CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF HUNTINGDONSHIRE

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) saw the development of the Huntingdonshire Futures Place strategy as an opportunity to better co-ordinate their engagement activity so it does not duplicate efforts, confuse residents and stakeholders, or miss opportunities to hear from residents and stakeholders we may not always engage with.

An engagement plan was delivered which set out to:

- Support the development of a new Huntingdonshire Place Strategy, will include our shared ambitions for the future and short, medium, and longer term priorities.

- Ensure a better understanding of what is most important to residents within their localities, as an example in the short term this will be used to support future funding bids including Levelling Up Fund and Shared Prosperity Fund. Beyond this it will inform our thinking on the development of future Local Plans.

- Support the refresh of the Huntingdonshire Community Strategy, which was currently time limited to link in with this activity.

- Provide an opportunity to gain feedback on early masterplanning thinking in Ramsey, Huntingdon, and St Ives.

This report summarises the findings of the community engagement process, which informed the Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy. It provides an overview of the two distinct phase of engagement and what local people told us about their aspirations for their district.

PHASE 1: JULY – OCTOBER 2022

Phase 1

This initial phase of engagement focused on understanding and exploring:

- What people feel about Huntingdonshire now.

- Their priorities for change around the four key themes of economy, environment, people and community, and place.

- What if we did things differently? What types of change in approach would local people like to see considered in the context of the place strategy?

How We Engaged

Phase 1 of the community engagement was delivered through a range of mechanisms:

- Pop up exhibitions with interactive activities at Huntingdon Carnival, St Ives Farmers Market, St Neots Farmers Market and Ramsey Market.

- Focus groups in Bury and Huntingdon (please note additional focus groups were postponed as a mark of respect following the death of Queen Elizabeth II), and digital focus groups on Zoom.

- Visiting community groups and activities including Butterfly Ladies in Eynesbury, Yaxley Coffee Morning, Sapley Park Fun Day, Conygear Foodbank and Conygear Fun Day.

- Rural area visit, speaking to people in rural communities including Godmanchester, Hilton, Kimbolton, Sawtry, and Stilton through visits to community meeting places such as benches in parks and bus stops.

- A discussion session with young people aged 20-24 who live in Huntingdonshire.

EMERGING THEMES

Across the phase one events and activities we had 481 conversations with people from across the district aged 6 to 95, living in rural areas and market towns. Notes from engagement sessions have been reviewed and coded to identify emerging themes in relation to the four key elements of the place's strategy.

Economy

The Role of Retail: We explored with local people both how they perceived the economy now and how they wanted it to be in future. Consistently, particularly in the market towns, retail was seen to be critical to the economy, with the retail offer being seen as a key measure of success.

> *"There are just not enough shops in the High Street anymore. I can't spend my money locally. For shopping I have to go to Cambridge."*
>
> Focus Group Participant
>
> *"To have a thriving market town you have to have shops. Not just charity shops and cafes."*
>
> Note On A Display Board
>
> *"What if we make market towns work as market towns?"*
>
> Note On A Display Board

There is an acknowledgement that the internet and other challenges are changing how people shop, that high street is facing challenges across the country. However, there is a clear perception that thriving high streets in the districts market towns are important to local people. This aligns with a desire to see opportunities to spend money locally. People also want to see targeted support for local businesses specifically business rate relief, lower rents and support with energy bills.

The Quest for Innovation: Huntingdonshire's relation to Cambridge, and the health and technology innovations happening in that city are seen as a missed opportunity.

> *"We have to make being near Cambridge work for Huntingdonshire, work for our economy."*
>
> Focus Group Participant
>
> *"Could Huntingdonshire be a Silicon Valley in 30 years' time?"*
>
> Focus Group Participant
>
> *"What if the wealth, culture, knowledge, high tech solutions and infrastructure in Cambridge was spread across the County?"*
>
> Focus Group Participant – What if

Engagement suggests local people would like to see more jobs and opportunities in innovative sectors including biotech, robotics and AI based in Huntingdonshire. An innovation driven economy should be linked to education provision and opportunities for young people.

Infrastructure as a Barrier to Economic Growth: In conversations with local people, infrastructure across the district that was seen as a barrier to attracting businesses, entrepreneurship, and economic growth.

> *"Ramsey doesn't have an A road. Ramsey doesn't have a train station. Ramsey doesn't have a decent bus service. No wonder we can't attract businesses here."*
>
> Conversation with Ramsey Resident
>
> *"I don't understand why you can't get a direct train to Cambridge. We're not linked to where the jobs are."*
>
> Focus Group Participant

There was a concern that the current road and rail infrastructure is a barrier to bringing new businesses into the area and are also a barrier to benefitting from economic success in the wider region. There is a feeling that the district's infrastructure is *"holding it back from being more successful."*

Night-time and Cultural Economy: Local people spoke of a perceived lack of a night-time and cultural economy across the district. As with retail, there is a desire to stay and spend local, alongside there being a perception that the economy does not offer enough.

> *"You have to search out the night-time economy in Huntingdonshire."*
>
> Focus Group Participant
>
> *"Not much culture. Very little musical culture."*
>
> Post It Note
>
> *"You can go and have a meal. You can go and have a drink. But there's not much else – you can't go for a dance."*
>
> Conversation with Conygear Park Event Attendee

One of the challenges in terms of delivering these aspirations is that most participants want the night-time and cultural economy to based where they live, specifically for those living in the district's market towns. This connects with concerns about public transport and the ability to get around the district.

A Local Economy That Works for Everyone: There is a concern, particularly in deprived areas of the district, that there is an increasing divide based on socio-economic factors.   For example, people living in areas of deprivation, and using support services including food banks, feel the local economy is lacking in opportunity for them. That when you are struggling to meet the needs of your household economy, for example paying increasing energy bills, you have different requirements from your local economy.

> *"If we do not have jobs in Huntingdonshire for people who live in Huntingdonshire, we're just going to become a dormitory town."*
>
> <div align="right">Post It Note</div>
>
> *"You should be able to earn a decent living here. People should be being paid a fair wage."*
>
> <div align="right">Focus Group Participant</div>
>
> *"Too many people around here are getting left behind."*
>
> <div align="right">Conversation with Food Bank User</div>

The ideal of a local economy that supports local people, provides opportunity for local people and keeps local money in the Huntingdonshire economy was seen as important and vital to the future success of the district.

Environment

The Need to Act Now: Conversations with local people showed that there is an understanding of the need to act now in relation to climate change. Recent events including significant flooding in St Ives, and 40° temperatures were cited as examples.

> *"What if we stopped destroying the planet now?"*
>
> <div align="right">Conversation with St Neots Resident</div>
>
> *"Climate change is the big threat we are facing."*
>
> <div align="right">Post It Note</div>
>
> *"Stop talking about doing something (about climate change) and do something."*
>
> <div align="right">Conversation with Huntingdon Carnival Visitor</div>

There is concern that change is not happening at the pace that is needed, with a perception *"that it's all talk and no action."* Whilst the majority of people we spoke to acknowledged that climate change is a real and urgent issue, there are a small group of people for whom it is a hoax and / or not a priority.

Local Nuances: Pop up events showed clear and distinct local issues, specifically in the Market Towns.

