Beatfreeks X IM Properties

Young People Panel

August 2024

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings and reflections from the IM Properties Young People Panel, facilitated by Beatfreeks from May to August 2024. The panel was established to engage young people in the planning and development processes for the Thrive site in North Warwickshire, ensuring that their voices are heard and integrated into the project's outcomes. The collaboration between IM Properties and Beatfreeks sought to bridge the gap between young people's insights and the strategic development of the site, covering key areas such as sustainability, employment opportunities, community engagement, and more.

Background and Context

IM Properties and Beatfreeks have been working together since July 2023, initially conducting qualitative and quantitative research (including a survey of 400 young people) to gather actionable insights from young people across Birmingham and North Warwickshire. This research highlighted key themes such as sustainability, employment, and the impact of logistics developments. Following this, a series of insights workshops were held with key stakeholders to further refine these findings. Building on this groundwork, the IM Properties Young People Panel was launched to continue engaging young people and ensuring their perspectives are central to the Thrive site's development.

Objectives

- Provide a platform for young people to voice their opinions and aspirations regarding the Thrive site.
- Foster discussions that would inform the development to better serve the local community.
- Explore innovative methods of community consultation that include young people in a meaningful way.

Methodology

Beatfreeks, as the lead delivery partner, designed and facilitated the panel sessions with a flexible and reflexive approach. This methodology allowed the panel's discussions to evolve organically based on the interests and emerging priorities of the participants. The panel was composed of a mix of previous participants and new recruits to ensure diverse perspectives. The discussions were held both in-person and online, covering a wide range of topics relevant to the Thrive development.

Key Discussions

- **Employment Opportunities and Upskilling:** The panel emphasised the need for a variety of accessible employment pathways, including apprenticeships and clear career progression opportunities, particularly for young people.

- **Transportation and Accessibility:** Concerns were raised about the limitations of public transport to the Thrive site, particularly for young people within the travel to work area (including the urban area of Birmingham). The panel recommended shuttle services and green transportation options.
- **Community Engagement and Social Value:** The panel advocated for using local community platforms like Facebook to engage residents and ensure the site's social value initiatives are aligned with community needs.
- **Third Spaces and Community Connectivity:** While the discussion around third spaces was challenging due to the complexity of stakeholder priorities, the panel highlighted the importance of creating versatile, inclusive spaces that serve both employees and local residents.
- **Sustainability and Biodiversity:** The panel stressed the importance of integrating green spaces into the site and ensuring that IMP's sustainability efforts are communicated transparently to avoid perceptions of "greenwashing."
- **Industrial and Logistics Perceptions and Ethical Practices:** The panel explored the perceptions of the logistics sector and expressed a desire for the Thrive site to set high standards for worker welfare and sustainability.

Peddimore Site Visit

A visit to an existing IM Properties site and a new logistics operation provided the panel with firsthand insights into a modern logistics facility. This experience moderated some of their initial scepticism about the logistics sector, though questions remained around working practices and the depth and reach of the local community impact.

Key Learnings and Reflections:

- The need for careful consultation with the community, particularly regarding third spaces.
- The importance of including a broader range of stakeholders to fully understand community needs.
- The value of continued engagement with the panel to refine the development process.

Recommendations

1. **Continue Engagement with Current Panel Members:** Maintain ongoing involvement with the panel to leverage their insights for future developments.
2. **Wider Community Consultation:** Expand consultation efforts around third spaces, potentially using a peer research approach with current panel members.
3. **Establish a Young People Insights Partner:** Partner with an external youth consultation expert to ensure that young people's voices are accurately represented.
4. **Develop Clear Communication Strategies for Sustainability:** Prioritise transparent and accessible communication of sustainability efforts, emphasising their local impact.

Project Overview

Background and Context

IM Properties' local needs assessment strategy is a cornerstone of their Sustainable Futures initiative, within the "Place" pillar, which is designed to inform social value strategies relevant to each community they engage with on a project by project basis. The Sustainable Futures framework centres around creating long-lasting, community-centered developments that prioritize social value, environmental stewardship, and economic resilience. Guided by their "Seven Steps to Social Value," IM Properties commits to understanding and addressing specific community needs by embedding sustainable practices and localized benefits into every stage of their development process.

In 2023, IM Properties partnered with Beatfreeks to conduct in-depth research aimed at understanding the aspirations, concerns, and values of young people in Birmingham and North Warwickshire. This initial phase involved over 400 participants, spanning both urban and rural demographics, who shared perspectives on sustainability, employment, public space, and the impact of new developments. The research was methodologically comprehensive, incorporating focus groups and a local survey to ensure a wide demographic reach and capture nuanced insights in the vicinity of the site.

Urban participants voiced appreciation for city connectivity and local amenities, although they expressed concerns about community safety and declining high streets. Rural participants emphasized the value of green spaces and tranquility in their communities but noted challenges related to limited public transport and fewer local job opportunities. Across both groups, there was a strong, shared commitment to sustainability, with 76% of participants ranking it as a key priority. Many advocated for community-managed spaces, such as orchards, green areas, and outdoor recreational facilities, which they felt could foster a sense of belonging and well-being. Employment emerged as another central theme. While young people in urban areas were generally open to working in logistics and retail, rural participants had limited awareness of career options in these fields, viewing local roles as largely temporary or entry-level. Both groups expressed a strong desire for accessible, diverse job opportunities close to home.

Building on these initial findings, IM Properties and Beatfreeks went on to launch a youth panel to sustain engagement with young people as the Thrive site development progressed. The youth panel has provided an interactive platform where young voices can directly inform IM Properties' planning and implementation. This initiative plays a significant role in IM Properties' commitment to continually adapting their developments based on real, evolving community needs, ensuring their projects serve as true assets to local residents.

Through research with Beatfreeks and the youth panel, IM Properties has refined a model of local needs assessment that prioritizes inclusivity, transparency, and sustainability. Their strategy has

gone beyond initial engagement, fostering an iterative process that incorporates broader community feedback into ongoing development planning.

Objectives

- To connect with young people from the local area, providing them with a platform to voice their opinions, needs, and aspirations.
- To foster constructive and insightful discussions regarding the Thrive development, focusing on how it can best serve the local community.
- To explore and develop ongoing methods of community consultation that extend beyond traditional forums, ensuring young people have a continuous role in shaping their environment.

Methodology

Fostering a secure and supportive environment where participants, especially young people, feel comfortable sharing their experiences, perspectives, and opinions is central to the Beatfreeks methodology. By building trust and authenticity, we are able to gather meaningful insights that truly reflect the thoughts and emotions of young people.

For this project, our methodology was designed to be flexible and responsive, evolving with the needs and interests of the young people involved. While we initially identified key themes based on preliminary research and workshops, the discussions naturally shifted, revealing new areas of importance that had not been anticipated. This organic evolution underscores our commitment to an iterative process where the voices of young people actively shape the direction of the conversation.

Throughout the six-month engagement, we maintained this flexible approach, adapting the format and structure of our sessions to address emerging priorities and interests. For example, while our initial focus was on themes like employment opportunities and sustainability, the discussions expanded to include significant conversations about the consultation process and the design of industrial spaces—topics that became critically important to the panel.

A key element of our methodology was the integration of reflexive practice. We regularly reviewed the process with all engaged parties, to identify areas for improvement and to ensure the process remained dynamic and responsive. This reflective approach allowed us to make necessary adjustments, such as increasing in-person engagement opportunities, culminating in an impactful site visit to Peddimore.

Panel Structure and Design

Beatfreeks led the design and delivery of the panel discussions, working in tandem with IM Properties to reflect on potential and emerging topics. This collaborative approach allowed the panel to remain flexible and responsive to the evolving priorities and interests of the panellists.

Several in-person sessions were held where IM Properties representatives were present, providing the panel with the opportunity to directly ask questions and engage with them. These were complemented by online sessions led by the Beatfreeks delivery team and onsite visits to key locations, ensuring a comprehensive and varied engagement experience.

The panel ran from May 2024 to September 2024, covering key topics including;

- Employment Opportunities and Upskilling
- Transportation and Accessibility
- Community Engagement and Social Value
- Third Spaces and Community Connectivity
- Sustainability and Biodiversity
- Logistics Perceptions and Ethical Practices

However, these topics emerged and evolved over time, deviating slightly from the original plan as the process remained reflexive, allowing the panel's interests and insights to guide the discussions toward what was most important to them. At each step of the way, the panel's discussions were also informed by an understanding of what was in 'scope' i.e. those issues that could be reasonably influenced by IM Properties as a developer/investor.

