

Farnworth Long Term Plan Initial Engagement Report

Prepared by PLACED
June 2024



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Overview

The Farnworth Long Term Plan will see £20m invested in the town, spread over the next 10 years. This will enable the delivery of projects that address key issues facing the residents and businesses of the town. The Farnworth Town Board is being established to ensure local people can shape the plan and they have invited people to share challenges, opportunities, and ideas for the changes. The Farnworth Town Board want to understand what people think the vision should be for the town in 10 years.

PLACED (Place Education CIC) supported in this process, leading public engagement activities for the Farnworth Long Term Plan. There have been meetings and workshops with key local individuals, organisations and groups, pop-up engagement events where residents could share their views, and an interactive website. These public engagement activities will help to shape the way the investment is spent, ensuring it has the greatest impact possible on the town, shape the vision, and decide where funding should be invested.

PLACED's public engagement for the Farnworth Long Term Plan took place during April and May 2024 and included the following:

Online Engagement

- Thursday 9th May–Sunday 2nd June 2024, Farnworth Long Term Plan Engagement Website, www.placed-engagement.org.uk/farnworth, (1429 number of visits, 91 comments, and 28 survey responses)

Stakeholder Workshops

- Friday 26th April 2024, 1.00pm–4.30pm, New Bury UCAN Centre (25 attendees)
- Monday 20th May 2024, 10.00am–12.00pm, Farnworth Social Circle Cricket Club (28 attendees)

Pop-up Events

- Monday 20th May 2024, 12.30pm–3.00pm, New Bury UCAN Centre (24 attendees)
- Monday 20th May 2024, 4.00pm–6.30pm, Farnworth Start Well and Young People's Centre (22 attendees)
- Saturday 1st June 2024, 1.00pm–3.00pm, The Well (15 attendees)

This is the beginning of a series of consultations throughout the lifetime of the Long Term Plan. This report will shape the themes and priorities identified for investment.



Summary of Findings

Response to the engagement delivered was, on the whole, positive, with local people and participants keen to see both capital and revenue projects in Farnworth that build upon the town's existing assets such as its green spaces, leisure facilities and community organisations.

The following report provides an overview of the public engagement activities delivered by PLACED, drawing from both the qualitative and quantitative data gathered.

The key outcomes of the engagement delivered include:

Youth Provision and Antisocial Behaviour

Residents and participants reported a significant lack of youth provision in Farnworth, with young people having little to do and nowhere to go. Those we spoke to suggested this was encouraging antisocial behaviour, such as off-road biking and loitering. It was proposed that updated youth facilities, sporting activities, and access to role models and youth workers could address these issues.

Community Facilities and Services

Participants expressed a strong desire to build upon and enhance existing community facilities and services in Farnworth. They suggested that existing spaces, such as The Well and New Bury Learning Centre, could be expanded and redeveloped and that new facilities, like a community hub, health centre, and youth centres, could be established.

Safe and Welcoming Environment

Those we spoke to emphasised the importance of creating a safe, clean, and welcoming environment in Farnworth. They reported issues with drug dealing, antisocial behaviour, poor traffic safety, litter and fly-tipping. Suggestions included increasing policing, installing CCTV and lighting, and providing more litter bins.

Green Spaces and Sporting Facilities

Many of our participants highlighted the need to invest in and upgrade Farnworth's parks and green spaces. They suggested that parks like Farnworth Central Park and Moses Gate Park could be improved with better seating, flower beds, sports facilities, and play equipment. It was also proposed that the town's existing sporting facilities could be improved e.g. Harper Green.

Town Centre Regeneration

Those we engaged both in-person and online expressed concerns about the current state of Farnworth's town centre, reporting a run-down looking high-street, poor-quality retail and mix of businesses. They suggested that efforts should be made to attract a wider range of businesses, including big-name retailers, independent traders, and artisanal shops.

Lack of Essential Health Services

Residents at pop-up events showed a strong desire to see a health care centre in Farnworth. They expressed the need for better GP services in the area. Some of our participants suggested that there are too many takeaways and that these contribute to various health issues among residents.

Engagement Overview

PLACED delivered their public engagement activities for the Farnworth Long Term Plan during April and May 2024. Pop-up events were supported by staff from Bolton Council. Engagement activities were promoted online on Bolton Council and PLACED social media channels. Direct emails were also sent to local groups and individuals by Bolton Council.

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In total, we have engaged with approximately 160 people through stakeholder workshops, online engagement and pop-up events. This number indicates the amount of people that we engaged in substantial conversation or who properly participated in the activities delivered. It does not include every person who viewed our engagement materials in-person or online, or who we were only able to engage in shorter, fleeting conversations. In the context of this report, 'engagement' is defined as meaningful, quality conversation and participation.

The people who attended our in-person engagement events in Farnworth included local people, Bolton Council officers and councillors, community groups, local organisations, and business owners. The members of the public, we spoke to included adults, older people, people with disabilities, underrepresented and minority groups, and people from different ethnic backgrounds.



Findings from the stakeholder workshops

The following are the key themes and comments received from the community engagement. It is important to note that this represents the views of only those who participated.

Stakeholder Workshop 1

On Friday 26th April 2024, we delivered a workshop for key individuals, organisations and community groups at New Bury UCAN Centre.

The purpose of this first workshop was to inform key participants about the process of producing a long term plan for Farnworth; discuss where the town should aim to be in 10 years; and start to think collectively about what projects could be brought forward to deliver on this ambition.

Activity 1: Farnworth Today

At the start of the workshop, participants were asked 'What makes Farnworth Special?' Each participant was given a piece of paper and asked to write down key words or draw images that summarise what they feel is special or unique about Farnworth.



Figure 1: Responses to the question 'what makes Farnworth special?' Size of words indicates frequency.

Resident Community

Participants highlighted the resident community of Farnworth, describing them as friendly and as having an established culture of supporting one another. It was also noted that there are many residents who dedicate their time to community groups and volunteering. The proactive and determined character of residents was celebrated. Farnworth residents are people that proud of where they come from, who are willing to make things happen and offer their time.

Identity and Place

It was emphasised that Farnworth has a strong identity and sense of place with one participant summing this up with the phrase “Farnworth not Bolton”. Farnworth is felt to be a place that residents are proud of with multiple generations of families living in the area.

Assets

Many of the town’s assets were mentioned including its industrial history and heritage offer, business community and host of large employers, green spaces, new homes, community organisations / groups, and volunteer sector.

Connections

Although it was felt that transport connections could be improved, the town’s proximity to Bolton, Salford and Wigan as well as major cities like Manchester was considered to a key strength.

Green Spaces

Participants also frequently mentioned the town’s green spaces including Moses gates, Farnworth Park and Willow Hey as well as the various pocket parks, play areas and allotment spaces.

Activity 2: Mapping Challenges

In their groups, participants identified key geographical and social challenges on a map of Farnworth. We also asked them to identify key challenges that are less location specific and are town wide. The following summarises the challenges.

- Location Specific Concerns

Rock Hall / Moses Gate Country Park:

Participants reported that these assets require investment. Additionally, anti-social behaviour issues were highlighted.

Farnworth Town Centre: Attendees raised concerns regarding anti-social behaviour within the town centre.

Farnworth Park: It was suggested that the lack of lighting in Farnworth Park discourages residents from visiting after dark.

Kearsley Roundabout: Participants commented that traffic congestion is heavy due to the volume of vehicles and the lack of adequate signals and markings. Further, concerns were noted that traffic is likely to increase in this area due to new housing developments.

Farnworth Library: Concerns were raised that the library’s location would be disconnected from the Farnworth Green development and other new activities in the area.

Farnworth / Moses Gate Train Stations:

Participants reported that train services at these stations are infrequent, with only one train per hour.

Gladstone Road: It was suggested that recent road changes on Gladstone Road have contributed to traffic issues.

Highfield: Participants highlighted the lack of community activities and spaces in the Highfield area. Furthermore, shoplifting issues in the Highfield Precinct (retail area) were cited as deterrents for residents to visit.

New Bury: Concerns were raised about the use of bikes and e-bikes for drug dealing in this area.

The Well: One group suggested that there is a demonstrable need for The Well to expand due to high staff numbers.

Harper Green: Participants advocated for the restoration and reuse of the sports facility at Harper Green.

Ageing Well Centre: There was a desire expressed for the growth of the Ageing Well Centre, contingent upon staffing, funding capacity, and maintenance considerations.

Royal Bolton Hospital (RBH): The lack of parking for visitors at the Royal Bolton Hospital was highlighted, with suggestions for the construction of a multi-storey car park.

Bradford Street Recreational Park: Participants reported incidents of vandalism to play equipment and youth anti-social behaviour in this park.

New Bury Learning Centre: Promoting this asset, addressing the cost of upkeep and maintenance, and addressing vandalism to the building were identified as areas requiring attention.