> *"St Ives could be underwater in 50 years? I need information to make a decision about our home and where we live."*
>
> <div align="right">Conversation with St Ives Residents</div>

> *"Why are houses being built without solar panels? Without heat pumps? Without a wind turbine on every estate? Without electrical vehicle chargers?."*
>
> Conversation with St Neots Resident
>
> *"If you want me to use my car less then there has to be a cheap, reliable, convenient alternative. I had to by a car because the bus services weren't reliable."*
>
> Conversation with Ramsey Resident
>
> *"For me I have to use less energy because I can't afford what I use. It's not about climate change its about how much money my family has."*
>
> Conversation with Huntingdon Resident

As illustrated in the quotes above, in St Ives, the focus was on potential impact on future flooding, specifically on homes and businesses. People in this community wanted to see direct action to reduce and mitigate the impact of flooding.

In St Neots the focus is on buildings and infrastructure, and a desire to see this delivered in an environmental conscious way.

In Ramsey, public transport was seen as important to their ability to cut their emissions, there is an acknowledgement of an over reliance on the car and frustration that *"you cannot live in Ramsey without a car."* This frustration is also reflected in rural communities.

People we spoke to in Huntingdon tended to put the climate crisis in the context of cost of living and the desire to reduce energy usage primarily to reduce household costs.

Housing and Climate Change: Consistently in engagement there was a belief that new house building needed to be more environmentally conscious and that *"there is no excuse for the lack of environmental provision in new builds."* Participants wanted to see a clear strategy for how new housing will be built in a way to minimise environmental impacts, including net zero building, renewable energy and generation, and reducing water and energy usage. Interestingly, these references were specific to new homes and did not include other new builds including business premises and infrastructure.

> *"There's lot of new housing been built. Why on earth are they not being built with solar panels?"*
>
> Focus Group Participant
>
> *"I would love to replace my old boiler with a new heat pump, but I do not have the money to do that."*
>
> Focus Group Participant
>
> *"We've just bought a new house and I'm already worried it's not built to survive the climate we're moving towards."*
>
> Focus Group Participant

Owners of existing homes were concerned about the cost of making changes to their homes – including both changes to reduce the environmental impacts of their homes and changes to protect their homes from increasing temperatures and rising water levels.

Supporting Behaviour Change: There is a proportion of the population who want to do more, acknowledge that there is a need to do more, but aren't sure what to do and how. These people want to be able to change their behaviour and want to be supported to make positive changes to reduce their environmental impact.

> *"Where do you start? I can't afford to do anything to my house. I can't not use my car. What can I do?"*
>
> Conversation with Community Group Participant
>
> *"What if good things for the environment were cheaper?"*
>
> Post It Note
>
> *"What if solar panels were a planning requirement?"*
>
> Post It Note

While there was a desire to make individual and household level changes, there was also a desire to see obvious and apparent systemic change with key organisations including the Council and local businesses being seen to make positive changes to protect the environment.

People and Communities

Communities are more than just houses: A consistent topic raised in community engagement was a concern about house building and increasing population numbers, without the infrastructure (road, public transport and schools), and facilities, and support services (health, education and well-being) being provided to meet this increased need.

> *"What if we built communities, not houses?"*
>
> Post It Note
>
> *"Villages should be supported to be viable, but not overwhelmed."*
>
> Post It Note
>
> *"Increase in population – can't keep putting people in local towns."*
>
> Post It Note

In engagement, the local people there, were people who did not want to see any further house building, whilst others appreciated the need for more homes. Consistently, local people wanted to see an approach to house building that brings community facilities and infrastructure with new homes. Approaches such as the 15 minute city and Australia's approach to planning (where community facilities come first) were cited.

Housing for the Life Journey: Housing is a need and community engagement highlighted a concern that housing development is focused on economic viability rather than need. In that, local people feel it is about *"big houses that developers can sell for high prices. Not homes for local people."*

> *"You can't find an affordable home when you're young. Then when your children have left the nest and you want to downsize you can't do that."*
>
> Conversation with a St Neots Resident
>
> *"What if we built more social housing and the council retained them?"*
>
> Focus Group Participant
>
> *"Affordable housing needs to be affordable, and developers need to be held to account to deliver."*
>
> Focus Group Participant

Discussions highlighted a desire to see a housing strategy that considers all aspects of people's lives and the housing they need for each step of their life. For example, affordable housing to get on the ladder, opportunities to move to larger homes as families grow, and downsize as people get older. Most people we spoke to enjoy and value living in the area, but there are concerns that they will have to leave to find homes they can afford and meet their needs.

Young People: Both young people (under 20), and the wider population are concerned about a perceived lack of opportunity and lack of "things to do" for this age group.

> *"There is just nothing to do for teenagers here."*
>
> Conversation with Sapley Park Event Attendee
>
> *"What if there was a way to harness young people's talent?"*
>
> Post It Note
>
> *"We need to keep young people in the area, boosting our economy."*
>
> Focus Group Participant

Engagement participants spoke of the importance of creating aspiration, ambition, and opportunity for young people. In addition, increasing concerns around anti-social behaviour and county lines were in part attributed to the lack of provision for young people / teenagers.

In phase 2, we will be working with young people to understand what type of district they want and need to build their lives in this area.

Huntingdonshire As the Best Place to Live: Among a proportion of engagement participants there was a belief that Huntingdonshire should focus its energy on primarily being *"a great place to live, where people can live happy and healthy lives."* That it should seek to find benefits from the post pandemic, understanding that you can work from home, and there are opportunities when you don't live and work in the same place.

> *"Huntingdonshire is a great place to live. So why don't we just focus on that? Making Huntingdonshire a really great place to live. You don't have to live where you work anymore. People can still work in other places and spend in our economy."*
>
> Focus Group Participant
>
> *"If people live here but don't work here, we just become a dormitory town."*
>
> Conversation with Ramsey Event Attendee
>
> *"Being able to work from home during the pandemic has changed what people think about when choosing where to live."*
>
> Focus Group Participant

However, there was another school of thought that more people should be both living and working in the district. A concern that places across Huntingdonshire are becoming dormitory towns', where there is no major employer or industry, and people go to other places to work and spend.

Place

A Green and Pleasant Land: When asked what the best things are about living in Huntingdonshire, people consistently raised the countryside, access to green places, the local rivers, and wildlife.

> *"Please stop building on our green places."*
>
> Hilton Resident
>
> *"It is a very pretty place; we are lucky to live here."*
>
> Focus Group Participant
>
> *"Activate green spaces for the community."*
>
> Post It Note

Huntingdonshire has high levels of accessible greenspace, but there are concerns across the community that these valued spaces and places are at risk, primarily from house building. Other issues raised included sewage in rivers, fly tipping, and a desire to see more trees across the district.

Getting Around the District: There is a belief among the community that the public transport system is not fit for the needs of the district. Public transport is seen as vital to enabling people to move around the district, reducing rural isolation and contributing to net zero aspirations. The Ting bus was mentioned and overall praised, but not seen as a realistic solution to meet the transport needs of the area.

