

StrettonClimateCare

Think Global, Act Local

Sustainable Strettons
A Vision for the Future

Outcomes from discussions held over the course of 2018

Background

In May 2017 Stretton Climate Care invited representatives from a range of local organisations to meet to discuss sustainability and to come up with ideas that could be presented to the community as proposals for shaping the world that we would wish to live in in the future.

There were two concrete proposals that came from that workshop. The first was to set up a small group to plan how discussions might be continued and shaped. The second was to seek to involve young people in the community by establishing a youth council.

By the end of 2017, the sub-group had agreed to set up a series of monthly discussions, starting in February 2018, with invited speakers on a range of topics. An open invitation to the community was issued, and those who attended and contributed are listed at the end of this document.

At the same time, work started on a Youth Council, under the leadership of Mrs Sam Jones, from Church Stretton School. A meeting with representatives of the Town Council showed that they were keen for this initiative to start, and this support was matched by the school itself. Stretton Climate Care provided some initial funding, and by September 2018 the Youth Council was up and running, and had conducted a survey to establish the wishes of young people in the locality.

The following report is a collaborative effort, resulting from the monthly discussions, to which many contributed. Final responsibility for this document lies with the writer, David Howard, Chair of Stretton Climate Care, who invited speakers, chaired the discussions, and circulated notes of the discussions for comment.

The report is endorsed by the Trustees of Stretton Climate Care. It will be presented to the Town Council as a contribution to its upcoming development planning process.

The questions:

- What would the Strettons have to be like twenty years from now for people to want to live and work here?
- What should we be doing now in order to prepare a sustainable future for the Strettons?
- How do we make best use of present resources and talents to achieve a sustainable vision?

Vision Statement

Church Stretton in 2040 is a thriving and bustling community, which is renowned for the quality of life of all its citizens, for their involvement in community affairs, for the richness of its cultural life, and for its economic resilience. It is a community that has learned to look after itself, and is acknowledged as a model throughout Shropshire and beyond.

The re-configuration of the town centre, with a new emphasis on pedestrians rather than cars and parking, has boosted the viability of local retail outlets, and this, together with a determined promotion of local produce and products, has made Church Stretton into a truly local centre for trade. The establishment of more attractive community space in the centre, together with enhancement of existing assets, the addition of new attractions such as the Geology Museum and Study Centre, and the inauguration of a number of new events, both sporting and cultural, has made the town into a priority tourist destination.

The building of a new “eco-hotel”, with a large function room and a restaurant of repute, has proved a significant attraction, as well as being a marker for the town’s ambition to move towards a zero-carbon future.

The town’s long-standing and intensive cooperation with both the National Trust and the AONB has meant that the development plans of all parties have meshed together in a

way that has benefitted all. A shared recognition of the need to conserve and enhance the environment, while at the same time profiting from the benefits brought by sensibly managed tourism, was matched by a determination that the land should be managed to high environmental standards. In achieving this, the cooperation of local agriculture, and the participation of surrounding parishes had been vital elements.

This was also seen clearly in transport issues, where the establishment, early on, of a Sustainable Transport Group, provided the catalyst. A determined campaign achieved its goals of coordinated, integrated and enhanced local public transport (including the electrification of the rail line), a car club and car sharing, the provision of electric vehicle charging points throughout the area, and the building of cycle tracks. The closing of tourist hotspots to traffic at weekends and holidays, and the linked provision of Park-and-Ride/Shuttle buses (electric) has only served to enhance the attractiveness of the town as a tourist destination, with corresponding benefits to local business.

Daily markets, and pop-up stalls selling “Grow Your Own” produce show a community concerned to both produce and buy locally, so reducing travel miles and the carbon footprint of the locality.

Close cooperation between the Medical Centre, Mayfair, and local support groups, together with a digital transformation in

health care (tele-health) has built on the already extensive volunteer network in the locality, and has enabled a greater focus on preventative action. It has also brought more services in-house, allowing fewer journeys to hospital, faster treatment and quicker recovery.

