



The Future of 'Tewkesbury Garden Town': Integrating Community Vision into the Garden Town Charter

October 2023



1. Introduction

The Tewkesbury Garden Town Programme is part of the Government's Garden Communities Programme. This promotes the development of well designed, sustainable new communities. This report aims to evaluate the feedback received from a series of initial engagement events to discuss and help shape the new approach for the delivery of the Tewkesbury Garden Town programme.

A new approach to the delivery of Tewkesbury Garden Town Programme – with a commitment to increased community engagement, and improved collaboration with partners and developers – was voted in at Tewkesbury Borough Council's Full Council in July 2023.

The decision followed a gateway review of the programme, undertaken earlier in 2023. The review found no fundamental concerns with the aims or the principles of the garden town itself, but it made hard-hitting recommendations to enhance the programme's delivery, particularly regarding community engagement and collaboration with partners and developers.

2. Scope

To kickstart the Council's commitment to a new approach to community engagement, Cratus was engaged for an additional piece of work to:

- **Deliver a series of workshops to agree an updated vision and narrative, supported and co-created by all current stakeholders**
- **Devise and agree a stakeholder framework for delivery of the garden town**
- **Produce an integrated stakeholder and community engagement strategy for Tewkesbury Borough Council for the delivery of the garden town**

This report covers the development and delivery of the first of these objectives to: Deliver a series of workshops to agree an updated vision and narrative, supported and co-created by all current stakeholders.

The second and third objectives will be covered in an extensive, long term community engagement strategy for Tewkesbury Borough Council, to ensure the momentum continues.

3. Methodology

The success of Tewkesbury Garden Town relies on robust and inclusive stakeholder engagement. The following methodology outlines the structured approach for this initial round of engagement with Tewkesbury Borough Councillors and Officers, local Parish Councils, various community groups, businesses, and the public.

Cratus implemented a programme of workshops to explore an updated vision for the Garden Town, including workshops for the councillors, the officers, community groups, public sector stakeholders and private sector stakeholders. Reflecting the Council's clear commitment to meaningful engagement, these sessions are the first step in establishing a new relationship with stakeholders, especially local communities, on the garden town programme.

Alongside exploring the existing vision for the garden town, Cratus was asked to consider how the feedback could be incorporated into a new charter, which will be used to inform and guide the development of the garden town.

We held the following workshops and events across a two-week period:



3.1. Workshops and events:

Target Audience	Date and time	Location	No invited	No attended
Tewkesbury Borough Councillors	5th October 6pm - 8pm	Council Chamber	40	17
Tewkesbury Council Officers	6th October 10am - noon	Council Chamber	37	24
Parish Councillors	11th October 6pm - 8pm	Council Chamber	42	11
Landowners and Developers	12th October 2pm - 4pm	Council Chamber	24	6
Community Groups	12th October - 6pm - 8pm	Council Chamber	96	19
Businesses (Breakfast briefing)	16th October 8:30am - 10am	Sherdons Golf Centre, Tewkesbury	158	3
General public	Pop-up event - 10am - 4pm	Tewkesbury Food and Craft Market	n/a	194
Businesses (high street)	Business door to door - 10am - 4pm	Tewkesbury High Street	n/a	25

3.2. Format

The format of the workshops was consistent across the different groups engaged, but the emphasis and timings were deliberately flexible to allow for the conversations to develop naturally.

We discussed and reviewed the existing vision of the garden town in groups, with a discussion on future engagement channels and a Q&A session with the officers present.

The pop-up was held at Tewkesbury Food and Craft Market and was designed to create an opportunity to listen to the residents who would not normally attend workshops. This gave them the chance to talk to us about what they would like to see should 10,000 more homes be built as part of the Garden Town.

4. Findings

4.1. Themes

We have categorised the feedback into the headings of the most recent version of the Tewkesbury Garden Town Charter to demonstrate how the findings can be incorporated into the Charter.



We have presented the feedback below based on the quantity of feedback gathered under each heading, with the most discussed first, following from most to least. For ease of reference, we have referenced the order in which they appear in the Charter in brackets.

4.1.1. Integrated live, work and play communities (Principle 7)

Given an integrated live, work and play community was most popular theme, it is clear that local residents are keen for the development to foster thriving, inclusive neighbourhoods.

Aside from homes, groups asked for community amenities from shops including supermarkets and general retail to community centres. Sport facilities such as tennis courts and football pitches for all weathers also came up, with the caveat they must be affordable. In discussing the need for entertainment spaces, teenagers were cited as a group that is often overlooked here.

Providing jobs and employment space would make this a desirable place to live, and benefit the wider area with more opportunities.