> *"If you live here you have to go in the car and that's crazy in this world."*
>
> Hilton Resident
>
> *"If you don't fix the incredibly broken public transport system in this district, and to this district, nothing else you are trying to do can be achieved."*
>
> Focus Group Participant
>
> *"If we're cut off due to the buses going, there's no point planning for 2050."*
>
> Post It Note in Ramsey
>
> *"It is easier to get to London than St Ives. Why?"*
>
> Conversation in Godmanchester

Public transport is seen as a priority that sits across all themes of the place strategy. In addition, people want to see a joined-up approach across the District and County to rights of way, footpaths, and cycle routes. People spoke of *"cycle paths that just run out in the middle of nowhere"*. They would also like to see routes that are distinct from roads for example, *"we have loads of lovely, flat countryside. Why do I have to cycle next to a busy road and breathe in car fumes. Can't we create more routes through our lovely countryside and green spaces?"*

Rural Communities: Those living in rural communities think *"all the attention goes to the market towns"* and that there is not a clear strategy for supporting rural communities to continue and thrive.

> *"We've only just got decent broadband. If you want to live in the village you have to have a car. It's like we're being left behind."*
>
> Focus Group Participant
>
> *"All the investment is in the market towns; no support or finance comes to rural areas."*
>
> Focus Group Participant
>
> *"We're getting new bus stops because of some new houses, but no bus. So, what's the point? Who is making these decisions?"*
>
> Focus Group Participant
>
> *"There are 18 new houses being built in the village. Unlike some, I'm not against it. We need houses. But I am against the number of affordable houses being built being reduced and the Council doing nothing to prevent it."*
>
> Hilton Resident

Rural communities acknowledge that they are now towns, that they are a different proposition. But they do want to *"feel love, to feel like someone knows we're here"* and have the fundamentals that make life in rural community's work including support services in their communities, access to transport and broadband.

Ambition: Local people want Huntingdonshire to balance ambition whilst retaining what makes the area charming and special.

> *"Why isn't the District Council bolder, and more ambitious? Stop doing the option that is the bare minimum. What if we didn't settle for the norm and instead aimed for the ideal."*
>
> Focus Group Participant

In particular, they want to see their District Council be ambitious in tackling the challenges being faced by local people and communities including the cost of living, climate change, housing need, health and welling, and poverty.

Is there too much Democracy? A number of people expressed frustration and confusions at the levels of politics and democracy and the impact.

> *"What if we didn't let politics get in the way of change?"*
>
> Post It Note
>
> *"Huntingdonshire does not exist."*
>
> St Neots Resident
>
> *"You try to get something done. There is an overgrown tree growing over our path. You ring the Council, and they say it's not us it's the other council. Then you try them. Nothing ever gets done. The cemetery isn't kept tidy. The paths are full of potholes because everyone can just put the blame on another Council."*
>
> Yaxley Residents

Those who took part in engagement want to have clarity about what Council is responsible for what, and to be able to access support and information from Council's when they need it.

Does Huntingdonshire have an Identity? Throughout engagement no one referred to themselves as being a resident of Huntingdonshire. Often when asked if they came from Huntingdonshire at pop up events, they wouldn't be sure. Instead, people would talk about the town or village where they live.

> *"What is Huntingdonshire anyway? It's some towns and some villages, but you can't say Huntingdonshire is this."*
>
> Focus Group Participants

As a result, their aspirations for the future are primarily focused on change in the places where they live, rather than at a District wide level.

YOUNG PEOPLE FOCUS GROUP

To capture more perspectives from young people during phase 1 we did an additional discussion session with 3 young people aged 20 -24 who live in Huntingdonshire.

Economy

- More needs to be done to give young people the opportunity to learn and develop new skills, that can give them wider potential / choice of careers.

- Schools and colleges in the area are to focus on the *"university route and make it the only option"* and *"when you're at school its just uni, uni, uni, uni, uni."*

> *"I did a degree apprenticeship. I was hoping for a chemistry role but the offered me a position in HR. It was the best thing I could have done. I been able to learn, develop and buy my own home. But degree apprenticeships are seen as a lesser thing."*

- More needs to be done to present alternative pathways to young people, there is a belief that at the moment there is a blockage between connecting young people to enterprise and employers in the area.

- It is important that young people see the options and routes available to them and here from a range of perspectives about what a successful life is and could be.

- Have to cultivate opportunities for young people to grow and develop.

> *"Education and supporting young people should be seen as a community issue."*

- They would like to see more of a night-time economy in Huntingdonshire but don't want it to *"just be about eating and drinking."* They are looking for a different offer based on experiences. They want shared activities that bring people together for example gaming, football and dancing.

- Transport is a major barrier, which disconnects local people from employment, training and participating in the wider community and economy.

> *"You have to be able to drive to work here, the X5 used to be okay but know driving is the only option."*

Environment

- Is a priority for this group and they are concerned about the lack of action they see at all levels of Government.

Place

- New housing that is being built in the area is not affordable for young people.

- Rent is too high and is a barrier to people being able to save for their own home. There are young people living in rented accommodation *"who are having to decided between heating and eating."*

- As with the wider community they are concerned about the numbers of new houses and the perceived lack of community services and infrastructure.

- They are frustrated by what they see as misuse of power examples cited included a 199 house development, which meant it didn't meet the 200 household threshold for community infrastructure. One participant spoke of his dad losing his business premises for a housing development and receiving no support to relocate.

People and Communities

- There is a significant concern about the lack of mental health support for young people in the area.

> *"Counselling should be available in all schools for everyone. There is a mental health crisis among young people here."*

- Without mental health support, young people will be unable to be part of the local community and contribute to the local economy.

- Social media and gaming communities are important ways for young people to connect, but there is concern about the impact on mental health.

- They feel that the communities in which they live do not reflect them, and do not meet their needs. The decision to leave in the area tends to be driven by family, friends and the ability to travel to different places for example London.

> *"I don't see me in my local community."*

- They believe that decisions about where they live and what happens in their community are made without them. That there is no clear involvement of young people in the current system. None of the participants knew who their Councillor is, there was some awareness of the local MP.

> *"Nothing about us without us."*

- They would like to see approaches like citizen's assemblies that give local people, of all types, to be active in decision making and work with decision makers. They believe there are numerous under-represented groups including young people and the LGBTQ+ community.

- Need to be creative about how we engage use different techniques and approaches like gamification to involve and encourage people to participate. They want to see spaces created where local people can be part of the shaping what happens.

- There is a need to better connect people to information and support to *"empower people through information."*

- They also want to see different measures of success being used beyond financial, e.g., wellbeing and happiness.

- Their priorities for change are mental health, citizens' assembly and support networks. They see Huntingdonshire Future's as an opportunity to be bold and make significant changes.

WHAT IF?

Pioneered by the founder of Transition Town Totnes - Rob Hopkins, 'What if?' is a simple question, but perhaps the most important question that society has somehow forgotten. In his book 'What if to what next', Hopkins explores what we must do to revive and replenish our collective imagination. If we can rekindle that precious creative spark, whole societies and cultures can change rapidly, dramatically and unexpectedly for the better. Through all engagement activities we collated 'What if's?' These are shown in the table below.

What if.......

