

Tunbridge Wells Futures

A report for Tunbridge Wells Together

October 2008

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1 Introduction

Background

Tunbridge Wells Council commissioned the Local Futures Group to produce a State of the Borough report in March 2008. The Audit benchmarked the borough's performance on a range of economic, social and environmental indicators, highlighting strengths, weaknesses, and policy challenges. The findings of the research were presented at separate stakeholder events, helping to create a story of place and a shared understanding of the challenges faced by the borough.

In August 2008, Tunbridge Wells Council commissioned Local Futures to help further, in developing a long-term vision for the borough. There was recognition that the pace of change – economic, social, and environmental – is accelerating and that short-term actions should be set in the context of a shared long-term vision for the area. Determining a shared vision for the future is particularly pertinent in the context of the new performance framework within which Tunbridge Wells Together, as with all local strategic partnerships, will operate, following the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007. New emphasis and opportunities for partnership working, through the proposed Comprehensive Area Assessments and Multi Area Agreement processes, will make the need for a shared vision for Tunbridge Wells all the more central to the work of Tunbridge Wells Together.

A workshop was held in September 2008 to start the process of developing a shared vision for Tunbridge Wells. Partners were brought together to carry out a SWOT analysis of the borough's economic, social and environmental conditions and to consider future 'drivers of change' within the borough. This was followed by a workshop in October 2008, where previous findings were refreshed and syndicate groups undertook a scenarios-based exploration of possible alternatives for Tunbridge Wells. Finally, a third workshop, again in October 2008, discussed the key elements of a long-term vision for the borough and key challenges in achieving the vision.

This Report

The findings of our earlier research and the workshops are presented in the following chapters. In **Chapter 2**, we summarise our baseline analysis of Tunbridge Wells, highlighting current strengths and weaknesses. In **Chapter 3**, we consider some of the main drivers of change that are likely to be influential in shaping Tunbridge Wells' future, outlining opportunities and threats. In **Chapter 4**, we present four scenarios for the future and assess the potential impacts and implications for Tunbridge Wells. **Chapter 5** presents the elements of an overarching vision for Tunbridge Wells, and the challenges they present, as raised during the workshops. **Chapter 6** presents the key strategic priorities for delivering this vision, and the next steps for the process of delivering the vision.

2 The State of Tunbridge Wells

Introduction

This chapter sets the context for developing a vision for Tunbridge Wells, by providing an overarching analysis of local conditions based on the State of the Borough report (April 2008). This Local Futures Group Audit benchmarked the borough across a range of key economic, social and environmental indicators. The report provided a baseline analysis to inform a workshop discussion by partners of current strengths and weaknesses.

State of the Borough

A summary of the Audit is presented in the report card below, where 'A' places the borough in the top 20 per cent of Local Authority Districts and 'E' in the bottom 20 per cent, within Tunbridge Wells' sub-region, region and Great Britain (or England and Wales, or England where appropriate).

Economic Development: The economic performance of Tunbridge Wells is generally good, particularly with regards to its knowledge-driven foundations. Tunbridge Wells is a moderate economy in terms of scale, driven by above-average levels of productivity and knowledge-driven employment by national standards. These latter drivers reflect the borough's advantages in its location just outside the greater London city-region. However, the borough is within a very competitive region and performs less well when benchmarked against the South East. The residential skills base is average by national standards; nevertheless, there appears to be a reasonable match between available jobs in the region and local skill levels, as indicated by the high employment rate by all three benchmarks.

Social Profile: On the whole, social conditions in Tunbridge Wells are also good. Reflecting the area's economic profile, there is a strong performance with respect to knowledge workers and overall prosperity. The social profile suggests there is a high level of overall well-being among residents in Tunbridge Wells. Despite average local skill levels, residents record high residential incomes, boosted by the local share of knowledge workers (by national standards). Tunbridge Wells has low levels of deprivation, which is also reflected in the wider socioeconomic conditions of the borough, namely crime and health. Nevertheless, the borough is again ranked less highly when compared with the South East.

Environment & Quality of Life: Tunbridge Wells has a mixed environmental record by national standards. The natural environment and amenities are the borough's key strengths, balancing its largely rural environment with a developed local amenities offer. However, the attractiveness of the borough has led to very low levels of housing affordability by all three benchmarks; modest commercial floorspace growth suggests there may be some conflict over future land use in trying to accommodate both these challenges. Connectivity in the borough is average by national standards, but more limited when compared to the wider sub-region and region.

Figure 1 Report card, 2008

	Sub-Regional Kent & Medway	Regional South East	National
Economic scale score	C	C	C
Productivity score	B	D	B
Economic change score	E	E	E
Industrial structure score	B	D	B
Business & enterprise score	E	E	D
Skills & qualifications score	C	E	C
Labour market score	A	B	A
Knowledge worker score	B	C	B
Prosperity score	A	B	A
Deprivation score	A	C	B
Inequality score	A	C	B
Health score	B	D	B
Crime score	A	C	B
Affordability score	E	E	E
Floorspace change score	B	C	C
Connectivity score	E	D	C
Local amenities score	B	C	B
Natural environment score	A	A	B

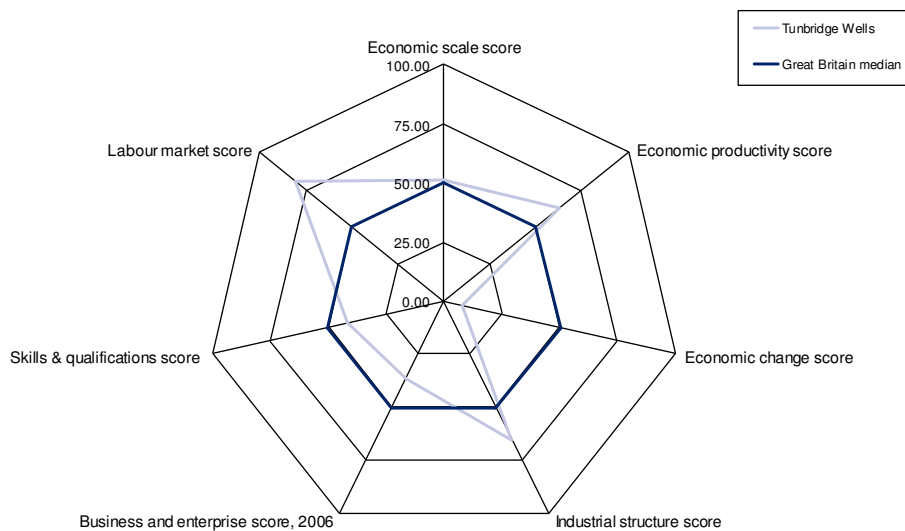
Source: Local Knowledge; Local Futures Group

Economy

A summary of the Tunbridge Wells economic profile is presented below, in the form of a spider chart. Every district's score is converted into a percentile, with the top-ranked area in the 100th percentile and the bottom in the 0th percentile. The rankings of Tunbridge Wells, on a range of indicators, have been plotted on the chart below to give a 'web' profile for the borough. In general, the bigger the web, the better the area is performing on each set of indicators. The darker line shows the British median.

