



All Through Traffic
P Short Term
380 spaces

↑ Short Term **P**
58 spaces

 Shopmobility

Theatre
Shopping-Centre
Toilet

LEATHERHEAD

Tomorrow



Report of the Healthcheck 2005





**LEATHERHEAD TOMORROW
A REPORT OF THE HEALTHCHECK
2005**

MAIN REPORT

January 2006



Acknowledgements

The Leatherhead Tomorrow Steering Group would like to thank all those who have contributed their time, enthusiasm and commitment to this project. Above all, we would like to thank the residents, businesses, voluntary sector organisations and community groups who have given their time to answer questionnaires, contribute to focus group discussions and come along to public meetings.

We would also like to thank the organisations which have funded the Healthcheck: Mole Valley District Council via the Thomas Flack Fund, Surrey County Council and Awards for All.

We would like to thank the following individuals:

- The Leatherhead Tomorrow Chairman and Work Group leaders: Colin Langley, Di Stirling, David Mitchell-Baker, Heather Ward and John Howarth, who have achieved such a lot and devoted so much of their free time to the project
- Sophie Lund for her professional and painstaking commitment to the task of project co-ordinator, which guided the project through to successful conclusion
- Graham Tuck, Head of Therfield, Julie Wooding, the School Council members and students of Therfield; and Alison Edwards, Head of The Woodville School, and teachers, pupils and parents at The Woodville School
- All the volunteers who have contributed their time, ideas and expertise to help within a Work Group or with specific elements of the project including:
 - Keith Chandler for his expertise in setting up the questionnaire input and analysis tool, and for his help with data analysis
 - Hilary Porter of the Leatherhead Society and Joan Kirby of Leatherhead Community Association
 - The Bookham, Fetcham and Ashted Residents' Associations, the Leatherhead and North Leatherhead Community Associations and Leatherhead Society
 - Sheila Hill for her expertise in developing the sustainability questionnaire
 - Lucy Hanson, Town Centre Manager and Pat Lawless, Swan Centre Manager for providing useful information to the team
 - Andy Newbold, Alison Bretherick, Maureen Walker, Miranda Virgo and Pat Lawless who gave their time to come to the first visioning workshop
 - Dee Ayling, Sue Dare and Sue Williams at the Leatherhead Help Shop who encouraged so many people to fill in questionnaires
 - Michael Levitton and staff at The Theatre for letting us use the Mezzanine floor for meetings
- The following for supplying photographs for the report: Leatherhead Leisure Centre; Surrey Wildlife Trust; Andy Newbold from Acorn Images, www.acornimages.co.uk; the Lower Mole Project; Mole Valley District Council; Squiggle Design: www.squiggle.co.uk; and the Children at the Woodville School.

Finally the Steering Group would like to thank the spouses and families of all involved for their patience and forbearance, IT and other support.

Copies of a summary of this report can be obtained from the Leatherhead Help Shop at the following address:

Leatherhead Help Shop
25-29 High Street
Leatherhead

The full report and annexes can be viewed at public libraries, the Help Shop, Mole Valley District Council and Surrey County Council's Leatherhead office. They are also available on the website at: www.leatherheadtomorrow.co.uk.



LEATHERHEAD TOMORROW A REPORT ON THE HEALTHCHECK

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GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

ALDAG	Ashtead Learning Difficulties Action Group
ASFP	All Saints Family Project
CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau
Credit Union	A self-help savings and loans financial institution set up by and for people who share a common bond.
Healthcheck	The audit of the economy, environment, social and community, transport and accessibility of a market town and surrounding countryside.
LDCPS	Leatherhead & District Countryside Protection Society
Leatherhead Community Association	Membership organisation for activities at the Institute.
Leatherhead Society	The town's Civic Society and Residents' Association.
Living Streets Survey	A method of evaluating streets and public places from the viewpoint of users. A Pedestrian Association initiative.
Local Development Framework	Replacement for the Mole Valley Local Plan
Lower Mole Countryside Management Project	Partnership to provide volunteers for supervised conservation work in the countryside.
MRF	Materials Recovery Facility, at Randalls Road
MVDC	Mole Valley District Council
New Trinity Primary School	Future combination of All Saints, St Mary's and Woodville Schools and an additional Children's Centre.
QEFD	The Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for the Disabled
SCC	Surrey County Council
SEEDA	South East England Development Agency
Snapshot	Basic factual information about the town and surrounding countryside.
SWOT Analysis	The process of identifying and analysing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
Vision	The overall aims of the market town partnership and community for the future.
Youth Voice	The youth council made up of elected representatives from schools in Mole Valley. Sponsored by MVDC



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 Introduction

Leatherhead Tomorrow is a community-driven project to find out the extent to which the town satisfies the needs of the residential and business communities and those of the surrounding area, and to put in place an Action Plan for improvement. The project is being undertaken in line with the Healthcheck methodology set out in the Countryside Agency's Market Towns Initiative.

This report describes the results of the first stage of the Healthcheck, carried out over a nine month period in 2005, which aimed to:

- Find out the key things that people think work well and would like to preserve
- Identify the key things which people would like to see improved
- Determine the community's Vision for how they would like their town to be in the future
- Form the basis for developing an Action Plan for the future.

The second phase will be to develop the detailed Action Plan and put the Plan into action.

2 The Healthcheck

The focus of the Healthcheck process is to help communities establish how their Market Town serves the needs of people living in the town itself and the outlying rural communities and how the town can be improved or revitalised to better serve the community. Over 300 Healthchecks have been completed across the country. They use a structured approach, they are inclusive and provide well researched evidence of need. As a result they are well received by funding bodies and can attract external funding for projects as demonstrated recently by other Surrey Healthchecks. Equally, they can influence local District and County policies.

3 Leatherhead Today and Tomorrow

Leatherhead Today

Leatherhead, Gateway to the Surrey Hills, is situated in the centre of Surrey and surrounded by the beautiful countryside of the North Downs to the south, and Ashted and Bookham Commons to the north, and with the pretty River Mole to the west. An historic market town with a thriving business sector, one of Leatherhead's key features is its close proximity to hills, woodland and farmland, whilst also being only a short journey to the facilities and attractions of large towns.

The gathering of information and opinions in the Healthcheck clearly indicated that Leatherhead and its hinterland area have a wealth of positive features which make it an attractive area in which to live, work and play. There are weaknesses too, which need to be addressed.

Heather Ward, Chairman of the Leatherhead Town Centre Forum from which the Leatherhead Tomorrow initiative emanated, and a Steering Group member, says:

'We now have robust information about what local people appreciate about our town and want to keep, as well as those facilities and services which they want to be improved, so that the town satisfies their various needs. We have demonstrated the inter-dependent links between our local communities and mapped out a route that shows the way to the Leatherhead of Tomorrow. Now we must take this opportunity to use the findings and recommendations in the report, to make it happen.'



Leatherhead Tomorrow

Following public meetings in September, the team arranged workshops aimed at developing the shared Vision for the town based on information received from all the community consultations. This Vision will provide the guiding principles and values for the Action Plans that follow in order to develop the town in the way most people want. The Vision is:

Leatherhead will be a vibrant, attractive, self assured and welcoming town that provides access to the amenities of both town and countryside.

It will satisfy the needs of all sectors of the community, plus those who visit for business or pleasure.

Leatherhead will be the focal point of an area in which people are proud to live and work.

4 Key Findings

The Healthcheck has demonstrated that most people in the community feel that it is a good place to live with wonderful countryside around and within it. Residents of Leatherhead and the villages not only enjoy easy access to local shops and the surrounding countryside but also to destinations further afield by way of a good weekday train service and the close proximity of the M25. The town is endowed with a very rich and varied environment and contains many beautiful listed buildings.

The river was viewed by many as a key feature of Leatherhead. It is also one of the most valued features of the town. People felt that more could be made of the river and the area could be made a much more attractive and accessible part of the town. There was a range of views on this subject, ranging from 'leave it as it is' to 'allow boating on the river'. The majority wished to retain the unique wildlife while improving access to it and adding features such as seats or footpaths/cycle ways. There were requests for a café near to the river and for picnic tables. Many people wanted the footpaths to be better maintained and also extended further into the countryside. Some suggested that there should be signage to the river from the town centre and information with pictures about what to look out for in the way of wildlife.

The town itself is full of beautiful buildings. There are some eyesores and people felt that the streetscape in the pedestrian centre of the town could be improved. People see the town both as a place to shop and as the place where they could meet and chat with friends. So they asked for seating and pleasant civic spaces. There were also a number of requests to make the entrance to the town more welcoming.

Residents would welcome improvements to the number and mix of shops in Leatherhead. In particular, residents would generally like to see more clothing shops, more independent shops but fewer charity shops. The ability of the town to support large outlets such as department stores, requested by a number of respondents, is limited due to existing retail units being small and the lack of suitable development sites.

The pedestrianisation of the High Street is popular and is being exploited by local restaurants and cafés. This has helped foster a lively atmosphere in the High Street at lunch times and in the evenings. But a balance needs to be achieved between the convenience of parking in it after 4.30pm, the needs of the shops and restaurants, the safety of pedestrians, and its use for the market and as access for deliveries.



Leatherhead is regarded as offering poor parking facilities, particularly for shoppers. This is based partly on the unpopular Swan Centre car park but also on the alternative nearby car parks often being full at peak times. There are limited 'pop and shop' facilities and so there is a serious demand for more short term parking at cheaper rates. Parking pressures are increased by workers who park in residential streets. Bus services, particularly in the southern part of Leatherhead and the villages, are poor though train services (except on Sundays) are good. Walkers and cyclists suffer from poor maintenance of paths and dangerous crossings. Disjointed routes make cycling less enjoyable or safe and cycle paths are limited.

The pressure put on the roads by the high proportion of car use in the area inevitably causes congestion. The one-way system around Leatherhead is seen by many as a barrier to passing trade as well as being uninviting and confusing to visitors. Signage around the town is confusing and unattractive. The plans to make Leret Way more attractive are welcomed.

There is a need for more affordable homes, especially for families and not just for "key" workers. The price of houses is a constraint on recruitment, especially for small businesses and retailers, since it is increasingly difficult for people who work in the area to be able to afford to live within it. Housing provision and support for people with special needs is poor, and it is considered that some elderly people would benefit from help to downsize their property, thereby making their lives easier and enabling their homes to become available for younger families.

The jobs in the town are mainly office-based rather than factory or workshop based and are concentrated in north Leatherhead, thus contributing to the congestion. Employment opportunities for people with learning difficulties and those wishing to learn practical skills to help them find work are not well supported. It is not easy to become established as a new small business.

Attitudes were generally positive about what Leatherhead has to offer, especially noting recent improvements in the High Street and the reopening of the Theatre. Appreciation was expressed for the wide range of activities and facilities such as the Theatre, the Leisure Centre, Leatherhead Institute, Museum, All Saints Family Project, new Kingston Road recreation facilities, Clubhouse, Pitstop, Youth Café, churches working together in the community, B@attitude, Leatherhead Hospital and University of Third Age. Many believe that the new Leatherhead Trinity School will be a very positive force in improving community cohesion.

Leatherhead is not seen as a cohesive community compared with the surrounding villages, although full of thriving clubs and societies covering a wide range of activities. Because of the lack of a community wide organisation and a free local paper, many complained of not knowing what was happening, especially in the north of the town. The existing organisations could consider amalgamating or forming an all-Leatherhead association to initiate action on behalf of the community and represent its interests. While Bookham and Ashted have good neighbour schemes, Leatherhead and Fetcham have a limited car driver scheme operating through surgeries.

While appreciated as a unique facility in the area, many would like improvements to the Leisure Centre. Youngsters in particular asked for a range of additional sporting and recreation facilities, not necessarily at the Leisure Centre. Better entertainment and more community celebrations were asked for in consultations with all ages and in response to questionnaires. The Town Centre and Swan Centre managers have recently been active in promoting such events and the Theatre is actively promoting a range of entertainments.

On health matters, the consultation in respect of the new acute hospital location has upset many, as have the continuing changes in health provision. On public safety, youngsters feel misunderstood and stigmatised by the anti-social behaviour of the few. A shortage of facilities for the young was a constant complaint. Money matters are a source of problems for a



significant number of people. Financial literacy is often poor and CAB services stretched. A group of local residents is promoting a credit union which will provide financial literacy training as part of its services. There are no Community Legal Service Partnership contracts in Leatherhead.

5 Project Ideas

Over the summer of 2005, the project team identified the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats from our community consultations and activities and facilitated the development of the community's Vision and objectives for the town. Leatherhead Tomorrow has developed approximately 30 key project ideas.

LEATHERHEAD TOMORROW - PROJECT IDEAS

Objective 1: To review and implement a Town Centre improvement plan which encourages economic vitality and prosperity whilst safeguarding the needs of the residents, visitors and the environment	
V1	To review the many uses of the High Street in order to plan for its varied functions and uses and then implement agreed proposals.
V2	To revitalise the Theatre entrance and adjacent Church Street Area.
EC1	To improve the retail provision in Leatherhead town centre.

These projects would be coordinated with other projects listed below which also concern the Town Centre

Objective 2: - To improve the vitality of the town and the surrounding area in a way which recognises the different needs of the residents in the town and in the villages	
EC2	To improve retail provision in the areas outside immediate town centre.
EC3	To develop business & employment opportunities in the town & surrounding area.
EC4	To increase the number of visitors to the town & surrounding area.

Objective 3: To develop Leatherhead as the leisure, recreational, sport and entertainment centre for the northern Mole Valley	
SC1	To improve leisure facilities and opportunities for children and families.
SC2	To improve leisure, sports and recreation facilities for all.
SC3	To encourage the Theatre development and promotion.

Objective 4: To encourage a thriving community about which all sectors of the community feel proud, about which they feel informed and in which they feel welcome.	
SC4	To improve community cooperation and communication.
SC5	To improve community services.
SC6	To improve access to appropriate housing.
SC7	To introduce meeting and socialising areas.
SC8	To introduce more seating.
SC9	To foster pride in the community.
SC10	To improve community safety.
SC11	To improve services for young people.
SC12	To improve facilities for young people.

Objective 5: To preserve and enhance the riverside environment and the wider countryside; to improve access to it and further to develop links between town and countryside and to promote it to visitors.	
EN1	To investigate how to allow and encourage active and passive recreational use of the river and riverbanks whilst safeguarding the unique environmental characteristics of the river.



EN2	To improve access for all to the countryside immediately around the town and to promote Leatherhead to visitors as gateway to the Surrey Hills.
EN3	To protect areas of beauty and wildlife value and to promote high standards of countryside management.

Objective 6: To enhance the visual attractiveness of the townscape and the routes into the town

EN4	To improve elements of the townscape in the town centre and the routes into the town.
EN5	To improve attractiveness of routes into town and make them welcoming.

Objective 7: To improve transport, access and parking for all residents and visitors

TA1	To improve the service and facilities provided by the train companies.
TA2	To improve the service provided by the bus companies within the area.
TA3	To improve cycling access for work, school and leisure.
TA4	To improve pedestrian access within and around the town and villages.
TA5	To improve traffic circulation, access by car and parking provision.

Objective 8: To encourage businesses and residents to take local responsibility for environmental issues of national/global concern

EN6	To promote waste reduction.
EN7	To promote energy efficiency
EN8	To connect local producers with local consumers

All the key project ideas and the supporting projects are described in more detail in the report.

6 What Next?

This is the end of Phase 1 of the project. Turning the project ideas into reality through implementing an Action Plan will require a number of activities to be undertaken concurrently as Phase 2 of the Healthcheck. These activities are as follows:

- Establishing a Delivery Organisation
- Identifying Partners
- Finding Volunteers
- Identifying Funding Sources
- Defining projects and the Action Plan

Leatherhead Tomorrow would like to work in a close partnership with Surrey County Council and Mole Valley District Council, and will also be looking for additional partners. The team will also be looking closely for volunteers from across the community to take projects forward.

Having explored various options, the proposal is to establish a not-for-profit Company as the delivery organisation to facilitate the development of the Action Plan and implementation of the projects. This would involve representatives from the Local Authorities and other Partners involved, residents, voluntary sector and local business.

Considerable time and energy has been put into the Healthcheck to date, and the project has identified important projects for the community. The success of the project from now depends on the commitment of volunteers and partners and on the level of project coordination.

It is recommended that the community now takes up the challenge to assist in implementing these projects for the benefit of the town and surrounding communities.



SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Leatherhead Today

Leatherhead is situated in the centre of Surrey and within the relatively densely populated northern part of the Mole Valley District Council (MVDC) area. Known as 'Gateway to the Surrey Hills' Leatherhead is surrounded by the beautiful countryside of the North Downs to the south, Ashted and Bookham Commons to the north, and the attractive River Mole to the west. As an historic market town with a thriving business sector, one of Leatherhead's key features is its close proximity to hills, woodland and farmland, whilst also being only a short journey to the facilities and attractions of large towns. It is only 40 minutes by train to London, within a few minutes of the M25 and has easy access to two major international airports.

1.2 Why was a Leatherhead Healthcheck undertaken?

Leatherhead Tomorrow is a community-driven project which aims to find out the extent to which the town satisfies the needs of the residential and business communities and those of the surrounding area, and to put in place an Action Plan for improvement. The project is being undertaken in line with the Healthcheck methodology set out in the Countryside Agency's Market Towns Initiative.

This report describes the results of the Healthcheck carried out as the first stage of the Project.

The aims of the Healthcheck are to:

- Find out the key things that people think work well and would like to preserve
- Identify the key things which people would like to see improved
- Determine the community's Vision for how they would like their town to be in the future
- Form the basis for developing an Action Plan for the future.

In line with the Healthcheck process, Leatherhead Tomorrow focuses on four key areas: Economy, Social and Community matters, Transport and Access, and Environment.



The High Street

1.3 The Healthcheck Process

The term Healthcheck was coined by the Countryside Agency as a useful way to describe and define how people feel about their community. It is also a tried and tested method of establishing the social, economic and environmental 'health' of market towns and small rural towns. It is:

- An inclusive process designed to enable the whole community to contribute
- Community-led and based on facts and figures from the town and surrounding areas, as well as the views and opinions of all stakeholders
- A tool to create a Vision and an Action Plan.

The purpose of completing a Healthcheck is to enable the town to decide on its Vision for the future. Having created the Vision, an Action Plan will be developed to make that Vision a



reality. Action for Market Towns, a member organisation, has been established, dedicated to promoting the vitality of small rural towns across the UK and to providing support and assistance to towns in addressing their particular challenges and taking forward Action Plans.

The term 'Market Town' is used to include towns in rural England with a variety of backgrounds including those which have traditionally hosted an agricultural market and which serve a rural hinterland. Whilst the role of market towns has changed in recent years, the view of Action for Market Towns is that they are still very much at the heart of rural England. Such towns can be seen as the focus for the area, providing:

- Local services
- A range of shops
- A local transport hub
- A centre for culture, art and theatre
- A hub or gateway for tourism capitalising on the assets of the town and countryside
- An access point for training, education and employment opportunities
- Local jobs for local people

The focus of the Healthcheck Initiative is on how the town serves the needs of people living in the town itself and the outlying rural communities and how it can be improved or revitalised to better serve the community.

Nationally over 300 Healthchecks have been completed. In the South East, 39 have been carried out and in Surrey this is the fourth. Because Healthchecks use a structured approach, are inclusive and provide well researched evidence of need, they are well received by funding bodies. They therefore attract external funding for projects, as demonstrated recently with other Surrey Healthchecks, as well as influencing local District and County policies.

1.4 The Beginnings of the Leatherhead Tomorrow Healthcheck

As Leatherhead is not parished and has no town council, one of the most influential bodies in the town is the Leatherhead Town Centre Forum. This is an advisory body where representatives of the main civic organisations in the town and businesses, together with County and District Councillors, can discuss local issues, share ideas, reach consensus and work together for the benefit of the Leatherhead community.

During the summer of 2004 members of the Leatherhead Town Centre Forum undertook some local studies on people's views of Leatherhead. Following a visit to Faringdon in Oxfordshire where a Healthcheck had been conducted, the Town Centre Forum agreed at a meeting in September 2004 to promote a Healthcheck for the town and its hinterland area. A successful bid for funding for a part time Project Coordinator was agreed by MVDC and SCC. A Steering Group was formed, comprising volunteer representatives of the communities and interest groups of north Mole Valley, and this group met on 4th November to plan the project.





1.5 The Leatherhead Tomorrow Team

The Leatherhead Tomorrow Steering Group comprises:

NAME	ROLE / AFFILIATION
Colin Langley	Leatherhead Tomorrow Chairman. A Fetcham resident and member of Leatherhead & District Countryside Protection Society
John Howarth	Economy Work Group Leader Director of Leatherhead and District Chamber of Commerce
David Mitchell-Baker	Social and Community Work Group Leader President of Ashted Residents' Association, Ashted Rotary, Ashted Good Neighbours
Di Stirling	Transport and Access Work Group Leader Ashted Representative, Friend of Ashted Residents' Association
Heather Ward	Environment Work Group Leader Leatherhead resident, Chairman of the Leatherhead Town Centre Forum
John Pagella	Bookham Representative Bookham Residents' Association
Bernard Dore-Boize	Treasurer North Leatherhead resident, North Leatherhead Community Association
Kay Meats	Leatherhead resident Leatherhead Community Association
Paula Sabine	Transport and Access Work Group Leatherhead resident; Leatherhead Ahead
Sophie Lund	Independent Project Coordinator
Cllr Tim Hall	Surrey County Councillor
Cllr Tony Moore	Mole Valley Councillor
Rod Shaw	Mole Valley District Council Officer
Margaret Morton	Surrey Rural Towns Coordinator from April 2005
Helen Wade	Surrey County Council officer to April 2005

In view of the vigorous debate concerning the town centre over recent years, Mole Valley District Council and Surrey County Council were keen that the Healthcheck should be a community-led project, in which the community decides how it would like its town to be in the future, rather than a project in which the Councils took a lead role. The Mole Valley officer and councillors on the Steering Group provided information at the request of the team but were not involved in the Work Groups or day to day activities.

