



A Vision for Harrington

Community Planning Weekend Report Back Broadsheet, 15/11/22



A proposed new 21st century sustainable community with all the best attributes of a traditional market town.

The Vision

A distinct new settlement designed to respond to its landscape setting and prevent coalescence with nearby villages; an integrated movement network prioritising active travel within Harrington and enhanced public transport and cycle connectivity to surrounding towns and villages; a diversity of workspaces and homes for people of all incomes set within 20 minute neighbourhoods focussed on community hubs with local services; at least half the land set aside for green infrastructure with space for recreation, food growing and enhanced biodiversity and water management, and; a focus on building an enterprising and supportive community. These are just some of the ideas to emerge at the Vision for Harrington Community Planning Weekend held on Friday 11 and Saturday 12 November 2022 at the Belfry Hotel, Milton Common.

Planning Background

The challenges facing Oxfordshire are big – whether it's tackling the climate emergency, improving connectivity for rural communities or creating the jobs and working environments of the future. At the same time, as people are living longer and there has been a second 'baby boom', many local families are unable to afford or even find a decent home – so new homes are desperately needed.

Harrington offers a chance to deliver the sustainable growth, including the workspaces and homes South Oxfordshire needs, without developing around historic communities, in the green belt or the Chilterns AONB.

Community Engagement

In late October and early November 2022 the local community was invited by JTP, on behalf of Summix, to help shape the Vision for Harrington, a proposed sustainable 21st century community. There were chances to visit roadshows, give views online and participate in workshops at the Vision for Harrington Community Planning Weekend.

Vision Report Back

Following the roadshows and workshops, the JTP-led team analysed and summarised the outcomes and drew up a Vision for Harrington. The Vision was reported back to the local community on Tuesday 15 November at Oxford Belfry Hotel. This broadsheet summarising the Vision was handed out to the audience after the presentation.

Next Steps

Following the Community Planning Weekend, the Vision for Harrington will inform submissions made by the Summix team to the Joint Local Plan process for South Oxfordshire District Council and the Vale of White Horse District Council. This Joint Local Plan will focus on the new homes, infrastructure, jobs and other important considerations needed in the future development of the area.

Vision Report Back Online Webinar

7pm, Tuesday 22 November 2022

There will be a second chance to view the Vision presentation on Tuesday 22 November at 7pm at an online webinar. Please email community@jtp.co.uk to register for the webinar or visit the project website for joining details.