Brackley Street: This retail area was reported to experience frequent instances of shoplifting.

- Social and Town-Wide Issues

Safety and Security: Participants raised concerns about drug dealing in certain areas and venues, drug and alcohol abuse, speeding cars, off-road bikes, theft, and a lack of policing presence. It was reported that drug dealing is

encroaching into residential areas, with many instances occurring near houses of multiple occupation (HMOs).

Education, Training, and Employment:

Attendees highlighted the lack of post-16 educational provision in Farnworth and youth activities. Additionally, low aspiration levels, low skills, unemployment levels, and generational unemployment were identified as issues within the community.

Health and Well-being: Mental health challenges, particularly among children and young people, were reported in the town. It was noted that a high number of children are struggling in school due to poor mental health. Concerns were raised about unhealthy eating habits, with a prevalence of takeaway establishments in the area and limited opportunities for residents to grow their own food and address food insecurity.

Sporting Offer: Participants suggested that Farnworth's sporting offer, such as facilities like Harper Green and running tracks, represents a significant untapped potential.

Promotion of Activities: Attendees expressed the need for greater promotion to raise awareness among residents of the presence of the numerous community organisations, groups, projects, and initiatives.

Culture and Creativity: A lack of free cultural or creative activities in the town was highlighted.

Accessible Community Spaces: Participants reported difficulties in finding free or affordable community venues to deliver their activities.

Connectivity: Concerns were raised about the infrequent train services at Farnworth and Moses Gate stations, with only one train per hour. Comparisons were drawn to villages in Greater Manchester South, which were perceived to have better connectivity. Additionally, issues related to inter-town connectivity were mentioned.

Activity 3: Prioritising Themes

Participants were then asked to look at the challenges they identified in the previous activity and consider whether they should be a high, medium, or low priority, and whether addressing the issue should be a short, medium, or long-term priority. The following table illustrates the outcomes of this activity.

	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farnworth library not well connected to new developments. Sports facilities underutilised. Lack of lighting in Farnworth Park. Traffic safety concerns, e.g., congestion, speeding. Lack of post-16 education and youth activities/provision for older youth to access town centre. Lack of policing across Farnworth. ASB, e.g., drugs, off-road bikes, theft, drugs, vandalism in Bradford Street Recreational Ground. Brackley Street - shoplifting ASB in town centre, Rock Hall, Moses Gate, and New Bury. Market / Gladstone Road, new road changes causing traffic issues. Expansion of The Well. Harper Green playing facilities. Promoting New Bury Learning Centre as a community asset. Train station not well connected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviving the town's sporting offer e.g. Harper Green. Investment in Moses Gate and Rock Hall. Concerns over poor mental health within the community. Addressing domestic violence issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Congestion issues at Kearsley roundabout. Parking concerns at Royal Bolton Hospital. Need for skills development initiatives for young people. Addressing mental health concerns among young people. Lack of facilities catering to all age groups. Green spaces requiring more maintenance and upkeep. Unemployment and heavy traffic due to lack of traffic signals.
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low skills levels identified as a very serious issue. Farnworth and Moses Gate train stations infrequent service (e.g., one train per hour). Concerns over the cost of upkeep and maintenance for the New Bury Learning Centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting groups and activities within the community. Reports of drug dealing encroaching into residential areas. Concerns over unemployment and generational unemployment. Low aspirations among certain segments of the population. 	
Low		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth and expansion of the Ageing Well Centre. Highfield area lacking community activities and facing drug issues in the precinct. 	

Activity 4: Solutions

The group of key participants were asked to propose solutions that could address each of the priorities that were placed into their top (high priority) row. The following summarises solutions participants suggested.

Challenge	Solution
Farnworth library not well connected to new developments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move library and include heritage space, space for other groups, and manage external space.
Sports facilities underutilised and the need to revive the town's sporting offer (Harper Green playing fields).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring sporting clubs together, create viability plan, investment – DLUHC and Sports England. Restore the Harper Green facility, build changing rooms, re-design field to accommodate five-a-side football field and re-design car park.
Traffic safety issues e.g. congestion and speeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher police visibility and speed calming measures. Putting a proposal together ready for bidding on funding opportunities. Invest more money into the Gladstone Road area where new road changes are causing traffic issues.
Train station not well connected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce wayfinding and active travel links – connect to town's heritage.
New Bury Learning Centre Promotion, Upkeep and Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in the building. Get a project sponsor for New Bury Learning centre. Bring together interested parties, feasibility study, refurbish, promote.
Investment in Moses Gate and Rock Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Match fund Rock Hall to increase capacity if 'strategic' – green and heritage project.
Post-16 education and youth activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical skills in schools, employer visits, and apprenticeship schemes. Provide more youth activities and involve them in the discussions about this.
ABS e.g. drugs, off-road bikes, theft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CCTV installed and monitored regularly. Increase police presence. Education and enforcement. Lighting introduced in Farnworth Park. To counter ABS in Bradford Street Recreational Park, install equipment and skate park targeted at age group who cause vandalism – ensure they are consulted and ask for their input. Signposting to youth and sport provision / activity in the town centre.
Expansion of The Well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possibly a new building or change venue. Space could also be shared.
Domestic Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer Support Groups.
Low Aspirations and unemployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult taster sessions at UCAN and if there is uptake, longer term adult courses.
Parking at RBH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-storey car park.

It is notable that some of the Short Term, High Priorities issues are also significant in scope. Therefore, when feeding back to the community, expectations need to be managed and decisions communicated in terms of timeframes for investment.

Activity 5: Impact Versus Effort Matrix

After considering possible solutions, the group were then asked to place these onto an impact versus effort matrix. The following illustrates the outcomes of this activity.

- **Quick / Easy Wins (High Impact, Low Effort)**

Addressing Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and Engaging Youth

Install equipment and a skate park at Bradford Street Recreational Ground. The restoration of Harper Green sports facility was also proposed.

Community Support and Engagement

Establishing domestic abuse peer support groups. Improved communication and promotion of the Rock Hall project were highlighted, with attendees emphasising the importance of setting realistic timeframes. Adult taster sessions at UCAN (a community organisation) were proposed.

Youth Involvement and Ownership

Installing equipment at designated spaces, whilst actively seeking input from young people throughout the process. The installation of a skate park on hard ground surfaces was suggested as a potential strategy to attract groups prone to causing vandalism.

- **Major Projects (High Impact, High Effort)**

Security and Safety Measures

Participants suggested installing CCTV cameras and ensure regular monitoring to enhance security measures. They also advocated for increasing police presence and visibility.

Revitalising Community Spaces

Relocate the library and incorporate dedicated areas for other community groups. One group recommended identifying a project sponsor for the New Bury Learning Centre, bringing together interested parties, conducting a feasibility study, and subsequently refurbishing and promoting the facility. Construction of a multi-storey car park at RBH was recommended, along with investment in New Bury Community Centre.

Investment in Education and Extracurricular Sport

Bring sporting clubs together, create a viability plan, and seek investment from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and Sports England. Attendees highlighted the need for post-16 education initiatives, including practical skills training in schools, employer visits, adult education programs, skill sessions, and apprenticeship schemes.

- **Fill-in (Low Impact, Low Effort)**

Youth Engagement and Activities

Participants emphasised the need for more youth activities. Concerns were raised regarding the lack of young people involved in discussions, prompting calls for greater inclusion and representation of youth perspectives.

Traffic Management and Safety Measures

Funding was recommended to address traffic issues at Kearsley Roundabout, aiming to alleviate congestion and improve traffic flow. Attendees suggested implementing speed-calming strategies to enhance road safety.

- **Thankless Task / Money pit (Low Impact, High Effort)**

Park Improvements and Accessibility

Participants suggested installing lighting within Farnworth Park to enhance visibility and create a safer night-time environment.

Funding for Community Projects

Attendees suggested match funding for the Rock Hall project, contingent on it being deemed a 'strategic' initiative, to increase capacity and support its green and heritage aspects.

Public Education and Enforcement

Participants highlighted the need for education and enforcement measures to address issues such as improper disposal of dog waste and failure to keep dogs on leashes within designated areas.



Stakeholder Workshop 2

The second stakeholder workshop was a feedback session where we shared what we heard in the previous workshop and aimed to build upon these findings and insights. In this second workshop, participants also contributed to the vision for the Farnworth Long Term Plan.

Activity 1: Key Priorities

We presented participants with the key priorities they had highlighted in the previous workshop. We asked them to vote for their top three priorities individually. This would enable us to create a 'community charter' of sorts, being able

to identify the top priorities of this group of key participants.

'New Bury Learning Centre upkeep, maintenance and vandalism' was the priority that received the highest number of votes (10 votes). This was closely followed by 'Post-16 education and youth activities' (9 votes), and 'Mental health of young people' and 'Low aspirations and skills' (both receiving 7 votes each).

