

Statement of Community Involvement

2024



Contents

Engagement timeline for the Abbey

4	March 2019 – July 2019	
6	September 2019 – March 2020	Dropping in on the community
12	March 2020 – September 2020	Opportunity not obligation
14	September 2020 – January 2021	Engaging again
15	January 2021 – May 2021	Our support for you
17	May 2021	The options
26	June 2021 – December 2021	Consultation on the Abbey
34	September 2019 – Present day	Engaging with Stakeholders
36	January 2022 – November 2022	Commitment and clarity
42	November 2022 - December 2022	Public exhibition
44	December 2022 - Present	Offering further clarity to the community

Foreword

Ever since we began our conversations with local residents in 2019, community consultation and engagement has been at the very heart of developing a design for the Abbey.

This has extended to making a firm commitment within our promise to residents to meaningfully consult residents so that we understand what matters to local people.

Over the last four years, we have taken an inclusive approach to engagement: identifying, and delivering different approaches, tools, and activities to ensure that everyone is able to have their say and feels listened to. This included during the lockdown periods when we adapted our engagement to meet the needs of local people and the demands of that time.

We have taken a fair, transparent, and cohesive approach to engaging and consulting the community, offering varied opportunities for people to influence the design. As such, the design we have developed directly responds to the feedback we have heard from the community over the last three years. Since 2019, we've offered 75 opportunities – events, 1-2-1 conversations, digital polls, and surveys – for residents to share their views, and we've also kept people updated with brochures, letters, and on our website and Facebook page.

We recognise and appreciate the diversity of opinion amongst residents and the design we've developed reflects this – we have always wanted to unite and not divide the community through any improvements. The design and subsequent delivery of the Abbey will continue to be shaped with community feedback, and we will keep people informed and involved now and in the coming years.

Together with the community, we are co-creating a different future for The Abbey, one that not only reflects people's aspirations now but meets the changing needs of the generations to come.

Spotlight on the community

March 2019 – July 2019

Flagship Group has had a long-held ambition to bring sustainable and meaningful change to the Abbey, to benefit today's residents and the generations to come.

With over 600 homes in our management, and with a presence in the community that dates back many years, we have an acute insight into the systemic problems that are impacting upon this community.

But, to bring a real step change for the Abbey and to find solutions to these deeply ingrained issues, we knew that we had to take a 'bottom-up' approach, meaning that whatever we would do would be informed, shaped, and led by community involvement and feedback. Since the very beginning, community consultation and engagement has been at the very heart of our approach.



Abbey insight*

- The Abbey is within the top 10% most deprived neighbourhoods nationally.
- There are lower life expectancy and health outcomes for the people of the Abbey.
- There are higher than the national average emergency admissions to hospital for coronary heart disease, heart attack, and COPD.
- Skills level and educational attainment for residents are well below the national average.

*This information was taken from the Social Value study for the Abbey.

We started engaging with the community in early 2019 by listening to the views of local people at the Abbey Tenant and Resident Association meetings. These conversations shone an early spotlight on what mattered to people, what worked well in the community, and what could be better. Concerns were voiced in these meetings about issues such as anti-social behaviour, parking, and the garages.

We wanted to build on this feedback and understand more about the challenges being faced. So, we carried out a text survey with only our tenants to find out how they felt about their home, their community, and the wider area. With existing communication channels already in place with our tenants, this was the obvious next activity for us.

Engagement: text survey for tenants June and July 2019

We wrote to all of our tenants* to let them know that, over the coming month, we would be sending them three questions via text message and asking them for a score between 1 -5 (1 being very negative and 5 being very positive):

3 July Text 1 sent
'How do you feel about your home?'

4 July Text 2 sent
'Please let us know how you feel about the Abbey.'

5 July Text 3 sent
'Please let us know how you feel about Thetford.'

*550 tenants engaged, 1650 messages sent and 447 responses were received.

Building on the findings

The findings from our text surveys (Fig.1) coupled with the narrative feedback from our meetings with the tenants and residents, demonstrated a need, aspiration, and scope for improvement for the Abbey. With the early knowledge we had gained, our next focus was to open up the conversation wider and hear from the whole community.

“Since the very beginning, community consultation and engagement has been at the very heart of our approach.”

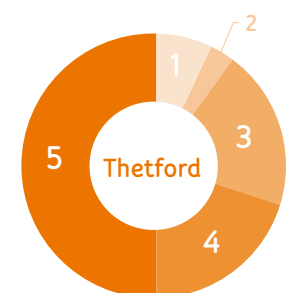
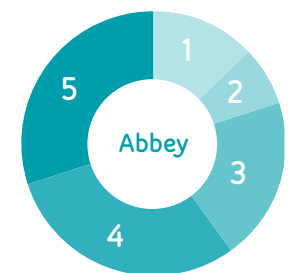


Fig 1: Tenant opinion of their home, the Abbey and Thetford on a scale of 1-5, 1 being very negative and 5 very positive.

Dropping in on the community

September 2019 - March 2020

Building on the insight we'd gained to date, we wanted to further our understanding of the needs and aspirations of local people by opening up our conversations with the rest of the estate.

Over a six-month period, we hosted a series of drop-in sessions in the neighbourhood centre, right in the heart of the Abbey. These sessions allowed us to connect directly with local people, hear their thoughts, concerns, and ideas, and develop our knowledge of the area.

We held seven drop-ins in total with the focus and theme of each session shaped in response to feedback gained in the preceding event. This was our approach throughout all of our engagement, with all ideas and the design directly informed by community feedback.

By the end of this phase of our engagement, we had developed a strong picture of what worked well on the Abbey, and what could be better. We had also started to co-create ideas for potential improvements that could tackle the issues that had been highlighted by the people who know the Abbey best: the residents.



Drop-in session one: confirmation

In our first session, we tested and explored the themes that had emerged from our initial engagement - garages, anti-social behaviour and homes. We wanted to understand more about these and other challenges. Residents were able to look at boards and give their feedback verbally, or via comments on post-it notes.

Feedback highlights:

- **Garages:** people shared their concerns about the condition of the garages;
- **Anti-social behaviour:** feedback revealed challenges around anti-social behaviour and problems such as littering and flytipping;
- **Homes:** we heard feedback about the condition of properties.

Drop-in session two: improvement

Building on the challenges, concerns, and issues raised in the first session, we wanted to get people thinking about what improvements they would like to see. The ideas that residents shared related to the themes we'd already heard about, as well as some different challenges.

Feedback highlights:

- **Garages:** there were ideas to replace these with new homes or more parking;
- **Open space:** feedback revealed a desire for more formalised spaces for play;
- **Connectivity:** people talked about better connections to town and seating along the river walk;
- **Lighting:** there was interest in better lighting for the Abbey.
- **Homes:** we heard feedback about the condition of properties.



Community spirit

Whilst people told us about the challenges and concerns they have about the Abbey, they also told us that they loved the strong community spirit on the estate.

Neighbourhood heart

Residents highlighted that they would like to see more facilities in the centre of the Abbey, reflecting what had been in place previously. Ideas for the neighbourhood heart included a new community centre, shops, and play space.

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Drop-in session three: solutions

Following on from the issues and themes that emerged in the previous sessions, we responded with some possible ideas for improvements that could tackle the challenges we'd heard about. This was the beginning of co-creating solutions for the Abbey.

Feedback highlights:

- **New homes:** we shared some ideas for new homes which look to solve issues previously raised and certain areas of the Abbey;
- **Open space:** people liked the ideas that offered more play space for young people of all ages;
- **Parking:** parking was flagged up by the community as a priority, and residents suggested ideas such as allocated parking.



Drop-in session four: solutions

We continued to share, explore, shape, and discuss possible ideas and improvements for the Abbey with residents.

Feedback highlights:

- **Courtyards and communal spaces:** concerns over lighting and parking were expressed;
- **Neighbourhood heart:** people fed back that they would like a better centre of their community;
- **Safer routes and connections:** more seating was suggested;
- **Your homes and new homes:** feedback included a need for more mixed housing across the Abbey.

