

4 Achieving our goals: social and community

Our goals

The remaining three goals that support Wincanton's vision all relate to the social and community aspects of the town. They are:

- **HEALTH** A healthy population with well-resourced healthcare.
- **COMMUNITY** An active, caring and inclusive population with facilities for all.
- **HOUSING** Affordable homes for all and new building sympathetic to our heritage.

Health

Where are we now?

A fifth of the Wincanton area population has a long-term limiting illness, This particularly affects the elderly who are generally in poorer health than other older people across South Somerset. Wincanton has a worrying level of hospital admissions for depression and self harm and a relatively high number of teenage pregnancies.

Wincanton has one doctors' surgery that serves the town and surrounding villages. The surgery has indicated that it is prepared to cater for an expanding population as the town grows.

There is a local hospital that offers a limited range of services, including physiotherapy and a walk-in treatment centre (formerly known as a minor injuries clinic) open 7am to 9pm (weekdays) or 10pm (weekends), but no accident and emergency or diagnostic facilities. However, it is intended to bring mobile diagnostic and treatment units to the hospital once improvements to the parking area have been made. Wincanton is 16 miles from the nearest main hospital (in Yeovil).

Key findings of the Healthcheck are summarised in this section. For full details, see the Healthcheck Report, available from www.wincantontowncouncil.co.uk or by calling 01963 31693

Wincanton’s health SWOT [1]

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctors’ surgery ready to cater for expanding population • Local hospital (but with limited services) • Healthy Living Centre • Good opportunities for walking and most sports • Ready access to good local foods 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively poor health of older people • High level of hospital admission related to mental health problems • High level of teenage pregnancies • 16 miles from nearest main hospital • Lack of facilities for safe cycling
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing population • Ageing population 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing population • Ageing population • Service provision might not keep pace with population growth

[1] SWOT = Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

We are fortunate to have a Healthy Living Centre - one of only 350 nationwide - that offers a very wide range of services to improve physical and mental health and quality of life.

A keystone of physical health is exercise. Wincanton has 52 footpaths around the town and linking it to the surrounding countryside, excellent sports facilities including a swimming pool and two riding stables in nearby villages. There are no dedicated cycle routes.

Friendly support

Wincanton’s hospital is undergoing a major refurbishment. Substantial financial help from local charity, the Friends of Verrington Hospital, will include helping to:

- upgrade the Athlone ward to give patients greater privacy and better facilities
- alter the car parking
- remove redundant buildings
- improve the hospital gardens.

Community consultation

There is a great fear in the community of losing its local hospital and overwhelming support for its retention and expansion of the services it offers. In particular local people want a round-the-clock minor injuries clinic.

There is concern that local health facilities will not expand quickly enough to keep pace with Wincanton’s planned expansion and the demands of an ageing population.



Wincanton Health Centre © Muriel Cairns, 2003.

Relevant framework policies

The main local health facilities are provided through the National Health Service (NHS) and are being developed in accordance with the NHS Plan 2000 and National Service Frameworks.

A key part of the NHS Plan was to devolve previously centralised NHS budgets to local health providers. As a result, the Somerset Primary Care Trust (PCT) is the budget holder for our local health services. It is responsible for steering the work of our GPs, providing community nursing and therapies, providing community hospitals such as Verrington and ensuring acute hospital care and specialist services are available when needed.

The NHS Plan includes requirements to improve accountability to patients, which includes having members of the public on the committees that make decisions about how local services are run.

The National Service Frameworks set out national standards and delivery strategies for specific health areas, such as mental health and older people.

The Somerset Local Area Agreement includes themes relating to the mental health of children and young people, the promotion of healthier communities and the difficulties faced by older people.

Possible health strategies

The evidence from the Healthcheck and the community's views suggest the strategies below as key ways to achieve our health goal.

