



**LITTLE BARFORD**  
garden community

# Summary of summer engagement events

August 2024



Lands Improvement

## **Introduction**

Little Barford has been allocated in the emerging Bedford Local Plan (Policy HOU19) to deliver a new community of at least 4,000 homes and four hectares of employment land.

The Little Barford Garden Community will be delivered by Lands Improvement. Our role is to take Little Barford Garden Community from conception all the way through to the delivery of the new homes, schools, health facilities, parks, green spaces, footpaths, community buildings and other facilities.

As part of this, we are conducting a comprehensive consultation with the local community and key stakeholders. The views and feedback from the community will be central to how our plans will develop, as we work alongside Bedford Borough Council to produce a Supplementary Planning Document to expand on the policies contained within the Local Plan, including a set of design principles for future planning applications.

The first part of this involves understanding what people think about the area, what their ambitions for the area are and what they would like to see in this garden community as it is developed. To help achieve this, we held three initial engagement events during Summer 2024 to gather feedback from the local community.

The three events took place at the below venues and dates:

- Harpur Centre (outside Starbucks), Horne Lane, Bedford, MK40 1TJ – Wednesday 10 July 2024, 10am - 4pm
- Stuart Memorial Hall, Church Street, Tempsford, SG19 2A – Thursday 11 July 2024, 4pm - 7.30pm
- St Neots Farm and Craft Market, Market Square, St Neots, PE19 2AA – Saturday 13 July 2024, 9am - 1pm

Two of these events took place as a pop-up in busy shopping areas where there were many passers-by and the third, on the 11 July 2024, was in a more formal village hall setting. In total, approximately 146 people took part in these three events. This can be broken down as:

- Wednesday 10 July – approx. 40
- Thursday 11 July 2024 – approx. 41
- Saturday 13 July 2024 – approx. 65

At each event, members of the project team were on hand to discuss the plans and answer any questions that attendees had, as well as collect feedback from people and ask what they would like to see brought into the local area.

## **Promotion**

The events were advertised through a two-page flyer that was distributed by a combination of Royal Mail and hand deliveries to a total of 8,473 households and businesses within a radius of the development site. In addition, a bespoke invitation providing details of the pop-up events with the flyer attached was also distributed to local political and community stakeholders.

The events were also advertised to the local community with large, laminated posters in the neighbouring communities to where the events were taking place. All three events were advertised across social media by third party organisations, as well as on the website ([www.littlebarfordgardencommunity.co.uk](http://www.littlebarfordgardencommunity.co.uk)).

During the pop-up events on Wednesday 10 July and Saturday 13 July at the Harpur Centre and St Neots Farmand Craft Market, the team also took flyers to encourage visitors to go and visit the event and find out more about the project.

## Feedback



During all three events, members of the project team, including representatives from Lands Improvement, architects JTP, planning consultant Carter Jonas, and our communications and consultation agency Marengo Communications were present to engage in conversations with attendees, provide information about why the event was taking place, and encourage them to provide in-person or online feedback via the consultation website, which was prominently displayed via QR codes.

The feedback provided below is a summary of the conversations that team members had with members of the public, which have been categorised into the main themes that frequently came up, as well as some other general comments of interest that were made. This feedback was collated by team members by writing notes during the events following conversations and does not include feedback from the printed or online surveys, which is provided separately.

The top five themes noted from the engagement events were:

**Connecting infrastructure with housing.** A perceived lack of infrastructure associated with new development was a common topic in conversation with the community. A number of residents, particularly those attending the St Neots Farm and Craft Market event, commented on the need for better social infrastructure including GP surgeries and schools. It was also noted that existing GPs and schools were struggling to recruit staff and that this would need to be factored into any social infrastructure offer.

**Bedford but not Bedford.** During all three events, some residents made note of the location of the development being on the edge of Bedford Borough and on the boundary of Huntingdonshire District Council / Cambridgeshire County Council / Central Bedfordshire Council. This in turn led to questions about securing benefit (including financial benefit) for areas outside of Bedford

Borough, including St Neots. Those that did stop and engage with the design team at Tempsford Memorial Hall and St Neots Farm and Craft Market were grateful of the opportunity to engage in the project from its inception.

**Connectivity and public transport.** Some residents wanted to discuss how people would move around the site and wider area. This included discussions about the future of Barford Road (which is currently busy and many drivers speed), cycle / walking connections to a future East West Rail station in Tempsford and future connections off / onto the A421. A lack of local bus services was also raised by many residents at the St Neots Farm and Craft Market, with many people keen to see a connection from St Neots down to Tempsford.

**Provision of green space.** Many local residents made note of the opportunity to create new accessible green space for the whole community. Opportunities for walking, cycling and horse riding were highlighted and many of the responses to the feedback questions pinpointed opportunities to create new green infrastructure. Conversely, there were also some concerns about the loss of green space / space for food production.

**Development fatigue and poor examples of good development.** There was a feeling, particularly from the St Neots Farm and Craft Market event, that residents had only seen poor examples of development which had failed to deliver promised infrastructure and had not been successful in creating cohesive communities.