The establishment of a Sports Forum, with input into the town's development process, has enhanced the community's commitment to a healthy and active lifestyle, and has brought the additional benefit of bringing different generations together in a common purpose. The upgrading of the town's promotional activities in this area has helped to widen its reputation, and made the town increasingly attractive to younger families.

Despite the pressure on land and environmental sensitivities, the Town Council's determination to achieve a viable and balanced mix of housing, as determined in its 2020 policy statement, has helped to prevent the town becoming little more than a retirement community. The determined pursuit and promotion of a wider range of employment opportunities has been made possible by improved broadband connectivity. Affordable housing, together with the recognition that the Strettons were a good place to bring up a family, has also helped first to maintain and then increase school numbers.

The same housing policy has also insisted on new build being carbon neutral (this also applied to industrial/office building) – another example of how the Strettons, in going their own way,

has come to be regarded as a special community, which is resilient enough to face the many challenges that have appeared, both nationally and globally.

Changes in government policy on renewable energies have allowed the development of community energy schemes, where the council, in a joint enterprise with local investors, has been able to provide a significant proportion of the energy required by the community. This, together with intensive promotion of energy-efficiency measures, has meant that the Strettons are becoming self-sufficient in energy.

The vibrancy of the community has been in no small part due to the way in which, over the years, it has encouraged a milieu of mutual help and volunteering. People in the Strettons have a reputation for generosity. The extension of civic awards has shown that, in this part of the world, such giving was the norm.

Nor is this restricted to those who had the time and resources. The Youth Council, established in 2018, plays a major role in determining the direction of the community, demonstrating that work and commitment is inter-generational. The extension of community service at the school has become an important marker for the social health of the Strettons, enhancing the bonds of trust and care which are its distinguishing feature.

At the same time, links continue to develop between U3A, the school, and the University Centre in Shrewsbury, creating a learning network, linked to tourism, agriculture and new

technologies. A key element was both the determination of all parties to learn from the experience of other communities in the transition to a sustainable future, and the establishment of a benchmarking process to monitor progress. Choosing key projects with a high chance of success had helped create the confidence to embark on further developments. The establishment of a Community Trust Fund had enabled the Council to pump-prime small projects and initiatives. Much of this was due to the community's ability to tap into its own resources, many of which had been identified in the Strettons Voluntary process. This investment in people had created opportunities for a new pattern of cooperative leadership to emerge

By 2040, the Strettons have managed to develop a new way of working politically, where participation in the life of the community was accepted by all as the way that things were done here. After publication of its 2020 development plan, and the resultant action plan, the Town Council had worked hard to develop a different relationship with Shropshire Council, which had brought a re-calibration of Council Tax, reflecting local need more appropriately and accurately. Imaginative thinking about the appropriate location of various functions and the establishment of a Community Interest Company had enabled new partnerships to flourish, with strong links to a new Voluntary Sector Forum, which brought together representatives of all interested groups in the Strettons,

establishing much improved patterns of communication. The new Forum gave impetus to the vision which the community wishes to bring about. This small-scale, mutually committed democracy in action, has been seen as the central success factor for sustainably managing common resources in the long run.

By 2040, the Strettons has become a flourishing and increasingly self-sufficient community, which is able to cope with economic turbulence, social unrest and climate change. By building on existing strengths, by mobilising community organisations and bringing them together in a joint enterprise, by putting learning from each other at the heart of that enterprise, and by acting courageously to move forward in realising a shared vision, the Strettons is now a model for Shropshire and, indeed, beyond the county boundaries.

Twenty years earlier, those involved in developing that vision had wished to “keep the smile on the face of the Strettons”. The Strettons are still smiling.

Background

The following themes and topics provided the background to the discussions:

What strengths do the Strettons have as a community which could be drawn on to bring about change?

