



Buckinghamshire Local Area Agreement: ‘Story of Place’

Buckinghamshire faces substantial challenges, particularly due to the growth agenda in the north of the county and changing demographics resulting in an increasingly ageing population in the south. The substantial programme to build new homes over the next 20 years creates challenges for transport, education, health, employment and training not just in Aylesbury Vale but across the whole county as the population expands. The demographic changes – with a 14% increase in the number of over 60s, and a 3% decrease in the number of under 30s predicted during the next 10 years – mean that the county will have to adjust to an older population in terms of health and social care, and will have to attract jobs, alongside the right skill-base of workers, into the county to maintain a strong economy. Many of these issues, such as adapting to demographic change, increased investment in the county and improving the quality of life for older people, appeared as priorities in the BSP consultation to inform the new LAA.

The theme “Promoting Prosperity, Tackling Inequalities” illustrates the Buckinghamshire aim of achieving equally beneficial outcomes for all demographic and community groups. Closing the gaps in health inequalities and educational achievement are priorities. Equalities issues emerged from the BSP consultation as needing consideration, particularly communicating with all parts of the community, and access to services and facilities for rural communities. The Bucks LAA has tried to strike a balance between including indicators explicitly addressing closing the gap, and building equalities issues into the wider delivery of improved outcomes for the county. To support this, an equalities impact assessment will take place across the whole LAA as part of the delivery planning process.

Sustainable Community Strategy Vision

“In 2015, Buckinghamshire has maintained its economic success and its position as one of the most prosperous counties in England. At the same time, it has enhanced its environment and improved the well-being and quality of life of all its residents.”

What matters to Buckinghamshire?

The Bucks Strategic Partnership has considered a wide range of consultation materials and feedback from residents and partners in determining the priorities to be considered when drafting the content of the new Local Area Agreement and also considering areas for wider partnership working.

Key challenges include:

- Reducing inequalities and closing the gap more generally, ensuring improved outcomes for the whole population in order for it to reach its potential
- Further reducing crime, and the fear of crime
- Reducing health inequalities, particularly in life expectancy and childhood obesity
- Responding to anticipated demographic changes, particularly that of an ageing population
- Supporting people to live independently for longer
- Reducing carbon emissions in Buckinghamshire, and adapting to the impact of Climate Change
- Promoting prosperity through skills development and jobs creation, in the context of the growth agenda
- Promoting community cohesion
- Access to, and affordability of, housing
- Balancing the needs of the whole population against responding to a predominantly articulate and educated residents' body which has high expectations of public services.
- Maximising sporting opportunities, which are a key aspect of the quality of life for many residents including responding to the 2012 Olympics agenda.

A summary of the priorities identified is:

Theme	Key priorities	Cross-cutting principles				
Safe Communities	Crime and fear of crime Anti-social behaviour, Drug and alcohol misuse.	Access and opportunities for all, including rural issues	Acknowledgement of differences across the county; both geographic and communities of interest	Sustainability	Targeted at areas of most need	Adjusting to demographic changes (population growth, ageing population)
Strong Communities	Community cohesion, including volunteering.					
Healthy Communities	Addressing health inequalities,					
Improving Quality of Life for Children and Young People	Targeting areas of identified need Anti-Bullying					
Improving Quality of Life for Older People	Supporting people to live independently for longer					
Prosperous Communities	Skills development and economic well-being of vulnerable groups					
Accessible Communities and Transport	Access to services Road maintenance					
Superb Environment	Climate Change Clean environment					

Distinctiveness of localities across Buckinghamshire

Whilst there are clear common issues which are best dealt with on a county-wide basis, it is clear that the priorities play out differently across the county. These differences need to be taken into account, including through differentiation in target-setting and action-planning in responding to the priorities. Equally, Buckinghamshire cannot be seen in isolation. The Milton Keynes and South Midlands Region is the single largest growth area in the UK, of which North Bucks is a part. The proximity to Oxford, Thames Valley and Milton Keynes sub-regional economies impacts on Buckinghamshire as a county. So there are key drivers from both a regional perspective, and in working in partnership with neighbouring authorities on various aspects of the priorities.