Priorities related to 'Drug and alcohol abuse' and 'Parking at RBH' did not receive any votes.

Key Priorities

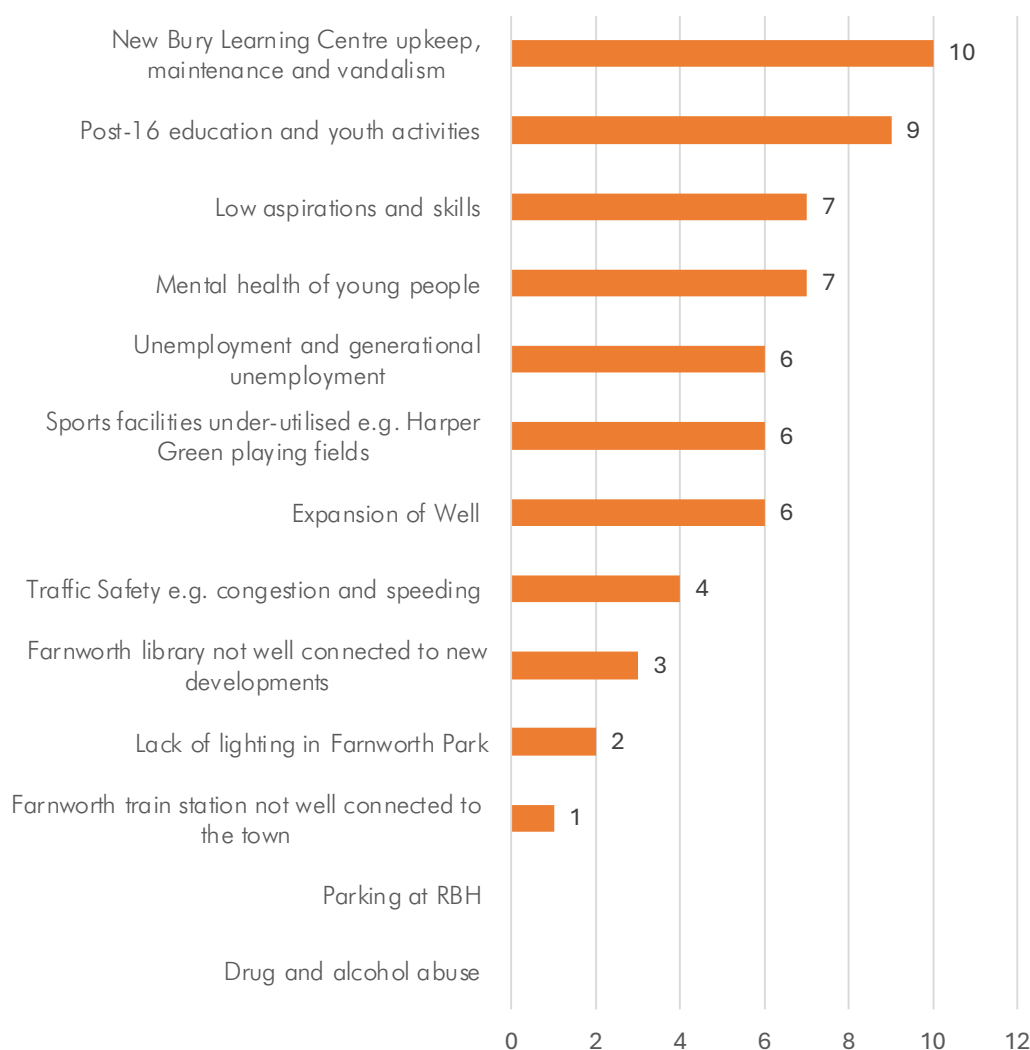


Figure 2: Responses to the question 'what are the key priorities for Farnworth?'

Activity 2: Developing Solutions

Participants were tasked with proposing 3 solutions for the challenges they identified in the previous workshop, being mindful of the potential beneficiaries, the wider impact, and who would deliver these solutions.

• Challenge 1: Domestic Abuse

One group suggested initiatives that promote positive masculinity as a potential approach to tackle domestic abuse. Others felt that the adoption of a Trauma Informed Toolkit could be beneficial across various organisations. A number of attendees recommended programmes targeting both perpetrators and victims of domestic abuse.

Beneficiary Groups

Families, communities and groups that could potentially benefit from further dedicated support and provisions tailored to their requirements.

Who needs to be involved?

Greater Manchester's violence reduction developed by community safety. Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises coordinated by Community and voluntary Services (CVS), and art support groups collaborating with police could help develop dedicated provisions.

Wider Impact

Dedicated provisions could promote healthier relationships, particularly for young people and families, whilst enabling better emotional awareness and open discussion within groups. It was suggested this may prevent perpetrators from carrying unaddressed behaviour into new relationships.

• Challenge 2: Anti-Social Behaviour

Participants suggested initiatives like youth engagement groups focused on bike maintenance, dedicated spaces for safe riding,

and signposting to existing youth / sports provisions. Others commented on restoring facilities like those at Harper Green.

Beneficiary Groups

Young people, bike riders, community groups, residents and local businesses could potentially benefit.

Who needs to be involved?

Local bike enthusiasts, the council, social housing providers, farmers, community youth groups, grassroots clubs, schools, police, resident consultations, and organisations like the National Children's Bureau and sport funding bodies.

Wider Impact

Some participants felt such initiatives could increase awareness, provide safe spaces for young people, enable more meaningful community engagement, and improve physical and mental wellbeing. It was also suggested this could help reduce anti-social behaviour and promote respect for others and vehicles in the local area.

• Challenge 3: New Bury Learning Centre (Maintenance and Vandalism)

Participants suggested a rebuild project for New Bury Learning Centre, overseen by a management board.

Beneficiary Groups

Community groups and residents.

Who needs to be involved?

Bolton College, Bolton At Home, Bolton Council, Bolton CVS, health services, young people and sporting clubs.

Wider Impact

Involving the right participants could lead to community facilities that inspire pride and aspiration amongst young people, reducing issues like vandalism.

- **Challenge 4: Skills and Education**

Initiatives focused on raising career education aspirations and improving access to education, such as free bus passes to aid attendance. Some felt dedicated skill training facilities providing job training and paid placements may help address long term and short term skills gaps.

Beneficiary Groups

In-school and out-of-school groups, those aged up to 16 or 16-18, hard-to-reach communities, and families requiring tailored skills and job application support.

Who needs to be involved?

Schools, community groups, colleges, universities, employers, and organisations like Working Wardrobe and UCAN.

Wider Impact

Changed aspirations, higher qualification levels, increased engagement across all ages, and improved access to higher education or vocational options for youth.

- **Challenge 5: Youth Facilities and Engagement**

Participants commented on the potential for a pump park, organised activities and engagement sessions at locations like Harper Green and Bradford Street Recreational Ground. Suggestions were made regarding initiatives by organisations to provide dedicated youth facilities.

Beneficiary Groups

Volunteer groups, young people and the broader community could benefit from such provisions.

Who needs to be involved?

Bolton Council, the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF), cultural partners like Octagon Theatre, and local residents. It was also suggested that young people should be consulted and engaged in decision making so they feel a sense of ownership of facilities.

Wider Impact

Such facilities could help reduce anti-social behaviour by occupying young people's time productively.

- **Challenge 6: Community Facilities and Initiatives**

Restoring sports facilities at locations like Harper Green, bringing clubs together, developing skate parks and social spaces, and enhancing blue and green spaces in parks. Some participants felt deploying targeted community engagement workers could be beneficial. Others proposed ideas like developing an unrestricted 'Farnworth Fund' to support local initiatives and community led 'Right to the Streets' activities.

Beneficiary Groups

Local residents, young people, children, local clubs, parents, volunteers, as well as businesses could potentially benefit from such initiatives.

Who needs to be involved?

Sporting organisations, Bolton Council, Bolton CVS, Bolton at Home, community groups, community champions, youth clubs, young people (via a co-design process), and organisations like Rock Hall and The Well.

Wider Impact

Dedicated facilities could provide much-needed outdoor venues, increase physical activity levels, promote community involvement and positive wellbeing. Such facilities could support the VCSE sector, increase pride in the area, build social capital and aspirations through community-based social infrastructure, whilst providing capacity for smaller organisations to thrive.

Activity 3: Vision for Farnworth

At the end of the workshop, participants were asked to write their own vision statements for the Farnworth Long Term Plan.

Each group was provided a grid with sections for key themes, verbs (what the Plan should achieve), adjectives (how you would like to describe Farnworth in 2034), and people / organisations. Participants wrote down relevant words on post-it notes and arranged them accordingly. They then constructed 50–100-word vision statements using keywords from the grid.

The following vision statements were produced:

“Farnworth as a place will be vibrant, accessible, and safe with a focus on young people, families, and communities, providing partnerships for all to thrive. Building on the existing strong cohesive communities to create a welcoming, vibrant, and thriving place where people choose to study, work, and invest.”