A Vision for Harrington

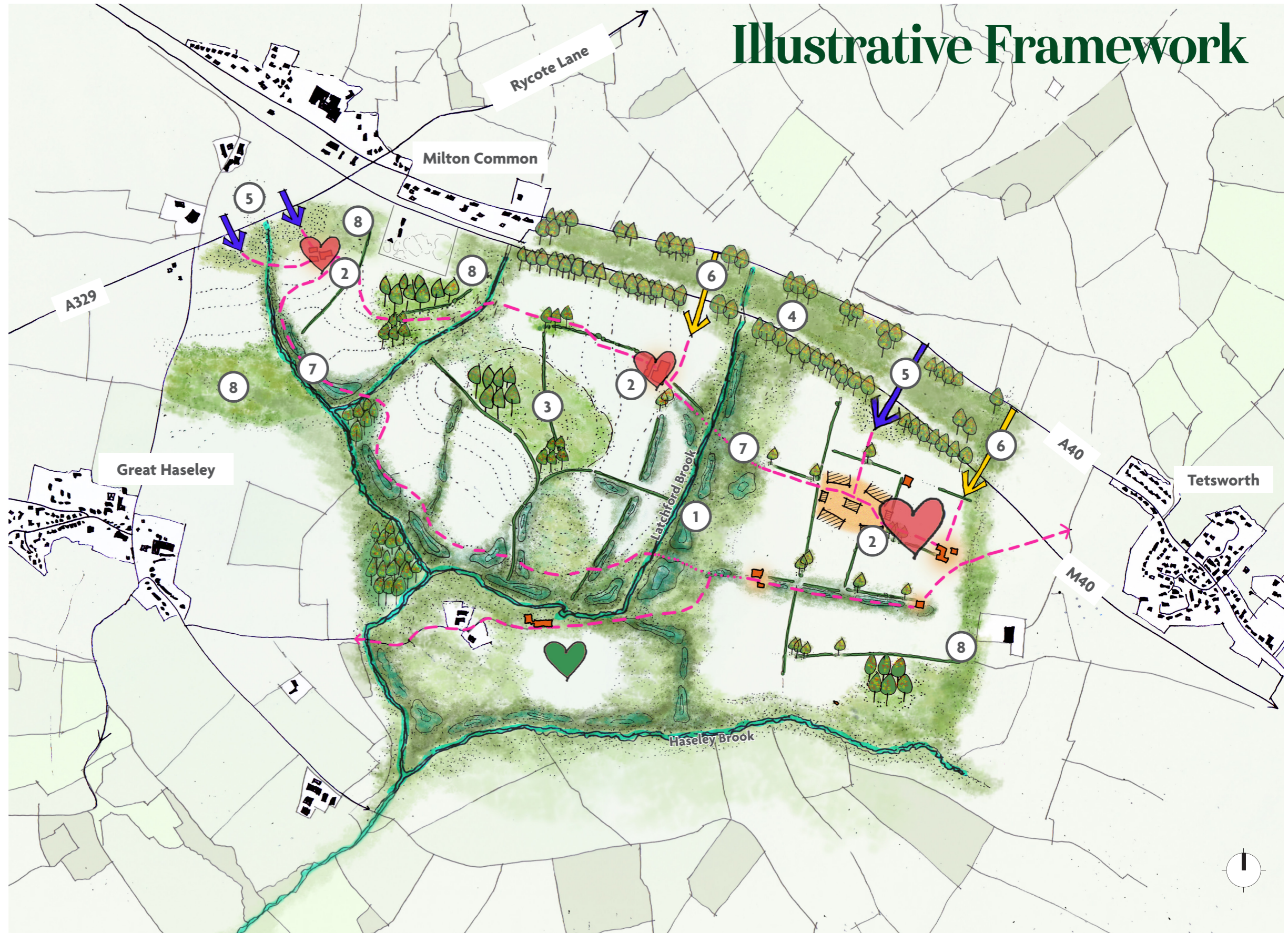
Tuesday 15 November 2022

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The Vision for Harrington was drawn up following the Community Planning Weekend public workshops.

Key

1. Green and blue network through the heart of the community
2. Community heart
3. Proposed village common
4. Proposed landscape buffer
5. Proposed site access
6. Proposed pedestrian and cycle access
7. Connected community
8. Buffer to existing settlements