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Drop-in session five: developing the options

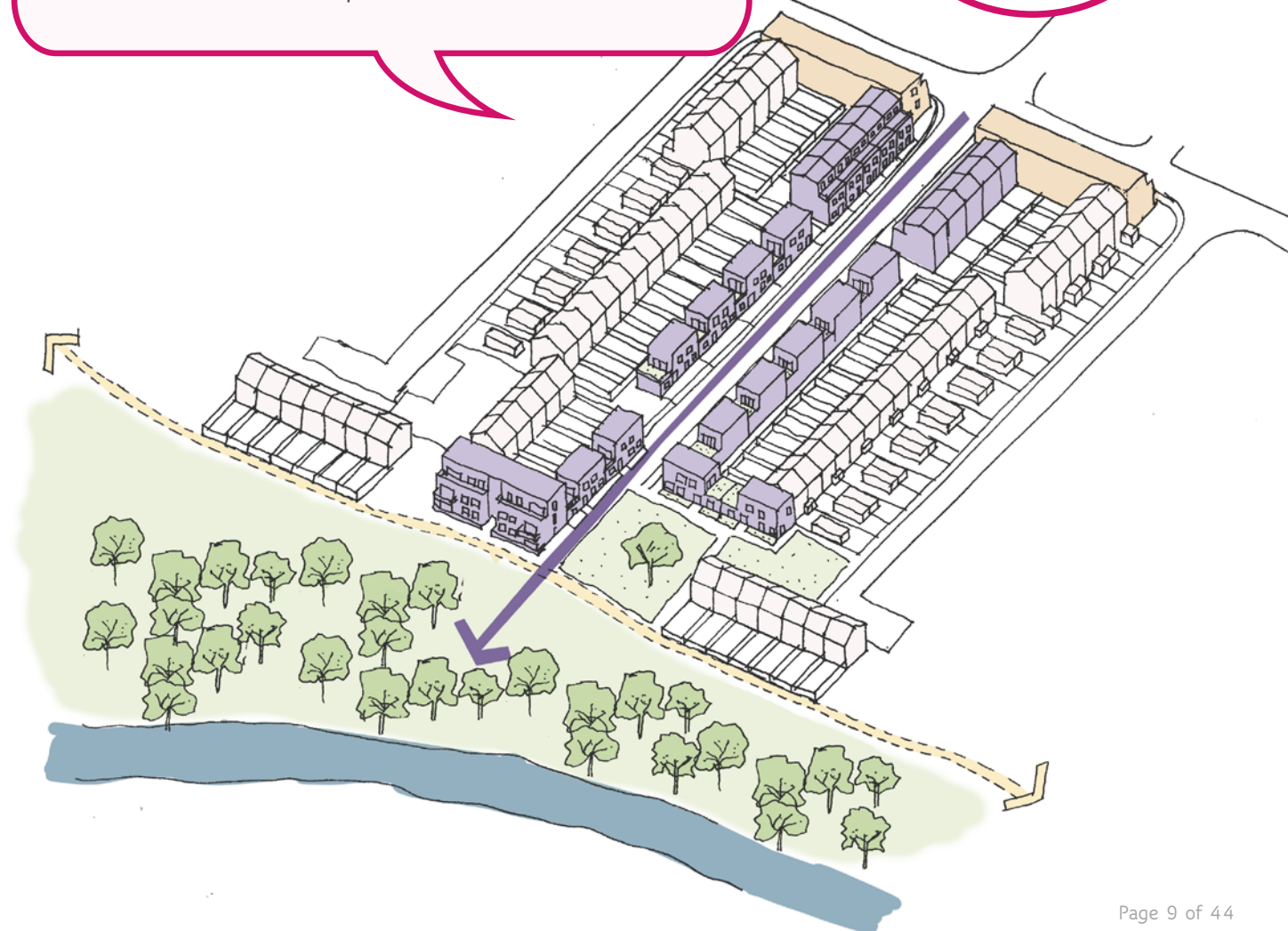
This session was about looking at the possible improvements in greater depth and inviting more detailed feedback to understand the feasibility of the ideas for local people.

Feedback highlights:

- **Garage sites:** residents wanted any new houses to be of a similar size to existing ones;
- **Neighbourhood heart:** feedback around a new neighbourhood heart was positive;
- **Sports and recreation:** more parks and better cycle routes were among the ideas highlighted;
- **River walk:** there was interest in a new river walk.

Reflecting the past

Residents told us about their memories of enjoying the riverside. This inspired us to look at ideas on how we could maximise the river area and show its full potential.



“Feedback was given on a new route to town that would provide space to play and sit.

Drop-in session six: developing the options

We shaped the ideas based on the previous feedback that had been given and shared these within the session. We also started to talk about how the ideas could fit together to benefit the whole Abbey.

Feedback highlights:

- **Neighbourhood heart:** there was positive support for new facilities along with concerns around parking and anti-social behaviour;
- **Route to town:** feedback was given on a new route that would also provide space to play and sit;
- **The river area:** there was interest in new, safe areas to play;
- **Parking:** this was highlighted as a priority for residents.



Drop-in session seven: bringing it all together

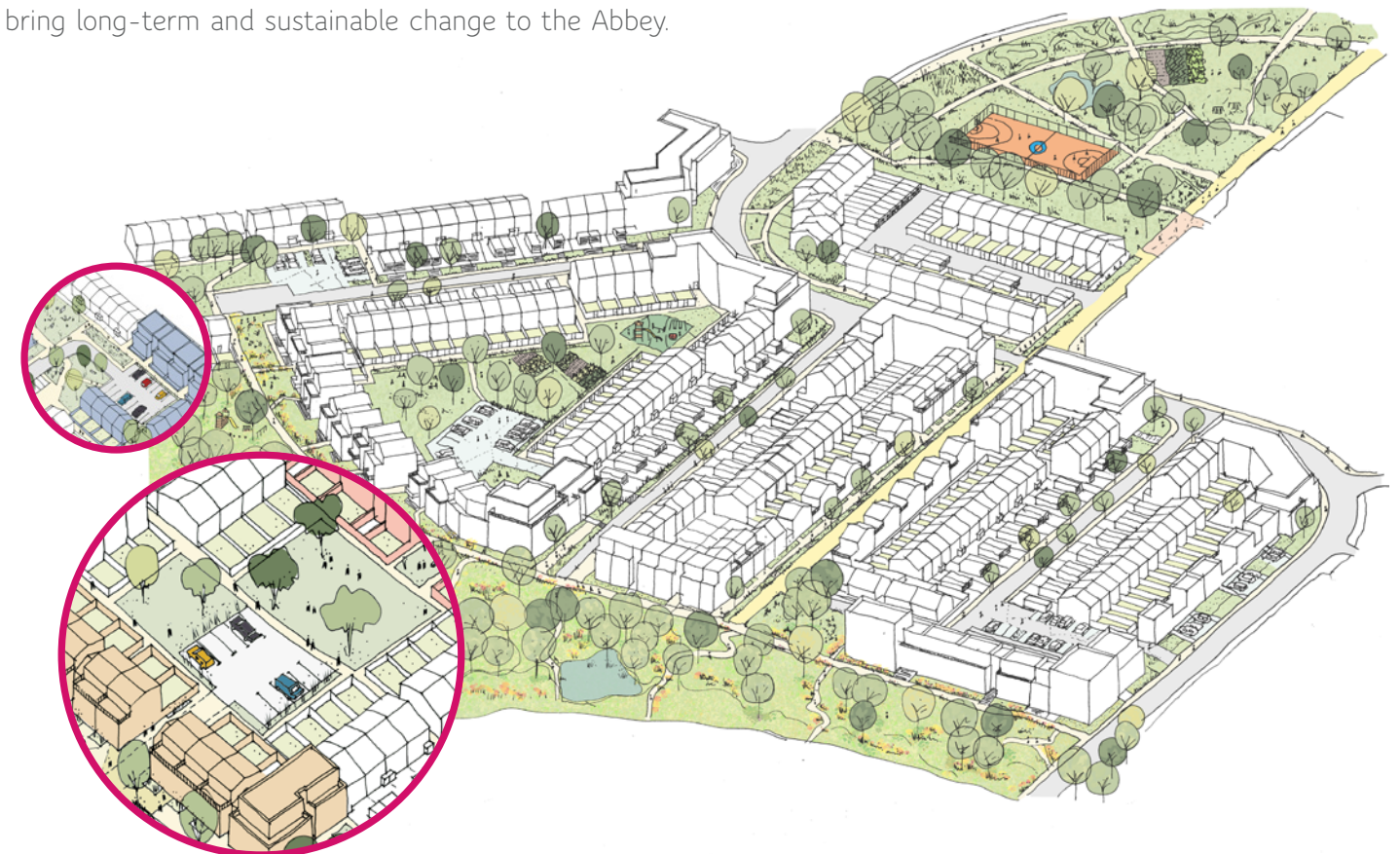
The last drop-in session brought all the themes and improvements together. The ideas that we shared in this session were shaped by the feedback we had heard in the previous six drop-ins.