“Farnworth will establish a legacy that goes beyond 2034, creating a place where people want to live with high aspirations, as Farnworth is leading the way by flourishing, developing futures, and being sustainable. This new Farnworth has been moulded by its residents, community groups, families and participants. So that all are safe, healthy, well-educated, and happy.”

“We are proud of our Farnworth identity, including all of our communities and places. Everything that we do will be inclusive, inspiring, and aspirational for our current residents and the generations to come. Everything we offer will come from a place of trust, cultivation, and a sense of belonging for everyone.”

The word cloud below summaries the key idea and themes that were highlighted during the vision statement activity. Safety, security and sense of community arose as key themes along with the need for development and a focus on sustainability.



Figure 3: Keywords and themes highlighted during the vision statement activity. Size of words indicates frequency.

The people and organisations highlighted during the activity included:

- The Farnworth community: families, parents, young people, older people, disabled people, and ethnic minority groups
- Schools, colleges and universities e.g. Bolton College
- Community groups, faith organisations, and volunteer sector groups
- Local businesses and employers
- NHS
- VCSE Network
- Transport for Greater Manchester
- Cultural / creative organisations
- Farnworth Community Alliance
- Family hubs and groups who support young families
- Housing providers
- Wildlife Trust
- Thrive Office
- Greater Manchester Police



Findings from the pop-up events

On Monday 20th May, we delivered pop-up events at New Bury UCAN Centre and Farnworth Start Well and Young People's Centre. An additional event was delivered on Saturday 1st June at The Well providing an opportunity for those who had been previously unable to attend to contribute.

These events were in-person 'drop-in' sessions where local residents could share their views and ideas for the Farnworth Long Term Plan. Below is a summary of the key findings.

Question 1: What is special about Farnworth?

Those who attended our drop-in events emphasised the strong sense of community spirit and involvement in their local area. It was suggested that community spaces, facilities, and the residents themselves - particularly volunteers - contribute significantly to fostering this sense of togetherness. Some people highlighted local organisations like Believe achieve CIC, and New Bury Learning Centre, suggesting they play a vital role in the community.

However, a few of the residents we spoke to did not offer any positive response to this question and instead flagged issues such as the lack of a quality night-time economy, unstable business landscape, and parking issues. One resident expressed that there is nothing they currently like about Farnworth, highlighting its deprivation, tired looking high street, and lack of educational and employment opportunities.

Question 2: How would you like to describe Farnworth in 2034?

Youth Provision

A key theme was the need for more facilities and activities catered specifically towards young people and children in New Bury and the surrounding areas e.g. a modern skate park, gaming centre, and spaces for arts and music. Other suggestions included enhancing sporting opportunities, establishing youth centres and community hubs, and providing a diverse range of indoor and outdoor recreational activities.

It was suggested that young people should be involved in the development of recreational leisure spaces so they can feel a sense of ownership. Some residents proposed creating a cybercafe, gaming cafe, or convention centre in empty shops. Residents also felt that Harper Green playing field needs focus and redevelopment.

Development and Regeneration

Those we engaged highlighted the need for urban development and regeneration - particularly of the high street and town centre. Residents advocated for better quality retail offerings, improved facilities, and amenities to accommodate population growth, with a focus on housing development over large commercial enterprises.

Additionally, there were suggestions to revitalise vacant buildings and spaces, transforming them into community hubs or support centres for vulnerable groups. Some participants commented that Market Street looks tired and needs uplifting. It was also proposed that shop signs and shutters could be brightened up, possibly in collaboration with the art college.

Health and Wellbeing

Residents we spoke to at The Well stressed the need for a health centre in Farnworth, noting that healthcare should be a key priority, especially given the high number of sick, elderly, and disabled residents in the area. People spoke about how a health centre had been promised in the past but was not delivered. Residents also highlighted connections between health, employment, and the economy.

Access to healthcare facilities, particularly hospitals, was identified as a challenge by some people, who reported difficulties with transportation and the need for improved connectivity. Furthermore, the importance of prioritising mental health support and resources was emphasised. Residents also highlighted the importance of green spaces for areas with poor health.

Safety and Maintenance

Many of the people we engaged in-person expressed concerns regarding community safety, cleanliness, and maintenance. Issues such as littering, poor road conditions, antisocial behaviour, and a general sense of feeling unsafe in certain areas were highlighted. They suggested addressing these concerns with increased surveillance, maintenance, and utilisation of vacant spaces.

Employment and Skills

It was felt that low employment rates are related to poor health in the area, and that improving employment opportunities could also benefit community health. Residents also suggested providing accessible routes into education.

Transport Connectivity

It was reported that transport connectivity is poor in Farnworth and needs to be improved, particularly from the north to the south of the town.

Accessibility and Inclusivity

Those we spoke to emphasised the importance of ensuring accessible and inclusive urban design for individuals with disabilities. Concerns were raised about the need for accessible active travel options, controlled crossing points, and the allocation of appropriate budgets to accommodate the specific requirements of disabled individuals during community meetings and events.

Community Engagement

Participants acknowledged the strong sense of community ownership and pride in New Bury and surrounding areas. Fostering opportunities for community engagement, social gatherings, and initiatives that promote inclusivity, such as LGBTQ+ spaces, were proposed as potential avenues to further strengthen this aspect.

Residents suggested creating a community hub in Harper Green and developing a website / newsletter called 'Focus on Farnworth' to promote events, activities, and groups. It was also proposed that a community representative or development worker could be appointed to encourage residents to get involved and be a catalyst for engagement.

Other ideas included community gardening projects, planters on Market Street, healthy eating and cooking courses, and a trip for key participants to visit an area with successful regeneration such as Stockport. Some people emphasised the need to change the mindset of residents, encouraging them to believe that initiatives are worthwhile and to get involved.

Question 3: What type of projects / initiatives you would like to see?

We asked residents what projects and initiatives they would like to see receive investment as part of the Farnworth Long Term Plan. They were presented with a range of ideas for projects / initiatives that could receive investment. The ideas presented related to the following key themes recommended by Central Government:

- High Street, Heritage and Regeneration
- Security and Safety
- Transport and Connectivity

3a. High Street, Heritage and Regeneration

'Funding for community centres' received the highest number of votes (8 votes). This was followed by 'Improvement to local green spaces, tree planting' and 'Volunteering and social action projects to develop social and human capital', both receiving 6 votes each. 'Entrepreneurial Support', 'Investment in digital infrastructure', and 'Decarbonisation' were the most unpopular ideas, each receiving only 1 vote.

High Street, Heritage and Regeneration

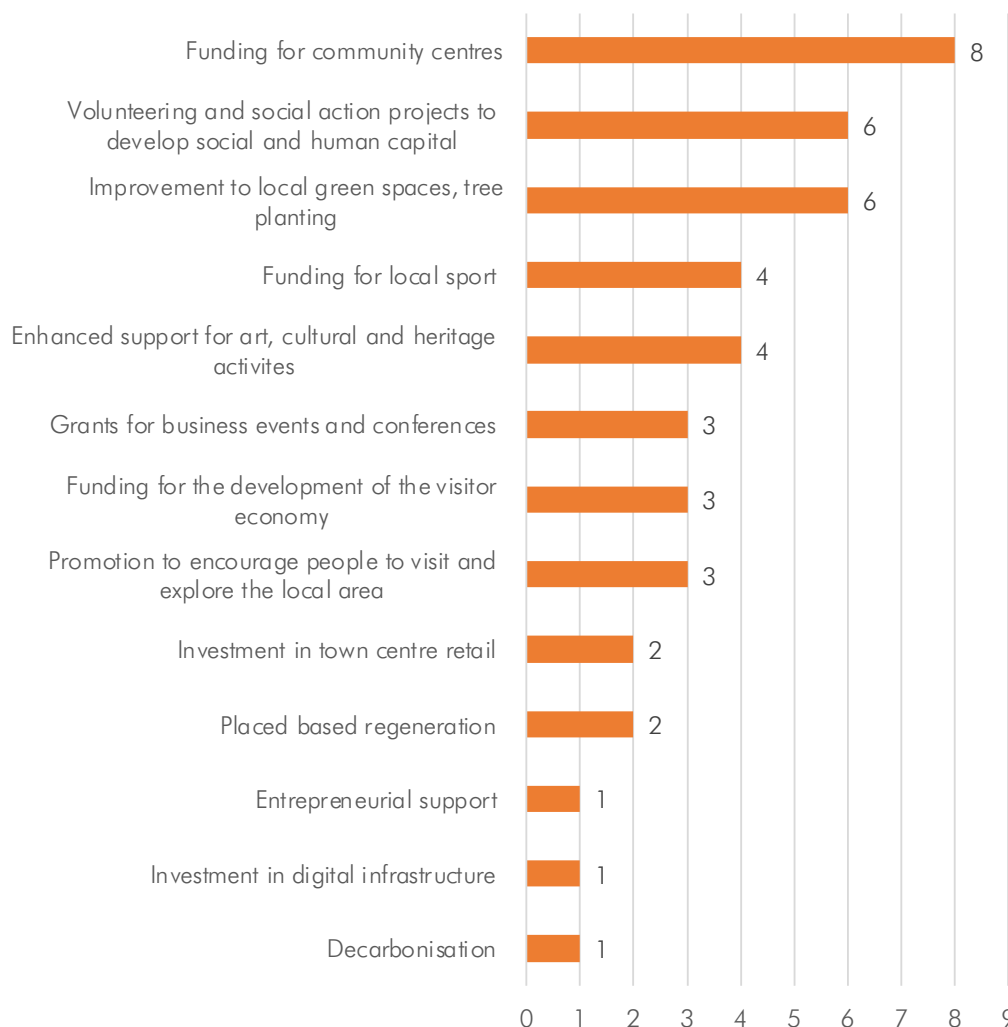


Figure 4: Responses to the question 'what type of projects / initiatives you would like to see in terms of high street, heritage and regeneration?' Responses are labelled as number of responses.