Strategies for health

To promote good health

- Promote healthy living at all ages and from early age to reduce likelihood of health problems later on. For example, encourage exercise (eg dedicated safe cycle routes, circular walking routes, more health walks including outside normal work hours, ensure sports facilities retained and expanded as population grows), encourage healthy eating (eg in schools, residential homes, meals on wheels, lunch clubs, consider healthy eating festival (may also aid Tourism).
- Investigate causes of mental health problems. Build on existing services, eg at Healthy Living Centre, to improve prevention and support.
- Support local activities of organisations that aim to reduce teenage pregnancy.

To promote good health services

- Ensure Verrington Hospital retained and work with local PCT to expand its services. This includes ensuring active and effective representation on relevant PCT committees.
- Support expansion of doctors' surgery as town grows and creation of further surgery if this becomes necessary and viable.
- Ensure good support and social inclusion for elderly infirm and others with limiting physical and mental conditions and their carers.

Specific projects

The Steering Group identified the following projects as the main priority for the next five years for health.

H1. Research existing health provision and identify gaps.

- **The aim** is to improve understanding of the many, existing health facilities and how they are responding to the growth of Wincanton.
- **What's involved?** This project is likely to involve research, discussions with health providers and surveys of healthcare and social care users.
- **Key partners** are likely to be South Somerset Primary Care Trust, Verrington Hospital, local doctors, dentists and other health providers, Wincanton Healthy Living Centre (the Balsam Centre), Somerset County Council (social services department), local residents.

H2. Promote healthy eating through, for example, themed food festivals.

- **The aim** is, over time, to improve the health of the community as a whole. The idea is to achieve this by, in a fun way, informing people about, and encouraging them to make, healthy choices. This project overlaps with projects identified to meet the shops, tourism and leisure and community goals.
- **What's involved?** This project is likely to involve organising events and marketing.
- **Key partners** are likely to be Wincanton Healthy Living Centre (the Balsam Centre), Wincanton Chamber of Commerce, High Street and other local businesses, Wincanton Town Council, South Somerset District Council, Wincanton Tourist Information Centre, Somerset Food Links.

H3. Promote healthy eating through allotments and 'future farms'.

- **The aim** is to create a source of high quality, fresh, organic food within walking and cycling distance, particularly for people in villages. There are two proposed models: 'allotment-plus' where allotment owners form a collective to sell locally the produce that they grow; and 'future farms' which are very small, local farms. These projects also address community and health aims by encouraging local people to become involved in gardening and farming and to meet socially at weekly produce markets. The farms, in particular, would also target environmental issues through, for example, production without chemicals, use of renewable energy and elimination of 'food miles'. A Wincanton-based farm could be operated alongside the environmentally friendly wholefood supermarket (see project S1 under Shops on page 25).
- **What's involved?** The allotment project is likely to involve: negotiating with town and parish councils (which have a duty to meet demand for allotments); and developing a viable plan for the sale of produce. The farm project is likely to involve: finding financial support at least for the early stages; negotiating with the planning authority; creating a viable business blueprint for the future farm concept; identifying suitable parcels of land (approximately 3 to 4 hectares per farm) on the edge of participating villages; deciding on a suitable form of farm ownership

Reuniting us with our food

Sue Place has run a 'future farm' in Henstridge for the last 15 years. It produces organically grown vegetables and lamb, which are sold at Saturday morning markets. By cutting out transport costs and wholesalers' mark-ups, the food is affordably priced. Local people are encouraged to volunteer and get involved on the farm, and the markets are a regular high spot of village social life. 'Local food is one of the biggest media messages of our time,' says Sue, 'Yet for most consumers, especially those economically disadvantaged and living in the countryside, fresh local food is neither affordable nor accessible.'

- for example, a community land trust: supporting individuals and communities in getting each farm off the ground.
- **Key partners** are likely to be town and parish councils; local landowners (including Somerset County Council which is currently selling of many of its own farms), South Somerset District Council, Somerset Local Strategic Partnership and Somerset Food Links.

H4. Use planning gain to expand health facilities as the town grows.

