



## Introduction

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This planning statement is written in support of a Full Planning Application by The Nurture Project CIC for change of use of a unused, neglected agricultural plot to Class F: Local Community & Learning to create a 'community garden' with the erection of: polytunnel, shed, yurt, composting toilet, pedestrian entrance, pond, raised beds, sensory garden and tree planting. On the Land North of Low Hall, East of Temple Houses, Haydon Bridge.

The community garden is designed to meet the needs of the local community and the natural environment to address sustainability and climate change, to benefit health & wellbeing, tourism, employment and education. Which will fulfil many of the Community Actions of the Haydon Parish Neighbourhood Plan.

## Background

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The community garden will be managed by The Nurture Project CIC, a not-for-profit social enterprise, aiming to enhance the physical, mental and social wellbeing of individuals, communities, and enhance their environments. Connecting people and nature through educational outdoor experiences. With environmental sustainability at the heart of their social and economic development, The Nurture Project aims to regenerate the unused land to create a thriving outdoor environment which enhances and improves the open countryside by increasing biodiversity, and provides multiple benefits for community education, health & wellbeing, employment and tourism.

## Site Selection

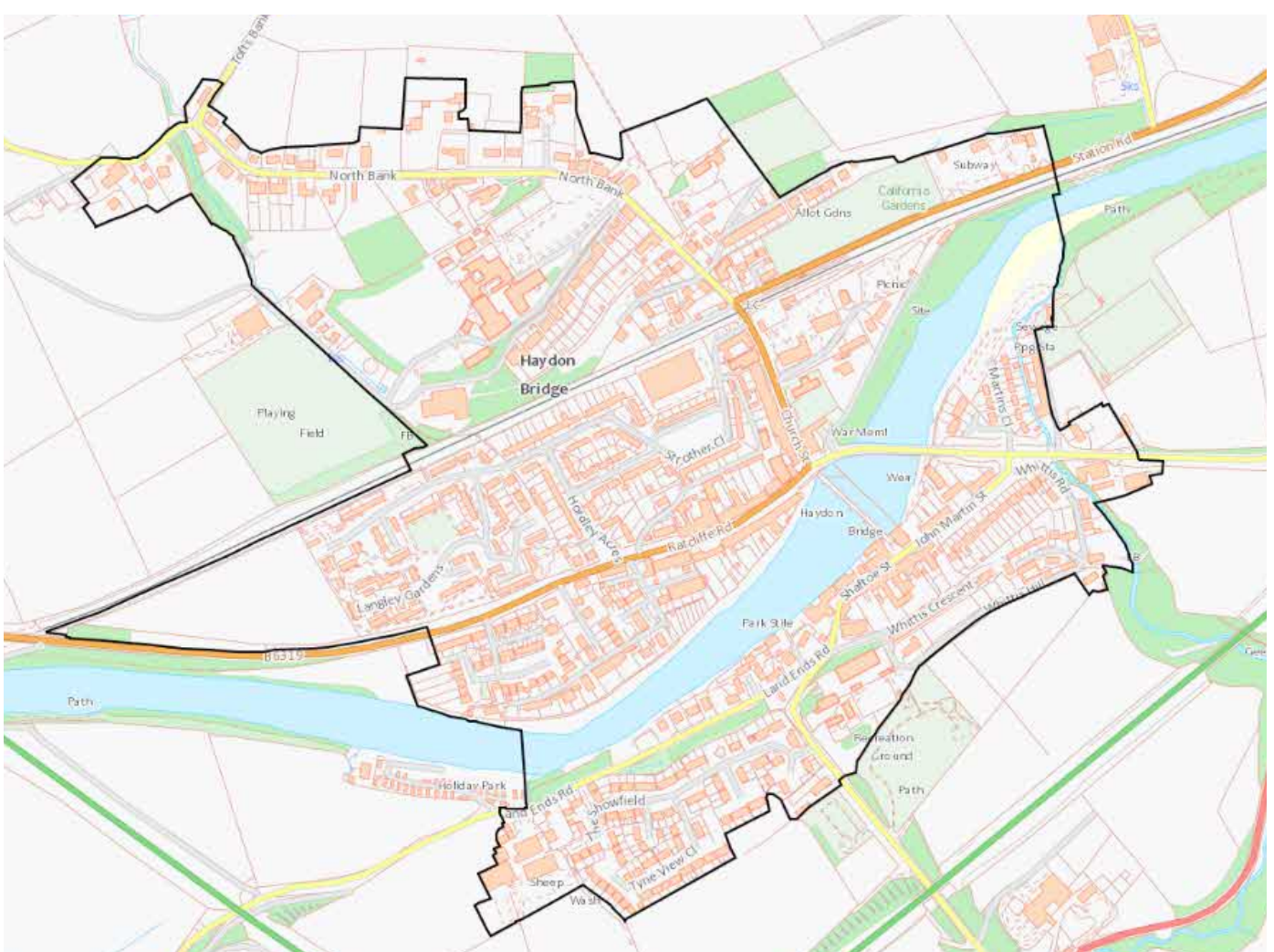
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The proposed location (highlighted green in the below map of the settlement boundary) is adjacent to the settlement boundary, and is enclosed on the North and East boundaries by an existing community facility; Haydon Bridge United Football Club (highlighted yellow).