Economy	Environment	People and Communities	Place
• we supported our local markets? • we invested more and better? • we kept investment local? • we sold only local produce in our markets? • we could bring energy prices down? • we had a scope to encourage more visitors? • what if public transport was affordable? • we made it obvious we want businesses in our town centre? • we had a tourism destination management plan? • we maximised tourism and presented our towns better? • we had a night-time economy? • we had a town wide festival that works with local businesses? • we run the weekend farmers market until 3pm? • we switched to thinking local? • we make the market towns work as market towns? • we did have affordable housing? • our economy was a green economy?	• waste was managed sustainably? • we didn't build on green spaces? • we make it interesting to be sustainable? • we invest in water infrastructure? • we stopped destroying the planet now? • we had an honest conversation with constructors about sustainable building? • we started doing something now, rather than just having bland conversations about the environment that go nowhere? • the river valley was an AOWB? • for every new house built, we planted 10 trees? • we had a way of saving water? • St. Ives was car free? • we had a strategy for flooding to prevent St. Ives being underwater in 2050? • planning required solar panels, water buts, insulated and estate turbines? • we recognised climate change as an immediate issue?	• ambulances came quicker? • we gave local young people a social café? • children with special educational needs had the same opportunity and support as others? • all children walked to school? • there was a way to harness young people's talent? • if we went back to face healthcare? • we put people before money? • HDC lead a joined-up thinking programme? • we built community pride? • we did more to encourage people to come together? • celebrated local art? • we drove forward kerbside and car park charging and gave everyone the opportunity to run an electric vehicle? • we had initiatives to bring certain age groups together to plan together? • we made bold decisions? • we helped, rather than hindered people disposing of rubbish in public spaces?	• we did planning like Australia? • public transport was the first choice? • we built new houses with character? • we didn't let politics get in the way of change? • we design towns so the people who find it most challenging (disabled, additional needs) can get around? • we connected car parks to parks and new housing? • we had a 15-minute model town/district? • the guided busway was reliable? • new housing development followed the 15-minute model? • we had more than one bus a day? • infrastructure kept up with development? • we thought about the impact of more housing? • hospital was connected to a university? • if the plans for buses had happened? • St. Ives was a dark town? • we had reasons to visit? • we had parking strategies targeted to local areas?

Economy	Environment	People and Communities	Place
• we supported businesses to reduce energy costs? • trees were a planning condition? • no one did a journey less than a mile in a car? • we planted fruit trees in public areas and grow vegetables in public? • we supported businesses to become more circular? • we remove the word waste? Everything is reusable. • we shared what is already happening to protect the environment? • streets were pedestrianised? • we communicated better? • we re-isolated our rural areas? • we had an educational ad campaign on how/what to recycle? • we had cheap energy now? • solar panels were a planning requirement? • we supported businesses to reduce energy costs? • childcare supported working rather than a barrier? • the council lead by example with flexible working? • we built affordable housing? • businesses were incentivised to look after their patch? • we had universal basic income? • we all shopped locally? • we had a local, fresh produce economy? • community projects had long term funding? • national government reduced business rates? • business advice and support – how can we progress?	• we had nature friendly forming with zero soil erosion? • when we plant trees, we looked after them? • you could walk, cycle, or catch a bus everywhere? • plans and activities for nature recovery for all our green spaces and land in the district were produced by local people? • we had a great natural and town environment? • we focussed on the environment? • If we supported businesses to be green? • people reused their waste? • no-one drove a journey that was less than a mile? • new builds had to have solar panels? • put the environment first? • good things for the environment where cheaper? • we never built on green space? • everyone planted a tree in their garden? • we made it easy to not use a car? • we promote alternatives to weedkiller, grain dumping, and paving? • every house had a water butt? • we had more trees, and more planting incentives to keep lawns and hedges? • we had more ways to reuse water? • all old houses were retrofitted? • we viewed climate change as the number one? • we had more green organizing campaigns to show others and also encourage everyone to has a little garden?	• we had a shared sense of direction? • we built communities, not housing? • we promoted things to do better? • we had an honest conversation with residents about infrastructure and planning? • we used sport and culture to bring people in? • people in rural villages didn't need a car? • we had a better wellbeing? • we did prevention and early intervention? • we were kind to each other? • we brought support services to people rather than expecting them to come to you? • all children had an equal chance? • no child lived in poverty in Huntingdonshire? • no-one was lonely? • we put the pedestrian first? • we designed people centred places? • we had youth clubs that were open everyday • we involved young people in planning? • we had community-based adult education? • we had a district wide cycle path network? • we had public transport for the villages? • we helped people to help themselves? • we incentivised behavioural change? • children with ALN had equal opportunities? • we educated children to be citizens? • we enable behavioural change?	• we had school choice? • we stopped putting housing first? • public transport was affordable? • we had a proper high street? • there was a shopping centre? • had less parking? • we had the town centre of the future? • we had reasons to visit town? • It was illegal to build a flat without a balcony? • St. Neots was the go-to place? • everyone felt safe where they live? • we had good links to villages and London? • transport was regular? • the positive energy about the town was used to promote what is good? • we had a district identity? • we took pride in how our town looks and feels? • Ramsey had another industrial/incubator hub? Same site as Lidl? • we made change rather than talking about it? • we had a safe cycle/footpath to countryside centre at Ramsey Heights? • It was safer to cycle? • we didn't have the same high street as everywhere else? • we had 5G in Ramsey? • Ramsey had a bypass? • we had a Tom's Cakes in Ramsey? • we had everything we need here? • we had more reliable buses? • we had free public transport? • we considered the long-standing assets?

Economy	Environment	People and Communities	Place
• more support was given to small businesses? • we supported local businesses? • we helped local businesses to grow? • we addressed the barriers to work e.g., transport? • we have a career pathway for everyone? • we enabled businesses to expand? • we had enough jobs locally for all our school leavers? • the wealth, culture, knowledge, high tech solutions and infrastructure in Cambridge was spread across the County? • I could work locally? • we could compare work pay to work done, I feel like the people who work the most don't get an equal amount of compensation compared with their counter who have little work input and get a larger amount of compensation? • more technology was used to make life easier and more fun for everyone, and also discovery of medicines for diseases that have none currently? • the government provided reliable technology and internet to have a good working environment?	• what if we reduced air pollution that diversify to other sources of energy? • what if we reduced the number of private gasoline vehicles around town to reduce air pollution, diversify sources of energy, like solar, wind turbines, increase recreational parks, bring in more developmental & economic projects? • what if we reduced air pollution? • what if we had alternative sources of local renewable energy? • what if we restricted where people can drive? • what if the government made everywhere green? • built houses now that do what we need them to in 2050? • helped people change their behaviour?	• Huntingdonshire was truly inclusive? • The council answered emails? • we created spaces for teenagers to come together? • we had a bandstand? • we focused on solutions, not problems? • we thought about the life cycle of people in planning? • empty shops became community hubs? • all the public bodies spoke to each other and worked together? • renters were supported to buy? • we had communal spaces? • we kept young people in our area and spending in our economy? • joined up transport: bus, rail, and cycling? • we thought about downsizing? Bungalows as well as houses? • we had a more sustained community? • we helped those just about managing? • there were no waiting lists? • the council stepped in early to help people with their mental health? • we could make access to sport free for under 16s? • we had a community pub? • we had role models for children? • we had youth workers in our community? • we had detached youth workers? • we did join up local planning? • we promoted understanding of biodiversity in the Fens • we guaranteed a job for everyone? • we looked after the right people?	• smaller buses were available and reliable? • Huntingdonshire was more accessible to all by public transport? • traffic went? What if we could divide the ring road bus / cycle with a small park and ride. • we could minimise the hustle of travelling to workplaces and leisure opportunities by promoting more eco-friendly means like cycling and walking to protect our environment? • we used our history and parks to generate income from tourists to support our economy? • we had modern places to live in our historic buildings and towns? • what if public transport worked with people's lives? • the ting bus was available across Huntingdonshire and in the evening. • Huntingdonshire was the Silicon Valley of the region. • It was affordable to live in Huntingdonshire? • we were more ambitious and bold? We didn't settle for the norm and aimed for the ideal? • stopped working in silos? • we sorted out transportation? • built more social housing? • had rent control?