Feedback highlights:

- **New homes:** residents had varied views with some positive feedback as well as questions about parking;
- **Existing homes:** people wanted to know what else might be done for homes already on the Abbey;
- **Back greens:** people highlighted how important these spaces are to them;
- **Parking:** this continued to be a big concern for people with different ideas expressed to tackle it.

Building on the findings

This phase of our engagement provided us with invaluable feedback directly from the residents. With the extensive insight that the drop-ins provided, we were able to identify what the challenges were, and start to co-create solutions to tackle these issues and bring long-term and sustainable change to the Abbey.



Listening to local people

Our seventh and last session was our best attended drop-in session overall with around 100 people in attendance. Like the other drop-in sessions, it provided the opportunity to listen to people's views and answer questions.

Opportunity not obligation

March 2020 – September 2020

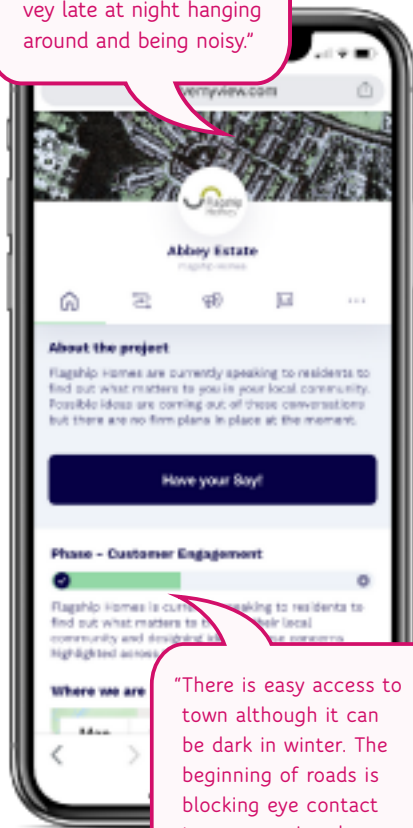
March 2020 saw the first lockdown and we refocused our approach to engagement.

Whilst we couldn't meet in person, we wanted to continue to provide the opportunity for people to share their thoughts with us and build on the dialogue that had developed during the dropping-in phase.

This opportunity came in the form of an online poll and the offer of telephone or virtual 121s, as required. During this phase of engagement, we also wanted to understand the impact that Covid-19 was having within the local community and identify any support we might be able to provide.

What we were completely clear on was that there was no obligation whatsoever for people to engage during this truly unprecedented period; rather, the Flagship team remained available to listen, answer questions, and offer support, where possible.

"Living by an alley way is not that great, we have groups of people very late at night hanging around and being noisy."



Engagement: online poll April 2020

Unable to meet in person, we offered residents the opportunity to share their thoughts via an online poll. 89 people took part in the survey and we gathered almost 400 responses in total to the questions which aimed to gauge people's sentiment towards their local community.

75%

stated anti-social behaviour was the biggest concern of living on the Abbey

57%

highlighted fly-tipping as an issue, making it the second biggest concern

57%

also said they weren't happy with the garages

Opportunity for conversation

Summer 2020

"We are here, we care and we're still listening." This was our message to residents as the lockdown and the challenges of Covid-19 persisted.

We took a light touch approach to engagement, with communications issued via Facebook inviting people to get in touch if they would like a 121 conversation with us. We were available – virtually – to help.

Working with local stakeholders: assessing the impact of Covid-19

Summer 2020

Undoubtedly, the pandemic had an impact on the local community and we wanted to gain an understanding of how residents had been affected. Coupled with this, we were keen to identify what support we could give to those who might have seen their circumstances change within the lockdown period.

We took a qualitative approach to this engagement, focusing on conversations with our own frontline teams, such as Neighbourhood and Housing, before seeking narrative feedback from partners. We carried out 12 virtual conversations with individuals representing councils and other community organisations.

Feedback highlights:

- **Community spirit** continued to be a characteristic of the Abbey, demonstrated significantly during lockdown;
- There was concern about those families who were not the most vulnerable but **who would have been impacted financially** through loss of employment and a rise in bills;
- **Collaboration and continued partnership working** were identified as vital to tackling these challenges.

Supporting the community during the pandemic

We looked for where we could lend a hand to the community. This included donating almost £6,500 to support customers in desperate need of financial provision through the Hopestead Coronavirus Assist Initiative which helped people through the pandemic. In addition, we also made support calls to our most vulnerable tenants to see where we could help.

“The Flagship team remained available to listen, answer questions, and offer support, where possible.”

Engaging again

September 2020 – January 2021

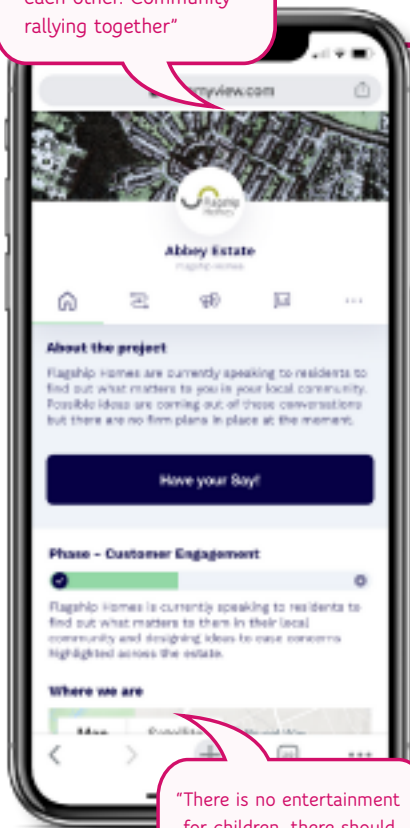
As restrictions eased, we were able to resume our engagement with the community however, as our priority was people's safety, these weren't face to face.

In this phase, we were keen to gain insight from the community on the impact of Covid-19 and build on the feedback that we had gathered from community stakeholders and partners during the summer.

We conducted a survey, giving people the choice of sharing their thoughts online or in writing. Our survey posed questions to gauge what mattered to residents now – and whether their views had changed as a result of Covid-19.

Having experienced such a period of uncertainty and change we wanted to find out what the impact was on the Abbey. Alongside the survey, we continued to offer people 1-2-1 virtual conversations, providing residents with the opportunity to speak to a member of the Flagship team around their concerns and queries.

"Good neighbours. Everyone watching out for each other. Community rallying together"



Engagement: hybrid survey November 2020

A survey was shared to give all residents the opportunity to tell us what mattered to them on the Abbey and whether this had changed since the pandemic. We had 404 people take part in the survey.

Feedback highlights:

- Respondents to the survey felt that the pandemic had had a negative impact on the community;
- Community spirit was highlighted as a positive about the Abbey;
- The number one concern was fly tipping (42% of respondents). The second biggest concern was safety and security (37% of respondents);
- 64% of respondents stated they were not happy about the state of the garages.

Our support for you

January 2021 – May 2021

A new year provided us with the opportunity to reflect on the insight we'd gained to date and set out our upcoming engagement and consultation with residents.

With a new lockdown in place removing the ability to meet face to face we focused our efforts on giving residents comprehensive and direct communications to provide reassurance and highlight our commitment to the Abbey

We produced and distributed a brochure for all residents that gave a summary of the 'story so far', capturing all of the events and surveys we'd carried out since we began our conversations in spring 2019. We also shared with residents a summary of the findings from the survey that had been conducted in November 2020; our approach throughout has been to listen to residents and share what we've heard back to the community.

At the same time, we were very keen to confirm our commitment to the community and we also provided every household with a copy of 'Our Promise to You.' The promise clearly set out what residents could expect from us in the coming months and years, and also provided information on what support we would provide for those in all tenure types. From our many conversations, we knew that residents had some concerns and with the promise, we wanted to allay these, address queries, and assure all residents of our steadfast and long-term commitment to their community.