## Other feedback

The below section highlights summarised comments of particular interest outside the most common themes:

- Sewage capacity in Tempsford which is already considered a problem.
- The need for an additional supermarket with Tesco considered to be at capacity.
- Conversion of the barn buildings into a farm shop.
- Creation of bridleways, as has been done at Wintringham.
- Impact of a mixed-use centre at Little Barford on Bedford town centre.
- Scepticism on the delivery of East West Rail.
- Existing surface water flooding in the local area.
- A feeling that St Neots requires significant investment.
- Questions about Little Barford and its heritage assets.

## Feedback questions

In addition to capturing verbal feedback, the team also prepared a series of semi-structured questions to capture a range of different viewpoints. With this approach, residents had the freedom to fully express their initial opinions and views. The responses received are provided below.

### Question 1

*Imagine you live life thirty years into the future at Little Barford Garden Community. Tell us what three things you and your family most enjoy about where you live (it could be green spaces, community ownership, access to nature, low carbon homes, walkable neighbourhoods, the range of things to do or something different altogether).*



### Question 2

*If you were developing a vision for Little Barford, what key words would you use to summarise it?*



### Question 3

*What do you think will be our biggest challenge to creating a new community at Little Barford?*

The below section highlights summarised comments of particular interest from written feedback forms:

- Locals! You're going to need to give a lot: GP, School, Café, infrastructure!!
- The negative impact it will have on nearby communities e.g. St Neots, Little Barford proper and Tempsford.

- Convincing the locals in the surrounding villages that this development to be closely followed by many more people/houses that they will be considered properly. They currently live in a rural community for a reason.

#### Question 4

*Are there any local developments that you think have been done particularly well or badly and why?*

The below section highlights summarised comments of particular interest from written feedback forms:

- Linmere- good. Loves Farm and Wintringham – bad.
- The entrance to Biddenham Park is interesting but this disguises the lack of meaningful open space and sense of place at the development. Most local developments are pretty depressing for the lack of community, place and design interest. Loveden Fields has interesting aspects.
- The A428 upgrade has considered locals and is trying to work with them. *[Equally, many residents shared with the team their view that the consultation and engagement from East West Rail needed to be improved.]*

#### Question 5

*Is there anything else you would like to say at this early stage?*

The below section highlights summarised comments of particular interest from written feedback forms:

- Good job engaging early.
- The Borough has not got a good record of community consultation on the Local Plan and support for East West Rail.
- This is a major upheaval for the current locals, who have lived rurally all their lives or have moved to quiet villages because of rural life, and they need to be considered and heard.

#### Question 6

*Is there any information that you would like to see at a future consultation event?*

The below section highlights summarised comments of particular interest from written feedback forms:

- Transport, GP, local shops and cafes (not chains)
- Design ethos.
- Economic impact assessments.
- Design and building standards.
- How current communities will be considered.



## Community feedback map

The team used a large-scale site map to encourage residents to provide location-specific feedback, including 'likes' (blue), 'dislikes' (purple) and 'ideas' (yellow). The completed map is provided below.

We want to find out what you think about the site and local area: what you like and dislike and any ideas you have. Please take a sticky note and add a comment here.

**Add your coloured sticky note**  
 Likes  
 Dislikes  
 Ideas

1 Dilapidated Lower Farm Barn Buildings  
 2 New Manor House and grounds  
 3 River Great Ouse  
 4 The Cottages, Barford Road  
 5 Grade II Listed Bungalows, Barford Road  
 Alington Hill

**GIVE US YOUR IDEAS**

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Community Note: Call 01753 529900 for more information  
 I've got an idea  
 I've got a dislike

www.littlebarfordgc.co.uk    Freephone: 0800 689 5209    Email: info@littlebarfordgc.co.uk

A larger version of the map can be found at the end of this document.

## Stakeholder list

Below is a list of both political and community stakeholders for the project; this is a list that will be added to as the project progresses.

- Mayor of Bedford
- Bedford Borough Council Cabinet
- Bedford Borough Councillors
- Bedford Borough Council Officers
- Central Bedfordshire Council
- Huntingdonshire District Council
- Cambridgeshire County Council

Member of Parliament for North Bedfordshire  
Member of Parliament for St Neots and Mid Cambridgeshire  
Abbotsley Parish Council  
Wyboston, Chawston & Colesden Parish Council  
Waresley-Cum-Tetworth Parish Council  
St Neots Town Council  
Tempsford Parish Council  
St Neots Local History Society  
Roxton Parish Council  
Staploe Parish Council  
Great Barton Parish Council  
The Waterfront Hotel, Spa & Golf  
Ride Leisure  
Bedford Architectural, Archaeological & Local History Society  
Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce  
Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire  
Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC)  
The British Horse Society  
Knotts of Tempsford - Family Farm and Animal Experiences  
Tempsford Museum & Archives  
Little Barford Power Station

## **Next Steps**

Community workshops are planned for Autumn 2024. This phase will provide opportunities for focused areas of community input, to help the design team work out which ideas to take forward.



