

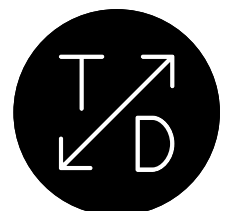
# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WORK STAGE 2 REPORT

## SUMMARY REPORT

**Blackbird Leys Community Centre and  
Surrounding Public Open Spaces**

Blackbird and Greater Leys, Oxford | January 2024

Transition by Design  
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# INTRODUCTION

Transition by Design (T/D) has been appointed by Oxford City Council to deliver community engagement and consultation for the development of the new Blackbird Leys Community Centre and surrounding Public Open Space.

The Leys is to have a new identifiable Community Centre to meet the current and future needs of the Blackbird Leys & Greater Leys community. The centre will have a new inclusive and multifunctional community centre and better accessible public space. This will complement the wider regeneration of the Leys, which includes new shops and new affordable homes, and is being led by Peabody and Oxford City Council.

T/D used a Consult-Inform-Activate framework as a basis for the community engagement. Where the majority of activities were consult (gathering input at a point when it can be usefully and meaningfully implemented) or inform (providing a platform or quality dialogue between the design team, client representative, local communities and key stakeholders).

Multiple consult and inform events and consultations have been carried out so far, comprising the following events from 2023:



Above  
Engagement events calendar produced  
by Jessop and Cook Architects

### October

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

10th Key stakeholder interview: Agnes Smith Advice Centre  
 12th Leys Health and Wellbeing Partnership meeting  
 19th Key stakeholder interview: Oxford Hub  
 31st Blackbird Leys Parish Council meeting

### November

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

9th Key stakeholder workshop 01  
 14th Existing and prospective user group workshop 01  
 14th Existing and prospective user group workshop 02  
 20th Wider Public communications and press release  
 23rd Public online workshop 01  
 28th Blackbird Leys Parish Council Meeting  
 29th Public online workshop 02  
 29th Leys Community Larder Engagement 01  
 29th Launch of online and in person consultation forms  
 29th Distribution of flyers for upcoming events  
 30th Leys Health Promotion Day  
 30th Launch of monthly update/ newsletter online  
 30th Communications for local newsletters (Tenants in Touch, Peabody, Hill)

### December

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

4th Key stakeholder meeting: Church of the Holy Family  
 6th Key stakeholder meeting: Blackbird Leys Adventure Playground (BLAP)  
 7th African Families in UK (AFiUK) Homework Club, youth engagement 01  
 8th Leys Christmas Event  
 9th Leys Christmas Event  
 9th African Families in UK (AFiUK) Community Lunch  
 12th Key stakeholder meeting: Agnes Smith Advice Centre  
 12th Youth Partnership meeting  
 13th Leys Community Larder Engagement 02  
 19th LCRP meeting 02  
 21st Monthly update release

This summary report will cover all aspects of community engagement to date during RIBA work stage 2 (WS2).

The report will cover the following areas:

- // Overview from the events
- // Key themes identified
- // Itemised feedback from each event
- // Reflection on the events so far
- // Appendices

Further engagement events are scheduled in January 2024 until the planning application submission. This engagement will be summarised in further reports. Appendices are included at the end of the report with information that has been circulated to the design team during this process. Where applicable, this can be consulted for more details into specific consultations and events.

**Above**  
 Engagement events calendar produced  
 by Jessop and Cook Architects



## OVERVIEW

After the stakeholder analysis and development of engagement strategy in April 2022, a calendar of events to engage a wide range of community members was designed and carried out by Transition by Design.

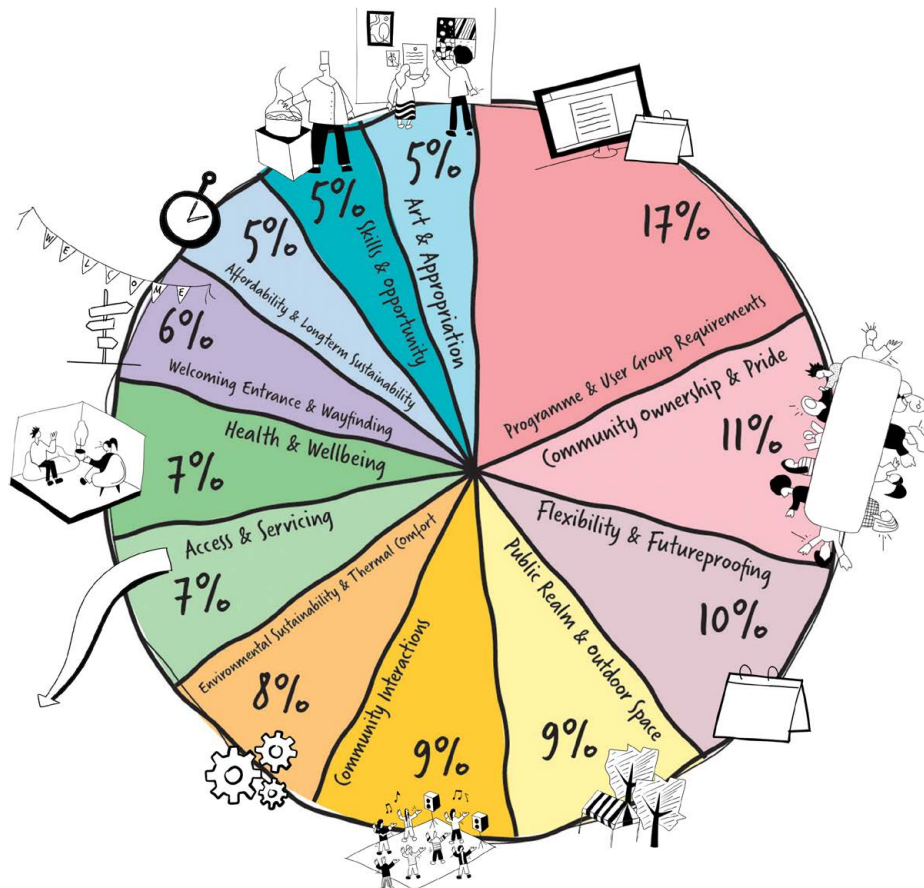
The following key stakeholders were identified:

- // Blackbird Leys Parish Council
- // The Agnes Smith Advice Centre
- // HomeStart Oxford
- // Blackbird Leys Community Larder
- // Oxford Hub
- // African Families in the UK (AFiUK)
- // Holy Family Church
- // Leys CDI
- // Blackbird Leys Adventure Playground (BLAP)
- // Oxford Polish Association

After the initial consultation with key stakeholders and user groups, twelve key themes were distilled. The key themes identified are:

1. Health & Wellbeing
2. Access & Servicing
3. Flexibility & Futureproofing
4. Affordability & Long-term Use
5. Skills & Opportunity
6. Community Ownership & Pride
7. Art & Appropriation
8. Programme & User Group Requirements
9. Public realm & Outdoor Spaces
10. Welcoming entrance & Easy Wayfinding
11. Environmental Sustainability & Internal Comfort
12. Community Interactions

These themes were shared with the design team, as an overview to inform the design development.



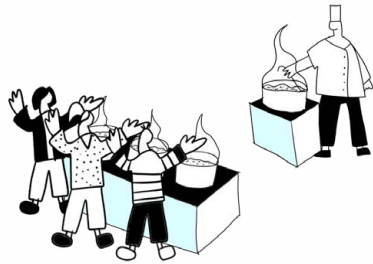
Above  
Key themes graphics showing percentage of points. Produced by JTP



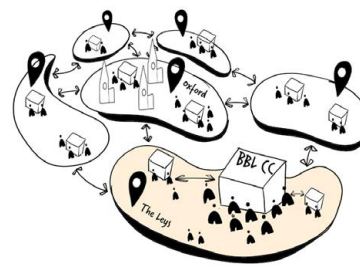
“A place to come together”



“Feels like it’s ours”



“Providing skills and opportunity”



“The new dreaming spires of Oxford”

Left  
Vision points graphic.  
Produced by JTP

The key themes have also been distilled into a four point vision as part of the brief development.

In addition to consulting key stakeholders, members of the public were consulted. These consultations were publicised through the following avenues:

- // Oxford City Council website
- // Leaflet drops across the Leys
- // Mailing list of interested persons compiled during the engagement so far
- // Poster’s and leaflets accessible in key locations in the Leys including; The Community Centre (before closure), Leys Leisure centre and Pool, Shops within the Leys
- // Banner with QR code within the Leys
- // Transition by Design newsletter
- // Transition by Design website
- // Tenants in Touch newsletter
- // Peabody’s mailing list
- // Hill’s mailing list
- // Transition by Design email networks and partners mailing lists
- // Issued to Key Stakeholders for circulation
- // Transition by Design social media

Over 400 individuals have been directly consulted and informed at the events and through workshops. 1000s of individuals have been engaged via newsletters, press releases, and leaflet drops.

As part of the engagement strategy, T/D hosted events and workshops, in addition to attending on the ground events with existing local groups and grassroots organisations.

An online feedback form was published and open to members of the public since the end of November 2023, and will remain live throughout the project. Paper versions on the feedback form have also been printed and distributed at in person events. A postal and email address is included in the forms for the return of this information. Forms have also been passed back to us via Oxford City Council employees working in the community in Blackbird and Greater Leys. A link to the feedback form has been included in any digital communication since it’s launch.

So far, we have received approximately 20 responses to this feedback form, which will be synthesised

# 01

## BLACKBIRD LEYS COMMUNITY CENTRE CELEBRATION

(Organised by MES Creations CIC, voluntary & grassroots organisations together with OCC)

**Date:** Saturday 12th August 2023

**Event Location:** Blackbird Leys Community Centre, Blackbird Leys

**Activity:** Attending the celebration event on a Saturday afternoon, spreading the word via word of mouth and flyers

**Purpose:** To encourage applicants from local people in the Leys to apply to be part of the Leys Community Review Panel (LCRP)

### Summary:

- Transition by Design attended the event organised by volunteers & grassroots organisations (including MES Creations amongst others) and Oxford City Council
- The event was held between 11am - 7pm, with representatives from Transition by Design attending the event from 11am-4pm.
- We spoke with over 50 different individuals and shared with them about the Leys Community Review Panel recruitment process as well as the upcoming community engagement events for the new community centre

### Key Takeaways:

- One individual applied after hearing about the LCRP and is currently sitting on the panel
- People expressed concern at previous historic consultations and how the voices of locals are rarely listened to
- With the above, locals were excited about the prospect of genuine community engagement, if a different and inclusive approach was taken, citing the LCRP as something interesting to look out for
- There is a wealth of community and grassroots groups doing commendable work across the Leys and there was a genuine sense of conviviality and community during the event
- Painting the mural on the wall was an exciting collective exercise that engaged people from all backgrounds and was visible from the street
- Transition by Design will explore collaborating with or engaging with some of the organisations from this day for a future event as part of the ongoing community engagement for the new community centre



Above  
Poster of the Blackbird Leys  
Celebration Day



Above  
Photograph taken at the  
celebration day

## 02

## KEY STAKEHOLDER MEETING: OXFORD HUB

**Date:** Tuesday 19th September 2023

**Event Location:** Online

**Activity:** Key stakeholder interview with Oxford Hub

**Purpose:** To inform them of the LCRP and the wider community engagement. This process will include current and future active & vocal local voices and a stratified sample of residents and community groups. To listen to lessons learned from having a panel within Blackbird Leys

### Summary:

The key stakeholder interview with Oxford Hub was held with Suzy Donald, head of Community Development. During the interview the following key points were discussed:

- Discussed learnings from the Blackbird Leys Community Fund
- We enquired about the recruitment process and a number of participants that were involved as part of the democratic participatory grantmaking process
- We spoke about the panel's composition and diversity. Namely how the panellists were diverse in a range of different ways; 50/50 working and not working, ethnic diversity, age diversity, educational background diversity and religious diversity. All panel members were from Blackbird Leys or Greater Leys
- Asked about demographics and whether a platform was provided for communication
- Suzy shared about the success of the project and how engaged each of the panel members were
- Talked about the Windale nursery space and upcoming events
- Addressed the extent of community influence on design
- Highlighted efforts to change the narrative in BBL
- Suggested having a story about the panel's purpose
- Emphasised the ongoing consultation process
- Discussed CIL funding and decision-making power in the community
- Noted the smooth process and the challenge of scheduling meetings



### Key Takeaways:

- Ensure that panel members are informed of dates well in advance
- Continuation of the ethos of changing the narrative of the Leys
- If there is a future panel refresh, ensure that the demographics continue to be representative of the Leys

# 03

## LEYS COMMUNITY REVIEW PANEL MEETING 01

**Date:** Thursday 21st September 2023

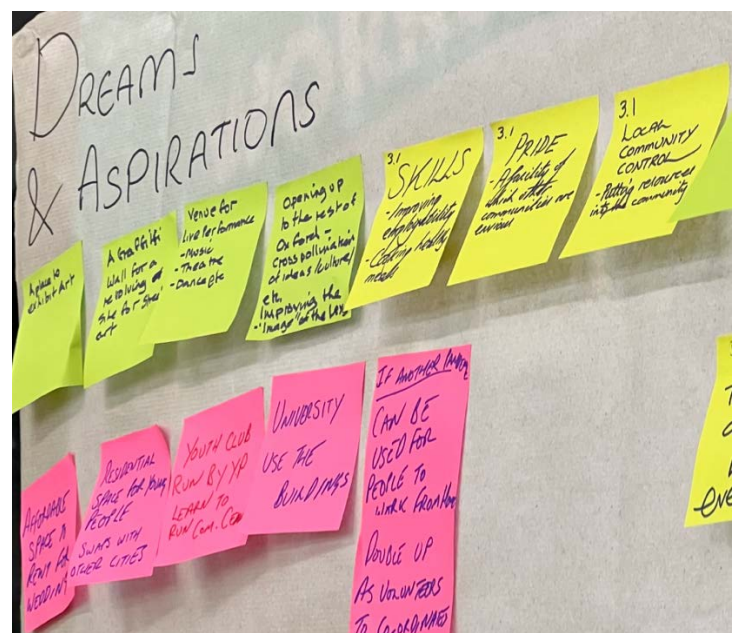
**Event Location:** The Farmhouse, Nightingale Avenue, Oxford, OX4 7BU

**Activity:** Facilitation and engagement with the Leys Community Review Panel for the panel to design and form the brief

**Purpose:** For the Leys Community Review Panel to initially meet together and to meet the design team. To gain insights from the LCRP on aspects that should be considered within the brief of the new community centre

### Summary:

- T/D provided an overview of the process, referring to the Leys Community Review Panel briefing pack. T/D outlined that the LCRP is a vital avenue for the community to contribute to the design, and mentioned that this is the first of 3 meetings prior to planning submission
- Clarified that there is a wider community engagement strategy involving key stakeholder, user groups and the wider public
- The presentation by JTP covered the proposed new community centre, including concerns over the reduction in the building. The LCRP engaged in a brainstorming workshop, addressing community dreams, challenges, opportunities, and learnings from the existing centre
- Community aspirations included dedicated spaces for art, training kitchens, live performances, cross-pollination with Oxford communities, and world-class facilities
- Challenges and opportunities discussed involved floor area reduction, event servicing, rental income, community user groups, and concerns about mistrust in the wider community. Learnings from the existing centre emphasised a sense of ownership, sufficient parking, clear signage, and diverse community uses
- Potential solutions suggested flexible spaces with folding doors, soundproofing, kitchenettes, clear signage, and use of surrounding car parks. The shared vision emphasised flexible space, a welcoming atmosphere, long-term sustainability, and community ownership. Concerns about parking and a balance between car use and public transport were discussed. The importance of community engagement, youth input, and pride in the centre were highlighted
- The conclusion outlined common themes of flexibility, sustainability, health, community ownership, and skills development
- Acoustic concerns and potential overlap with the nearby church's community spaces were discussed. The Parish Council will be informed of progress. Group visits to other community centres are being considered for inspiration



Above  
Photograph taken at the celebration day





Above  
Poster of the Blackbird Leys  
Celebration Day

**Key Takeaways:**

The following key themes were taken from the meeting and post-it notes written during the brainstorming exercise and discussions:

1. Health & Wellbeing
2. Access & Servicing
3. Flexibility & Futureproofing
4. Affordability & Long-term Sustainability
5. Skills & Opportunity
6. Community Ownership & Pride
7. Art & Appropriation
8. Programme & User Group Requirements



Above  
Photograph taken at the  
celebration day

## 04 KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW: OXFORD POLISH ASSOCIATION

**Date:** Tuesday 26th September 2023

**Event Location:** Online

**Activity:** Key stakeholder interview with Oxford Polish association

**Purpose:** To inform them of the LCRP and the wider community engagement. This process will include current and future active & vocal local voices and a stratified sample of residents and community groups. The intention is to synthesise local knowledge in service of the feasibility and to send a clear message that we are listening

### Summary:

- The meeting was held online together with Ewa Gluze (Oxford Polish Association) also involved with youth in the local area and is a Blackbird Leys Parish Councillor
- The use of the BBL Centre for events highlights the limitations faced including how the Polish Association preferred to use the Rose Hill Community Centre because of the current outdated aesthetic of the Blackbird Leys Community Centre
- The previous community centre was missing the kitchen spaces needed for their events
- Desired features include a large hall, a functional kitchen, and sufficient parking for event equipment
- The Rose Hill Community Centre is favoured for its high ceiling, spacious kitchen, and versatile rooms
- The need for performance infrastructure, like lights and a PA system, is emphasised
- Suggestions include dividers for flexible room configurations, an open reception, and the incorporation of greenery, even portable trees
- Public space and the potential for outdoor events are highlighted
- Emphasising collaboration with organisations for activities like music and food
- Additionally, there is a call for better representation and engagement with elderly residents in different houses, proposing individual sessions for each
- Accessibility and a dedicated person for communication, rather than relying solely on forms and online methods, are emphasised for effective community engagement