We are committed to you and to the Abbey – and we're here for the long-term. To demonstrate that, we want to make this promise to you. We want to reassure you that in the next steps, we will support you and provide you with a fair offer.



Your views on the Abbey

January 2021

We sent your views on the Abbey to all residents.

“Since 2019, whether in person, online, or in writing, we’ve been inviting Abbey residents to share their thoughts with us about living on the estate. This engagement has provided us with a solid insight into what matters to local people, and their aspirations for the Abbey.



Our promise to you

Spring 2021

We are committed to the Abbey and we wanted residents to understand what they could expect from us. *Our promise to you* set out what we would do for all residents, for homeowners, and for tenants. We were also conscious that people had questions about what improvements might mean for them and within *Our promise to you*, we aimed to address some frequently asked questions.

We were also aware of the importance of letting residents know what would come next in our engagement with them and within this brochure, we scoped out what the upcoming steps – around consultation – would be. We wanted to give residents some assurance.



The options

May 2021

Based on the extensive feedback that the community had shared with us since 2019, we developed four possible options for the Abbey.

These options had a common purpose of tackling the challenges that local people had identified, but would bring varying degrees of transformational improvements: essentially, the more improvements that were delivered, the more benefits that the community would see. The options reflected the needs and aspirations of Abbey residents and each offered a potential new beginning for the Abbey.



“The options had a common purpose of tackling the challenges that local people had identified, with varying degrees of transformational improvements.

Option 1

Option 1 started to tackle some of the issues that residents had told us about. In this option, the garage courts could be transformed into new, safer spaces with some new homes. There could be better parking, improved lighting, and places for children to play. Some of the garage courts could be linked together to form a new lane - a safer, well-lit route to walk or cycle along. We could also make some small improvements to the streets, such as planting.



2 Housing courts

Improved green spaces outside your homes, with play spaces, seating and grow your own space.

1 Existing street improvements

We can introduce some new trees and planting along existing streets.

3 New lane

A new pedestrian and cycle friendly lane with new that front onto the street. The lane will be well lit, with play areas on your doorstep for children.

Key features;

-  Garage courts transformed helping tackle anti-social behaviour.
-  Improved lighting in housing courts and on existing streets.
-  Some new homes.
-  New small play areas for children.
-  Some improvements to existing streets, such as planting.

Issues remaining:

- Parking is still a problem on a lot of streets.
- Routes to the river and town centre are not improved.
- No improvements to back greens, so flytipping could still be a problem.
- Not possible to build a new park.
- No improvement to community facilities or existing shops.
- Anti-social behaviour could still be a problem.
- Does not improve routes over the railway.

Option 2

In option 2, we would be able to tackle more of the challenges that residents had highlighted with us. Option 2 offered all the benefits of option 1 but would also create a new park - with more things for children to do - next to the community centre. The space outside the shops could also be improved and this option would see a route to the river developed. We could also deliver more improvements to existing streets, helping to solve some of the parking issues and improve lighting. In option 2, we would also be able to replace a small number of homes and build some new ones to give better quality and choice.

1 New park with existing community centre

A new park is created with places to sit, rest, and enjoy. This could include play facilities for children and a small ball court.



2 River Walk

A safer route connecting the new park in the centre of the estate to the river, with trees, planting and space for play



3 Neighbourhood Centre

Improved space outside of shops and community centre, with areas to sit and meet others.



Key features;

-  Garage courts transformed tackling anti-social behaviour and creating new attractive spaces.
-  Improved lighting in housing courts and on existing streets.
-  Some new homes.
-  New small play areas for children.
-  New park in the centre of the estate.
-  Safer connection to the river.
-  Some more improvements to existing streets, such as planting and better parking.

Issues remaining:

- Parking is still a problem on some streets.
- Routes to the town centre are not included.
- No improvement to community facilities or existing shops.
- Limited improvements to back greens so flytipping issues could remain.
- Does not improve routes over the railway.

Option 3

We built on the benefits of options 1 and 2 with option 3 which, by replacing some more of the homes, would bring further facilities for the community. This would include a new neighbourhood heart with a larger park, a ball court, a new community centre, and new shops. In addition, in this option, a new pedestrian connection linking the Abbey towards the town centre could be created to provide a safer way for residents to walk to town. In option 3, we could also build a variety of types of new homes to meet local housing need and demand.



1 Neighbourhood Park

A new park is created with places to sit, rest, and enjoy. This could include a ball court, play areas, pond, swales (a type of channel, that helps to sustainably manage surface water run-off during heavy periods of rainfall - they can have plants and ecology), nature trails and new tree planting.

2 Neighbourhood Centre with new community centre

A new community centre is located at the heart of the Abbey alongside spaces for new shops and new homes. Exeter Way will be improved with wide footpaths and spill out spaces.

3 Potters Path

A new east to west route that connects the Abbey estate to the town centre. This will be green, well lit, with places to sit and play along it.

Key features;

-  Garage courts transformed tackling anti-social behaviour and creating new attractive spaces.
-  Improved lighting across the estate.
-  New homes of various types.
-  A variety of new play facilities for children.
-  Some more improvements to existing streets, such as planting and better parking.
-  Safer, direct route between the neighbourhood centre, park and river.
-  New larger park.
-  Improved connections to the town centre along Potters Path.
-  A new community centre.
-  A wider choice of shops.
-  Improvements to most back greens helping to tackle flytipping and creating spaces to enjoy.

Issues remaining:

- Parking is still a problem on some streets.
- Does not improve routes over the railway.
- The new park may not provide everything that you would like to see.

Option 4

Option 4 would include all the benefits of options 1, 2 and 3 and would also see the development of a multi-use games area, adventure playground, outdoor gym, and nature trails in the new park. This option would also see improvements to the riverside so this space could be used for play, leisure, and recreation. There would be improvements to lighting, parking, and streets across the whole neighbourhood. In this option, there would be more homes replaced and new ones built to meet local housing need and demand. This option would tackle many more of the issues that residents had told us about.



1 Neighbourhood Centre and park

A new park is created with places to sit, rest, and enjoy. This could include a multi-use games area, adventure play area, junior play area, pond, swales, nature trails, new trees and planting, lawns and an outdoor gym.

2 Riverside

Improvements to the area by the river so this space can be better used for play, leisure, and recreation.

3 Lighting and streets

New and improved lighting on new and existing streets, making the estate a safer place to walk around in the day and at night.

Key features;

-  Garage courts transformed tackling anti-social behaviour and creating new attractive spaces.
-  Improved lighting across the estate.
-  A choice of new homes.
-  Lots of new play facilities for children of all ages.
-  High level improvements to all existing streets.
-  Safer, direct routes between the neighbourhood centre, park and river.
-  New larger park with a wide range of activities for people of all ages.
-  Improved routes to the town centre along Potters Path and towards the railway.
-  A new community centre.
-  A wider choice of shops.
-  Improvements to all back greens helping to tackle issues of flytipping and create spaces to enjoy.
-  Improvements outside the school, to create a safer, attractive environment for drop off and collection.

Consultation on the Abbey

June 2021 - December 2021

Built around the proposed options, we developed and delivered a comprehensive four-stage consultation process.

We wanted to take an inclusive approach to our engagement and as well as sending a detailed brochure to every resident at each step of the consultation, we also hosted a number of drop-in sessions in the neighbourhood centre. People had choice when it came to giving feedback and they could do so online via an independent, third-party platform, or for those who preferred to complete the survey in writing, we also made hard copy surveys available. In addition, we continued to offer 121 conversations – in person or virtually – for anyone who wanted to share their concerns and queries with us. We were committed to ensuring that people felt able to have their say in a meaningful way, whatever their circumstances. As a result, 2,095 surveys were completed and we had many more conversations with residents.

Being responsive was key in our consultation approach; we listened to feedback at each step and adapted our options and ideas accordingly. This meant that, with the community, we could co-create a way forward.



Our consultation process was built based on the conversations we had whilst engaging with the community. We wanted to better understand which improvements people liked within the four options to help us shape a design for the Abbey which truly encapsulates what people want.

Consultation step 1 June 2021

During our first step of consultation, we presented all four options for the Abbey. Each option incorporated different solution ideas which would help to improve the Abbey based on the feedback we'd received already.

In this step, our focus was to listen and understand what people liked and didn't like about each option. We heard from 447 people.