- **The aim** is to ensure that some of the profits from residential development are used to meet some of the cost of the infrastructure consequences of the resulting expansion in population.
- **What's involved?** This project is likely to involve monitoring major planning applications, consulting healthcare providers, and negotiating with and lobbying developers and the planning authority.
- **Key partners** are likely to be healthcare providers, South Somerset District Council, Wincanton Town Council, developers.

Community

Where are we now?

Wincanton has a good range of facilities where people come together as a community. These include the Memorial Hall, several other venues that can be hired for events, Healthy Living Centre, six places of worship, eight public houses, a social club and a community office in the Town Hall. All of the villages, except Bratton Seymour, have a village hall, about half have a public house and most have a place of worship.

Less formal social contact is important too. For example, the monthly farmers' market, main shopping area in the High Street, post office and doctors' surgery are places where people often stop to chat.

There are lots of clubs and societies, including 15 sports clubs, 13 hobby-based organisations, nine support groups (related to health conditions, losing weight, and so on), and 13 youth groups. About a quarter of the population belong to at least one of the sports clubs.

There are two recreation grounds and other informal play areas. There is also a relatively new and successful skate park on the edge of town. But there is little organised entertainment for young people.

Key findings of the Healthcheck are summarised in this section. For full details, see the Healthcheck Report, available from www.wincantontowncouncil.co.uk or by calling 01963 31693

Some of the clubs relate to music and drama. But, whatever your age, there is a general lack of regular, professional cultural events. Over the last two years a film club has started up which shows films once a month throughout a ten-month season. But, in general, for cinema, live music or theatre, residents must travel to Yeovil (16 miles) or further afield.

A variety of community events take place throughout the year, including Remembrance Day parade, local flower shows, harvest festivals, pantomime and quizzes. Some of the villages (such as Bayford) have an annual village hog roast or similar event.

Wincanton is a relatively low crime area, but the town centre is plagued with petty criminal damage. Despite low actual rates of crime, a high proportion of residents are fearful of walking in Wincanton at night or during the evening.

Wincanton’s community SWOT [1]

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendly town • Good range of services in the town • Healthy Living Centre • Extensive range of community organisations including many aimed at young people • Excellent sports facilities • Wide range of cultural associations and events • Community accessible transport scheme 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor range of services in villages • High level of criminal damage • Many residents fearful of going out on foot in evenings and at night • Lack of cultural events • Lack of events/activities for younger people
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing population • Ageing population 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing population • Ageing population • Service provision might not keep pace with population growth

[1] SWOT = Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

Community consultation

What Wincanton people like best about their town is its friendliness and there is a strong desire to retain this even though the population is set to grow. Other community-related comments and suggestions included:

- **initiating events and activities.** There needs to be a good network of people to make things happen. Often it’s the same people taking the initiative, so maybe we need new ways to attract and enthuse volunteers



Community gathered to commemorate the crash of Old Faithful © JTL Financial Research, 2004

- **more activities and participation.** Need to ensure that our social and educational infrastructure expands to accommodate population growth. We need a new range of leisure facilities and activities. There is a lack of live professional music, drama and dance. There should be more organisations offering new activities, such as orienteering and pond-dipping and better information about existing groups and activities. There should be improved access to the countryside
- **young people.** Teenagers need a proper place to meet. The skatepark should be developed further with a covered area and better lighting. There should be more informal play spaces, with or without equipment. The council fails to fund youth - there is no youth club coordinator. Young people should be consulted about what they want, through the schools and using modes of consultation that appeal to them. They should be encourage to organise for themselves, using youth committees and maybe controlling their own project budget
- **safe community.** Crime and anti-social behaviour is of increasing concern. The problem is perceived to be with the nightclub and drugs culture rather than with youth culture. Older people need to be more tolerant of young people.

Relevant framework policies

The Wincanton People's Plan needs to be consistent with central and regional government's sustainable development strategies (see pages 13-14).