The village Residents' Associations were involved from an early stage of the Healthcheck and throughout the process. Each put forward a member to join the Steering Group, who had the role of feeding back progress to their Associations as the Healthcheck progressed, as well as feeding relevant information into the process from the point of view of the village residents, and encouraging the village residents to become involved. A member of Leatherhead Ahead, a local campaigning group, was also involved in the Steering Group and in one of the project teams.

In accordance with the Healthcheck guidance, Work Groups were set up comprising volunteers from across the community, focusing on each of the four Healthcheck themes. The Work Group



leader represented his or her group on the Steering Group. The Steering Group met monthly to provide overall direction to the Healthcheck and a part time Project Coordinator was appointed from mid March to coordinate the activities of the groups.

A Project Team met regularly during the project, comprising the Project Chairman, the Work Group leaders and the Coordinator. The full list of people involved in the Steering Group and Work Groups is contained in Annex M.

David Mitchell-Baker joined the team at the end of June to lead the Social & Community effort after the initial leader withdrew due to work and other commitments. The Social & Community group of Healthcheck topics is the widest ranging of the four and presented the heaviest workload. David injected new impetus and ideas but was incapacitated for several weeks due to illness. This prevented him from covering some topics at all and from consulting on some to the depth planned. Hence there are areas in the Social & Community remit that will require further investigation. These are noted in the report.

1.6 The Healthcheck Report

This report records the results of Phase 1 of the Healthcheck project, carried out in the period February to December 2005. It describes how the team consulted the community, identifies the key findings in terms of the economy, social and community issues, transport and the environment, describes the community's Vision for the future and outlines key project ideas and initiatives. The Healthcheck report is a continually evolving and dynamic document to which further data will be added as ideas are developed during the next phase of the project.

This report comprises two volumes. This document contains the main report. Annexes providing detailed information are provided in electronic form on CD.

1.7 Next Steps

The next steps for the project will be to develop the project ideas into fully costed project proposals. These together will form an Action Plan which when delivered will help to achieve the Vision for Leatherhead and the communities of north Mole Valley. This process is described in Section 7.



2.3 Definition of Approach

2.3.1 Introduction

Following the launch of the Healthcheck, the Project Team developed an approach to the project to fit the agreed timescales and geographic scope of the Healthcheck and the number of volunteers offering assistance. The challenge was how best to involve as many people as possible from all sectors of the community and across the town and its ‘hinterland’. This required careful definition of the hinterland and the identification of an efficient approach to broad community involvement.

2.3.2 Leatherhead and its Hinterland

Leatherhead is not a traditional market town, where the town provides the key focus for a number of small surrounding villages and the countryside around. Whilst Leatherhead is considered the market town for the area, it is by no means the only focus in the area. The reality in Leatherhead is of a town of 9,600 residents surrounded to the east and west by the ‘villages’ of Ashtead, Bookham and Fetcham. These villages each have populations of similar or greater size than the market town itself and each has its own substantial hinterland.

Residents of Bookham, Fetcham and Ashtead, as well as Leatherhead, are also drawn to the neighbouring towns of Cobham and to some extent Dorking, and for larger shopping trips, Guildford, Epsom and Kingston are important centres.

Instead of a single hinterland focused on Leatherhead, the picture is therefore more of a number of overlapping hinterlands, the size of hinterland varying with the issues concerned, whether shopping, entertainment, sport or employment.

The Steering Group considered the following factors in identifying the hinterland for the town:

- The catchment area for the shopping area, Leisure Centre and the Theatre.
- The catchment area for Leatherhead station, although it is recognised that many residents in the area travel from Bookham and Ashtead stations
- The boundaries used in other surveys, including the census
- Consideration of the opportunities to increase the influence of the town.

Based on these considerations the hinterland of Leatherhead was defined as the area shown on the map Figure 2.2 including the villages of Ashtead, Bookham, Boxhill, Fetcham, Headley and Mickleham.



Figure 2.2: Leatherhead and its Hinterland
Scale _____ 1 mile



For the purposes of this Healthcheck, Leatherhead itself is defined as the area shown on the map Figure 2.3. This is the built up area bounded by the M25 and countryside to the north, the M25 to the east, the River Mole to the west and the countryside to the south. It therefore encompasses the town centre itself, the area around Leatherhead Common and the superstores to the north, and stretches to the Givons Grove estate, just the other side of the Leatherhead bypass to the south.

Taking account of the aims of the Healthcheck and the defined hinterland, the team then defined the scope of study as follows.

Scope of consultation: The Steering Group decided that it was important to consult residents throughout Leatherhead's hinterland as they are major consumers in terms of The shops, services, entertainment and leisure activities of the town and surroundings.

Scope of data collection and questions: Whilst the focus for the study was Leatherhead, the geographic area within which the team collected data for completing the worksheets depended on the issue concerned. For example, we collected data on the frequency of buses from the whole hinterland. However when identifying the number of shops, or the use of car parks, we focused on the town. The questionnaires included a comprehensive set of questions referring to Leatherhead (e.g. parking on the High Street) and also questions concerning the area in general (e.g. leisure or the provision of buses). Some questions related to people's views of the villages – these views are summarised in Section 4.8.

Scope of Healthcheck proposals: Similarly, Leatherhead Tomorrow's project list focuses on ideas to improve Leatherhead itself or the area in general. However, during the process, the team gained many ideas for improving the villages – these are also summarised in Section 4.8 to be passed to the relevant Residents' Association to progress. Details are found in Annex K.



Figure 2.3 Leatherhead scale _____ ½ mile



2.3.3 Approach to Community Involvement

We developed a strategy to capture the views of as wide as possible a cross-section of the community, considering factors such as age and gender; where people live within the hinterland; interests and hobbies; and disability. The strategy involved a mix of techniques to ensure that as wide as possible a cross-section of the population was involved.

An estimated 680 adults were involved in focus group meetings and 60 in Work Group specific discussions and over 400 came to public meetings. We had nearly 2000 adult and youth returns to questionnaires from across the community (including a general questionnaire, specialist questionnaires focusing on Work Group themes and a young people's questionnaire). In addition to the young people's questionnaire, we held workshops with young people at local schools and youth groups. In total, we involved approximately 9.5% of the adult population in the Ashted, Bookham, Fetcham and Leatherhead area.

The key elements of our approach are described in the remainder of this Section.

2.4 Questionnaires and Surveys

The team prepared a general questionnaire covering people's views of Leatherhead and the area, their Vision for the future and ideas for projects and initiatives. The questionnaire was distributed between May and October. It was distributed with newsletters to community groups, included in school book bags or referred to in school newsletters. It was also handed out at meetings with focus groups and made available to people visiting the Help Shop, Theatre, CAB and other public places in Leatherhead, and public places in the villages. An on-line version of the questionnaires was included on the Leatherhead Tomorrow website.

In addition, the project team carried out one-to-one surveys at selected community events around the community and in the high streets, using a shorter version of the general questionnaire. In 2004, the Town Centre Forum had carried out two surveys of public satisfaction in Leatherhead, Fetcham and Ashted - an 'Environmental Audit Survey', and a 'Visits to Leatherhead Survey'. The results of these surveys are incorporated into the analysis of Leatherhead Tomorrow's questionnaires.

In total, some 1218 general questionnaires were returned. Of this total, 1158 were returned before the closing date and therefore included in the quantitative analysis. The breakdown between the different questionnaires was as follows:

General Questionnaires

Type of Questionnaire	Number of questionnaires
Long general questionnaire	540
Short general survey questionnaire	350
Town Centre Forum Environmental Audit Questionnaire	119
Town Centre Forum 'Visits to Leatherhead Survey'	149
TOTAL	1158

The detailed analysis of the questionnaire is provided in Annex E and the results integrated with the overall findings in Section 4. In addition we analysed responses to a youth questionnaire and specialist questionnaires relating to the Work Group themes (see Sections 2.5.3 and 2.6.2).



2.5 Focus Group Discussions and Presentations

2.5.1 Community Groups

We identified a number of community groups with whom we were able to hold discussions at one of their regular meetings. By carefully identifying the groups, the team ensured representation across all sections of the community.

2.5.2 Hard to Reach Groups

We took care to include hard to reach groups such as elderly, young and more vulnerable people, and people with disabilities. There is a higher than average percentage of disabled people living in Leatherhead due to the presence of The Queen Elizabeth's Foundation, SeeAbility and other organisations for the disabled. We helped them to identify issues of concern and where improvements could be made by meeting on a one-to-one basis and by holding group discussions. The most valuable information was obtained through arranging accompanied walks to and around town with people with disabilities and elderly people to see first hand where improvements are needed.

2.5.3 Young People

Meetings with Mole Valley Youth Voice, the School Council at Therfield secondary school in Leatherhead, and two of St George's Church Youth Groups in Ashted provided useful insight into the views of young people. We also received 316 responses to the youth questionnaire which we had circulated to all students at Therfield school, and to youngsters via the Youth Café, church youth groups, the website and other personal contacts.

Children at The Woodville School in Leatherhead were involved in focused teacher-led discussions and completed focused questionnaires, and their school council participated in discussions over a wide range of issues. The Woodville School also made a photographic record of the good and bad things about their route from school into Leatherhead town centre. These pictures were then converted into a rolling *PowerPoint* presentation which was shown at the start of each of the September Progress Report meetings with memorable effect.

2.5.4 Presentations to Parish Councils, Residents' Associations and Community Groups

The team arranged talks at a number of community meetings in Leatherhead and the hinterland. We found these meetings were excellent venues for explaining the background to the project and the scope and coverage of the Healthcheck, and for promoting the Healthcheck. Approximately 680 people were involved in focus group discussions and presentations. Annex D lists the groups involved in consultations and provides details of the feedback.

2.6 Work Group Activities

The Work Groups carried out research and consultations as follows:

2.6.1 The Snapshot

The Work Groups first carried out the Snapshot in accordance with the Countryside Agency guidance. The Snapshot is an overview of the geographic area in the context of the four work streams using data available from census and other publications. It forms important background information for identifying issues to investigate and for deciding on priorities for study. The Leatherhead Snapshot is summarised in Section 3 and the supporting data are provided in Annex C.



2.6.2 Worksheets and Work Group Consultations

Between March and September, the Work Groups engaged in discussions with specific interest groups across the community in relation to the individual Work Group themes:

- The Economy group consulted a range of businesses, retailers and others interested in the economy of the area, and issued a questionnaire to employees of Leatherhead businesses. Some 60 completed questionnaires were received from employees.
- The Social and Community group consulted officers and professionals with responsibilities for community development, safety, leisure and health from the County Council and District Council, voluntary and private sectors.
- The Transport and Access group consulted public transport users groups, cyclists, people with mobility problems and school children, and issued a transport questionnaire, a commuter questionnaire and questionnaires for school children. 158 commuter and 103 transport questionnaires were returned completed.
- The Environment group held consultations with a number of contacts in Leatherhead and the surrounding area, including the Leatherhead and District Countryside Protection Society (LDCPS) who also returned 34 completed environmental questionnaires from the 190 distributed. A specific questionnaire on sustainability issues was issued to 200 houses in Leatherhead, Fetcham and Ashted; 79 completed questionnaires were returned.

In addition to the 434 responses to the above *specialist* questionnaires, approximately 60 residents, council officers, other professionals and representatives of interested parties were involved in discussions focusing on the specific Work Group issues.

The guidance provides worksheet templates which formed the framework for data collection, enabling the Project Team to collect information on a full range of issues relevant to each Work Group area. The completed worksheets are in Annexes G to J.

2.7 Public Meetings

In September the Project Team arranged further public consultation events, again at locations across the community. The Team:

- Provided feedback to the community on the key findings and the progress of consultations to date
- Enabled attendees to voice their views on priorities to attach to each of the key issues
- Discussed the attendees ' Vision for Leatherhead'
- Asked the attendees to contribute their ideas for initiatives and projects

175 people attended across the five locations. Attendees were asked to comment on early project ideas and to note down their own ideas for improvements. These ideas were combined with those obtained in the Work Group consultations and used as a basis for developing the project ideas list. The findings from the public meetings are described in Annex B.

2.8 Publicity

Regular press releases were issued to the Leatherhead Advertiser covering the progress of the project and how the community could be involved. The team developed a website which proved successful in informing a wide cross section of the community. Three on-line questionnaires were available on the website: the general questionnaire, and the questionnaires for employees and for young people. In addition the team made use of community newsletter distribution networks for publicising the public events, providing updates on progress, and distributing questionnaires.



2.9 Taking Account of Other Studies

The following surveys had been carried out prior to the commencement of the Healthcheck:

- The Town Centre Forum had arranged distribution of two questionnaires in October 2004.
- Bookham Residents' Association had issued a questionnaire to households in Bookham as part of the village's 'Bookham 2010' study.
- Mole Valley District Council had issued its annual Residents Survey as part of its evaluation of quality of life issues in the District. The report was published in January 2005.
- Headley Village was in the process of preparing a Village Plan.

In addition, during the period of the Healthcheck, MVDC was in the process of reviewing the Community Strategy and developing the Local Development Framework to replace the Local Plan. As the Community Strategy will be a key mechanism for delivering some of the Healthcheck projects, the project team liaised with relevant officers as the project list was developing.

In September 2005, MVDC announced its plan to consider the future of the Leatherhead Leisure Centre. When this was announced, the Healthcheck Steering Group put on hold the proposed leisure survey pending the results of the MVDC survey. The initial results of the MVDC survey (published in December 2005) are summarised in Annex A.

The Healthcheck analysis demonstrates the enormous support for the Leisure Centre and the support for improvements to facilities at both the Leisure Centre and within the area. It is clear that a wide spectrum leisure survey would be supported by the community.

A summary of the findings of these other surveys is provided in Annex A. The results of these surveys have been taken into account in the Healthcheck.

2.10 From Key Findings to Action Plan

Over the summer of 2005, the team used a technique called a SWOT analysis. This examines all the data available from the worksheets, questionnaires, public meetings and consultations to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats affecting the town. From the SWOTs, the teams identified the key issues and findings of the Healthcheck, described in Section 4. The detailed SWOT analysis for each Work Group theme is provided with the worksheets in Annexes G - J.

Following the public meetings held in September, the team arranged workshops aimed at developing the Vision for the town based on information received from all the consultations. The Vision is reported in Section 5.2.

The development of the project ideas presented in Section 6 of this report was based on the analysis of all the key issues and other findings in the context of the Vision. These project ideas will be developed into fully costed project proposals in Phase 2 of the project.



2.11 Summary of Supporting Research

Section 4 sets out the key findings of each Work Group theme and includes sections on issues expressed by young people and disabled people, and village residents’ views on their village. Supporting data are provided in the following Annexes:

A	Previous studies	G	Economy: Worksheets and other Supporting Data
B	Feedback from Community Events	H	Social and Community: Worksheets and other Supporting Data
C	Snapshot	I	Transport and Access: Worksheets and other Supporting Data
D	Involving Community Groups	J	Environment: Worksheets and other Supporting Data
E	Analysis of the General Questionnaire	K	Consultations in the Villages
F	Consulting Young People	N	The High Street and Theatre Projects



SECTION 3 SNAPSHOT

3.1 Introduction

This section provides a summary of the Snapshot of the Leatherhead area carried out by the Work Groups. The Snapshot comprises key background data gathered at the beginning of the project to provide guidance to setting the overall approach to the Healthcheck itself. The full Snapshots for each Work Group theme are provided in Annex C.

3.2 Economy

The Leatherhead area has a population of about 47,000 and provides employment for 21,000 people in over 2,600 businesses. Leatherhead town itself provides 10,100 jobs in 933 businesses. Employment is mainly office-based rather than skilled or unskilled manual. The unemployment rate is low (0.6%).

A notable feature of the area is that over 10,000 people commute out every day and about the same number commute in.

Leatherhead is typical of the rest of the country in that the vast majority of its businesses employ less than 10 people each and only a very few employ more than 200 people. The ward where the vast majority of businesses are concentrated is Leatherhead North.

The focus for retail provision is not just the town centre – Ashted, Bookham, Fetcham, and Kingston Road, Leatherhead all have their own retail centres. However Leatherhead town centre is the largest and contains a range of retail outlets as well as services such as hairdressing, restaurants & cafes; and professional services such as banks, building societies and estate agents.

3.3 Social and Community

Leatherhead is the north Mole Valley centre for County and District Councils health, police, CAB, culture and leisure services. It has experienced much positive change in recent years, with the reopening of The Theatre, the Arts and Drama Festival, the reconstruction of the Kingston Road recreation ground, several public celebration events and increasing social and economic activity. This may be further enhanced with the construction of significant numbers of mainly one and two bedroom houses and flats, mainly near the centre, redevelopment of the Bull Hotel site and proposed changes in many public services. Leatherhead has an opportunity to embrace these changes to become a more cohesive and inclusive community, taking advantage of increasing council revenue and prosperity.

The community of Leatherhead has never been shy of innovation. From the Theatre to the Royal School for the Blind (now SeeAbility), from The Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for the Disabled to the Night Hostel, from the Clubhouse to the Pitstop, Wildlife Rescue and the All Saints Family Project, this is a creative and warm-hearted community.

3.4 Transport

Although Leatherhead, Ashted and Bookham are each served by a train station, each of the stations is on the edge of its catchment area thus involving extra local journey time by car, cycle, bus or on foot for many. Fetcham has no station and therefore it has to rely on the local bus service for public transport. The limited bus service has no central terminus in Leatherhead, and only two of the routes run a regular weekday half-hour service. There is no fast coach service serving the town or the villages. Cycle paths are also extremely limited because the roads in the area are, with just one exception, single carriageways. The result of this is that the



car is the predominant form of local transport for people wishing to make journeys to work and to local schools, shops and leisure activities. Car ownership within households in Leatherhead, Ashted, Bookham, Fetcham and Headley runs at a high 87.7%.

3.5 Environment

Leatherhead is endowed with a very rich and varied environment. The town itself contains many beautiful listed buildings and contains several conservation areas. It is set within countryside which is of exceptional interest.

South of the town are the North Downs, which make up the large Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the famous Mole Gap, where the River Mole winds its way through the North Downs. North of the town are Bookham and Ashted Commons, the latter of which is a National Nature Reserve. Three Sites of Special Scientific Interest are to be found within these landscapes as well as eight Sites of Nature Conservation Importance.

The most unusual aspect of Leatherhead's setting is that the section of the River Mole corridor, which runs between Leatherhead and its close neighbour, Fetcham, is a Local Nature Reserve and is readily accessible to local residents.

There is an excellent network of footpaths and bridleways in the countryside, close to the town, but access to it from the town is difficult without a car, since the bypass is dangerous to cross for cyclists and pedestrians.





SECTION 4: KEY FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Section 4.2 provides an overview of the key findings of the Healthcheck. It identifies the key strengths and weaknesses of Leatherhead, and the threats which exist at a broad strategic level. Key opportunities to preserve or enhance these strengths, address weaknesses and manage the threats are described.

This overview is followed by sections providing the key findings for each of the four Work Group themes. Each section commences with a summary of the Work Group activities and the data sources. Sections 4.8 to 4.10 provide feedback on the results of consultations in the villages, with young people and people with disabilities.

4.2 Overall Findings and SWOTs

4.2.1 Overall Findings

The Healthcheck has demonstrated that most people in the community feel that it is a good place to live with wonderful countryside around and within it. Respondents were generally positive about what Leatherhead has to offer, especially noting recent improvements in the High Street and the reopening of the Theatre. Residents of Leatherhead and the villages not only enjoy easy access to local shops and the surrounding countryside but also to destinations further afield by way of a good weekday train service and the close proximity of the M25. The town is endowed with a very rich and varied environment and contains many beautiful listed buildings.

'What is the best feature of Leatherhead?'

Source: 1158 questionnaires:

- 1 *The Riverside*
- 2 *Entertainment*
- 3 *Architecture*
- 4 *Eateries*

The river was viewed by many as a key feature of Leatherhead. It is also one of the most valued features of the town. People felt that more could be made of the river and the area could be made a much more attractive and accessible part of the town. There was a range of views on this subject, ranging from 'leave it as it is' to 'allow boating on the river'. The majority wished to retain the unique wildlife while improving access to it and adding features such as seats or footpaths/cycle ways. There were requests for a café near to the river and for picnic tables. Many people wanted the footpaths to be better maintained and also extended further into the countryside. Some suggested that there should be signage to the river from the town centre and information with pictures about what to look out for in the way of wildlife.

The town itself is full of beautiful buildings. There are some eyesores and people felt that the streetscape in the pedestrian centre of the town could be improved. People see the town both as a place to shop and as the place where they could meet and chat with friends. So they asked for seating and pleasant civic spaces. There were also a number of requests to make the entrance to the town more welcoming.

Residents would welcome improvements to the number and mix of shops in Leatherhead. In particular, residents would generally like to see more clothing shops, more independent shops but fewer charity shops. The ability of the town to





support large outlets such as department stores, requested by a number of respondents, is limited due to existing retail units being small and the lack of suitable development sites.

The pedestrianisation of the High Street is popular and is being exploited by local restaurants and cafés. This has helped foster a lively atmosphere in the High Street at lunch times and in the evenings. But a balance needs to be achieved between the convenience of parking in it after 4.30pm, the needs of the shops and restaurants, the safety of pedestrians, and its use for the market and as access for deliveries.

Leatherhead is regarded as offering poor parking facilities, particularly for shoppers. This is based partly on the unpopular Swan Centre car park but also on the alternative nearby car parks often being full at peak times. There are limited 'pop and shop' facilities and so there is a serious demand for more short term parking at cheaper rates. Parking pressures are increased by workers who park in residential streets. Bus services, particularly in the southern part of Leatherhead and the villages, are poor though train services (other than on Sundays) are good. Walkers and cyclists suffer from poor maintenance of paths and dangerous crossings. Disjointed routes make cycling less enjoyable or safe and cycle paths are limited.

The pressure put on the roads by the high proportion of car use in the area inevitably causes congestion. The one-way system around Leatherhead is seen by many as a barrier to passing trade as well as being uninviting and confusing to visitors. Signage around the town is confusing and unattractive. The plans to make Leret Way more attractive are welcomed.

There is a need for more affordable homes, especially for families and not just for "key" workers. The price of houses is a constraint on recruitment, especially for small businesses and retailers, since it is increasingly difficult for people who work in the area to be able to afford to live within it. Housing provision and support for people with special needs is poor, and it is considered that some elderly people would benefit from help to downsize their property, thereby making their lives easier and enabling their homes to become available for younger families.

