. Out commuting is strong to Huddersfield and beyond, especially to Leeds, with a high and growing demand for housing by people who want to move into an attractive area driving up costs for local people. The lack of affordable housing is a major issue. There are many small firms providing local jobs with manufacturing still featuring strongly. There is a strong tradition of cultural, sporting and civic activities and extensive voluntary activity. There is a sense that some smaller communities are declining with the loss of services, shops and public transport. Transport and connectivity is an issue, particularly for those without access to a car. Overall health is good but the emotional health and social isolation of some children and young people and levels of alcohol consumption is a worry. Most people are satisfied with the area as a place to live but there are hotspots of crime and anti social behaviour requiring additional actions.

The area has a predominantly white population with an above average proportion of working age residents. This locality is the least deprived in the District but pockets of deprivation do exist, particularly around Leymoor and Milnsbridge in Golcar ward. Throughout the area there is a mixture of poorer and more affluent families often living side by side, making real poverty often difficult to identify and support. Access to services and social isolation, especially for older people, are key local concerns. Supporting older people with increasing frailties within these communities is a challenge shared with everywhere else but it is more difficult to resource in a rural area. People of the valleys feel that less attention is paid to their needs than those of more urban and deprived areas in the District. However the locality has inherent strengths, there are a lot of good things going on contributing to fulfilling lives and the picture is far from negative. There are opportunities to grasp. Future developments if well located and carefully designed could bring major sustainable benefits to the area.

Local context for change - key challenges

For the Valleys to take full advantage of its beauty and location at the heart of three city regions and have a future of sustainable communities that people want to live and work in with a good quality of life, a number of key challenges will need to be addressed. These can be broadly grouped under the four thematic blocks of the Kirklees Local Area Agreement:

Economic Development and the Environment

- We must find an effective balance between the demand for housing, particularly from local residents wanting to enter the housing market, and the need to preserve the quality of the environment and the identity of settlements. Future sustainable growth requires strong infrastructure, mixed developments, connectivity and carbon reduction
- The locality has become increasingly attractive for out-commuting but there is still a need for local jobs and improved skills suitable for new and innovative businesses. We must foster small niche business growth to provide a sustainable economy and local opportunities. We will need to find land and buildings for this to happen
- Tourism is important but we need to take the offer to a new level beyond 'Summer Wine' to maximise opportunities for people to enjoy the great outdoors, attracting people to stay longer. We must look to the revitalisation of agriculture to maintain high quality landscapes, support local food production and promote diversification to offer more leisure and tourist facilities and more sustainable incomes to rural communities.
- We must improve transport infrastructure and accessibility for all parts of the community, including businesses and tourists. Whilst access to Huddersfield is generally fine in theory the main routes are over-used and lack capacity at peak times. The road infrastructure is not good enough between Valleys communities as topography is a major barrier. Public transport is inadequate in many parts of the area and needs to be enhanced to meet the different needs of local people to access key services and offer a real alternative to using the car to reduce environmental impact

Healthier Communities and Older People

- The health profiles for both younger and older communities compare favourably with the rest of Kirklees but binge drinking in the male adult population is a concern, as are the affects of social isolation on mental well being in some more remote communities
- The locality will increasingly have a proportionately large retirement age population. We must encourage and support positive lifestyle behaviours in order to encourage healthy ageing, alongside adequate health and social care services and support to meet increasing needs that are accessible to everyone irrespective of where they live
- The growing number of older people with dementia will present many challenges and we will need to find different ways of providing care as care homes and sheltered housing have large land requirements in an area of land shortage. Providing home care services for people in a dispersed rural area presents challenges for the future. To support older people with chronic health conditions we must encourage more self-help, voluntary and community support and help from within the family

- People want care available locally so we will need a workforce to provide it. It is difficult to attract people into low paid and less popular jobs given the problems of housing affordability in this area. We need more affordable homes and incentives for younger people to take up caring careers given the current ageing workforce

Children and Young People

- The availability, accessibility and co-ordination of youth provision needs improving and there is a need to engage with young people in the shaping of local services to make sure that they are both appropriate to their current and future needs, in the right places, they can get to them and they are available all year round
- Educational performance is generally of a particularly high standard but there is a distinct gap in levels of attainment in the Golcar ward compared with the rest of the locality which requires urgent remedial action to raise the aspirations of young people and their families in these stressed and disadvantaged communities
- The emotional well-being of young people is a cause of considerable concern, reinforced by social isolation in some more remote communities
- There is a considerable increase in young people drinking to excess
- There is a lack of quality playing fields available for young peoples' sporting needs

Safer, Stronger Communities

- Despite high levels of satisfaction with the area and low crime there is a perception that the Council and Police are not responsive enough to the needs of the community or act on local concerns. People feel that urban crime problems always take priority
- Crime levels are relatively low but there are local concerns about the incidence and impact of anti-social behaviour within some hotspot areas across the locality
- The Sycamore estate in Golcar is a hotspot for crime and violent anti-social behaviour which is impacting severely on the local community and spilling out across the ward
- We need to examine the nature and extent of domestic violence which data tells us impacts on a cross-section of society, including young people
- Continued action is required to enhance the area's environmental quality in order to protect its rural appeal, promote tourism and enhance the quality of life for everyone

