

Transition Wilmslow- Workshop to Develop Principles for Responding to Planning Applications Report 2025

Quaker Meeting House, Wilmslow, 11th May 2025



Summary of Ketso Workshop Outcomes

To cite this report:

Tippett, Joanne, Li, Junyi (2025) 'Transition Wilmslow: Workshop to Develop Principles for Responding to Planning Applications Report', workshop held at Quaker Meeting House, Wilmslow, 11th May 2025, Transition Wilmslow, School of Environment, Education and Development, The University of Manchester

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Executive summary and set of key principles

Transition Wilmslow (TW) is a community-based charity based in Wilmslow, Cheshire, working on initiatives related to climate change, biodiversity, and health & wellbeing across Wilmslow, Handforth and the surrounding area. Thirty members of Transition Wilmslow and wider partners met for a half-day workshop to develop a set of principles that will help the organisation to engage effectively with the planning process.

The aims of the workshop were to:

- Identify what is special about Wilmslow (and what needs to be protected)
- Develop ideas for a sustainable future for the town
- Generate guiding principles for responding to planning applications
- Distil a set of overarching principles to support future responses to planning applications in the area

Ketso, a hands-on toolkit for creative engagement, was used to engage the participants in dialogue and gather their ideas. The [RoundView](#), a systems-based framework of sustainability learning and communication, was used to spark new thinking about sustainable futures as part of the dialogue.

247 ideas were developed on the day. This report first gives a set of distilled principles for responding to planning applications (the key outcome from the workshop), followed by an overview of the workshop process and a summary of the subset of these ideas that were highlighted as important by the participants at the workshop. A spreadsheet with **all** ideas transcribed can be downloaded from [this link](#).

Overall, there was agreement that there should be an endeavour to increase accountability measurability of sustainability and biodiversity measures, with concerns expressed over the lack of follow up and enforcement of such measures in the actual development process. The following table presents the key principles distilled from workshop discussions to guide Transition Wilmslow's engagement with planning and development.



Figure 1: Participants discussing how ideas relate to big picture of sustainability (RoundView)

Key principles for responding to planning applications, Transition Wilmslow

Sustainable and Local Housing Recognise a demand and need for affordable, accessible, and environmentally sustainable housing, with a focus on local provision and green building standards and minimal land take. • Social housing provision should be local • Ensure new houses are ECO (e.g. well insulated, with solar + heat pumps) • Safeguard the countryside & minimise impact of development • Minimise land use for new builds (i.e. build up not out)	Transport and Mobility Prioritise infrastructure that enables low-carbon mobility, reduces emissions, and supports vibrant, walkable communities. • Reduce car reliance • Internal & external links – better active travel • Ensure good public transport is available for any new build • Improvement of public transport links to neighbouring towns (EV vehicles) • 15 minutes town principles (on foot) - consider access to amenities
Access to Nature, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Development should aim to increase biodiversity and habitat. High density of development, to reduce land use, needs to be balanced with access to nature for all. • Improve access to nature • Nature positive – giving nature rights • Safeguard natural landscape, countryside & biodiversity • Protect & strengthen green infrastructure in the town (sustainable infrastructure) • Biodiversity Net Gain should be local	Climate Mitigation and Adaptation All development should be designed for climate adaptation, and strive to be net climate positive. • Large/all developments should have localised water retention and include sustainable urban drainage systems • Avoid loss of mature street trees, essential for urban cooling • Climate positive development (housing and transport), and increased renewable energy generation • Need to balance new renewable energy generation with impact on nature
Community and Social Wellbeing All development should be sensitive to the local context, engaging with local communities and minimise impact on valued local assets, including cultural heritage. Development needs to take into account wider social concerns including access to amenities, services and facilities. • Understanding the need to support sense of community • Community education & innovation • Reducing health inequalities, improving health & well-being • Preserve heritage • Focus on local • Local food production including community	Wider Sustainability Considerations Developments and construction should show consideration of the full life cycle costs, including consideration of bio-safe materials (e.g. minimising plastics). • Recycling materials used in construction (including from demolition) • Consideration of land contamination • What is the material used in the supply chain? What is the carbon footprint? What is the lifecycle implication? • What plastics and non-biodegradable materials are used, and can they be reused safely? • Consider polluting emitters e.g. airport, and opportunities to mitigate noise and pollution in surrounding landscape

Workshop process and types of ideas developed

Participants were asked their thoughts on the following questions, with each question asked on a different coloured leaf (to capture ideas on the Ketso felt):



What is special about Wilmslow?