The jobs in the town are mainly office-based rather than factory or workshop based and are concentrated in north Leatherhead, thus contributing to the congestion. Employment opportunities for people with learning difficulties and those wishing to learn practical skills to help them find work are not well supported. It is not easy to become established as a new small business.

Leatherhead is not seen as a cohesive community compared with the surrounding villages, although full of thriving clubs and societies covering a wide range of activities. Because of the lack of a community-wide organisation and a free local paper, many complained of not knowing what was happening, especially in the north of the town. The existing organisations could consider amalgamating or forming an all-Leatherhead association to initiate action on behalf of the community and represent its interests. While Bookham and Ashted have good neighbour schemes, Leatherhead and Fetcham have a limited car driver scheme operating through surgeries.

While appreciated as a unique facility in the area, many would like improvements to the Leisure Centre. Youngsters in particular asked for a range of additional sporting and recreation facilities, not necessarily at the Leisure Centre. Better entertainment and more community celebrations were asked for in consultations with all ages and in response to questionnaires. The Town Centre and Swan Centre managers have recently been active in promoting such events and the Theatre is actively promoting a range of entertainments.

On health matters, the consultation in respect of the new acute hospital location has upset many, as have the continuing changes in health provision. On public safety, youngsters feel misunderstood and stigmatised by the anti-social behaviour of the few. A shortage of facilities for the young was a constant complaint. Money matters are a source of problems for a



significant number of people. Financial literacy is often poor and CAB services are stretched. A group of local residents is promoting a credit union which will provide training in financial literacy as part of its services. There are no Community Legal Service Partnership contracts in Leatherhead.

4.2.2. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

The following table sets out the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified in the Healthcheck.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Easy access M25, London, airports River Mole and attractive countryside Leisure Centre Theatre Strong, able community Range of major and many smaller employers Low crime rates Proactive Town and Swan Centre manager Spending power of residents and in-commuters Up and coming evening sector Small compact town with basic shopping needs and eateries within walking distance All Saints Family Project and North Leatherhead Partnership Workers Good sense of community in villages	Labour shortage Poor bus services Lack of safe cycle routes Poor traffic system Poor parking Limited range of shops Lack of commercial links between town and countryside Few mechanisms for community cooperation and communication Lack of integrated town planning Small size of retail units Shortage of sites for retail development Insufficient activities for families and young people
Opportunities	Threats
Substantial new housing around town centre Proximity to River Mole and Countryside Community cooperation and communication Development of the Leisure Centre Develop Church Street area as piazza and integrate with High Street Theatre management initiatives Improve town centre environment Connect local farmers with local consumers Promote town to visitors and new traders Create more interesting facilities for families and the young people New integrated junior school Resources of retired residents Development potential of vacant sites.	Complacency Decline in under 40s Increase in dependent elderly people Overdevelopment and infill Poor support for Theatre and traders Competition from larger towns Downgraded Leisure Centre Over consultation and not much quick action Poorer bus service because of under-use Downgrading of health and community services Widening of M25 and airport expansion

4.3 High Street and Theatre/Church Street Findings

Two important groups of findings emerged which span a number of the Work Group areas, and are singled out for separate attention because of the scale and breadth of the projects which will result. These are:

- the concerns over the High Street
- the Community’s views regarding the importance and potential of the Theatre



4.3.1 Key findings relating to the High Street

The pedestrianisation of the High Street is seen by the majority to be a positive step but the questionnaires and surveys carried out by the team have highlighted a number of problems which need to be resolved to satisfy the multifarious needs of all the users. The issues relate to all four themes of the Healthcheck hence their resolution becomes a general integrated project.

Economically, the general opinion is that the High Street is currently a much livelier place, especially in the evenings, and that Leatherhead is improving as a centre. For the shops pedestrianisation is a boon but one which causes problems of access. In order to supply the shops with goods it is necessary for some lorries to drive up the High Street, but this cannot always be achieved before 10.00 am or after 4.30 pm when pedestrianisation begins and ends.



The market traders don't always find it easy to set up or dismantle their stalls when faced with parked cars at the beginning or end of the day. The restaurant managers are taking advantage of the pedestrianisation by allowing their patrons to eat outside, and people are drawn to Leatherhead to eat in the evening because they can park conveniently in the High Street. Whilst in the winter, restaurant managers are only too happy to lose the space outside their premises to parked cars; there is a potential conflict of interest in the summer months. The convenience of being able to park in the High Street is seen as one of the reasons for the success of the High Street eating establishments but obviously a balance has to be achieved.

Residents commented that the town lacks an attractive focal point, a place where people can meet and chat or simply sit and watch the world go by. Suggestions such as making the area at the lower end of the High Street into more of a focus, especially if the vista into Church Street were to be opened up, need further assessment. Equally important is the need for seats further up the High Street for those who need to sit because they need to rest. With an increasingly elderly population we see this as a very important issue which needs to be addressed and one that has been raised time and time again in our surveys.

Environmentally, the High Street could be made much more inviting and attractive with the introduction of shrubs and flowers. The stark greyness of the ramps at the lower end of the High Street could be softened by strategic, colourful planting and the area outside the Duke's Head could be equally enhanced. This, and welcoming signage, more carefully placed cycle racks, litter bins and street furniture would all help to make the High Street an inviting place for families to visit. The High Street would also benefit from better designed shop fronts and more sympathetic window dressing especially for such chains as Argos.

Vehicle access to the High Street has already been touched on, but there are further considerations for pedestrians. When cars are allowed back onto the High Street after 4.30pm pedestrians can be unsure where it is safe to walk and sometimes have difficulty in accessing the shops because cars have parked too close to the sides. Cars and bicycles travelling at too



fast a speed make the High Street dangerous so an enforced speed limit would be welcomed. And finally, the broken cobbled surface of the High Street is a concern for all who walk there as there are so many trip hazards and the drainage gully is also a problem. A new level surface for the centre is highly desirable not only from the point of view of safety but also aesthetically because attempts to mend it in places have resulted in ugly infills.

In summary, the pedestrianisation of the High Street is generally seen as a success and now that it is well settled in, attention to these issues in the form of a review could build on that success. This High Street review is one of the key projects within our proposed list of improvements.

4.3.2 The Theatre and Church Street

Throughout the surveys and consultations, where people were asked what they liked best about Leatherhead and what they wish to be improved, the Theatre featured highly. It was also highlighted in responses to questions on leisure and entertainment, and in terms of its potential to help in filling the demand for better meeting and conference facilities.

'The Theatre has been under-utilised for many years. Go and see what's on now though.'

'The Theatre – use it or lose it.'

There is widespread appreciation of the re-opening and subsequent development of the Theatre's live shows, films, cafe and bar. Along with the Leisure Centre and restaurants it is seen as a key attraction that brings people into the town.

In the analysis of the general questionnaire, entertainment topped the list of Social & Community features ranked as best in Leatherhead. In giving reasons for visiting the town, the Theatre came fourth after shopping, banking and eating out.

Looking for what can be done to strengthen the local community, the two top suggestions from local people were for more community events/ street entertainment and for an improved Theatre. On the critical side, when people expressed concern about aspects of the town's appearance, the discoloured concrete 'fly tower' topped with telecommunication equipment was high on the list of eyesores.

In Annex F the feedback from Youth consultations shows a thread of demand for more entertainment, including whole family entertainment, with the Theatre shows and films listed as examples. These findings were confirmed at community consultation events. They also showed the need for more places for people to meet and socialise, to improve visitor attractions and facilities and to continue the rejuvenation of the town centre, including Church Street. The Theatre has a role to play in all of these. There is a need for better sign posting to all key locations, including the Theatre and when seeking later evening bus services, people want them mainly for the entertainment, recreational and eating activities, now a feature of the town.

For its part, the Theatre management is called on to publicise the shows and films more visibly, particularly in outlying villages such as Headley.

Resulting from these findings, the Theatre features as the core of one of the eight overall objectives which give focus to proposed projects that will achieve the Vision for Leatherhead of



The Theatre

LEATHERHEAD *Tomorrow*



tomorrow. This objective is *"To develop Leatherhead as the leisure, recreational, sport and entertainment centre for the northern Mole Valley area"*. The Theatre also contributes to other objectives and projects aiming to continue the revitalisation of the town. These are integrated in the project lists in Section 6 and brought together as a focused proposal in Annex N.

Incorporated in the projects is one already initiated by the Theatre management to improve the appearance and usefulness of the area outside the entrance in Church Street. This is supported in our findings as it will not only facilitate better access to the Theatre but also provide a new social focal point and attraction which will bring more people into the Town Centre and Church Street in particular.



4.4 Key Findings - Economy

Author: John Howarth

4.4.1 Information Gathering

We obtained information on the local Economy from the following sources:

Data Sources	
i)	<p>Official Government Data</p> <p>This provided information about population, employment, number of firms by ward and size of firms. Tables in Annex E are based on information obtained from these sources.</p>
ii)	<p>Meetings, Discussions and Interviews with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leatherhead Town Centre Manager: Lucy Hanson • Swan Centre Manager: Pat Lawless • Mole Valley District Council Business Development Officer: Simon Matthews • Menzies Chartered Accountants: Partner: Paul McWhirter • Leatherhead Round Table • Leatherhead Rotary • Leatherhead Lions • Leatherhead & District Chamber of Commerce Limited: Directors • Retailers & Businesses within Leatherhead
iii)	<p>Published Information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publications and seminars provided by Tourism South East
iv)	<p>Feedback at Focus Group Consultations and Public Meetings</p>
v)	<p>Questionnaires and Surveys</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The General Questionnaire included questions on how the general economy of Leatherhead could be improved. • A specific "Working in Leatherhead" Questionnaire was distributed to businesses and their employees in Leatherhead. 60 responses were received.

4.4.2 Key Findings and Ideas for Improvement

From the consultations, surveys and worksheets the team identified the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOTs) in relation to the economy. The detailed SWOT analysis is provided in Annex G and summarised in Section 4.4.3. The key findings are presented below.

i) Shopping, Catering and other services within the town

By far the most comments in respect of the economy related to shopping, retail provision and town centre services. This was across all stakeholder groups contacted.

Comments on shopping fell into two broad categories:

- Introducing more variety of shops into the existing portfolio
- Increasing the number of shops in total.

In particular respondents wanted:

- More clothes shops – for women, for children but less so for men;
- More specialist food shops – fishmonger, butcher, delicatessen;
- More multiple retailers – Woolworths, M&S, TKMaxx, HMV;
- Teenagers in particular wanted outlets specifically dealing with their needs.



Within this range respondents wanted one shop, or a collection of shops, to act as a “magnet” to pull them in and make a visit to the town worthwhile. There was also some conflict in that some respondents wanted “value for money” shops whilst others wanted retail provision in the town to go “upmarket”.

There was also a feeling amongst many residents that there were too many establishments in the town catering for the office population but not the resident population – hairdressers and sandwich bars were cases in point. Some respondents pointed out that there were already, in their opinion, too many catering establishments in the town. Some felt that the number of catering outlets was about right but that the mix needed to be changed with more restaurants and fewer “take away” units. There were also comments that there were too many financial institutions and estate agents in the town. There was not one request for an increase in the number of such businesses (A2 use) within the town.

Some responses to a question to children at The Woodville School: 'How would you improve Leatherhead?'

*'Sports shop'
'A Fun Learning shop',
'Toy shop'
'More toys at Tesco'
'Clothes for Kid's'
'Things to do when mum shops'*

However as will be noted from the “Snapshot” data in Annex C, there is very limited opportunity in the town centre for bringing in more shops. There are very few vacant premises available in the town and there is little land available for additional retail development (the Lidl site in Station Road excepted). In addition the retail units in the town are small, and this acts as a constraint in attracting larger multiples. However as premises become vacant through the natural turnover of the retail business stock, opportunities could be taken to introduce more variety.

The influence and power of the commercial landlords, who take decisions in respect of their own businesses that have an impact on the town, is not to be under-estimated. There has been one example where a landlord quite deliberately targeted a particular type of business, brought it into the town, and has seen it become successful.

Recommendation EC 1.1:

That a working group be set up involving the commercial landlords, the Town Centre Manager, the Mole Valley Business Development Officer (Simon Matthews), the Swan Centre Manager and the Chamber of Commerce to ensure that the shops and services in the town are appropriate for the requirements of residents and visitors alike.

There was criticism that there were too many charity shops in the town and the comment was made that charity shops depress the image of the town as an attractive shopping venue. At the start of the Healthcheck there were six such outlets and this had grown to eight by December 2005.

There was a feeling that the number of charity shops should be limited. This could be managed via the mechanism established as a result of the recommendation above. However local planning regulations do not identify charity retailers as being different from other retailers. It may therefore be sensible to see if such regulations should be altered to accommodate this requirement.



Recommendation EC1.2:

That a working group be established between MVDC Planning Department, Councillors and representatives of the town to examine ways of amending the existing planning regulations.

The Swan Centre shopping centre was criticised for being draughty and “user unfriendly.” In particular comments were made about the areas in the Centre that were open to the weather. Respondents commented that the seats in the Centre were in the open areas. Typical comments were: *“It would be nice to walk through the Centre on a rainy day and not get wet;”* or *“It would be nice to sit down in the Swan Centre and be protected from the elements.”*



The Swan Centre

Roofing over the open areas, providing doors at the entrances and exits, and installing more seating could make the Centre a much more attractive shopping venue – and could help increase shopper numbers to the town.

Recommendation EC1.3:

That the Swan Centre Management install roofs over the open areas in the Swan Centre.

As noted earlier comments were made about the need in the town for more independent and specialist food shops. Comments were also made about “food miles” - it was noted that some excellent foods were produced locally and the question was asked as to why such produce was not readily available in the town.

Recommendation EC1.4:

That an outlet for locally produced (i.e. local to Surrey) food be established within the town, either via the markets or via an existing retail unit.

The markets – the monthly Farmers’ market and the twice weekly General Market – were, on balance, both seen as being beneficial to the town although comments were made that they both could (and should) be expanded and improved. At the time of writing the future of the Farmers’ Market is uncertain. Nevertheless it is considered that both markets are strengths in the town and that more use should be made of them. They have the added advantage of having the potential to increase retail capacity in the town centre.



The Market

Recommendation EC1.5:

That the Farmers’ Market and the twice weekly High Street Market be expanded and improved.

Respondents to the various surveys that were undertaken were conscious of the fact that Leatherhead as a shopping venue is in competition with other – in some cases larger – venues. Epsom, Guildford, Kingston and Cobham were all mentioned as competitors. Yet some respondents commented that they came to Leatherhead instead of the above mentioned towns. Clearly there is potential if it can be harnessed properly.



Recommendations EC1.1 to EC1.5 when implemented will contribute to improving the attractiveness of the town. In addition to this it was suggested that the competitiveness of the town must be improved.

Recommendation EC1.6:

That the working groups defined in Recommendations EC1.1 and EC1.3 investigate and implement ways of improving the competitive edge of the town in comparison with neighbouring towns.

The shortage of land for further town centre, or close to town centre, additional retail development is a weakness. Within the close proximity of the town centre only the Lidl site is available and when developed will provide only one additional retailer – although one which supplies a wide range of products.

However if this development should not materialise for any reason then the opportunity should be taken to develop additional retail floor space on this site, with a range of retailers in small units, that possibly could be combined into larger units if required, as requested by respondents.

Recommendation EC2.1:

That the Lidl site be earmarked for additional retail units if the planned development does not materialise.

The Lidl development does not deny the possibility of further retail development on the edge of the town, as exemplified by the Tesco and B&Q stores. The consultations identified a demand for multiple retail development in the town. However the retail premises, apart from J. Sainsbury, WH Smith and Boots, are small in size and hence unattractive for multiple retailers. There is a shortage of sites for new retail development, both within the town centre and within the other built up areas of the town. This may mean that the town cannot satisfy the requirement for additional retailing unless there is “out of town” or near “out of town” development.

It is acknowledged that there are environmental, access and planning issues (in particular in respect of encroachment on Green Belt) that may constrain or even prevent such developments. However this should not act as a deterrent to identify possible location(s) for such developments which meet with the community’s wish to protect the surrounding and in-town green environment.

Recommendation EC2.2:

That suitable sites be identified within the existing built up areas of the town for retail development.

Leatherhead town centre is not the only point of retail focus within the area covered by the Healthcheck – although it is the largest. Ashtead, Bookham, Fetcham and the Kingston Road area of Leatherhead each have their own retail provision.

As in Leatherhead town centre the retail units in these locations are small apart from Tesco and B&Q. These retail clusters compete amongst themselves but they do have the facility to complement each other. There are types of shops available in some areas and not in others. For example the comment was often made that Bookham has three butchers and that Leatherhead doesn’t have any!

Recommendation EC1.1 refers to the need to ensure that the shops and services in the town are appropriate for the requirements of residents and visitors alike. This concept can be applied to the Healthcheck area as a whole so that the totality of this provision meets these needs as far as possible.



Recommendation EC2.3:

That the working group described in Recommendation EC1.1 and the Residents' Associations, work together to develop plans to ensure that retail developments in the town centre and the villages are mutually compatible and complementary.

The demand by residents for additional small specialist shops (e.g. clothing, food shops, toy shop etc.) can only be met in the non-multiple sector by individuals or small businesses carrying the commercial risk of investing in such outlets.

The proprietors of one new business in the town said “*we have invested all our life savings in this business in this town.*”

There is nothing to prevent residents in the town (and the surrounding area) from investing in retail development themselves if the appropriate mechanism can be put in place. There are examples in other towns and villages where local residents have bought into their own High Streets to, for example, keep a general store or post office open.

Recommendation EC2.4:

That the feasibility of establishing a mechanism to allow residents of Leatherhead and the surrounding area to invest in expanding the retail mix in the town be carried out

The outcomes of the above recommendations will help define the future strategic development of the town. Lidl may be established; there may or may not be sites suitable for further retail development; the Residents' Associations may not be able to establish complementarity; it may not be feasible to set up the investment mechanism as indicated. The development strategy for the town is dependent upon the outcomes of the above projects. Hence:

Recommendation EC2.5

Develop and implement a strategy for improving the vitality of the town and the surrounding areas that recognises the different needs of the residents in both the town and its hinterland.

The Kingston Road area of Leatherhead is unique in its geography. Unlike the other centres, which are quite compact, it is stretched out in a ribbon from Woodville School, past the Plough Roundabout and over the railway bridge up to the large Tesco and B&Q stores. It has the potential to complement the town centre, to provide additional employment and to provide a location where some of the extra retail and service facilities could be located.

Recommendation EC2.6

That a strategy to reinvigorate the Kingston Road area in terms of retail development, character and ambience be developed.

ii) Employment and Skills

With unemployment in the Leatherhead area at very low levels it was not surprising that few comments were made about it. Those issues that were raised concerned:

- The provision of facilities to help people start up in business for themselves;
- The shortage of reasonably priced business premises available for micro businesses (i.e. businesses employing less than 10 people but typically single person enterprises);
- The shortage of “suitable” employment opportunities for young people;
- The shortage of manufacturing and skilled and unskilled manual jobs.

The first two points arose out of discussions with people in Bookham, Fetcham and Ashted during the various consultations that took place in those locations. These are perhaps reflections of the rents charged on commercial property and the nature of that commercial



property in the area – which is suited to businesses of a more substantial nature. These comments arose despite the presence in the town of several enterprise centres or business centres.

One lady in Bookham was particularly concerned that her son had to work at jobs he particularly did not like because he was unable to obtain business premises of a suitable (small) size and at a rent that he could afford.

Young people were particularly aware that, in their words, “*there are not enough interesting or exciting jobs for young people.*”

Recommendation EC3.1.

That facilities (premises and access to advice and support) be established for entrepreneurs (both young and old) to start and develop their own businesses (including retail businesses)

Not everybody is suited, or has the wish, to become self employed and run their own business – even a “lifestyle” business. Following on from the above, and recognising the nature of the predominant type of employment in Leatherhead, i.e. office based, there is a need to develop employment opportunities for those whose skills are more suited to less desk bound work.

Recommendation EC3.2:

To facilitate the creation of more employment opportunities for skilled and unskilled manual workers.

Evidence was presented to the effect that there were few opportunities for individuals who were for whatever reason disadvantaged in the workplace to gain work. This evidence came from bodies such as ASFP, ALDAG and MENCAP amongst others. In the recent past “The Gallery” in Leatherhead High Street provided opportunities for people who had mental health problems to gain useful experience and build their confidence before going back to work.

There is evidence from other towns in the South East that the “Social Enterprise” and “Social Firm” sector can be beneficial in this effect and can make useful contributions to the local economy. It is suggested therefore that this is an initiative that should be pursued.

Recommendation EC3.3

Develop projects in consultation with ASFP, ALDAG, MENCAP amongst others to develop the confidence and skills of vulnerable and less able residents to help them gain employment

It is difficult for people in the area to learn new skills and develop existing ones with a view to getting back to work because of the shortage of education facilities in the town, a situation not helped by the recent developments in respect of Nescot and IT training. Many of the small businesses are struggling to recruit staff. There are few opportunities for young people in particular to combine college training (e.g. in catering skills) and gain practical experience in these skills in businesses within the area.

Recommendation EC3.4

Investigate opportunities with the SCC Widening Participation Project for further education, financial literacy training, vocational training and life long learning and facilitate the coordination of training providers.

iii) Integration of the Business and Resident Communities

Many people commented that there were two quite different broad groups of people in the town: those who lived in the town, some of whom worked in it; and those who commuted into the town to work. There was a feeling expressed by many who lived in the town that those who commuted in to work in the business parks were psychologically remote from the town. There was a feeling that more should be done to integrate the commuters into the life of the town and



to encourage businesses to allow some of their facilities – conference rooms, car parks for example – to be used by the local community.

Recommendation EC3.5:

That measures be taken to integrate the business community more closely with the town.

iv) Promotion of the Town

Traders in the town centre, particularly retailers, expressed concerns that as a result of the recent history of the town footfall had fallen and not recovered to the levels it had been before.

One of the strengths of the town is the excellent working relationship between the Town Centre Manager and the Swan Centre Manager. Initiatives taken by them and the Leatherhead Christmas Festival Committee have been very successful in increasing footfall. In 2005 for example there will have been a St. George's Day event, a Halloween event, and the Christmas Festival itself.