For Aylesbury Vale, the over-arching driver is the growth agenda and the challenges and opportunities this brings in terms of matching economic development and increased employment. Challenges include making the growth sustainable, enabling integration of existing and new communities and considering the implications across the county of the growth agenda in the north.

For the southern localities, the challenges of dealing with an ageing population are substantial particularly in relation to supporting people to live independently at home for longer. Additionally, key themes for residents are improvement in the level of traffic congestion and the conservation and enhancement of the environment. A key issue for the most southern areas of the county is maintaining the very high quality of life – rated as one of the highest in the UK. The attractiveness is a semi rural area, much of which is Green Belt and AONB, with such close proximity to London at a comparatively low cost. One of the effects of this is the pressure this puts on house prices – further exacerbated by limited availability of developable land. Communities are particularly active and engaged in the south of Buckinghamshire.

Community cohesion issues, given an added focus in the light of the recent anti-terrorism operations affecting some parts of the county, necessitate a clear link to local front-line understanding of community issues.

What marks Buckinghamshire out?

Background

Over 50 miles in length but just 10 miles wide at its narrowest point, Buckinghamshire enjoys a beautiful environment including a largely rural north, beechwoods, the Chiltern Hills and the River Thames.

With a population of 487,000 people living in 188,000 households, 31% live in the two main towns of High Wycombe and Aylesbury. By 2026, the population is expected to rise to 530,800. The population is ethnically diverse, with 8% of the population coming from a non-white ethnic background (Black or Minority Ethnic Groups (BME)) and 92% coming from the white ethnic background. There are higher concentrations of people from BME groups in the towns of Aylesbury and High Wycombe, where BME groups make up the majority of the population in some neighbourhoods. People from the Asian or Asian British ethnic group

(including Pakistani) make up 4.6% of the population. Within these communities, there is a disproportionately higher representation in the younger population.

The age structure of the county is similar to the national and regional averages. The proportion of people aged over 50 is projected to increase from 36% in 2008 to 40% by 2017. Life expectancy is above the national average, being in the top quartile nationally for males and top two quartiles for females. Buckinghamshire is home to a wealth of historic houses and gardens, leisure venues and places of interest such as Waddesdon Manor, Cliveden, Chiltern Open Air Museum and the Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre.

Key features/distinguishing aspects

- Buckinghamshire is a relatively affluent county, with the local economy creating £10,440 million per annum. Average household incomes are 24% higher than the UK average. The county ranks 143rd out of 150 in terms of the government indices of deprivation (where 1 = most deprived). There is low unemployment and the workforce is highly skilled, with a quarter of 16-74 year olds educated to degree level. Although there are large proportions of highly skilled people, 21% of 16-74 year olds don't have any qualifications.
- The county has good transport links, particularly to London. The M4, M40 and M25 motorways pass through the county and it is well connected to the rail network, with the London Underground system extending into the south of the county. Travel to work patterns reveal that 38% less people travel into the county, than out, to work. The proximity of both Heathrow and Luton airports is a benefit in terms of travel opportunities for residents, but a concern regarding potential expansion resulting in deterioration of the environment, especially noise pollution.
- Educational attainment is high, with significantly higher than average pass rates at GCSE although this is not reflected across all groups in the county.
- Health outcomes are better than the national average, e.g. for mental health, teenage pregnancy, deaths from smoking, early deaths from heart disease. However, figures for road injuries and deaths are significantly higher than the national average.
- A significant percentage of Buckinghamshire is an Area of Outstanding National Beauty and Green Belt.
- Buckinghamshire County Council was assessed as a 3* authority, 'improving well', by the Audit Commission for 2006/07. The four district councils in the county were assessed as; one "Excellent" council (Chiltern DC), two "Good" councils (Aylesbury Vale and Wycombe DCs) and one "Fair" council (South Bucks DC). All four councils were rated as "continue to provide better services to residents" for 06/07. Thames Valley Police were given a 4* rating overall for 2006/07, and Bucks Hospitals NHS Trust were given a 3* rating. Bucks PCT was assessed as a 1* organisation for 2006/07, which was its first assessment as a unified PCT. Bucks and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service was assessed as a "Weak" organisation for 2005, but was awarded an "improving well" rating.
- The Voluntary and Community Sector is actively involved in partnership working and service delivery but there is an acknowledged need to build capacity in the sector.
- Many residents are very active in the community and engaged with community issues, are articulate and have high expectations of public services, particularly in the south of the county.

