

WORKSHOP 1			WORKSHOP 2		
	WEAKNESSES	THREATS	STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES	IMPLEMENTATION
<b>Planning</b>	<p>The group felt a key weakness in planning for rural areas is that policy tends to be focussed on urban areas and the issues are very different. One size does not fit all. This is also considered to be a threat because if rural areas are planned for on the basis of an urban model, their issues will not be addressed and will become more pronounced. In addition, the group identified that there are not many young people on Parish Council's and as such decision making does not necessarily reflect their concerns and aspirations. Furthermore, Parish Councils are often viewed as ineffectual.</p>	<p>One weakness and threat is an apparent lack of communication between planning authorities across borders and at different levels of governance.</p>	<p>The group did not discuss this aspect.</p>	<p>Swindon Borough is 70% rural. Fundamentally, there was consensus in the group that rural areas need planning policies which address rural issues – indeed this is something that the Core Strategy should seek to achieve much more firmly that it does currently.</p> <p>The group's vision for such planning policies is that they should be flexible and responsive to the unique needs of rural communities, established through rural proofing and consultation with local people, and managed through a more devolved administration at the local Parish Council level, possibly incorporating a Borough-wide Rural Planning Forum.</p>	
<b>Transport</b>	<p>The group felt that transport is a, possibly <u>the</u>, critical issue for rural areas and the key to unlocking their potential and increasing their sustainability. Transport underlies everything – economic development, access to facilities, jobs and services, and environmental improvements through reduced reliance on the private car.</p>	<p>A key weakness with public transport provision in rural areas currently is that the bus operators only provide services which are economically viable, and this often precludes rural areas from receiving the regular and quality service they need.</p> <p>This is also a threat to the sustainable development of rural areas.</p>	<p>The group felt Demand Response Services which are currently operating in Wiltshire County, are a real strength and a model which could be adopted by Swindon Borough.</p>	<p>A number of key opportunities exist for transport in rural areas. The group generally favoured the development and implementation of Demand Response Services and one delegate explained the success of these services in Wiltshire County.</p> <p>DRS were seen by the group as a good opportunity for local/social enterprises to explore. DRS can be economically viable, and that is the key to its potential success in the Swindon Borough's rural areas.</p>	
<b>Economic Development</b>	<p>The group discussed at length the critical role that transport and accessibility plays in the economic development of rural areas.</p> <p>A key weakness of rural areas is that they are often inherently inaccessible by any means other than private car, and this is a barrier to their economic development.</p>	<p>Many people can't afford to live in villages which results in an "outflux" of economically active people and a reduction in economic development prospects.</p>	<p>The group did not discuss this aspect.</p>	<p>It was felt that massive opportunities exist in rural areas for a balance of traditional village enterprises (such as farmers markets) and innovative e-commerce industries. Planning policies should be responsive to this opportunity.</p>	<p>One delegate suggested that the National Farmer's Union (NFU) has a key role to play in the promotion of economic development in rural areas.</p>

**WORKSHOP 1**
**WORKSHOP 2**

	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>	<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTATION</b>
<b>Housing</b>	<p>The group discussed housing issues in the rural areas at length and felt that the issues were inextricably linked to wider economic development issues. Fundamentally, housing needs surveys indicate there simply isn't enough housing in rural areas, which inflates prices and causes a range of social issues. Tough planning decisions need to be taken regarding what type of housing is appropriate in rural areas, on a case by case basis, paying particular attention to the way housing is provided to address pertinent issues such as flood risk and design.</p>	<p>Housing in itself could be seen as a threat to rural areas, especially the large extension sites which do not contribute to the rural housing quota but impact upon rural communities in the area.</p> <p>In addition, some members of the group discussed the extent to which providing new housing for incomers to occupy can disrupt and undermine the social balance of communities.</p>	<p>There was general consensus that rural areas can accommodate some housing growth.</p>	<p>It was acknowledged that a dispersed and even distribution of small extensions to villages throughout the Borough is preferable to a few large scale extensions.</p> <p>Other opportunities include making provision through the Core Strategy for a range of housing types, sizes and tenures.</p>	<p>In terms of implementation strategies, the group felt a more local and devolved administration and decision making at the local Parish Council level may result in more locally suitable decisions being taken.</p>
<b>Climate Change/ Renewable Energy</b>	<p>The group identified that the stringent climate change controls which are in place for social housing should be replicated in market housing. Currently there is a significant imbalance.</p>	<p>The group did not discuss this aspect.</p>	<p>The group did not discuss this aspect.</p>	<p>The group did not discuss this aspect.</p>	<p>The group did not discuss this aspect.</p>
<b>Community Engagement</b>	<p>One of the key problems and weaknesses of community engagement in rural areas is that people don't see their community's problems until they become personal.</p> <p>One delegate suggested that another problem may be apathy amongst young people towards getting engaged in community issues. There was not consensus on this point, as one delegate felt this apparent apathy may be simply an indication of young people having different agendas.</p> <p>There are varying levels of commitment in different rural areas.</p> <p>The group additionally discussed education and training issues. It was again felt that transport holds the key to the facilitation of education and training. Access to education is key to receiving education.</p>		<p>One key strength of education in rural areas is the quality and community-focussed nature of primary education. Secondary and further education facilities become more amorphous on account of their relative size, and transport issues are more pertinent with regard to this type of facility given their distribution.</p>	<p>Social enterprise should be encouraged and funding barriers removed.</p> <p>Access policies directly facilitate social enterprise and community engagement.</p>	<p>The Core Strategy should encourage rural proofing as a way of life.</p>