Tunbridge Wells has an average-sized economy characterised by high productivity by national standards. A relatively good skills base supports its favourable industrial structure and the borough's labour market is quite strong, with a high employment rate. A relatively weak business environment undermines the borough's generally strong performance with low growth in business stock over recent years and low rate of economic growth, which places Tunbridge Wells below the median of local authority districts nationally. Although this in part reflects the relative maturity of its economic base, it may be of concern for future economic development.

Figure 2 Economic Profile



Source: *localknowledge*, Local Futures

In light of our analysis, the following economic strengths and weaknesses were highlighted by partners:

Strengths	Weaknesses
Education standards and skills base	Connectivity
Strong knowledge sector	Skills polarisation
High productivity and earnings	Narrow economic base
Low unemployment	Ageing population
Location/proximity to London	Road Infrastructure
Built environment	Pockets of deprivation; polarisation
Attractive visitor destination	Brand/place marketing
Strong retail sector	Skills migration
Enterprise culture	Business support infrastructure

Society

Tunbridge Wells has considerable strengths in terms of its social conditions. Consistent with its good economic performance, the borough is a prosperous area and has attracted a large share of 'knowledge workers', while it is also an attractive area for families, as indicated by the average household size in the district.

These social assets are reflected in low levels of deprivation and crime, as well as in good health outcomes and high life expectancy rates by national standards. However, the overall levels of prosperity hide a few challenges facing the borough such as inequality levels, manifested in small pockets of housing deprivation within the borough, and an above-average dependency ratio, implying an ageing population.

Figure 3 Social profile



Source: *localknowledge*, Local Futures

In light of our analysis, the following social strengths and weaknesses were highlighted:

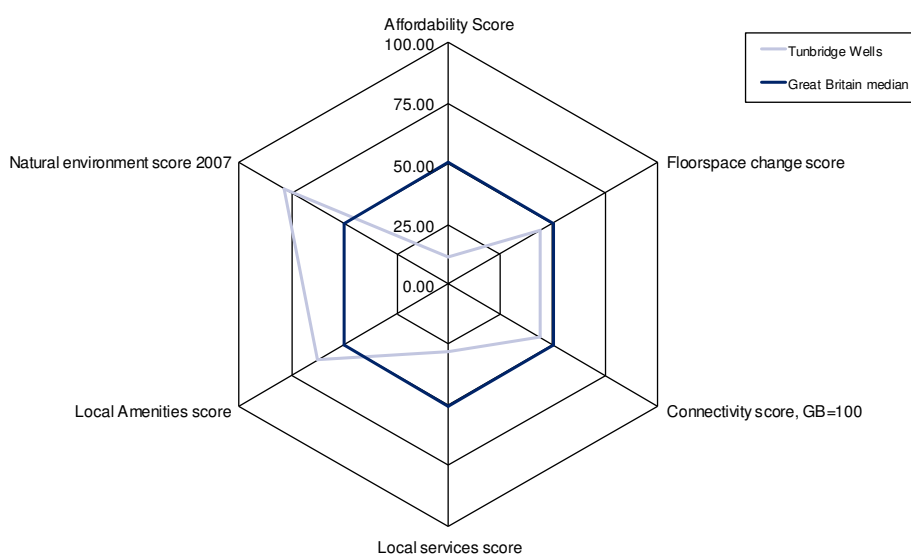
Strengths	Weaknesses
Social cohesion Overall crime rate falling; violent crime (low) Prosperity; educated population Low deprivation Civic participation Voluntary sector Commitment to partnership	Housing affordability Pockets of deprivation Polarisation; widening inequalities Perception of crime rising Shifting crime (e.g. petrol theft!) Ageing population (particularly by the coast) Teenage pregnancies on the rise Lack of civic engagement among the young Lack of service provision for the young

Environment

The strongest asset in the Tunbridge Wells environmental profile is its natural environment, with high levels of tranquillity and areas of natural beauty making it an attractive place to visit and reside in. There is a reasonably good local amenities offer in the borough, although access to services is low for a share of its residents. These strong quality of life benefits, however, together with the borough's prosperity levels, have resulted in the borough ranking among the least affordable in the country.

Moderate levels of connectivity in Tunbridge Wells are a drawback in terms of the borough's attractiveness to skilled people and firms. This may in part contribute to the modest growth in commercial and industrial floorspace, which may have an impact on future economic sustainability.

Figure 4 Environmental profile



Source: *localknowledge*, Local Futures

The following table summarises the borough's environmental strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths	Weaknesses
Green space; natural beauty Historical built environment Transport; less congestion than elsewhere Strong housing market Attractive suburban areas Amenities offer in town centre	Housing affordability Congestion; reliance on car Air quality Long commuting times Poor cross-Tunbridge Wells links Appropriate office space Lack of amenities (e.g. Sports facilities) NIMBYism

3 Future drivers of change

Introduction

Successful visions and strategies are those that anticipate the future. For this reason we undertook a short programme of research on longterm future drivers of change that will have the greatest implications for regions and localities. The key trends, summarised below, were presented at the workshop and generated a discussion of the most important drivers for Tunbridge Wells.

Drivers of change	Underlying trends
Globalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The world economy is globalising • Europe is a major source of inward investment • Rapid growth in world air freight • Production costs cheaper in developing/emerging economies • Rapid growth of China and India: re-emerging economies
Industrial Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The decline of manufacturing • The growing dominance of and trade in services • The use of technology key to higher productivity • London dominates Britain's knowledge economy • The growing healthcare economy • Tourism on the rise
Science & Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications cost declining • Processing power gets more powerful • Consumer use of the internet maturing • Increase in online shopping and other e-services • Broadband critical engine of growth
Organisational Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreign direct investment grows • Mergers and acquisitions recovering • Transnational corporations are growing • The rise of employment in Small and Medium Enterprises • Rise in foreign ownership of UK companies
Labour Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size of the labour market set to decline • An ageing workforce • Increasing importance of foreign workers • Growth in 'knowledge workers' • Flexible working increasingly common • UK struggling to compete on skills

- Demographics and households**
 - World population growth
 - A middle ageing population
 - Changing life patterns
 - Changing family structures
 - Household structures changing
- Inequality and social cohesion**
 - Households in relative poverty declining
 - Inequality still high
 - Growing wage inequality
 - Housing increasingly unaffordable
 - Unequal distribution of wealth
 - Rich getting richer, poor getting left behind
- Values and attitudes**
 - Emerging values of individualism and self fulfilment
 - Levels of trust declining
 - The personalisation of authority
 - Growing importance of cultural and intellectual capital
 - The search for quality of life
- Environment**
 - Demand for water expected to surge
 - Water scarcity worsening
 - World temperature rising
 - Traffic volumes expected to increase
 - CO₂ in atmosphere expected to increase
- Leisure and tourism**
 - The rise of the experience economy
 - Time spent 'out and about' rising
 - Tourist expenditure abroad outstrips foreign tourist expenditure in UK
 - Local leisure culture and long term success linked
- Government and politics**
 - The rise of global institutions
 - European Union – widening and deepening
 - The Euro and UK membership
 - Winners and losers in a Europe of regions
 - The new 'localism'

Key future drivers of change for Tunbridge Wells

Following a presentation and discussion of the future drivers of change, partners were asked to highlight the trends and forecasts that were likely to have most impact on Tunbridge Wells' own future, over the period to 2030. The feedback is summarised below highlighting some of the key trends for which the borough may need to prepare:

Globalisation

Globalisation will have a number of implications for Tunbridge Wells. Infrastructure and connectivity will be even more important in a globalised world, with congestion and out-of-date technology potentially creating significant limits to the local economy. Partners raised the increase in global transport as a key factor from which Tunbridge Wells could benefit from in terms of expanding its visitor economy.