Knowledge that there will be schools for all ages to cater to the new residents will be key. Borough councillors discussed making it an opportunity to have schools with a focus on STEM to enhance the growth potential of the area in the future.

Some brought up the need for health facilities or a GP surgery, pointing out that the existing hospitals and surgeries are full. Concerns raised about impact on local existing amenities and infrastructure would also be assuaged with the knowledge that residents would not necessarily have to leave their community to access a school, shop or social activity. It would also showcase the sustainability element of the scheme.

The phrase itself 'live, work, play' was admired. Other examples came up, with developers saying schemes in Gloucester and Worcester focused on creating employment opportunities, and borough councillors suggesting a project team trip to visit Poundbury, the experimental urban extension in Dorset.

4.1.2. Sustainable wider connectivity (Principle 6)

The second highest focus was on making sure that the development is not isolated, and that existing residents are also able to easily benefit from the new amenities. Bringing a clear focus on infrastructure improvements in terms of connectivity will go a long way towards showing residents that the wider impact is being considered.

All types of connectivity were mentioned, again calling for a holistic view, covering cars, buses, trains, cycling and the improvements to existing roads, pathways and parking needed for all of these.

Many focused on driving and the roads, with requests for an improved motorway junction at junction 9. The traffic and congestion on the A46 came up frequently, with requests for a dual carriageway and another junction, or a bridge or bypass. One attendee suggested turning Pamington Lane into a one-way system.

However, despite acknowledging that cars have an important role to play, there was an emphasis on making sure it ties into sustainability and the long-term future, with requests for electric vehicle charging and many calls for an improved bus service, particularly asking for more buses more frequently, more connections to train stations, and for the trains themselves to improve. A couple also called for a new tram system across the area, and one asked for an underground bus.

The officers coined the phrase 'healthy and sustainable' travel, and attendees across all sessions also requested strong cycle and walking routes between neighbourhoods, and one suggested pedestrianising Tewkesbury High Street. It was noted anecdotally several times during the



workshops that the existing cycle routes are considered to be recreational rather than functional, as cyclists still need to use the trunk roads when travelling between local towns.

A key point to note was that road improvements would ideally be carried out before the housing is built, so the problems are alleviated rather than exacerbated with construction traffic or new residents.

4.1.3. A strong identity and character of place (Principle 2)

Similar to the conviction that a ‘live, work, play’ community was the preferred outcome, most attendees across all groups felt it was important to build a neighbourhood with its own personality for the residents to feel proud of, rather than just houses near existing towns.

Feedback focused on questions as to whether ‘Tewkesbury Garden Town’ was the correct name for the new series of developments. Some residents wanted to ensure a unique identity was formed. Other comments acknowledged that the physical geography was closer to Ashchurch and Northway therefore should not be called Tewkesbury. Alternatively, others agreed the current name was suitable and should remain.

We recommended a naming strategy takes place to ensure the name for the Garden Town is agreed upon. Suggest a naming consultation focussing on those within the boundary of the Garden Town to ensure the chosen name has a distinct character that resonates with residents and visitors alike.

Borough councillors had a few suggestions, but also recommended involving students in the formulation of the name and final decision-making. Suggestions were Tewkesbury Rural Garden Town, Ashway (combining Northway and Ashchurch) or something referring to the Orchard heritage.

There were several comments on potential design of buildings, often just saying it is important to design well. Many mentioned drawing on the history of the area, one requested that the design is not too futuristic, another suggested an ‘apple barns’ design style, using black wood and redbrick designs. However another attendee said that there were enough redbrick designs nearby, showing the breadth of opinion on design. Developers suggested it should be co-designed with the community inputting at all stages.

The developers pointed to development in Didcot where too many different phases led to a ‘choppy’ feel.

4.1.4. Respect existing communities and reflect local character (Principle 1)

While the rooms were overall supportive of the scheme, understandably they were keen to make sure that existing towns and villages are not overshadowed or left out by the process. Reviewing what makes each area unique, making sure their concerns are considered in the design process and building alongside the existing community is the key to making the project a success. Enshrining respect for this in the initial stages and vision is key.

Quite a few mentioned their concern over the phrasing ‘transform Tewkesbury’ as they believe that most people are very happy with their existing borough, and one suggested calling it ‘a journey together’.

Protecting existing outdoor spaces, from bridleways and countryside walks to general greenery was a theme in most workshops. While inevitably some will be lost, suggestions such as green buffers between new and existing community could benefit both sides, and the provision of newly designed green spaces for everyone to enjoy were suggested to help.