Nevertheless it was considered that more could be done, and on a continuous as well as an event basis, to encourage visitors to the town and to the surrounding area including the countryside (See also Section 4.7). Such visitors would spend money in the shops, the restaurants and the tourist attractions and thus give a further boost to the Leatherhead economy. In this context "visitors" includes "residents."

The Leatherhead area as a whole exports labour and many of the people who work outside the area are highly skilled and the jobs they occupy are highly paid. Consequently they bring high levels of disposal income and spending power into the area. Promotional activity should be targeted at these high earners.

Recommendation EC4.1:

That a visitor attraction strategy be developed and implemented with a view to making more use of the area's tourist attractions.

There was comment as well – particularly in respect of the Theatre – that "...we don't know what's going on – they don't advertise themselves enough." And this from people who lived in the town! There was also comment that people in each of the villages (Ashted, Bookham and Fetcham) didn't know what was happening in the other villages. More could and should be done to generate communication between the villages themselves and between the town and the villages.

Recommendation EC4.2.

That a strategy to promote the town and villages to all residents within the area be developed and implemented.



St George's Day



Promoting the countryside: Juniper Hill



It does not help the town's economy if visitors, having been attracted to the town, then cannot find their way around because of the lack of information about where to go. They would be discouraged from returning.

There are therefore two recommendations in respect of this.

Recommendation EC4.3.

That an appreciation of what Leatherhead has to offer be encouraged by putting up large information maps with details of shopping areas, Theatre, places of historical and contemporary interest, parks, River Mole walks, sports facilities, halls etc.

This could be complemented by having a Visitor Information Centre. If this could be located in the Theatre it would have the additional benefit of attracting people into the Theatre – recognised by the residents, and others, as one of the jewels in Leatherhead's crown.

Recommendation EC4.4:

That a Visitor Information Centre be established

Studies conducted by Tourism South East in conjunction with Surrey County Council have identified the Leatherhead area as a suitable location for a new three star hotel. This is despite the recent arrival in the town of the Travelodge Hotel in the High Street and the presence of several other hotels in the area – Woodlands Park Hotel, Preston Cross Hotel etc. The location of the town adjacent to the M25 and equidistant between two major airports makes it an attractive proposition for the major hotel chains.

The arrival of such a hotel would bring more business and tourism visitors to the town.

Recommendation EC4.5.

That in conjunction with Tourism South East, and others, suitable sites for the development of a new hotel in the Leatherhead area be identified and that the feasibility (or otherwise) of building such a hotel be determined.

Although there are plenty of meeting and conference facilities, including at present those in the Leisure Centre, they are rather fragmented in that it is almost impossible to match the provision of seating catering and sleeping accommodation within one location. This makes it difficult to attract conference visitors in numbers.

Recommendation EC4.6:

That in conjunction with all current providers of conference & meeting facilities, catering and accommodation, a conference strategy for the town to bring more business visitors into the area is developed.



4.4.3 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats: Economy

The Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats presented by the findings of the Economy study are summarised as follows:

ECONOMY – SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- Spending power of residents, particularly those who live in the area but work outside it
- Spending power during the day of those who come in to the area to work.
- Location with respect to the M25 and airports making it attractive for businesses to locate their premises within it, and also attractive for people to live in the area and work elsewhere.
- Retailers: Good shops, though limited range
- Excellent working relationship between managers of the Town Centre and Swan Centre which has resulted in several successful “festive” days in the town designed to bring people in.
- The town is not dependent upon one particular employer or on one particular employment sector
- The influence of the commercial landlords can potentially bring in to the town the type of retail offer required by the shopping public. – also see weaknesses

Weaknesses:

- Shortage of sites for new retail development
- Existing retail premises are small in size
- Open areas in the Swan Centre providing little shelter in case of rain and cold
- Too many charity shops
- High investment required to set up a retail business
- Limited tourist bed capacity
- Limited Conference facilities
- Not enough facilities to encourage new business start ups
- No Visitor Information Centre
- Commercial landlords have refused to allow particular types of retailer into their premises despite the desire of the shopping community for such retailers (see also strength).

Opportunities:

- To ensure that the shops and services are appropriate to the needs of residents and visitors and to enhance the shopping experience
- To enhance provision of locally produced food
- To improve Leatherhead’s competitive edge
- To encourage entrepreneurs
- To provide further education, life long learning or hobby skills training
- To integrate the business community more closely with the town
- To promote Leatherhead and surrounding area to visitors

Threats:

- Competition from nearby shopping centres in other towns
- Expansion of nearby shopping centres in other towns
- Lack of use by the community of the facilities within the town
- Local planning policies at odds with economic needs
- Increasing difficulties in recruitment for local businesses
- Failure to resolve access and parking problems
- Increases in interest rates and business rates putting added financial pressures on local businesses



4.5 Key Findings - Social and Community

Author: David Mitchell-Baker

4.5.1 Feedback from Consultations and Interviews

Attitudes were generally positive about what Leatherhead has to offer, especially noting improvements in the High Street and reopening of the Theatre. Appreciation was expressed of the wide range of activities and facilities such as the Leisure Centre, Leatherhead Institute, Museum, All Saints Family Project, new Kingston Road recreation facilities, Clubhouse, Pitstop, Youth Café, churches working together in the community, B@ttitude, Leatherhead Hospital and University of Third Age. Many believe that the new Leatherhead Trinity School will be a very positive force in improving community cohesion.

Concerns were however voiced on the following issues:

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY ISSUES - CONCERNS EXPRESSED DURING CONSULTATIONS

Housing

- Need for more affordable housing, not just for “key” workers
- Free up large houses occupied by very elderly/infirm

Health and Public Safety

- More affordable child care needed
- Concern about healthcare changes, future location of the acute hospital, waiting lists
- Difficulties with some surgery appointment systems
- More police presence wanted to reduce fear of anti-social and drunken behaviour
- Nothing for young to do in evenings, need somewhere just to hang about
- One Stop not a problem before it was licensed
- More funding needed for Leatherhead Youth Café and Youth Clubs and other youth activities, need more and better paid youth workers
- Young feel victimised by police and misunderstood by older people
- Some 18-22 yr olds out of control and no one working with them
- Shortage of leaders for the nine scout groups
- Litter and graffiti

Local Government and Community Organisations

- It isn't a community but a mix of several
- Need for a Residents' Association to cover the whole of Leatherhead
- Not always knowing what is going on in other parts of the community
- Poor communication, too much reliance on internet. Increase publicity at Help Shop, but not convenient for those living in north of town and in villages
- Good neighbour scheme needed for Leatherhead

Sport, Leisure and Open Space

- Fear for future of the Leisure Centre
- Leisure Centre Café menu unattractive to many and inappropriate for a place promoting health
- Wish for ten pin bowling, running track, graffiti wall, more family fun facilities
- Need somewhere to kick a ball about
- Would like football back on Kingston Road recreation ground with changing facilities for league games
- No proper swimming training pool within 10+miles
- Much consultation, promises, no follow through, leading to cynicism
- Council do not seem to take complaints seriously
- North Leatherhead Community Centre not to everybody's liking
- Would like things such as coffee mornings, line dancing

Culture and Heritage

- Need for more and better publicised learning opportunities especially vocational and practical skills and for those with special needs
- Concern over closure of the Learning Centre
- Desire for more community celebrations and competitions to enhance community spirit and cohesion
- Shortage of venues for activities such as U3A and concern at threat of reduced meeting facilities at Leisure Centre



The Community Legal Service

- A credit union needed
- Lack of financial literacy
- Under-funding of the CAB
- No Community Legal Services Partnership contract
- Cost of parking when visiting CAB
- No disabled access to solicitors, nearest in Epsom

4.5.2 Population

Note: All figures are 2001 Census unless otherwise stated

Leatherhead, with a population of 9685, serves as a centre for services, shopping, employment and recreation for the neighbouring dormitory villages of north Mole Valley: Ashted, Fetcham, Bookham, Boxhill and Mickleham. The total population of north Mole Valley is about 46,000, 58% of that of the whole of Mole Valley.

Between 1991 and 2001, the population of Mole Valley fell by 1.4%. Over the same period, U16s fell by 4% and 16-40s by 8%. 20.1% are over 65% compared with 13.3% in England, but similar to the rest of SE England. 8% are over 85, similar to the rest of the country. 30% of households are occupied by pensioner only households.

Examination of these and other statistics in Annex H shows that the average age of the population is increasing rapidly, probably related to the high price of property forcing young people to look elsewhere in order to enter the housing chain. The issue of an aging population poses a threat to all sectors of the community, services and transport and economy. This is not untypical of most of Surrey but important for Leatherhead and its future as a significant centre for employment, services, sport and leisure.

4.5.3 Housing

i) Summary of Findings

Housing in Mole Valley is reputedly the eighth most difficult place for younger working households to enter the housing market in the UK (Joseph Rowntree Foundation ref 0415). Other recently published data show Leatherhead housing to be the seventh most expensive in the UK (Halifax Building Society) at an average price of £426,821.

Two schemes assist first time buyers. MVDC loans 25% (and possibly more) of the purchase price, repayable as the same percentage of the resale price. The council have rated this issue one of their main priorities and may improve this scheme. Alternately, a housing association pays a share of the purchase price and the occupants pay rent on that share. Some 100 affordable units within walking distance of the town centre are about to come or just have come onto the market, most of which are 1 or 2 bedrooms.



HOUSING – SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- Wide range of properties in and around Leatherhead
- Forecast housing need over the next 5 years in the Surrey Structure Plan is expected to be exceeded by actual building by 55% and a similar pattern continues to 2016
- 100 affordable housing coming on to market now and in near future in Leatherhead within larger developments
- Schemes available to assist first time buyers

Weaknesses

- Unbalanced mix of both council and private sector housing with shortage of family 3-4 bed properties
- Many family houses under-occupied by the elderly / infirm, reluctant to downsize
- Planning policy/guidelines and economics encourage developers to build 1 or 2 bedroom affordable units not 3 bed semis and maximise density
- Government policy encourages elderly to remain in their homes with no encouragement to downsize
- New properties not generally attractive to elderly as rooms too small
- Elderly see home as best investment for their future care costs and their heirs
- Poor provision for people with special needs

Opportunities

- Change planning policy to encourage better mix of new build
- Assist elderly/infirm to downsize or share
- Build properties to attract elderly
- House building expected to exceed planners' estimate of needs and may help stabilise prices
- Slower general rise in house prices will help first time buyers and encourage a more balanced market
- Slower rise in house prices plus significant rises in council tax and gas/electricity prices may encourage elderly to move

Threats

- Elderly very reluctant to move/share, fearful of change
- Commercial builders are unlikely to change unless "encouraged"
- Long time frame for change

ii) *Proposals*

There is already awareness among council officers of the effect of planning procedures and land shortage in not providing housing most suited to needs. This will not be unique to this area and pressure should be brought to bear on the government to make changes, including through elected members at all political levels. This study is not in a position to detail what these changes could be, only to underline that the current system is not producing the best results. This is a very complex subject.

While the MVDC scheme assists first time buyers with a 25% loan, this still leaves a large number of young families unable to access the housing market, particularly those who do not qualify for the housing list and do not have the deposit for a house. It is suggested that it would be in the interests of some employers to become involved in affordable housing support. MVDC will be applauded by many for deciding that Affordable Housing will be one of its priorities for 2006-9. In addition to raising the proportion loaned, other means of assistance should be explored. Wealthy individuals may be willing to become involved in order to extend the resource. The council should also consider how to ensure better mix of properties and how to persuade developers to build family homes and property attractive to people wishing to downsize, as these appear to be in short supply (Project SC 6.2).

While there are a few sources of assistance to the elderly to downsize, discussion with a local estate agent suggested that there may be more that could be done. For instance the elderly may feel reluctant to offer their property for sale as "nobody will want to buy this house as the kitchen and bathroom need modernising and it all needs redecorating". In practice buyers usually prefer to do these things to their own taste, whatever the condition of the property, and



there is a ready market. Helping people to have a full unbiased appraisal of the options available may help them to decide to move. Help then with whatever is needed to realise this will reduce the strain. The aim must be to help the elderly/infirm into more manageable accommodation in a location probably near their old home and friends, and so release housing for families (Project SC 6.1).

4.5.4 Health and Public Safety

Health

80% of those responding to the question concerning doctors and dentists rated them good or satisfactory. Only 7.4% considered them poor and other evidence suggest this may relate to the difficulty of finding an NHS dentist.

62% considered hospital and other medical services to be good or satisfactory, while 25% considered them fair and 13% poor. In response to another question, 46% rated them good or excellent and another 13% thought them adequate or fair. 41% considered them poor or of concern. This may be explained by the resentment felt by residents of Bookham, Fetcham and part of Leatherhead that they had not been adequately consulted over the siting of the new acute hospital. The site selected was at Sutton Eye Hospital, considered by many to be inconveniently far, but since overturned by the Minister in favour of even more inconvenient St Helier. Significant budget deficits and reorganisation of PCTs are also causing concern.

*How would you improve Leatherhead?
(from The Woodville School)*
'Something like Crazy Tots but for the over 8s'
'Wavy water like the sea in the Leisure Centre'
'No smoking in restaurants'
'Cars stop when the little children cross the road'
'A park next to the Leisure Centre'
'More shops'
'Bowling Alley'
'More for me to do when mum drags me in to do the shopping'.

HEALTH- SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- Epsom General Hospital generally perceived as good or satisfactory
- Services at Leatherhead Hospital improving
- Accessible local hospitals will provide most health care
- Government policy helping to bring some health services nearer to patients
- Highly rated ambulance service
- Modern ambulance services bringing better emergency care to patients so reducing demand on A&E

Weaknesses

- St Helier perceived as poor unfriendly and inaccessible
- Larger acute hospitals make for transport/access difficulties especially for less well off
- Distrust of consultation processes
- Lack of information on what is changing, "good" or "bad"
- Too few NHS dentists
- Same-day-only surgery appointment systems seen as inconsiderate of patients

Opportunities

- Higher quality care usually more conveniently located
- Quicker response by new paramedic and ambulance services
- Informing public in variety of ways will reduce suspicion
- Surgery operate more flexible appointment system

Threats

- Poor communication will fuel distrust
- Budget over runs
- Continual change never lets organisations settle down and sort out transition problems
- Continual change diverts senior management from running the operation more effectively



ii) Proposals

This study and report is unable to begin to address the many and continuing issues in health service changes. There is an active lobby responding as new information is released and the occasion demands. One area that the health authorities should address is how they communicate with the public. Working with the local press to ensure a regular, probably weekly, feature on what is proposed and is being implemented could help allay suspicion, especially if bad news and difficult issues are not suppressed. Reliance on the internet leaves out a large section of the community, either because they do not have access or do not use the internet as their main source of news. Elsewhere in this report (see project SC 4.1) a regular monthly local newspaper/magazine is proposed. The health authorities could usefully part fund this to maintain a dialogue with the community (Project SC 5.2).

The issue of “unfriendly” doctor surgery appointment systems was discussed with one large practice with two surgeries in the area. Since changing to the present system, they had experienced a 95% reduction in Did Not Attends, a powerful argument in its favour. When questioned on various problems which had been raised by clients, they described how, knowing an individual’s particular circumstances, they were able to be flexible in accommodating all the problems posed. They operate several lines in the morning in order to deal with demand and were generally able to answer quickly. We do not know how typical this good practice is. It is recommended that all surgeries that operate this type of booking system consider how they can better meet their clients’ needs and advise their clients to discuss any difficulties (Project SC 5.3).

Public Safety

i) Findings

When questioned about the causes of the fear of crime, 24% said the media, 20% each said jobs and “insufficient police”. 13% cited real crime and 11% drink and drugs. 27% felt unsafe after dark, noting particularly the station and alleyways.

Anti-social behaviour – “too many professional drunks” was one consultation comment. Under-age drinking was frequently mentioned especially at One Stop in North Leatherhead, not a problem until it was licensed. Young people need somewhere else to go. Anti-social behaviour was also complained about in the villages. The Café project and The Bridge were good, but funding precluded them being open as frequently as desired. Youth Voice and other youth consultations said that they would welcome some mechanism to enable youngsters to provide support or help in the community.

Statistically Mole Valley enjoyed the lowest recorded crime levels in England in 2002-3 and crime has continued to fall. The introduction of neighbourhood policing has enabled the public to express their concerns and fears to their local neighbourhood police officer at regular meetings with the public at which attendance has varied. Good publicity has helped. He or she has then been able to focus on the issues identified by the public with a resulting reduction in crime and fear of crime. An active Local Community Safety Partnership has developed and the meetings in Leatherhead appear to be well attended. They have also engaged with young people through forums such as Youth Voice and Young Citizen.

Concern was expressed by some young people in north Leatherhead about the footpath between the station and Therfield School. CCTV and better lighting were requested to improve safety. An incident has already occurred here. There were also complaints that failed lighting on the Kingston Road recreation ground had not been repaired quickly.



SAFETY - SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- Designated neighbourhood police officers
- Regular meetings with the public
- Community Police Safety Partnership
- Leatherhead Youth Café, the Bridge and Kingston Road recreation ground
- Low level of crime

Weaknesses

- Easy access to drugs and alcohol
- Few places to go that do not involve alcohol
- Café and youth clubs not open all evenings
- Hard core of yobs

Opportunities

- Most youths asking for facilities and acceptance by older people
- Youth want to help in the community
- Issues identified for action in Community Safety Strategy and Youth Plans

Threats

- Difficulty in finding suitable projects to interest disruptive young people
- Difficulty of engaging with people responsible for anti-social behaviour

ii) *Proposals*

Most of the concerns expressed are dealt with in the Community Safety Partnership's Safety Strategy and report on tackling anti-social behaviour, the MVDC Youth Strategy and the Children and Young People's Plan for Surrey, currently out for consultation.

We suggest that there are some areas in which the adult community could take the initiative. Many young people said they feel unfairly condemned by older members of the community. We suggest that interested parties be brought together to promote mutual understanding between generations by encouraging activities such as more elderly reading in schools, young reading to blind, community groups improving eyesores, litter picks, cutting back shrubbery, cyclists respecting pedestrians and vice versa, volunteering (Project SC 4.3).

It is suggested that the practicalities be examined of creating a forum for exchanging information on opportunities for youngsters to carry out voluntary or paid work for the community and for individuals. These could be facilitated by Residents' Associations, school youth councils, Youth Voice, churches, service clubs and others working together in Leatherhead and each village (Projects SC 11.1).

Projects such as making seats at the Fire & Iron Gallery for the Kingston Road Recreation Ground, planting bulbs behind the recreation ground and the Ashted go-kart project show how involving young people on worthwhile projects can improve their relationships with society. There are similar opportunities elsewhere. The initiative for such projects has to be supported by the community who can identify the need and provide some funding and who should step forward to involve young people who are out of control or may become so. Residents' associations, service clubs, companies are potential partners working with the Police and councils to implement this (Projects SC 8.1 and 9.1).

Better lighting should be installed on the footpath between the station and Therfield and the possibility examined of any other improvement to safety, including ensuring failed lighting is repaired quickly (Project SC 10.1).

Consider how a sense of pride in the town may be developed by building on the existing community links, exchange visits and twinning agreement with Triel in France (Project SC 9.2).



4.5.5 Local Government and Community Organisations

i) Findings

Local politics may be considered reasonably healthy although election outcomes in most seats are predictable. Voting turnout has been as low as 39% in local elections but is generally healthier. There are no parish councils in the study area.

In the Environmental Audit study, which took place before the healthcheck started, one of the requests was for more effective consultation between community stakeholders and local Councillors. When asked, in the general questionnaire “*How do you feel about consultation processes with District/County Councils?*” 29.4% thought they were good or satisfactory, 33.6 fair and 37.1% poor. 10.8% said that the Council doesn't listen enough. However, when asked if they had received a satisfactory response from the Council last time they had contacted them, 70.8% said "Yes" and 29.2% said "No". The Councils fall down, not only on their efficiency or their effectiveness, but also on their consultation processes.

Each village has an active Residents' Association with substantial resident memberships, but Leatherhead has several organisations representing different interest groups – Leatherhead AHEAD, Leatherhead Society, North Leatherhead Community Association, Leatherhead Community Association, Leatherhead and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Leatherhead Town Centre Forum. None have large memberships and none can be said to speak for the whole town. The Town Centre Forum probably represents the widest interests of the organisations, but is felt by some to concentrate too much on the town centre. The lack of an organisation representing residents in the whole of Leatherhead is seen by many as a weakness which needs addressing. It differentiates Leatherhead from the surrounding villages.



The proposal for a Residents' Association came from the launch meeting in Leatherhead and was repeated in questionnaire responses and later consultations.

Interest was expressed in a good neighbour scheme in Leatherhead and in Fetcham. The present Leatherhead and District Scheme serves a limited purpose and for various reasons needs to be developed along the lines of the Bookham and Ashted models. Each of these schemes provides transport and other help on about 800 occasions each year. No research is needed – there is every reason to expect that a proportionally similar need will exist in Leatherhead and Fetcham.

There are many societies and clubs catering for a wide range of sport and leisure interests and all ages, some local, others with wider support. Most of the more visible venues are well used. U3A say they have difficulty in finding enough suitable facilities. We endeavoured to find a comprehensive list of places which could be hired, without success. The MVDC most comprehensive list omitted several well known halls and had few school halls.





The local newspaper is the Leatherhead Advertiser which gives reasonable coverage of the area but is not seen by all. There is no free newspaper covering Leatherhead or north Mole Valley although two A5 publications have recently appeared. The free Challenger covers the whole of Mole Valley and is heavily loaded with advertising. It lists some local events but has little editorial of interest. Consequently most people have no regular comprehensive source of information on what is about to happen. This does not help to bring the various smaller communities of Leatherhead together to support communal events and celebrations.

There are a number of educational groups but their profiles are not high. There appears to be gap in the courses they offer. ALDAG would like to see courses such as hygiene and cooking for people with a mild to moderate learning disability. Accessibility is a consideration for such people. Employment is also an issue for this group. Employers often view such people as less able to perform a job. Asperger's Syndrome can be of benefit to an employer, for instance where a routine must be followed such as in cleaning or maintenance. Once such a person understands what is expected, he or she will perform more reliably than most.