Economy	Environment	People and Communities	Place
		- we helped young people on to the house ladder? - we put addressing poverty on the agenda? - help was person centred? - we listened? - the police were more present in Ramsey? - we lived in caring communities? - we stopped overlooking one off incidents?	

POINTS OF DIFFERENCE

When reviewing the note and comments from the engagement activities, there were two key factors that primarily defined people's aspirations for the future.

Where People Live: As previously discussed in engagement activities, people prioritised need and change in the town or village they lived. Therefore, change tended to focus on local issues rather than District wide challenges.

Socio-Economic Status: There is a divide in people's priorities for the next 30 years based on socio economic status. Those living in areas of deprivation and struggling in the face of costing of living feel the priority should be on immediate support to address those challenges now rather than future thinking. Those in a stronger socio-economic position wanted to balance short, medium, and long term change.

Phase 2

This summary report sets out the findings of the second phase of engagement to support the Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy. This phase of engagement focused on understanding and exploring how participants think and feel about:

- The proposed journeys that make up the draft Place Strategy.

- The pathways and actions that can make a change.

- The role of the community.

How We Engaged

Phase 2 of the community engagement was delivered through the following mechanisms:

- A programme of focus groups and listening sessions:

  o Digital:

    ▪ People who have lived in Huntingdonshire for 3 years or less.

    ▪ People who have live in Huntingdonshire for 15 years or more.

    ▪ The pathways and you – general focus group.

    ▪ Ghanian Community Association.

  o Face to Face:

    ▪ Conygear Centre Users.

    ▪ 3C's Colne Caring Community.

    ▪ Young people aged 18 to 24.

    ▪ People who live in Love's Farm.

    ▪ People who live in Alconbury Weald.

- Working with young people at Sawtry Village Academy (Year 7 to Year 9) and Hinchingbrooke School (Year 7 to Year 12).

THE FIVE JOURNEYS

Across the phase 2 listening sessions we heard the perspectives of 258 people, aged 11 to 94, living in rural areas and market towns. Notes from the sessions have been reviewed and coded to identify emerging themes in relation to the five pathways which form the basis of the draft place strategy.

Pride of Place

It is important to be proud of where you live: Most participants felt it was important to be proud of where you live, that it is important to feel connected to your community. Pride is connected to how people feel about and perceive where they live.

> *"I would like to be proud of where I live. I think if I did, I would be more inclined to get involved and make it better."*
>
> Conygear Centre Focus Group Participant
>
> *"If you're proud of where you live, it means you like where you live."*
>
> Year 7 Student

How can you feel proud of a place where you don't feel safe: Almost all of the young people we worked with in schools included the importance of feeling and being safe as a criteria for a successful community and part of creating a great place to live. The majority of the those students said they didn't feel safe or were able to cite incidents when they did not feel safe.

> *"You can't work through town without being harassed by gross men. Being shouted at. It makes me feel awful."*
>
> Year 10 Student
>
> *"There is a great skate park in St Neots. But every time my son goes there, he tells me about drug deals happening. People taking drugs. Where are the police?"*
>
> Love's Farm Focus Group Participant
>
> *"When there's litter everywhere, when they use your area to fly tip. When nothing is taken care of you don't feel safe never mind proud of where you live."*
>
> Conygear Centre Focus Group Participant

Participants raised a range of issues related to community safety including county lines, street lighting and anti-social behaviour. There is a belief that the area is getting less safe over time, which impacts on people's ability to feel proud about where they live.

A decline in standards: Participants spoke of a perceived decline in standards, not just across public services but also in the behaviour of people in area. There is a concern that Huntingdonshire is a on a downward trajectory.

> *"Nothing is working at the moment. The roads are full of potholes, you can't get in at the doctors. Why should we feel proud?"*
>
> Digital Focus Group Participant
>
> *"We could have more bins, but the problem is the people. They don't care, they don't care about where they live. Why should we have to pick up after them."*
>
> Year 9 Student

The idea of having pride in Huntingdonshire, is connected to the other journeys and all aspects of life. The small things do matter, several discussions around pride were connected to litter and graffiti. Others raised concerns that the things that used to make them proud of their town are no longer happening, as one focus group participant explained *"there used to be wonderful flowers outside the Church in Huntingdonshire every spring. That does not happen anymore. Huntingdon is now very run down. You do not see flowers anymore."*

What if We Were Incentivised to Look After Own Patch: In activities with students at Sawtry Village Academy and Hinchingbrooke School there were several discussions about the role of the individual / people and the role of the public sector.

> *"Why should I do a litter pick. That is not my job. Someone is paid to do that."*
>
> Year 11 Student
>
> *"I think we should do things that can help keep where we live, how we want it to be."*
>
> Year 9 Student

Across the focus groups, some felt that local people should take more of an active role in looking after their own patch. Others felt that *"too much is being left to volunteers, what does the Council actually do now"* (digital focus group participant). The Alconbury Weald focus groups participants suggested there is a good balance between the role of local people and public services / the developer in their area. This was put down to the type of people who lived in the area, a willingness to put in *"hard work to keep it the way it is now"* and the presence of a Community Development Officer.

We Had Beautiful Places To Call Home: In focus groups the reference to 'beautiful homes' and 'beautiful places to call home' in the description and pathway often brought the conversation to planning. Listening to local people, as in phase 1, there is a concern that the planning system in the area is not meeting the needs of local people and communities.

> *"The HDC planning process feeds into everything. Why are they building houses without capacity for GPs, without the transport links? It feels like reality isn't considered and decisions are being made on data from the 70's. You need to get in front of the problems."*
>
> <div align="right">Love's Farm Focus Group Participant</div>
>
> *"Why is it beautiful homes and not affordable homes?"*
>
> <div align="right">Young People Aged 18 to 24 Focus Group</div>
>
> *"The cost of houses around loves farm and Wintringham are in my opinion, as a 22 year old working, horrendous and I definitely think that most young people my age will feel that these prices aren't affordable for anyone."*
>
> <div align="right">Love's Farm Focus Group Participant</div>
>
> *"There seems to be an inability to do things in a cohesive way in this area. New houses are being built and transport is getting worse.*
>
> <div align="right">Love's Farm Focus Group Participant</div>
>
> *"Nobody collaboratively thinks."*
>
> <div align="right">Young People Aged 18 to 24 Focus Group</div>
>
> *"Everyone passes the buck. They hide behind the bureaucracy."*
>
> <div align="right">Young People Aged 18 to 24 Focus Group</div>

There is a perception that the planning system is not working in the area, and that more transparency and clarity in how the planning process works in Huntingdonshire and why decisions are made is needed.