The SSDC Local Plan, Chapter 11, sets out policies specific to recreation and community facilities including:

- **CR1** which generally protects existing playing fields from being used for new development unless enhanced as a result or replaced by equivalent facilities
- **CR2** requires new housing developments generally to provide formal and informal play area at a rate of 1.8 to 2 hectares per 1,000 population for use by youth and adults and 0.6 to 0.8 hectares per 1,000 where for use by children.

The Local Plan notes the importance of public houses in villages as centres for a wide range of community activities and facilities.

The Somerset Local Area Agreement includes the themes of safer communities and stronger communities. Targets include tackling anti-social behaviour, reducing the harm caused by alcohol to individuals and communities, policing communities more visibly, increasing the proportion of services delivered by voluntary and community bodies, increasing the number and training of volunteers, and expanding the use of village halls.

Also relevant is central government's Crime Reduction Strategy and National Drug Strategy which are coordinated locally by the Government Office for the South West.

Possible community strategies

Drawing together the above snapshot of where we are now and your views on where we should try to be in future suggests the broad strategies below.

Strategies for community

<p>To retain and extend our friendly community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustain existing clubs and societies, support their expansion and establishment of new societies (eg with venues, publicity, help accessing grants etc). • Help existing clubs cater for hard-to-reach groups eg through access to grants, transport, help creating websites etc. • Encourage more volunteering. Build on existing networks through Healthy Living Centre, Live At Home Scheme etc. Provide support - eg training, grant information, equipment - for volunteers setting up and running activities and events • Consider ways to bring high quality touring music, drama etc to Wincanton. 	<p>To provide more for young people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and improve facilities for young people as alternative to drinking/drug culture, eg further development of skate park, youth shelter, barbecue hut, coffee bars. • Build on existing youth initiatives - eg increase support for and reach of Linx Project, as part of enterprise education in schools get young people to choose, design and implement own project. • Ensure good range of formal and informal recreation spaces especially as population grows. • Encourage events where people of all ages come together to foster understanding between young and older people. • Help young people to access facilities - eg providing footpath, safe cycling routes and lighting on access routes to Sports Ground. 	<p>To promote greater feeling of safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve lighting in areas where pedestrians feel particularly unsafe. • Extend CCTV coverage to promote reduction in fear of crime and improve deterrent effect and detection rates. • Encourage close relationship between community and its police to promote reporting of crime and identification of culprits.
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Specific projects

The Steering Group identified the following priority projects for the next five years for working towards the community goal.

C1. Develop a well-lit footpath to the Sports Ground.

- **The aim** is to encourage greater community use of Sports Ground, in particular by providing safe access for young people. This project also targets the health goal and addresses environmental issues by encouraging access without the use of fuelled transport.
- **What's involved?** This project is likely to include negotiation and financing. Some progress has already been made in obtaining relevant landowners' permission for the path and initial commitment from relevant bodies towards funding.
- **Key partners** are likely to be Somerset County Council, South Somerset District Council, Wincanton Town Council and the Wincanton Recreational Trust.

C2. Create safe cycle routes to schools.

- **The aim** is enable children to reach school without the use of a car via safe routes. This project simultaneously targets the community and health goals and addresses environmental issues.
- **What's involved?** The project is likely to involve identifying and mapping appropriate routes, negotiating with the local Highways department and landowners, promoting use of the routes, and ensuring schools have cycle storage facilities.
- **Key partners** are likely to be Somerset County Council, relevant landowners, local schools.

Safe cycling

Local resident, Richard Nicholl, is a member of the Steering Group and a keen cyclist. He has already undertaken a great deal of work to identify potential cycle routes both within and around Wincanton and also to link the town with national cycle routes. You can find an outline of Richard's proposals on page 105 of the full Healthcheck report.

C3. Enhance the skate park facilities and host contests.

- **The aim** is to provide a shelter and lighting for skate park users and generally to bring the facility up to a standard suitable for hosting contests with teams and individuals from other areas.
- **What's involved?** The project is likely to involve working with users to identify needs, financing and procurement.
- **Key partners** are likely to be skate park users, Wincanton Town Council and South Somerset District Council and possibly UK Skateboarding Association.

