



# **Improving the quality of life for *everyone***

A 2026 Vision for  
Stratford District

A Sustainable Community Strategy

## **Introduction by the Chair of Stratford District Partnership**

I am delighted to introduce the Sustainable Community Strategy for the Stratford District.

The strategy is yours. The Stratford District Partnership of the county and district councils, police, health agencies, private sector and the voluntary and community sector developed it. You have endorsed it.

Your strategy sets out the community's vision for the District for 2026, and what we intend to do to improve our economic, social and environmental wellbeing – and our quality of life overall.

The vision is aspirational – but achievable. And we aim to achieve it through working together.

That will be key. The members of the Partnership have signed up to a shared vision and have committed to work together in a coordinated way to address the challenges facing us.

We need to tackle the challenges and opportunities to make the quality of life better for everyone living here, regardless of their race, religion or belief, age, disability, gender or sexual orientation.

I am confident that with all the partners and the community united around our ambition, and prepared to work together, we will be successful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Charles Goody". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

**Charles Goody**  
**Chair, Stratford District Partnership**

## What is a Sustainable Community Strategy?

### And how is it meant to work?

A Sustainable Community Strategy sets out a long-term vision for an area. Ours sets out what we would like Stratford District to look like in 2026.

It describes

- What the key challenges are for us
- What the Stratford District Partnership has identified as the main things we need to do, and
- What the partners, working together, intend to do.

### What is a 'sustainable' district?

Sustainability is at the heart of our new strategy. But what is 'sustainability'?

According to the government, a sustainable community is

- **Active, inclusive and safe** – fair, tolerant and cohesive with a strong local culture and other shared community activities
- **Well run** – with effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership
- **Well connected** – with good transport services and communication linking people with jobs, schools, health and other services
- **Environmentally sensitive** – providing places for people to live that are considerate of the environment
- **Thriving** – with a flourishing, diverse and innovative local economy
- **Well designed and built** – featuring high quality built and natural environment
- **Fair for everyone** – including those in other communities now and in the future

Our aim is for our District to be sustainable by 2026.

And achieving this means getting the balance right between our social, economic and environmental needs to ensure a steadily improving quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations.

### Relationship with other strategies

The Sustainable Community Strategy links closely to other strategies and plans agreed by the members of the District Partnership. These include:

- Local Area Agreement (LAA)
- District Council Corporate Strategy
- District Council Wellbeing Strategy
- Local Development Framework
- Regional Spatial Strategy
- Warwickshire NHS Strategy
- Warwickshire County Council Children and Young People's Plan
- South Warwickshire Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Plan
- District Council Housing, Private Sector Housing and Homelessness Strategies
- Warwickshire County Council Local Transport Plan
- Warwickshire Waste Partnership Waste Management Strategy
- District Council ICT Strategy
- District Council Active Communities Strategy
- Vision Action Plans for Alcester, Shipston and Southam
- Parish plans

### **How it will be delivered**

The Strategy sets the long-term direction for the District to achieve the community vision, and identifies key priorities for action.

The members of the Partnership will direct resources to delivering those priorities through their existing strategies and plans.

### **How we'll check it is being delivered**

The District Partnership has a Core Group of senior representatives from all the partners. It has also six groups covering the six sections of the Strategy. These are:

- Children and Young People
- Stronger Communities
- Safer Communities
- Healthier Communities and Older People
- Economy and Employment
- Climate Change and Environment

Those groups will monitor progress in their areas and report every three months to the Core Group. The Core Group will identify and tackle any problems collectively.

The Strategy will be fully reviewed every three years and action plans updated as needed.

## **What are the key challenges for the District?**

Stratford District is an enviable place to live, work and visit. We have much to appreciate and value. And we certainly want to preserve everything that makes our District one of the best places to be.

Yet we cannot be complacent. There are challenges we need to tackle over the next ten years just to maintain our quality of life, let alone improve it for everyone.

### **An ageing population**

The District's population is among the 'oldest' in the country. More over-65s than under-15s live here. There are fewer births per 1,000 compared with most other districts. People moving into the District tend to be older than those moving out. And with the number of over-85s set to increase dramatically – and outnumber the number of children – our District will age even faster. This will have considerable implications for services, especially healthcare.

### **Shortage of affordable housing**

Housing is expensive. Young couples, people on low incomes and key workers, can't buy or rent anywhere to live because property prices and rents are beyond their reach. Demand for affordable housing for local needs is outstripping supply. This is causing a persistent, serious and ever-growing shortage District-wide. And it is driving younger people from our District, and stopping others from moving in.

