

## **2030 Vision for the Cambridge sub-region**

### **Social cohesion: summary of workshops with schools**

The two groups tackled the topic in very different ways. They are therefore summarised separately. What is interesting is that, despite the dominance of 'academic' students, both groups expressed concern about the lack of attention given to vocational education.

#### **First workshop: Linton Village College, Manor School, Parkside Community College, St Peter's School**

- See themselves as likely to be living at home for longer than previous generations – so they may be the first ones to experience intergenerational living. They believe that new housing should reflect this – with annexes, granny flats and so on – and that there should be more hostels for the young. The cost of housing – on top of the cost of university education – is seen as a hugely divisive factor in society.
- Social (and community) cohesion can be enhanced by young and old meeting and working and volunteering together in community and interest groups. Perhaps this involvement might extend to job-sharing between young and old.
- Certain sections of society are already on the margins – we need a fairer, more equal society. The need for work is basic: it's part of an individual's identity. And a shared workplace is a better social mixer than the homeworking brought about by new technology (although the latter enables dispersed families to communicate better than before).
- Cambridge is seen as 'a happening place' but it was felt by some that there should be more – and smaller – events for young people in Cambridge, advertised in a way that does not put the young off. Many young people are put off by large events.
- The press is widely disliked for the way it stereotypes the young. We should be more encouraging to the young – telling them they will fail is a self-fulfilling prophesy. Optimism from the media and politicians – neither of which understands the unprivileged young – is badly needed. The young are more open than their elders to change and difference.
- Great concern about reducing employment possibilities and about how to develop appropriate skills, obtain work experience and so on. Wide belief that education is too narrowly targeted towards exams and university. One size does not fit all – there needs to be a route for the non-academic and the existence of options (such as the Open University) which can be taken up later.

#### **Second workshop: Comberton Village College, Cottenham Village College, Hills Road 6th Form College**

- Some scepticism about the issues – impact on jobs of ever-developing technologies, implications of growth in old – identified in the BITC video. Trends rarely follow planners' predictions.
- For many of these sixth-formers school is not a perfect preparation for the world of work but at present strikes a sensible balance. However, they saw a need to make education more relevant for the non-academic and for their futures. Are languages really necessary for everyone?
- Sixth formers expressed deep concern about the downgrading of *vocational* education – with the vocational nature sometimes disguised (eg cooking renamed as 'food technology'), and its value downgraded in league tables. In contrast to Germany, where vocational education is taken seriously, it is often treated as 'a bit of a joke' in the UK. Employers should do more to encourage students, providing mentors and placements.
- There was concern about a shortage of work for the unskilled combined with inadequate training and low pay.
- There needs to be more housing available for rent and more houses and housing groups which are suited to large and extended (usually immigrant) families and family groups.
- Too often, young families decide where to live not just on the qualities of a place or its convenience in respect to the workplace but on the school catchment area.
- There were differing views on community creation. Some saw Cambourne and new settlements generally as disasters in which newcomers find it difficult to collaborate and the infrastructure (including schools) for community development is not in place. Others see Cambourne as highly successful with newcomers all motivated to generate a community. Those who have less tend to collaborate to improve their quality of living while the better-off tend to keep to themselves. (And some people are just not interested in the community aspect.)
- Varying views on sense of isolation in villages. Some admit to it, others deny it (despite the lack of public transport) and consider themselves part of Cambridge – a feeling which access to the Guided Bus has done much to reinforce.
- Cambridge city seen as a very segregated city – well-off and poorer areas are widely separated. At its present scale it's a walkable city and public transport is 'reasonable'. (Some disagreement on the later, though.) But concern on narrow city streets and the ability of Drummer Street to continue as the central bus hub for an expanded city – it needs relocation and the city centre pedestrian area possibly extended and city centre trams or some other form of transport introduced.