Within this overall context, challenges include:

- High levels of affluence and low unemployment rates across the county as a whole disguise pockets of disadvantage, particularly in the higher populated areas of High Wycombe and Aylesbury. Within these urban communities and some communities of interest, some residents experience higher levels of unemployment, crime, poorer educational attainment, health and housing than other parts of the county. Access to services for those residents living in rural parts of the county also needs to be considered.
- Long-term infrastructure planning to respond to the large-scale growth agenda in the north of the county.

Key themes

Improving the Quality of Life for Children and Young People

The priorities identified for inclusion in the LAA are based on evidence of the needs assessment underpinning the Children and Young People's plan, and are linked to its five priorities: Prevention, Active Lifestyle, Tackling Under-achievement, Participation and Keeping Children and Young People Safe. Specifically, anti-bullying has been chosen as a focus in view of the results from the recent 'Tell Us' survey which highlighted bullying as a key concern for children and young people locally. The achievement gap has been included because it reinforces our commitment to ensuring excellence for all.

Priority indicators to support the delivery of this theme:

- NI 51 Effectiveness of child and adolescent mental health (CAMHs) services
- NI 56 Obesity among primary school age children in Year 6
- NI 69 Children who have experienced bullying
- NI 102 Achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers achieving the expected level at Key Stages 2 and 4
- NI 111 First time entrants to the Youth Justice System aged 10 – 17 (main listing is under 'Safe Communities')
- NI 115 Substance misuse by young people (main listing is under 'Safe Communities')
- *Plus 16 statutory National Indicators on achievement and learning.*

The LAA indicators are embedded into the Children and Young People's Plan which contains additional indicators with a partnership focus that have been identified as requiring action in Buckinghamshire.

Improving the Quality of Life for Older People

The National Indicators prioritised for inclusion in the LAA reflect the local emphasis on promoting independence and self determination, the County Council's "because Every Adult matters" (bEAM) strategy and the outcomes described in Our Health Our Care Our Say. Approximately 16% of Buckinghamshire's population are aged 65 and over and by 2026 it is

estimated that this age group will grow as a proportion to 21%. The Buckinghamshire population has a higher life expectancy than the national average and overall, the local population is relatively wealthy, with average household income around 25% higher than the UK average, although there are significant pockets of deprivation also. Because of this a significant number of people pay for their own social care. Supporting people to maintain their independence requires multi-agency advice and support, especially in supporting timely discharge from hospital and reducing repeat admissions. The suite of indicators recommended for inclusion in the LAA reflect these priorities and the variety of funders (including self funding) involved in securing their ongoing support. The suite of local indicators identified for this block recognise the variety of tools for preserving and enhancing independence.

Priority indicators to support the delivery of this theme:

- NI 131 Delayed transfers of care from hospitals (also listed under 'Healthy Communities' theme)
- NI 134 The number of emergency bed days per head of weighted population (main listing is under 'Healthy Communities' theme)
- NI 136 People supported to live independently through social services (all ages)
- Local Indicator; Number of carers receiving support from Carers Centre
- Local Indicator; Number of older people accessing bereavement support
- Local Indicator; Number of people aged 50+ accessing learning programmes
- Local Indicator; Number of people accessing pre-retirement support

Safe Communities

Safer communities are an extremely high priority locally. Residents in Buckinghamshire consistently rank crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour as the most important issues for them and for their quality of life. The first countywide Partnership Strategic Assessment was completed in December 2007. It identified a number of countywide priorities that have informed the LAA process and have fed into the local community safety partnerships for inclusion in their partnership plans.

Drug and Alcohol abuse have been identified by residents as issues to tackle which underpin anti-social behaviour and violent crime, and featured as a top priority under the Safer Communities theme in the BSP Consultation. Pockets of negative health due to alcohol misuse exist in the county, and indications of under-age drinking have emerged across Bucks. In the 2007 Residents Survey, 25% of residents said they drank alcohol on at least 3 days a week. The Bucks Alcohol Strategy, published in October 2007, sets out the partnership approach to tackling alcohol misuse in the county.