### **Lack of access**

Many residents in the rural areas struggle – and often fail – to get to the services, facilities and activities that matter to their lives. They live too far from them and public transport is poor in many areas. The problem affects most rural areas. And it affects young and old especially. Going anywhere in the evening is impossible for many young people – getting to medical appointments is costly and time-consuming for older people. The public sector will have to find new ways of delivering services

### **An economy under pressure**

Our District's economy needs revitalising to compete successfully in the future. Economic growth has been low. Increases in jobs and pay have lagged behind other areas. Four in ten workers travel to jobs, often higher paid outside the District. Yet poor broadband connections prevent people from working from home. Tourist numbers continue to fall. Stratford faces strong competition for shoppers from neighbouring areas, and our market towns are struggling to attract new investment and businesses.

### **Keeping us all healthy**

Keeping residents fit and healthy will be increasingly important. Our children and young people are not active enough – and obesity is a growing problem among primary school pupils. Bullying in school and at college affects the emotional and physical health of young people. More and more of us are living longer with long-term health conditions such as heart disease, arthritis, mental health and diabetes – a particular challenge for healthcare providers. Healthcare varies in quality across our District: there are significant differences in life expectancy between some areas.

## **Improving our skills**

Generally, our District benefits from high levels of qualifications. Yet many residents – of all ages, not only school-leavers – are relatively lowly skilled. This forces them to take low-paid jobs, stops them getting better-paid ones, and makes it harder to attract new companies looking for better-qualified workers to fill higher-paying jobs. Skills and qualifications will be key to our District's economic resurgence.

## **Crime and our fear of it**

Crime levels in our District are low compared with most areas, but residents want them reduced further. The fear of crime, while falling, is high. A major concern, among all age groups, is lack of activities for youngsters, seen as a cause of anti-social and other misbehaviour. The level of alcohol abuse, often leading to violence, creates anxieties. The numbers of casualties from road accidents and persistent speeding through our towns and villages are other big issues.

## **Young people**

Young people feel frustrated about the lack of access to opportunities and facilities. Under-12s for example want to be able to play outside in any way they can. Over-12s want places to meet up and hang out – without being told off or moved on. Young people's dissatisfaction continues after leaving school. Many find it hard to get well-paid jobs. And those looking for somewhere to live often find it impossible to get anywhere they can afford. Vulnerable young people often lack support, including accommodation in some circumstances, to live independently, or avoid dropping out of school or work.

## **Managing new development**

The character and heritage of our District is important to us, and we need to protect it for ourselves and for future generations. Yet we have to balance this with providing more housing and new employment opportunities for local people. Where we put these extra homes and businesses will decide whether new development supports our towns, villages and natural environment – or damages them.

## **Tackling waste and climate change**

We still send too much waste to landfill. And we must cut back – to comply with tough EU and national rules, and for the environment's sake. But higher recycling rates won't be enough to cope with the scale of the problem – because we produce too much waste in the first place. Climate change is a global issue. But we can help by significantly reducing our carbon footprint - ultimately becoming a carbon neutral District – through cutting our energy use and using our cars less.

## **Flooding**

Flooding has caused considerable damage to homes and businesses across the District on several occasions in recent years. It is a recurring threat, and residents in the areas at risk live with the worry of it happening again. It is the overriding concern for many. Residents expect the authorities to work together more closely and effectively to reduce the risk of future flooding, and where possible remove the threat altogether.

## **Getting us more involved**

People are asking for more influence over the decisions affecting them. And they want their voice to be heard before decisions are taken. This means giving more weight to their views – for example acting on the priorities they identify in local plans – and finding new ways to actively involve them in the process. We need to do more to find out the views of hard-to-reach groups, including the emerging minorities.

## **Strengthening the voluntary sector**

Voluntary organisations are already the lifeblood of many communities, playing a key role in tackling disadvantage and exclusion. They are being asked to take on more work as the authorities struggle to maintain services. Yet they need to recruit more volunteers and attract new sources of funding to be able to do so. New investment in the voluntary sector will be critical.

## **Deprivation**

Lack of access and rural isolation causes social deprivation. There is financial deprivation too. The average income here is £xx,000, but 17% of households have an income of less than £10,000 a year. There are more households on means-tested benefits now than ten years ago. Fuel poverty has become a serious issue in some villages. Parts of Stratford are among the 25% most deprived neighbourhoods nationally. There is a big gap to narrow within our District.