The success of Haydon Bridge United Football Club as a community facility adjacent to the proposed community garden, demonstrates that the location is accessible and beneficial to the community, with 240 members attending HBUFC weekly, in addition to weekly attendance by residents of neighbouring villages.

Following pre-application planning advice, with reference to Policy STP 1, alternative site locations have been searched for within the settlement boundary, with the conclusion that there are no other suitable green spaces within the settlement boundary. Demonstrated on the Parish Neighbourhood Plan Policies Map.



## Proposal

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**Accessibility:** Located adjacent to the thriving community Football Club, we are situated at the East end of the village, within walking distance of the whole village, with proposed wheelchair accessible pathways planned around the site and bicycle parking on site. We are adjacent to a bus stop, and 5 minutes walk from the train station.

A pedestrian entrance will be created with wheelchair access to enable inclusive access to the site. There will be a disabled drop off point on site, and parking is available at the adjacent Haydon Bridge Football Club.

### **Nurture Community Garden:**

The proposal is to create a natural environment for use by the whole community to enjoy, grow and learn together. An outdoor community hub, to benefit the physical, mental and social wellbeing of people, and to enhance and protect the environment; 'Healthy People, Healthy Planet'

The community garden will have open hours of weekdays 8am-7pm, weekends 9am-5pm, and will be available for use by the whole community via timetabled sessions.

**The community garden space will include:**

- Annual Food growing beds, with a polytunnel to extend the growing seasons.
- A Forest Food Garden, to enhance the environment, biodiversity, and grow local food produce.
- A Sensory Garden, to enhance the sensory development and wellbeing of children.
- A pond, to enhance biodiversity.
- A wooden 'learning centre' shelter for educational sessions, storage of equipment, and a 'creation station' for people to recycle wood and create bird boxes etc.
- A yurt, to act as a wellbeing centre, for people to keep dry and warm, a safe space for meetings, courses, youth groups etc.
- A wildflower meadow, to enhance pollinators and biodiversity.
- A fully accessible composting toilet.
- Wheelchair accessible pathways, ( permeable surface)
- A variety of trees, shrubs and plants to enhance habitats, biodiversity and carbon sequestration, and to provide educational opportunities.

**The community garden programme will include:**

- Community gardening sessions
- Forest School sessions - Under 5's, Over 5's, Youth Club, Alternative Education, Home Ed sessions
- Nature based educational sessions; growing club, work experience, horticulture courses
- Environmental Arts & Crafts
- Land / nature based training courses
- Booking availability for community groups
- A safe space for local people to facilitate sessions that benefit the community.

## **Heritage Statement**

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The proposed location for the Community Garden is not within, but is adjacent to the conservation area. The proposal will beautify and enhance the open countryside, through the development of the community garden as a natural environment which will enhance biodiversity and wildlife.

There are no heritage assets on or adjacent to the proposed site.