The Panellists

To ensure a diverse and balanced representation, the panel was composed of a mix of participants—some who had been previously engaged through earlier research initiatives, and others who were newly recruited for this phase. This approach was intentionally designed to prevent the discussions from becoming an echo chamber, allowing us to introduce fresh perspectives and critically revisit and challenge the findings from previous discussions.

Name	Age	Gender	Location	Profession	Engagement
Sophie	27	Female	Lea Marston	Education	New Participant
Tendai	31	Male	Castle Bromwich	Self-employed	New Participant
Michelle	35	Female	Sutton Coldfield	Security	New Participant
James	34	Male	Erdington	Construction	New Participant

Daquan	26	Male	Erdington	Student	Previous Participant
Megan	26	Female	Tamworth	Full-time Parent	Previous Participant
Zak	24	Male	Chelmsley Wood	Security	Previous Participant
Victoria	27	Female	Castle Bromwich	Administration	Previous Participant

Discussions

The primary ambition of the IM Properties Young People Panel was to reflect on key focus areas related to the Thrive site and potentially wider developments. To set the stage, the panel first met with the IM Properties team in person for an extensive session where they were provided with information on the site and its progress to date. This initial meeting allowed the panel to familiarise themselves with IM Properties, the Thrive site, and previous work, including research conducted by Beatfreeks and the Local Needs Assessment conducted by Turley.

Following this foundational session, the panel engaged in a series of discussions, both in person and online, over the course of six months. These sessions were designed to allow for in-depth exploration of the identified focus areas, enabling the panel to ask questions, receive relevant information, and discuss what they consider to be key challenges and opportunities per subject area.



Employment Opportunities and Upskilling

Variety and Accessibility of Employment Pathways

The panel were presented with the variety of roles that would be available on the Thrive site, including administrative office roles, grounds and security, logistics and manufacturing, and management. They were then asked to reflect on who they think would be the primary employee on a site like Thrive, and what support they would need to connect them with these employment opportunities.

The panel strongly emphasised the importance of offering a variety of accessible employment pathways, especially for young people who may not follow traditional academic routes.

Apprenticeships were highlighted as a crucial option, providing a valuable combination of earning while learning. These programmes allow young people to gain practical experience alongside their studies, which is particularly important for roles within logistics and other sectors. As Victoria stated, *"Not everyone is going to go to university, so there needs to be more options like apprenticeships that are easy to find and apply for."* The panel agreed that providing a range of entry-level positions across different sectors would attract a broader spectrum of young talent, making the Thrive site a more inclusive workplace.

Promoting Employment Opportunities

The panel highlighted the importance of effectively promoting employment opportunities to young people. Many young people are unaware of the job opportunities available to them, particularly in new developments like the Thrive site. The panel suggested using targeted social media campaigns, collaborating with schools and universities, and hosting job fairs or open days as effective ways to reach potential employees. They also recommended that employers actively engage with the local community to raise awareness about the types of jobs available and the benefits of working at the Thrive site. Megan highlighted, *"Sometimes people don't apply for jobs because they don't know they exist or don't understand what the job is about. More needs to be done to promote these opportunities."* The panel went on to discuss how many of the jobs we had been discussing, such as administrative office roles, may not be the first thing people think of when thinking of the employment opportunities on sites like Thrive. They suggested that the promotion of the employment opportunities shouldn't be ambiguous, e.g. "We have created 1000 as a result of this development", but to be specific about the types of roles available to attract a diverse range of people and skills.

Focus on Upskilling and Continuous Learning

Upskilling and continuous learning were identified as critical components of career development. The panellists stressed the importance of employers offering opportunities for employees to develop new skills and advance within the company. There was a strong desire for employers to provide clear and structured career progression pathways, which include opportunities for further education and training. James noted, *"It's important that companies invest in their employees' development. If you're stuck in the same role with no chance to learn new things, you're more likely to leave."* The panel agreed that upskilling should be an ongoing process integrated into the workplace culture, available to all employees regardless of their starting position, to foster a more equitable and motivated workforce.

Importance of Inclusivity and Support

The discussion also touched on the importance of inclusivity in the workplace, particularly in supporting those who may face barriers to employment, such as individuals with disabilities or long-term health conditions. The panel stressed that employers should be proactive in creating an inclusive environment where all employees feel valued and supported. This includes offering flexible working arrangements, providing mental health support, and ensuring that workplace

policies accommodate the needs of all workers. Michelle noted, *"Employers need to do more than just hire people; they need to support them once they're in the job, especially if they have additional needs."*

Recommendations from the Youth Panel

1. **Expand Apprenticeship and Entry-Level Opportunities:** The panel recommended that employers, including those involved in the Thrive development, should expand their apprenticeship programmes and offer a broader range of entry-level positions across various sectors. This would make employment more accessible to young people who do not follow traditional educational routes and would help diversify the talent pool.
2. **Implement Clear Career Progression Pathways:** Employers should develop and communicate clear career progression pathways that include opportunities for upskilling and further education. By doing so, they can attract and retain young talent by providing them with a clear vision of their future within the company.
3. **Create an Inclusive and Supportive Work Environment:** The panel recommended that employers prioritise inclusivity by offering flexible working arrangements and providing the necessary support for employees with additional needs. This would help create a more equitable workplace and improve employee retention.
4. **Enhance Communication and Engagement Strategies:** To effectively promote employment opportunities, employers should enhance their communication strategies by using social media, engaging with local educational institutions, and hosting community events. These efforts would help to increase awareness of available jobs and encourage young people to consider the Thrive site as a viable place to work.

Transportation and Accessibility

The panel was shown the geography of the proposed Thrive site in North Warwickshire, along with a general outline of the scale of the development. They were then asked to reflect on the connectivity to the site, particularly considering how people travelling from the travel to work area (including the urban area of Birmingham) might access the area.

Challenges with Current Transportation Options

The panellists expressed concerns about the limitations of existing public transportation, particularly for those who do not drive. They highlighted the unreliability and infrequency of public transport services, especially in more rural areas, which can make commuting to work difficult. Many participants noted that their only option to get to similar sites has been through carpooling or relying on others for transportation. Daquan shared, *"In my experience, the transport to logistics sites is usually limited, and without a car, it can be nearly impossible to get there easily"*.

The panel's reflections highlighted the potential challenges of accessing the Thrive site, especially for young people travelling from a wider area. According to a Department for Travel Survey, only a

third of young people aged 17-25 hold a full driving licence.[1] This situation points to a need for more dependable public transport options that can serve the Thrive site effectively.

Importance of Shuttle Services and Connectivity

The panel strongly supported the idea of introducing shuttle services that connect the Thrive site with nearby urban centres and transport hubs. These services could operate at key times during the day to accommodate typical working hours and could be extended to cover late shifts, which are common in logistics and manufacturing roles. *"Having shuttle buses from town centres that are accessible, and timed to coincide with shift changes, would make a huge difference,"* Megan suggested. This would not only make the site more accessible but also create additional employment opportunities, such as drivers for these services.

Affordability and Financial Support for Transportation

The cost of transportation was another significant concern. Many young people on lower incomes find the cost of commuting to work prohibitive, particularly if they have to rely on taxis or other expensive alternatives due to a lack of public transport. The panel proposed that employers could offer financial incentives or subsidies for transportation costs, such as covering part of the fare for shuttle services or offering carpool incentives. This suggestion was aimed at reducing the financial burden on young workers, making it more feasible for them to take up roles at the Thrive site. As Zak noted, *"If companies could help cover transport costs, it would make jobs at Thrive more accessible for those who need it most".*

Environmental Impact and Green Transportation Options

Sustainability was a recurring theme, with the panel advocating for environmentally friendly transportation solutions wherever possible. They suggested that the Thrive site could lead by example by integrating green transport options such as electric shuttle buses, secure bicycle storage, and e-scooter facilities. Tendai mentioned, *"Providing secure bike racks and promoting cycling would encourage more people to use greener modes of transport"*. The idea of having well-lit, safe walking and cycling paths was also discussed as a way to reduce the site's carbon footprint while promoting healthier lifestyles.