# 05

## KEY STAKEHOLDER MEETING: AGNES SMITH ADVICE CENTRE

**Date:** Tuesday 10th October 2023

**Event Location:** Online

**Activity:** Key stakeholder interview with the Agnes Advice Centre

**Purpose:** To inform them of the LCRP and the wider community engagement. This process will include current and future active & vocal local voices and a stratified sample of residents and community groups. To listen to lessons learned from having a panel within Blackbird Leys

### Summary:

- The meeting was held online together with two of their trustees (Wendy Spray and Liz Cairncross) and one of their employees, Zoe Millington
- Feedback on the old community centre and suggestions for improvement; this included discussing how the old community centre was affordable, and convenient but not necessarily 'beautiful'. The globe hall worked well for events space requirements and design ideas
- Hopes for the new community centre; they expressed an interest in enclosed outdoor spaces such as courtyards and quadrangles
- Ideas from other community buildings in Oxford
- Missing or unnecessary elements in the current Community Centre brief; this included how it could at times be difficult to get into the community centre with no reception, front door not working, lift not very useful as it required special training and a particular key
- Importance of the Community Centre brief to the community
- Importance of accessibility, natural light, and ventilation in the new design
- They discuss the functionality of different spaces, the importance of a well-designed entrance and lift for accessibility, and the need for privacy in certain areas
- The desire for user input on design requirements
- Preferences for natural light, concerns about potential issues with too much glass, and the need for effective noise insulation, temperature control, and ventilation
- The conversation also touched on storage requirements and the importance of maintaining privacy during consultations for the Advice Centre.

## The Agnes Smith Advice Centre

### Key Takeaways:

- The need to address issues around thermal comfort and adequate daylight within different spaces
- Ensuring that accessibility is a key consideration in the design process
- Enclosed outdoor spaces as a possibility for a design consideration
- Agnes Smith Advice Centre shared a user needs requirement document which has been shared with the project team

# 06

## BLACKBIRD LEYS PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

**Date:** Tuesday 31st October 2023

**Event Location:** Blackbird Leys Bowls Club,  
Cuddesdon Way, Oxford

**Activity:** Share the upcoming dates for community engagement and introduce ourselves formally as Transition by Design to the Parish Council

**Purpose:** To inform the Parish Council and attendees of the community engagement strategy for the new community centre



### Summary:

- Oxford City Council and Transition by Design attended the Blackbird Leys Parish Council meeting, with Transition by Design being invited to give an update on the community engagement for the new community centre
- Transition by Design updated the council on the upcoming events in November and December
- The Parish council emphasised the importance of incorporating youth engagement and ensuring they have an opportunity to feed into the process
- The Parish council also spoke of how the events should be advertised widely to enable as many people as possible to have their say during the engagement process
- Transition by Design reassured the Parish council of both of the above points as a core element of the community engagement
- The Parish Council nominated one individual to represent the Parish Council at the upcoming key stakeholder workshop

# 07 KEY STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP 01

**Date:** Thursday 9th November 2023

**Event Location:** Clockhouse, Nightingale Avenue, Blackbird Leys

**Activity:** An 1.5hr interactive workshop. Invitation only through stakeholders identified by T/D and OCC

**Purpose:** Gain insights from key stakeholders on the previous community centre design, its function and use. Covering what worked well and lessons learnt. Gather design ideas to be considered by the design team as they develop the design for the new community centre. Explore and contribute thoughts on the public realm (outdoor courtyard and wider area) for the new community centre

## Summary:

Reflections - What Went Well:

- Existing centre had a rich history and was cherished by the community for generations
- Warm and welcoming atmosphere, aiding social interaction and combating social isolation
- Facilitated connections between organisations, leading to collaboration and rapport building
- Overlapping themes of mural spaces and artwork added character
- Rose Hill Community Center is cited as a positive example, with a light and airy feeling
- Opportunities for evening and morning crossovers with multiple generations, fostering collaboration

Reflections - What Could Be Improved:

- Multiple entrances in the existing centre led to confusion; a clear entrance is desired for the new centre
- Lack of reception visibility, need for improved management oversight
- Suggestions for co-working space, improved toilets, dedicated social space, and learning areas
- Desire for a multifunctional new centre connecting with other community programs
- Considerations for noise management, sound-proofing, and the balance between safety and potential antisocial behaviour in outdoor spaces
- Concerns about the potential for the new centre to be used as an office block rather than a community space

Key Design Ideas:

- The outdoor space around the centre reflects the history of the old centre
- Integration of parts from the demolished centre into the new design
- Consideration of public space issues, safety, and potential noise complaints
- Ideas for vehicle access to the public square, multi-purpose open spaces, and separation between pedestrian and car zones
- Suggestions for a warm and welcoming design, avoiding sterile atmospheres
- Request for a separation between pedestrian space and areas for cars
- Consideration of accessibility needs, including parking for people with disabilities
- Thoughts on facilitating large events with service requirements

Brainstorming:

- Suggestions for a community square with water fountains and a multi-functional outdoor space
- Caution against oversimplified or overcomplicated entrance systems based on past experiences
- Importance of not having a sterile building and having accessible and responsive ventilation systems
- Consideration of a warm palette of colours for a welcoming atmosphere
- Ideas for future events and community engagement, including visits to other community centres
- Encouragement for attendees to send additional ideas via email post-event



Above  
Photo taken during the Key  
Stakeholder Workshop 01

# 08

## EXISTING AND PROSPECTIVE USER-GROUP WORKSHOP 01

**Date & Time:** Tuesday 14th November, 12-1pm

**Event Location:** Leys Pools & Leisure Centre, Pegasus Road, Oxford

**Activity:** 1hr interactive drop-in workshop. Invitation only through the OCC user group mailing list. Key stakeholders unable to attend the key stakeholder workshop are also invited