Additional Comments

One participant expressed apathy, questioning whether proposed improvements would actually be delivered. Some of the people we spoke to suggested that investment should be primarily focused on capital projects and the regeneration of the town centre. These residents felt that funding should prioritise infrastructure, amenities, and regeneration efforts rather than temporary / short-term initiatives or things they felt the council should address.

Business and Retail

Some residents reported that high business rates are an issue in Farnworth, leading to struggling local businesses and empty units on the high street. It was suggested that artisanal shops and better-quality retail could help improve the situation. Others felt that Market Street looks tired and run-down, with poor public realm and appearance issues.

Community-led Initiatives and Events

Residents suggested several community-led initiatives, such as a community cinema and a collaboration between art schools and local businesses to improve shop fronts and shutters, making the area look better in the evenings and at night. It was also proposed that a community carnival could be held within the parks, and that the Brackley Street event committee could provide volunteers.

Community Services

Some residents mentioned that bike maintenance is already offered on Bradford Street. The establishment of a flagship agency or accessible building in New Bury was proposed to cater to the needs of surrounding areas like Highfield and Harper Green.



3b. Security and Safety

'Neighbourhood watch and alley gating' received the highest number of votes (6 votes). This was closely followed by 'Prevention of ASB and reduce reoffending' and 'Visible crime prevention' which each received 5 votes.

Less people engaged with this topic through voting. Security and safety were still key themes, however, with residents preferring to engage in a more qualitative way, with conversation and written comments.

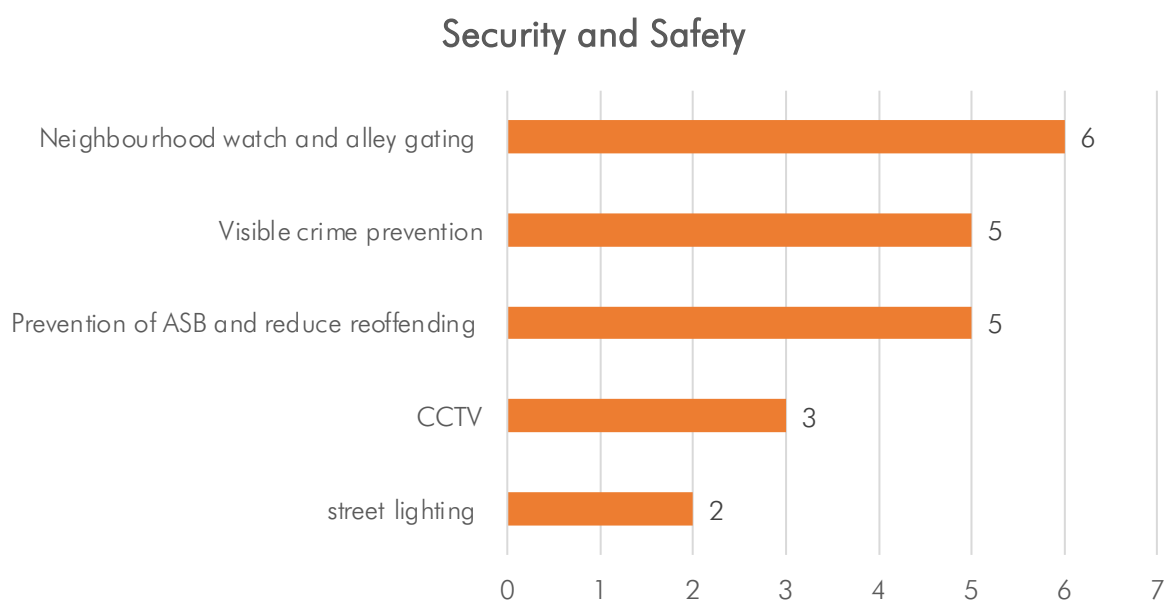


Figure 5: Responses to the question 'what type of projects / initiatives you would like to see in terms of security and safety?' Responses are labelled as number of responses.

Additional Comments

Those we spoke at our in-person events highlighted safety concerns in specific locations such as Farnworth Park. Residents felt that Farnworth's night-time economy is not active and the town therefore feels unsafe.

It was suggested that fostering a sense of ownership and pride amongst young people could help prevent vandalism and promote responsible behaviour. Engaging young people through various initiatives like the Duke of

Edinburgh Award scheme was recommended. People also suggested consulting young people to find out what sort of activities they would be interested in and engaging them in decision making processes.

Residents advocated for dedicated youth provision and engagement to address social isolation and antisocial behaviour concerns. Consulting with local high schools was proposed as a means to gather input from young people and ensure their voices are heard.

3c. Transport and Connectivity

'Funding for road improvements' emerged as the top priority (7 votes). This was followed by 'Additional revenue to bus service improvement programme' (5 votes), indicating the importance of enhancing public transportation. 'Reducing vehicle emissions' received the least votes (0 votes).

Like Security and Safety, less people engaged with the voting aspect on this topic, instead showing a preference for engaging in a more qualitative way, with conversation and written comments.

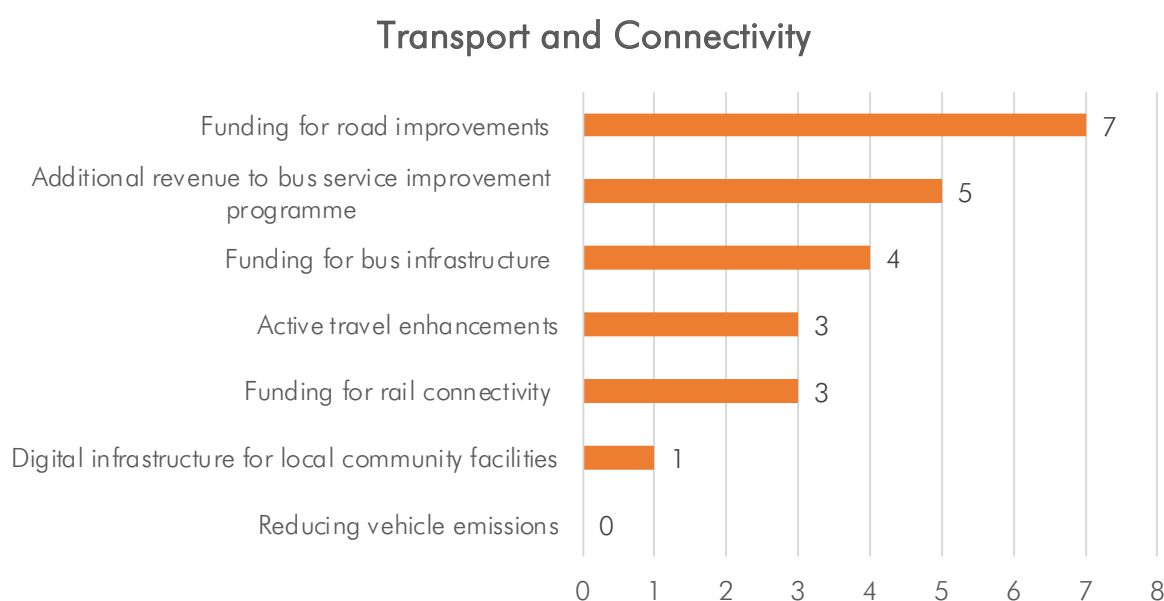


Figure 6: Responses to the question 'what type of projects / initiatives you would like to see in terms of Transport and connectivity?' Responses are labelled as number of responses.

Several issues with public transport in Farnworth were reported, including unreliable buses, a need for improved services, low car ownership in certain areas, and poor ratings for local train stations. Concerns were raised about the underutilisation of cycle lanes, with many pedestrians using pavements instead. The need for improved active travel accessibility for individuals with disabilities such as those who are deaf or hard of hearing was emphasised.