Part of this perception relates to affordable housing and the lack thereof. Young people in particular are concerned about their inability to get on the house ladder, and parents feel their children may need to move out of the area to afford home.

We Had a Strong Identity for the Whole District: Very few participants described themselves as coming from Huntingdonshire. In discussions participants struggled to find a single identify for the District and tended to focus on the specific town or village they live in.

Our High Streets Were the Centre of Social and Cultural Life: As with phase 1, there is concern that town centres / High Streets are run down, unattractive and not great places to visit. There is an acknowledgement that High Streets across England are struggling, but this is tempered by a feeling that there is not enough action and support for the areas Market Towns.

> *"Its all nail shops, and coffee shops and barbers. There's so many barbers and yet I've never seen so many bald people."*
>
> Young People Aged 18 to 24 Focus Group
>
> *"We keep losing our banks. I read about banking hubs recently, can we have one of those. Not everyone is on the internet."*
>
> Digital Focus Group Participant
>
> *"There is noting special about our town centre."*
>
> Digital Focus Group Participant

On whole there is support for this pathway, but a need to see more tangible and realistic actions for change.

How do you know if you're successful: A consistent concern is the numerous levels of democracy in the area and the inability to hold specific Council's / public sector organisations to account. The community wants to clear about what the District Council is seeking to achieve. To have mechanisms by which they can held the public sector to account.

> *"This all feels very woolly too me. How we will know if anything has changed. What will you measure?"*
>
> Love's Farm Focus Group Participants
>
> *"It's so broad as to be almost meaningless."*
>
> Digital Focus Group Participant

Environmental Innovation

Zero Carbon Became the Norm and All Our Children Were Fluent in Sustainability: There is a consistent concern that not enough is being done to achieve net zero and protect the environment. It was felt the Place Strategy needs to focus on ways to help people and communities make a difference in their own areas.

> *"We learn about sustainability at school. What we don't learn is what we can do to reduce our own environmental impact."*
>
> Year 12 Student
>
> *"There needs to be more done to make people change, like when they started charging for carrier bags."*
>
> Year 9 student

As well as support and education, people wanted to see more environmental innovation on a community level in their locality. For example, the Conygear Centre focus groups participants spoke about a desire to see a recycle and reuse facility in their area *"if we had somewhere people could take their old office chair, then someone else could use it. We wouldn't have that chair dumped in the alleyway behind our homes."*

New Homes: As in phase 1 focus groups participants feel it is a missed opportunity not to ensure all new homes are built to minimise their environmental impact.

> *"Why are you letting developers getting away with building homes without solar panels? There is no excuse."*
>
> Alconbury Weald Focus Group
>
> *"All houses should have no carbon footprint."*
>
> Year 11 student

Participants spoke about wanting to see policy being used to ensure that new homes are carbon neutral, across both phases of engagement this was a clear and consistent message.

All Our Energy was Produced with the District: There is support for community energy generation projects, particularly those which can both reduce environmental impact and people's utility bills.

> *"It's very windy here, very flat we should have a community wind turbine."*
>
> Alconbury Weald Focus Group
>
> *"If it reduces my energy bill then I would support community energy. But you won't do that round here you'll do it in a better neighbourhood."*
>
> Conygear Centre Focus Group

There is concern that local people won't know where to start and there needs to be a clear mechanism to turn this pathway into projects. There also needs to be an assurance that this pathway and opportunity reaches all communities and provides equality of opportunity. Interestingly there was no nimbyism (not in my backyard) in the focus group sessions and people weren't concerned about the possibility of community energy generation infrastructure in their community.

Our Natural Assets Inspired A New Infrastructure: As with phase 1 the natural environment was considered to be one of the areas key assets, greenspaces and access to nature are often cited as the best thing about Huntingdonshire.

> *"How is this protecting local wildlife? We should be protecting what we already have."*
>
> Year 9 Student
>
> *"Our greenspaces are a very important factor. Without them it wouldn't be the same."*
>
> Digital Focus Group Participants

There is a desire to see a more explicit protection of existing natural assets as well as 'taking inspiration for new infrastructure' and 'making the most of our wonderful natural assets.'

Show What You're Doing: At all of the schools' sessions, during a warm up exercise we asked a series of yes / no questions. One of which was 'are we doing enough to tackle climate change?' in response one student asked *"what is the Council doing in Huntingdonshire?"* From discussions in focus group sessions, it became clear that local people are not seeing key organisations like the Council being proactive in the battle against climate change.

> *"When we talk about the environment, we're talking about where we live. I know what I'm doing, but I don't know what HDC, or St Neots Town Council are doing. Are you doing anything?*
>
> Digital Focus Group Participants
>
> *"Is HDC switching the lights of when no-one is the office? Are they going to invest in electric bin lorries? What are they doing?"*
>
> Digital Focus Group Participants

Equitable Economy

We Created A Place Where Start-ups Could Flourish: Across the focus groups there is a desire to see this journey being used specifically to support local entrepreneurs and local businesses to thrive and grow.

> *"When I think of start-ups, I think of Hi – tech/ Biotech start-ups in Silicon Fen in Cambridge.' 'The word start-up tends to be used in that context, whereas if we think about local businesses, entrepreneurship is more appropriate."*
>
> Ghanian Community Association
>
> *"There are communities of like minded people, like here in St Neots. How will this support those of us who are already here?"*
>
> Young people aged 18 to 24
>
> *"This should be about small innovative companies, not attracting big companies in."*
>
> Young people aged 18 to 24.

They would like to see HDC and other partners explore if they could for example *"cut business rates"* or *"motivate landlords to not let buildings stand empty"*. They want the Council to explore these issues and explain what it can and can not do. As one participant put it *"the Council should be supporting those who want to but can't rather than those who could but don't."*

We Become the Destination for Sustainable Tourism: There was limited support for sustainable tourism, across the focus group sessions. It was felt that the focus should be on addressing *"the needs of local people, rather that the wants of visitors."*

> *"Why are you trying to attract tourists, when the people who live here don't have everything they need."*
>
> Year 10 student
>
> *"Will people want to visit here? Can we really compete with other places? I'd rather you invest in our local businesses."*
>
> Digital Focus Group Participant
>
> *"There's nothing in our town centre, I would be embarrassed if people came here to visit."*
>
> Digital Focus Group Participant

There was some support for tourism as a mechanism for creating jobs, however there was concern that these tend to be low paid / zero hour contracts. Participants picked up on the potential for reduced public sector budgets in the future, and there is a belief that resources and capacity should be focused on the needs of the people who live in the area.

Our Business and Organisations Worked with Young People: Everyone who participated thinks it is important to create opportunity for young people, but there was a feeling that support for young people needs to go beyond this one pathway.