Park place

Abbey Manor Homes Ltd is the firm that has applied to develop the key site at New Barns Farm, Wincanton. The developer will donate a strip of land between the river and the recreation ground to the town. This will provide the space needed to enhance the skate park by including a shelter, lighting and other upgrades.

C4. Extend CCTV coverage.

- **The aim** is to increase residents' safety and perception of safety, improve crime detection and deter crime.
- **What's involved?** This project is already underway and involves working with other towns and local government.
- **Key partners** are Wincanton Town Council, town councils in Bruton and Castle Cary and South Somerset District Council.

C5. Establish regular whole community events.

- **The aim.** A sense of community depends in part on the participants sharing common experiences, such as arranging and taking part in local events. Steering Group suggestions included a summer event with a children's carnival, a music/fun day, a pre-Christmas event and re-establishing the annual street market. Specific projects targeting the shops, health and tourism and leisure goals include suggestions for a Michaelmas fair, healthy-eating food festival or similar. There is considerable overlap between these ideas which could be tackled as a single project targeting multiple goals.
- **What's involved?** This project is likely to involve organising events and marketing.
- **Key partners** are likely to be (depending on the type of event) local residents, local clubs, organisations and schools, local businesses, Wincanton Chamber of Commerce, Wincanton Town Council and local parish councils, South Somerset District Council, Wincanton Tourist Information Centre, Somerset Food Links, Wincanton Healthy Living Centre (the Balsam Centre).



Quick win: MCTi lights up the town

With MCTA funding, we purchased new lights for the Town Christmas tree and these were used for the first time in 2005. They were a huge improvement on their predecessors.

C6. Expand the Linx Project for young people.

- **The aim** is to provide more activities and facilities for young people, building on the existing infrastructure.
- **What's involved?** This project is likely to involve research with young people to establish needs and wishes and then taking forward ideas through negotiation, fundraising and organisation with relevant bodies.
- **Key partners** are likely to be young people, Linx Project, Somerset County Youth Service, South Somerset District Council, Wincanton Town Council and local parish councils.

C7. Create a web-based community directory.

- **The aim** is to enhance awareness of local organisations and activities. The Town Hall community office currently compiles a directory of all groups active in Wincanton and the surrounding villages. But the directory dates frequently and can be accessed only at the community office. By transferring the directory to the internet, both updating and access will be greatly improved and also print costs saved.
- **What's involved?** This project involves establishing and maintaining contact with local organisations, database and website skills, and publicising the existence of the directory. Work on compiling the directory has already started.
- **Key partners** are likely to be local organisations and Wincanton Town Council (which operates the community office and the hosting website).

Housing

Where are we now?

At the last Census (in 2001), Wincanton had 2,040 households. By 2006, this had grown to around 2,250 and is set to grow further to 3,040 by 2011. Wincanton's housing stock includes three sheltered housing schemes for the elderly and people with disabilities.

Seven out of 10 Wincanton households own their home outright or are buying it with a mortgage. 15 per cent rent from a housing association or the local council and 8% rent from a private landlord. A tiny proportion of homes (just 3 in 1,000) are being bought using shared equity schemes.

In general, it is hard for local people to get onto the housing ladder because the average house price is nine times average male annual earnings. Even a flat, the cheapest form of accommodation, costs five times earnings. This reflects a combination of low average earnings in this area and house prices above the national average.

Hardly any 'affordable housing' has been built in Wincanton in recent years but, if planned developments go ahead, around 95 affordable homes could be created in the next few years.

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Some of the housing stock needs attention. For example, one in nine Wincanton homes has no central heating. If experience in Wincanton is similar to the rest of South Somerset, 70 per cent of homes owned by the over-60s are likely to need some immediate repair work.