The local business profile will play a major part in ensuring that Tunbridge Wells remains competitive, particularly the attraction of large employers and global companies within Tunbridge Wells. Keeping up with local and national competitors, such as Maidstone and King's Hill, will also be critical to ensuring the sustainable prosperity of the borough.

Finally, the globalised financial sector and the economic and social effects of the current turbulence in financial markets will also have important implications for Tunbridge Wells to the local future of areas of Britain and of Tunbridge Wells in particular, which draws a large part of its wealth from London's knowledge sector.

Industrial structure

The restructuring of the economic base within Britain will have implications for the Tunbridge Wells economy. The borough's response to the growth in the service industry will determine the success of the local economy. The ageing population could influence the area's ability to engage with the developing knowledge economy, through generating a healthcare economy, for instance.

Skills

In line with the changing industrial base, the borough's skills and knowledge base will be critical drivers of the social and economic shape of Tunbridge Wells. The borough is already endowed with a strong skills base but needs to retain its locally generated pool of skilled workers. How the borough meets the changing skills requirements will be central to determining the sustainability of the Tunbridge Wells economy, shaping business growth and economic migration for employment.

Demographic change

Demographic change was another key driver of the future of 'Tunbridge Wells' raised by partners. Rising life expectancy will put increasing pressure on local services and housing. An ageing population will also bring added costs with increased health and social care needs. However, an older population was seen by the partners to also present opportunities for the borough, allowing to potentially benefit from the development of a healthcare economy, starting from its new public hospital as a basis. Finally, immigration will add to the complexity which demographic change will bring; immigration was considered by partners as both an opportunity and a challenge, creating winners and losers among the different subgroups of the borough's population.

Environmental sustainability

Climate change will bring added pressure to introduce local measures in order to prevent further strain on the local environment. Other strategies regarding the use of renewable energy and sustainable management of the borough's woodland were also highlighted as critical to shaping the effectiveness of local sustainability.

Polarisation

Inequalities are another important driver of change for the borough. Increasing polarisation regarding income and housing has implications for future social cohesion. As Tunbridge Wells moves forward economically, these divides could potentially widen. Social expectations and aspirations will be a major factor in the direction of travel within the communities of the borough.

Built environment

The built environment has an important role to play in the future economic and social prosperity of the borough. Out of town centre development in particular was raised by partners as a key driver of the image and cohesion of Tunbridge Wells. Exploiting the opportunities that the development of available land – particularly for housing and modern business floorspace - outside of the town centre can offer was seen as a way to foster both the economic and social inclusion of a wider set of the borough's communities.

Technological change

Technology shapes the future of all local areas, particularly driving economic processes. However, technological change will also affect social processes, particularly the nature of employment. Flexible patterns of working will have an impact on the local infrastructure and community, from demanding greater access to technological capability to furthering the 'virtual' dimension of social interaction.

Political agenda

Partners felt that the political agenda would have significant implications for the future of the borough. The local-national nexus of politics particularly affects areas such as Tunbridge Wells, lying within a powerful city-region. Partnership working and the devolution of responsibilities will affect how Tunbridge Wells is governed. Resources will also be affected by changing governance structures; investment decisions via the political structure will have a significant impact on the area's ability to adapt and respond to future change.

Opportunities and threats

In discussion with partners the following opportunities and threats were identified:

Economy

Opportunities	Threats
<p><i>Skills base</i> Further development of local skills; encourage skills to attract competitive firms/sectors; raise aspirations</p> <p><i>Knowledge economy</i> Take advantage of new technology and economies (e.g. climate change) to create hi-tech base; service industry expansion</p> <p><i>Transport</i> Develop further links (internal and external); reduce congestion; new road infrastructure</p> <p><i>Tourism</i> Build on leisure/heritage offer; develop a 'long-stay' tourist economy;</p> <p><i>Ageing population</i> Develop health economy (new hospital); take advantage of niche consumer economy</p> <p><i>Globalisation</i> Global transport; new technologically-enabled working patterns: more home-working/less commuting; international labour markets;</p>	<p><i>Economic restructuring</i> Loss of retail sector through new technology; risk of standing still during change; reduction in public spending</p> <p><i>Skills</i> Skills migration/brain-drain; Declining proportion of economically active population;</p> <p><i>Demographic change</i> Longer life expectancy; supporting elderly population;</p> <p><i>Infrastructure</i> Congestion; static infrastructure; business floorspace unattractive to high-growth firms</p> <p><i>Polarisation</i> Socioeconomic polarisation; widening inequalities; child poverty</p> <p><i>Competition</i> Foreign ownership: engaging firms locally/creating stable jobs; competition from Maidstone and King's Hill; international labour markets</p> <p><i>Complacency</i> Reluctance towards change</p>

Society

Opportunities	Threats
<p><i>Skills</i> Retain skilled population; attract investment in skills base</p> <p><i>Cohesion</i> Ageing population: boost on voluntary sector; encourage community engagement;</p> <p><i>Quality of life</i> New/upgraded facilities; health improvements; digital engagement</p> <p><i>Immigration</i> Winners and losers among population subgroups</p> <p><i>Partnership working</i> Wider engagement; avoid duplication</p>	<p><i>Polarisation</i> Pockets of deprivation; digital divide; increasing house prices – exclusion</p> <p><i>Health</i> Inability due to long terms sickness rates; health costs and welfare state</p> <p><i>Ageing population</i> Pressure on services; skills replacement; fear of crime</p> <p><i>Immigration</i> Winners and losers among population subgroups</p>

Environment

Opportunities	Threats
<p><i>Green agenda</i> Use natural environment assets to attract responsible businesses; alternative fuel supplies; carbon footprint reduction</p> <p><i>Natural environment</i> Attract knowledge workers; under-used rural hinterland for recreation and development of rural economy; make most of LEADER grants</p> <p><i>Built environment</i> Strong heritage to build image; spare land capacity for incubator facilities</p> <p><i>Vibrancy</i> Upgrade leisure and cultural amenities; facilities fit for young and older population; use existing assets to create wider range of activities</p>	<p><i>Housing</i> Affordability for first-time buyers and elderly; housing fit for an ageing population</p> <p><i>Climate change</i> Unknown impact of global warming</p> <p><i>Built environment</i> Business facilities unappealing to innovative firms;</p> <p><i>Quality of life</i> Conflict between green space, housing and the economy; NIMBYISM</p> <p><i>Vibrancy</i> Existing amenities not attractive to the young population</p>

Governance

Partners also raised some overarching concerns regarding governance challenges within Tunbridge Wells. They represented both opportunities and threats, depending on the response. One concern related to potential apathy regarding the need for change, linked to the borough’s heritage and the tendency towards complacency over the borough’s prosperity.

The need to capitalise on the opportunities presented in partnership working, through the LSP and the rise of wider partnership groups, was seen as a way to avoid duplication and to maintain the borough’s overall success in economic and social prosperity.

Of particular concern was a lack of available funding to address the borough’s socioeconomic challenges, as the high average levels of affluence in the borough make it difficult to attract public grants for local social services.