Work across safer communities will focus in particular on young people and older people, with an increased emphasis on early intervention and preventative work. Finally, improved communication and engagement with residents and greater information sharing between partners will underpin delivery of all the Indicators.

Priority indicators to support the delivery of this theme:

- NI 8 Adult participation in sport (also listed under Healthy Communities theme)
- NI 16 Serious acquisitive crime rate
- NI 21 Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the local council and police

- NI 49 Number of primary fires and related fatalities and non-fatal casualties, excluding precautionary checks
- NI 111 First time entrants to the Youth Justice System aged 10 – 17 (listed also under 'Children and Young People' theme)
- NI 115 Substance misuse by young people (listed also under 'Children and Young People' theme)
- Local Indicator: Number of people participating in alcohol treatment or counselling following arrest referral

Other indicators which will receive a partnership focus, outside the LAA, are:

- NI 30 Re-offending rate of prolific and priority offenders
- NI 40 Drug users in effective treatment
- NI 47 People killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents

Strong and Cohesive Communities

Buckinghamshire has a long tradition of community activity, from organised groups to individual support for community events. Communities benefit from access to a wide range of cultural, sporting and learning opportunities which bring people together, promote a sense of purpose for communities and enhance quality of life. 88 % of residents (Residents' Survey 2007) feel that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.

However, it is recognised that a number of communities across Buckinghamshire experience significant challenges. Whilst three quarters of the population live in the 30% least deprived areas in the England, 3% of the population live within areas which are within the 30% most deprived areas in England. Areas in the towns of Aylesbury and High Wycombe experience higher levels of unemployment, crime and vandalism and poorer educational attainment, housing and health than other areas of Buckinghamshire. Issues of disadvantage are not just confined to urban areas however. Rural communities can experience isolation and difficulties in accessing services, particularly those groups without access to cars such as young people and the elderly. Also, the preventing violent extremism agenda is one which has received a recent focus locally, where actions across all parts of the county are required to build greater understanding and resilience.

The voluntary and community sector in Buckinghamshire has a key role to play in helping to connect people and enabling them to shape their communities. The Voluntary and Community Sector has participated fully in the partnership agenda, including Voluntary Impact leading on development of NI.07, but it is recognised that there is a continued challenge in building capacity in the sector. Similarly, the partnership believes that greater participation in sport and active lifestyles can play a big part in bringing people together, as well as the benefits for health and well being. The inclusion of NI 8 will harness contributions from many different sectors and agencies in Buckinghamshire.

The changing composition of the county in terms of ethnicity and age characteristics, and the addition of new communities in housing growth areas all provide challenges for both new and established communities. A challenge is to promote cohesive communities, strengthening intergenerational, interfaith and cultural understanding, and to promote equality of opportunity for all residents, ensuring that communities have the capacity to help themselves.

Priority indicators to support the delivery of this theme:

- NI 1 % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area
- NI 7 Environment for a thriving third sector
- NI 8 Adult participation in sport (also listed under Healthy Communities)
- NI 35 Building resilience to violent extremism

Other indicators which will receive a partnership focus, outside the LAA, are:

- NI 04 % of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality
- NI 06 Participation in regular volunteering
- NI 09 Use of public libraries
- NI 110 Young people's participation in positive activities

Healthy Communities

Healthy Communities features as a key priority from the BSP consultation responses, including responses from Members. The population of Buckinghamshire enjoys better health than the national average on a range of health indicators. However despite this, and the improvements in health that have been achieved, new challenges to health are emerging including a trebling of the incidence of obesity in the last 20 years, more sedentary lifestyles and drug and alcohol issues. When comparing Bucks to equivalently affluent areas across the county we find higher rates of ill-health, with levels of years lost of life being 14% above expected rates. In addition there are significant differences in the health experience across different socio-economic groups in Bucks, with people living in poorer socio-economic circumstances demonstrating poorer health. People living in the most deprived areas in Bucks have relatively poor health-outcomes when compared to equivalent populations across the rest of the UK.

Many factors influence how healthy we are. Some of these factors are directly related to the individual such as age, sex, hereditary factors and lifestyle. However it is now well recognised that health is affected by a wider range of factors such as general socio-economic, cultural and environmental conditions and social and community networks.