It is important to the villages that they do not lose the ‘village feel’, and that their views are considered where possible, as the quieter lifestyle may be impacted by construction and new residents.

Some suggested a ‘homes for local people scheme’ to show existing residents that their interests are at heart, to allow them to stay in their local area.

4.1.5. Mixed-tenure homes, housing types and densities for diverse communities (Principle 8)

One group of borough councillors believed that homes must be the priority in messaging, saying ‘How do we sell to everyone’. Affordable housing was unsurprisingly a key desire, with housing specifically for key workers and local residents raised.

Family homes and bungalows for older residents were mentioned in equal numbers, showing the need for a range of housing for a range of residents. Groups wanted a range of housing that caters for people both upsizing and downsizing, and that addresses inequality, such as costs being tied to local salaries.

Developers pointed out that without homes, nothing else will be built. It is key to remember that homes should remain at the heart of the vision and charter.

4.1.6. A carbon neutral community and building sustainability for climate resilience (Principle 4)

The groups discussed how the project will span decades, and noted the need to future-proof as best as possible with both the commitments and the overall design.

The importance of connectivity both in and out of the new town is important, as discussed above, however most mentioned public transport and cycling/walking routes not only as convenient, but important for sustainability, mentioning that improvements in these areas would discourage people from using their cars. Where cars are necessary, easy electric charging is requested.

The houses themselves are also seen to play a part, with requests for a commitment to building with sustainable materials, and installing sustainable energy systems.

During the course of the development, it will be key to share information related to sustainable development and climate resilience. Provide recommendations for building carbon-neutral structures and implementing eco-friendly practices throughout the Garden Town.

Flooding was a concern for a lot of groups, so reassurance as to a robust plan which takes into account changing weather due to the climate emergency will be important. Residents will also want reassurance that it will not make the risk of flooding to their homes any greater, with one worrying about the effect on home insurance. One group suggested hiring local contractors who will know the area to add local knowledge of the risk.

4.1.7. Fantastic green spaces for people and wildlife (Principle 5)

There was enthusiasm for greenery to be seen as key to the development from all angles, with one calling for ‘ribbons of green’ across the neighbourhood, and another asking for ‘a green view from every home.’

Given that some negativity came from those who were concerned about the garden town removing green space from Tewkesbury, an emphasis on the variety of open spaces that will be provided would be useful.



Some active uses for outdoor space were suggested, such as community allotments, football pitches, play parks and dog play areas. Others simply requested a variety of green spaces, with meadows, parks and fields all mentioned.

Biodiversity and ecology were important, with requests to ensure deer and wildlife are protected, and suggestions of nature reserves and hedgehog highways.

4.1.8. A social model for sustainability (Principle 9)

There was limited feedback on this section from the workshops or the pop-up, so we recommend further exploration of this topic through future engagement sessions.

As the sessions did not include specific reference to the charter itself, this title was not specifically tested. However, from discussions between officers and the Cratus team during and following the workshops, we recommend that the title for this section be revisited to make its meaning clearer and to include reference to 'stewardship'.

4.1.9. Interconnected blue infrastructure (Principle 3)

Alongside the flooding concerns mentioned above, groups suggested ways to incorporate as a benefit to the development. They discussed having lakes, ponds and streams, and even canals, referring back to the need to connect biodiversity with the vision of development.

4.2. The vision document

There were several comments about the clarity of the vision document, with the overall view that it needs to be much shorter and written in simple and clear English.

Wording such as 'wider heartland', 'holistic place' and 'always in the world' were mentioned as examples of language that was difficult to apply to real life.

Regarding the name of the garden town, many asked whether Tewkesbury refers to the borough or the town in this instance, and this should be made clear.

There were requests for the local villages to be mentioned, which can be used to reassure the community that the planning will involve them throughout.

Timescales were frequently mentioned, one group worried that the phrase 'tomorrow' implied fairly quick action, and timescales are always useful to avoid uncertainty.

Participants would like the vision to reassure people about any potential issues, while also emphasising the benefits. One comment described it as a 'jigsaw' that needs putting together.

The branding of the existing garden town collateral and its abstract design received a great deal of negativity.

4.3. Communication preferences

At each workshop we discussed attendees' preferred way to hear updates along the journey. We emphasised how the workshops were just the beginning of engagement with these key stakeholders, and that Tewkesbury Borough Council wanted to make sure that it was done in the best and most appropriate way possible.

The preference by far was to continue with in person meetings or workshops, so that the groups feel like they could genuinely input into the process. Many also requested digital updates - newsletters, email updates and a single written update that could be implemented in multiple ways. These communications preferences will be incorporated into the community engagement strategy.



