



LSP Conference Report 2009

Focusing on our future

**A clear vision for the borough
we're working towards**



LSP Conference 2009 – Focussing on our future

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1 SUMMARY:

- 1.1 Over 40 organisations and partnerships, along with elected representatives, came together to consider some of the key ambitions for the future of Basingstoke and Deane to 2026.
- 1.2 Key partners set out why it was so important to have a clear vision for the future and suggested some elements that might be included – stressing that we are at a crossroads and need to be able to start to plan to provide certainty and be able to create the communities that we aspire to.
- 1.3 Wayne Hemingway, guest speaker, challenged the conference to view developing a vision as answering the question ‘what is our gift we are leaving?’ and to ensure we are creating places that look after people and enable them to feel part of it.
- 1.4 Discussion groups commented on some draft ambitions and helped prioritise the issues – indicating:
 - strong, high quality design should provide for healthy, active communities with the local facilities that they need
 - regeneration should help stimulate economic development and quality homes should meet local need
 - the high value placed on the distinctive and diverse nature of the borough should be matched with high environmental standards and;
 - together we should foster local pride and community responsibility.

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2 Background

2.1 The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) devoted its annual conference to bringing together stakeholders and partners to develop key ambitions for the future of the borough and consider the major elements for a vision for 2026.

2.2 This built on:

- the LSP's [Conference in 2007](#) which looked at the longer term issues that need to be considered when starting to plan for the future
- joint sessions earlier in 2009 involving the LSP and the Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (BDBC) Cabinet.

2.3 The vision is a core element of, and provides the link between, two strategic documents that help plan for the future:

- the key blueprint for planning and development decisions – the [Local Development Framework \(LDF\)](#) being led by BDBC
- the local priorities for joint action by local organisations to improve local quality of life – the [Sustainable Community Strategy](#)

2.4 A strong achievable vision should be built on robust evidence of the issues and challenges the future might bring, and local community aspiration, setting out a shared set of local priorities¹. The event therefore aimed to:

- gain partners' and stakeholders' views on key ambitions and elements of a vision for the borough
- share perspectives on what should be seen as priorities.

2.5 Representatives from 41 organisations and partnerships (see Appendix A), including elected councillors, joined together to listen to some speakers set the scene and provoke debate. They then worked in groups to discuss their views. Details including the [programme](#) of the day and the [delegate list](#) are available on the LSP website at:

www.basingstokelsp.org ²

3 Stimulating debate

3.1 Prior to the event an [interview in a local newspaper](#), the Basingstoke Gazette, set out some views expressed by the Leader of the Council

¹ [Creating strong, safe and prosperous communities – statutory guidance](#)

² where links can be followed to 'Events' and the 'LSP Conference 2009'.

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and the Chair of the LSP with regards to some aspects that need to be tackled in the future.

- 3.2 Participants in the conference were also invited to bring with them some items (such as a photo or article) that portrayed [what they liked](#) about Basingstoke and the borough, and [what they did not like](#), to help share views and inform debate.

4 Welcome from the LSP Chair

- 4.1 Stephen Sheedy, Chair of the LSP, welcomed everyone to the event. He outlined that closer working between the borough council Cabinet and the LSP Board had led to bringing forward the annual conference (usually held in July) to enable earlier input into the development of a shared vision for the borough.
- 4.2 He stressed “it is important to help plan for the future. When the recession comes to an end communities with a clear vision for the future will be best placed to move forward. A vision will help frame how the future will look,” adding “we need to paint a very exciting picture of what Basingstoke and Deane could be.”

5 A vision - Introduction and overview

- 5.1 Cllr Andrew Finney, Leader of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, and LSP Vice-Chair, observed that the conference was centrally focussing on change: “It is very important that we acknowledge that change happens and that we embrace change.” Noting that the borough had already transformed considerably, and will continue to do so, he outlined the [importance of a strong vision](#) in preparing for further change and giving the ability and certainty to plan. He acknowledged there is a limit to our influence for example “climate change will happen; but we cannot sit and do nothing.”
- 5.2 Recognising the varied nature of the borough and its communities he commented, “we are a very diverse community; and we come together to create something unique. Our economy is at the heart of our prosperity and will provide the wealth to enhance all that is good about our borough.” He also emphasised that “in planning for the future we need to protect our more vulnerable residents.”
- 5.3 With regards to developing a vision Cllr Finney drew attention to the value of working in partnership. “We share a common purpose” he said. “We need to agree what is important to Basingstoke and Deane. . . We, in the form of the LSP, need to lead our community. We need to talk to people, garner information, create the vision and lead the vision. This will give us confidence to change.”