Almost every young person we spoke to at Sawtry Village Academy and Hinchingbrooke School felt there is nothing for them to do in Huntingdonshire. There is a perception that young people are also facing increasing challenges in the area, with parents of older children making references to drug taking, anti-social behaviour and county lines.

> *"Youth Council – don't put me on a kids table. If you want to work with us, take us seriously."*
>
> 18 to 24 Focus Group
>
> *"I run the youth club and we're looking at the moment at how we can get work experience for young people. It is so hard."*
>
> Alconbury Weald Focus Group
>
> *"Schools need to be more consistent in what they do and how they support our young people."*
>
> Love's Farm Focus Group Participants

There is a desire to see opportunities created for young people and this is widely supported. Young people feel this process needs to involve and engage them more. They feel that are the moment too many decisions that affect them are being made without their involvement.

Growing Food Fresh and Local: Discussions on this topic with focus group participants, highlighted the need to think about the specificity of how to deliver this locally. This was an example of a topic where people were concerned about its fundamentally deliverability.

> *"Importing food from other places increases air miles, and shipping miles. Growing food locally is better for the environment."*
>
> Ghanian Community Association
>
> *"We could have a local good supply but the lose of local farmland seems to run counter to that. You need to be realistic and make sure it is achievable."*
>
> Digital Focus Group Participant
>
> *"Community orchards would be a good way to educate people about growing food."*
>
> Year 10 Student

Health Embedded

GDP v Happiness: In discussion it was felt that people being happy is a worthwhile aspiration, but concern there is concern about how this can measured and delivered. It was also felt to be confusing to put it in the context of GDP, which most focus group participants did not understand.

> *"How are you going to measure happiness? It feels like a nice thing to say, but how are you actually going to do that."*
>
> Love's Farm Focus Group Participant
>
> *"People should be happy to live here, but I think that happiness will come from the place improving. I don't think it should be a thing on its own."*
>
> Digital Focus Group Participant

In conversations with focus group participants, it was suggested that the language should maybe change to focus on wellbeing, in the context of wellbeing being a key priority for the council and its partners.

Easier to Live Healthy: There was support for this pathway, in the context of preventive health that reduces need for health services.

> *"Let's be honest its money that makes it easier to live healthy."*
>
> Conygear Focus Group Participant
>
> *"Gyms should be cheaper, so everyone can afford them."*
>
> Year 7 Student
>
> *"It would be better to do more to prevent people from getting to the point where they're really ill. Whether that's physical health or mental health."*
>
> Year 12 Student
>
> *"It would be easier to live healthy if there was a doctor here. Why do we have to go to St Ives?"*
>
> 3C's Participant

Participants want to see this pathway tackle the barriers that prevent people in their community living healthier lives including the cost of healthy living and the lack of health infrastructure in some communities.

Loneliness: In conversation, when loneliness was discussed in the context of the wider impact on people's lives it became more of a priority for participants.

> *"No-one should be lonely; we should have events and parities where people can get together."*
>
> Year 8 Student

> *"The Council needs to visit people in their homes and see how they're doing… There is a personal touch missing in Colne. The Council should have a list of vulnerable people on their system to visit."*
>
> 3C's Participant

There is a perception that increased loneliness is in part due to the legacy of covid, that as a result of the pandemic there are less places, events and activities that bring people together.

Skills and Training: Probably because it is the health embedded theme, participants tended to focus on skills and training opportunities for people who work in health and care related fields.

> *"It will contribute to Huntingdonshire's health sector, and people will not feel discriminated."*
>
> Digital Focus Group Participants
>
> *"There are lots of people who work in care in this area, and we don't do enough to support them. They certainly don't get paid enough."*
>
> Digital Focus Group Participant

Some people felt that lifelong learning would be a better fit for equitable economy, *"if equitable means for everyone. If we're talking about skills and training for people of all ages, maybe that should move."*

Mental Health: A significant number of participants felt that mental health needs a specific pathway / focus with the place strategy beyond happiness and loneliness.

> *"Mental health is being pushed aside in this conversation."*
>
> 18 to 24 Focus Group Participant
>
> *"You really need to help with mental health in this area. There's lots of people struggling who can't get help."*
>
> Year 9 Student
>
> *"When I was a police-officer I spent more time dealing with mental health than anything else, and the only training I had was a half day slide show on mental health."*
>
> 18 to 24 Focus Group Participant

There is a swell of support for mental health being a specific pathway within the place strategy. If this is not possible a clear reason why needs to be given in feedback.

Travel Transformed

Car As A Relic of the Past: A significant majority of participants of all ages felt this pathways is fundamentally unachievable, and therefore to an extent setting up the Place Strategy for failure.

"It's not going to happen; people are not going to get rid of their cars. Even if electric cars become more successful people will still be using cars."

Alconbury Weald Focus Group Participant

"Public transport needs to be frequent, cheap and reliable otherwise it won't work. That's why I'm sticking to my car."

Alconbury Weald Focus Group Participant

"I've only just passed my test and there is no way I'm going to give up my car."

Year 12 Student

"We live in a car centric county; it's going to take one heck of a network to beat point to point."

Digital Focus Group Participant

"There doesn't seem to be much thinking about disabled people in this."

3Cs Participant

It was felt that this pathway does not reflect the reality of the district and the challenges of getting around. That it doesn't take into account that services such as GPS's and schools are not available within all local communities, or those people who need to use cars for health reasons. They felt the language of this statement is *"to final, too black and white"* (digital focus group participant.

Mobility on Demand: There was a feeling among participants that this is good in theory more challenging in practice. A number of people spoke of using the Ting bus service, but concerns were raised. For example, one focus group participant explained that son uses the service to get to work, but on several occasions there have not been enough drivers. As a result, he has needed to get a taxi, which the Ting service has then paid for.

"My son has used the Ting service to get to work, it was going great but lately they haven't had the drivers. Which means he gets a taxi that they pay for. How is that sustainable? The Ting needs to be working properly first before they do more of it."

Alconbury Weald Focus Group Participant

"Huntingdon needs Uber, when can we get uber."

Year 12 Student

"The reality needs to be considered – I've heard about the Ting bus, but I don't think I would rely on it to get me to work."

Digital Focus Group Participant

Among young people in particular the need for 'uber' was raised consistently in conversation.

Distribution Networks: There was an acknowledgement that there are high levels of traffic in the area, and that distribution of goods contributes to this. However, discussions of this topic were limited and it was not a key priority for local people.

> *"We do need to think about how stuff as well as people moves around."*
>
> Year 11 Student
>
> *"I think on a very local level we can do more about how we move goods around. But on a bigger scale is this feasible."*
>
> Digital Focus Group Participant

Fun to Move Around: Again, as with mobility on demand it was felt there was a need to get the basics right and improve on existing infrastructure first. As was the case in phase 1, participants feel that the current approach to cycling and walking is disconnected.