Finally, partners felt that a re-branding of the borough’s image was necessary in order to take advantage of the opportunities available to Tunbridge Wells. This would require a more aggressive marketing campaign directed both to residents and externally, to visitors and businesses.

4 Scenarios for the future

Introduction

During the workshop Local Futures facilitated a series of exercises in which four different scenarios for the future were presented and then applied to Tunbridge Wells. Partners were divided into groups and each focused on one of the four scenarios. The exercises involved partners highlighting key implications for Tunbridge Wells, suggesting possible impacts, naming the scenario and indicating what they liked and disliked about the scenario.

Scenarios are not intended to predict the future. Rather, they are tools for thinking about the future based on four assumptions:

- **The future is unlike the past, and is shaped by human choice and action.**
- **The future cannot be foreseen, but exploring the future can inform present decisions.**
- **There are many possible futures; scenarios map a ‘possibility space’.**
- **Scenario development involves rational analysis and subjective judgement.**

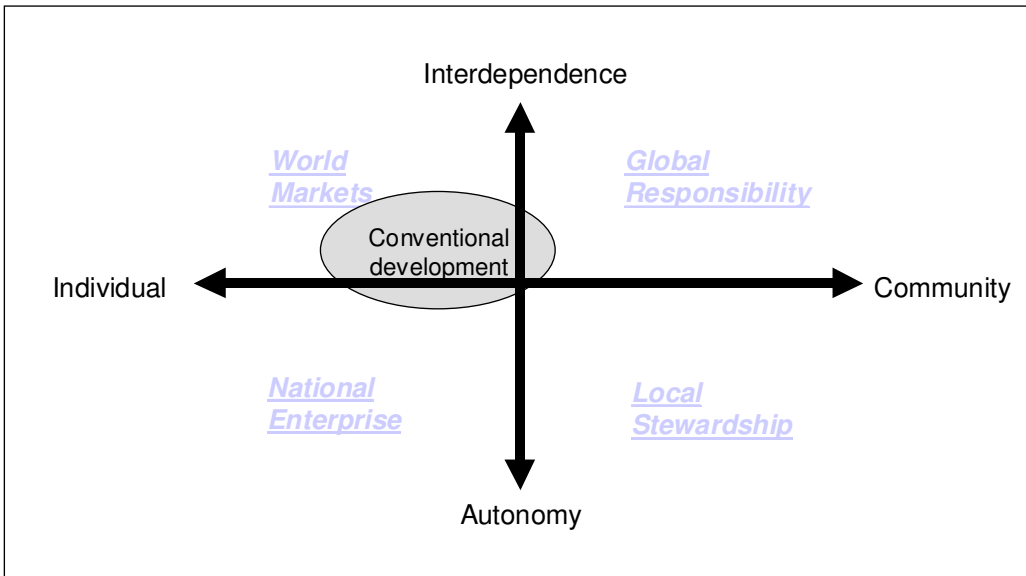
Our four scenarios are based on work undertaken for Department for Trade and Industry by the Science Policy Research Unit at Sussex University and adapted to take into account Local Futures’ perspectives on the knowledge economy. The scenarios suggest possible futures for the UK during the period 2010-2030, exploring alternative directions in which social, economic and technological changes may evolve over the coming decades. Scenario storylines are built from a simple set of assumptions about the main drivers of change in the future. While they focus on broad socio-economic trends at the UK national level, the scenario framework is used here as a context for creating scenarios relevant to Tunbridge Wells’ own future.

Underlying drivers of change

The scenarios have been framed in the context of two underlying drivers of change: social values and systems of governance. These dimensions are taken as background conditions that define the specific features of each scenario. The diagram on the following page indicates the positioning of the scenarios in relation to these drivers.

The **social values** dimension takes account of social and political priorities, as well as patterns of economic activity resulting from them. At one end of the spectrum (Individual), values are dominated by economic and political liberalism, the rights of the individual and the pursuit of personal freedom. At the other end (Community), values are shaped by more communitarian ethics that emphasise social networks and responsibilities, with a greater concern for common goods, social cohesion and sustainable development.

The **governance system** dimension represents the structure of political authority and decision-making. At one end (Interdependence), governance is increasingly distributed away from the national level; this is seen as occurring both upwards – to the supra-national alliances such as the EU and large international organisations – and downwards towards devolved and regional governments in the UK. At the other end of the spectrum (Autonomy), decision-making power in public and private spheres is largely preserved (or strengthened) at national and regional levels, with political and cultural boundaries enforced.



Scenario 1: World Markets

In this scenario, people aspire to personal independence, material wealth and mobility to the exclusion of wider social goals. Integrated global markets are presumed to best deliver these goals. Implications include high but uneven growth, a rapid shift to knowledge-intensive sectors, high levels of material wealth, weakening of public services, increased polarisation and weak planning controls.

Partners applied this scenario to Tunbridge Wells and named the scenario '**Haves and Have-nots**', highlighting the following implications for the economy, society and environment.

Economy	Society	Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased growth in high-tech sector • Low employment • Attraction of international businesses • Increased disposable income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased mobility for Tunbridge Wells' citizens • Ageing population • Shrunk public sector, less resources; poor health and social care services • Digital divide • More social deprivation • Rise in fear of crime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only wealthy able to afford alternative energy • High levels of congestion, more commuting • More pressure on green space • Lack of brownfield land – high density of development • Increase in CO₂

Potential impacts of the 'Haves and Have-nots' scenario were identified and plotted on a 'timeline':

Now



- Planning regulations further relaxed
- Plastic bags banned in Tunbridge Wells
- Retail sector starts specialising
- Innovative regional hub in operation
- Santander relocates to P. Wood
- Mental health services cannot cope
- All primary school pupils to learn Chinese
- Flooding closes A21 - plans for improvement revisited
- Gated community becomes energy self-sufficient Kent police merges with Essex
- Penbury hospital privatised
- Local authorities are no longer

2030

Partners highlighted the following likes and dislikes about the 'Have and Have-nots' scenario:

Likes	Dislikes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer life expectancy and health standards • Increased wealth within TW • More affordable housing • More opportunities for young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...but only if you are rich • Increased insurance costs • Increased social divide • The environment suffers • Higher levels of crime and fear of crime

Scenario 2: Global Responsibility

In the Global Responsibility scenario, people aspire to high levels of welfare within communities with shared values, more equally distributed opportunities and a sound environment. There is a belief that these objectives are best achieved through active public policy and international cooperation within the EU and at a global level. Implications include medium Gross Domestic Product growth, growth of multinational companies and high-tech businesses, improved inequality and strong planning controls.

Partners applied this scenario to Tunbridge Wells and named it '**Tunbridge Wells: A step in Time**', highlighting the following implications for the economy, society and environment.