Recommendations from the Youth Panel

1. **Implement Shuttle Services:** Introduce reliable shuttle services connecting the Thrive site with nearby urban centres and transport hubs. These services should be timed to coincide with shift changes and should be available during both early morning and late evening hours to accommodate all workers.
2. **Offer Transportation Subsidies:** Provide financial support to employees for their commute, such as subsidising shuttle fares or offering incentives for carpooling. This would make

[1] Chatterjee, K., Goodwin, P., Schwanen, T., Clark, B., Jain, J., Melia, S., Middleton, J., Plyushteva, A., Ricci, M., Santos, G., & Stokes, G. (2018). Young People's Travel–What's Changed and Why? Review and Analysis.

employment at the Thrive site more accessible to young people from various economic backgrounds.

3. **Promote Green Transportation:** Incorporate environmentally friendly transportation options, including electric shuttle buses, secure bike racks, and e-scooter facilities. Ensure that the site design includes safe and well-lit pathways for pedestrians and cyclists to encourage the use of sustainable transport.

Community Engagement and Social Value

Leveraging Local Community Platforms for Effective Engagement

Community engagement was a significant focus of the panel's discussions, with a strong consensus that social media platforms such as local community Facebook pages are one of the most effective avenues to connect with the communities that Thrive seeks to engage with. The panel emphasised the importance of utilising these platforms to ensure that the Thrive site's community engagement and social value efforts are truly reflective of the localised and granular needs and perspectives of the surrounding area.

The panel recognized that effective community communication is crucial for building trust and fostering a sense of ownership among local residents. By actively participating in and contributing to these community-driven platforms, Thrive can ensure that its initiatives are both relevant and impactful. Sophie noted, *"I use my community Facebook page to keep up to date with what's going on, I've always found it really helpful and informative ... that may be a good place to start."*

The discussion underscored the value of tailoring communications to meet the community where they are, ensuring that feedback loops are established and that residents feel their voices are being heard and acted upon. This approach will not only help in aligning Thrive's social value initiatives with the community's needs but will also strengthen the relationship between Thrive and the local population, fostering long-term engagement and support.

Face-to-face Community Engagement

As part of the discussions around community engagement, the panel introduced the innovative idea of the "Thrive Tour Bus." This concept was envisioned as a mobile outreach tool designed to bring the Thrive site directly to the community, making it more accessible and transparent. The Thrive Tour Bus would serve as a dynamic way to demystify the development process, allowing people to see firsthand what the site is about, learn about the opportunities it will bring, and engage directly with IM Properties representatives.

The panel recognized that while social media platforms like local community Facebook pages are effective for reaching residents, there is also significant value in face-to-face interactions, especially when it comes to building trust and fostering a deeper understanding of the Thrive project. The Thrive Tour Bus would complement these digital efforts by providing a physical

presence within the community, where residents can ask questions, share their concerns, and see the development plans up close.

The bus could travel to various neighbourhoods, particularly those that are further afield and might feel disconnected from the Thrive site due to distance or lack of transport options. By bringing the site to them, the bus can bridge the gap between the development and the community, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to engage with the project, regardless of their location.

Moreover, the Thrive Tour Bus could be a platform for showcasing the social value initiatives associated with the project. It could highlight how the site plans to support local businesses, create jobs, and enhance community assets. Informational displays, interactive presentations, and even small workshops could be held on the bus to educate the community about the site's sustainability efforts, biodiversity plans, and long-term commitments to social value.

It was noted that such an approach could support the development at any point of its 'lifetime', including early planning stages, construction and operation.

Supporting and Enhancing Existing Community Assets

The panel emphasised that any community engagement strategy should focus on supporting and enhancing what already exists within the community rather than imposing new structures without proper consultation. Participants pointed out that communities often have established networks and resources that can be leveraged to create more impactful and sustainable outcomes. Victoria noted, *"It's about supporting and enhancing what's already there, not just coming in and building something new without understanding the community's needs."*

The panellists highlighted the importance of investing in local initiatives that provide tangible benefits to the community, such as employment training programmes, support for local businesses, and charitable activities. There was a strong belief that the Thrive site should contribute to the local economy by prioritising local procurement and creating opportunities for small businesses. *"Thrive should be encouraging local procurement and supporting small businesses is key to keeping the money circulating in the local community,"* Tendai remarked. The panel also discussed the importance of transparency in these efforts, ensuring that the community is aware of the social value being generated and how it is being measured.

Long-Term Commitment and Accountability

The panel also highlighted the importance of a long-term commitment to community engagement. They cautioned against one-off initiatives that do not have lasting impact, stressing the need for ongoing dialogue and regular reviews of the engagement strategy to ensure it remains relevant and effective. James emphasised, "*It can't just be a tick-box exercise. There needs to be a long-term commitment to the community, with regular check-ins to make sure that what they're doing is actually working*". This ongoing engagement would help build trust between the Thrive site and the

local community, ensuring that the development is seen as a positive addition rather than an imposition.

Recommendations from the Youth Panel

1. **Engage with Existing Community Networks:** The Thrive site should focus on building relationships with existing community networks and organisations to ensure that its contributions are aligned with local needs. This includes supporting community initiatives that are already making a positive impact and finding ways to enhance their effectiveness.
2. **Prioritise Local Procurement and Employment:** To maximise social value, the site should prioritise local procurement and create employment opportunities for local residents. This could involve working with local businesses, offering training programmes, and ensuring that job opportunities at Thrive are accessible to all segments of the community.
3. **Commit to Long-Term Community Investment:** Establish a long-term commitment to community investment that includes regular reviews and adjustments to the engagement strategy. This commitment should be transparent, with clear metrics for measuring social value and regular reporting to the community on progress and outcomes.

Third Spaces and Community Connectivity

The panellists were presented with the concept of “third space”, which refers to a social environment that is distinct from the two primary social environments of home (the "first space") and work (the "second space"). Third spaces are public or semi-public places where people gather, interact, and build community outside of their private lives and professional obligations.

They were then shown a preliminary mock-up of the Thrive site, and the dedicated space that will be utilised for community engagement and serve a third space function. The panel were tasked to explore what they would consider to be an impactful use of the space, engaging both the local community and the employed occupants of the Thrive site.

The panel found this discussion challenging, primarily due to the complexity of balancing diverse stakeholder priorities and navigating potential limitations inherent in such projects. Despite these challenges, they raised several insightful points, demonstrating a thoughtful consideration of how the third space could effectively serve its intended purpose while accommodating the needs and expectations of all involved parties.

The Role of Third Spaces in Community Engagement

They emphasised that the space should be designed to cater to a broad audience, including both employees of the Thrive site and local residents. The goal is to create environments that encourage people to spend time, engage in activities, and build connections. The panel also noted that these spaces could serve as a bridge between the site and the surrounding community, helping to break down barriers and foster a sense of belonging. This is particularly important in ensuring that the Thrive site is not seen as an isolated business park but as an integral part of the local community.

Versatility and Flexibility of Spaces

A recurring theme was the need for third spaces to be versatile and adaptable to different uses over time. The panel discussed how these spaces could be designed to accommodate a variety of activities, from arts and cultural events to educational workshops and community meetings. This flexibility would ensure that the spaces remain relevant and useful as the needs of the community evolve. *"We need spaces that can be used for anything. It's about being flexible and thinking ahead. We don't want the space to become redundant and unused"*, Tendai remarked.

Additionally, the panel suggested that these spaces should not feel solely commercial or tied to the businesses operating within the site. Instead, they should be marketed and presented as true community assets, open to all and not restricted by commercial interests. This approach would help ensure that the spaces are welcoming and accessible to a diverse range of people. As a logical extension to this, the notion of community ownership was briefly discussed.

Integration with the Local Community

The importance of integrating these third spaces with the broader community was another significant point of discussion. The panellists suggested that the Thrive site could host regular events, such as markets, food festivals, and outdoor cinemas, to draw in local residents and create a sense of excitement around the site. These events could serve as a way to introduce the community to the space, helping to build a relationship between the site and the local population. The panel also emphasised the importance of accessibility, ensuring that these spaces are easy to reach and use for everyone, including those with disabilities or limited mobility. This includes providing clear signage, safe walking paths, and accessible facilities throughout the site.