A Vision for Harrington

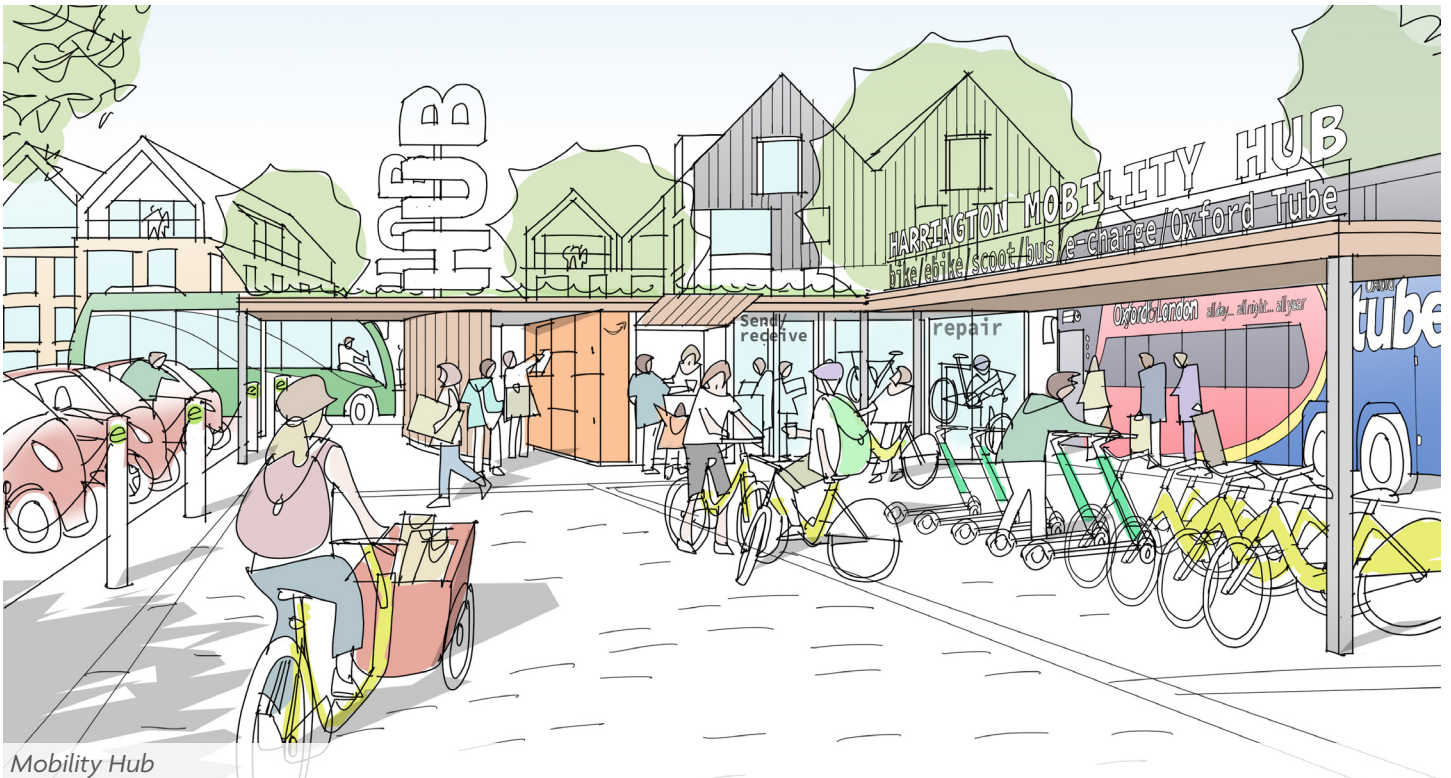
Report Back Broadsheet, Tuesday 15 November 2022



Park life



Harrington homes



Mobility Hub



Safe active travel routes to schools



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The Harrington community planning process is being organised by JTP on behalf of Summix. For more information, please visit harringtonnewsettlement.co.uk or contact the Community Planning Team at community@jtp.co.uk on Freephone 0800 0126 730 or write to us at Freepost JTP (no stamp required).





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Key Themes, 15/11/22

The following key themes represent a summary of the views of the participants through the community planning process. All quotes are from participants of the process unless otherwise stated.

Principle of a new settlement at Harrington

Some members of the community, even some living near the site, see the benefits that could come from Harrington and are supportive of the concept. They wish to see the opportunity explored sustainably and holistically and they envisaged how Harrington could fulfil the urgent need for more housing within a well-planned and serviced community, whilst providing benefits for nearby villages too. Others, especially those living close to the site, oppose the proposed new settlement at Harrington, concerned about the potential impacts on the area and their quality of life.

Many participants recognised that there is a fundamental choice to be made when delivering the homes needed over the next decades. One option is to continue building more and more housing estates on fields around existing local settlements, including local villages with limited or no infrastructure and the edges of historic market towns, or designing a new, fully serviced, sustainable community at Harrington with the same number of homes brought together with new facilities, like those of a small market town. The decision on whether to proceed with a Harrington or housing estates around existing communities will ultimately be made through the Joint Local Plan process.

“People who live here feel threatened and powerless about what’s happening.”