Future possibilities: ideas for a sustainable future Wilmslow



Guiding principles for responding to planning applications



Figure 2: Ketso leaves to capture participants' ideas

For each question, participants first had the opportunity to develop ideas on their own. These ideas were then shared with the group at the table and placed on the shared Ketso workspace, forming clusters of similar ideas.

Part way through the discussion, the participants were introduced to the RoundView framework of sustainability. The RoundView gives a holistic view of the root causes of all environmental problems, and their positive opposites. This serves as a navigational tool to test if plans, projects and actions are likely to move us towards sustainability, or conversely, are likely to cause unintended consequences.



Figure 3: Participants engaging with RoundView learning tools to encourage a holistic view

Ideas were placed around themes (branches on the Ketso) to structure the conversation. The resulting picture of participants’ thinking served to record the ideas, structure the discussion and stimulate more ideas as they went along. The distribution of types of ideas, as they were clustered around the themes, is shown in the chart below.



Figure 4: Ketso felt used to structure ideas emerging in dialogue

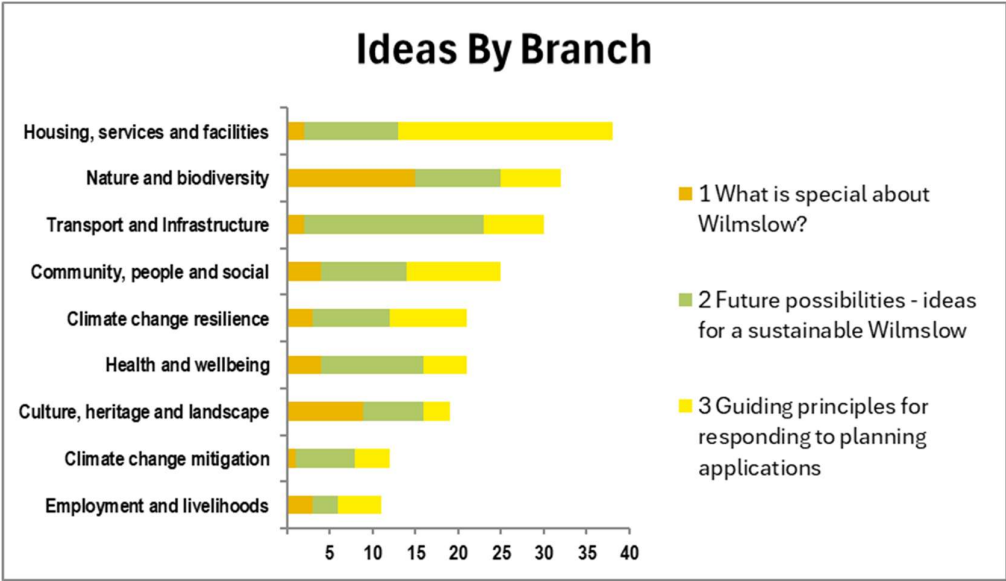


Figure 5: Chart reflecting the types of ideas to emerge, structured by participants against themes

The branch that gathered the greatest number of ideas was ‘Housing, services and facilities’, with a particularly high number of ideas around ‘Guiding principles for responding to planning applications’. The greatest number of ideas around ‘What is special about Wilmslow’ was collected under the theme of ‘Nature and Biodiversity’, following by ‘Culture, heritage and landscape’. The branch with the greatest number of ‘Future possibilities’ was ‘Transport and Infrastructure’. Ideas that were prioritised to be considered as key principles by participants were then shared in the plenary session, as the basis of the table of principles set out above.

Summary of ideas prioritised by workshop participants

The following section shows clusters of ideas that were identified as a priority or highlighted as important/interesting. These are presented below by the themes given on the Ketso felts to structure the discussion.