6 Views of the future – partner perspectives

Gloom or Glow

- 6.1 Tony Curtis, Chief Executive of the borough council, put forward that having a vision is about place-shaping and civic and community leadership. He noted that as Basingstoke grew rapidly and successfully in previous decades, the rural areas experienced incremental growth and the environment was protected. “People reaped the benefits of growth – good housing, full employment, good education, excellent leisure and culture, great shopping.”
- 6.2 However he felt that in recent years “we’ve plateaued, lost our sense of direction. The sense of positivity, can-do, and embracing growth, has been replaced by negativity; where growth is seen as bad.”
- 6.3 Reflecting that it was the vibrancy of the place and the opportunities that it offered that brought him with his family to Basingstoke, he queried whether there is currently the vision and ambition to move forward. He offered a personal view of how two contrasting scenarios may play out in the future.
- 6.4 **Gloom** – no change, not investing, doing nothing, may lead in 20 years to:
- all of our major firms having closed or moved elsewhere; leaving high unemployment, Basing View empty, derelict buildings and a poor declining environment
 - a poor selection of shops in run down centres, and limited local employment opportunities
 - poor educational results and young people with skills leave or head off to university - never to return
 - our infrastructure issues (that is those we have now) remain
 - an ageing population, in need of greater care and support puts increasing pressure on services such as health and social services
 - older people have more limited opportunities and feel more trapped in housing that doesn’t meet their needs
 - our run-down ageing 1960s housing areas are difficult to regenerate because of mix of tenure and lack of funding
 - there is social unrest and lack of community cohesion, with boarded up properties, urban wastelands and a drugs and drink culture; and with high levels of deprivation we fulfil the description of the ‘Fifty worst places to live’ book
 - our rural areas suffer from limited or no services; our villages will be dying with no public transport leading to increased isolation
 - we have derelict farms and unmanaged landscapes; blocked ditches lead to flooding
- 6.5 **Glow** – a much more positive outcome when aiming for greater prosperity could be that we are distinctive, bold and ambitious with

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physical statements and public services that bring benefit to local people. In that scenario we:

- welcome development and support growth
- have iconic designs and a strong recognition of our high quality urban and rural environments
- are a centre for excellence and attract people and investment
- have thriving communities, that feel safe and empowered, with high quality affordable facilities
- have the right homes for our people
- support a greater role for a thriving third sector
- have healthy communities with accessible health facilities including a world class hospital
- develop better linkages with the countryside including a major country park
- have improved leisure facilities, such as a snowdome and adventure sports, or go karting; a 20,000 seater multi-function stadium for sports and live music events
- promote a vibrant town centre with high quality public realm and an annual festival, such as for electronic gaming
- are well connected, with eco transport, including trams, a cycle network and improved train stations, as well as good public transport in rural areas
- have a thriving urban and rural economy and are seen as a centre for eco-development and climate change with a cutting-edge green town centre business park
- attract top class international firms, supported by top quality broadband for all
- have service providers co-located in a state of the art energy efficient town centre building heralding a new unitary council
- enjoy excellent education results at all levels, with new secondary schools in the right locations and our colleges are best in class
- have developed a university from a learning campus and young people want to study in the borough

6.6 He concluded that “we should be putting Basingstoke and Deane on the map” and mused whether “a thriving Basingstoke, set in the most beautiful countryside, could possibly be one of the smallest cities in the world, but still in the top 100 cities in the world?”

6.7 Stephen Sheedy, the LSP Chair, responded saying “the moment has come for very powerful civic leaders,” heralding a new model “where councillors benefit from powerful direct civic leadership.” He suggested that Basingstoke could be a centre of excellence for civic leadership.

6.8 Mary Edwards, Chief Executive of the local hospital³, felt there was a strong case to secure the glow scenario. She outlined the scale of the

³ Basingstoke and North Hampshire NHS Foundation Trust

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hospital as a local player⁴ and felt that it plays its part in helping put Basingstoke on the map – especially

- as one hospital of only twelve that have met and retained an external rating of Excellent/Excellent, and
- through running a number of services that are recognised nationally and internationally and help attract top quality staff.