“I’m a realist. So long as it’s designed right, it will be a benefit.”

“We live in an estate, it’s a bit impersonal and having nature closer would be better; we’d much prefer to live in somewhere you’re proposing.”

Coalescence with nearby villages

A key concern of participants was the potential for Harrington to coalesce with neighbouring villages. The new settlement will include at least 50% greenspace and the new community should use this to include substantial green buffers to nearby villages, including a green corridor between Milton Common and Tetsworth on the land north of the motorway along the A40.

“There must be separation between the villages.”

“Create a green corridor along the road (A40), with no housing. That will reassure local people.”

Pressure on local services

Participants described the pressure that adding new housing estates around Thame have already put on its social infrastructure. They said schools and doctors are full and public services are stretched. In particular, the lack of local health facilities was an existing concern, and the ability to include new educational, health and social care provision at Harrington would provide amenities to not only the new residents (rather than putting even more pressure on existing facilities) and also serve nearby villages, many of which have lost services over the years.

“There are no doctors, nurses or medical facilities in the three parishes.”

“You must put the infrastructure in first. Developers usually get it the wrong way round.”

A planned and evolving place

To ensure early residents have access to the services to support a new community, Harrington should commence from the start with delivering a mix of uses alongside homes, including social, economic and environmental benefits (eg parks, local shops and food offers, schools and business premises). The new community should be designed to sit within a landscape framework of open space and water, to enable the community to grow into a place with all the attributes of a market town. Thame - with its historic marketplace - provides an enduring example of how a new market town can be planned from the beginning, and evolve over time.

“Develop it as a local village that is part of a much larger whole.”

“It’s all about creating the feel, the atmosphere of a market town.”

Designing a sustainable community

The concept of the new settlement is that it will be of sufficient size to enable residents to live, work, study and play there and provide for all daily needs - this is termed “internalisation”. Homes should sit within “20 minute neighbourhoods” where residents can access on foot or by bicycle the things they require daily, such as shops, schools, services and leisure amenities, providing a more sustainable, healthy and convivial living environment.

“You asked me for words to describe the new place: I’d say “communal”, “sustainable” and “independent”.

“I reckon it’s quite a good idea. But you’ve got to have facilities.”

“If the right things are not put in, they’ll all come to Thame.”

A mix of homes to meet all local needs

The need for more new housing to be built, especially affordable, was reiterated by people attending the three roadshow engagement events. Older teenagers and younger adults said they were local but felt unlikely to ever afford to own their own home, and there is a particular shortage of accommodation for key workers in the area, as well as for staff in the hospitality industry. Participants also suggested the provision of housing for older generations, including supported living, and opportunities for market rent and self-build (for those locally in the younger generation unable to afford to buy and yet ineligible for social housing). In short, doing something at the scale of Harrington was seen as the opportunity and a necessary obligation to have a mix of housing for all incomes to provide much needed homes for South Oxfordshire and ensure the creation of a balanced community meeting local needs.

“I feel sorry for the youngsters. It’s impossible for them to get on the housing ladder.”

“I hope we can afford a house at Harrington.” (young person)

Employment and training

Harrington should provide a range of training and employment opportunities to create a vibrant local economy well connected to other local centres in South Oxfordshire and beyond as part of an “innovation corridor”. As well as larger traditional workspaces, home working could be supported through the design of homes to accommodate workspace and the provision of co-working space in local centres. A successful community could be described as “tribrid” where people can effectively work at home, within the settlement, perhaps in a co-working space, and, only when necessary, further afield.

“There will be people working and living there, living where they’re working.”



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Key Themes (cont.)