**Purpose:** Gain insights from key stakeholders on the previous community centre design, its function and use. Covering what worked well and lessons learnt. Gather design ideas to be considered by the design team as they develop the design for the new community centre. Explore and contribute thoughts on the public realm (outdoor courtyard and wider area) for the new community centre

### Summary:

Reflections - What Went Well:

- Mixed feedback on the existing community centre's design, with concerns about a clinical feel and a desire for a more welcoming and community-oriented atmosphere
- Feedback on the architectural elements, such as a business-like atrium and a lack of a homely front
- The Bullingdon Centre is seen positively by the Parish Council
- Discussion on the community identity, with suggestions to name it "Leys Community Centre" for unity and maintaining identity with the idea of referencing Blackbird Leys inside

Reflections - What Could Be Improved:

- Repeated concerns about confusing layout, corridors, and entrances
- Limited storage in the previous hall

Brainstorming - Indoor Space:

- Suggestions for labelled storage cupboards and flexible room sizes
- Ideas for shared kitchens and cafes for warmth and social interaction
- A proposed "pay it forward" cafe and canopy for shelter
- A discussion on the number of entrances and the potential for a single or multiple entrances

Brainstorming - Outdoor Spaces:

- Suggestions for covered seating and considerations for anti-homeless and anti-skating measures

Brainstorming - Look/feel:

- Emphasis on preserving existing elements like the mosaic and tree sculpture
- Reference to recognizable spaces like Peckham Community Centre and the distinctive form of the neighbouring church
- Concerns about the durability of the building

Discussion:

- In-depth discussion on kitchen spaces, including the need for various kitchen sizes, shared and separate kitchens, and considerations for tea points and pop-up kitchens
- Affordability concerns for community use, with references to high hourly rates at Clockhouse
- Consideration for lockers for staff and individual storage needs
- Identification of key stakeholders for future community engagement events
- References to other community centres, such as a house for artists in Barking and Fulham Community Centre's emphasis on the natural environment

Below  
Photo taken during the User  
Workshop 01



# 09

## EXISTING AND PROSPECTIVE USER-GROUP WORKSHOP 02

**Date & Time:** Tuesday 14th November, 4-5pm  
**Event Location:** Leys Pools & Leisure Centre, Pegasus Road, Oxford

**Activity:** 1hr interactive drop-in workshop. Invitation only through the OCC user group mailing list. Key stakeholders unable to attend the key stakeholder workshop are also invited

**Purpose:** Gain insights from key stakeholders on the previous community centre design, its function and use. Covering what worked well and lessons learnt. Gather design ideas to be considered by the design team as they develop the design for the new community centre. Explore and contribute thoughts on the public realm (outdoor courtyard and wider area) for the new community centre

### Summary:

Reflections - What Went Well:

- Affordability and the location of the existing centre were highlighted as positive aspects
- The centre served as a meeting point for various users and stakeholders
- Different-sized halls and spaces were valued for accommodating various activities, from community events to one-on-one meetings

Reflections - What Could Be Improved:

- Emphasis on the importance of sustainability and creating a greener community centre
- Suggestions for a versatile kitchen, potentially used for teaching, a cafe, or addressing food poverty through a community larder
- Prioritisation challenges for ground-floor space allocation
- Improvement ideas included better signage, a welcoming entrance, addressing multiple entrances, and providing cycle racks

Brainstorming - Indoor Space:

- Focus on accessibility and strategic placement of the kitchen to facilitate interaction between spaces
- Consistent emphasis on disability access for every room

Brainstorming - Outdoor Spaces:

- Ideas for green spaces, bug hotels, and interactive features like play areas

- Consideration for maintaining shrubs and small trees, creating connections between the community centre and surrounding areas
- Incorporating art, including the retention of the glow tree and mosaic

Brainstorming - Facilities:

- Repeated emphasis on the importance of the kitchen, potential reintroduction of indoor sports areas, and providing shower facilities
- The desire for a space similar to the previously used Blitz for computer learning
- Suggestions for additional smaller halls to accommodate various events

Brainstorming - Look/Feel/Sustainability:

- Mention of defensive hedging as a sustainability measure

Discussion:

- Participants expressed varying opinions on the wider development
- Plans for ongoing engagement, with in-person and online workshops for different stages of the design process
- Upcoming events and workshops, including visits to existing centres and engagement with youth
- Participants were encouraged to spread the word and provide feedback, fostering continued community involvement



Above  
Photo taken during the Key  
Stakeholder Workshop 01

# 10

## PUBLIC ONLINE WORKSHOPS 01

**Date:** Thursday 23rd November 2023

**Event Location:** Online

**Activity:** 1.5hr presentation with Q&A. Invitations sent to key stakeholder, but event published to the public to attend

**Purpose:** Share the emerging design principles based on the key stakeholder, user group and Leys community review panel meetings & workshops. Gain insights from the wider public on the above. Gather design ideas to be considered by the design team as they develop the design for the new community centre and the public realm

### Summary:

- Participants in the discussion, including a representative from Blackbird Leys Adventure Playground (BLAP), stress the importance of collaboration in the community centre design process
- There were inquiries about bringing wealth into the area, with a suggestion of potential community-run initiatives after an initial period of council management

- Ideas such as incorporating a bakery, accommodating events for up to 200 people, and utilising a hall in the church were brought up
- Concerns about excessive tarmac were raised and a preference for garden spaces
- This was followed by discussions on whether outdoor spaces should incorporate elements of play
- Participants express interest in natural play spaces and connecting outdoor areas to the halls, considering options like a roof terrace or rear private garden
- Maintenance suggestions include a community shared tool store, and there are considerations for accessibility and level access
- The Agnes Smith Centre emphasises the importance of a ground floor location for accessibility and visibility
- Questions are raised about the timescale for building reopening, aiming for late 2025 to early 2026 for external spaces, and there is a desire for the community centre to have a connection to the main square