Long-Term Community Connectivity

The discussions underscored the need for a long-term strategy to maintain and enhance community connectivity through these third spaces. The panellists recommended ongoing engagement with the community to ensure that the spaces continue to meet their needs and remain vibrant over time. This could involve regular surveys, community meetings, and collaborative planning sessions to gather feedback and ideas. Sophie noted, *"It's important that IM Properties keep talking to the community to understand what they need and how we can keep these spaces alive and useful"*. Additionally, the panel discussed the potential for these spaces to support local initiatives and projects, further embedding the Thrive site within the fabric of the community. This could include offering space for local groups to meet, hosting community workshops, or providing facilities for educational programmes.

The Importance of Social Infrastructure in Third Spaces

The discussion on third spaces within the Thrive site highlighted the essential role of social infrastructure—community resources and physical spaces that support social interactions and activities. Social infrastructure, as emphasised in the *Levelling Up Local Outcomes* report by Reform, is crucial for empowering communities, fostering social cohesion, and providing access to essential services. Social infrastructure offers neutral, accessible places where residents can gather, reducing social isolation and strengthening community bonds. Additionally, it supports local businesses and initiatives, contributing to the economic resilience of the area. For the Thrive site, ensuring that third spaces are designed with robust social infrastructure in mind will help transform these areas into vibrant, community-driven assets that provide long-term social and economic benefits.[2]

Recommendations from the Youth Panel

1. **Design Versatile and Inclusive Third Spaces:** Create third spaces that are versatile and adaptable, capable of hosting a wide range of activities from cultural events to community meetings. These spaces should be marketed as community assets, not just extensions of the business park, to ensure they are welcoming and accessible to all.
2. **Host Regular Community Events:** To foster engagement and connectivity, the Thrive site should host regular events that draw in local residents, such as markets, festivals, and outdoor cinemas. These events will help build a strong connection between the site and the community, making the site a destination for more than just work.
3. **Ensure Accessibility and Inclusivity:** Make sure that all third spaces are easily accessible, with clear signage, safe pathways, and facilities that accommodate people with disabilities. This will ensure that everyone in the community can use and enjoy these spaces.
4. **Maintain Ongoing Community Engagement:** Establish a long-term strategy for community engagement, including regular feedback loops through surveys, meetings, and collaborative planning. This will help ensure that the spaces continue to meet the community's needs and adapt to changing circumstances.

Sustainability, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Green Space

During the first in-person session with IM Properties, the panel was walked through IM Properties commitments to sustainability and biodiversity. IM Properties emphasised the progressive nature of the project, particularly highlighting their intent to enhance the site's biodiversity by 15%. To gauge the panel's understanding, IM Properties queried their perceptions of biodiversity — a complex and multifaceted concept that is often misunderstood or oversimplified.

Sustainability emerged as a recurring theme throughout all discussions, weaving into various aspects of the panel's conversations. In contrast, the topic of biodiversity was more contained, surfacing primarily during specific sessions or when IM Properties representatives were present, as they were able to provide valuable context on the initiatives. The discussion around biodiversity was further enriched following the visit to the Peddimore site, where the panel had the opportunity

[2] All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Left Behind Neighbourhoods & Local Trust. (2023). Levelling Up: Local Outcomes.

to reflect on a tangible example of biodiversity in action. This experience allowed for a deeper, more informed conversation on how such initiatives could be effectively integrated into the Thrive site.

Green Spaces and Employee Well-being

The panel placed significant emphasis on the importance of integrating green spaces into the Thrive site. They discussed how these spaces not only contribute to environmental sustainability but also enhance the well-being of those who work on or visit the site. The presence of wildlife and natural areas was seen as a critical component of the site's appeal, offering a sense of escape and tranquillity within an otherwise industrial setting. These discussions are supported by findings from a study by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), which highlights the positive impact that green spaces can have on mental health and overall well-being. According to CPRE, access to green spaces can reduce stress, improve mood, and promote physical activity, further underlining the importance of incorporating natural elements into urban and industrial developments.[3]

Authentic Sustainability Practices

The panel expressed concern about the prevalence of "greenwashing," where organisations market themselves as environmentally responsible without making meaningful efforts to mitigate their environmental impact. They emphasised that the Thrive site must remain committed to its sustainability promises and ensure that its messaging around these efforts is both authentic and transparent. The panel acknowledged that this is a challenging balance to maintain, but it is crucial for building trust with the community.

The panel urged IM Properties to avoid the pitfalls of superficial sustainability gestures—such as planting a few trees—without addressing the broader environmental impact of the site. They stressed the importance of a holistic approach that genuinely reflects the site's commitment to sustainability throughout its development and operations. By ensuring that the sustainability practices at Thrive are not only substantive but also clearly communicated, IM Properties can avoid the perception of greenwashing and demonstrate a true dedication to making a positive environmental impact.

Promoting and Communicating Sustainability Efforts

Effective communication of the site's sustainability initiatives was seen as crucial by the panel. They discussed how these efforts should be transparently communicated to the community, not only to demonstrate the site's commitment to environmental stewardship but also to engage and educate the public. The panel suggested that marketing should focus on the tangible benefits of these initiatives and how they contribute to local biodiversity. They also warned against over-promoting these efforts in a way that could be perceived as disingenuous. As Michelle pointed

[3] Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE). (n.d.). Mental Health and Green Spaces.

out, *"There needs to be a balance in showcasing what's being done without it coming across as just patting themselves on the back".*

Public Awareness and Understanding

During the discussions on biodiversity and sustainability, the panel underscored the importance of making these efforts accessible and understandable to the general public. While IM Properties is doing commendable work in these areas, the panel highlighted the risk that the communication of these initiatives could be lost in translation if the language used is too sector-specific or technical. They emphasised the need for IM Properties to prioritise clarity and accessibility when communicating their sustainability and biodiversity commitments.

The panel recommended that IM Properties tailor their messaging to non-experts, ensuring that the language is straightforward and relatable. They also stressed the importance of highlighting the localised and community-specific impacts of these efforts. By focusing on how these initiatives directly benefit the local community, such as through improved green spaces, increased biodiversity, or enhanced well-being, IM Properties can ensure that residents are not only informed but also engaged and supportive of the work being done. This approach would help bridge the gap between technical achievements and public perception, making the positive impacts of these initiatives more tangible and meaningful to the community.

Community Involvement and Engagement

The panel highlighted the importance of involving the community in the site's sustainability and biodiversity efforts. They suggested that the Thrive site could engage local residents through initiatives like community gardens, educational programmes about local ecosystems, and events that allow people to experience the site's natural areas firsthand. This could also include social media campaigns that encourage visitors to share their experiences of the site's biodiversity, helping to create a sense of ownership and pride within the community. One idea discussed was to create a hashtag for visitors to use when posting about the wildlife they encounter on site, which would help to naturally promote the site's biodiversity efforts without feeling forced.

Recommendations from the Youth Panel

1. **Prioritise Genuine and Holistic Sustainability Efforts:** The Thrive site should focus on implementing comprehensive sustainability practices that address the full environmental impact of its operations. This includes integrating extensive green spaces that support local wildlife and contribute to the well-being of both employees and visitors.
2. **Transparent and Balanced Communication:** IM Properties should ensure that its sustainability efforts are communicated transparently and authentically, avoiding the pitfalls of greenwashing. The focus should be on educating the community about the tangible benefits of these efforts and how they contribute to local and global environmental goals.

3. **Engage the Community in Biodiversity Initiatives:** The site should actively involve the local community in its sustainability and biodiversity efforts through educational programmes, community gardens, and interactive events. This could help build a stronger connection between the site and the community, fostering a shared commitment to environmental stewardship.
4. **Use Social Media to Promote Biodiversity:** Encourage visitors to share their experiences of the site's biodiversity on social media, using a designated hashtag. This grassroots approach to promotion can help build awareness and appreciation of the site's natural areas, contributing to a positive public image without over-relying on traditional marketing techniques.

Industrial and Logistics Perceptions

While Industrial and Logistics Perceptions were not originally identified as key focus areas, it quickly became apparent that this was a topic the panel was eager to explore. Although the plans for the Thrive site are still in their early stages, and it remains unclear who the eventual occupants will be, the panel was informed that the site would likely be occupied by businesses in manufacturing and logistics, at a variety of scales and potentially different economic sectors. This prompted the panel to delve into the practices of logistics businesses specifically, recognizing the significant impact these industries have on both the environment and the community.