Our Vision for the future

In twenty years time the Valleys will be an attractive rural and semi-rural area providing an enhanced, safe and sustainable quality of life for residents and visitors alike. Communities will live in harmony with each other and their stunning environment. People will feel that they have a voice that is listened to. The local economy will revolve around a mixture of local small creative and green business development, tourism and commuting to jobs elsewhere. Good infrastructure and transport connectivity, including public transport links and access to fast broadband will allow people to work locally and compete in the global economy. All communities will have high aspirations for their children and themselves and have access to the support and tools to achieve them. People will be able to travel to where they need to access jobs and services and to find them locally where they want to. New developments will be at least carbon neutral and flexibly support the sustainability of local jobs and services through mixed use developments, stemming elements of rural decline in smaller settlements. They will have contributed to the infrastructure improvements needed to ensure the locality has the long term capacity to support an increased population. They will provide affordable homes for local people and contribute to vibrant and cohesive communities able to balance work with a good quality of life in quality green environments. Preserving the sense of identity and space, improvement works will have enhanced town and village centres and the public realm. Farming enterprises will sustain both rural landscapes and contribute to tourist facilities. Green networks will provide better links between villages for both leisure and tourism. Public open spaces and play areas will be high quality and offer excitement and things to enjoy. Younger and older people will care for each other and voluntary activity will sustain a rich mix of social, cultural and sporting events. It will be a great place to live.

Early priorities for action in next 18 months

- In order to improve access to services in the Valleys we need to improve partnership working in the locality by sharing information and expertise with the voluntary & community sector, as well as public agencies, utilities and businesses. We will bring the right locality leads together to do this, build the wider networks required to keep it going and jointly plan and spend our resources on shared priorities. We will improve information and access to services especially for young people, the elderly and those vulnerable and disadvantaged. By looking at current service provision and how resources are distributed we will devise alternative ways of reaching smaller and isolated communities and individuals currently 'off the radar'
- We need to tackle poor transport infrastructure by linking public and community transport to services, employment, tourism and social activities, including identifying and addressing any gaps. We will lobby for improved bus services, especially in the evenings and at weekends and pursue increased investment in highways, footpaths and green links bringing them back up to a good standard. We will identify public transport improvement schemes and access Council monies allocated in the 2008/9/10 budget for rural transport initiatives to pay for them

- We must better understand the health and well being challenges of children and young people. We will audit and map the activities and facilities available for young people, creating a directory including how they can get to them. We will engage young people in the shaping of local provision, improve their awareness & access to existing activities and link to Building Schools for the Future and other relevant strategies including Play and Sports & Recreation. We will ensure the additional resources allocated by the Council and its partners for activities for young people and the realignment of Young People's Services on a locality basis working across sectors both make a major and lasting contribution to the well being of our children
- We must start to narrow the gap in educational achievement between Golcar and the rest of the locality recognising this will be a long term concentrated programme
- We will address the primary health inequalities in the locality, namely emotional well-being amongst young people and binge drinking in the adult male population
- We will produce a co-ordinated locality perspective to feed into the Local Development Framework consultation in the autumn of 2008 to ensure that new developments take account of the impacts on transport, accessibility and local services. We must make sure the infrastructure requirements of the locality are built into future development plans. We will lobby for sustainable mixed use developments and communities with local jobs and services and reduced carbon impact. We will develop a detailed understanding of local housing need and the affordability issue, and strive to obtain our fair share of new affordable units from new developments
- We will develop more support for the Voluntary & Community sector and for volunteering, looking at ways in which more activities and services can be provided by local people and organisations. We will contribute to corporate volunteering initiatives to be supported by additional Council funding agreed in the 2008/9/10 budget
- We will Investigate the nature and extent of domestic violence in the locality and develop appropriate interventions to reduce its prevalence and impact on families

Longer term opportunities

- Identify the potential for converting old mill building for sheltered accommodation for older people or affordable housing
- Improve the transport network in Colne Valley including extra rail tracks, park and ride and connecting bus services
- Develop better Greenway links between villages and across the Valleys and promote them for leisure and tourism
- Foster better links between older and younger people to develop a shared future through working together and caring for each other

- Engage young people in talking about the future of living and working in the Valleys
- Identify opportunities for more flexible use of buildings including joining up how and where the Council and its partners deliver services to the community. Build on the potential of the LICs (Library and Information Centres) and 21st century working
- Develop health services closer to people and identify alternative methods of meeting local health needs
- Capture the potential of business diversification. Broaden the use of post offices to ensure they are sustainable and link together public and private sector services
- Draw on the learning from locality working and the changes experienced in other localities to help us to build a future for the Valleys that meets our vision
- Build the tourism potential of the Valleys to encourage more than just day visits and beyond the current 'Summer Wine' offer. Promote the unique identities of the two Valleys and the opportunities they each provide for outdoor pursuits. Look at diversification of farming activities and more facilities and attractions for visitors

The following sections of the Plan set out in more detail the evidence we have used to come up with the priorities outlined above. There are three statistical appendices. As we go forward it will be important to keep this evidence up to date and this is part of a wider project being developed by the Council and its partners across all seven localities in Kirklees.