We asked which ideas were most important to people. Residents told us that improved facilities for young people, better parking across the Abbey and better lighting were most important to them.

In addition, residents liked the idea of a new park, and wanted to see an adventure playground, trees, and planting within this.

As well as feedback, residents raised several concerns across all the options. These included concerns around parking, what would happen to existing streets, and what would happen to the shops. In response, we developed these ideas in more detail, to present in step two.

Finally, we asked residents to rank each option in order of preference. They told us that they liked option 2 least. We understood their views about why and removed this option in the subsequent step of consultation.

From this step, it was clear that there was a desire for improvements across the Abbey.



In step 1, we asked residents to rank each option in order of preference:

- 1 Option 4
- 2 Option 1
- 3 Option 3
- 4 Option 2

Consultation step 2

July-August 2021

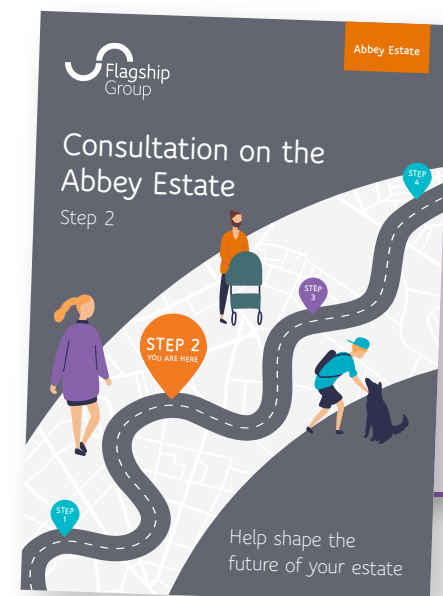
In this step, we heard from 588 people. Our aim was to understand more about the solution ideas that people said they liked, the options, and to investigate other solutions too.

Building on concerns raised in step one around parking, we presented residents with some ideas of how we could improve it. Residents felt that these parking ideas could have a positive impact on the estate; only 28% of people said that they believed we couldn't improve the current parking situation. In addition, residents told us that one of the things that mattered most to them outside their home was that they had a parking space which was close to their home.

Focusing on the solution idea of 'The Lane', which would create better connections across the Abbey, we found that only 21% of people didn't like the idea. When looking into why this was the case, concerns were raised around e-scooters and motorbikes using the lane in the future.

It was clear that opportunities for play and leisure were important – people said they wanted play areas for young children, areas for more wildlife and play areas for older children. With the idea of a neighbourhood park, we could meet those needs. Only 20% of people said that the new park wasn't a priority for the future. This demonstrated how important it was to include the new park in the final design, and to consider green spaces further.

Finally, following the feedback from the last consultation, we removed option 2. We then asked residents to rank the options from most to least preferred again. Option 3 was the least preferred out of the three, having been only favoured by 21% of people. Option 1 was most favoured with 42% of people voting it as their most preferred. And, finally, option 4 was followed closely with 35% of people voting it their second most preferred out of the three.



“Our aim was to understand more about the solution ideas that people said they liked, the options, and to investigate other solutions too”

Consultation step 3

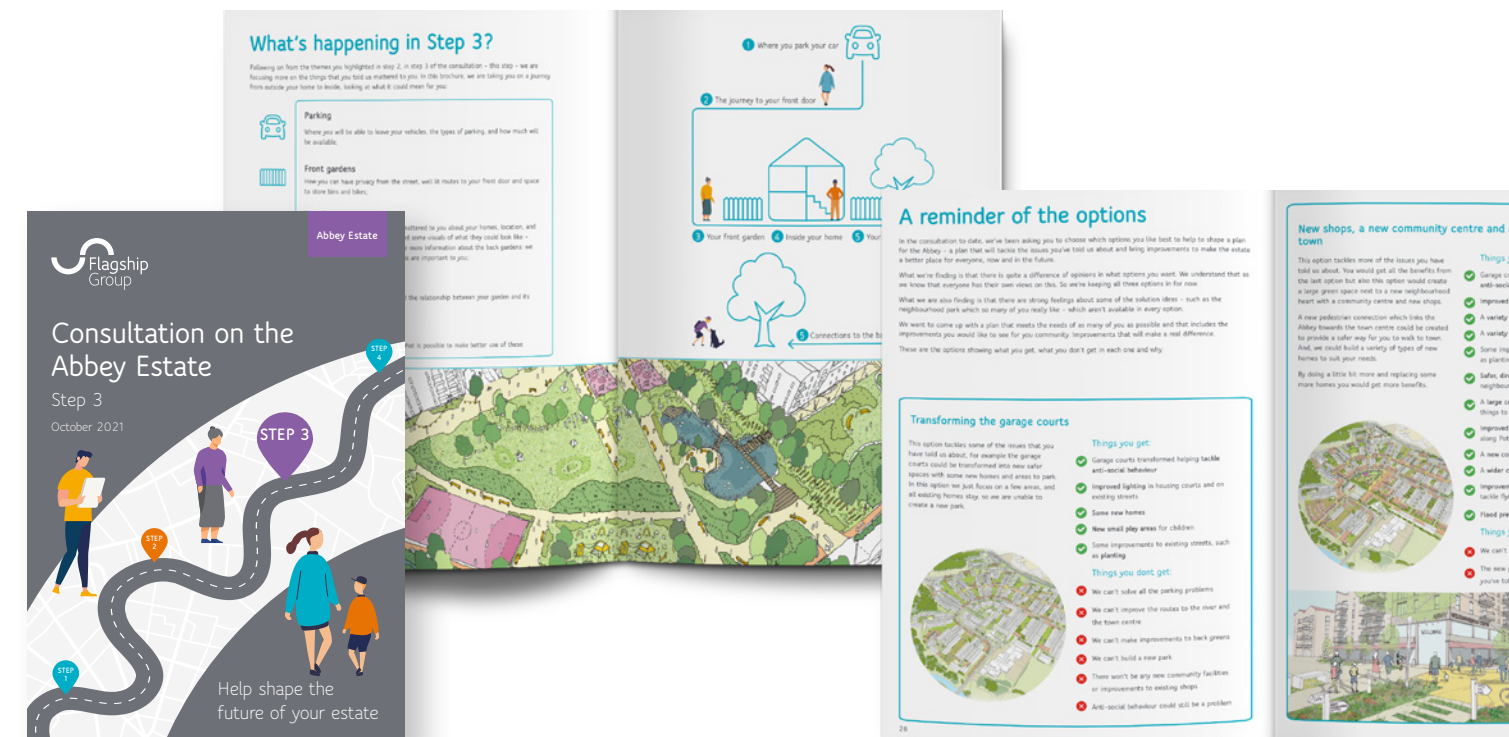
October 2021

In this step, we heard from 556 people. Throughout consultation steps so far, when asked about the options, we found a difference of opinion between those who wanted either wholesale change or little change. However, when splitting the options into ideas, we found the majority of people liked each of these. Therefore, in order to gain further clarity around what improvements residents wanted to see, our priority in this step was to gain a further depth of insight around the solution ideas and how they form the options separately.

Feedback on the ideas:

- As we found in the previous stages, **60% of people** said they were either **neutral** or in **favour of the idea of the new lane**
- Only **22% of people** said they felt **negatively** about the idea of the '**river walk**' which would allow people to have greater access to the river, something we knew mattered to people
- **Most people were in favour of transforming the garages**, with only **36%** of people voting negatively for this idea.
- Again, people were still **positive about the Neighbourhood Heart and Potters Path**; **29%** of people voted negatively towards the new park and **19%** voted negatively for Potters Path.

Based on responses we found that options 1 and 4 were still generally most favoured by respondents which is why we removed option 3.