6.9 She urged however that “the status quo is not an option” and that she needed “to grow the business” just to meet local need. This included a projected 25% increase in the number of people over 65 years. Some key elements that were essential to meet that future need were:

- improving transport and access
- retaining ‘excellent’ rating to attract the high quality staff – which also relied on
- a high quality environment
- a positive image of the town.

6.10 “The first step” she said “is to believe it. We need to speak Basingstoke up and start talking about the hospital belonging to our community.”

7 Guest Speaker – Wayne Hemingway – what is Basingstoke’s gift?

7.1 [Wayne Hemingway](#) briefly outlined his background as a designer relaying that in 2000 he wrote an article about the ‘wimpification’ of Britain - commenting that every town was being built the same way. He became chair of [Building for Life](#) which aims to improve quality of life through good housing design.

7.2 In that role he had observed that while our houses could meet high standards for the [Code for Sustainable Homes](#) the tick-box approach was not working in terms of making places attractive and liveable. “The most important thing about living is being happy,” yet we don’t measure or plan for happiness. A survey of all new housing developments built in the last seven years against a liveability index had shown that “80% were poor or mediocre” and that 29% should not have got planning consent. Nationally we should be making houses “as good as the Edwardian and Victorian houses we cherish” – but he shared a deep concern that we are “building slums for the future.”

7.3 Reflecting on other communities, and drawing from many international examples he suggested that the role of a vision should be to answer the question: “What are we giving?” adding “if your town can follow its vision it is empowering everyone. A vision is about

⁴ £150m business and one of the biggest local employers with 3,000 staff; a footfall of 42,000 annually through the emergency department and 208,000 through out-patients

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people feeling involved ... we need towns where people feel part of it."

- 7.4 He suggested everyone can learn from other cities that have made mistakes as well as those that have been successful, and that a criterion for success is building great town centres. "Part of a vision of the town is looking after people." Allowing people to be involved and take some ownership was a theme that had worked well in different parts of the world.
- 7.5 He warned "what you mustn't do is let your big sites be run by central government," illustrating that local control over the business structure of development allows for competition, provides choice and ultimately better quality; and that developing the business structure "takes guts and hard work." He observed that towns smaller than Basingstoke are in the top 100 for liveability, and that we should aspire to that.
- 7.6 Referring to inequalities he felt the "vision has got to bring people together and narrow that gap – we have to sort out a vision that allows us to get on" and not think about CCTV, gated communities, and exacerbating fear.
- 7.7 In conclusion he offered that "Place-making is about gifting things. Do things for the right reasons and it will work. . . think about a vision as to what you are going to give."

8 Discussion Groups

- 8.1 Mark Helyar, independent facilitator, set the scene for the discussion groups and outlined that the task was to consider some statements setting out some draft ambitions for the borough and comment on them; then consider what was a priority in terms of both
- importance
 - urgency
- 8.2 Seven discussion groups each considered a set of 25 draft ambitions statements (Appendix B). The detailed comments from each group are recorded in Appendix C. Giving an overview, Mark Helyar reported that discussions covered:
- a strong emphasis on people and what the vision for Basingstoke can give
 - getting people involved – through personal, corporate and community responsibility
 - a concern there was not enough for children and young people
 - a high value placed on volunteering
 - comment on the value of small business at the heart of the community

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- 8.3 Group facilitators were asked to pick out one key aspect from their discussion group to give a flavour of the range of issues that were raised (full discussion points are in Appendix C). This covered:
- affordable iconic projects such as visual gateways to entering the town that give a sense of local belonging and pride
 - taking tough action where it is needed such as on education where a partnership approach has tackled what is not good
 - health and community should be at the heart of good design
 - empowering local people to enhance and develop a strong feel of community
 - capture the essence of 'liveability' and happiness at the centre of the vision
 - make it easier to volunteer
 - ensure we have a collective voice and influence – to ensure we have the type of growth we want.