In a consultation, the demise of the old Community Services Forum was regretted and its re-establishment requested.

Responding to Needs

Leatherhead people are used to associating with all sorts of people with all sorts of needs, making allowances for them and making them welcome. For example, Leatherhead has long been the home of the Royal School for the Blind, now called SeeAbility. Local residents have been used to seeing people with visual impairment making their way around the town. Nowadays, many of the former residents have their own flats and live fairly independently. Likewise, The Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for the Disabled, which has been in Leatherhead since 1935, has assisted some of its former residents to move into their own adapted flats in the town. They regularly use the local facilities, many of them with the aid of wheelchairs. Views of some of SeeAbility residents and staff, and a report of a project created by QEFD residents are in Annex D.

Charities continue to be set up by the community of Leatherhead. In 1975 the Leatherhead churches set up a working group to create a hostel for homeless people. This was the first of its kind in Surrey. A homeless person could come to the hostel straight from the street and be given a safe place to stay, bed, food and company. With tremendous support from the people of the district, in the form of money, gifts and the time of volunteers, the hostel has flourished ever since. In 1995, a steering group set up the Leatherhead Clubhouse, for people with severe and enduring mental health needs. Here, there are no patients or clients, only members, who take part in the running of the house including cooking, keeping accounts and producing newsletters. Members are supported in seeking and retaining employment or lifelong learning. The service is evolving, but the Clubhouse continues to give members a safe place to be, to grow in confidence and to launch out into new activities.

In 1998, the Pitstop was set up in Leatherhead Football Club. Anyone who needs support can go there to find a welcome, food, company and opportunities to learn new skills or polish up old ones. Homeless people can go there during the day, instead of roaming the streets. Local volunteers help to run Pitstop and it is supported by donations as well as grants. The Grange in Bookham and Headley Court in Headley also work with people with disabilities of various kinds, some of whom are regularly to be seen in the shops and cafes of the town.

In 1999, the All Saints Family Project was set up, to give better opportunities to young children and their families living in Leatherhead Common. Next year it will become a partner in the new Children's Centre, the first of its kind in Surrey. Some of the views of the families are to be found in Annex D.



Leatherhead is a warm community. Evidence of this warmth is to be seen in the response of the members of the Leatherhead Society to the question, “*What do you most value about Leatherhead?*” They nominated the friendly community and the “village” atmosphere, second only to our beautiful countryside, as the best asset of the town.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS – SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- Easy to reach Help Shop in Leatherhead
- MVDC has improved its performance on answering calls and customer care
- SCC has a call centre
- Consultation has improved of late, on housing was good
- Articulate residents usually get heard, some success with hard-to-reach people through a partnership worker
- Local issues are usually considered in local strategies and community planning
- Several community organisations with some influence
- Many vigorous societies and clubs

Weaknesses

- MVDC Dorking offices difficult to reach for some
- SCC main contact is through a call centre
- Hard-to reach residents and those who don't like meetings and form filling often don't have a say in consultations
- Poor consultation on Leisure Centre, main decision already made, restricted range of options, very short response time
- No representative Residents' Association or similar
- No town-wide means of advertising forthcoming events
- Apparently limited number of halls and rooms for hire

Opportunities

- Develop a representative group to work for the good of all Leatherhead
- Develop a community newspaper delivered free to all
- Identify and advertise more halls and facilities for hire
- Develop good neighbour schemes for Leatherhead and Fetcham

Threats

- Continued division of community into interest groups
- Inaction
- Alienation through thoughtless action/inaction

ii) Proposals

A database of all halls and accommodation available for hire, together with details of facilities, would provide a useful resource for societies, clubs and individuals and should be built up. Schools should be encouraged to enter this market. (Project EC 4.6) Opportunities for using these and areas in the High Street for informal meeting places should be explored (Project SC 7.1 and SC 7.2).

The existing organisations could consider amalgamating or forming an all-Leatherhead association to initiate action on behalf of the community and represent its interests. It could facilitate occasional gatherings of councillors, representatives of local organisations and societies, church groups and others to encourage networking and informal development of ideas and community initiatives. It could take responsibility for the initiative on some (Project SC 4.2).

It could take responsibility for a local magazine or newspaper to be a means of advertising events and services, celebrate local achievements and draw the community together. Alternatively, organisations such as the churches and Theatre may consider it in their interests to take the initiative. A monthly publication with editorial material of local interest such as the local *Ashtead* magazine, supported by advertising and delivered free to every home, is



suggested; it would have to be more comprehensive than the Ashted publication to achieve its purpose but needs to be similarly concise and focused locally on feel good issues. The level of advertising carried by such as *The Challenger* suggests that advertisers see an untapped market. The magazine distribution coverage could be Leatherhead alone but advertisers would probably prefer the whole of north Mole Valley; this would be to the ultimate benefit of Leatherhead (SC 4.1). A less ambitious alternative would be a regular 'What's On' poster.

A group of people with knowledge of the community should work together to identify the key personnel to develop a good neighbour scheme. Ashted Good Neighbours have indicated their willingness to assist the chairman of the existing Leatherhead car lift scheme and this could be set in motion at an early date (Project SC 5.1)

It is suggested that interested parties be brought together to identify unmet education and training needs in the community, identify existing providers and develop a strategy for filling the gap, then ensure its implementation (Projects EC 3.3 and 3.4).

4.5.6 Sport, Leisure and Open Space

i) Findings

The Leisure Centre received strong support in responses to the questionnaires and in consultations. A majority considered adult leisure activities as good to fair but youth leisure and recreational activities were considered poor by 27% and only fair by another 29%. Many wanted improvements to leisure facilities and the Leisure Centre, the 3rd highest response to the question "*what could be improved to strengthen the local community?*" Therfield students rated the Leisure Centre the best feature of Leatherhead by a good margin, but only 50% considered leisure and entertainment excellent or satisfactory.



Kingston Road Recreation Ground

The young expressed wishes for a wide range of additional facilities in the community, from ten pin bowling, a running track to an open air pool/lido, "somewhere to kick a ball about" and changing rooms to enable league football to be played in north Leatherhead. Annex F contains many specific suggestions for sport and recreation. It is known that Leatherhead Swimming Club, one of the country's leading clubs, has difficulty in finding proper training facilities. The nearest training pool is Crystal Palace. Leisure pools do not have the water and air treatment equipment to cope with vigorous lane swimming. A proper training pool would serve a large area.



Leatherhead Leisure Centre



Woodville school children asked for, among other things: slides in the swimming pool; bigger swings and larger equipment in the play areas; activity centre for young children; graffiti boards. Improvements to public parks were mentioned in youth and adult consultations and questionnaires. More seating and picnic areas were requested. It was noted that there is only one park bench in the Red House grounds.

'Refurbish the Leisure Centre and bring it up to standard. It is wonderful facility and could be made into something great'

'Slides in the swimming pool'

It was intended to carry out a survey to refine the needs and wishes of the community but in August, Mole Valley advised that they would be carrying out a Leisure Centre survey in the following month. However this did not look at the wider sport and leisure interest of the community, concentrating on what could be provided in a Leisure Centre. The consultations show that there is clearly an unmet need for other facilities for the young but the scope of such facilities would need to be established through a full survey.

ii) Proposals

In order to make the area, especially the town centre, more interesting for children and families, it is suggested that a Work Group develop ideas and identify suitable partners with which to develop them. (Project SC 1.2)

Therfield School has recently announced that it has achieved sports academy status and that money is being made available for additional sporting facilities, to which the public will have access. This is welcomed and will provide the opportunity for more activities in the area of the town with most young people. Planning permission exists for tennis courts on the site of the water park beside the Leisure Centre. Skateboard parks have been constructed at Fetcham Grove and Kingston Road. One is also needed in Ashted and moves are in progress towards building one. Bookham residents would also welcome one. (Project SC 12.1). Inter-area skateboard competitions would add interest and should be encouraged and facilitated (SC 12.2).



Leatherhead Leisure Centre

The availability of good leisure and recreational facilities will have wide benefits to the community, helping to address boredom and anti-social behaviour, health and community well being. It is recommended that a survey be carried out of what people would like in the way of sport and leisure facilities, what organisations are in existence or need to be established to help utilise them, the competitive environment and where facilities would most effectively be located. The young are less well catered for than older groups and they should be involved. This should consider the needs of Leatherhead and the surrounding villages as some area needs can be met in Leatherhead and others more locally (Project SC 2.1).

The 2012 London Olympics provides a unique opportunity to focus on sport, which has to begin at local level. Local sportsmen and women have featured at Olympic level in swimming, gymnastics and the triathlon. Now is the time to take further the possibility of locating locally facilities that serve a larger area than north Mole Valley (Project SC 2.2). In order to ensure that young people are aware of all opportunities and events, it is suggested that a group examine existing sources of information and how people may become better informed (Project SC11.2).



The Leatherhead Youth Café and The Bridge provide useful centres for youngsters to meet, but funding is inadequate. At one consultation it was suggested that older members of the community contribute to a fund to subsidise coffee for young people in the evening. Since that suggestion was made, Costa Coffee has opened. It is suggested that a group examine funding options (Projects SC11.3).

The success of involving disaffected youngsters in making benches and gates for the Kingston Road recreation ground could be extended to improving seating in other park areas and in the town centre. This could be part of meeting the need for places to sit down and meet with friends, which came up in many consultations with adult and youth. (Projects SC 7.1 and 8.1). It is suggested that the revival of the Community Services Forum be investigated (Project SC 5.4).

4.5.7 Culture and Heritage

The Theatre featured prominently as both an asset and an opportunity for improvement. 55% considered “entertainment” satisfactory or good, another 32% considered it fair.

When asked about other issues or concerns, 17% said there was not enough for youth and families in the area, another 15% said “not enough leisure and entertainment” and 13% that there were too few family things in the town centre. To the question “*What could be improved to strengthen the local community?*”, the highest requests were for “*more community events, street entertainment and improve Theatre*”. Also high were “*more family activities, entertainment, eateries, things to do in town and area*” and “*local support for Theatre, library*”.

Not unexpectedly, this subject did not feature as strongly as sport in the youth consultations although community events were mentioned. Several requested graffiti walls of which the one in north Leatherhead is understood to be very successful. Time and resources did not allow a detailed study of the culture scene and shortcomings. There are many thriving societies and groups such as the Leatherhead Operatic Society which show that music, drama and the arts generally are well supported in the area. The villages have their own organisations such as Ashted Choral Society which has a high reputation beyond the village. The recent Mole Valley Arts and Drama Festival covered a wide range of interests and is evidence of lively cultural activities.

The subject of Heritage has been dealt with in the section 4.7 on the Environment and in section 4.4 on the Economy.

In terms of what could be done to improve Leatherhead, wider attendance at events in the Theatre will enable their vision and objectives to be achieved. Publicity and wider awareness of what the Theatre has to offer is needed. The Theatre holds considerable potential to be a major force in bringing new life to Leatherhead. In section 4.3.1 a project is described which would increase the visibility of the Theatre in the town centre and also respond to the demand in the consultations for more street entertainment. (Projects SC1.2, V2.1 and V2.2)

Part of the justification for the regular monthly magazine would be to publicise the Theatre programme as well as to highlight achievements by local residents and societies in the editorial. It is suggested that the Theatre be partner in the magazine project (Projects SC 4.1)

The Leatherhead Carnival folded some years ago despite strenuous efforts by Leatherhead Lions, Round Table and others. Round Table said that they had difficulty in staging community events because of lack of local support from MVDC and larger companies. However, in the last few years, the two town centre managers and a Festival Committee have staged successful large community events including Halloween and Christmas events. North Leatherhead had held a family day on the Kingston Road recreation ground until 2004, with strong support from KBR. Reconstruction of the grounds in the summer of 2005 prevented it being held in that year.



Bookham and Ashted both hold very successful annual village days which are well attended and help develop social cohesion and community cooperation. Other villages hold smaller events. They help local charities to promote themselves while raising useful sums of money to support themselves and other charitable activities.

It is recommended that the Festival Committee involve service clubs of Leatherhead (e.g. Lions, Rotary, Round Table), if not already involved and other representative groups in order to bring together their resources and energies to develop and implement a programme of major community celebrations and competitions to enhance community spirit and cohesion (Project SC 4.4). They would have an interest in the community magazine project.

The frequent request for graffiti walls and the success of the one already provided support the provision of more. These would provide outlets for artistic creativity in a contained environment. It is suggested that additional graffiti walls for youngsters be provided say near Fetcham Grove skateboard park and in visible places in villages. Some visibility is an incentive to graffiti artists in the sites they select to deface. The graffiti walls would provide outlets for artistic creativity in a contained environment. (Project SC 12.1)

4.5.7 The Community Legal Service

Financial illiteracy was raised as a problem and the need for a credit union identified during consultations. Time and resources did not permit study of this subject beyond an interview with the manager of Citizens Advice Bureau. CAB suffers from a severe lack of resources while providing help and advice to a very needy group of people, most of whom have multiple problems.

Help with debt problems, which are around 29% of the issues the CAB deal with, may extend to contacting creditors and helping to maximise income, but does not extend to financial advice. Welfare benefit problems were 24% of CAB's work. Financial literacy is a major problem with many of their clients.

There are no Community Legal Services Partnership contracts in Leatherhead, the nearest being in Epsom and Dorking. Local solicitors work free of charge with CAB on some cases. The nearest disabled access to solicitors is in Epsom although some will make home visits. Access for the disabled to banks is also a problem. A local problem is the cost to CAB visitors of parking, seldom less than 30 minutes. Also signage is misleading.

A group of local residents are promoting a Credit Union and funding has recently been agreed for a study which is in hand in conjunction with Woking and Guildford. It will also address the problem of financial literacy. This initiative is strongly supported (Projects SC 5.5 and EC3.3)

It is recommended that the need for a Community Legal Services Partnership contract in Leatherhead be investigated as well as disabled access problems to solicitors' offices. (Project SC5.6)



4.6 Key Findings - Transport and Access

Author: Di Stirling

4.6.1 Information Gathering

Data Sources

- i) Data Collection**
- Examining public information such as bus and train time tables
 - Government data available on the internet
 - Journeys using public transport
- ii) Questionnaires and Surveys:**
- The General Questionnaire
 - A Commuter Questionnaire which was given out at Ashted, Bookham and Leatherhead Stations. 158 questionnaires returned. See Annex I.
 - A Transport Questionnaire available during our on-site surveys and from the Help Shop. 103 questionnaires returned. See Annex I for details.
 - Transport Questionnaires which were produced for the pupils of Therfield and The Woodville Schools. See Annex F for details.
- iii) Feedback at Focus Group Consultations and Public Meetings (see Section 3 of this report)**
- v) Meetings, Discussions and Interviews**
- Mole Valley Cycle Forum and Dave Charters of the SeeAbility Tandem Club
 - Ron Eaton and Alan Thornhill of Ashted Residents' Association: advice on the railways.
 - Crissy Kerton of Ashted Good Neighbours and Linda Heath: voluntary car schemes in Ashted, Leatherhead and Fetcham.
 - A consultative meeting with Cllr Helyn Clack, Surrey County Council Executive Member for Transport
 - A viewing of the computer model of the Leatherhead one-way system with alternatives given by Surrey County Council Highways Department.
 - Correspondence with Daniel Wright of Surrey County Council concerning the railways and a possible Sunday service to Guildford.
- Notes of these meetings are in Annex I.
- vi) Earlier surveys**
- Studies conducted by Bookham village and The Leatherhead Town Centre Forum which have added to an understanding of local access.
- vii) Access Studies with individuals and groups:**
- A series of three walks with Residents of SeeAbility which allowed us to see the problems experienced by those with partial sight and no sight at all when faced with visiting the town especially when traffic was parked in the centre.
 - A walk from QEFD to Leatherhead station along the pavement beside the A245 which allowed us to see the problems presented by the poor state of this route.
 - A Town Centre Access Study which was able to confirm and highlight the problems faced by the less able and wheelchair users around the town.
 - A 'Living Streets' survey which was able to give more information on access around the town centre.

Details of these activities are in Annex D.



4.6.2 Key Findings

From all our consultations we have learned that people appreciate having easy access to the countryside, to London by both rail and road, and to the M25 for both leisure and business. The pedestrianisation of Leatherhead High Street during the day is seen as a bonus especially by parents with pushchairs and by the disabled. We have a good train service and two good bus routes albeit with limitations.

i) Travel by Train

From the commuter questionnaire especially, it was found that the train service is good but that passengers would like a faster service to and from London especially at peak times. There is no train service to Guildford on Sundays which is seen as a serious gap because there is no bus service either. There are concerns about security on the trains, at the stations and in the station car parks and there is a need for improved facilities on each of the stations.



ii) Travel by Bus

According to the various questionnaires and surveys the bus service is seen to be poor. The 465 from Dorking to Kingston is the only route in the area which has a frequent service which runs late into the evening even at weekends. Although the 479 route from Epsom to Guildford is good it does not run beyond 6.30 in the evening or on a Sunday. Other routes have infrequent buses and no evening services. As a result Fetcham is without any public transport in the evenings and together with Bookham no service on Sundays. Areas of the villages which are at a distance from the stations are also without public transport in the evenings and on Sundays.

*What would be your Vision for Leatherhead?
'Where buses run again'.*

iii) Cycling and Cycle Paths



In each of the villages, the stations are set on the edge of their catchment area and so cycles are frequently used by commuters to reach their local stations. They are also used by pupils at the senior schools in the area. Because the roads (with the exception of the A24) are all narrow single carriageways there are few dedicated cycle paths and many places where cycling is dangerous especially at peak times in the mornings. The surveys and consultations have highlighted the key places where paths need to be extended and crossings put in place. Cycle paths needing improvement for riding for leisure have been identified.



iv) Walking

The main concerns of walkers are the poor state of the paths, encroaching undergrowth which in certain places renders the paths impassable and lack of safe crossing places on certain main routes into the town.

As has already been stated, with just one exception (the A24 dual carriageway), all the roads in the area are single carriageways and this means that severe pressure is put on the roads. Residents of all ages have expressed concern about the weight of traffic passing through the villages and large lorries driving too close to pedestrians. It is therefore important that footpaths are kept in good condition so that pedestrians are not forced to step into the roads. Cars which park on pavements not only cause problems for walkers but for wheelchair users and parents with pushchairs as well. Once again they are at risk of having to resort to the roads. (See Section 4.10 for further information on access for people with disabilities).

'Leatherhead Hospital by bus – you must be joking'

'Leret Way - A boulevard between two bottlenecks'

'Road system says 'Keep out of Leatherhead.''

v) Access by Car and Parking Provision

The one-way system around the centre of Leatherhead was devised to help cope with heavy traffic around the town but it is a source of frustration for many at peak times because it becomes heavily congested. That, and the blocking of the North Street – Church Street link make access in and out of the town difficult for both cars and public transport. It is particularly confusing for visitors and those unfamiliar with the town.

Cars are by far the most predominant form of transport within the area and this puts a great deal of pressure on parking facilities. Leatherhead is perceived as a town with inadequate parking. All the questionnaires, surveys and discussions have called for more parking, free or cheaper parking, and the opportunity for half hour 'pop and shop' parking. The Swan Centre car park which provides most of the spaces in the centre is poorly designed with very tight spaces on the upper floors. It is also unable to cater adequately for the larger modern family car and so it is avoided by many whenever possible.



Swan Centre Car Park

Parking pressures are increased by workers who park in residential streets.

Road signs also come in for criticism because they are seen to be confusing and in need of rationalisation.



4.6.3 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats: Transport and Access

The Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOTs) from the Transport and Access study are as follows:

TRANSPORT AND ACCESS - SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- The pedestrianised High Street
- Easy access to the countryside
- Easy access to M25
- A good weekday train service
- The Buses4U service in Fetcham and Bookham

Weaknesses

- The poor surface of the High Street and paths in and around the town and villages
- Dangerous crossings points in and around the town for walkers and cyclists
- Poor access for the disabled to many shops and services in the town centre
- No train service to Guildford on Sundays
- A feeling of insecurity on the trains and stations in the evenings
- The impression given by Leatherhead Station
- The facilities offered on each of the stations
- Difficulty of driving around the Swan Centre car park and parking in the narrow spaces
- The poor bus service with the exception of the 465 route and the 479 during the day
- Disjointed cycle paths and routes with many suffering poor surface conditions
- Traffic congestion around the one-way system and key roundabouts at peak times
- Parking facilities not matching the requirements of local residents or business drivers
- Inadequate or confusing sign posting in and around the town

Opportunities

- To improve walking conditions in and around Leatherhead and the villages
- To improve dangerous crossing points
- To inaugurate a Sunday train service to Guildford
- To restore a feeling of security among the train travelling public and improve station facilities
- To improve the bus service especially in the evenings and at weekends
- To make cycling safe and enjoyable for all
- To improve traffic flow at peak times
- To offer improved parking facilities at attractive prices

Threats

- Low demand threatens the viability of the regular bus services
- The lack of easy obvious access to the town centre is a deterrent for passing trade
- The poor reputation of Leatherhead's parking provision is a deterrent for people visiting the town for shopping or leisure

The projects for maintaining or enhancing the strengths, improving identified weaknesses and reducing the threat relating to Transport and Access are described in Section 6.



4.7 Key Findings - Environment

Author: Heather Ward

4.7.1 Consultations

We obtained the views of the community on the environment from the following key sources:

Data Sources:	
i) Previous Surveys:	<p>We already had a body of information from previous surveys undertaken by the Town Centre Forum in 2004 – the Environment Audit Survey, and the Visit to Leatherhead doorstep survey. The main findings of these surveys are provided in Annex A. This information helped us to formulate the questions we included in the environment section of the main questionnaire.</p>
ii) Presentations and Discussions	<p>We discussed the environment specifically with the Leatherhead Society at their AGM and with the Leatherhead and District Countryside Protection Society (LDCPS). We obtained views of the community on the Environment at the launch events in February / March and at the consultation meetings in September, in Leatherhead, Ashted, Bookham and Fetcham.</p>
iii) Discussions with practitioners in relevant fields	<p>The answers to the questions posed in the Snapshot and worksheets led us to investigate further issues, by consulting practitioners in the relevant fields.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rod Shaw from Mole Valley District Council• Nick Owen from Lower Mole Countryside Management Project• Mole Valley Branch of the Ramblers' Association• Shaun Page from Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group• Surrey Wildlife Trust• Several farmers in the Farmers' Market• Farmers at Norbury Park Farm• Jo Homan of Greenpeace
iv) Questionnaires and Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We prepared an environmental questionnaire for the LDCPS which was responded to by 34 people.• We developed a sustainability questionnaire, with which we surveyed a representative selection of households on reducing waste, recycling, conserving energy and water, and buying locally produced foods. 79 responses were received.• We used the Living Streets Survey material to find out what the High Street was really like, from the points of view of parents with small children and of people with limited mobility.• We attended a meeting of a group of physically disabled Residents, to discuss with them their developing project to build an accessible footpath from their flats at the Queen Elizabeth's Development Centre, through Teazole Woods to the town.