In South Somerset, 2.1 per cent of homes stand empty at any one time, which is not particularly high (given turnover through death, relocation, and so on).

Wincanton’s housing SWOT [1]

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage of fine older houses • Past growth has avoided urban sprawl • Doctors’ surgery ready to cater for expanding population • 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low earnings • High average house prices • Some of housing stock in poor condition
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing population • Ageing population • Extensive housing development taking place and planned • Increase in supply of social/affordable housing 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing population • Ageing population • Extensive housing development taking place and planned • Housing development threatens visual links from town to countryside • Service provision might not keep pace with population growth

[1] SWOT = Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

Community consultation

The community expressed three key concerns about housing:

- **growth.** Most people see housing growth as a threat rather than an opportunity. New jobs need to be created first otherwise there will be nowhere for new residents to work. The town’s infrastructure may be overwhelmed. An expanding population needs pedestrian-safe roads (maybe pedestrianisation), but where can all the extra traffic go? Some think there is too much high density development going on and planned and, that to attract high income employees, there needs to be a more ‘aspirational’ mix of housing. Others argue that providing ‘middle-management housing’ does not attract employment
- **affordability.** There is great concern that local residents, especially young people and low-income families, cannot afford local homes. This is a twin problem of low earnings locally and lack of social or affordable housing. There is anger that new homes are often unoccupied for a long time, new cheaper properties are snapped up by buy-to-let investors, second-home owners, the lack of rented social housing and that vacated social housing

is often slow to be reoccupied. Shared ownership schemes are seen as a desirable option

- **respecting and preserving our heritage.** New developments often don't fit with their surroundings. In the community's view, the Priory development worked well, but the original Bellway proposals for Deanesly Way showed poor design and quality. Planning decisions need to pay greater heed to community input. A historical buildings/environmental design framework should be adopted. Our existing historical buildings need to be improved but owners often can't afford to refurbish them.

Relevant framework policies

Central and regional government sustainability policies (see pages 13 to 14) are highly relevant. This should mean, for example, ensuring that all new developments are energy efficient and minimise the need for travel by car (by for example locating homes close to employment, schools, shops and services or on public transport routes).

The Draft Regional Spatial Strategy published by the South West Regional Assembly is also relevant. This is a strategic planning document for the whole of the South West that sets out the broad planning policy for the next 20 years. Policy RE5 is particularly relevant with regard to environmental issues:

'RE5 Renewable energy and new development. Large-scale developments will be expected to provide, as a minimum, sufficient on-site renewable energy to reduce CO2 emissions from energy use by users of the buildings constructed on site by 10%. developers will be expected to demonstrate that they have explored all renewable energy options, and designed their developments to incorporate any renewable energy requirements. Individual Local Planning Authorities may use lower thresholds for what constitutes a larger-scale development and set higher percentages for on-site generation, taking into account the impact on initial and lifetime affordability of homes.'

For the purpose of policy RE5, 'larger-scale development' generally means 10 or more dwellings or a site of 0.5 hectares or more.

Central government Planning Policy Guidance 3, *Housing*, is a key document that has a big impact on local planning decisions. For example, PPG3 sets out a normal density of 30 to 50 dwellings per hectare for new housing. In effect, it sets a maximum 1.5 parking spaces per dwelling and encourages significantly lower provision in urban areas where public transport is available. (It should be noted that Wincanton does not have frequent public transport services.) Less prominence is given to PPG3's requirements that poor design should be rejected and that new housing should have regard, not just to neighbouring buildings but also the townscape and landscape of the wider locality,

The SSDC Local Plan, Chapter 10, conforms to PPG3 and sets out local policies. These include:



New housing development off Tout Hill © Muriel Cairns, 2006.

- **key site at New Barn's Farm.** 250 new dwellings (policy HG2)
- **housing density.** At least 30 dwellings per hectare but higher densities only in places with good public transport (policy HG4)
- **affordable housing.** 35 per cent of dwellings to be affordable housing in developments of 25 dwellings or more or 1 hectare or more in settlements over 3,000 population. In smaller settlements the 35 per cent quota is applied to developments of 15 dwellings or 0.5 hectares (policy HG7). In villages, development outside the development area may be permitted if there is local need for affordable housing (policy HG9).