Additionally, specific infrastructure improvements were suggested, including addressing congestion issues at Kearsley Roundabout, which garnered support from multiple attendees.

Question 4: What are the key challenges for Farnworth and what could possible solutions look like?

In this engagement activity, we asked local residents what they think are the key challenges for Farnworth and what possible solutions could look like. We presented residents with several themes to consider:

- **Transport and Connectivity**
- **High Street and Regeneration**
- **Culture and Heritage**
- **Security and Safety**
- **Education, Training and Skills**

The following summarises the key findings from this activity.

4a. Transport and Connectivity

Problems

- Public transport links are poor, especially in Farnworth North, where there is also low car ownership.
- Trains are not frequent enough at Farnworth and Moses Gate stations, with only one per hour and no night bus service. Train stations are not clearly signposted to and from the town centre.
- Older people with poor mobility face difficulties getting out and about.
- Heavy traffic flow through Farnworth at the Kearsley roundabout.

Solutions

- Improvements to public transport links, particularly buses.

- Lobbying for more frequent trains, at least a half-hourly service, could help people feel more capable of securing employment in Salford and Manchester, which could also have environmental benefits by encouraging train use.
- Installing new signage, road, and pavement surface works.
- Lobbying for a night train service should be considered.
- Organising volunteers for more ring-and-ride type transport services to assist older people with mobility issues.

4b. High Street and Regeneration

Problems

- Lack of fresh food shops selling fruit and vegetables in Farnworth.
- Poor-quality retail, an imbalance of shops, and too many takeaways contributing to obesity, mental health issues, and safety issues.

Solutions

- Monthly markets on Brackley Street.
- Encouraging initiatives like Her Spirit (female running group) to promote healthier lifestyles.
- Investing in the built environment and allocating money towards regeneration projects.

4c. Culture and Heritage

Problems

- Lack of local events in Farnworth.
- Farnworth Park needs heritage features restored.
- Lack of education about Farnworth's history for children and insufficient display of heritage information.
- Not enough safe spaces for youth and a lack of nightlife, social activities, and community engagement for young people.

Solutions

- Organising Farnworth Carnival events on the park and Brackley Street.
- Installing a new bandstand.
- A museum at Farnworth Town Hall with exhibits on Farnworth's history.
- Developing heritage trails and installing blue heritage signs were suggested by participants.
- Engaging, consulting, advocating for, and upskilling young people to achieve better futures that meet their needs and aspirations.

4d. Security and Safety

Problems

- Vehicles using Piggott Street as a cut-through, creating noise and congestion.
- Some residents mentioned that they do not want to use the subway through the Kearsley and Farnworth roundabout.
- Issues with youth antisocial behaviour and vandalism of the New Bury Learning Centre and a general lack of youth activities.
- Graffiti in the subways at Kearsley Roundabout.

Solutions

- Encouraging the reporting of any issues to the police, family members, friends, and open communication was proposed by participants.
- Installing adequate lighting and CCTV for extra security.
- Increasing youth provision in New Bury and including young people in decision-making process to give them a sense of ownership of spaces.

4e. Education, Training and Skills

Problems

- Young people lack understanding about mental health.

Solutions

- Hosting open sessions and engagement activities to help build knowledge, organised by community groups.

Online Engagement

PLACED also conducted some engagement online with an interactive website dedicated to the Farnworth Long Term Plan: <https://www.placed-engagement.org.uk/farnworth>

This website featured an 'Ideas Wall' where people could post comments and complete a survey. We provided prompt themes and questions to support discussion. Online engagement ran for 3 weeks (Thursday 9th May – Sunday 2nd June 2024).

Participation figures are as follows:

- 1429 number of visitors
- 28 people took the online survey
- 91 comments were left on the Map / 'Ideas Wall'

Map Comments / Location Specific Issues

To structure and prompt discussion on the interactive Farnworth map, we provided key themes / discussion points. These were:

- **Challenges**
- **Ideas and Suggestions**
- **Things I like**

Participants were able to respond to these discussion points and pinpoint specific places or locations pertaining to them on a map of Farnworth. The following summarises the

comments we received.

• **Challenges**

Harper Green: Commenters said there is a lack of community facilities in the area, such as spaces to hold toddler groups, pensioners groups, youth clubs, or other events which could support community cohesion.

The Well: It was suggested that The Well, a key provider of social action projects in Farnworth, is hampered by a lack of space.

Moses Gate Country Park: Some people commented that there are too many off-road bikes in Moses Gate Park, and that the park is very overgrown with nobody caring for the wildlife. It was suggested that park rangers could be brought back to help maintain the park. Others felt that erecting solid barriers at key entry points like near Rock Hall and fencing around the park, could help prevent off-road bikes from entering public areas.

St Peter's Way: Some commenters from outside the town said that, whilst they could cycle to Farnworth in 15-20 minutes from their house, the stretch of Manchester Road where it runs alongside St Peter's Way feels intimidating and dangerous, preventing them from cycling. It was suggested that the new cycle lane does not address this issue and that there is no alternative route, taking the bus instead takes around 40-45 minutes.

- **Ideas and Suggestions**

Moses Gate Country Park: Commenters suggested that a cafe and an activity centre could be established to encourage and help all ages, particularly youngsters, to use the park more.

Bradford Street Recreational Ground: It was proposed that the space could be turned into a multi-use playing pitch, with the local authority potentially applying for a play zone with the Football Foundation. Others felt that benches or picnic benches could be installed within the park.

- **Things I Like**

Believe Achieve CIC: Commenters said there are fantastic youth services in the area, supporting the community through programmes and workshops.

Farnworth Central Park: Some people commented that there are green spaces in the area where people can relax, walk their dogs, and enjoy the outdoors.

The Well: Commenters reported that The Well is a fantastic resource for the whole community, offering a wide range of services including Christian worship, children's work, benefits and debt advice, a cafe, toddler group, and foodbank. It was also mentioned that The Well provides wellbeing groups, Job club, book club, peer group support, and more.

Age UK Bolton: Some people commented that Age UK Bolton is a valuable resource for older people in the community. It was highlighted that people go there a few times a week for activities such as dancing, art, afternoon tea, and singing. Others felt that it is a very friendly place and that lots of people use it, with some suggesting that it is the only place where they feel welcome and that they wouldn't know what to do if it wasn't there.

Other Community Spaces: It was suggested that the Great Lever and Farnworth Voice Youth Group and Bolton Wanderers In The Community Football provide valuable services for young people. Others felt that New Bury Boxing Club is a great asset to the community.

Ideas Wall Comments

To structure and prompt discussion on the Ideas Wall, we provided key themes relevant to the Farnworth Long Term Plan project. These were:

- **Farnworth Today**
- **Challenges**
- **Opportunities**
- **Vision**
- **Other Ideas and concerns**

People were able to comment under these themes, respond to comments from others, and like / dislike people's comments to indicate support or otherwise. The following summarises the comments we received pertaining to each of the themes above.

• **Farnworth Today**

Lack of activities for young people

Commenters reported that young people have nothing to do locally and are loitering, creating no-go areas for more vulnerable residents. It was suggested that there is a real need for something aimed at that age group. Others felt that there is not a variety of activities or places for young people to meet.

Retail and High Street

Some people said that there are too many takeaways, vape stores, and barbers in Farnworth. It was suggested that the shop fronts look run-down and many shops are closed. Others felt that the types of shops, such as nail salons, fast food outlets, and aesthetic salons,

are an issue. It was felt that there are no major outlets other than Asda, Home Bargains, Iceland, Heron, and Card Factory. Some people who commented expressed a desire for a greater variety of independent traders with local goods on Brackley Street.

Decline of the area

Some commenters who have lived in the area for a long time said that they have seen Farnworth decline over the years. It was suggested that Farnworth is now full of empty shops, rubbish, vape shops, and takeaways, particularly on the main road from Bolton and from the motorway. Others felt that nothing has been done for years and that there is no market, no decent cafes, and no public toilets.

Public Spaces and Maintenance

Those who commented said that the streets, especially the side streets, are dirty with a lot of litter. It was suggested that more needs to be done to stop littering and fly-tipping. It was also suggested that roads are in bad condition with potholes and that there are dangerous junctions in the area.

Lack of essential services

Commenters reported that a police station, which was promised four years ago, and a much-needed health centre, which had been agreed to, have not been delivered. It was also suggested that Farnworth, as a market town, should have a market.

- **Challenges**

Shops and Businesses

Those who commented said that there are too many of the same types of shops in Farnworth, such as barbers and vape shops. Others felt that there are too many takeaways, run-down, and unattractive shops.