These are major challenges, many of them tied together.

Tackling them requires a clear vision of how we want the District to move forward, and a clear strategy – a Sustainable Community Strategy – to see that we get there.

## **A 2026 Vision for Stratford District**

***By 2026 the quality of life will have improved for everyone living here.***

### **Our economic vision**

By 2026,

- all sectors of the local economy will be thriving throughout our District
- children, young people and older workers will have access to the first-class education and training they need to qualify for better paying new jobs within our District
- Stratford-upon-Avon will be established as a world-class town to live, work and visit, competing with the best in Europe and beyond
- our rural areas will be providing more businesses and jobs
- more tourists will be visiting the whole District, staying longer and spending more

### **Our social vision**

By 2026,

- everyone will have access to first-class services and amenities
- there will be enough affordable housing, opportunities and support to keep young people in the District during and after their education
- everyone will have access to high-quality healthcare
- older people and people with disabilities will have the support they need to lead independent lives
- communities will influence decisions affecting them
- everyone will feel and be included, involved and safer

### **Our environmental vision**

By 2026,

- our carbon footprint will be significantly smaller
- there will be less need to use cars because there will be more reliable alternatives
- homes will be using less energy
- much less waste will be going to landfill because we will be using and producing less
- the District's character, landscape, heritage and natural habitat will have been enhanced
- our District will be the cleanest in the country

**Children and Young People: By 2026, our young people will be active, involved and physically and emotionally fitter.**

**We want to**

- ***Increase activities for children and young people***, by
  - Providing more opportunities and facilities, e.g. youth clubs, youth spaces, play areas, holiday play schemes and after-school clubs
  - Running more organised, adult-led outside activities
  - Implementing new ways of delivering different play opportunities for all ages
- ***Improve children and young people's physical and emotional health***, by
  - Providing more healthy lifestyle support, and getting more children and young people active in school and community sport
  - Reducing the level of bullying and supporting its victims
- ***Improve access for children and young people***, by
  - Taking services into rural areas and improving transport for children and young people to access activities throughout the area
- ***Increase children and young people's positive contribution***, by
  - Giving children and young people more influence through county and district youth councils, and through seats on locality forums
  - Improving vulnerable young people's wellbeing and independence through enhancing their accommodation and support options

**Stronger Communities: By 2026, everyone will have access to first-class services and amenities, and more influence over decisions affecting them.**

**We want to**

- ***Improve access to services/facilities***, by
  - Taking services closer to rural communities
  - Giving everyone 'anytime anywhere' access through digital and other technologies
  - Improving transport links by extending community schemes, pressing for more funding for other rural initiatives, and lobbying for better public transport
- ***Give residents more influence over decisions***, by
  - Giving more weight to parish plans in decision making
  - Using digital and other technologies to let residents 'have their say' at meetings and other times
  - Finding out the views of hard-to-reach groups
- ***Increase the number of affordable homes in rural areas***, by
  - Helping communities identify sites for affordable housing
  - Extending the local choice scheme
  - Making more accommodation available by bringing more empty homes into use and encouraging older people to move to smaller properties
- ***Strengthen the role and work of the voluntary and community sector***, by
  - Developing new sources of funding
  - Recruiting more volunteers

## **Safer Communities: By 2026, we will feel safer, and be safer.**

### **We want to**

- ***Reduce the level of crime***, by
  - Focusing on priorities and moving resources to tackle them
- ***Reduce anti-social behaviour***, by
  - Providing more activities for children and young people (see **Children and Young People**) to keep them away from trouble
  - Supporting parents and schools to deal with bad behaviour, and taking tough enforcement action against unacceptable behaviour
- ***Reduce violent crime***, by
  - Clamping down on drunken behaviour and under-age drinking
  - Focusing on domestic abuse
- ***Reduce substance abuse***, by
  - Identifying and prosecuting drug pushers
  - Running anti-drugs education programmes in schools
- ***Reduce theft and robbery***, by
  - Working with businesses to deter offenders
- ***Reduce the fear of crime***, by
  - Working closely with communities to support local initiatives like Neighbourhood Watch
  - Involving people of different ages and backgrounds in community projects
- ***Reduce road accidents***, by
  - Cutting traffic speeds, particularly on rural roads, by enforcing speed limits and introducing local safety schemes