The Somerset Local Area Agreement (stronger communities theme) includes a target of maximising opportunities to meet affordable housing needs, including better use of public-sector-owned land for affordable housing.

Possible housing strategies

The Healthcheck evidence and community consultation suggest the following strategies can help Wincanton to achieve its housing goal

Strategies for housing

Affordable housing

- For villages, argue for new build using the rural exceptions policy in PPG3 and the SSDC Local Plan.
- Ensure SSDC exercises its right to require 35% affordable housing with all new planning applications over 25 dwellings/1 hectare and implements its rule in a clear, transparent manner.
- Lobby SSDC to lower the size of development at which the affordable housing requirements are triggered from 25 dwellings to 8.
- Assess whether there is unmet demand for shared ownership schemes.
- Consider radically different approaches, such as purchase of land by community development trust which borrows to develop (often using green principles) and sells dwellings (but not land) on permanent shared ownership basis. (See Environment Trust for model.)
- Ensure all eligible claimants take up their rights to means-tested benefits, including housing benefit.

Integrate new with the old and promote sustainable development

- Consider drawing up a design framework that identifies key features of our built heritage and townscape to be taken into account by developers of new housing.
- Integrate into the design framework features to encourage energy and water efficiency, including for example micro-generation using solar and wind technology and rainwater harvesting.
- Ensure infrastructure growth keeps pace with housing growth, including key services and safe routes for pedestrians and traffic.

To help existing homeowners

- Ensure awareness of grants and loans available to low-income and other vulnerable homeowners to cover maintenance and some adaptations/improvements, including installation of central heating. See Foundations www.foundations.co.uk.
- Ensure owners of homes of historic significance are aware of any suitable grants (eg the previous Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme - HERS) and loans.

Specific projects

The Steering Group identified four priority projects for the next five years for housing as described overleaf.

HO1. Optimise our use of the New Barns Farm key site by locating more of the homes we need there.

- **The aim** is to use our land efficiently and retain our green spaces. Given that Wincanton has been designated for additional housing, it would be better to build more densely on the key site rather than lose more green space to development.
- **What's involved?** This project is likely to involve negotiating with local government and possibly central government.
- **Key partners** are likely to be South Somerset District Council, Wincanton Town Council and the developer of the key site.

HO2. Develop a flagship housing project to showcase quality and sustainability.

- **The aim.** There is much talk about quality design and environmental principles, but not always a consensus on what it entails or what is feasible in a commercial project. The aim is to showcase what can be done as a model for other developments.
- **What's involved?** This project may involve negotiation with developers, the local planning department and environmental organisations, but could involve the establishment of a local land trust and more direct involvement in the development. Once complete, the project should be widely marketed to stimulate similar developments
- **Key partners** are likely to be South Somerset District Council, Somerset Trust for Sustainable Development, Wincanton Town Council and developers.

HO3. Increase affordable housing to meet local needs.

- **The aim** is to ensure that young people in particular can rent or buy a local home rather than having to move out of the area.
- **What's involved?** This project is likely to involve lobbying local government and negotiation with local developers, but could involve the establishment of a local land trust and more direct involvement in the development of affordable housing.
- **Key partners** are likely to be South Somerset District Council, Wincanton Town Council and developers.

HO4. Create a quality-design framework for Wincanton and the surrounding area.

- **The aim** is to identify what high-quality design means in the context of our local heritage and environment and produce guidelines that developers should follow when implementing local developments.
- **What's involved?** This project is likely to involve consultation with the public, architects, planners and developers, production of an illustrated document and distribution of the document to relevant people and organisations.
- **Key partners** are likely to be local residents, South Somerset District Council, Somerset Trust for Sustainable Development, Wincanton Town Council and developers.