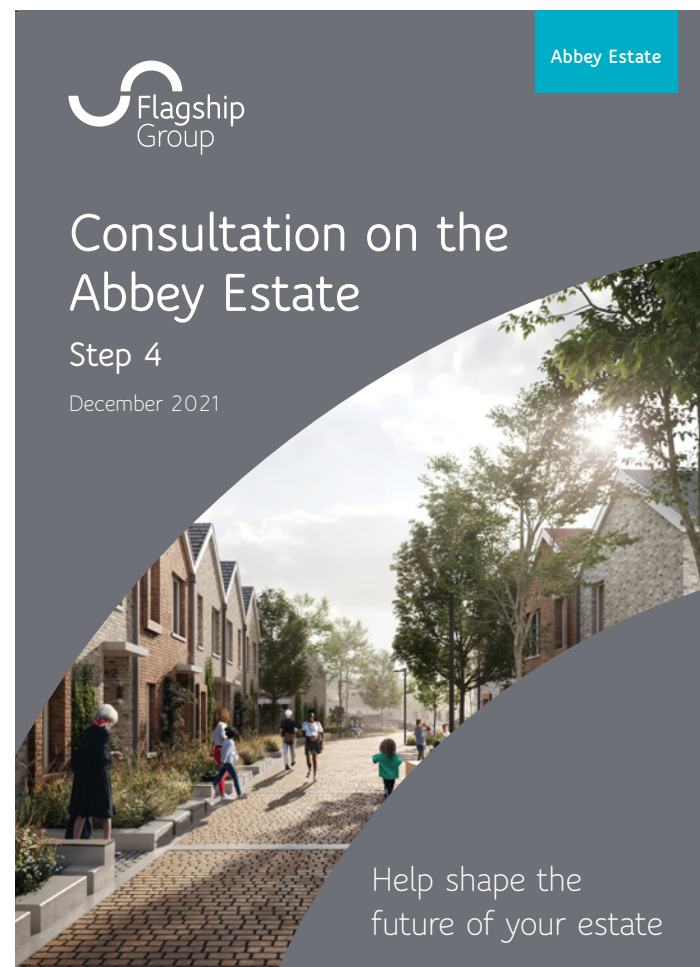
Consultation step 4

December 2021

In this step, we heard from 498 people. Now we had a better understanding of which ideas people wanted to see or didn't like, we wanted to compare the two remaining options, and the ideas within them. This would help us to create a design that truly encapsulates what people wanted.

We found that when considering the options, the majority of people were happy with both option 1 and option 4, and less than 25% of respondents didn't like either of them. We wanted to further understand what people liked and didn't like about each option.

By focusing on the ideas, rather than the options, during the consultation we were able to understand resident's priorities in terms of changes. We found that when looking at each of the ideas in turn, on average 70% of people were in favour for all of the ideas. However, we also know that there were parts of the options that people didn't like as much.



“Now we had a better understanding of which ideas people wanted to see or didn't like, we wanted to compare the two remaining options, and the ideas within them. This would help us to create a design that truly encapsulates what people wanted.”

What people liked:

- 74% of people liked the idea of making improvements to the streets with new trees and planting from option 1 and option 4
- 71% of people said they liked the idea of the garage courts being transformed into new safer spaces with new homes in both option 1 and option 4
- 66% of people said they liked the ideas surrounding the river from option 1, and 77% said they liked the improvements suggested surrounding the river in option 4
- On average, 69% of people said that they liked the idea of improvements being made to the back greens in both options
- 75% of people said they liked the idea of the new neighbourhood centre suggested in option 4

What people didn't like:

- There were concerns surrounding parking. Residents wanted to be reassured that if the garage courts were to be removed, that additional parking would be provided elsewhere
- Residents raised concerns surrounding anti-social behaviour and how these ideas may impact on the issue
- Some residents didn't like the density of development suggested by the river in option 4 and preferred the density suggested in option 1
- Some residents were also concerned about what would happen if their home was affected and wanted better understanding of this.

This final step in consultation enabled us to have a clear understanding of what residents would like to see. It was clear that there were aspects of each option that people liked and didn't like, and that in order for us to achieve a design which would provide all residents with what they want, we would need to amalgamate the two options and create a new design.



The Abbey Story

As part of our step 4 consultation, we produced a film that featured Abbey residents talking about their community. The film captured people's thoughts, memories, and hopes for the Abbey, as well as their concerns. The purpose of the film was to drive involvement in the final step of the consultation process – we wanted all residents to tell us their thoughts and our message was clear: the time is now.

Developing a new and improved design for the Abbey based on feedback

Overall our consultation has highlighted that there was a mandate for change on the Abbey with residents showing a desire for improvements.

By listening to over 2,000 responses, we know that the new design for the Abbey must include:

- **Better transport links** via The Lane
- **A new Neighbourhood Heart** which includes a new park and community centre
- **Better connections to the town centre** along Potters Path, as well as **better connections to the river** and the forest
- **Improved green spaces** within the back greens
- **Improvements to street scenes**, which include better parking and lighting across the Abbey

The feedback from this stage will help us to develop a design which is truly shaped by the community.



Engaging with stakeholders

September 2019 - present day

Alongside our engagement with residents, we have also been committed to engaging stakeholders in our work on the Abbey

We know that collaboration is key to delivering meaningful and sustainable improvements for the area, and we were keen from the start to involve stakeholders, in alignment with our community engagement approach.

This involvement has taken different forms and one of the main conduits for engaging stakeholders has been partner and community conversations. We have held a number of these events over the last three years, online and in person, to bring partners – people who are involved in the project – and stakeholders together to share updates, feedback and ideas. These conversations have enabled us to bring together a wealth of expertise, knowledge, and support for the benefit of the Abbey.

We were particularly keen to tap into that expertise during the first lockdown when we carried out virtual conversations with individual partners and stakeholders. Undoubtedly the pandemic had had an impact on the local community and we wanted to gain an understanding of how residents had been affected. The conversations allowed us to tap into insight from stakeholders, and identify any potential support we could provide.

We have also strived to keep elected representatives informed and involved in the work that we have been doing. We have met with the local MP on a recent occasion, and we have provided regular letters and updates to Ms Truss' office. We have also kept local councillors informed through meetings – for example, we have met with Thetford Town Council and attended meetings of the Greater Thetford Partnership. Our engagement with the Greater Thetford Partnership has led to our involvement with the partnership and the town council in a shared project to improve an area around the river on the Abbey.

We have maintained a flow of targeted communications with all of our partners and stakeholders, providing email updates, letters, and brochures around key milestones. And, we have also worked with stakeholders to share resident communications via their channels, allowing our key messages to reach the community in diverse ways.

We have, and continue, to meet with stakeholders on a 121 basis, to share insight and to proactively seek any ways we can collaborate for the benefit of the Abbey. By engaging with stakeholders, we are taking a joined-up approach, sharing knowledge and expertise, and identifying opportunities to work together for the benefit of the community.

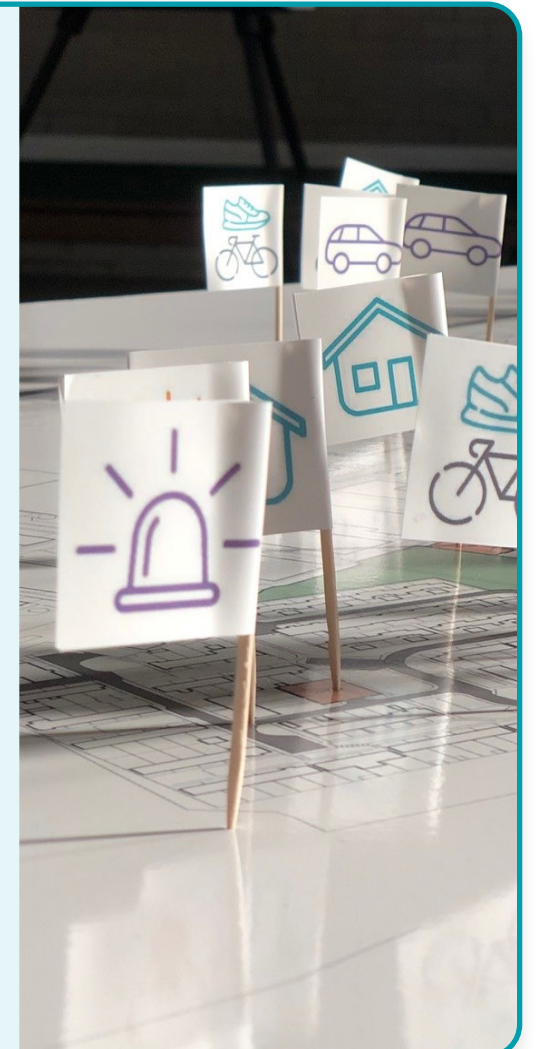
“We know that collaboration is key to delivering meaningful and sustainable improvements for the area.”