> *"It is impossible to cycle to Cambridge, or Sandy or Huntingdon from here. More needs to be done to create a network, rather than just a hodge potch of paths."*
>
> Love's Farm Focus Group
>
> *"I would maybe walk more if all the street lights in my local neighbourhood worked."*
>
> Digital Focus Group Participant
>
> *"The river is lovely; it would be great to see paddleboards and rowers on it more often. But are members of the public just allowed to do that?"*
>
> Digital Focus Group Participant

As shown above there is also an aspiration to see more made of the river, which is seen as a key feature of the District. Project like the St Neots Future High Street Fund are looking at the river, but local people are unsure of what they and others can do on the river.

THE MISSING JOURNEYS

Crime and Community Safety

As part of our work in schools, we asked the students to create a vision for the future of their community. Almost, all these visions referenced that their community needed to be safe. Several students spoke of times when they had felt unsafe or had witnessed anti-social behaviour or had concerns about levels of drug taking locally.

In focus group sessions, in particular the discussion at Love's Farm, it was felt that tackling crime and community safety were significant gaps in the proposed journeys / place strategy. Parents raised significant concerns about behaviour in their communities and the potential influence on their children.

From the phase 2 engagement an argument could be made that crime and community safety should be considered as an independent journey or as a specific pathway within potentially pride of place.

Young People

Whilst people of all ages would arguably benefit from change across the place strategy, there was a feeling that more consideration needs to be given to young people beyond the 'what if our businesses and organisations worked hand in hand with young people.' A range of issues were raised including consistency of schooling and education, mental health, lack of things to do for young people and anti-social behaviour.

Culture, Recreation, and the Night-time Economy

Young people in particular thought that the equitable economy theme should have a specific pathway around culture, recreation, and the night-time economy. That there is a need for a clear pathway for how Huntingdonshire District Council plans to support, enhance and develop culture, recreation and the night-time economy in the area. In so doing illustrating how this will benefit the area, creating jobs and opportunity.

Mental Health

The are references to mental health in the current draft of the place strategy. However, its importance and the levels of need across the District is felt by local people to require a specific pathway of its own.

Forward Thinking Planning

Throughout phases 1 and 2, the local planning system has been criticised and the community would like to see it used for the benefit of local people. The place strategy needs to illustrate how the planning system can change and will change to deliver its aspirations. It needs to show how it will link to local plan/s and other strategies. If this is not possible, then the feedback process needs to explain why.

People

The place strategy needs to ensure that it puts local people and communities at its heart. People want to be sure that the place strategy is a journey towards the changes they want and need in their local area to improve quality of life for them and their families.

Transparency and Communication

As with phase 1 there is a concern that number of levels of democracy in the District *"means that we have blame game, with people hiding from their responsibilities."* The place strategy narrative needs to explain how its journeys have been chosen, why it is focusing on these specific pathways and which organisations will be responsible and accountable for change.

POINTS OF DIFFERENCE

When reviewing the notes from the focus groups it was apparent that the factors summarised in this section were most likely to lead to differences in perspective and need.

Socio-Economic Status: As with phase 1 there is a divide in people's priorities for the next 30 years based on socio economic status. Those living in areas of deprivation and struggling feel "left behind" and that they do not benefit from the same levels of support and care as other areas.

> *"We had all our bins taken away. There are barely any bins in our park. Behind our homes there is always fly tipping. You don't get that in the posh areas, the areas where you spend money."*
>
> Conygear Centre Focus Group Participant
>
> *"Let's be honest nobody cares about what happens in the Oxmoor. It's got a bad reputation, and nobody wants to make it any better."*
>
> Year 11 Student

Where People Live: There was evidence of variation based on where people live. For example, the Love's Farm focus group included a discussion about a perceived missing journey / focus on community safety, support for young people and a perceived lack of community infrastructure including a "promised pub." In contrast in Alconbury Weald there was a perception of a stronger sense of community, that there is "low level crime" but it was not seen as a fundamental issue that the Place Strategy needed to address.

> *"Crime and drugs are a massive problem here. Bikes keep getting stolen, there's no police presence. I'm concerned about what is going on and how it's influencing my kids."*
>
> Love's Farm Focus Group Participant
>
> *"There's not respect here. If you tell teenagers not to litter, they tell you to F-off."*
>
> Love's Farm Focus Group Participant
>
> *"It is friendly place, as you're walking around everyone says hello. So much so that when someone didn't say hello to me the other day, I almost called them on it. Told them that we say hello round here."*
>
> Alconbury Weald Focus Group Participant

> *"We are in a bit of a bubble here. I hope that as we grow, and more houses are built the friendliness grows on."*
>
> Alconbury Weald Focus Group Participant

As shown in phase 1 there is also a rural urban divide. For example, those we spoke to at the 3C's Colne Caring Community Session explained how for them transport and health are linked. Young people from areas such as Offord, talked about community groups that had gone during the covid pandemic and not comeback. The impact of not have accessible things to do and activities in your community, without the need to have access to a car.

> *"We've lost all our doctors they've gone to St. Ives."*
>
> 3C's participant
>
> *"None of my school mates live where I live. There used to be a youth club in Offord but know there is nothing to do where I live."*
>
> Year 9 student

Commuters: While travel was seen as an issue for almost everyone we spoke to, it was a particular area of focus for commuters. Focus group participants spoke of moving to the area for its perceived "good transport links" only to be disappointed by the reality.

> *"Too often I'm stuck in traffic. I'm a single mum and I can't guarantee I'll get home in time for childcare. The bus is expensive and slow. There is not direct train. Cycling is taking your life in your own hands. It has to be the car for me."*
>
> Love's Farm Focus Group Participant
>
> *"I'm support a Ukrainian family they are working in Cambridge, and it is a nightmare to get them there."*
>
> Love's Farm Focus Group Participant
>
> *"I had to travel for my work experience and most of the time the bus didn't show up.   I can drive now; I won't give up my car."*
>
> Year 12 Student

Age of Participants: Young people (below mid-20s) had very specific perceived gaps in the place strategy journeys particularly around mental health, the night-time economy and how the Council and Councillors work with and listen to local young people.

> *"You really need to help young people with mental health problems. They won't be able to go to school or get jobs if you don't."*
>
> Year 9 student
>
> *"Any conversation about mental health is just pushed aside."*
>
> 18 to 24 focus group participant
>
> *"How do you keep young people here? A night-time economy, entertainment, culture it could be busy all the time."*
>
> 18 to 24 focus group participant
>
> *"We've got ideas, but how do we put them in front of decision makers. Why don't Councillors come and listen to us. Work with us."*
>
> Year 12 student

FEEDBACK AND COMMUNICATION

Feedback

Consideration needs to be given to communicating to participants how the engagement process has shaped the place strategy. In addition where the communities has asked for elements / themes / areas that are not suitable for the Place Strategy an explanation needs to be provided.

Communicating the Place Strategy

The engagement process has shown that there is concern that *"this process is about nothing more than a fancy brochure"* (Digital Focus Group Participant) and *"it is meaningless if we can't hold it to account"* (Love's Farm Focus Group participant). Communication around the Place Strategy needs to clearly and concisely illustrate:

- **The role and remit of the Place Strategy.**

- **Who will be responsible for delivering the strategy and who is committed to supporting its implementation.**

- **How the Place Strategy will link to other Huntingdonshire District Council policies and strategies.**

- **How the community can hold the strategy to account.**

- **How the success of the strategy will be measured.**

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