9 Analysis of the comments raised through discussion groups:

- 9.1 After the event the comments and prioritisation exercise from each group were amalgamated to give a full picture of all the views expressed (Appendix D).
- 9.2 The ambition statements were generally heading in the right direction but needed refining in terms of relative emphasis, presentation and language.
- 9.3 The main areas for strengthening were felt to be around:
- health
 - education
 - local distinctiveness
 - sense of community and responsibility
 - improving quality of life for all
 - engaging young people
- 9.4 The prioritisation exercise did not make a major distinction between ambitions – indicating support for the overall package. However
- 9.4.1 the most **important** were felt to be:
- a. high quality design
 - b. growth to be supported by key facilities then equally
- healthier active communities
 - environmental responsibility
 - distinctive and iconic places – a sense of place
- 9.4.2 the most **urgent** were felt to be:
- a. empowerment and ownership of decisions (by a bigger margin)

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then equally

- growth to be supported by key facilities
- healthier active communities
- most deprived areas to be focus for regeneration
- range of housing to meet needs
- regeneration of Basing View

9.5 Some suggestions for moving forward were:

- Better design –with health and community at the heart – and working with /controlling developers
- Establish a culture and identity for Basingstoke, promoting what we've already got and develop affordable iconic projects that belong to the community. Be different and distinctive.
- Enterprise – everything we want to do depends on a successful and dynamic economy. Support new business and incubation. Work with regional partners and providers.
- Education and skills are important; brave decision making is needed. Skills development ranges from children's centres to learning campus and life skills.
- Foster a strong culture of personal and collective responsibility. Need to take more risks, with less blame, and challenge intolerance. Develop strong leadership.

10 Closing remarks

- 10.1 Cllr Finney observed that "it has been a fantastic afternoon" and that "we are ambitious. We want to see high quality, high value environments with a strong economy across the whole of Basingstoke and Deane" and adding "we are going to have to have some grown-up conversations – locally and within our sub-region."
- 10.2 He continued "If we harness the power of evidence and the views of our community, people will have to listen, and I am confident that we can succeed."
- 10.3 In terms of next steps he outlined the timetable for developing a shared vision and commented "I am hugely encouraged by the closer working of the LSP and the local authority. I am hugely encouraged that the LSP is becoming a real focus for debating issues and an activist for change." He felt that we need to go forward jointly – by "doing things once and well and together."
- 10.4 Cllr Finney emphasised however that "we need the buy in from the community" and encouraged everyone to stay engaged with the process. "Together we can achieve a huge amount – encourage your colleagues to get involved."

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11 Evaluation by participants

- 11.1 Of those [completing an evaluation form](#) 89% agreed they were able to communicate their views and contribute their ideas, either 'on the whole' or 'completely'. The remaining 11% felt they could do so in part.
- 11.2 Informal comments at and after the session indicated that the programme was interesting and had provided a good stimulus for debate.
- 11.3 In response to commenting if the event had helped move us forward towards developing a clearer vision, the majority of views were positive. There were however some notes of caution in that we are at a high level stage and need to translate ideas into action. One comment was:

"The vision is not something a long way away, this is the thinking of prevarication. Our vision needs to be exemplified today in putting right the many wrongs in the way we live – deal with today's detail fully and effectively with the long term in mind always".

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APPENDIX A – ORGANISATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS REPRESENTED

Organisations and partnerships	
1	Active Life Centre
2	Basingstoke and Deane Association of Town & Parish Councils
3	Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (Councillors and officers including from Housing, and Neighbourhood Development)
4	Basingstoke and North Hampshire NHS Foundation Trust
5	Basingstoke Churches Together
6	Basingstoke Citizens Advice Bureau
7	Basingstoke College of Technology
8	Basingstoke Consortium
9	Basingstoke Voluntary Services
10	Brookvale Community Centre
11	Children and Young Persons Locality Partnership
12	Community Furniture Project
13	Community Safety Forum
14	Cultural Forum
15	Destination Basingstoke
16	Disability Forum
17	Environment Agency
18	Federation of Small Business
19	Hampshire Constabulary
20	Hampshire County Council (Councillors and officers incl Children's Services, Economic Development, Transport)
21	Hampshire Families
22	Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service
23	Hampshire Primary Care Trust
24	Health and Wellbeing Partnership
25	Housing Partnership Board
26	Kingfisher Housing Association
27	Local Business Partnership
28	National Probation Service
29	Natural Environment Forum
30	North Hampshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry
31	Objective Internet
32	Proteus Theatre Company
33	Relate
34	Sentinel Housing
35	Sovereign Housing Association
36	Stagecoach
37	Swaythling Housing
38	The Making
39	University of Winchester
40	Vitacress
41	Voluntary Sector Forum