Economy	Society	Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure in new technology – fibre optics • Improved West-East transport links and train links to London • Adult skills gap • More time for leisure and larger leisure industry • Increased need for healthcare workers • More home-based employment • More job opportunities for all local people and low unemployment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolation of older population • Loss of social interaction • Housing affordability • Improved distribution of housing stock • Improved local home care services • Better education • Healthier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More use of sustainable and renewable energy sources • Increase water requirements • Pressure on land use • Reduced use of agricultural land

Impacts of the ‘**Tunbridge Wells: A step in Time**’ scenario were identified and plotted on the ‘timeline’ below:

Now



Improved health and home care bring employment growth

Baby boom

New transport links between the East and West and improved rail links between North and South

New local business opportunities are created

2030

Partners highlighted the following likes and dislikes about the ‘**Tunbridge Wells: A step in Time**’ scenario:

Likes	Dislikes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer life expectancy and health standards • Increased wealth within TW • More affordable housing • More opportunities for young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...but only if you are rich • Increased insurance costs • Increased social divide • The environment suffers • Higher levels of crime and fear of crime

Scenario 3: National Enterprise

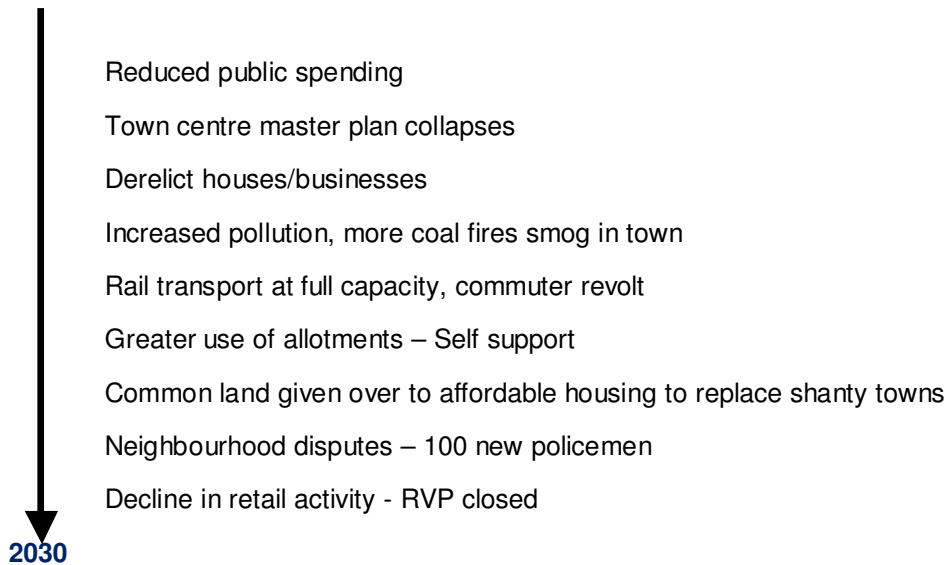
In the National Enterprise scenario, people aspire to personal independence and material wealth within a nationally rooted cultural identity. Liberalised markets together with a commitment to build capabilities and resources to secure a high degree of national self-reliance and security are believed to best deliver these goals. Implications include medium-low GDP growth, medium-high unemployment, strong enterprise ideology, encouragement of planned developments, but high social tensions.

Partners applied this scenario to Tunbridge Wells and named the scenario ‘**Tunbridge Wells in Trepidation**’, highlighting the following implications for the economy, society and environment.

Economy	Society	Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low public investment • Low investment in infrastructure • Town centre degrades • Falling house prices • Imbalance between rich and poor • Lack of confidence and increased uncertainty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher crime rate • Strain on social support • Poorer health standards • Funding for arts and culture drops • Rise of borderline xenophobic views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of greenbelt • More land given to agriculture • Less investment to address environmental problems • Rise of NIMBYism

Impacts of the ‘**Tunbridge Wells in Trepidation**’ scenario were identified and plotted on the ‘timeline’ below:

Now



Partners generally disliked the ‘**Tunbridge Wells in Trepidation**’ scenario:

Likes	Dislikes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater community engagement and spirit • More agricultural production 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of green belt • Growth in congestion • Low public expenditure • Rise in poverty • Selfish society • Less planning regulations

Scenario 4: Local Stewardship

In the Local Stewardship scenario, people aspire to sustainable levels of welfare in networked communities. Markets are subject to social regulation to ensure more equally distributed opportunities and a high quality local environment. Active public policy aims to constrain large-scale markets and technologies. Implications include; growth in labour-intensive occupations, low incomes, post-materialist values, strong improvement in social equity and minimal new development.

Partners applied this scenario to Tunbridge Wells and named the scenario '**Happy at Tunbridge Wells**', highlighting the following implications for the economy, society and environment.

Economy	Society	Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimisation of resources • Increased business opportunities (e.g. from climate change and inter-area trading) • Integrated transport networks (pooled cars, rail, innovative use of ICT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater personal responsibility for health and wellbeing • Self-sufficient people: physical and mental wellbeing • People working shorter hours but longer periods of their life • More time for leisure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater use of communal space/Multi-use spaces • More space given to energy generation –solar power, forestry • Intelligent transport schemes: cycle systems, mini-bus services

Impacts of 'Happy at Tunbridge Wells' scenario were identified and plotted on the 'timeline' below:

Now



- Free public transport – Centre of TW is car free
- Four multipurpose 'hubs' open in TW
- Enterprise and Technology University in West Kent
- Car pool scheme starts across the borough
- TW wind farm becomes net exporter of energy
- Reserves of oil run out. Recycling laptops, TVs, tyres
- 'Own you own farm'. New EU subsidies available

2030

Partners generally liked the 'Happy at Tunbridge Wells' scenario and highlighted the following likes and dislikes:

Likes	Dislikes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health improvements • Control of one's own destiny • Decentralisation • Increase in community cohesion • Up skilling for sustainability • Seasonable local produce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower GDP/incomes • Less focus on technological development • Limited improvements to public transport • Deprived communities might be excluded from change – difficult to adapt

Scenario reflections

Partners reflected on the four scenarios and voted on their preferences as follows:

	National Enterprise	World Markets	Global Responsibility	Local Stewardship
	<i>Tunbridge Wells in Trepidation</i>	<i>Haves and Have-nots</i>	<i>Tunbridge Wells: a step in time</i>	<i>Happy at Tunbridge Wells</i>
<i>Most plausible</i>	4	1	16	0
<i>Most favourable to citizens</i>	0	0	10	12
<i>Most favourable to businesses</i>	0	9	11	1
<i>Closest to now</i>	13	7	1	0
<i>Closest to the future you aspire to</i>	0	0	14	7
<i>Closest to what your organisation is planning for</i>	4	5	8	2
<i>Closest to what Tunbridge Wells is planning for</i>	0	0	16	0

A clear majority of partners felt that the Global Responsibility scenario was the most plausible overall. Moreover, most felt that this scenario was also closest to the one they personally aspire to and to what their organisation and Tunbridge Wells is planning for. It was also voted as the most favourable to citizens.

Partners seemed to like the Local Stewardship scenario, which gathered the greatest number of votes as the most favourable to citizens, and came second as being a scenario that partners personally aspire to. However, only one participant felt that this scenario would be favourable to businesses. This could reflect a view of diverging interests between residents and businesses within the borough.

However, the majority of partners considered National Enterprise as the scenario closest to now, reflecting the climate of uncertainty and pessimism that the latest evolvments in the global financial markets have brought. By contrast, Local Stewardship and Global Responsibility were not considered as scenarios close to the present reality.

5 A Vision for Tunbridge Wells

Introduction

In the final workshop, partners discussed and agreed the key elements of a vision for Tunbridge Wells, in light of the earlier benchmark analysis of the area and reflections on potential scenarios for the area’s future. These elements were then weighed up and synthesised to produce “win-win propositions” for the future of Tunbridge Wells, in order to create a vision that is distinctive to the area and responds to local drivers of change. In doing so, partners also considered how to bring this vision to life for Tunbridge Wells residents.