4.7.2 Key Findings

The worksheets provided for the Environment Section of the Healthcheck centred around three areas:

- EN1 Character & vitality of the town
- EN2 The town & the wider countryside
- EN3 The environment & quality of life

The information we found by answering the worksheet questions revealed that the town in its setting is highly favoured and could make much better advantage of its assets, chief among which are the river, the nearby countryside and the many listed buildings in the town. There are threats to the sustainability of both town and country and opportunities to make positive changes to our environment. The detailed SWOT analysis is provided in Annex J. The key findings are presented below.



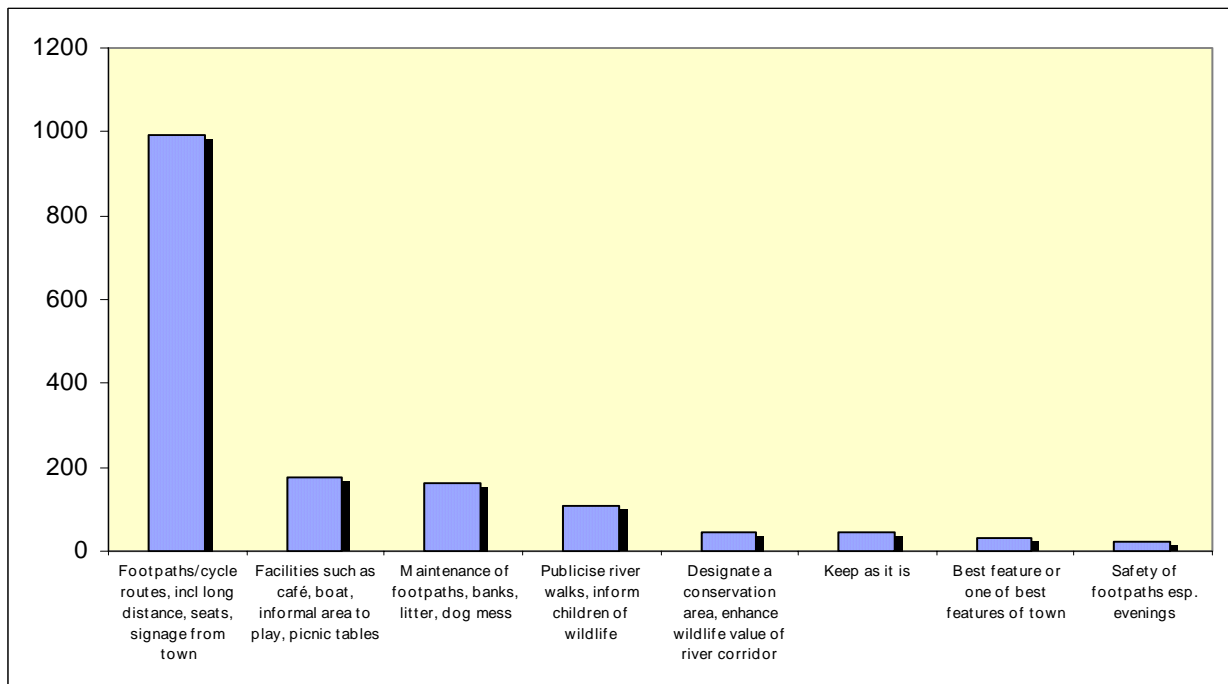
i) The River Mole

It has been striking to see how consistently local residents of all ages have nominated the riverside as the best environmental feature of the town. This emerged from the first discussions with the Leatherhead Society and was endorsed by the responses to the Environmental Audit. *“The River Mole and its riverbanks and islands...were particularly appreciated.”* The children from The Woodville School said in their early questionnaires that they liked the river and the riverbanks. One respondent, from the Ashted launch meeting, wrote, *“Kingfishers, grey wagtails, swans and herons – all visible from Leatherhead Bridge. What more can you ask for?”*



The same message came out from subsequent consultations and was confirmed by the response to the open question in the main questionnaire, Q4a, *“What do you think are the best features of Leatherhead?”* 41.5% nominated the river, which represents 277 respondents, the highest number of responses in all four sections of the questionnaire.

This was such a constant theme that we went into more detail in the later consultations, and we found great enthusiasm for improvements to the footpaths by the river, such as extending them and adding seats and signage, and possibly improving disabled access. A wealth of suggestions has been made, particularly from the Countryside Protection Society, and from the Greenpeace interview, for ways to make more of the river without spoiling it. We decided to include a more specific question in the main questionnaire: *“How could we make more of the River Mole?”* (see below) Their response gave us a clear lead.



Q11d. How could we make more of the River Mole?

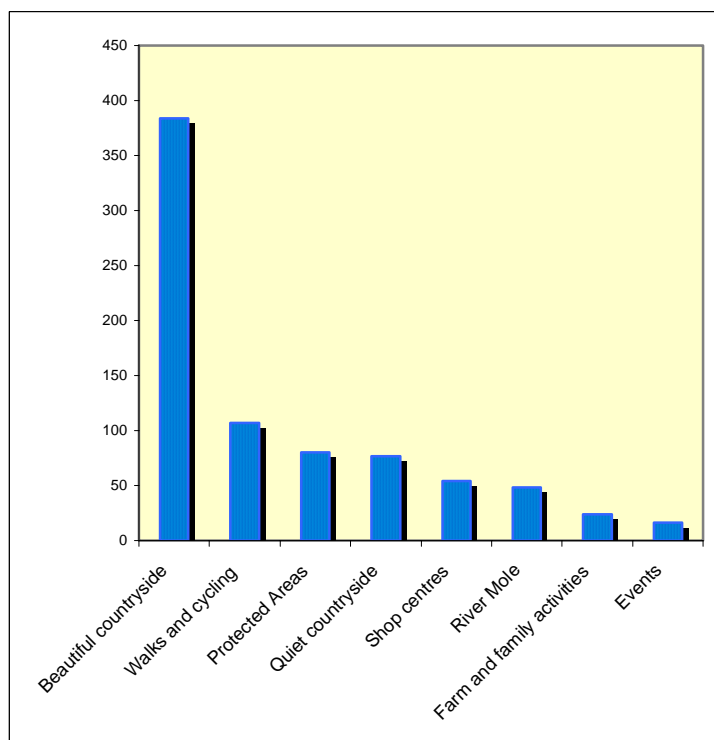


Esponse	No.	% of Total
Footpaths/cycle routes, including long distance, seats, signage from town	991	62.5
Facilities such as café, boats, informal area to play, picnic tables	177	11.2
Maintenance of footpaths, banks, litter, dog mess	161	10.2
Publicise river walks, inform children of wildlife	110	6.9
Designate a conservation area, enhance wildlife value of river corridor	47	3.0
Keep as it is	45	2.8
Best feature or one of best features of town	33	2.1
Safety of footpaths especially in evenings	21	1.3
Total	1585	

Q11d. How could we make more of the River Mole?

The huge response to this question provides an indication of the interest in the River Mole as a key feature of the area. It is evident that the greatest proportion of those surveyed are keen to make the best use of the river and riverside with footpaths and seating, but that there is also a body of opinion that people like it as it is, and are keen to preserve the environment. These two are not opposing, and the challenge will be to find the optimal way to enable the community to best make use of the important resource in a way which harmonises with the environment.

The MVDC Residents survey showed that the attractiveness of the surrounding countryside was important to the quality of life of local people and that high priority should be given to protecting the countryside. This was a major theme throughout our consultations, again from all sections of the community. In response to the question, Q4c, in the main questionnaire, “What do you think are the best features of the Surrounding Area?” 48.6% referred to the beautiful countryside, as shown below.



Response	No.	% Total
Beautiful countryside	384	48.6
Marvellous for country walks, cycling, horse riding etc	107	13.5
Protected areas	80	10.1
Quiet	77	9.7
Shop centres	54	6.8
River Mole	48	6.1
Bocketts Farm and other family activities	24	3.0
Events	16	2.0
Total	790	

Q4c. What do you think are the best features of the Surrounding Area?

The high response rate demonstrates the large amount of interest in this topic and in particular the high value given to the beautiful surrounding countryside.



ii) Access to the Countryside

However, we found that 20.5% of respondents found it difficult or impossible to go for a walk in the countryside without a car to take them there. This was a particular issue for more elderly members of society, as voiced by the Leatherhead Community Association members. They would like the opportunity to access the countryside around Leatherhead by bus.

"We can't reach the countryside without a car. We go to the Splash. We went into the woods behind Tesco once – we got lost in there and ended up at The Queen Elizabeth's Foundation.

Young parent living in Leatherhead Common

Some elderly people who do have cars would like a car park which is close to the riverside. We found that walkers had great difficulty crossing the bypass to reach the countryside beyond, and cyclists have the same problem. We received requests for family cycle routes away from traffic. The tandem riders from SeeAbility also wanted safer cycle routes, where they could hear the birdsong.



iii) Safeguarding our countryside

The consultations with local farmers and with the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group confirmed, that our countryside is under threat from various quarters, see Annex J section 2. If we want to retain our countryside, maintained as it is, we will have to look for ways to support our local farmers. Projects EN4.3, 4 and 5 propose ways of doing this. Another countryside issue is the safeguarding of green corridors between wildlife habitats, both for the sake of the wildlife and in order to keep an informal green belt around our urban area, which is becoming so full of buildings. The MVDC planners, Surrey Wildlife Trust and the Lower Mole Project could be helpful in this regard. Yet another idea that has emerged is the sharing of best practice among countryside landowners and managers, in fostering biodiversity and improving access. The Lower Mole Project could help facilitate this. It is possible that a further source of volunteers to help in countryside management could be the many employees in local businesses, many of whom have very few links with the community and countryside in which they spend their working life. Finally, the surest way of safeguarding our countryside is to make sure the public in general knows about it, so we need to promote our local countryside to a wider audience, as part of a wider Visit Leatherhead project.





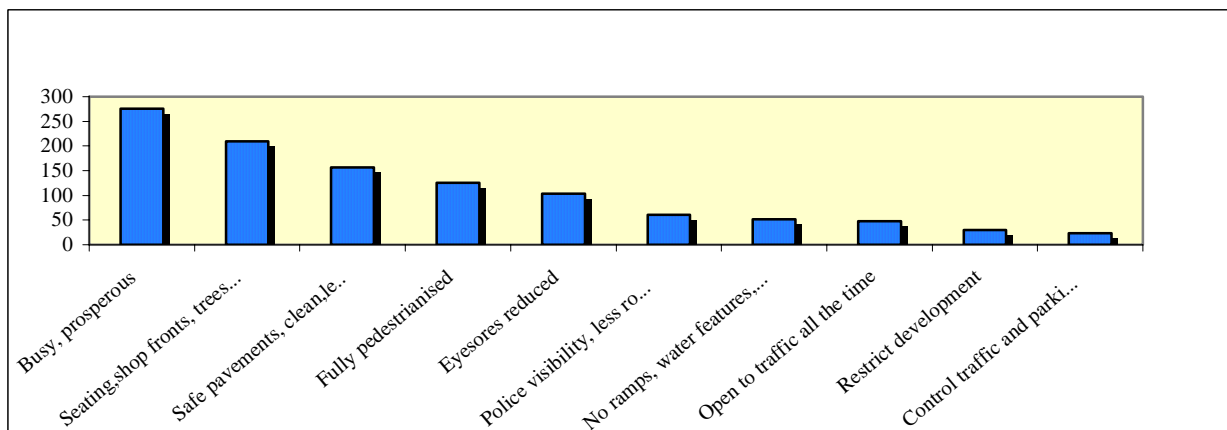
iv) The Townscape

The Environmental Audit showed that the town has a wealth of significant buildings, bridges, streets and open spaces, illustrated by 50 named landmarks. This was confirmed by responses at the launch, where people said they valued the architecture of the town as one of its best features. Some of the children also like the ramps and ironwork art as a meeting place. However, several places were seen to detract from the character of the town, such as the derelict Bull Hotel site, the Theatre fly tower, Argos and More shop frontages and Leret Way. There were diverse views on the ramps at the end of the High Street. The Theatre fly tower scored top of environmental issues to work on at the September meetings. The issue of improving the approaches to the Theatre in Church Street, making it look more inviting from the bottom of the High Street and turning it into a lively civic space, only emerged during the period of the Healthcheck, so has not fully been consulted upon, although we know from our responses that the community is very keen to support the Theatre.



People want the pavements in the town centre to be safe, kept clean and tidy, clutter removed, and the town centre looking more attractive. There have been many requests for more seating in the High Street and the Swan Centre. This need became very obvious while we were doing the Living Streets survey, see Annex D. In view of the number of residents with limited mobility in our community and the growing number of elderly in the population, this need can only grow. More seating was also wanted on pedestrian routes to the town and in the parks.

The question: *‘How would you like Leatherhead High Street to LOOK in two years time?’* produced a large response. The comment most frequently made was that they wanted to see the High Street busier and more bustling. They suggested a variety of improvements to make it more attractive, such as trees, plants and flowers, smarter shop fronts, less clutter, better lighting and no cars when they are not supposed to be there. They also saw the High Street as a place where they would like to meet friends and socialise, with more seating and places to chat with friends.



Q11e: How would you like Leatherhead High Street to LOOK in two years time?



Analysis	No.	% of Total
Busy, prosperous, community feeling	276	25.5
More seating, covered in places, planting, more attractive shop fronts, more trees, outside meeting area	209	19.3
Safe pavements, clean, tidy, better lights, fewer A boards and signage	156	14.4
Fully pedestrianised	126	11.6
Eyesores reduced	103	9.5
Police visibility, less rowdy drinkers	61	5.6
No ramps, water features, statues	52	4.8
Open to traffic all the time	48	4.4
Restrictions on development	30	2.8
Control traffic, keep it one way, control parking	23	2.1
Total	1084	

Q11e: How would you like Leatherhead High Street to LOOK in two years time?

v) Young people’s Views

Children and young people raised the issue of litter and the need for litter bins at strategic points all around the town. In addition, some young people highlighted the lack of security on the path by the railway. This is an issue that should be addressed.

Some of the children’s written responses emphasise the impact which traffic makes on their environment:

‘When you cycle to school it’s really dangerous’
‘Cars speed down the road even though there are speed bumps’
‘One way system is noisy – too much traffic’
‘There are reckless drivers so I’m in danger of getting hurt’

vi) Sustainability

The Sustainability Survey demonstrated that many local people do their best to recycle, conserve energy, reduce their use of cars and buy locally produced food. More and better information is needed on the recycling scheme and also on how to further reduce waste; this was endorsed by the September meetings. We found a readiness to reduce the amount we spend on energy use in our homes. People agreed that if we were able to buy more locally produced food, this would help local farmers, other producers and the environment, as well as enabling us to eat fresher food and to know its source. There is scope for a local project here.



4.7.3 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats: Environment

The Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats from the Environment studies are as follows:

ENVIRONMENT – SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- Beautiful and diverse countryside around the town
- Local nature reserve along the River Mole corridor through the town
- Strong public support for above two assets
- Many listed buildings in the town

Weaknesses

- Eyesores within the town
- Poor maintenance of street surfaces, some buildings and some footpaths
- Poor access to countryside for walkers and cyclists except by car
- Paucity of links between town and country

Opportunities

- A project to make the most of our river and countryside by improving access for all, information and promotion.
- Celebrate centre of town with integrated improvement scheme
- Encourage high standards of building design and maintenance
- Improve links with farmers and landowners

Threats

- Cramming of the urban areas of the town
- Loss of countryside on the urban fringe
- Difficulties for residents with disabilities to move safely on badly maintained pavements
- Widening of M25 or extension of Heathrow or Gatwick Airports.

The projects for maintaining or enhancing the strengths, improving identified weaknesses and reducing threats relating to the Environment are described in Section 6.



4.8 Village Findings

4.8.1 Introduction

The *key focus* for the Healthcheck data collection and the project ideas has been how people across the community view *Leatherhead* and the *area in general* and how Leatherhead and the area could be improved. However, a number of the questions in the questionnaires and the one-to-one surveys (carried out at Village Days and in the village High Streets), asked village residents for their views on their *villages*. These views are summarised in this section for the attention of the Residents' Associations. Further details are provided in Annex K.

Annex K also provides a comparative analysis of the views expressed on Leatherhead by residents of each of Leatherhead, Fetcham, Ashted, Bookham, Mickleham and Headley, based on the questionnaires, surveys and public consultations.

4.8.2 What Fetcham people think about Fetcham

Fetcham people are generally very satisfied with their village. They see a good community spirit and like the residential character, quietness and ease of walking to most places. Fetcham people appreciate the churches being active in the community and they rate the schools very highly.

The shops provide everyday goods and services and are supplemented by a number of good specialist shops and two well-rated restaurants. The gap missed by some is fresh food from a greengrocer and butcher. The easy, convenient and free parking is a key beneficial feature for shoppers.

The village is well endowed with green open spaces within its boundaries and in the nearby countryside. Its location for easy access to London, the airports, M25 and Surrey areas of outstanding natural beauty is a reason given for living in Fetcham.

There are some areas of concern. People would like the state of the roads improved, see more evidence of police presence on the streets, more activities for teenagers in the evenings, a comprehensive medical centre and NHS dental service and better bus services, especially in the evenings and on Sundays.

4.8.3 What Mickleham people think about Mickleham

Mickleham people like their village for the people who live there and its unspoilt, quiet, easily accessible features, all set in a rural environment. The pubs, village shop, church and school are all appreciated as important features. There were no suggestions made for improvements to the village.

4.8.4 What Ashted people think about Ashted

The most striking aspect of Ashted is its village atmosphere. It has a strong sense of community fostered by its Village Day and fetes, the lively well-attended churches, the many activities which take place in the Peace Memorial Hall, the Ashted Residents' Association, and the Ashted Good Neighbours Scheme. The village is also fortunate in having excellent infant and junior schools.

The second best feature of the village is that it has a wide variety of small, friendly independent shops which gives it a special character. Although there are those who would favour a good supermarket being built on the site of the old Esso garage in The Street there are those who fear that such a building would put the small shops out of business and the village would lose its



Ashted High Street

unique feel. There is a shared feeling for more independent shops and those that are there need to be protected from being turned into yet more charity shops.

Another attraction of the village is its close proximity to the countryside. In Ashted itself there are good parks, places to walk the dog, good nearby sports facilities and places to cycle. To add to this, as well as its setting, Ashted has the advantage of easy access to nearby towns, London and the M25.

The greatest need in Ashted is for somewhere for the young to meet in the evenings.

Suggestions from the under 16s include benches where they can sit and talk, a coffee bar and a skate park in the recreation ground. More money should be channelled into the Youth Centre so that it can have a full time youth leader. A lack of jobs is also a concern of the young. Parents with young children would like somewhere where they can eat as a family. With two out of the three pubs barring children, families have to go further afield to be able to eat together.

Other improvements include a better bus service especially on Sundays and a bus stop on the south side of The Street, an emergency crossing for those living on the north side of the railway, free half hour parking and more affordable housing but not at the expense of inappropriate over-development. Many complain about the weight of traffic in The Street, the speed of traffic in the village and the poor standard of the roads and pavements. The long-term problem of a right hand turn out of Woodfield Lane onto the A24 still remains to be solved.

4.8.5 What Bookham Residents think of Bookham

The level of satisfaction with the village of Bookham as a place to live which was apparent from the survey and completed questionnaires was remarkably high with virtually no dissent. This was not to say that some people were not critical and concerned over recent trends in the way in which development has been taking place in the village over recent years, but these observations were more directed at preserving aspects of the village that they valued and considered to be under threat than any sense of wishing to encourage change.



Bookham High Street

Attributing reasons to the high level of satisfaction was, however, rather more difficult, although the principal factor in the minds of many was the atmosphere and character of the village centre grouped around an historic Parish Church, with a community hall (The Old Barn Hall) and a wide range of shops and local services. The fact that the range of shops available in the village includes a significant number of independent retailers was regarded as particularly important, notably in the minds of many the butchers, a fish shop as well as bakers and greengrocers. At the same time the recently refurbished and extended supermarket operated by Somerfield was appreciated for the range of product lines and the fact that it avoided the necessity of travelling outside of the village on a regular basis.



Accessibility and convenient parking was considered important by many people reflecting the size of Bookham with a resident population of over 10,350 people spread over an area which means that for many the car is the only practical means of transport in to the village centre.

The fact that Bookham lies within open country, much of it owned by the National Trust and designated as An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, was considered important by people in Bookham as in Leatherhead. There was however a high level of concern that over recent years protection of the Green Belt and open country has meant that development activity in the village has been focusing increasingly on infilling. A frequent comment was that this was having the effect of changing the character of the village giving it a more urban feel. This was of particular concern to older people recalling Bookham as it existed years ago. All generations however recognised the need for affordable housing, more especially for younger people unable to remain in the village due to high house prices.

From a social perspective many of those who participated in the survey felt that the most important feature of Bookham to which they attached considerable importance was the sense of community that the village offered. There was particular approval for the community facilities available in the Old Barn Hall and the local library.

Looking to the future the predominant and almost universal comment was that Bookham so far as possible should be allowed to retain its character and the many features which they felt contributed to what they saw as life in a village.

4.8.6 What Headley people think about Headley

Opportunity was taken just before the official launch of Leatherhead Tomorrow to meet Headley people at an open day in the Village Hall.

Whilst this question was not posed at this early stage, people were keen to promote Headley for its countryside walks and for businesses in Leatherhead to use the Village Hall for away day conferences for up to 50 people, with catering provided by the local Inn.