- Retired professionals with a wide range of skills
- A vast array of voluntary organisations with experience and expertise
- Talented individuals who are willing to share for the benefit of the community
- Mayfair Community Centre (nationally recognised support)
- A range of organised and informal Christian faiths, offering spiritual guidance
- Exemplar organisations of sustainable development in Guides and Scouts
- Wide range of sporting activities, together with space and opportunities for enhancing health and fitness in the widest sense
- Strong sense in community of need to preserve the small town nature of the Strettons and to conserve the natural environment

What are the biggest threats to the Strettons as a community?

- Population of retired and elderly people
- Increasing needs for support and care of ageing population
- Over-dependency on volunteers
- Inappropriate development adversely affecting the local, natural landscape
- Lack of vision or strategy for change, and insufficient visionary leadership
- Falling public funding and its many consequences
- Devolution of Shropshire Council responsibilities, with inadequate funding and loss of economies of scale
- Introduction of 100% business rates retention in 2020, and consequent impact on rural areas
- Fossilisation of the status quo as regards planning
- Increasing number of second homes
- Lack of affordable housing
- Inadequate infrastructure
- Lack of post-16 education and employment opportunities
- Adverse financial climate for development
- Poor communication between public bodies and the public beyond community groups
- Limited communication with external bodies
- Lack of any plan for development that goes beyond statutory aspects
- Apathy

What opportunities are currently available or could be created by positive action?

- Improving links between town as a market centre and local agriculture
- Developing links with AONB and National Trust to promote sustainable tourism and agriculture
- Enhancing green business prospects
- Social cohesion for stimulating healthy, active lives
- International environmental recognition for the beauty of the landscape
- A nationally recognised and leading community centre – Mayfair – with potential for further development of local delivery of services
- Digital transformation of health care
- Improved use of data on community health
- A new learning network incorporating library, U3A and voluntary organisations
- Links to University Centre (Shrewsbury) research on technological advances to support ageing population
- Links to Economic Growth Hub in Shrewsbury
- Promotion of arts and crafts courses at Westhope and Acton Scott
- Increasing involvement of young people in helping to determine future of community
- International twinning arrangements with a market towns in Europe
- Promotion of existing events (e.g. Community Games, Arts Festival) and inauguration of new festivals with environmental themes

Contributing speakers

Professor John Whitelegg – “Sustainable Transport”

Nigel McDonald, AONB – “Sustainable Tourism”

Peter Carty – National Trust

Professor Rod Thomson, Director of Public Health, Shropshire

Stuart Wright – Chamber of Trade

Cllr. Bob Welch – “Economic Development”

Jon Halle (Sharenergy) – “Community Energy”

Barrie Oxtoby – “Sport”

Attendees:

The following individuals attended meetings during 2018 and contributed to discussions:

John Antill

Lynn Antill

John Bacon

Noel Beattie

Michael Bourke

Cllr. Michael Braid

Bridget Bromwich

Jon Cooke

Richard Elliot

David Gibbon

David Howard

Kate Johnson

Pete Johnson

John Lloyd

Barrie Oxtoby

Jim Petch

Charles Simmonds

Cllr. Bob Welch

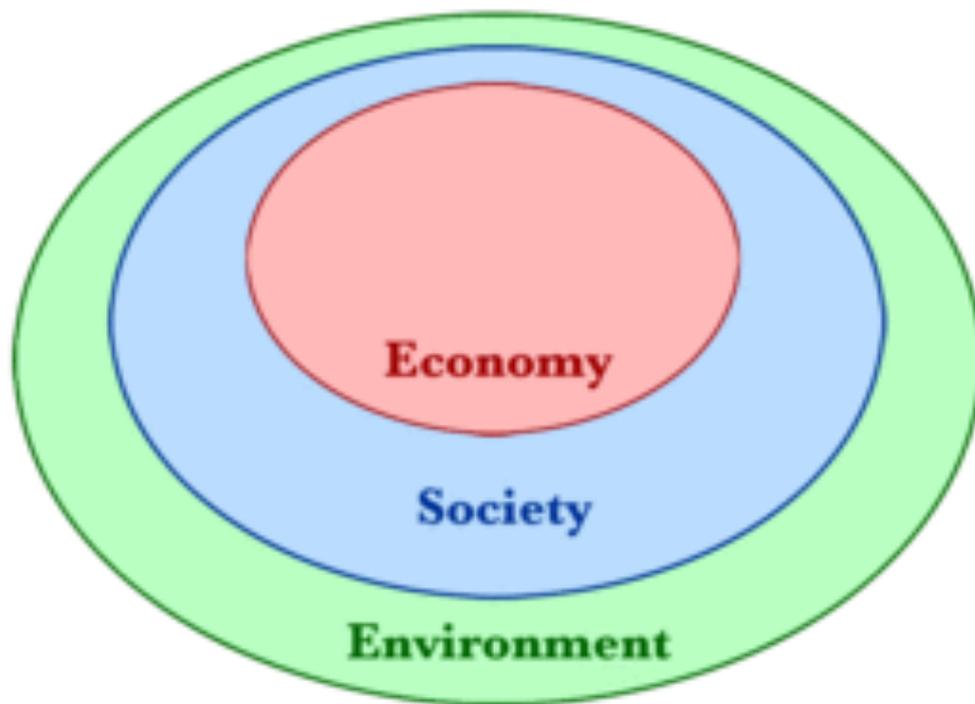
Ken Willis

Jane Wrench

(All those who attended are thanked for their contributions. Attendance does not signify endorsement of the report or any part of it. Responsibility for the report rests solely with Stretton Climate Care.)