As the panel's interest in this topic grew, we dedicated multiple sessions to exploring it in depth. These discussions culminated in a dedicated session focused on the contribution of, and practices within the logistics sector, and the wider environment within which such developments sit. A site visit to one of IM Properties developments provided the panel with firsthand insights into the operations of a modern logistics facility, enriching their understanding and enabling a more nuanced discussion about the practices and potential impacts of logistics businesses, including similar businesses that might occupy the Thrive site.

Perceptions of Logistics

The panel initially expressed concerns about the working conditions in the logistics sector, describing environments they perceived as prioritising efficiency, sometimes at the expense of worker well-being. Panel members shared personal anecdotes and stories they had heard, which painted a picture of challenging work environments with high turnover rates and the temporary nature of many jobs contributing to a perceived lack of job security and satisfaction. Michelle noted that these factors could lead to lower job satisfaction among workers.

Business Practices

The panel also discussed the broader implications of logistics operations, including the drive for efficiency. Many panellists remarked on the difficulty of reconciling the need for business profitability and the highest standards of employee welfare (including hours worked, appropriate breaks, ability to use amenity spaces etc). This discussion highlighted the panel's desire for the

Thrive site to set a higher standard. As Tendai commented "*a progressive employment park should adopt progressive ethics*". It was noted that whilst IM Properties had high ambitions for the Thrive site, some issues would be beyond its direct control.

That said, the panel suggested that the site developers should take a more active role in vetting the companies that lease space, ensuring they adhere to ethical labour practices. This could include accommodating tenants that pay a living wage, provide safe working conditions, prioritise employee welfare and support unionisation efforts. Victoria suggested, *"It would be great if the site could be known for hosting companies that are ethical and treat their workers well, rather than just being another business park".*

Impact on Community Perception

The reputation of logistics companies, particularly in relation to how they treat their employees, was seen as a significant factor that could influence community perception of the Thrive site. The panel expressed concern that the notion of logistics occupiers taking space at the site could undermine the positive aspects of the development.. To counteract this, the panel suggested that the Thrive site should actively promote its commitment to ethical practices and community engagement. This could involve supporting and promoting an ethical agenda, hosting community events that showcase the positive contributions of the site, and providing transparency about what goes on within the buildings on the Thrive site.

Promoting Ethical and Sustainable Practices

The discussion also touched on the importance of sustainability alongside ethical labour practices. The panel expressed a desire for the Thrive site to lead by example, not only in how it treats its workers but also in how it manages its environmental impact. This includes adopting green logistics practices, such as reducing carbon emissions through the use of electric vehicles and optimising supply chains to minimise waste. The panel felt that the Thrive site could become a model for sustainable and ethical logistics by integrating these practices into its operations from the outset.

Recommendations from the Youth Panel

1. **Promote Ethical Standards for Tenants:** The panel recommended that IM Properties promote and actively seek occupiers with high ethical standards and employee welfare.
2. **Promote Transparency and Accountability:** To build trust with the community, the Thrive site should regularly report on the working conditions and ethical practices of the companies operating there. This transparency can help counteract negative perceptions and demonstrate the site's commitment to high standards.
3. **Engage with the Community:** The site should engage with the local community through events and initiatives that highlight the positive impacts of the logistics and wider operations on site, including job creation, community investment, and sustainable practices.

4. **Adopt and Promote Sustainable Practices:** The panel also recommended that the Thrive site adopt sustainable industrial and logistics practices, such as using electric vehicles and minimising waste, to reduce its environmental impact and align with broader community values.

Peddimore Site Visit

The visit to Peddimore was a pivotal moment for the youth panel, providing an opportunity to directly observe the operations of a modern logistics facility and to explore the wider environment within which such developments sit. The visit aimed to challenge preconceived notions and provide the panel with a clearer understanding of what working in a state-of-the-art logistics building and modern employment environment entails.

The Opening Briefing Meeting

The Young People panel, accompanied by the IM Properties and Beatfreeks project team, were given an informative tour of a building at Peddimore, led by the General Manager of the site. The visit began with an introduction to the facility. The discussion covered:

- The nature of the operation
- Operational goals and meeting customer requirements/expectations (including shortening delivery times)
- The diversity of employment roles from entry level to management and leadership
- Progression opportunities
- Community projects and initiatives
- Volunteering and fundraising

The Building Tour

Following the initial briefing, the group was then taken on a tour of the building, which spanned both the ground and first floors. The tour provided the panel with a comprehensive look at the logistics process, from the arrival of products to their handling, distribution, and eventual dispatch.

A key highlight of the tour was the introduction to the automation designed to assist employees in their roles, making tasks more manageable and efficient. It was noted that there are opportunities for employees to rotate between different roles depending on their training, preferences, and the availability of tasks on any given day. Insights was also given into the occupiers' data-driven approach to stocking products and responding efficiently to customer needs.



In Discussion with the General Manager

After the tour, the group reconvened in the meeting room for a more reflective discussion.

The panel inquired about the various shifts and contracts available to employees. They were advised that the most common contract involves working four 10-hour shifts, followed by four days off, with two 30-minute breaks during each shift. The opportunity for “donut” shifts, which feature one to two days off between two-day working patterns, and term-time only shifts were also highlighted, as part of the businesses commitment to accommodating employees needs.

The panel also expressed interest in career development opportunities and were advised that career advancement is accessible to any employee who demonstrates strong performance and has a clean disciplinary record. It was added that the occupier supports employee growth through training and provides opportunities to move to different sites, which can accelerate career progression. Notably, it covers the cost of any training that employees wish to pursue, to support an individual's development (even if it is unrelated to their current role), with the example of an employee attending cookery school, a benefit that was well-received by the panel.

Employee turnover was questioned by the Panel. They were advised that it had not been an issue at the site and that there was high interest in working at this site. It was added that new sites are typically launched with experienced staff who may move temporarily to help establish the new location, creating new opportunities at existing sites.

The Peddimore Estate Tour

In addition to the building tour, the panel was given a tour of the broader Peddimore site by IM Properties, the developers behind the project. IM Properties provided a bus for the panellists, allowing them to fully explore the site’s scale and structure.

The panel was introduced to the site’s biodiversity initiatives, which include a brook, wildflowers, and habitats for insects such as butterflies. The panel appreciated seeing these efforts in action, along with observing members of the public using the pathways for activities like dog walking and running.IM Properties also discussed the potential use of third spaces on the site and their plans for public



art (as part of a public art strategy).

They are in the process of commissioning local artists to collaborate with the community, bringing colour, interest and culture to the area.

Key Observations from the Visit

First Impressions and Site Environment

Upon arrival at the Peddimore site, the panel was immediately struck by the scale and cleanliness of the warehouse. The site's spaciousness, natural light, and advanced technology were noted as significant departures from the panel's initial expectations. Many panellists had anticipated a more chaotic and cramped environment, as is often portrayed in media representations of logistics facilities. Instead, they found the warehouse to be calm, well-organised, and technologically advanced, which positively shifted their perceptions.
Megan remarked on the surprising amount of natural light in the facility, highlighting how even small design elements, such as large windows, contributed to a more pleasant working environment. *"Even the simple things like having windows to let in natural light make a big difference. It's not what I expected from a warehouse at all,"*.

Automation and Job Roles

The tour revealed the extent to which automation is integrated into the operations at the Peddimore site. While there were concerns that automation might reduce job opportunities, the panel learned that it actually creates new, more skilled roles that require specialised training. The presence of robotic facilities designed to assist with the handling and distribution of products was particularly impressive to the panellists. Zak noted, *"I thought automation would just mean fewer jobs, but it actually seems to create more skilled jobs that might be better for the workers in the long run"*.

Working Conditions and Employee Experience

Despite the positive aspects observed during the building tour, the panel felt that matters relating to the whole working experience had not been sufficiently addressed. They appreciated the efforts made to provide a good working environment, such as the availability of various shift patterns to accommodate different employee needs, including term-time only shifts for parents. However, the lack of interaction with the workers themselves made it difficult to gauge their overall experiences and satisfaction levels. Many panellists expressed a desire for more candid conversations with the employees, saying, *"It would have been nice to talk directly with the workers to really understand what it's like to work here day-to-day"*.