Getting about

Participants expressed concern over the potential impact of Harrington on the local road network, particularly the A329, and the potential impact of construction traffic. There are limited bus services to local villages and towns (although the new bus service to Great and Little Milton has been welcomed) and local cycling provision is poor. To be a sustainable settlement Harrington must provide for the needs of residents as much as possible internally (like a traditional market town such as Thame) thereby reducing the need to travel far to access employment and services. Connections to nearby villages and towns will also be important, not least to enable residents of nearby villages to access services in Harrington. Participants explored opportunities to introduce new cycle routes and bus connections, including to Thame and the Phoenix Trail. It was suggested that the increasing use of e-bikes will reduce journey times and expand the distances people will contemplate cycling. Within Harrington car clubs could be set up and active travel, ie walking, and cycling, can be prioritised with a network of safe routes and facilities, all to reduce the need to own and use cars.

“Transport links are so important... and reliability.”

“Surely most people will drive? If they do, the M40 will become an M25.”

Creating community

It will be important to work hard to build a strong community from the arrival of the first residents. Participants suggested the creation of a community hub, perhaps repurposing existing heritage/farm buildings onsite, where new residents can engage with their neighbours through social interaction at a school, shop, play space, sports field or cafe. Setting up community-led housing and community interest companies to manage and run facilities and services could catalyse the process of community cohesion. Pedestrian and cycling links should be made between different neighbourhoods within the Harrington community and to neighbouring villages. The proximity of places to visit within 20 minute neighbourhoods and ease of getting around will be a key element of a sustainable community.

“It’s important to have a centre, some kind of heart to the place.”

“You need to be able to get to where you want to go to, such as the pub down the road.”

Landscape and environment

The size and nature of the site means that over 50% of the site will remain as green or blue landscape, accessible to the community, which was seen as a huge benefit. There was strong feedback that Harrington should identify different character areas, protecting and enhancing habitats and managing water to control flood risk and create attractive landscapes. Some spaces will be used by dog walkers and for recreational activity, others may be less accessible to protect nature, including the SSSI. The network of spaces will be key to how people perceive and experience Harrington. The community could be part of the long-term stewardship of the landscape, in association with existing conservation organisations.

“Connect watercourses more widely and use for nature conservation and flood control.”

“Plant a clump of trees on high spots to provide a landmark.”

One Planet Living®

Participants at the Community Planning Weekend debated how Harrington could address the climate and ecological emergencies and be designed around the principles of sustainable One Planet Living®. Strategies included opportunities for food production, sustainable urban drainage, rainwater harvesting, use of local materials, solar panels, heat pumps and a circular waste economy. These and many other elements that should be incorporated to create a sustainable community – the fact this could be enabled by creating a 21st century community at this scale rather than adding housing estates to existing communities was seen as a key benefit.

“We have a climate emergency and an ecological emergency and we need to respond to those.”

“Most places are not going to be carbon neutral in the immediate future, but this place could be....solar panels on every roof, loads more trees.”

Locking in quality

Many who saw the potential benefits of Harrington were sceptical that the aspirations set out in the Vision would be delivered in practice. Participants pointed to recent and local examples of developments of poor quality and where early promises had not been realised. Trust and delivery are key to the creation of a successful place at Harrington. Through the planning and development management process the promises made must be guaranteed through appropriate detailed policies and commitments to “lock in quality”. In particular, the Council should set out strong policies in the local plan regarding any new settlement proposal, to guarantee that any developer is held to the Vision, this should not be left to later planning applications.

“Trust needs to be earned early.”

“We have to secure policy to reflect what we’ve been talking about, which is how to lock in quality and certainty.”

Continuing community engagement

The information exchange at the roadshows and the collaborative co-design and discussions at the Community Planning Weekend was overwhelmingly welcomed by those who engaged with it, including sceptics, as bringing local knowledge and creativity into developing the concept for Harrington. The resulting Vision for Harrington sets out and integrates the elements for a new sustainable community and its relationship with neighbouring towns and villages that were argued for, often passionately, by the participants. The Vision from the Community Planning Weekend will inform the work that is now taken forward and the submissions made by Summix into the Joint Local Plan process. But it is only the start of working with the community. All attending emphasised the importance of continuing to engage with the community and participants, in particular, identified the need to engage with young people - it is after all for their generation that Harrington will be built.

“I see now, you’re starting out at the beginning and will endeavour to do the best you can.”