Partner and community conversations

The partner and community conversations are events which aim to seek feedback and keep attendees informed of our work on the Abbey.

Attended by a range of partners and stakeholders, including charitable organisations and local authority officers, the events see an update from Flagship followed by interactive discussion. The themes of these discussions are aligned with those of our community engagement, for example, thoughts have been invited on streets and parking, new homes, and play and open space. We also use the conversations to identify any opportunities to work together.

The partner and community conversations allow us to take a truly collaborative approach to our work on the Abbey; by meeting with stakeholders in the conversations, we are able to gain understanding, get feedback, and look for ways to deliver more for the community.



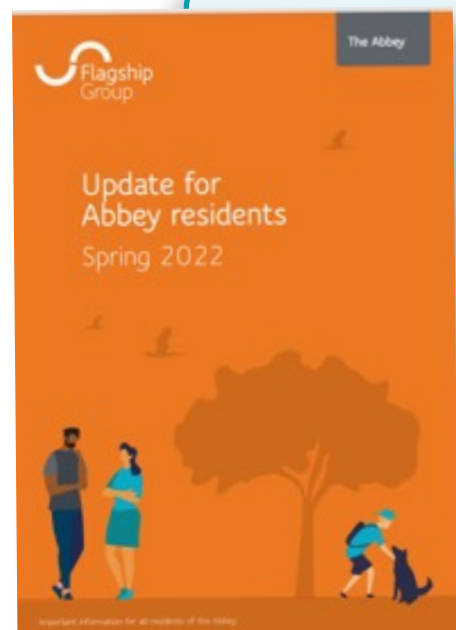
Commitment and clarity

January 2022 - November 2022

With the comprehensive consultation now complete, our focus moved onto developing a design for the Abbey, informed by the public feedback and the feasibility studies which we had been carrying out.

This period of engagement was about commitment and clarity: underlining our continued and long-term commitment to the Abbey and being clear about what's happening now, and what's coming next. We also held further engagement sessions to shape the detail of the design, and we hosted weekly surgeries in the neighbourhood centre during the summer.

We have built a strong dialogue with the community since 2019 and it was vital that we continued to keep residents informed and involved as we worked towards the public exhibition.

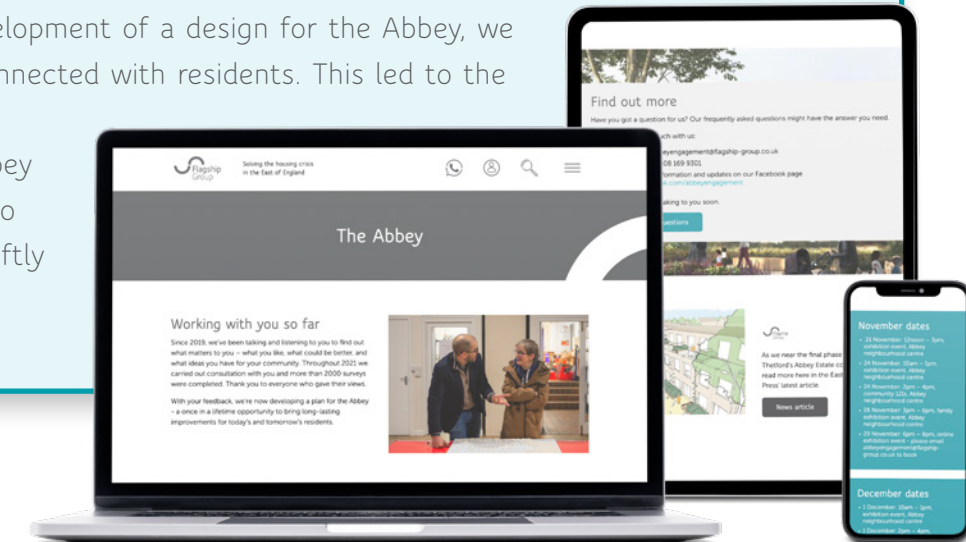


Update for Abbey residents Spring 2022

In the spring, we wrote to all residents to provide them with an update. This included a summary of the findings from the consultation process, as well as an overview of the feasibility work we were carrying out around the Abbey. As with the previous brochures, the update included a letter from Flagship's Chief Executive David McQuade, emphasising Flagship's commitment to the Abbey. The brochure also included information about what local people could expect next.

A new website Spring 2022

As the team worked on the development of a design for the Abbey, we were keen to ensure we kept connected with residents. This led to the development of a dedicated web portal which, along with our Abbey Facebook page, would allow us to reach residents with updates swiftly and directly



“It is vital that we continued to keep residents informed and involved as we worked towards the public exhibition

A design for the Abbey Summer 2022

We wrote to all residents to update them on our progress in developing a design for the Abbey. Informed by resident feedback and the findings of our feasibility work, the design will bring improvements to existing streets and green spaces, as well as new facilities in the heart of the community, and a new park.

But, the design was not finalised and we invited residents to get involved and share their thoughts with us at engagement sessions in the coming months.



This is a design for the Abbey. It's been shaped with the feedback you've given us since we began speaking to you in 2019. Over the next few pages, we'll explain in a little more detail what is included in this design.

This design isn't final. We're continuing to work with you to develop the design before a public exhibition by the end of this year.

KEY:

- 1 The existing streets will have better organised parking, and new trees and planting. We're considering what can be done to improve existing homes too.
- 2 You'll have a new neighbourhood heart, including a new community centre.
- 3 There will be lots of opportunity to improve the back green spaces. What we will do is create back green spaces that meet the needs of your community.
- 4 The design includes the park - this is why we have moved the flats to the opposite side of the road.
- 5 The lane is included and runs to Durham Way, linking into the existing footpaths near the river.
- 6 Because of your feedback on the previous options, this design keeps more of the existing homes near the riverside whilst still making sure there are clear, improved routes towards the river.
- 7 We're proposing to traffic calm Canterbury Way making it safer to walk, cycle and cross the road. Improved bus stops will have places to sit and wait.
- 8 We've included the connection to town via Potters Path - we're identifying spaces for replacement bungalows.

The Abbey

Our Promise and Support for Abbey Residents

Who is this booklet for?

- Do you live on the Abbey?
- Do you own a home on the estate?

Then, this is for you!

Whether you are a homeowner, a Shared Homes tenant, a private tenant, or a landlord, there is important information in this booklet for you.

Please take a moment to have a look through this document and read it carefully.

If you have any questions, do drop us a line abbeyengagement@flagship-group.co.uk or give us a call 0808 169 9301.

Important information for all residents of the Abbey

Our Promise and Support for You

Summer 2022

We are very aware of the importance of providing assurances to the community and addressing concerns that residents may have. In summer 2022, along with a design for the Abbey, we also sent out the Abbey promise and support for you to every home. The brochure detailed once again our Abbey promise - the commitments that we have made to local people - and explained in detail what these would mean for homeowners, tenants, and the community as whole. We also took the opportunity to address questions that had emerged during our conversations and consultation, providing clear and open information.

Together with you, we want to make a difference for the Abbey

Engagement sessions

July and August 2022

With the design still a work in progress, we asked the community to help us to shape the detail around two key themes: the neighbourhood heart and play and open space. We wrote to all residents to invite them to join us at these sessions which were slightly different from what we had run before as our focus was getting out and about in the community. The conversations we had during these sessions allowed us to understand more about what facilities and resources people would like to see in their community and would feed into the final design.

A committed presence in the community

July and August 2022

We knew that residents may have questions and concerns they would like to raise with us and throughout the summer, a member of the Flagship team was based in the neighbourhood centre on a weekly basis. This allowed anyone to drop in and talk to us and find out more about the design and the next steps. Our presence in the community underlined our commitment to the Abbey

The Abbey

Streets and Parking

October 2022

Throughout our conversations and in the feedback residents have shared with us, it became clear that parking is a priority. During the consultation, the majority of respondents told us that they would like to see parking improved on their streets.

As it's such a priority for the community, in October we wrote to all residents to set out what they could expect around parking provision. We also shared with residents the types of parking that will be available on the Abbey in future, providing information and assurances about this important subject.

Ideas and solutions to improve parking in your community

Have any questions?
You can arrange a 121 conversation any time by calling 0808 169 9301 or emailing AbbeyEngagement@Flagship-Group.co.uk

Public Exhibition

November 2022
– December 2022

The Public Exhibition was a key milestone for the Abbey.