Within Buckinghamshire, local data analysis suggests that the most disadvantaged communities may be experiencing disproportionate access to healthcare services. Ensuring that the opportunity for and benefits of good health are experienced equally within Bucks requires targeted action to reduce the barriers to good health experienced by disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and a focus on the wider determinants of health.

Priority indicators to support the delivery of this theme:

- NI 8 Adult participation in sport (main listing under Stronger Communities)
- NI 121 Mortality rate from all circulatory diseases at ages under 75
- NI 131 Delayed transfers of care from hospitals (main listing is under 'Older People' theme)
- NI 134 The number of emergency bed days per head of weighted population (also listed under 'Older People' theme)
- Local Indicator: Reduce fuel poverty: Number of households receiving heating and insulation improvements per year

Prosperous Communities

Buckinghamshire has a strong economy, and is part of the Milton Keynes South Midlands sub-regional growth area. A recent piece of benchmarking work identified productivity per worker, industrial structure, knowledge economy and qualifications amongst the workforce as areas

where Bucks performs strongly compared to the national and regional averages. Challenges, however, were identified in the residential and commercial property markets, and in the need to encourage the growth and emergence of businesses. Understandably, in the context of the growth agenda, key priorities are the growth of business alongside expansion in jobs availability.

The Bucks Economic Strategy for 2006-16 bases its vision around the three RES themes – Competitiveness, Smart Growth and Sustainable Prosperity.

Links between businesses and education have been identified as a priority, and the recent merger of the Bucks Economic and Lifelong Learning Partnerships, to form a Bucks Economic and Learning Partnership, provides a new body to help closer working between these sectors. The 2012 Olympics is a potential economic opportunity for local businesses, with all of the rowing events being held in Bucks, and will bring a considerable amount of tourism to the county.

Housing provision and homelessness have been identified as priorities by residents. The prosperity of the county has contributed towards its average house price sitting at 151% of the England and Wales average, and 122% of the South East average. Aylesbury Vale has committed to major housing growth over the next 20 years, which will impact upon employment, transportation and housing across the whole county.

Priority indicators to support the delivery of this theme:

- NI 155 Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)
- NI 156 Number of households living in temporary accommodation
- NI 163 Working age population qualified to at least Level 2 or higher
- NI 171 New Business registration rate
- Local Indicator: Number of clients directly accessing the private rented sector through local authority partnership schemes (Excluding Aylesbury Vale)

Accessible Communities and Transport

Despite the urban centres of Buckinghamshire being relatively well connected, some of the more rural areas of the county do not have the same access to transport or services. Some concerns emerged from the BSP consultation regarding access to services for some of the more vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities or older people.

The focus in the county's Local Transport Plan is on providing access to employment, learning, healthcare services and activities that promote healthy living, particularly food shopping, physical activity and leisure.

Priority indicators to support the delivery of this theme:

- NI 175 Access to services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling (% of households in Buckinghamshire within 800 metres of a bus/train service and 30 minutes of a local or regional town centre by a public transport service operating at least once an hour during the working day)
- NI 198 Children travelling to school – mode of transport usually used

Superb Environment

Sustainability and protection of the natural environment is a key priority for Bucks, identified in the BSP consultation as the second most important issue for the county, and reflected in residents' surveys, Bucks Economic Strategies and Local Transport Plans, and the Regional Economic Strategy and South East Plan. The natural environment is part of Bucks' attraction

as a desirable place to live, and over a quarter of the county sits within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Despite this, Bucks still has one of the highest carbon footprints in the region, due to high car use and relatively high levels of rurality.

The Bucks Economic Strategy identifies sustainability as a key theme, with goals to reduce carbon emissions in the county, promote corporate social responsibility and encourage environmental preservation underpinning economic growth. The Local Transport Plan has “protecting our environment” as a key priority for the Transportation service, and the county has piloted the first round of the Government’s “Cycling Demonstration Towns” initiative in Aylesbury.

Waste and air quality are priorities for residents, as well as light and noise pollution. The county has rates of recycling and composting in the top third of counties nationally.

Priority indicators to support the delivery of this theme:

- NI 185 CO2 reduction from Local Authority Buildings
- NI 193 Percentage of municipal waste land filled
- NI 196 Improved street and environmental cleanliness – fly tipping