Below  
Page from slides presented at  
Public Online Workshop 01

**BLACKBIRD LEYS**  
**Community Centre**  
**Online Public Workshop 01**  
November 2023



# 11

## PUBLIC ONLINE WORKSHOPS 02

**Date:** Wednesday 29th November 2023

**Event Location:** Online

**Activity:** 1.5hr presentation with Q&A. Invitations sent to key stakeholder, but event published to the public to attend

**Purpose:** Share the emerging design principles based on the key stakeholder, user group and Leys community review panel meetings & workshops. Gain insights from the wider public on the above. Gather design ideas to be considered by the design team as they develop the design for the new community centre and the public realm

### Summary:

- The Agnes Smith Centre emphasises the importance of visibility and wayfinding for the external aspect of the community centre
- Concerns are raised about the risk of people entering the building without knowing what is inside, prompting discussions about enhancing visibility for community centre organisations
- Signage and notice boards, possibly including digital boards, are suggested for improved communication
- Ensuring there are facilities for people to come to the centre, such as food offerings and study spaces, is highlighted

- The condition of the Holy Family Church as a heritage asset is discussed, acknowledging plans for its use as both a church and a hall
- The idea of a training kitchen is well-received, with potential conversations with local social enterprises and examples like Yellow Submarine mentioned
- Lettable space on the ground floor is praised, with discussions about potential partnerships and outreach performances
- Other points include considerations for a plant roof for equipment storage, the need for more dance spaces in Oxford, and the possibility of using the community centre as a daycare nursery during the day
- Questions about the dimensions of lettable spaces, engagement with the architects of the new church, and the provision of servicing for events, including weddings, are raised
- There is also an inquiry about the presentation being shared, with the response that arrangements will be made for distribution

Below

Page from slides presented at  
Public Online Workshop 01



## Blackbird Leys Community Centre Engagement

Emerging Design & Programme



Image credit to the organisers of the Community Centre Celebration event in August.

# 12

## BLACKBIRD LEYS COMMUNITY LARDER ENGAGEMENT 01

**Date:** Wednesday 29th November 2023

**Event Location:** Leys Pools & Leisure Centre, Pegasus Road, Oxford

**Activity:** Attendance at the Blackbird Leys community larder. Discussion with the participants about the project, and invitation to fill out feedback forms

**Purpose:** Inform the attendees about the engagement, provide opportunities to invite feedback, and details on upcoming events

### Summary:

- Approximately 30 attendees from diverse backgrounds, representing various age groups and life circumstances
- Community shows signs of engagement fatigue and scepticism about the timeline for the new community centre. Urgency expressed for timely delivery
- Current use of the Leisure Centre for events is deemed suboptimal due to its cold and uninviting nature
- Emphasis on a social space over a sports hall, catering to diverse activities such as weddings, birthdays, bingo, fundraisers, music events, community training, cooking classes, homework sessions, IT training, yoga, mother & baby support groups, and elderly coffee mornings
- Preference for a non-institutional appearance, steering away from a council building or office-like design
- Opposition to a café; desire for a welcoming entrance/gathering place with potential for coffee/food facilities without obligatory payment
- Positive response to the kitchen space on the ground floor, especially its connection to the hall for events and training
- Concerns raised about adequate natural light in the building; a request for simplified information on shading, sustainability, and energy production
- Enthusiasm for the insect wall and a nature trail in the public realm, focusing on engaging and educational elements for children to learn about biodiversity
- Resistance to playground furniture and perceived dangerous equipment; a preference for low-maintenance green areas due to budget constraints

- Strong desire for public art, specifically community-involved or inspired designs. Interest in collaborating with local schools and council art contacts for implementation
- Proposal for a community event during the demolition phase, with a request for recording the transformation from old to new

### Key Takeaways:

- Urgency and enthusiasm for the timely delivery of the new community centre
- Community prioritises a versatile social space over a sports hall function
- Aesthetic preferences lean towards a non-council appearance
- Importance of natural light and sustainability in architectural design
- Embrace of educational elements like nature trails for children
- Strong support for community-involved public art
- Desire for a community event during the demolition phase

# 13 LEYS HEALTH PROMOTION DAY

**Date:** Thursday 30th November 2023

**Event Location:** Leys Pools & Leisure Centre, Pegasus Road, Oxford

**Activity:** Attendance at the Blackbird Leys health promotion day. Discussion with the participants about the project, and invitation to fill out feedback forms

**Purpose:** Inform the attendees about the engagement, provide opportunities to provide feedback, and details on upcoming events

## Summary:

- Transition by Design and Oxford City Council communities and regeneration team attended the Leys Health promotion day as part of the on the ground engagement
- The format of this engagement was a stand at the event, set up as a informal engagement with tables and chairs for the community to speak with the team, ask questions and provide feedback
- A3 print outs of the latest information from the design team were available to view and comment
- Feedback forms were available for people to take away, fill in during the event, or discuss answers with the team and fill in during discussion
- The feedback forms were collected and have been analysed as part of the feedback from synthesis
- Spare feedback forms were given to participants who wished to share the information with others
- There were approximately 100 attendants throughout the day
- Recurring conversations around the history of the community centre being used as social space for bingo, social events, and for IT education were mentioned. There was a desire for this usage to remain or be revived in the new community centre

- A key conversation stream was about young women and girls feeling safe and able to use the community centre
- There was a recurring feeling that there were not enough information available to the wider community

## Key Takeaways:

- Information is not widely available though the community, and a strategy is needed for a wider reach
- The need for a young women and girls workshop was emphasised
- The reinforcement of the desire for the community centre to be available as a social space, instead of for only sports functions or commercial functions



**PAIN MANAGEMENT INFORMATION EVENT**

ARE YOU SUFFERING FROM PERSISTENT PAIN?  
DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS?  
DO YOU WANT TO IMPROVE YOUR OWN HEALTH AND WELLBEING?