Community Engagement and Social Initiatives

The panel expressed surprise upon learning about the community initiatives in place, noting that, given the scale of the brand, they expected nothing less. However, they also indicated that they would have appreciated some tangible evidence of these efforts. While the discussion highlighted the occupiers community engagement activities, such as volunteer days and charity fundraising, the panel felt the conversation would have benefited from more substance. They acknowledged these efforts but questioned whether they were sufficient to address the broader concerns often associated with working in the logistics sector. The panel emphasised the need for these initiatives to be more than just surface-level gestures and called for greater transparency and evidence to substantiate any occupier's claims of community support.

Reflecting on the Post-Visit Discussion Two Weeks Later

The visit to the Peddimore site was instrumental in contextualising some of the panel's perceptions about the logistics sector and employment parks. The experience highlighted the disparity between media portrayals and the reality of working in a modern logistics facility. Many panellists left with a more nuanced understanding, recognizing both the quality of working conditions and the ongoing challenges that need to be addressed. However, the visit also reinforced the importance of transparency and genuine employee engagement. The panel's concern regarding the whole working experience, underscores the need for continued dialogue and for logistics companies to be more open about their practices.

The panel were provided with a short survey before and after the Peddimore visit to capture their perceptions in certain areas, such as working environment, green spaces, health and safety and use of technology. Two weeks after the visit, the panel reconvened in the final session of the six-month panel to reflect on their experiences and if/how the visit had impacted their perceptions. Several key themes emerged from this discussion.

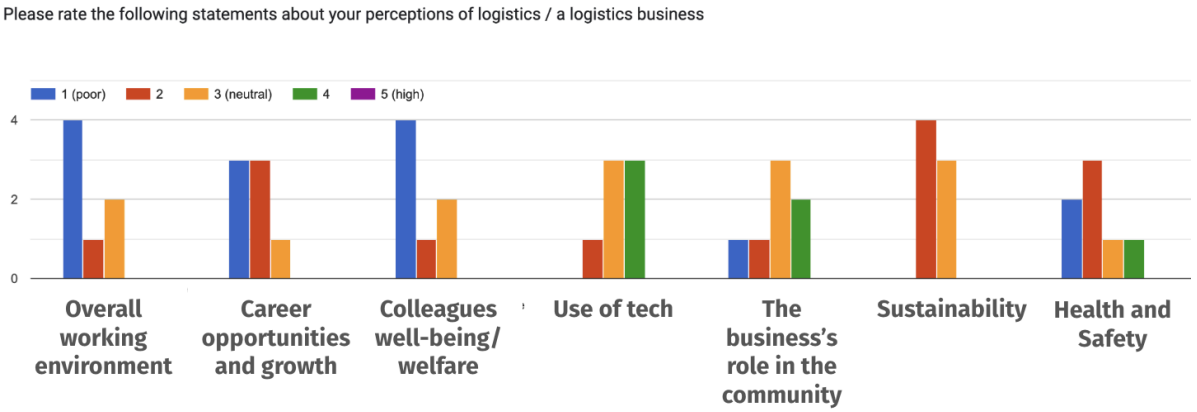
Survey Findings: Pre- and Post-Visit Perceptions Data

Pre-Visit Survey

The pre-visit survey highlighted generally negative perceptions of the logistics sector among the participants. When asked about their expectations of the overall working environment, four participants rated it poorly, giving it a 1 out of 5, reflecting significant scepticism about working conditions in logistics. Two participants were more neutral, rating it a 3 out of 5. Similarly, perceptions of career opportunities and growth were also low, with three participants giving a 1 out of 5 and two rating it as neutral.

Concerns about colleague wellbeing and welfare were also prominent, with four participants rating this aspect poorly at 1 out of 5, indicating serious concerns about the support and facilities available to employees. Perceptions around the use of technology were slightly more varied; two participants rated this aspect positively with a 4 out of 5, while three remained neutral at 3 out of 5.

When it came to the logistics sector's role in the community, the responses were mostly neutral, with four participants rating it as 3 out of 5, reflecting a lack of strong opinions or awareness. However, two participants rated it lower, indicating some scepticism. Similarly, expectations around sustainability were mixed, with three participants giving a neutral rating and three rating it as 2 out of 5, suggesting doubts about the sector's commitment to environmental practices. Concerns about health and safety provisions were also evident, with four participants rating these poorly at 1 or 2 out of 5.

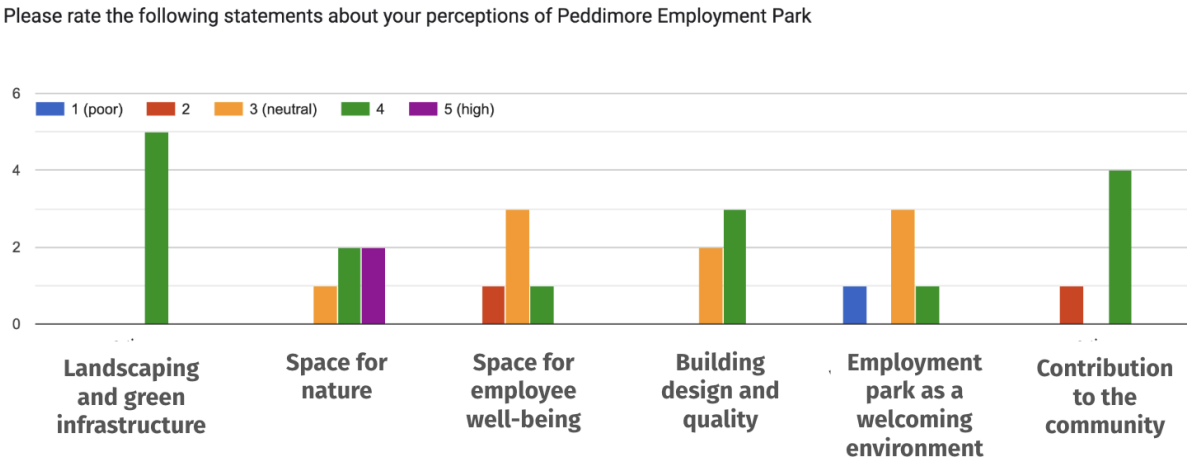


Post-Visit Survey

After the visit to Peddimore, participants' perceptions showed a noticeable shift, particularly in areas related to the physical environment and employee wellbeing. Regarding the park environment, four participants rated it positively with a 4 out of 5, indicating an improved perception after seeing the site's green infrastructure. Perceptions of space for nature were also positive, with two participants rating it as 5 out of 5 and three participants giving it a 4 out of 5, reflecting a strong appreciation for the integration of natural spaces at the site.

The survey also revealed improved perceptions of space for employee wellbeing, with two participants rating it as 4 out of 5. However, three participants remained neutral, rating it as 3 out of 5, suggesting that while there were improvements, some concerns about employee wellbeing persisted. The quality of the building design was also positively received, with three participants rating it as 4 out of 5.

When it came to the perception of employment parks as welcoming environments, the responses were more mixed. Two participants rated this aspect as 4 out of 5, showing improved perceptions, but three participants remained neutral or negative, indicating ongoing concerns about the inclusivity of such environments. Finally, perceptions of the park's contribution to the community also varied, with two participants rating it as 4 out of 5, while three rated it lower, suggesting that concerns about the depth and authenticity of these contributions remain.



Survey Reflections Discussion

Shift in Perceptions

The panellists discussed how the visit had moderated some of their negative perceptions of the logistics sector. Initially, many had rated their expectations of the working environment poorly, influenced by negative media portrayals. However, after witnessing the modern, well-designed facility, some participants adjusted their views, acknowledging that the environment was better than anticipated. Michelle noted that while her scepticism had lessened, she remained cautious, especially concerning the day-to-day realities of working under strict performance metrics.

Concerns about Employee Well-Being

Despite improved perceptions of the physical environment, concerns about the whole employment experience persisted. The panel remained apprehensive about the pressure of meeting performance metrics and the potential mental health implications. The discussion highlighted that while the physical working conditions were better than expected, the underlying concerns about the whole working experience , particularly related isolated working and responding to business efficiencies and customer demands were still very much present.

Community Impact and Sustainability

The panel continued to question the broader impact of the logistics sector on the community and the environment. While the occupiers' community engagement efforts were acknowledged, the panellists expressed a desire for more substantial contributions that align with sustainable practices. They emphasised the importance of logistics companies playing an active role in supporting local communities, particularly in sustainability efforts. Suggestions included implementing more visible recycling programmes like "recycle your delivery boxes".