Housing, service and facilities

This was the category with the most ideas in total (38). Under this theme, there was a strong concern about the **sustainability of development**, particularly regarding poorly designed projects or urban sprawl. The emphasis is on compact, well-planned, and environmentally sensitive growth, prioritising engagement with responsible developers. Key ideas highlighted by participants were:

- Careful development that does not cause harm
- Rules that stop concrete jungle developments like Bluebell BMW
- Fight strongly against those developers who don't listen
- Engage early and partner with responsible developers
- Minimise land use for new builds (i.e. build up not out)
- Intensification of development rather than urban sprawl
- Protect the green belt
- Safeguard the countryside & minimise impact of development
- Better use of available land for houses & infrastructure
- Cycling better, re-use, repair, recycling
- Provide advice to those who wish to retrofit housing

Participants also called for **high environmental standards for housing** (particularly new builds), with emphasis were on insulation, renewables, low carbon materials, and regenerative design:

- Passivhaus for new builds
- Ensure new houses are ECO (solar + heat pumps)
- Include renewable energy in any development
- Renewable energy as requirement for new builds
- Define house building materials fully insulated
- Minimum standard. Less extension of existing house
- Regenerative development
- Contributing to a sustainable built environment
- Renewable tech with consideration of materials and greenhouse gas emissions

Affordability was another clear priority:

- More affordable housing (more of it and more affordable)
- Recognise the need for more housing especially affordable/social housing
- Human sized & accessible

There were also some ideas about the **green space and local services**.

- Ensure new houses have green space
- The home needs to have access to green space
- Green space and Net Gain
- 15-minute town principles (on foot)
- Local services (retail, health etc.) for new developments
- Better facilities

A few ideas were about greater community involvement in **Planning and Policy-level influence**:

- Get involved in the planning process
- Seek to influence NPPF at local level
- Empty houses enforcement
- Empty houses enforcement

Nature and biodiversity

This was the category with the second most ideas in total (32). Nearly half of the ideas emerged in response to **‘What is special about Wilmslow’**, reflecting deep appreciation for Wilmslow’s green spaces, biodiversity and unique habitats (Lindow Moss and the River Bollin):

- Green spaces
- Surrounding countryside
- Tree canopy and cover
- Lovely natural environment
- Trees Green Space
- Our green spaces
- Green space/biodiversity
- The River Bollin
- Mature landscapes
- The Moss
- Proximity to Lindow Moss & Special environment

For the ‘future possibilities’ and ‘guiding principles’, there were a strong concern about **tree planting, protecting biodiversity and clean air**:

- Re-plant trees that are cut down
- More tree planting
- Develop ongoing tree planting to more than replace any removed

- Better use of green space for biodiversity
- Nature preservation
- In tune with biodiversity
- Nature Positive
- Protecting green spaces to keep clean air
- Defend Nature
- Sustainable & environmentally "friendly"

Also, participants were clearly concerned about the **protection and restoration of the key habitats**:

- More protections of the Moss
- Restored Lindow Moss
- Bollin water valley improve
- Increase biodiversity by restoration
- Bollin valley weir fish ladder

One suggestion called for the **education and public awareness about the green space**:

- Education about the value of green spaces

Transport and infrastructure

In this theme, most ideas were about 'Future possibilities - ideas for a sustainable Wilmslow'. There was a clear demand for **reducing car dependency**:

- Less traffic (x2)
- Less cars on the road
- Fewer cars (x2)
- Less town centre traffic
- Reduce car reliance
- Does the development increase car dependency?
- Car free
- Radical change: no petrol/diesel cars, more bikes & walking

Besides reducing car use, there were a lot of ideas for **improving public transport**, including availability, frequency and affordability. Using electrical vehicles was also mentioned, showing concern for sustainability.

- More bus services
- Better more frequent public transport
- Better cheaper buses
- Joined up public transport

- Improvement of public transport links to neighbouring towns (E.V. VEHICLES PREFERABLY)
- Ensure good public transport is available for any new build

Besides supporting public transportation, **active travel and street safety** was also highlighted, focusing on better lanes designed and slower traffic speeds.