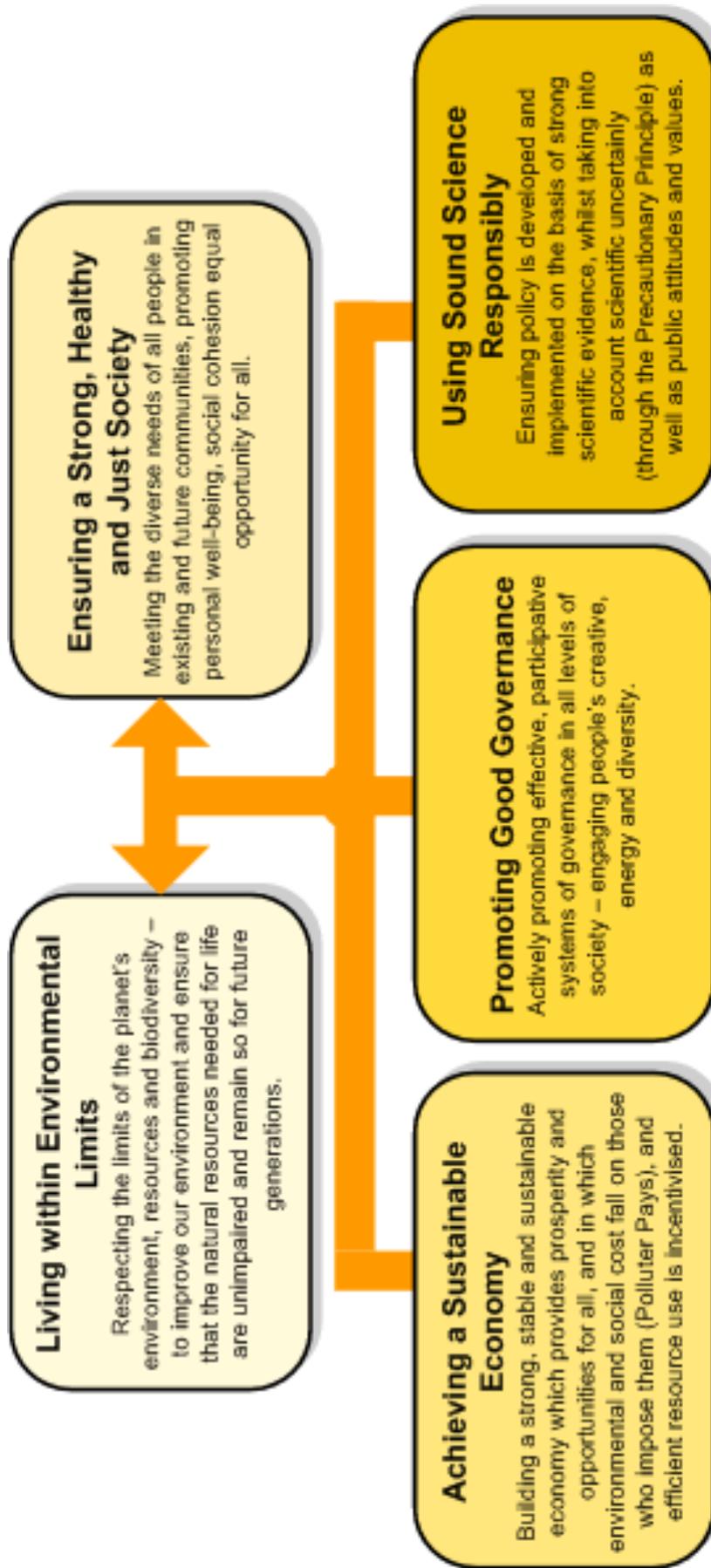
Appendices

Sustainability could be defined as an ability or capacity of something to be maintained or to sustain itself. It is about taking what we need to live now, without compromising the potential for people in the future to meet their needs.



Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Sustainable living is a lifestyle that attempts to reduce an individual's or society's use of the Earth's natural resources and personal resources. It is an attempt to reduce this dependence on natural resources. *Sustainable living means to make as lesser negative impact on the environment.*



(Foundation for Democracy and Sustainable Development)



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



(United Nations Sustainable Development Goals)



Mission Statement

“To advance environmental protection and improvement by reducing the carbon footprint of the local area.”

Aims and Objectives

- To raise awareness of issues concerning climate change and the need for action;
- To promote a culture of climate care through reducing energy consumption, encouraging the generation of local renewable energy, and advancing a more sustainable lifestyle;
- To support local people in reducing emissions, and eliminating fuel poverty;
- To provide a free home energy survey service;
- To assist households and others to implement any recommendations on energy saving measures by giving them suitable and impartial advice and introducing them to appropriate agencies and suppliers;
- To train a team of volunteers in surveying techniques, and energy saving and reduction technologies;
- To run an education and training programme to promote a local culture of climate care;
- To inform the community of national and local policy, and to influence debate;
- To work with other agencies and local groups: a) to bring about a reduction in carbon emissions, b) to address fuel poverty, c) to promote a sustainable lifestyle;
- To campaign on issues in support of the above aims and objectives.

Stretton Climate Care was founded in 2007, and has helped hundreds of people in our community make their homes more energy efficient, helped them save money on their energy bills, and, on average, helped them reduce their carbon emissions by some 13%.

In addition to providing free home energy surveys, and a weekly drop-in advice session at the Health and Wellbeing Centre, Stretton Climate Care runs a series of events, from high-profile lectures to the annual Duck Race in Cardingmill Valley.

It produces a number of advice sheets, on topics ranging from light bulbs to reducing use of plastic.

It helped provide the first public charge point for electric vehicles in Shropshire, and continues to press for an extension of the network. Electric vehicles are on display, and available for test drives, at the annual show.

Stretton Climate Care works with young people on environmental education, and was instrumental in helping to set up the new Youth Council.

It makes representations on environmental issues to both government and Shropshire Council, and responds in detail to consultations, in line with its stated aims and objectives.

It keeps the local community in touch with developments through regular contributions to the press, on the website and by Newsletter.

www.strettonclimatecare.org.uk

info@strettonclimatecare.org.uk

Tel.: 0752 849 3181

Sponsored by



Printed by Marshbook Print, Unit 4 Marshbrook Business Park, Church Stretton, Shropshire, SY6 6QE