The Public Exhibition allowed us to share the final design with the community – a design which has been shaped by resident feedback and reflects residents’ hopes and aspirations for the Abbey. The exhibition offered an opportunity for local people to ask questions about the design, and better understand how this could translate into reality.

Building on our engagement to date in the community, the exhibition consisted of 12 events, which were open to the public, over a three-week-period. When designing the exhibition, we wanted to ensure that the events were inclusive for all which is why we held an online event, multiple drop-in sessions, 1-2-1 surgeries, an evening event, as well as a family event on the weekend.

Alongside this, we held an event in the town centre to invite the wider community of Thetford to come along and find out more. During the last week of the Public Exhibition, all residents also received a brochure detailing the design, and 121 conversations were available as required. We also carried out engagement with stakeholders and partners.

We saw significant engagement from the local community and were able to have meaningful conversations with residents throughout the exhibition.



Following the Public Exhibition, and before submission of the outline planning application, we wanted to give residents some reassurance and clarity surrounding their home. To do this, we sent a letter giving specific details about their home and how it may be affected if the outline planning application was approved. Alongside this, we addressed some concerns and rumours we’d heard during the Public Exhibition surrounding topics such as making people homeless, moving fees, and more. As part of the letter, residents were also invited to contact us to chat through this in more detail with the hope that we’re able to answer any remaining questions they may have had. You can find a copy of each letter within Appendix A.



Offering further clarity to the community

December 2022
- Present

After further conversations with the Local Authority, we sought to offer further clarity to the community of the Abbey.

Regeneration bus tours

Working with our Architects, Levitt Bernstein, we offered residents and local councillors the opportunity to visit completed regeneration schemes in London. Although those schemes won't mirror exactly what we're looking to create on the Abbey, the aim was to give those attending an insight into what has happened elsewhere, speak to those who have been through the process themselves and to generate excitement of what could happen at the Abbey. During the bus tour we visited a total of four different schemes and heard from both local residents and scheme managers about their experiences.

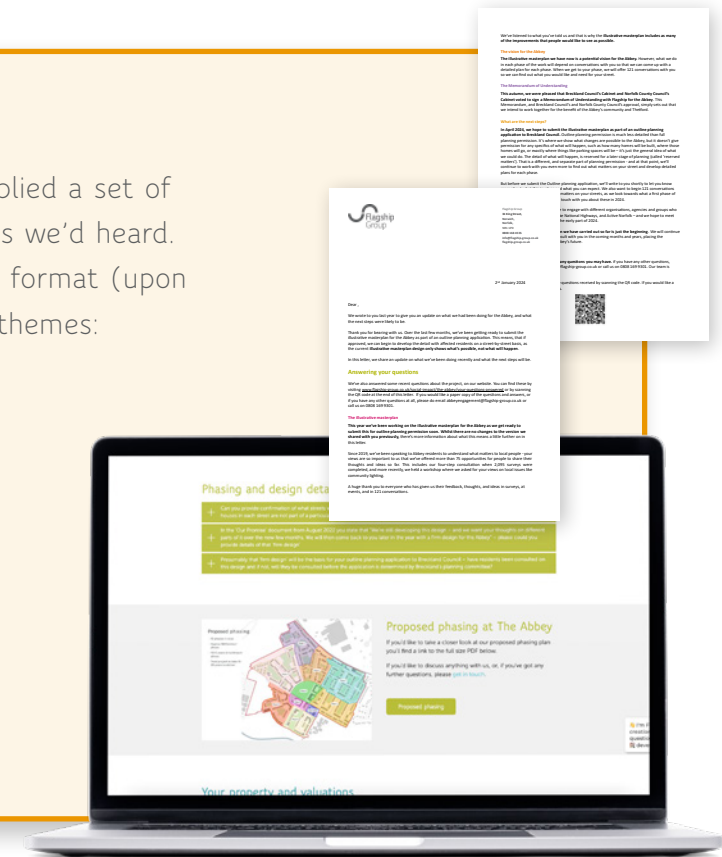


Your questions, answered

To provide further clarity to the community, we supplied a set of detailed answers, in response to a number of queries we'd heard. These were available both online as well as in paper format (upon request). The answers focused on a number of key themes:

- Phasing and design details,
- Property and valuations,
- Financials and compensation,
- Support and community,
- Parking and the outdoors
- Abbey regeneration specific.

To highlight these answers, we sent a letter to all residents on the Abbey directing them to [our dedicated website page](#)



Regular drop-in surgeries at the Abbey Neighbourhood Centre

At the beginning of 2024, we committed to a regular presence on the Abbey, holding drop-in sessions at the Abbey Neighbourhood Centre. These sessions allowed further clarity, with the opportunity for discussions around specific queries. We attended the centre between 2-5pm on Tuesday 6th, 13th, 20th of Feb and the 5th and 19th March, in which we had 12 attendees in total.

A meeting with Lizz Truss

Lizz Truss MP invited residents of the Abbey to a round-table session on 8 March 2024. The aim of the session was to gather further clarity around questions asked by the community. We had the opportunity to be a part of this session by answering questions that were raised. All residents were invited to attend the session and a total of fourteen people came along. Key themes from the discussion included;

- Parking is a predominant issue with residents wanting to park close to their homes
- Residents who attended were in favour of keeping garages at the front of their homes
- Further clarity was sought regarding the impact to Landlords
- Further clarity was sought regarding the planning process and when work will happen

Planning session

Based on conversations with the Local Authority and in reaction to themes brought out of the meeting held by Liz Truss, we held a session on the 19 March which aimed to clarify questions regarding the planning process.

Accompanied by our architects and planning consultants, Bidwells, staff were on hand to discuss the outline nature of the application: what it means to create an illustrative masterplan and the additional information needed for a reserved matters application.

Residents were invited by letter and to aid conversations at the session, were given a guide to planning.

The guide focussed on what is meant by planning, the definition of outline planning and reserved matters as well as what happens when the application is submitted. The guide also discussed the cycle that would be undertaken for each phase of the Abbey as well as showing in more detail what the indicative phases could look like.

30 residents took the opportunity to have their questions answered.



'Our offer to you' session

The Promise given to all Abbey residents sets out what Flagship will do to support those in the process, whether they are a homeowner, Samphire Homes tenant, private tenant or Landlord.

We appreciate that as part of any regeneration, residents will want to know what any work would mean for them and their home. That's why on the 26 March we held 'Our offer to you' session, with the Team on hand to answer any questions, outlining what residents can expect from us throughout the process.

For those 23 residents who attended, we could not share the details of the work, but we could provide information of what we could offer them.

Our commitment to the community

It's important to note that this is not the end of our engagement with residents. We will continue to listen to local people and offer opportunities for the community to shape the detail of the design in the month and years to come.

We will ensure that people are informed with regular updates throughout the process so that they can be assured of our commitment to them and their community. We want to continue our approach that we've had for the last three years, whereby we continue to work with residents to co-create a different future for the Abbey. One that not only reflects people's aspirations now but also meets the changing needs of future generations to come.



abbeyengagement@flagship-group.co.uk

flagship-group.co.uk/the-abbey

Engaging Accessibly

We are committed to accessible engagement, making sure that it is easy for everyone to have their say, and offering diverse opportunities for involvement.

This has included through how we communicate, and we have made a tangible commitment to use Plain English within our resident engagement. We also offer translation on request across all our communications, seeking to mitigate language barriers to engagement.

We have made our communications available in different formats and across varied platforms, including brochures and letters sent directly to residents, information provided at engagement events, and online updates on our dedicated web page and Facebook page. We want to ensure that everyone has access to the information that they need to play an active and meaningful role in the engagement.

We recognise that people have different communication preferences and we have responded by inviting and capturing feedback in multiple formats. This has included through online and offline surveys, as well as offering people the opportunity to share their thoughts via feedback boards at drop-in sessions, collecting information from 121 conversations, and collating views via a dedicated email address and in writing. Our surveys have also provided valuable demographic insight, helping to ensure we are reaching and connecting with the community widely.

We also have, and continue to, diversify our opportunities for engagement, hosting sessions on different days and times within the week and at weekends. We have committed to organising virtual, telephone, and in person 121 conversations at different times to suit the needs of local people, with our team available to listen, answer questions, and address concerns as required by local people.