



EERF

East of England Rural Forum

# Vibrant Rural Communities



*Unlocking the Potential of the East of England's Rural Areas*

# Overview of Paper

- Sets out key issues affecting rural communities
- Identifies main areas for action
- Defines key objectives
- Makes recommendations
- Action Plan
  - Identify who needs to take what action
  - Monitor & record progress
  - Update regularly to reflect progress & changes in political environment
  - Workshops in new year

# Sustainable Rural Communities

- Balanced & sustainable growth
  - Rural & urban equity of opportunities & support
  - Healthy demographic mix old & young
  - Affordable homes
  - Quality jobs
  - Enhanced natural environment
- *Rural communities should embrace growth for long term sustainability*
- *Planning policy must enable growth of towns & villages*

# Dynamic Rural Economy

- Business policy recognises
  - Diversity, value & potential of rural economy
  - Extent of micro- & home based businesses
- *Plan for business growth to match housing*
- *Fund flexible skills training for remote businesses*
- *Provide accessible employment advice*

# Melbourn Science Park

- On A10, 9 mls south Cambridge; 17 acres; 9 buildings
- Interlinked with and support sustainability of Melbourn Village
  - restaurants, shops, pubs, PO and building society
  - partnership supports village related activities



# Modern Infrastructure

- Settlements grow with more houses and workspace within green infrastructure
- Mix of public, community & private transport
- *Increase supply of affordable housing*
- *Encourage workspace for businesses*
- *Support refurbishment of old buildings*

# Affordable Rural Homes

- Rural incomes are £4,600 less than urban
- Rural house prices are higher than urban
- Affordability gap - house prices 8-10 x salary
- 45% of new households (16 – 35 years) cannot afford to live in their home village
- *Defra priority*
- *Mixed market/affordable developments*
- *More exception site developments*
- *More enabling planning policy*

# Embracing the Digital Age

- Good quality broadband is an essential utility
  - Increased economic & social benefits
  - Improved access to services
- Mix of commercial & community led services
- *Defra priority*
- *Encourage a range of technologies for min 10Mbps by 2013*
- *Ensure future proofed against new services*



# Community/Village Telecoms

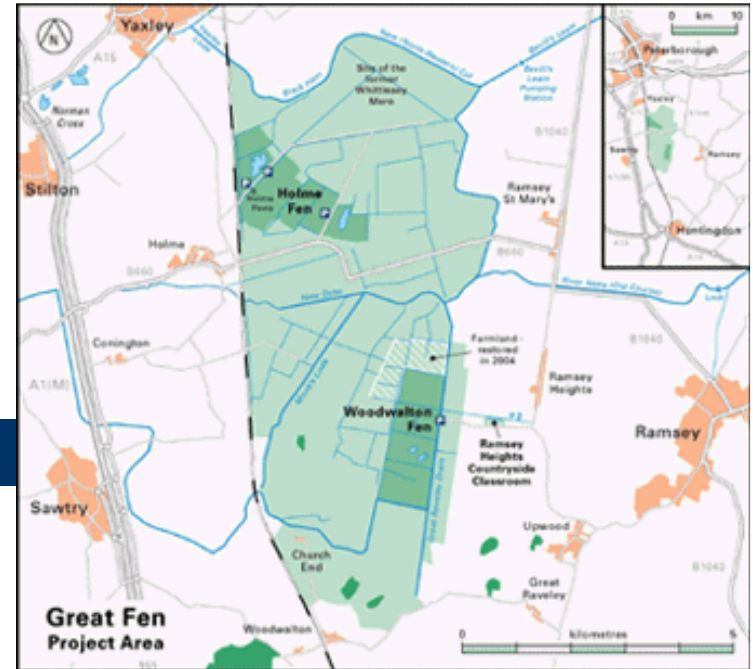
- Approx 40 such schemes across country
- Rutland Ultra-fast broadband
  - Up to 24Mbps download speed
  - £30/month including line rental; £40 setup fee
- Alston village in Cumbria
  - Fibre to 1,000 homes with speeds of up to 100Mbps
- Newton-on-Rawcliffe in North Yorkshire
  - fibre supplied to the local school and wireless connection 140 villager
- Lyng, mid Norfolk
  - community group investigating wireless hub in pub

# Living Environment

- Access to natural environment provides physical, mental & community benefits
- Increasing risk of flooding
- Increasing demand for water
- *Apply new approaches to management of competing uses of land*
- *Improve sustainability of land & water use*

# Great Fen Project

- 3,700 h wetland between Huntingdon and Peterboro
- Connecting Holme Fen and Woodwalton Fen
  - haven for wildlife
  - green space for people
  - recreation, education and business. opportunities



# Climate Change

- Low lying & dry region vulnerable to impact
  - Coastal erosion, flooding
  - Increasing temperature & pressure on water supply
- Opportunities for renewable energy supply
- *Mitigate carbon emission*
  - *behaviour change; reduced transport; low carbon developments*
- *Prepare adaptation plans*

# Living Well

- Access to services key to well-being and community cohesion
- New ways of service delivery should improve not disadvantage rural residents
- Health & social care increasingly important for aging rural population
- *Defra priority – Fuel poverty*
- *Provide constructive activities for young people*
- *Support local service provision using range of approaches including community based*
- *Preventative health care needs rural solutions*

# Engaged Communities

- Rural development & growth supported through positive, early, effective engagement
- Rural communities have a tradition of self-help and can act to deliver services and respond to climate change
- *Defra priority*
  - *Services and transport*
- *Big Society & Community action*
  - *Strengthen community led planning as process for engagement*
  - *Ensure young people fully engaged in vision for rural areas*

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# Conclusions

- Rural communities are varied and face range of complex issues but top priorities are
  - **Digital inclusion** is critical for rural economy & access to services
  - **Rural economic growth** can drive social, economic and environmental sustainability
  - **Demographic change** requires interventions to retain young families (jobs & homes) and rural services for older people
- Rural views must be central to all decision making.
- More rural people engaged in their local democratic processes
- *Next stage is detailed Action Plan setting out how we shall achieve our vision*

# Further information

- Copies of Full Paper and Summary available on [www.eerf.org.uk](http://www.eerf.org.uk)
- All comments and ideas welcome
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