Elements of the vision

The following table synthesises partners’ views on the key elements of a vision for Tunbridge Wells, and the strategic outcomes envisaged for these elements.

ECONOMY	<i>Competitive</i>	Diverse base and a balanced economy; less dependence on retail/tourism A technology led borough Help business expansion Expand knowledge based sector
	<i>Enterprising</i>	An innovative SME base An enterprise hub; business hubs in key locations A vibrant rural economy Increase start-ups by local people; increase survival rates
	<i>Educated and skilled</i>	Retain and attract skilled graduates Focus on business skills; workforce for a knowledge-based business Reduce skills gap Providing an up-skilled future for all Reputation for high skilled workforce Higher education offer
SOCIETY	<i>Inclusive and Cohesive</i>	Reduced skills gaps Narrow the gap in health, employment and education Raise aspirations and narrow inequalities; inclusion of all working classes Community spirit evident in all neighbourhoods

	<i>Healthy and safe</i>	Actively promote health and well-being; promote leisure activities for all Improved health and life expectancy Health education and change Healthy, independent, supported older populations To be the safest place to socialise in without fear of crime
	<i>High quality affordable homes</i>	Housing suitable for all sections of the community Mixed tenure Affordable housing, facilitating home ownership Affordable homes for first time buyers
ENVIRONMENT	<i>Connected</i>	High speed broadband and Wi-Fi in rural areas A regional hub A car-free centre Transport infrastructure to ensure no parts of the borough are disadvantaged
	<i>Vibrant</i>	Tunbridge Wells as a cultural hub Socially integrated leisure, shopping and arts Niche shopping A place where 18-30 year olds want to live and work
	<i>Environmentally sustainable</i>	Leader in recycling/renewable energy Sustainable management of agricultural land Carbon neutral; energy self sufficient

The following paragraphs flesh out the challenges surrounding the main themes of a vision for Tunbridge Wells, as summarised above, based on partners' discussions.

Economic elements of a vision

Competitive

Finding an economic identity for Tunbridge Wells was a strong recurring theme in discussions on promoting the competitiveness of the borough. Finding and exploiting a niche market within the city-region was raised as a solution to creating the impetus needed to develop a competitive Tunbridge Wells economy in the long-term. The development of the health care services sector, with the borough's newly constructed public hospital as the starting point, is a potential option, as is a niche retail sector. The underlying principle for this vision is for Tunbridge Wells to expand its economic base and reduce its reliance on the retail and tourism sector. Along the same lines, another element of economic competitiveness raised during this exercise was a vibrant rural economy, diversified to maximise its potential.

Partners recognised that Tunbridge Wells has some significant economic assets to maintain, and potentially build upon, such as its skilled workforce, its strong retail offer and its attractiveness as a visitor destination.

However, they stressed the need for the borough to expand its knowledge based sector especially by following advances in technology more closely and using them to attract knowledge based firms.

Enterprising

Bearing in mind the economic profile highlighted in preceding analysis, the partners felt that an improved enterprise culture within Tunbridge Wells should be an essential ingredient of the future local economy. Attracting business investment was considered the key to establishing this enterprising environment.

One of the major local obstacles for attracting investment lies in the local infrastructure and facilities. The lack of vibrancy and top quality business amenities, and the poor image and structure of some parts of the borough are significant barriers for businesses seeking location advantages. Another deterrent to future business investment is the lack of connectivity, with high levels of local congestion and few alternative modes of transport. Enhancing the railway systems (with connections to both East and West) and providing more sustainable transport schemes were raised as important elements to counteracting these challenges.

Educated

The already developed skills base in Tunbridge Wells was pointed out by partners as a key strength of the borough. However, the partners also identified the need to enhance and expand local skills as critical to sustaining the Tunbridge Wells economy in the long-term. This ties in with the earlier overarching economic challenge of finding a niche for the Tunbridge Wells economy; in doing so, this will also determine the shape of future local skills requirements (for instance, health care and leisure services).

Moreover, in the context of envisioning a healthier business and enterprise culture for the borough, strengthening business skills, as well as the skills base that would attract knowledge-based firms, came forward as an important part of the group's aspirations for the borough. This would create a virtuous circle, as the attraction of employers and the expansion of local firms would help attract and retain more skilled workers. To encourage skills development, high quality educational institutions are necessary. Partners stressed the need for a variety of skills to be encouraged locally. As a result, higher education establishments focusing on technological and digital skills as well as on healthcare was seen as a policy option for the future.

Social elements of a vision

Inclusive and Cohesive

Promoting a cohesive borough presents challenges for Tunbridge Wells, in light of the pockets of deprivation and polarisation, in terms of life chances found in the borough. Addressing this encompasses wider challenges of making education more accessible, equipping young people with the right skills to reach employment, reducing the skills gap within the borough and increasing opportunities for flexible employment to maximise access to work.

A greater sense of community within all neighbourhoods was also raised as a priority. The prospect of an ageing population was seen as an opportunity in terms of creating greater civic engagement through a larger voluntary sector. However, partners felt there was an important obstacle to future cohesion in the social distance between the older and younger population, manifested in a sense of fear towards young people. Tackling this would involve making Tunbridge Wells a 'young people-friendly borough' through their engagement with local decision-making. Service provision and a quality of life offer targeted to young people's needs were seen as steps forward. Moreover, many partners felt that working locally was fundamental in order for the younger population to have the time and energy to become more actively engaged in the community. Therefore, creating more opportunities for work locally would contribute to the goal of a cohesive local society. Partners also recognised that, through Corporate Social Responsibility

strategies, major employers may also be involved in delivering a more cohesive community within the borough.

Healthy and safe

A healthy quality of life is a key facet to the social conditions of any local area. Whilst inequalities are related to local problems of social cohesion, particularly regarding income polarisation, partners felt there is also a problem of 'health aspirations'. Enabling all residents to take responsibility for their own health would be a key factor of success in creating a healthier community. At a practical level, health education and social marketing promoting the demand and capability to raise health levels among communities in Tunbridge Wells was raised as an important part of the response to local health inequalities.

A need for greater resources to address the lack of adequate sports facilities was also noted. Providing for more sports and recreational facilities was also considered important in order to enhance the service provision for the young population. This in turn would help deliver a safer community, as it would increase the sense of inclusion for the local young population and would reduce antisocial behaviour. The same results of social cohesion and safety could be achieved by including young people in local decision-making processes, as highlighted in the previous section.

High quality affordable homes

Delivering affordable and high quality housing emerged as one of the most important elements of the vision for the borough's future, while at the same time presenting major challenges. Partners stressed the need for a provision of housing suitable for all sections of the community and for incentives to draw in all types of occupiers in the locality. Improving the design of housing, particularly improving supply for the older generation, could also help with community and intergenerational cohesion.

Creating housing options particularly attractive to a younger population was considered important by partners. To this end, facilitating home ownership and increasing affordability for first time buyers was seen as essential. Providing high quality, flexible and innovative types of ownership would also help retain and attract younger segments of the population.