It was suggested that there are not enough shops to serve the town, with a notable absence of big name or chain stores. Some people commented that it is impossible to get a pair of shoes and decent clothes in the town centre. It was also suggested that retail landlords are charging too high rents, making it difficult for shops to be sustainable.

Safety Concerns

Comments highlighted that there is a need for further or more policing to make Farnworth safe. It was suggested that some of the residents who hang around the town centre can be intimidating and that the town centre does not always feel safe after dark.

Some people said that the number of young people driving off-road bikes on the streets has increased significantly. It was suggested that these bikes are dangerous and have a negative impact on house prices when trying to sell. It was also proposed that community engagement officers should work with Bolton Council and the police to address rubbish being dumped in areas, with fines being issued.

Green Spaces and Leisure Activities

Some people said that there is a lack of green spaces with play equipment on them for children,

as well as a lack of sports opportunities for all ages. It was suggested that the Westland area is missing a park and that young people have not had any opportunities since the youth club closed due to vandalism and funding cuts.

Others felt that a skate park, fenced field with nets or a football pitch, or a youth club could be beneficial. Some comments suggested a bigger and better swimming baths, similar to the old baths in Bolton with a cinema, bowling, and arcade.

Other Social Issues

Participants reported that there are cycles of deprivation and dependence on state support in the area. Some participants reported that there are issues with low aspirations and poor self-esteem among individuals and the community, which they attributed to years of neglect. It was suggested that there is a lack of moral code and that too much antisocial behaviour is accepted as the norm and not challenged. Some participants commented on businesses burning waste near Farnworth Park.

Some people flagged the building that is currently being constructed on St German Street, suggesting it could lead to an increase in crime rate, and recommended a vetting process for residents, given the building's proximity to a school. It was also felt that the building would lead to a loss of privacy for those whose back gardens it overlooks, traffic is already heavy in the area.

- **Opportunities**

Existing Services and Community Facilities

Comments suggested building on existing services such as The Well and developing community facilities in the Flower Estate and Campbell Street areas. It was also proposed that a Farnworth-only targeted website could be created to direct people to opportunities, groups, activities, social events, volunteer opportunities, job clubs, support, and wellbeing services.

Parks and Green Spaces

Some people commented that the Harper Green area in Farnworth has a football pitch that is in poor condition and needs upgrading. It was also suggested that Farnworth Park needs to be upgraded to have better facilities, similar to those at Clifton Country Park. Others felt that park spaces in the borough need lighting and CCTV to deter antisocial behaviour and encourage resident use.

Youth Provision and Support

Some comments expressed that there needs to be more opportunities, inspirational spaces, and support for young people, extending beyond nice parks and public spaces. It was proposed that a food-growing project could be used to help local young people gain a horticulture qualification and give them an opportunity to make a living from it.

It was suggested that young people need guided activities, access to role models, and high-quality youth workers and career coaches. Others felt that increased opportunities and safe places/spaces for young people with regards to leisure, play, and culture are needed, and that just providing spaces is not enough. It was also suggested that schools could link well and provide additional support and information to assist in this area.

- **Vision**

Commenters envisioned Farnworth as a peaceful, prosperous, safe, bustling, welcoming, clean, and fun community that people would want to visit from outside the town, as they did years ago. It was suggested that Farnworth should be a place where young people want to stay and bring up their families, and where elderly people feel valued and supported.

Shops and Businesses

Some people suggested smartening up the shops on Market Street, as there are too many tatty shop fronts. It was also proposed that more retail should be encouraged in the town, whilst stopping the saturation of unnecessary shops like barbers and vape shops.

Community Events and Initiatives

Comments recommended creating a community for all in Farnworth, with daytime and evening events, cultural activities, and community organisations. It was also proposed that pop-up shops and advice centres could be set up in empty premises, and that schools should be involved in community initiatives. Other ideas included sheltered outdoor seating, community gardens, artisan retailers, and farmers markets.

- **Other Ideas and Concerns**

Health and Wellbeing

Commenters suggested that a new health centre should be built in central Farnworth. It was also proposed that better GP services should be provided, along with places for older people (60+) to attend. Some people commented that the Age UK centre on Cross Street is lovely but needs a bit more space, and that a cafe would be a welcome addition.

Others felt that a space for older people to gather is needed to support the isolation felt by large sections of the community, allowing them to meet up and engage in activities to improve wellbeing. It was also suggested that a dementia activity centre could be beneficial.

Financial Support and Community Hub

Some comments suggested creating a uniform donation shop or drop-off point to help low-income struggling families. It was also felt that financial support should be expanded, making the help available at The Well and other support agencies more well-known in the area. Others said that a community hub offering help with form filling, applying for assistance, and local welfare provision would be beneficial.

Waste Management and Cleanliness

Commenters said that more bins are needed throughout Farnworth, as there are a limited number at present. Some people proposed bringing back road sweepers to clear leaves and prevent flooding and blocked drains. Others felt that gated back streets could help deter fly-tipping.

It was also suggested that CCTV should be installed in key areas of the Flower Estate and near Farnworth's main roads for safety purposes. It was reported that the grey slimline bins that are emptied every fortnight are too small, and that even those who do their best to recycle still struggle with the size. Some comments suggested that providing bigger grey bins could lead to less litter being thrown or blown onto streets and roads.

Survey Findings

The following summarises the key findings for the online survey delivered as part of the project website.

Question 1: What is special or unique about Farnworth?

Community People
Library Welcoming
Friendly helping
Residents Friendly
Diversity Friendly
History

Figure 7: Responses to the question 'what is special about Farnworth?'

Question 2: How would you rate / describe existing buildings and public spaces in Farnworth?

Participants expressed concerns about the condition of many buildings in Farnworth, describing them as run-down, neglected, and often occupied by takeaways that were perceived to be unsanitary. They noted that public spaces lacked cleanliness and were primarily maintained by volunteers rather than official services. Some participants also commented on the lack of character in new builds and the prevalence of empty and scruffy shops.

Safety Concerns

Several survey participants raised concerns about safety in Farnworth's public spaces, particularly after dark or when alone. They mentioned that crime was a notable issue in the park, especially for women and the elderly.

Lack of Community Spaces

Survey participants highlighted a shortage of venues for hire and places where people could socialise without having to go to a pub. They suggested that a dedicated community centre was needed to provide a welcoming space for residents to come together. Some participants noted that whilst the town hall and library are wonderful buildings, they are currently underutilised.

Potential for Improvement

Despite the challenges, participants suggested that empty shops and fields could be repurposed to enhance the town's amenities. Some participants said that, whilst the park required modernisation, it is not currently seen as a priority by the authorities. It was proposed that creating meaningful, useful, aesthetically pleasing, and well-maintained buildings could help secure Farnworth's heritage and reduce the number of boarded-up properties.

Question 3: How would you rate / describe existing services and infrastructure in Farnworth?

Services and Infrastructure

Survey participants expressed dissatisfaction with the current state of services and infrastructure in Farnworth, suggesting that most were not fit for purpose. Some people mentioned that apart from the services provided at The Well on Trafford Street, there is very little available for people in the town. Participants said that there were too many takeaways, hairdressers, vape shops, and discount stores, and not enough diversity in the types of businesses present.

Transportation

Several participants commented on the poor existing transport links, noting that there is only one train per hour into Manchester and that bus services are unreliable. Some people mentioned that the bus service from King Street to the hospital is particularly problematic.

Roads and Footpaths

Many participants raised concerns about the condition of roads and footpaths in Farnworth, flagging dangerous potholes and uneven footpaths. Some participants noted that even main roads were rarely swept, contributing to the overall sense of neglect in the town.

Potential for Improvement

Despite the challenges, some participants expressed hope that investment in the town centre would bring improvements to Farnworth's services and infrastructure. However, others cautioned that hearts and minds needed to change along with the physical landscape, and that the town's varied demographic posed a significant barrier to progress at present.

Question 4: How would you rate / describe existing education provision, training and employment opportunities

Education and Training

Participants had mixed views on the availability and quality of education and training opportunities in Farnworth. Some mentioned that there was little in terms of training and further education options. A few participants noted that literacy levels amongst residents are low. They suggested more training opportunities were needed to cater to the growing population. Some participants commented that schools were overcrowded.

Employment Opportunities

Many participants expressed concern that, whilst there were some large employers such as Asda and Tesco, many shops and industries had closed down, forcing residents to travel outside the town for work. Some said that the only jobs available seemed to be in supermarkets, takeaways, or driving, with few options for those seeking careers with progression opportunities.

Access to Further Education

Participants highlighted the lack of higher education options within Farnworth itself. They mentioned that, whilst there was a community centre, anyone seeking further education had to travel outside the town. Some participants noted that this was heavily impacted by regularly delayed public transport. Participants suggested adult learning provision within the current library was good but that the location needed to be more central to increase use.

Question 5: What do you think are key opportunities for Farnworth?