4.9 Views of Young People

The Healthcheck has consulted young people of all ages within the district and their contribution has been both frank and valuable.

The first contribution came from Year 4 of The Greville School in Ashted and they gave us a view of their likes and dislikes of Leatherhead and their hoped-for view of the Leatherhead of the future. The Leatherhead Leisure Centre and the shops proved to be the most popular places to visit. Of the dislikes, problems caused by the weight of traffic were raised such as difficult crossing points and traffic jams on the way to school. For the future, more shops for the young and extra facilities at the Leisure Centre were hoped for. Their opinions were to be echoed by all the subsequent youth consultations that were made.

The school council of The Woodville School in Leatherhead gave us their views through a post-it session and they were asked to tackle each of the four areas of research. Working in groups the pupils were able to discuss their thoughts with their peers before making their contribution. They appreciate their local environment, the parks, river and quiet surroundings but have a strong dislike of litter, graffiti, problems caused by traffic and the behaviour of older, less responsible people around them. Of the centre, the newer shops such as Argos gained approval but they would like more clothes shops and shops catering for younger needs such as toy shops. The Leisure Centre is popular but they made many suggestions for improvements and additions. The problems of getting to school caused by heavy traffic are the same as those experienced by The Greville but in greater numbers because of the location of Woodville. To add to the information gained from this council session Year 6 and 3D of Woodville also gave



us their opinions of the environment and transport by way of teacher-led discussions and a questionnaire.

The Woodville School also made a photographic record of the good and bad things about their route from school into Leatherhead town centre via the River Mole and the Leisure Centre. Their acute observations highlighted many good and bad details which tend to go unnoticed by those visiting Leatherhead on a regular basis. These pictures were then converted into a rolling PowerPoint presentation which was shown at the start of each of the September Progress Report meetings.



**We don't like Rubbish -
The Woodville School Children**

For the points of view of senior students, Therfield School and two of St George's Church Youth Groups in Ashted were consulted by way of a group consultation session and the youth questionnaire. A meeting of Youth Voice, Mole Valley's youth council was addressed and also consulted. Comments from each of these groups about the town centre, the environment and Leisure Centre echoed those of the younger children but they added concerns which arise out of their increased maturity and growing independent freedom.

They are very conscious that there is a lack of understanding of their needs by the older generation. They feel a lack of respect for them by the adult population and are concerned that young people as a whole are suffering a bad reputation because of the behaviour of the few. There are few places for them to gather and talk in the evenings and when they do they are likely to be dispersed by the police. In each of the areas of the study there is a need for meeting places, more youth activities and increased funding to allow such facilities as there are to be open more often and for longer periods.

Public transport is also a concern for those who are as yet unable to drive. Buses for travel to school are often unreliable or late and travel by both bus and train is felt to be too expensive. For those students who walk in the evenings there is a concern for personal safety especially in Leatherhead. Public transport improvements they would like to see include better and safer cycle paths, a better more frequent bus service and a late evening train service.

4.10 Views of People with Disabilities

The Healthcheck team agreed to include the opinions, suggestions and requests of people with disabilities in the main body of the report. We took care to consult people with visual impairment and people with mobility difficulties, especially with regard to the High Street, and we accompanied them on walks around Leatherhead, so that we could see at first hand what the obstacles and hazards are. We also attended a meeting of residents at The Queen Elizabeth's Foundation Development Centre. All these investigations are described in Annex D.

Two major hazards stood out, both of them in the High Street. We saw a young man without sight, who had been trained to find his way independently to the town and around it, nonplussed when a vehicle came towards him when he was not expecting it. Our observation of this event convinced us of the importance of keeping the High Street clear of traffic when it is supposed to be pedestrianised.



Uneven surfaces



Secondly, we found that a person who is unsteady on their feet and needs a stick to help them along, can easily trip on the uneven paving in parts of the High Street, and can lose their balance if their stick goes into the gully which runs right down the street. Someone with restricted vision cannot always locate an obstruction in the pavement, or an unexpected A-board or car parked on the pavement, before they have crashed into it.

We also found that, for someone who is unable to walk far, and that means the majority of Blue Badge holders, a seat where they need it is a necessity, not a luxury. Seats placed at strategic points on the main pedestrian routes into and around the town could make it possible for a person with limited mobility to get out of the house, do their shopping, socialise and take their place in the community instead of being isolated at home.

While some of the shops and restaurants are easily accessible, it is very difficult to enter and go around others. Heavy doors are an obstacle, and we found out why people with limited vision prefer sliding doors: they want to avoid being hit by the door swinging back. Obstructions in the aisles can make it impossible for a person using a wheelchair or a blind person to get safely around a shop or a restaurant. The level of lighting and clarity of signage is important for a person who has partial sight. Signage should also take account of the needs of those with poor literacy skills.

The main problems on the routes into the town were narrow pavements blocked by parked cars, overhanging branches and vegetation obstructing the footway.

There is a group of tandem riders at SeeAbility, who would dearly love to be able to access the countryside on cycle tracks away from the noise and smell of traffic, so that the members of the group who have visual impairment would be able to hear the sounds and smell the smells of the countryside.

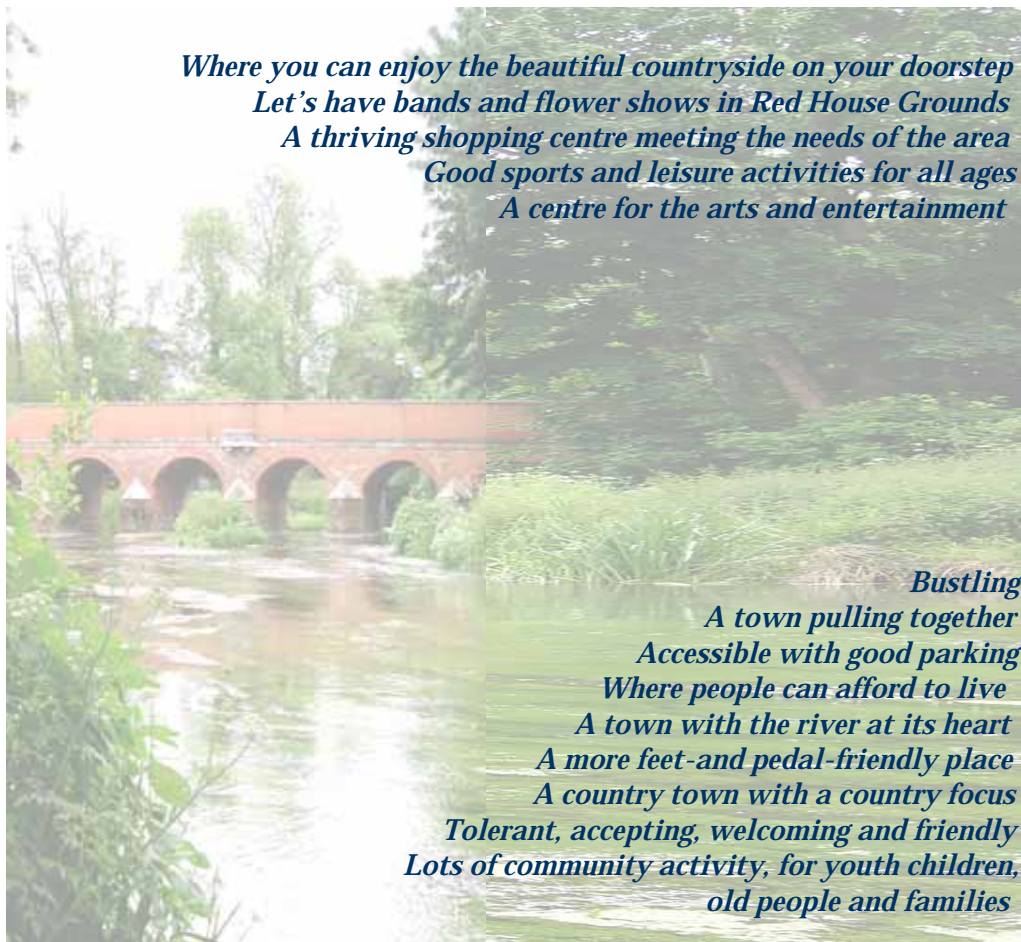
We attended an exciting meeting at the QFED Development Centre, where the residents were discussing a possible accessible footpath through Teazle Wood, which would give them a direct route to Tesco and, from there, to the bus stops for Kingston and Leatherhead, including the railway station. Their present route, along roads, is very much longer. This meeting is fully reported in Annex D. The interesting connection we were able to make was with a young parent living in the vicinity of Tesco, who said that when she took her children into Teazle Wood they lost their way. An accessible path, clearly sign-posted, would enable parents with push chairs to find their way into the wood, (which is designated of nature conservation importance), giving them relief from the traffic noise from the Kingston Road and the M25 and access to space and fresh air. Residents from Ashted and Fetcham as well as Leatherhead, supported this proposal at the September meetings.



SECTION 5 VISION

5.1 Developing the Vision

Community consultation on a Vision for Leatherhead was integral to the community involvement process throughout the Healthcheck. One of the questions in the general questionnaire and the short survey questionnaire was: ‘*What would you like Leatherhead to be like in the future.*’ The community’s Vision was a key element in the focus group discussions at which 680 people took part. Some very clear messages emerged from the analysis of the questionnaires exemplified by the following:



What is your Vision for Leatherhead?

The team developed a list of the words used most frequently to describe the respondents' Vision in responses to the questionnaires and key findings to date. These 'Key Vision Words' are listed in Annex B. The 'Key Vision Words' were displayed at each of the 5 public meetings in September. Attendees were asked to place sticky dots on the three words which best reflected their Vision for the town and also to give their own views on a Vision for Leatherhead.

Following the public meetings in September, the team arranged visioning workshops aimed at developing the Vision for the town. In developing the Vision, the Team examined the key findings of the Healthcheck to date, including the Work Group leaders' 'Key Findings Report' presented to the community at the public meetings in September. These summarised the information obtained from the responses to the questionnaires and the Work Group consultations.



The workshop team involved a mix of people of different age, residential location, socio-economic mix and a balance of male/female and employment status, so as to ensure the Vision represents the views of as wide a spectrum of the community as possible. The attendees were the Work Group leaders, the project coordinator and five invited guests selected to ensure the team reflected the diversity of the community. The meeting was facilitated by John Howarth. This meeting was followed up by a further session with the project team to finalise the wording.

5.2 The Vision for Leatherhead

VISION FOR LEATHERHEAD

Leatherhead will be a vibrant, attractive, self assured and welcoming town that provides access to the amenities of both town and countryside.

It will satisfy the needs of all sectors of the community, and those who visit for business or pleasure.

Leatherhead will be the focal point of an area in which people are proud to live and work.

This will be achieved by:

- *Supporting the development of a healthy balance of shops, services, businesses, restaurants, entertainment and leisure facilities*
- *Fostering a thriving community atmosphere in which all feel safe and secure*
- *Seeking to ensure there is suitable housing for all its residents*
- *Improving access into and around the town for everybody*
- *Improving links between town and countryside*
- *Strengthening the links between the town and surrounding villages*
- *Promoting itself to the wider world as an attractive location for all*
- *Protecting and making the most of our natural and built environment*
- *Considering the needs of generations to come*



SECTION 6 PROJECT IDEAS

6.1 Introduction

Leatherhead Tomorrow's project ideas vary from simple small scale projects to much larger scale initiatives which will require substantial external funding in order to succeed. Some of the projects are already being progressed but for many, there will be a need for considerable consultation, development and planning before they can be taken forward. To turn these ideas into reality will require the projects to be developed into a fully costed and prioritised Action Plan for implementation.

Section 6.2 describes how the project ideas were identified and developed during the Healthcheck. This is followed in Section 6.3 by a list of the project ideas.

The project ideas which are listed relate to:

- Improvements to Leatherhead itself
- General improvements in the town and surrounding area

The Steering Group's proposal for taking these project ideas through to successful implementation is provided in Section 7.

6.2 Development of Project Ideas

Development of the project ideas was an iterative process. Project ideas and initiatives were generated and noted from all our focus group discussions and from public meetings from the beginning of the Healthcheck. Numerous ideas were also generated from nearly 2000 questionnaires received over the period. These were analysed as an integral part of the questionnaire analysis and the results made available for team discussion.

The key issues resulting from community consultation, worksheets and observations informed the development of the Vision for Leatherhead. From the Key findings report prepared by the Work Group Leaders for the September meetings, and the Visioning Workshops, some 8 key objectives emerged describing what the community would like to achieve. The project ideas which can be considered as proposals to meet the identified objectives, were then grouped under these 8 objectives. A clear audit trail was therefore identified.

We have identified around 100 projects which the community proposed which help to achieve the Vision. These are listed under the headings of around 30 key projects.

6.3 Project Ideas

The projects range from small discrete projects which can be set up and implemented quickly – the quick wins - to some complex projects which will take time and considerable effort to develop into costed proposals for funding applications.

The projects vary from proposals to extend footpaths and widen access to the countryside, plans to improve the car parking and access to shops, and ideas for improving the shopping experience and community communication.



There are two key multi-faceted projects which are worthy of special attention and for which more information is provided in Annex N:

- Achieving the Vibrant High Street
- Reinvigorating the Theatre

Table 6.1 lists Leatherhead Tomorrow's project ideas. For more detail on each of the projects, reference is made to Section 4 of this report and associated Annexes.



The High Street at Night

Acorn Images



Table 6.1 LEATHERHEAD TOMORROW PROJECT IDEAS

OBJECTIVE 1: To review and implement a Town Centre improvement plan which encourages economic vitality and prosperity whilst safeguarding the needs of the residents, visitors and the environment <i>Links to Vision and Aims 1;2,4,5.8</i>		LINKS
V1	TO REVIEW THE MANY USES OF THE HIGH STREET IN ORDER TO PLAN FOR ITS VARIED FUNCTIONS AND USES AND THEN IMPLEMENT AGREED PROPOSALS. The aim is to satisfy the needs of all users as far as possible, as well as improve the attractiveness and safety of the High Street. Key areas of concern gained from the community consultations will be taken into consideration in the review and recommendations. The following will form the basis of the review with Annex N giving further details.	
V1.1	Access for Cars and Lorries: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The times at which cars and delivery lorries will be allowed to enter / leave the High Street, use of barriers • The times at which cars will be allowed to park in the High Street • Where parking will be permitted • Speed limits • Signage 	TA5
V1.2	Access for those with reduced mobility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce the unpredictability for the elderly, disabled, blind and parents with young children • To make the current surface of the High Street level throughout 	TA4
V1.3	To improve the attractiveness of the area both physically and aesthetically in order to celebrate the centre of the town. This will involve the coordinated provision of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seating, lighting, litter bins, cycle racks • Planting schemes, sculptures • Sign boards, finger posts • Improved shop fronts, displays and facades • Improved maintenance of the surface of the High Street 	SC8 EN4
V1.4	To improve the social role of the High Street by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a central focal point for the town • Making it an attractive interesting place for children and their parents to visit and for visitors. 	SC7 SC1
V1.5	To review such Economic Considerations as : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loading/unloading at the market • Improving footfall in the town shops and market (See EC1) 	EC1 EC4
V1.6	Implement the recommendations from the above review	
V2	TO REVITALISE THE THEATRE ENTRANCE AND ADJACENT CHURCH STREET AREA	
V2.1	Consult and work with the community to develop imaginative designs for revitalising the Theatre entrance and the area in front of the building as an attractive focal point for the town, linked with the High Street.	SC3
V2.2	Support The Theatre development and promotion.	SC3
EC1	TO IMPROVE THE RETAIL PROVISION IN LEATHERHEAD TOWN CENTRE	
EC1.1	Establish a working group comprising the commercial landlords, the MV Business Development Manager, Leatherhead Town Centre Manager and the Chamber of Commerce to ensure that the shops and services in the town centre are appropriate to the requirements of residents and visitors.	



EC1.2	Establish a working group comprising MVDC Planning Department, Councillors and representatives of the town (as listed in project EC1.1) to examine the feasibility of amending the existing planning regulations to limit the number of charity shops in the town centre.	
EC1.3	Install roofs over the open areas of the Swan Centre	SC8
EC1.4	Establish outlets for locally produced food within the town centre, via the markets or existing retail unit.	EN3 EN8
EC1.5	Expand the Farmers' Market and the twice weekly High Street Market.	EN3
EC1.6	In conjunction with the working groups defined in EC1.1 and EC1.3, investigate and implement ways of improving the competitive edge of the town in comparison with neighbouring towns.	
	Reference is also made to projects relating to the town centre within objectives 2-8 below.	

OBJECTIVE 2 - To improve the vitality of the town and the surrounding area in a way which recognises the different needs of the residents in the town and in the villages		
Links to Vision and Aims 1,2,5;7		LINK
EC2	TO IMPROVE RETAIL PROVISION IN THE AREAS OUTSIDE THE IMMEDIATE TOWN CENTRE	
EC2.1	Ensure that the Lidl site is earmarked for additional retail units if the planned development does not materialise.	
EC2.2	Identify sites within the existing built up areas of the town for retail development.	
EC2.3	The working group described in Project EC1.1, together with the Residents' Associations, to develop plans to ensure that retail developments in the town centre and villages are mutually compatible and complementary.	
EC2.4	Investigate the feasibility of forming an investment mechanism that would allow residents of the town and the surrounding area to invest in retail developments in the town and in the surrounding villages if required.	
EC2.5	Develop and implement a strategy for improving the vitality of the town and the surrounding area which recognises the different needs of the residents of the town and villages, and which is dependent on outcomes of projects 2.1 – 4 above.	
EC2.6	Develop a strategy to reinvigorate the Kingston Road area in terms of retail development, character and ambience	
EC3	TO DEVELOP BUSINESS & EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE TOWN & SURROUNDING AREA	
EC3.1	Develop facilities (premises and access to advice and support) for entrepreneurs (both old and young) to start and develop their own businesses (including retail businesses).	
EC3.2	Create more employment opportunities for skilled and unskilled manual workers.	
EC3.3	Develop projects in consultation with ASFP, ALDAG, MENCAP amongst others to develop the confidence and skills of vulnerable and less able residents to help them gain employment	
EC3.4	Investigate opportunities with the SCC Widening Participation Project for further education, financial literacy training, vocational training and life long learning and facilitate the coordination of training providers, in order to help retain younger residents and to promote the development of skills to enable return to work, to more skilled work or "hobby" skills, taking account of The Children and Young People's Plan for Surrey and other relevant strategies	SC5 SC11
EC3.5	Integrate the business community more closely with the town	



EC4	TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF VISITORS TO THE TOWN & SURROUNDING AREA	
EC4.1	Implement and further develop the visitor attraction strategy with a view to making more use of the area's tourist attractions.	EN2
EC4.2	Develop and implement a strategy to promote the town and villages to all residents.	EN2
EC4.3	Encourage an appreciation of what Leatherhead has to offer by putting up large information maps with details of shopping areas, Theatre, places of historical and contemporary interest, parks, River Mole walks, sports facilities, halls etc	EN5
EC4.4	Establish a Visitor Information Centre(s) in Leatherhead, possibly situated in the Theatre	
EC4.5	Work with Tourism South East and others to find suitable sites for the development of a new hotel in the area and determine the feasibility (or otherwise) of building such a hotel.	
EC4.6	In conjunction with all current providers of meeting & conference facilities, catering and accommodation, develop a strategy for bringing more conference and business visitors to the town. Identify all halls and meeting places (including school halls) available for public hire and make information available on the web and through help shops etc.	SC7
EC4.7	Prepare leaflets compiled with assistance of children to promote family activities in Leatherhead & area	SC1

OBJECTIVE 3: To develop Leatherhead as the leisure, recreational, sport and entertainment centre for the northern Mole Valley area		LINK
		<i>Links to Vision and Aims 1,2,6</i>
SC1	TO IMPROVE CHILDREN / FAMILY LEISURE FACILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES	
SC1.1	Enhance the Red House Grounds with additional seating and sign posting the nearest toilets	EC4, SC8
SC1.2	Seek opportunities for developing facilities /activities for young children in the Leatherhead area, and investigate opportunities to make the town centre more attractive for children: such as childrens' activities (parent supervised) / things to do/exhibits/ child friendly eating places, shops of interest to children.	V1
SC2	TO IMPROVE LEISURE, SPORTS AND RECREATION FACILITIES FOR ALL	
SC2.1	Undertake a leisure, sports and recreation survey to identify the needs of all residents in the town and surrounding area, and the needs of the various existing clubs and organisations, taking into account developing community sports facilities at Therfield and in recognition of possible changes at the Leisure Centre.	SC12
	For actions relating to outdoor enjoyment of the countryside see actions under objective 5.	
SC3	TO ENCOURAGE THE THEATRE DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION	
SC3.1	Encourage Theatre development, diversification and partnership with providers of other activities. Encourage its promotion as part of Leatherhead's community arts promotion; encourage residents support for the Theatre in order for it to thrive.	V1 V2 EC4