Environmental elements of a vision

Connected

The vision for improved connectivity in the borough involves better transport links both within and outside its boundaries. Increased levels of internal congestion, especially in the town centre, make improving transport links that connect all parts of Tunbridge Wells an imperative. The vision is to ensure that "no parts of the borough are disadvantaged". Moreover, reducing commuting times to London, as well as creating more transport connections to the rest of the South East, was considered fundamental in order for the borough to develop into a sub-regional hub for its surrounding areas.

Reducing the reliance on transport and commuting connects to the digital aspect of the borough's connectivity. This would require the technological capability and business support for more flexible working in the long-term. High speed broadband in all parts of the borough was seen as an important means to this end. A Wi-Fi enabled and well-connected Tunbridge Wells would have the location advantages to become more attractive to businesses and individuals.

Vibrant

The key for the Tunbridge Wells future is to become a 'great place to live and build a career'. Vibrancy was raised as an important element for the borough's future environment. Some partners imagined Tunbridge Wells being a cultural hub for its immediate area in the future. This translates into a richer cultural and leisure offer, particularly attractive to the age group between 18 and 30 years old. More innovative and flexible use of existing buildings would be part of this strategy, enabling multiple activities taking place in the same space

used by all parts of the community. In this way, a more socially inclusive arts and leisure offer will be possible.

Sustainable natural environment

Tied to the aims of reducing car reliance and the need to commute, is the vision for a carbon free borough. Partners envisioned a reduction of the borough's ecological footprint year on year, facilitated by the use of IT and technology and by local carbon trading schemes. Tunbridge Wells could use environmental innovation to produce renewable energy locally, become energy sufficient and even become a net exporter of energy in the future.

The borough could also serve as a hub for businesses that are environmentally responsible, active and innovative. Finally, the sustainable use of woodland and the full use of all agricultural land – again in a sustainable manner - also had a prominent position in the environmental elements of the partners' vision for Tunbridge Wells.

Applying the vision

The key elements of the vision and their strategic outcomes, drawn together with the key challenges faced by partners, were considered in order to produce a “bold plan” for bringing the vision to life. This exercise aimed to consider how the vision determined by the Partnership could be directly applied within Tunbridge Wells. The results from the stakeholder groups are summarised below.

A carbon neutral borough

Partners felt that a plan for a carbon neutral borough would encompass and bring forward goals related to multiple aspects of their vision for Tunbridge Wells. Reducing the carbon impact of the borough is directly linked to enhancing connectivity - both physical and digital. Measures to improve the digital capability of the borough for remote transactions would reduce dependency on travel and would, at the same time, give a significant drive towards economic competitiveness. Moreover, the introduction of sustainable transport schemes connecting the town centre with the rest of the borough would ease traffic in the centre and simultaneously foster social cohesion within Tunbridge Wells.

Another core part of this plan is the development of a long-term renewable energy strategy. This would encompass a push towards renewable energy sources and the local generation of energy, aided by micro-generation technologies. Ultimately, this locally integrated approach to energy consumption and production would make energy independence feasible for Tunbridge Wells in the future. Finally, supporting the rural economy and sustainably managing the borough's woodland and agricultural land was also considered an important part of the strategy for an environmentally sustainable borough.

The result of this plan would ensure the environmental sustainability of the local area. Further to that, however, by forming a unique Tunbridge Wells identity under the banner of sustainability, the borough would also establish a niche market from which to develop its economic base in terms of local business and skills profiles.

Pedestrianised town centre and Tunbridge Wells tram

Linked to the previous strategy is a plan for the ‘renaissance’ of the town centre, focusing on elements of the vision that would bring forward a sustainable local quality of life. The plan would involve a car-free and pedestrian town centre as well as the introduction of a tram line connecting the town centre with the rest of the borough. Partners felt that a recently established partnership with a new developer and the borough council brings with it great opportunities for putting forward such a vision. Furthermore, partners felt that this plan would contribute towards delivering a more enterprising, inclusive, healthy and connected borough.

New spaces for enterprise

While carrying out a SWOT analysis on aspects of the Tunbridge Wells' economy and environment, the lack of suitable space for start-ups and small firms was highlighted as an important obstacle to local entrepreneurship. Therefore, partners considered that the Local Development Framework should allow for innovative and quality space for business. Along these lines, it was suggested that local public houses facing difficulties in remaining viable, could be converted to work and networking spaces for local firms, also allowing the potential development of hubs of home-working. Partners also raised the possibility of drawing funding for these projects from the European 'LEADER' programme - earmarked for rural areas.

A vision for Tunbridge Wells

The different plans for the application of the vision to Tunbridge Wells have some variations, but common threads have emerged. The following 'E³' model of sustainable development helps to conceptualise how the partners have evaluated their vision for Tunbridge Wells.

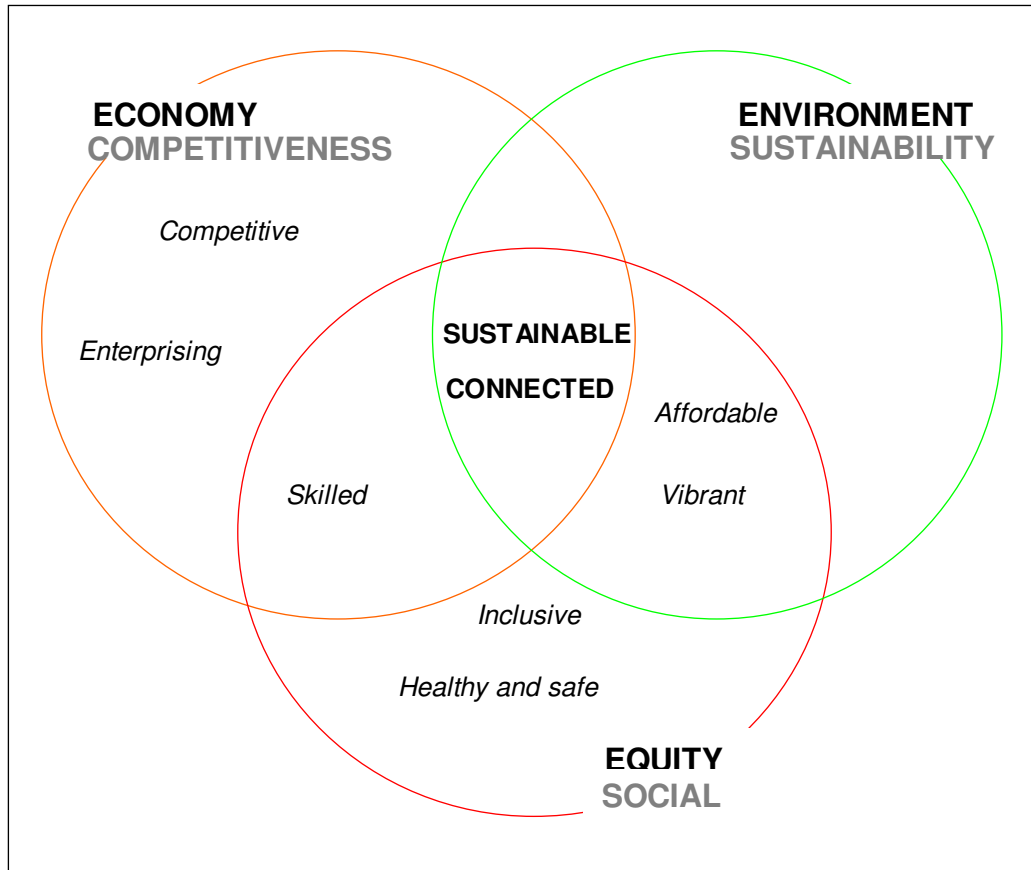
The model takes the three facets of sustainable development as the economy, equity and the environment. Using this model, a vision for the future of a local area should aim to achieve a balance between these three aspects of sustainability, namely weighing up economic competitiveness, social cohesion and sustainability, respectively. These three facets are primarily concerned with competitiveness, sustainability and social cohesion, respectively. As such, the model provides a broad framework for an area's place-shaping and sustainable development agenda.