Opportunities for Young People

Several survey participants highlighted the need for more opportunities and services for young people in Farnworth. Some participants proposed the idea of providing more education and training opportunities such as UTCs and colleges, or improving public transport to help young people access education elsewhere.

Regenerating the Town Centre

Several survey participants stressed the need to regenerate Farnworth's town centre. They suggested the town could capitalise on its history as a market town by encouraging the development of new markets. Some people said that the high street needed to be cleaned up and that there should be a greater diversity of shops and businesses. Others suggested the idea of creating a cinema or arts festival to help make Farnworth a creative hub.

Community Services and Facilities

Participants suggested that Farnworth could benefit from a centralisation of community services in modern, easily accessible buildings. They felt that there was a need for more leisure activities and spaces for people to meet and socialise. Some proposed the idea of a community hub that could provide a range of services and activities for residents of all ages. Others mentioned the importance of improving local parks, such as Moses Gate Country Park, to make them more attractive and user-friendly.

Promoting Farnworth as a Desirable Place to Live and Work

Some participants recommended improving the quality and affordability of housing could

help attract new residents to the area. Others proposed the idea of offering incentives to businesses, such as reduced rates, to encourage them to set up in Farnworth. Some participants also mentioned the importance of maintaining and improving the town's infrastructure to make it a more desirable place to live and visit.

Question 6: What do you think are the key Challenges?

Unemployment and Poverty

Several survey participants commented on the high levels of unemployment and poverty in the town. They noted that there are limited job opportunities, particularly for young people, and that many residents have to travel outside of the town for work or further education.

Crime and Antisocial Behaviour

Participants reported that crime and antisocial behaviour are significant issues in the town. Some mentioned the prevalence of drug use and dealing, whilst others highlighted the problem of off-road bikes and joyriding. Many felt that there is a lack of police presence and consequences for those engaging in criminal or antisocial activities.

Community Engagement and Local Government

Many survey participants felt that there is a lack of community engagement in the town. Some attributed this to apathy and a lack of understanding of how local government works. Some participants said that there is a need to involve residents more in decision-making processes and for greater transparency and accountability in how funds are being spent.

Question 7: Thinking about the challenges and opportunities you have already identified, what type of projects and initiatives would you like to see receive investment?

'Visible crime prevention e.g. hotspot policing' received the highest number of votes (24 votes). This was closely followed by 'Prevention of ASB and reducing reoffending e.g. mentoring and diversion models' (22 votes) and 'Funding for community centres' (21 votes). 'Decarbonisation / Net Zero' received the least number of votes (3 votes).

What type of projects and initiatives would you like to see receive investment?



Figure 8: Responses to the question 'what type of project and initiatives would you like to see receive investment?'

Question 8: Are there any existing businesses, community organisations or services you think could be enhanced or grown?

- Build an extension on The Well to allow its services to grow.
- Collaborate with charities like Bolton Lads and Girls Club (BLGC) to bolster youth provision, create sporting opportunities, and provide accessible provision for disabled young people.
- Improve parks, particularly Moses Gate Park, by addressing issues with dogs and off-road motorbikes.
- Support existing mental health-related services and organisations.

Question 9: What improvements would you like to see to buildings and public spaces in Farnworth?

'CCTV' was the most desired improvement to buildings and public spaces, receiving the most votes (18 votes). This was closely followed by 'Street lighting' and 'Improvement to local green spaces e.g. tree planting, improving access', which both received 17 votes. Reducing vehicle emissions received the least votes (3).

What improvements would you like to see to buildings and public spaces in Farnworth?

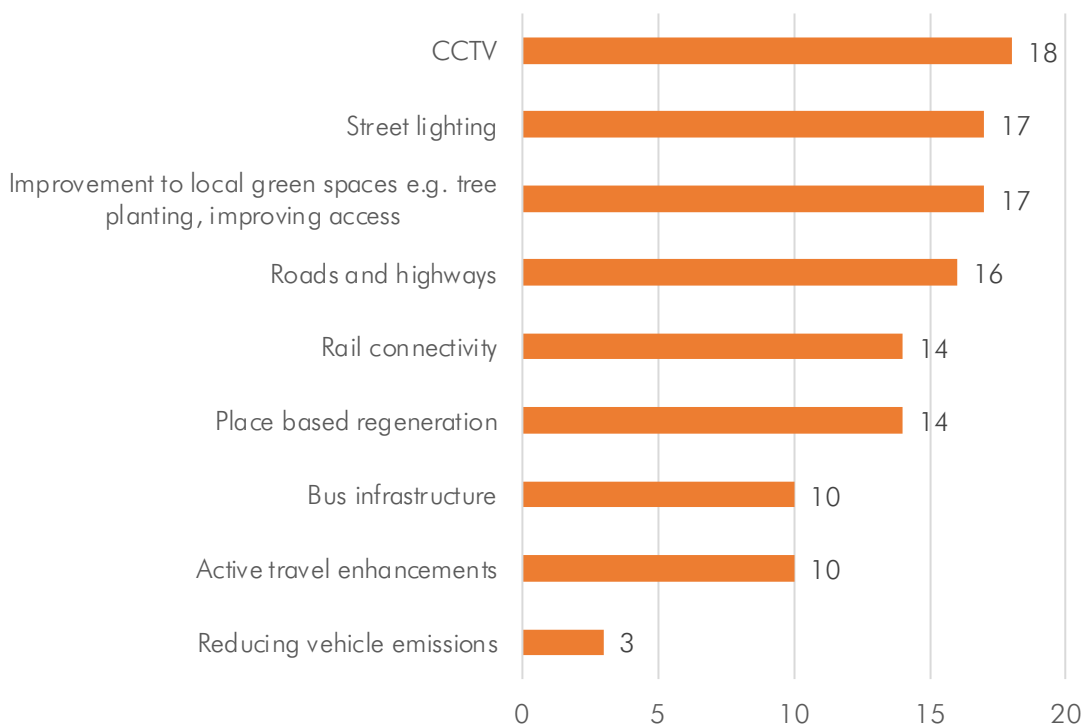


Figure 9: Responses to the question 'what improvements would you like to see to buildings and public spaces in Farnworth?

Question 10: What difference would you like funding to make in the town?

Safety and Crime Prevention

Survey participants expressed a strong desire for Farnworth to become a safer town, with reduced levels of crime and antisocial behaviour. They suggested that increased active policing could help address these issues. Some participants also proposed the idea of bringing back wardens who could fine individuals for littering. It was felt that prioritising safety in the short term could lead to significant long term benefits.

Employment and Skills

Participants highlighted the need to improve access to skills, training, and local employment opportunities. They suggested apprenticeships should be available to people of all ages, not just school leavers. Other participants recommended attracting more businesses to the town to create more jobs.

Community Spaces

Many participants emphasised the importance of promoting community involvement and providing easy access to community spaces. They suggested that centralising services could make them more accessible, particularly for older adults and young families. Some people said that there should be more spaces for families, such as improved parks and fields with benches and play areas.

Transport and Infrastructure

Some participants mentioned that improving train access to the town could make it easier for people to travel to work or access services elsewhere. Others felt that the town's roads and pavements needed to be repaired properly to make it safer and easier for people to get around.

Question 11: How would you like to describe Farnworth in 2034?



Figure 10: Responses to the question 'in no more than three words, how would you like to describe Farnworth in 2034?' Size of words indicates frequency.

Conclusion

The engagement process undertaken as part of the Farnworth Long Term Plan has provided valuable insights into resident and stakeholder concerns, aspirations, and vision for the future of the town. Those we engaged have highlighted a range of issues and opportunities, from the need for improved community spaces and services to the importance of investing in green spaces, leisure facilities, and youth provision.

An overarching theme throughout all engagement delivered was the urgent need to address youth provision and antisocial behaviour in Farnworth.

Another prominent theme was the desire for a thriving, diverse town centre. Participants expressed concerns about the current state of Farnworth's high street, with its run-down appearance, poor quality retail, and lack of variety.

Further, those we engaged emphasised the need for a safe, clean, and welcoming environment, with improved policing, lighting, and community engagement to tackle issues like litter and antisocial behaviour.

Response to public engagement was largely positive, with residents and participants keen to see both capital and revenue projects delivered that build upon the town's existing assets such as its green spaces, leisure facilities and community organisations. However, there was apathy amongst a small number of those engaged, with a few residents flagging projects and initiatives promised in the past that have not been delivered such as a healthcare centre.

As this is a long term plan, we recommend that engagement is sustained and efforts are made to maintain resident and stakeholder involvement. This should involve regular communication, consultation, and feedback opportunities.

Youth provision was a key concern throughout our public engagement activities, but we did not have the opportunity to speak to young people within the scope of this project. We would recommend that any future public engagement should include targeted engagement with young people to ensure their views are captured, to ensure the assumptions made about their needs align with what young people would like to see and feel are priorities for them.



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