Thursday 30th November  
1-5pm  
The Leys Pool and Leisure Centre

COME AND JOIN US FOR AN AFTERNOON FOCUSED ON IMPROVING YOUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

**What to expect:**  
Information from partners about services available  
Develop a better understanding of pain  
Physical activity taster sessions  
Mental health support

**fusion** **Connect Health** **SEOxHA** South East Oxford Health Alliance **OXFORD CITY COUNCIL**

Below  
Poster for Leys Health  
Promotion Day

# 14 MEETING WITH CHURCH OF THE HOLY FAMILY (NEXT TO SITE)

**Date:** Monday 4th December 2023

**Event Location:** Church of the Holy Family, 1 Cuddesdon Way, Oxford

**Activity:** Discussions with a representative of the church held in person in the Leys

**Purpose:** To inform the church of the current design stage of the community centre, and to consult them on any aspects that relate to the boundary line between both sites and gain an understanding on the current plans for the church's redevelopment

## Summary:

- Jessop and Cook wonder how they will face the square with any new scheme and side doors to the church
- The tree in their current scheme stays and the planners seemed keen to keep it
- They will be having a Café as it's a big part of their way of being part of the community (something to think about when considering the community centre)
- They wanted to know about how big the community centre halls will be. They have large Afro-Caribbean weddings and funerals that can take place in the area as the halls are not big enough, though specific dimensions or sizes were not given
- They were a bit concerned about BLAP and how the development is effecting them.



# 15

## MEETING WITH BLAP

**Date:** Wednesday 6th December 2023

**Event Location:** Blackbird Leys Adventure Playground (BLAP), Blackbird Leys Road, Oxford

**Activity:** Discussions with a representative of BLAP held in person in the Leys

**Purpose:** To inform BLAP of the current design stage of the community centre and consult them on aspects relating to the boundary line between both sites



### Summary:

- The meeting was held with Sue (Chair of Trustees) and Rae (Trustee member (& Blackbird Leys City Councillor))
- They are happy with the engagement process so far with the community centre

They have been talking to Hill and Peabody and are comfortable with the temporary measures that have to take place which include the following:

- Move the existing electricity gate to the Moorbank End of the site
- This includes adding a video link from the gate to the BLAP building
- Temporary hoarding will be building into and along the BLAP site about 1.5m into the playing area to allow demolition of the swimming pool (which is likely to be a tricky demolition process)
- Hill will move/make a new sandpit for them
- There is a bit of concern about traffic caused by parents pick up, this might cause conflict with residents on Moorbank
- The green area there is often used as unofficial car parking (this might need to be addressed)
- The gate move must be temporary as the current gate is next to the main entrance and they want to keep it there

- They have suggested there could be a gate (double gate) from the rear garden area of the new community centre. This could open to allow big events, weddings, birthdays to hire. Both a community hall and BLAP for kids and break-out
- They need to get a better idea of the massing of the new centre and the impact on BLAP
- They need to understand what boundary fencing will be used
- They are pleased we are thinking about the access route between the new buildings
- Opportunities to make a nice area with a bit of landscaping around the front area and the new car park
- Concern about number of car parking spaces

# 16

## AFiUK HOMEWORK CLUB (YOUTH ENGAGEMENT 01)

**Date:** Thursday 7th December 2023

**Event Location:** Blackbird Leys Library, Blackbird Leys Road, Oxford

**Activity:** Attendance at the homework club in the Leys library. Discussion with the youth and notes taken from informal questions, using the feedback forms as a guide

**Purpose:** To begin defining a 'youth-needs brief' for the new community centre design

### Summary:

- Transition by Design were invited by AFiUK to attend their homework club. This is a regular weekly session hosted in the Blackbird Leys library and is attended by youth from ages 8-15
- The engagement was semi-formal. The homework club format ran as usual, with two stations set up to allow for discussions with the youth and feedback
- A3 print outs of precedent images compiled by the design team were printed out and the young people were asked to identify their favourite images by adding stickers to the images
- Questions based on the online and paper feedback forms were used as prompt questions
- Notes were taken of the ideas and conversations from the young people
- The young people were enthusiastic and engaged in conversations, and with suggesting ideas for the community centre
- There was scepticism amongst the youth that the new community centre would be built, and if it would look like the ideas presented by the design team
- There were also conversations around the new community centre being vandalised, and comments were made around landscaping and public realm items being stolen and damaged
- Ideas for large internal and external spaces for sports and games were shared. There were also ideas for small more intimate and calm spaces to be available in the centre



Above  
Photo taken during the AFiUK homework club

### Key Takeaways:

- There is some scepticism towards the community centre and public open space development in the community present. This is reflected in the youth expressing disbelief that the development will happen, or will quickly become damaged
- The reinforcement of the desire for a youth engagement within the community to foster a feeling of ownership
- Play spaces for all ages are important to be integrated into the design

# 17

## LEYS CHRISTMAS EVENT

**Date:** Friday 8th December 2023 and Saturday 9th December 2023

**Event Location:** Leys Pools & Leisure Centre, Pegasus Road, Oxford

**Activity:** Attendance at the Blackbird Leys Meet Santa event. Discussion with the participants about the project, and invitation to fill out feedback forms

**Purpose:** To share about the community engagement programme for the new community centre. To invite feedback via consultation forms and interactive material at the stall that T/D will be hosting at the event

### Summary:

- The event was well attended by over 150 people on each day with families and children of all ages
- Oxford City Council, Jessop and Cook and Transition by Design each had representatives at the event. Several conversations were had with over 30 individuals
- Project material was displayed including early stage concept plans and precedent images for inspiration
- There was an activity set up for young people to place stickers against which precedents particularly interested them, and from which they would like the project team to draw inspiration from for the final design
- Several of the attendees were local to Blackbird or Greater Leys. Yet approximately 50% of people had little awareness of the new community centre as part of the wider regeneration of Blackbird Leys
- One person made a comment on how the previous community centre used to have community-led family friendly activities, like a bingo night that was open to all. They suggested that it would be good for the centre to be able to restart activities like this that used to happen
- Several children liked the precedent images of the kitchen spaces in particular. Children marked several stickers across the precedents to indicate their preferences
- Several comments were made about the value of having a cafe space within the community centre
- Wider activities such as roller skating were mentioned as possible outdoor activities to consider when designing the public square and outdoor space
- Allotments and food growing was also mentioned as a possibility to consider