Many acknowledged that different people would have different preferences, so it will be important to provide information in varied ways rather than just in person meetings or just emails. Some said they do not mind as long as they hear something, proving the need for constant communications.

A few people mentioned the need for visual aids to explain items, which could refer to anything from interactive maps to charts, or even regular site visits to visualise the development. Some said that concise or 'bite-size' regular updates were better than long emails.

Many also commented on how best to communicate updates with the local area in general, mentioning the Tewkesbury notice board on Facebook, potentially holding open meetings and/or focus groups, having a dedicated resident newsletter and saying that all resident communications should also be shared with the stakeholders for joined up messaging.

4.4. Individual points of discussion

While the focus was the vision, understandably each group veered into wider considerations which are useful to bear in mind throughout the lifetime of the project design. Many of these came from the expectation setting exercise at the start of the workshop, as they looked to longer-term concerns and queries rather than just the day, while others organically came up during the animated discussions about the vision.

We have divided the additional comments into each group:

4.4.1. Community Groups

As a group with less interaction with Council and planning processes, their queries ran from 'what is a garden town?' to 'what is the timeline?'. They also had less of an understanding of how development takes into consideration things like the existing infrastructure, flooding, amenities - so a simple explanation of the whole process and surveys etc. would be beneficial throughout.

Their key concerns were impact on local infrastructure, and making sure that all people are consulted and kept informed. They also discussed what amenities they would like in the community.

4.4.2. Borough councillors

Borough councillors brought up the need to be able to trust the project team and that the process will be followed, mentioning the masterplan and the need for a clear vision.

This group was very keen to make sure the name for the garden town is thoroughly thought through and relevant, and were very concerned with making sure the nearby villages are at the heart of discussions. Lots of groups discussed the importance of education, skills, training and employment being incorporated into the town's design, and the need for some night-time economy as well, all promoting the 'live, play, work' ideal.

4.4.3. Council Officers

Officers discussed the deliverability of the scheme, from budget to timelines and policies, and were in favour of creating a vision to share. They discussed how any successes and the process would be measured, and the word 'clarity' was a focus.

There was a great deal of discussion about building the new community, and how this would work given the long timescales involved.



4.4.4. Parish councillors

These councillors raised the question of how they can communicate with the project team; setting up a form of contact between engagement sessions would be useful to show the councillors and any other stakeholders it is a two-way conversation. They described the relationship between the stakeholders and project team as 'critical support' and were very keen to continue to engage and receive information.

They suggested holding an architecture competition for the design. The group focused strongly on the need for quality public transport.

4.4.5. Developers

This group pointed out that we should not see 'development' as a negative word. They noted that homes must ultimately be the main element, as other amenities do not come without housing, and that the economic benefits should be emphasised, and used the phrase 'aspirational'.

They noted that given the timescales, everyone must view it beyond party politics. They also said that landowners must be involved in the discussions.

They strongly made the point that the overarching vision was important to the communities where they are building, but the secondary objectives that sit beneath that vision are more relevant to developers, so that they are equipped to deliver it.

4.4.6. Pop-ups

The discussion at the pop-up event was more generalised, and any concerns referred to the impact on residents' lives. Flooding was the key concern, with roads, traffic and parking as the next highest topic. The bridge across the railway line was mentioned, with one resident asking for a public consultation, and another just asking for it to be sorted.

One was concerned that the sewer system is inadequate, another mentioned asbestos on the Ministry of Defence site. Some were concerned about air pollution and construction vehicles leaving dirt on the roads.

People we spoke to here inevitably had a stronger focus on ideas for what they'd like to see on the development compared to the workshop attendees. This covered everything from practicalities such as nurseries, schools and health facilities, to leisure activities like sports facilities and youth spaces, to design details such as open plan kitchens and requests for the design to be aesthetically pleasing. A community cafe for the elderly was mentioned, as was an ice cream shop and a nature reserve, showing that a range of amenities for local people will be key to keeping existing residents on side.

Overall many people who gave their feedback were aware of the need for housing in the area, with one person saying 'great idea, can't wait.'

5. Conclusion

The 'golden thread' through all the items that the groups all focused on was the need for a community identity, both for the fully equipped new town and the existing town and villages, while also connecting them all as a wider community.

While there are several concerns, mainly about the impact on the existing residents and settlements' lives and identity, by keeping these in mind at these early stages we can make sure to reassure residents, while simultaneously showing them the improvements and benefits the new garden town can bring to the Tewkesbury area.



Integrating the findings into the Garden Town Charter will help guide the team in creating the exciting new community in Tewkesbury. By having input from a wide variety of stakeholders we can genuinely say that the vision was developed as a community.