- Better cycle lanes
- More cycling, walking / Less cars
- Safer walking routes
- 20 is plenty (lower speed limit)
- Safer road crossings
- Work on developing sustainable connections – walk more
- Internal & External links better active travel

Participants also recognised the need for **green and enabling infrastructure**, including:

- More electric car charging
- Enabling infrastructure (changing points, bike lanes, buses)
- Contributing to a sustainable & green infrastructure

Community, people and social

There was a recognition of **community engagement and participation**, including:

- Involve the community
- More people getting involved in volunteering
- Schools + community more involved in sustainability
- Community Education & Innovation
- Understanding the need to support sense of community
- Collective responsibility
- Community
- Clear, accurate communication
- Better ways to communicate to everyone
- Young people's "clubs"
- More for young people

In addition to civic engagement, there were some ideas about **everyday responsibility**:

- Dog poo not in plastic bag
- Conscious consuming
- Countering the lies
- Accountability for developers

Underlying these ideas, there was a shared aspiration to create a **joyful, inclusive and people centred environment**:

- Pride in your own home
- More joy
- Joyful and sharing
- Welcoming
- People-centric

Climate change mitigation

Nature-based solutions, especially woodland and peatland management, were highlighted for future possibilities and guiding principles, including:

- Canopy replacement not numbers of trees
- Planting more trees (of the right type in the right place)
- Re-wet Lindow Moss
- To protect the importance of the peat/tree convert areas as CO₂ sequesters to reduce atmospheric CO₂

Ideas here also reflected **individual and systemic changes**, including:

- Stop burning things
- Independent utilities
- Positive attitudes towards the environment
- Climate positive
- Sustainability

A special concern raised was: **Encroachment of Manchester Airport infrastructure**. Participants highlighted concern about **regional infrastructure impacts**, particularly from **Manchester Airport**.

Climate change resilience

There were broadly a lot of **future possibilities** identified in this category, including:

- More local food
- More trees
- Retention of green spaces
- Nature corridors + water ways
- Resisting loss of urban greenspace
- Avoiding development in flood prone areas
- Preservation of the peat lands, protecting peat deposit from development
- Limited heat island and hard surfaces

Guiding principles for responding to planning applications including:

- Protect trees
- Make developers plant trees
- Push to increase biodiversity
- Putting the natural world first i.e. a priority
- Safeguard the natural landscape & diversity
- Preference for biogenic materials
- Future-proofed
- Closed loop system enabled
- BNG Net gain should be local

Health and wellbeing

Ideas under this theme were mostly about ‘future possibilities’, with strong links to **green space, community based, land connected living, active travel**, including:

- Green and pleasant town and countryside
- Green and leafy feel
- Town centre green spaces & trees
- Open spaces
- Succession programme for street trees
- Cleaner air
- General country walks
- More allotments
- Local food production including community gardens
- Children involved in food growing
- More / any forest schools
- More pupils involved in the land & outdoor activities
- Safe cycle paths
- Car-free centre

Guiding principles for responding to planning applications emphasised a **holistic approach to health**:

- Healthy + Holistic
- Reducing health inequalities
- Long-term improving health & well-being
- Increase tree cover
- Protect & strengthen green infrastructure in the town

Culture, heritage and landscape

A lot of ideas under this theme were about 'What is special about Wilmslow', reflecting a deep appreciation for the town's character and heritage, including:

- Distinctive Town/Culture
- The cultural heritage including key buildings
- Lindow moss
- Safety in the community
- Green and water system collaborative playful community
- Attractive environment
- Number of people who care about the town
- The people are special - expertise trees Moss
- Villagey Feel

For future possibilities, Participants described a picture **embed with arts for sustainability**, including:

- Public Art
- More use of the arts to change culture
- More diverse demographic
- Culture/performance space

Ideas for guiding principles including:

- Preserve heritage
- Family friendly (wholesome fun)
- Contributing to a sustainable and joyful culture

Employment and livelihoods

Although fewer in number, ideas under this theme pointed to a vision for **fair, local, and sustainable economies** that support long-term community wellbeing:

- No zero hour contracts
- Prosperity for everyone
- More small independents
- Wellbeing of future generations
- Focus on local
- Reducing poverty
- Sustainable business
- Mix of uses

Summary

This report captures the key ideas and principles developed during the Transition Wilmslow Principles for Responding to Planning Applications Workshop, where community members came together to explore how local development can support a more sustainable, liveable, and inclusive future for Wilmslow and the surrounding area.

The ideas presented in this report provide an overview of the ideas generated. An important outcome was a set of key principles for guiding response to planning applications.

The accompanying spreadsheet gives a larger set of results, acting as resource for further strategic planning, and helping Wilmslow shift from unintended consequences and environmental degradation to a sustainable, and regenerative future.



Figure 6: RoundView Learning tools root causes of environmental problems and their positive opposites