Ultimately, the ideal vision will find the local factors that lie in the cross-section of the model. In other words, the key drivers of sustainable development will be those elements that can support the economy, the environment and equity together. When applied to a Tunbridge Wells, using the plans devised by the stakeholder groups, the focus that appears to pull together partners' vision for future sustainable development is for a **connected** and **sustainable** Tunbridge Wells. It is these two elements that run as common threads throughout the vision, and the partners' application of the vision.

Connectivity – in both its physical and digital dimension - reflects the aims for competitiveness and enterprise within the Tunbridge Wells vision, helps to reduce inequality and generate social inclusion, and raises the prosperity and local independence needed for a sustainable local quality of life. Environmental sustainability presents a key area within which partners and partners may innovate in economic and social terms, whilst maintaining the quality of life existing in the borough. In doing so, Tunbridge Wells also finds its own identity, to market to residents, workers and visitors.

At this point, it is interesting to note that the partners moved closer towards a mix between the Local Stewardship and Global Responsibility scenarios - which were voted as the most favourable to citizens. However, the Local Stewardship scenario was not voted as a scenario favourable to businesses. More work in this area should be conducted to reconcile the vision for economic competitiveness with that for social and environmental well-being and to gauge the dynamics between the two that will be followed through within the final vision.

Figure 5 E³ model of sustainable development



6 Delivering the vision

Introduction

After identifying key elements and strategic outcomes making up Tunbridge Wells' vision for the future, together with the challenges these elements raised for the borough, partners turned their attention to determining the priorities for action to deliver this vision. Partners identified these strategic priorities as sectors in which the partnership should focus its efforts and resources in the future. These strategic priorities will also help to focus the next steps involved in delivering the vision for Tunbridge Wells, discussed in the concluding section.

Strategic priorities for delivery

High quality and affordable homes

One of the key strategic priorities raised by many partners regarded housing, in terms of both affordability and types of tenure. Partners believe this will be a critical point around which realising the vision for Tunbridge Wells hinges. This includes orientating the borough's housing strategy towards the long-term future housing needs of its communities. Making housing affordable for people that work locally and linking housing to job creation in the borough are also important elements of this strategy. Tunbridge Wells' housing provision should include more innovative approaches and practices. Allowing for shared equity housing schemes for key workers and graduates was emphasized as an example. Finally, partners also highlighted the need to adjust local planning policy in order to deliver more sustainable homes and to link housing developments with key transport and other infrastructure – existing and new.

Educated and skilled

Offering up-skilling and life-long education opportunities to Tunbridge Wells' communities was also strongly emphasized as a priority. Using labour market intelligence and carrying out an evaluation of future skills needs was proposed as a first step in this direction. Once the skills gaps in the borough are identified, integrating vocational training in the school curriculum and offering business-training and other training opportunities in the workplace would help sustain a more skilled and competitive workforce. Moreover, partners advocated setting up community learning and education centres and more apprenticeship schemes for those in lower skills jobs, as measures to address inequalities and promote a more cohesive and inclusive borough.

Connected

Connectivity across and outside the borough was, for partners, a concern and key priority for action that cuts across many themes touched on during the exercises. Partners felt that improving links within the borough would serve the goals of both local development and social cohesion. To this end, the introduction of free bus routes connecting the town centre with more remote areas of the borough was suggested. Sustainable transport options such as car pooling and cycling were also put forward as possible solutions. At the same time, improving the borough's connections to the East and West, across the county and the region, remained fundamental for the partners' vision for the future. This involves lobbying for road improvements (for instance the A26 and connecting the A21 to Hastings) and for the creation of a rail link to Brighton. This would position Tunbridge Wells as a hub for its surrounding areas, allowing it at the same time to pick up some of the economic vibrancy of the sub-regional centres of economic activity.

The digital dimension of connectivity appeared as another cross cutting priority for the borough. As emerged in previous exercises, providing all areas of the borough with high speed broadband and Wi-Fi connection is considered of primary importance for enabling future development. Some partners articulated this vision as '1 Gigabit communities by 2010'. More digital capability would also take pressure off the local transport system, as it would facilitate home-working and remote operations. However, partners were very aware of the possibility of a widening digital divide and social isolation that accompanies an emphasis on digitalising operations and services, stressing the need for more community-strengthening policies at the same time.

Entreprising

In the context of promoting an enterprise culture in Tunbridge Wells, partners felt that attracting skilled entrepreneurs with a 'can-do' mentality should be given special attention. This requires joining up initiatives that draw from a variety of policy fields that were treated throughout the exercises. A few of the thoughts put forward included identifying areas for new developments that would provide affordable and competitive office space for start-ups (for instance Paddock Wood); developing schemes that link firms in Tunbridge Wells with neighbouring higher education establishments; improving physical and digital accessibility in the borough; and providing an attractive and vibrant environment for knowledge workers.

A 'Tunbridge Wells' image and brand

A final, overarching priority for strategic action related to the Tunbridge Wells' image and brand. Partners discussing the issue felt that the image of Tunbridge Wells being transmitted outside the borough was still not sufficiently developed and coherent.

Currently, the borough has key selling points in its heritage, natural environment and its physical proximity to both London and the countryside. Partners suggested that the borough should market itself to London firms as an attractive area for relocation. To this would be added the promotion of Tunbridge Wells as a borough with a highly skilled workforce. Also critical will be to rebrand the image of Tunbridge Wells as a culturally vibrant place to live, especially for young people, while of course accompanying that rebranding with the appropriate policies for a more complete offer of cultural and leisure amenities.

Partners felt that the borough should exploit the opportunities that the construction of the borough's new hospital brings, in combination with an ageing population. With tranquillity and natural beauty as additional assets, Tunbridge Wells could develop its position and future image as the leading health care economy in the county and perhaps the region.

In addition, as partners noted, Tunbridge Wells is made up of a network of communities, rather than being driven by its town centre. This community living is a strength which can be built upon, to ensure the long-term vibrancy and identity of the area. Understanding and exploiting a 'Tunbridge Wells Federation' could help to carve a distinct image for the borough, and act as a thread running throughout the borough's long-term strategic activity.

Next steps

Having considered the various elements that should make up the vision for Tunbridge Wells' future development, applied this vision to Tunbridge Wells, and then considered the key priorities for delivering the vision, Tunbridge Wells Together is now in a position to take the next steps in delivering change and realising their vision.

This report has synthesised the various phases of work to date, and provides a foundation from which a clearer vision statement and practical phases of implementation can be considered. The Partnership can thus use this document to open up a consultation process with wider partners, in order to finalise a coherent vision for Tunbridge Wells.