Biodiversity and use of Green Space

All panel members spoke about how much they enjoyed seeing the biodiversity efforts at the Peddimore site up close, with many of them mentioning that it felt more like they were in a park or nature reserve than on an industrial site. The panel appreciated how the green spaces, wildflowers, and natural habitats had been integrated so seamlessly into the development. They agreed that this firsthand experience really highlighted what could be achieved from a biodiversity standpoint and left them inspired about the potential for similar initiatives at the Thrive site. The visit helped solidify their belief in the importance of these efforts, not just for environmental reasons, but for creating a space that would be pleasant and beneficial for everyone who interacts with it.

Public Access and Community Belonging

While they were impressed by the beauty of the grounds and appreciated seeing people using the space for activities like walking their dogs or going on runs, they couldn't shake the feeling that they were on private property, almost as if they were trespassing. This sense of discomfort led to a discussion about how the site could be made more welcoming to the public.

The panel suggested that simple additions, such as a "Welcome" sign at the entry point and clear signposting for walking and running paths, could go a long way in making the space feel more inclusive. They also mentioned the value of adding informational signage about the biodiversity efforts on the site, which could help engage the community and educate visitors about the environmental initiatives in place.

Another point of discussion was the lack of parking for non-staff visitors. The panel acknowledged that if the goal is to attract more people to the site, this issue would need to be addressed. However, they also recognized the challenge of balancing public access with the desire to avoid turning the site into a busy "destination," which could potentially create problems for local residents. They agreed that striking the right balance between making the site accessible and maintaining its peaceful, community-oriented atmosphere would be crucial.

Overall, while the visit did not completely transform the panel's views on logistics, it provided valuable insights and sparked a more informed discussion about the role of ethical practices in the industry. The panel expressed hope that the Thrive site could build on these lessons by promoting transparency, ensuring worker welfare, and setting new standards for community engagement and ethical business operations in the logistics sector.

The Consultation Process

In the final in-person session, the panel engaged in a discussion about the consultation process for the Thrive site, following a presentation by IM Properties on their planned phase two consultation strategy.

Overview of the Consultation Process

IM Properties presented an overview of their phase two consultation strategy, which includes three in-person consultation events to be held within the local area. The locations for these events are carefully chosen to be neutral, avoiding venues with alcohol licences, and often end up being held in parish council halls or church halls. IM Properties explained that these venues, while neutral, tend to attract an older, more affluent demographic, often those who are retired and have the time to attend weekday events. Recognizing the limitations of this approach in reaching a broader audience, particularly younger people, IM Properties was introducing a more robust online consultation platform and targeted consultation..

The Online Consultation Platform

The online platform presented to the panel was designed as a scrollable website, offering a comprehensive and interactive journey through the Thrive site development. The left side of the screen featured text that provided detailed information about the project, while the right side displayed an interactive map of the Curdworth and North Warwickshire area. As users scroll through the website, the map animates to show the boundaries of the Thrive site and details about how each area will be proposed. The platform covers various aspects of the development, including infrastructure, green spaces dedicated to biodiversity, community pathways, logistics sites, and startup zones. Additionally, the site outlines the application process, the types of occupiers expected, and the commitment to social value. At the end of the presentation, users are invited to complete a survey to provide feedback on the consultation and the proposed development.

Panel Feedback on In-Person Events

The panel reflected on the inaccessibility of traditional in-person consultation events for younger people. They pointed out that these events are often held during working hours, making it difficult for young people, who are more likely to be engaged in shift work or have young families, to attend. The panel noted that while in-person events can be valuable, they tend to cater to those with more flexible schedules, typically older, retired individuals. This demographic skew limits the diversity of voices heard during the consultation process. The panel suggested that in-person events could be scheduled at more varied times, including weekends or evenings, to better accommodate the schedules of younger people.

Feedback on the Online Platform

While the panel recognized the value of the online consultation platform, they also provided critical feedback to improve its effectiveness, including:

- Accessibility of language – it must be clear, concise and easily understood by all users (including young people)
- Avoid text heavy content and include complementary methods of communicating the key messages e.g. video and animation
- Allow users to more quickly navigate to the issues and topics that matter to them

Implications for Future Consultations

The panel's feedback led IM Properties to recognize the value of further involving young people in shaping the consultation process, maximising engagement and ensuring it was fit for purpose. The panel demonstrated their keen interest in continuing to help make such consultations more accessible and engaging for younger demographics. Subsequently further feedback on the consultation is being sought. This experience underscored the importance of continuing to adapt consultation methods to ensure that all community members, particularly younger voices, are included and heard in the planning and development processes.

Key learnings and Reflections

The IM Properties Young People Panel offered a range of valuable insights, reflecting the panellists' engagement with the diverse themes presented over the course of the sessions. As the discussions evolved, and time was given to reflect on the past six-months collectively, several key learnings emerged that will be critical in continuing to inform the shape of the Thrive project and future engagement.

1. **Third Spaces and Community Connectivity:** The discussion around third spaces proved challenging, largely due to the complexity of balancing diverse stakeholder priorities. The panel recognized that while the concept is valuable, its implementation requires careful consultation with the local community and broader stakeholders to ensure these spaces are truly beneficial and accessible. Despite the difficulties, the panel raised important points about the potential of third spaces to serve as community hubs, fostering connection and engagement between the Thrive site and its surrounding communities.
2. **Representative Views:** The panel and IM Properties both acknowledged that while the group of eight panellists provided insightful perspectives, it is not fully representative of the entire North Warwickshire and Birmingham area. However, the panel's contributions represent an important start to what is intended to be an ongoing conversation, helping to lay the groundwork for broader and more inclusive community engagement in the future.
3. **Gaps in the Discussion:** Upon reflection, it became clear that some topics, such as community-managed spaces, did not emerge as strongly in the panel discussions as anticipated. Previous research indicated a keen local interest in community-managed spaces, yet the panel was unable to form a solid idea of what this might look like within the

Thrive development. This suggests a need for more focused work on this topic, potentially involving a broader range of stakeholders to better understand and address community desires.

4. **Consultation Process:** The panel provided exceptionally valuable feedback on the consultation process, demonstrating a level of animation and confidence that exceeded expectations. Their insights highlighted the often-overlooked perspectives of young people in formal consultation processes, underscoring the importance of including younger voices in these critical conversations. In hindsight, it would have been beneficial to dedicate a specific session to discussing the formal consultation process, as this would have allowed for a more in-depth exploration of how young people can be more effectively engaged. Recognizing this gap, IM Properties is committed to continuing the engagement with the panel beyond this initial exercise. The panellists will have ongoing involvement in the consultation process, ensuring that their voices remain integral as the Thrive project progresses.
5. **Session Structure and Format:** Both the panel and IM Properties agreed that the balance of virtual and in-person sessions could have been better optimised. There were four virtual sessions, one site visit, and two in-person meetings. In hindsight, a one-on-one-off approach, alternating between virtual and in-person sessions, might have been more effective. While the in-person sessions allowed for more fruitful discussions, particularly when IM Properties representatives were present to provide live industry context, the virtual sessions gave the panel space to reflect and challenge perspectives in a more focused environment. A more balanced approach in future engagements could enhance the overall effectiveness of the panel's contributions.
6. **Co-Design and Topic Evolution:** A key reflection from the Beatfreeks delivery team is the realisation that, in hindsight, it would have been beneficial to outline the intended discussion topics with the panel from the very beginning. While our approach was intentionally reflexive, allowing topics to evolve based on the panel's interests and emerging priorities, we believe it would have been valuable to know from the outset what the panel felt was most important to discuss. We acknowledge that this panel was born out of the initial research phase, which necessitated a focus on certain areas where we needed to explore, clarify, and gain more granular insights. However, moving forward, incorporating a more co-designed approach from the start is something we feel would enhance the process. This would allow for a more balanced and participant-driven agenda, aligning the discussions even more closely with the panellists' perspectives. Ultimately, with only six sessions and a vast amount of ground to cover, there will always be areas we wish we had been able to focus on more deeply. The flexibility we maintained allowed for rich and meaningful conversations to unfold, and we believe that combining this reflexive approach with more structured co-design in future panels will further enhance the impact and relevance of the discussions.

Closing Thoughts From the Panel

The panellists have expressed that their participation in this process has been a valuable and rewarding experience. They felt genuinely heard and appreciated the opportunity to contribute to something meaningful. The intention of this engagement was never to simply gather praise for the work being done, but to invite young people to bring forward their lived experiences, perceptions, and expectations, and to challenge us to think differently about the future of the Thrive site. The panellists embraced this role with enthusiasm, offering critical insights and constructive feedback that have deeply influenced the direction of the project.