# 18

## AFiUK COMMUNITY LUNCH

**Date:** Saturday 9th December 2023

**Event Location:** Active Learning College, Cuddeson Way, Blackbird Leys, OX4 6HZ

**Activity:** Attendance at the African Families in UK (AFiUK) community lunch that T/D were invited to. Discussion with the local community members about the project, and invitation to fill out feedback forms

**Purpose:** To spread the word about the community engagement strategy and invite community members to fill out the consultation forms

### Summary:

- Transition by Design attended the end of year lunch as part of the on the ground engagement
- The format of this engagement was a stand at the event, set up as an informal engagement with tables and chairs for the community to speak with the team, ask questions and provide feedback
- A3 print-outs of precedent images compiled by the design team were printed and the young people were asked to identify their favourite images by adding stickers
- People were invited to write ideas on post it notes with a prompt statement 'I would like the new community centre to be...'
- Responses varied from youth spaces, community and social events, a space dedicated to women and girls to meet, a cafe or a place to share food, and an indoor place for people to shelter from the rain
- Feedback forms were available for people to take away, fill in during the event, or discuss answers with the team and fill in during discussion
- Posters and leaflets of the upcoming events in the Leys were available for the attendees to take away with them and share amongst the community



Above  
Photo taken during the AFiUK community end of year lunch.



**Date:** Tuesday 19th December 2023

**Event Location:** Leys Pools & Leisure Centre, Pegasus Road, Oxford (changed from The Farmhouse, Nightingale Avenue, Oxford, OX4 7BU due to issues with access)

**Activity:** Facilitation and engagement with the Leys Community Review Panel for them to review the current pre-app design for the new community centre. An opportunity to gather their feedback

**Purpose:** To gain insights from the Leys Community Review Panel on the current preapp design. An opportunity for the project team to gather feedback and incorporate it towards future design amendments

### Summary:

- JTP presented the latest designs, addressing concerns about the library relocation and the listed church
- Questions were raised on the reach representation of the community in the engagement process. Concerns were expressed about the short timescale of engagement
- The panel requested a detailed assessment of the existing community centre, to allow for a benchmark to assess the proposed designs
- Specific concerns were highlighted regarding the parking and servicing strategy, emphasising the need for a detailed plan
- The project team acknowledged ongoing engagement post-planning submission, providing reassurance to the panel
- Panel questions ranged from whole-life carbon considerations to building form and material choices
- The panel emphasised the community's desire for a design that feels integrated and belongs to them
- Discussion on the possibility of a fully timber frame, with considerations for a green roof as a distinctive feature
- Jessop and Cook Architects provided an overview of the evolving internal design, highlighting its ongoing nature
- Panel discussions included concerns and suggestions on lifts, building services, stairs, storage, and performance space

- Queries about ongoing developments at the leisure centre and concerns about the potential overlap of facilities between civic buildings in the Leys
- The discussion touched on the importance of flexible spaces, acoustic separation, and considerations for tiered seating
- Ireland Albrecht provided an overview of landscape design options, considering the impact of the church
- Discussions included considerations for community space, anti-social behavior measures, and family-friendly areas
- The panel raised questions about maintenance, and suggestions were made for a water park and space for growing vegetables
- Transition by Design provided closing remarks, summarising the key feedback received during the meeting
- Wide reaching community engagement in the design process was emphasised, with concerns about limited resources for door-to-door engagement
- Recognition of the importance of ongoing community engagement, with plans for a building visit in January and the Leys Community Review Panel meeting in February

### Key Takeaways:

- Identifying gaps and ensuring diverse perspectives in the engagement process
- Addressing concerns affecting community convenience
- Improving usability and flexibility of internal spaces
- Aligning external aesthetics with community identity and preferences
- Creating outdoor spaces that cater to community desires and needs
- Ensuring continuous community involvement for informed decision-making
- Addressing challenges posed by time constraints



## NEXT STEPS

The information above represents a summary of all the community engagement to date. There are more upcoming engagement events to continue to consult and inform the community as the designs progress to RIBA Work Stage 3 and beyond.

The next steps are for the design team to review the report and integrate the key takeaways into the proposals. This document forms a central reference point for reviewing the feedback so far, and an opportunity to include any feedback from events, which did not have design team representation.

The upcoming events are summarised in the following calendar of events for 2024, illustrated to the right.

January						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

20th Community building visit for public, LCRP and key stakeholders  
 23rd Key stakeholder meeting: Parish Council  
 24th Leys Community Larder Engagement 03  
 25th LCRP panel member invited to join Oxford Design Review workshop  
 26th Youth Session at Leys Leisure Centre, ages 11-14, youth engagement 02  
 26th Youth Session at Leys Leisure Centre, ages 15-19, youth engagement 03  
 30th Blackbird Leys Parish Council meeting  
 31st FriendLeys Senior Cafe visit  
 31st Monthly update release

February						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29			

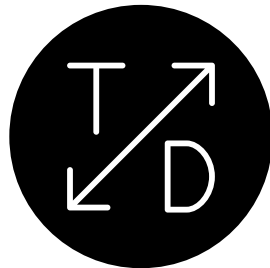
6th LCRP meeting 03 - TBC  
 7th Key stakeholder and user group workshop 03  
 8th Key stakeholder and user group workshop 04  
 10th Community Fun Day event  
 14th Young women and girls workshop, youth engagement 04 - TBC  
 20th Public online workshop 03  
 27th Blackbird Leys Parish Council Meeting  
 29th Monthly update release

March						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

16th Public exhibition on planning application design  
 29th Monthly update release

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