OBJECTIVE 4: To encourage a thriving community about which all sectors of the community feel proud, about which they feel informed and in which they feel welcome.		LINK
		<i>Links to Vision and Aims 1,2,3,6,7</i>
SC4	TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY COOPERATION AND COMMUNICATION	
SC4.1	Develop a regular community magazine and enhance the Visit Leatherhead website for details on forthcoming events in Leatherhead, including the arts, sports, countryside, community Associations, community events, links with villages; with editorial features on feel good subjects: preferably compiled by representatives from	EC4



	the community and funded by adverts and sponsorship. Options are to cover Leatherhead only or cover north Mole Valley.	
SC4.2	Encourage the many Leatherhead community organisations to work together to represent and support all sections and ages of the whole Leatherhead community, irrespective of geographical and physical boundaries, in bringing about appropriate developments and improvements.	
SC4.3	Promote mutual understanding between generations by encouraging activities such as more elderly reading in schools, young reading to blind, community groups improving eyesores, litter picks cutting back shrubbery, cyclists respecting pedestrians and vice versa, volunteering.	
SC4.4	Encourage more community-wide celebratory/festival events and town/village events such as the Drama Festival. Village and town football competitions; shop front competitions, best Christmas displays in Leatherhead and across north Mole Valley area.	
SC4.5	Promote the town and area to residents and visitors	EC4
SC5	TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY SERVICES	
SC5.1	Develop a Leatherhead and a Fetcham good neighbour scheme	
SC5.2	Encourage better and more balanced publicity for changes in services and facilities at Leatherhead Hospital and other changes in public funding and service delivery possibly using the proposed community newsletter/magazine.	
SC5.3	Encourage (where appropriate) surgeries with same day-only appointment systems to consider how they can better meet their clients needs and monitor their performance	
SC5.4	Review resurrecting the Community Services forum.	
SC5.5	Encourage and support the setting up of a Credit Union and financial literacy training	
SC5.6	Investigate need for a Community Legal services Partnership contract in Leatherhead	
SC6	TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE HOUSING	
SC6.1	Develop advisory and support services, possibly through a charitable trust/company limited by guarantee, for elderly/infirm people to assist them down size from family home to more appropriate housing if they so desire.	
SC6.2	Encourage creative solutions to the problem of appropriate as well as affordable housing in the area.	
SC7	TO INTRODUCE MEETING AND SOCIALISING AREAS	
SC7.1	Investigate opportunities for informal meeting and socialising areas/venues within the town's buildings e.g. at the Theatre, and within the town or high street itself e.g. plaza areas	V1 V2
SC7.2	Investigate opportunities to make better use of the Institute and other buildings for leisure activities for the whole community	
SC8	TO INTRODUCE MORE SEATING	
SC8.1	In consultation with representatives from across the community, identify locations for additional benches and then introduce as follows: in the High Street Swan Centre; at taxi pick up locations and bus stops; Red House Grounds; main walking routes into town; riverside; at view points Install litter bins as appropriate	V1 EN1 SC1
SC9	TO FOSTER PRIDE IN THE COMMUNITY	
SC9.1	Identify further projects of value to the community to involve young people with anti-social behaviour to help instil a pride in themselves and the community and provide them with worthwhile skills	
SC9.2	Consider how a sense of pride in the town may be developed by building on existing community links and the twinning initiative with Triel in France	
SC10	TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY SAFETY	



SC10.1	Improve security with lighting along the footpath from the Station to Therfield school.	
SC11	TO IMPROVE SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE	
SC11.1	Work with interested parties to develop better means of finding out and providing youngsters with information on opportunities for paid/ unpaid work in the community	SC4
SC11.2	In conjunction with MV, agencies in the field, and Youth Voice examine existing sources of information on leisure and recreation for young people and develop more comprehensive and appropriate means of distributing information.	SC2
SC11.3	It is suggested that a group examine further funding options for the Leatherhead youth Café and subsidising coffee for youngsters at Café Costa.	
SC11.4	Discuss possibilities for cheaper fares, provision of evening buses/routes with bus companies	TA2
SC12	TO IMPROVE FACILITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE	
SC12.1	Consult over constructing a skateboard / roller board park in Ashted and Bookham	
SC12.2	Encourage skateboard competitions within and between areas; invite local companies to sponsor	
SC12.3	Investigate additional venues for young people to hangout /socialise within the town centre and within the area, and encourage innovating measure to enable youngsters to socialise at alcohol free venues - such as the Epsom Starbucks idea of subsidising young people's coffee.	
SC12.4	Provide additional graffiti walls for youngsters as an outlet for artistic creativity in a contained environment near Fetcham Grove skateboard park and in visible places in villages	

OBJECTIVE 5: To preserve and enhance the riverside environment and the wider countryside; to improve access to it and further to develop links between town and countryside and to promote it to visitors. <i>Links to Vision and Aims 1,2,4,5,7,8,9</i>		
		LINK
EN1	TO INVESTIGATE HOW TO ALLOW AND ENCOURAGE ACTIVE AND PASSIVE RECREATIONAL USE OF THE RIVER AND RIVERBANKS WHILST SAFEGUARDING THE UNIQUE ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RIVER.	
EN1.1	Investigate ways to improve the special habitat and other key environmental features of the River Mole, working with key agencies and with the community	
EN1.2	Improve signage and develop attractive routes from all access points from the town to riverside.	
EN1.3	Make an attractive footpath from the Leisure Centre to the riverside and investigate opportunities to extend the riverside footpaths further along river corridor into the countryside.	
EN1.4	Improve access for people with all disabilities to the riverside.	
EN1.5	Add seats, picnic tables and litterbins where appropriate.	SC8
EN1.6	Investigate opportunities for a riverside café and further riverside facilities	
EN1.7	Improve maintenance of the riverside paths and involve local residents in clearance of rubbish.	
EN1.8	Spread knowledge about the wildlife to be seen beside and in the river, for adults and children, through information boards in the town centre and at other suitable locations and an interpretative centre, possibly in the foyer of the Leisure Centre, with pictures of exactly what to look out for and other learning opportunities, for both visitors and local people.	
EN1.9	Promote the River Mole Day.	
EN2	TO IMPROVE ACCESS FOR ALL TO COUNTRYSIDE IMMEDIATELY AROUND THE TOWN AND TO PROMOTE LEATHERHEAD TO VISITORS AS GATEWAY TO THE SURREY HILLS	
EN2.1	For those not able to walk far, ensure that the town is included in the routes of the countryside buses and find a location where people can park, walk a short distance to the riverside, sit down and contemplate the river.	
EN2.2	Review footpaths and bridleways giving access from town to country for ramblers; make safe crossing places over the bypass on the line of existing bridleways and footpaths.	



EN2.3	Develop a network of footpaths, allowing circular routes between the beauty spots, including a link between Mickleham and Norbury Park, with clear 'footpath' signs.	
EN2.4	Investigate opportunities for increased cycle route coverage from the centre of the town to the surrounding countryside and within the countryside, including family cycle routes away from traffic, suitable also for SeeAbility tandems.	
EN2.5	Develop the accessible route between Dorincourt and Woodbridge Corner through Teazle Wood.	TA4
EN2.6	Work with the SCC Tourism Office and the MVDC Business Development Officer to promote the countryside around Leatherhead, as an amenity for day visits, a wildlife habitat and an educational resource, for people from further afield.	EC4
EN3	TO PROTECT AREAS OF BEAUTY AND WILDLIFE VALUE AND TO PROMOTE HIGH STANDARDS OF COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT	
EN3.1	Safeguard wildlife corridors between areas of wildlife importance	
EN3.2	Enable sharing of best practice among rangers and wardens.	
EN3.3	Consult with local farmers as to how they can best be supported	EN8 EC1
EN3.4	Promote economic links and better mutual understanding between town and country, promoting Surrey Farm Visit Week, Surrey Hills Produce and the Farmers' Markets.	EN8 EC1
EN3.5	Develop further links between producers in the countryside around Leatherhead and potential customers living in the area.	
EN3.6	Invite local employers to encourage their employees to participate in conservation work in the local countryside.	

OBJECTIVE 6: To enhance the visual attractiveness of the townscape and the routes into the town.		
	<i>Links to Vision and Aims 2,6,7,8</i>	LINK
EN 4	TO IMPROVE ELEMENTS OF THE TOWNSCAPE IN THE TOWN CENTRE	
EN4.1	Review the local design statement to cover the main town centre shopping streets, in such a way as to celebrate the centre of the town and enhance the setting of the most attractive buildings.	V1
EN4.2	Consider enhancements to the visual quality of the whole of Church Street.	V2
EN4.3	Devise a scheme for further encouraging less garish and more attractive shop fronts, and where possible making town centre shops accessible to all.	V1
EN4.4	Encourage the enhancement of specific buildings such as the Theatre fly tower and the Bookworm parade of shops, and the screening of the new waterworks building.	V1
EN4.5	Monitor new building projects such as those on the Bull Hotel site, the Depot site and the Seaboard site, to ensure that the environment is improved at these locations and that the buildings are worthy of inclusion in an historic town.	
EN4.6	Explain the hazards of A boards on pavements and then work with shop keepers, Town Centre Manager and SCC Highways to solve the problem.	
EN5	TO IMPROVE ATTRACTIVENESS OF ROUTES INTO TOWN AND MAKE THEM WELCOMING	
EN5.1	Find ways to improve the appearance of the main routes and gateways into the town, including Leret Way, the downside of the Railway Station, Kingston Road, the entrance to the town from Fetcham and Church Street junction with the Crescent, to welcome visitors and shoppers.	
EN5.2	Improve the appearance and feeling of pedestrian alleyways and routes into the town and between the town and the riverside including Elm Road, by improving lighting, removing obstacles and eyesores, improving maintenance of fences, surfaces and signage.	
EN5.3	Update signage and fingerposts as part of a coordinated scheme of signage both within the town and to the main destinations around it, such as the river and the Leisure Centre.	EC4
EN5.4	Continue the enhancement of the Red House Grounds and plan enhancements to Park Gardens and King George V Field in consultation with the public; enhance the Mansion Gardens and improve the wildlife quality of the pond.	
EN5.5	Consider a programme of planting additional trees within or alongside housing estates, to replace the gradual loss of forest trees, for example behind Clare Crescent and along the stretch of farmland up to Barnett Wood Farm, or as part of	



	new planning permissions, for example near Windfield or in the Kingston Road.
EN5.6	Make road signs simpler and clearer.
EN5.7	Find ways to support Heritage Week.

OBJECTIVE 7: To improve transport, access and parking for all residents and visitors		LINK
<i>Links to Vision and Aims 1,2,4,5,6,9</i>		
TA1	TO IMPROVE THE SERVICE AND FACILITIES PROVIDED BY THE TRAIN COMPANIES	
TA1.1	To work with South West Trains to provide a Sunday service to Guildford.	
TA1.2	To investigate the possibility of faster services to London at peak times and later services at the weekends.	
TA1.3	To work with South West Trains, Southern and the British Transport Police to improve security on the trains, at Ashted, Bookham and Leatherhead stations and in the station car parks. See Annex I for details.	
TA1.4	To work with South West Trains to improve the facilities on each of the stations. See Annex I	
TA1.5	To work with Southern Railway and Network Rail to improve the appearance of Leatherhead Station. See Annex I for details.	EN 5
TA1.6	To investigate the possibility of a waiting place for cars outside the Leatherhead Station ticket office for drivers who wish to conduct business at the station	
TA2	TO IMPROVE THE SERVICE PROVIDED BY THE BUS COMPANIES WITHIN THE AREA	
TA2.1	To work with Countryliner Buses to extend the running time of the 479 bus.	
TA2.2	To work with the bus companies to provide more frequent services and additional routes and stops serving Leatherhead and the villages.	
TA2.3	To work with the bus companies to provide a regular bus service to Leatherhead Hospital, and a Sunday service along the A24 and A246 routes.	
TA2.4	To investigate the possibility of the Surrey Explorer Bus NT1 calling at Leatherhead and at Bocketts Farm as part of its route.	EN2 SC2
TA2.5	Work with SCC, MVDC and other funding agencies to extend the coverage and frequency of the Buses4U scheme within the area.	
TA2.6	To work with the bus companies and Mole Valley District Council to improve the provision of information. See Annex I for details.	
TA2.7	To work with the Mole Valley District Council and the bus companies to improve the provision of shelters and seats. See Annex I for details.	SC8
TA2.8	To work with Surrey County Council Highways Department and the bus companies to improve the reliability and punctuality of the services especially peak times in the mornings.	EN7
TA2.9	To investigate the possibility of a coach service to link Leatherhead to Gatwick and Heathrow Airports with companies such as Jetcoach to be approached.	
TA3	TO IMPROVE CYCLING ACCESS FOR WORK, SCHOOL AND LEISURE.	
TA3.1	To work with Surrey County Council Highways Department to improve the cycle route coverage, condition of existing routes and safety for cyclists within Leatherhead, and at specific places in Ashted, Fetcham and Bookham. See Annex I for details	
TA4	TO IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN ACCESS WITHIN AND AROUND THE TOWN AND VILLAGES.	
TA4.1	To work with the district and county councils to improve specific walking routes to the town centre and around the villages. See Annex I for details.	
TA4.2	To work with Surrey County Council to improve dangerous crossing points on key routes to the town centre and provide a greater feeling of safety on already existing crossing points. See Annex I for details.	
TA4.3	To work with local traders and services such as dentists and solicitors to improve access for elderly or infirm people and people with disabilities.	



TA5	TO IMPROVE TRAFFIC CIRCULATION, ACCESS BY CAR AND PARKING PROVISION.
TA5.1	To work with Surrey County Council Highways to continue to reduce the congestion experienced around the one-way system in Leatherhead and to improve traffic circulation at the two major roundabouts on the outskirts of the town centre. See Annex I for details
TA5.2	To work with the Swan Centre owners to radically improve their parking provision. Annex I for details
TA5.3	To work with the Mole Valley District Council and the Swan Centre owners to provide an electronic display board which gives information on the number of spaces available in the Swan Centre car park.
TA5.4	To work with Mole Valley District Council to provide more free 'pop and shop' parking especially close to the centre with Leret Way being one possible location.
TA5.5	To work with the council to find opportunities for more half hour parking and cheaper short-term on-street and off-street parking.
TA5.6	To work with the council to redistribute some of the long and short term parking provision to better serve the needs of shoppers and workers i.e. to provide the most appropriate type of parking in the most appropriate places.
TA5.7	To work with the council to identify more long term parking opportunities and to reduce business parking in residential streets.
TA5.8	To work with the Surrey County Council to rationalise road signs to the town centre, car parks and M25.

OBJECTIVE 8: To encourage businesses and residents to take local responsibility for environmental issues of national/global concern		LINK
		<i>Links to Vision and Aims 4,5,8,9</i>
EN6	TO PROMOTE WASTE REDUCTION	
EN6.1	Investigate ways community groups could assist in encouraging and facilitating trade waste recycling and the reduction, re-use and recycling of domestic waste.	
EN6.2	Encourage efforts to reduce waste and encourage the establishment of the educational information centre at the MRF.	
EN6.3	Improve information about which materials can be recycled.	
EN7	TO PROMOTE THE REDUCTION OF ENERGY USE	
EN7.1	Promote energy efficiency in new buildings in the area.	
EN7.2	Encourage Safe Routes to school, especially for the children of the new Trinity Primary School and the development of business travel plans	
EN7.3	Publicise best practice, such as at the MVDC development at Overlord Court	
EN7.4	Inform the public about ways to reduce energy use.	
EN8	TO CONNECT LOCAL PRODUCERS WITH LOCAL CONSUMERS	
EN8.1	Develop a plan for encouraging locally produced food such as outlets for Surrey Hills Project.	EC1 EC4
EN8.2	Encourage the Dorincourt vegetable box and other initiatives "Establish an outlet for locally produced food and other produce within the town	
EN8.3	Assemble information about local produce and prepare an information leaflet about it.	



SECTION 7 ACHIEVING THE VISION

7.1 Introduction

Turning the project ideas into reality through implementing an Action Plan will require a number of activities to be undertaken concurrently as Phase 2 of the Healthcheck. These activities are as follows:

- Establishing a Delivery Organisation
- Identifying Partners
- Finding Volunteers
- Funding Sources
- Defining projects and an Action Plan

7.2 Establishing a Delivery Organisation

This first phase of the Healthcheck was carried out by a small group of volunteers working to a Steering Group.

The Leatherhead Tomorrow Steering Group believes that:

- Community ownership and involvement is essential. The Healthcheck needs to continue to maintain strong links with the community and community organisations so as to ensure that the projects which are implemented reflect the community's views and respond to the community's needs.
- The approach to implementing the projects should be holistic, coordinated and integrated rather than being implemented on a piecemeal basis by the various partner organisations.
- Dedicated resources should be assigned to coordinating and progressing the activities

Leatherhead has no obvious delivery organisation in place. There is no town council, no parish council, Mole Valley's offices in Dorking seem remote to many, and there is not one Residents' Association for the town. The Town Centre Forum is an advisory body, not set up for 'delivery'. One of the outcomes of the consultation process was that Leatherhead needs a new energised umbrella organisation led by the community to manage the implementation of the projects. This would have representatives from the local authorities and other partners involved, residents, the voluntary sector and business in the area. The proposed organisation is described in Section 7.7 below.

7.3 Identifying Delivery Partners

It will be essential to liaise closely with a wide range of Delivery Partners in implementing the projects. Key Delivery Partners would be Mole Valley District Council and Surrey County Council. Delivery Partners may also include:

- Large commercial organisations such as the owners of the Swan Centre, train companies or local businesses
- Voluntary organisations such as local clubs
- Local Charities such as SeeAbility

Some of the projects are potentially achievable by the new Partnership, working with volunteers from across the community. Subject to availability of funding, others could potentially be implemented by a new Delivery Organisation working within a partnership with Mole Valley District Council and Surrey County Council and the private and voluntary sectors. Other projects



are included in order to fulfil the needs and aspirations of the community, but which will only be achieved when they become a high enough priority for the partner involved. For these other more strategic projects, the role of the Healthcheck is to provide the evidence of the community's need for such a project.

The team is in the process of identifying partners. Surrey County Council and Mole Valley District Council have already expressed their interest in working with Phase 2 of Leatherhead Tomorrow. From discussions with Mole Valley officers the Project Team is pleased to hear that the council is minded to incorporate a number of the project ideas into their community plan and other strategies, although details would need to be worked up between the Council and Delivery Organisation as part of the next phase of the Healthcheck.

A key challenge for the next phase of the work will be to identify additional partners from across the private, public and voluntary sectors and to work with these partners in developing the ideas into achievable projects.

7.4 Resourcing

The implementation of the Healthcheck will need community support and community involvement. From experience of other Healthchecks the Phase 2 Team will benefit from volunteers to lead or assist with specific projects as 'Project Champions' and to assist in various activities such as fund raising or helping at public exhibitions. Experience on Phase 1 of Leatherhead Tomorrow demonstrates the challenge it will be to recruit volunteers from the community although the team considers volunteers may be more forthcoming for the implementation of a project rather than the study that it has been to date. It is considered essential to start involving more volunteers to help form the teams at the earliest opportunity. It is also recommended that a dedicated project coordinator/manager role be established together with formal links to support from the Councils.

7.5 Identifying Funding Sources

The funding for the various projects will come from a variety of sources including.

- Mole Valley District Council
- Surrey County Council
- Thomas Flack Fund
- Delivery Partners listed above
- Private Sector
- UK or European Government Agencies (e.g. SEEDA)
- Charitable Trusts (e.g. The Shaw Trust, The Baring Foundation, Esme Fairburn Foundation, Wates Foundation)

A key challenge of the next phase of the work will be to identify available funding sources, to identify the types of projects which are eligible for such funding and then to develop bids to secure it. It is noted that funds from some funding bodies are provided only according to the 'Matched Funding' principle i.e. funds will only be provided by them if any equivalent amount has already been raised.

7.6 Project Definition and Action Plan Implementation

Some of the projects are already being investigated or are currently being implemented. For example, the information from the Living Streets surveys (see Section 4.6 and Annex D) was acted upon very quickly by SCC Highways. They have also started to act upon some of the recommendations from the walks which we undertook with visually impaired people. Likewise,



MVDC have already implemented one of the project recommendations before this report was published, which was to prepare very clear information about what can and can not be recycled.

Whilst for a number of projects, there will be some delay as funding is obtained, there are a number of projects on the list for which no funding is required. These 'quick wins' will be implemented as soon as possible, and our activities publicised so as to demonstrate to the community that progress is being made.

For most of the projects listed, there would be a need for the Phase 2 Project Team to work with delivery partners to draw up a detailed scope of the project and, through a process of consultation and development, to prepare fully costed project proposals to incorporate into an overall Action Plan. Prioritisation will be important, priorities depending on a number of factors, not least being:

- The need for the project
- The availability of partners
- The cost and other resources.

Whilst many of the projects will be to action an agreed change, some of the project ideas will be to 'further investigate.' These are projects which:

- Demand a specific study or evaluation outside the scope of the Healthcheck.
- Which could not be fully evaluated during the Healthcheck process because of the time involved or because the issue emerged too late in the process.

The community will also be asked to help in defining the projects, and in giving their views and comments as the project ideas develop. The Phase 2 Project Team would then submit bids for funding from organisations listed in Section 7.5.

On the basis of experience with other Healthchecks, whilst some of the project ideas can, budget permitted, be turned into projects and implemented almost straight away, it will take another nine or ten months to develop the full list of community-identified project ideas into fully costed projects for implementation.

7.7 Organisational Structure

Having explored a variety of options, the proposal is to set up a 'not-for-profit' Company called 'The Leatherhead Area Development Partnership Limited.' This would involve representatives from the Local Authorities and other Partners involved residents, voluntary sector and local business.

The Company will work with these parties to develop the project ideas into fully costed community led project proposals which when delivered will support the Vision for the community of Leatherhead.

The object of this Company will be:

"The implementation and facilitation of projects* relevant to the improvement of the economic, environmental, social & community and transport & access facets of Leatherhead and the surrounding area in order to improve the quality of life of those living and working in the area."

*It should be noted that in this context 'projects' means those projects identified by the Healthcheck Process and any subsequent projects identified by the Company itself.

The company will have a Board of Directors who will have the power to employ a project manager/coordinator or managers as it sees fit to undertake this work. It is proposed that the



current Steering Group with volunteers will form the first Board of Directors – until the first General Meeting – in no more than six months' time – when it will step down, although the individual members will be able to offer themselves for re-election.

Linked in with the Board will be project teams and project champions for each of the projects or groups of projects. These teams may include members of the Board.

Annex L sets out the proposed constitution of the Company.

7.8 Overall Action Plan Programme

On the basis of other Healthcheck experience, the Steering Group recommends that Phase 2 comprises the following work streams taking place concurrently:

- Identifying Delivery Partners
- Recruiting Volunteers
- Progressing of Bids to Funding Agencies
- Setting up the Community Led Delivery Organisation
- Implementing some 'Quick Win' projects
- Progressively implementing projects as funding/resources and people materialise

It is considered that this phase of the process will take around 10 months. The output would be:

- Implementation of some of the 'Quick Wins'
- Establishment of the Company and the availability of volunteers
- Identified scope and costs for progressing a set of the projects into implementation with a phasing of further projects over a longer term.

7.9 Concluding Remarks

Considerable time and energy has been put into the Healthcheck to date, and important projects for the community have been identified. It is recommended that the community now takes up the challenge to assist in implementing these projects for the benefit of the town and surrounding communities.