**Healthier Communities and Older People: By 2026, we will be encouraged to lead healthier lifestyles, and older people will be supported to live independently.**

**We want to**

- ***Improve access to healthcare***, by
  - Delivering more services locally supported by electronic services
  - Improving transport links between key health facilities to cut down the time and cost of obtaining treatment
- ***Support older and vulnerable people to live independently***, by
  - Improving, expanding and extending at-home services, and adapting more properties to meet the needs of older people and people with disabilities
- ***Encourage and support healthier lifestyles***, by
  - Encouraging more residents to get involved in sports, leisure and recreation activities and extending opportunities for them to do so across the District
  - Working with employers to launch initiatives in the workplace
  - Increasing the number of residents eating five portions of fruit and vegetables a day
- ***Reduce health inequalities***, by
  - Targeting resources at the areas where they are needed most
  - Delivering more accessible homes, transport, leisure and employment opportunities

**Economic Development and Enterprise: By 2026, all sectors of the local economy will be thriving throughout the District.**

**We want to**

- ***Encourage economic growth and change***, by
  - Attracting new firms to provide more high-value jobs in the District
  - Supporting business start-ups
  - Increasing the economic vitality of the main rural centres
  - Promoting and encouraging business diversification
  
- ***Increase the value of tourism across the whole District***, by
  - Encouraging a wider range of hotels, conference facilities and attractions across the District to persuade visitors to visit, stay longer, spend more and visit again
  - Capitalising on the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics
  - Using new technologies to promote the District internationally
  
- ***Improve qualifications and skills***, by
  - Working with local firms to improve training opportunities for employees
  - Increasing the take-up and success rates in science, technology engineering and maths in schools
  - Working with employers to develop more apprentice and other programmes to help young people enhance their employability skills

**Climate Change and Environment: By 2026, we will have created less waste, used less energy and cut our carbon footprint.**

**We want to**

- ***Reduce the District's carbon footprint***, by
  - Supporting and setting standards for home energy efficiency and the supply and use of renewable energy
  - Promoting energy efficient, low emissions forms of transport
- ***Cut the amount of waste we send to landfill***, by
  - Encouraging everyone to reduce waste, recycle more and establishing a community re-use shop
  - Increasing the level of home composting and requiring developers to provide home composting bins to new properties
  - Working with industry and government to reduce the amount of packaging used in the first place
- ***Encourage alternatives to private car use***, by
  - Promoting and supporting public transport, car sharing, home working and better facilities for cyclists and pedestrians
  - Promoting better rail services including a bus-rail interchange in Stratford
- ***Reduce the risk of flooding***, by
  - Preventing development in areas prone to flooding and tackling drainage issues in others
- ***Keep the District amongst the cleanest in the country***, by
  - Making litter, graffiti, dog fouling and fly tipping socially unacceptable, and responding rapidly to incidents
- ***Preserve the District's distinctive character***, by
  - Ensuring new development meets strict design quality standards
  - Supporting initiatives to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment
  - Protecting locally important wildlife and geological sites and features

## Joining it all together

We've identified the key challenges facing our District. Our new strategy sets out what we want to achieve – and some of the key actions to get results.

Many of the issues are linked. For example,

- Better transport links will improve **access** to facilities and services, support our **ageing population** and **young people**, and help both the **environment** and local **economy**.
- Improving the quality of the local **environment** will benefit our **health**, and impact on **community safety**.
- Providing more leisure opportunities will improve our **health** and ease **community safety** concerns by offering more activities to young people.
- Extending **learning** opportunities to improve skills and qualifications will strengthen the local **economy** by helping to attract new companies and equipping people to **access** higher-value jobs.
- Providing more **affordable housing** will help counter our **ageing population** by keeping more **young people** in the District, and strengthen the **economy** by increasing the labour pool locally.
- Creating a stronger local **economy** with more jobs here will benefit the **environment** by reducing outward commuting.
- Providing more opportunities for **young people** will improve **community safety** by keeping them off the streets, and improve their **health** by getting them more active.
- Supporting our **ageing population** to live independently will ease the pressure on **healthcare** and other services.
- ICT, digital and other technologies will improve business efficiency and help attract more visitors, boosting the local **economy**, help the **environment** by reducing unnecessary travel, and improve **access** to many services.

In short, our actions to tackle one challenge will have a knock-on effect on others too.