"Thank you so much, the last 6 months have flown by and been really interesting working with Beatfreeks and IM Properties. I have really enjoyed the project and would love for you to put my name forward to continue to work with them on this or anything else they may have in the future."

"I found a lot of it interesting because I work in construction and it was good to see the pre-site side of things."

"Thank you so much for your support on the project and for inviting me to be a part of the panel. I've really enjoyed the process and getting to know everyone. I'm keen to carry on the conversation and to support the project."

"Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be part of this. It was a valuable experience and I had a great time. I would be interested in working with IM Properties and Beatfreeks again."



Recommendations

Continue Engagement with the Current Panel Members

Recommendation

IM Properties should continue its engagement with the current panel members, recognizing the valuable insights they have already contributed. This ongoing involvement could take the form of another structured consultation cycle, similar to the initial six-month panel, or through more flexible, ad-hoc engagements as specific topics arise. Maintaining this relationship will allow IM Properties to leverage the panellists' established knowledge base and provide a consistent and reliable soundboard for future developments.

Rationale

The current panel has built a strong foundation of trust and understanding with IM Properties, making them uniquely positioned to offer continued input on the Thrive site and other projects. Throughout the engagement process, all panel members expressed that they found the experience to be both empowering and meaningful. They reported that they had learned a great deal and felt that their contributions were truly valued and impactful. This sense of accomplishment and involvement has fueled their desire to remain engaged with IM Properties and Beatfreeks as the project progresses.

Given the broad scope of topics still to explore, maintaining this relationship with the panel will ensure that future decisions are informed by the same thoughtful and reflective discussions that characterised the initial panel sessions. The ongoing dialogue with these panel members will not only help to refine and adapt the development process in response to emerging community needs and priorities but will also provide continuity in the feedback loop, ensuring that the community's voice remains at the forefront of IMP’s strategy.

Furthermore, the continued engagement with the panellists will reinforce the strong relationships that have been built, allowing IM Properties to maintain a deep connection with this group as the Thrive site evolves. This ongoing collaboration will help IM Properties stay attuned to the needs and concerns of young people, ensuring that their perspectives continue to shape the development in meaningful ways.

By keeping the current panel members involved, IM Properties can sustain the momentum generated during the initial consultation period and foster a long-term partnership that benefits both the company and the community. This approach will also demonstrate IMP’s commitment to ongoing, inclusive engagement, further strengthening the trust and credibility established with the panel and the wider community.

Wider Community Consultation on Third Space / Community Asset / Community Investment

Recommendation

IM Properties should expand its community consultation efforts specifically regarding the development of third spaces, community assets, and community investments. This consultation should be a localised effort, with a strong emphasis on engaging the diverse communities surrounding the Thrive site to ensure their needs and expectations are fully understood and incorporated into the development. A peer research initiative, where current panellists are trained to conduct research in their local areas, could be instrumental in gathering further insights. This effort would be supported by IM Properties, ensuring that the research is robust and that the community's voice is central to the process.

Rationale

The concept of third spaces and community-managed assets emerged as a challenging yet critical topic during the panel discussions. While the panel provided valuable insights, it became clear that a broader and more localised consultation is necessary to fully understand the community's desires and expectations for these spaces. This could be achieved by training the current panellists to act as peer researchers, IM Properties can leverage their established relationships and local knowledge to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of what the community values in a third space or community-managed asset.

This approach not only broadens the scope of the consultation but also empowers the panellists by enhancing their skills and involvement in the project. It builds on the trust and rapport already established, making the consultation process more inclusive and representative of the wider community.

One innovative idea suggested by panellist Tendai is the concept of a "Thrive Tour Bus." This mobile consultation hub would travel to different parts of the community, overcoming the barrier of access for those who live further afield or who may find it difficult to engage with the development process directly at the site. The Thrive Tour Bus would provide community members with the opportunity to meet IM Properties representatives, view development plans, learn about opportunities, and ask questions in a more accessible and engaging environment.

The tour bus could serve as a powerful tool in demystifying the development process, fostering transparency, and building stronger connections between IM Properties and the community. It would also allow for real-time feedback and discussions, making the consultation process more dynamic and responsive to community concerns and ideas.

By implementing these strategies, IM Properties can ensure that the third spaces and community assets developed at the Thrive site are truly reflective of and beneficial to the local population. This localised, peer-driven approach to consultation will help create spaces that not only meet the

community's needs but also strengthen the relationship between IM Properties and the people it serves.

Establish a Young People Insights Partner

Recommendation

IM Properties should establish a partnership with an external organisation or entity specialising in youth consultation to serve as a Young People Insights Partner. This partner would play a crucial role in facilitating impartial and meaningful engagement with young people throughout the development process. By providing a safe and independent space for young people to share their thoughts, this partnership would ensure that their voices are genuinely heard and accurately represented without the influence of wanting to say "the right thing" to please IM Properties.

Rationale

Collaborating with an external insights partner is essential for maintaining the authenticity and inclusivity of IMP's youth engagement strategy. This approach would not only align IMP's efforts with broader sector trends but also reinforce the importance of independent, unbiased feedback in shaping the future of the Thrive site and other developments. The presence of a neutral partner would allow young people to express their true thoughts and ideas, resulting in more honest, meaningful, and impactful contributions to the development process.

Given the long timelines typically associated with development projects, involving younger participants—particularly those under 16—becomes even more critical. These younger participants are likely to be the ones who will inherit and benefit from the opportunities created by the site upon its completion. Engaging them early in the process ensures that their perspectives are integrated into the planning and that the site meets the needs of future generations. However, younger participants may feel additional pressure to conform to perceived expectations, making it essential to have an external body that can facilitate their engagement in a way that encourages openness and transparency.

Moreover, the partnership would help bridge the gap between IM Properties and the youth community by serving as a "critical friend" who can provide ongoing feedback and ensure that youth voices are consistently integrated into decision-making. This collaboration would also allow IM Properties to stay informed about the latest trends, challenges, and opportunities in youth engagement, ensuring that their strategies remain relevant and effective.

In the long term, this partnership could support a continuous feedback loop, where young people feel empowered to contribute to the development process over time. This ongoing dialogue would not only enhance the relevance and impact of the initiatives but also build a stronger, more trusting relationship between IM Properties and the younger members of the community. By establishing a Young People Insights Partner, IM Properties can ensure that the Thrive site truly

reflects the needs and aspirations of the next generation, creating a development that is both forward-thinking and deeply connected to its community.

Develop Clear Communication Strategies for Sustainability and Biodiversity Efforts

Recommendation

IM Properties should prioritise the development of clear and accessible communication strategies to effectively convey their sustainability, environmental and biodiversity initiatives to the public. This involves using straightforward, jargon-free language and highlighting the tangible benefits these efforts bring to the local community. The communications strategy should also emphasise IMP's ongoing control over the biodiversity aspects of the site, even after the occupants have taken over, ensuring that these initiatives continue to serve multiple functions.

Rationale

The panel emphasised the importance of avoiding the pitfalls of "greenwashing," where sustainability initiatives are misunderstood or perceived as superficial if not communicated effectively. Given that IM Properties retains significant control over the site's biodiversity efforts, these communications have the potential to serve several key functions beyond simply informing the public.

First, effective communication can enhance community engagement by promoting access to the site's green spaces for recreational use. By clearly articulating the ways in which the site's natural areas are open and beneficial to the public, IM Properties can encourage more community members to visit and enjoy these spaces, fostering a stronger connection between the site and the local population.

Second, these communication efforts can facilitate educational opportunities, particularly for schools and youth groups. By positioning the site as a resource for eco-lessons and sustainability education, IM Properties can support local schools in providing hands-on learning experiences about biodiversity and environmental stewardship. Hosting school visits and other educational activities on the site would not only reinforce the importance of sustainability but also demonstrate IMP's commitment to long-term community value.

Ultimately, by ensuring that their messaging around sustainability and biodiversity is clear, transparent, and focused on these broader community impacts, IM Properties can build trust, enhance public support for the development, and create a lasting positive legacy within the local area. This approach will help to cement the Thrive site as a model for how industrial developments can coexist with and contribute to the natural environment and community well-being.