## **Consultation**

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Pre-application advice meeting with Northumberland County Council 17.11.22. Feedback highlighted that the proposed location was not within the settlement boundary of the village, with reference Policy STP1. To progress with a planning application, the planning statement would need to demonstrate that there is not an alternative suitable site within the settlement boundary, and that there is a community need for the proposal.

Consultations with Haydon Bridge Parish Council and Haydon Bridge Development Trust have informed planning preparations in terms of the benefits of the project and proposed location, to the community and the environment, in relation to the objectives of the Haydon Parish Neighbourhood Plan.

The proposals have been compiled following consultation with the local community through a series of engagement activities and meetings. Including:

- An open event on site, for which invitations were delivered to direct neighbours (150 people in attendance).
- An open event at Haydon Bridge Community Centre (112 people in attendance)
- Outreach attendance at summer events in Haydon Bridge, Newbrough and Allendale ( 160 people in attendance)
- Summer taster sessions at Gee's Wood (125 people in attendance)
- Autumn forest school programme at Gee's Wood (86 people weekly attendance)
- Winter forest school programmes at Crow Wood and Gee's Wood ( 34 people weekly attendance)
- Easter Forest School sessions ( 201 people in attendance over 8 sessions)
- Meetings with Haydon Bridge Parish Council and Haydon Bridge Development Trust.
- Engagement with Haydon Bridge High School, Shaftoe Primary School, Newbrough Primary School, Little Badgers Nursery, Haltwhistle Children's Centre, Haydon Bridge Bridge 2 Care group, Haydon Bridge Gardening Group.

Community consultation has proved very positive resulting in engagement with 1038 participants (July2022-March 2023), with 120 of those participants attending regular weekly sessions for 6+ weeks.

## Relevant Policy

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### Northumberland Local Plan

#### Policy STP1 Spatial strategy

**g. Development in the open countryside will be supported if it can be demonstrated that it:**

- i. Supports the sustainable growth and expansion of existing business or the formation of new businesses in accordance with Policy ECN13;** The proposal supports the development and sustainable growth of the newly formed Community Interest Company, The Nurture Project CIC, in accordance with Policy ECN13:
- ii. Supports the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses in accordance with Policy ECN14;** The proposal supports the development of the land-based business, a community garden and nature based education, in accordance with Policy ECN14.
- iii. Supports sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments in accordance with Policy ECN15;** The proposal will enhance landscape and nature based tourism and recreation.
- v. Supports the retention, provision or improvement of accessible local services and community facilities which cannot be provided in settlements, in accordance with Policy INF 2;** The proposal will create new accessible community and educational services and facilities in accordance with Policy INF2.

## **Policy INF2 Community services and facilities**

**2. Improvement in the quantity, quality, accessibility and range of community services and facilities, and the provision of new services and facilities where these will meet an identified need will be supported, subject to conformity with policies elsewhere in the Local Plan, and any made neighbourhood plans, which seek to ensure any significant adverse effects on the environment, habitats, heritage assets and local amenity can be avoided through good design and siting of development or that those effects can be suitably compensated for or mitigated.**

The proposal will provide new community services and facilities that meet needs identified in the neighbourhood plan household survey, the made neighbourhood plan, ( see neighbourhood plan details below) and highlighted through the engagement of the community (691 participants) through taster sessions held July-Nov 2022.

**3. Where opportunities arise through new built development and changes of use, the shared use of facilities, including community use of educational facilities where appropriate, will be supported and secured through planning conditions or planning obligations as appropriate.**

The change of use proposal will create a community hub, for use by the whole community and available for community groups to book for use within open hours.

## **Policy ECN 13 Meeting rural employment needs**

**1. The role of rural locations in providing employment opportunities, to meet the needs of those living in such areas is recognised. Therefore, in the countryside, development that will generate employment opportunities, proportionate to the rural location, will be supported where the following apply:** The community interest company, The Nurture Project CIC, has 'enhanced employment opportunities' as one of the social impact objectives; the proposal will generate opportunities for work experience, training and paid employment for the local community.

**a. Existing buildings are reused or, where possible, extensions or new buildings that contribute positively to local landscape character and, where applicable, local building traditions;** The proposal includes a natural wooden learning centre, with green roof, water harvesting system and solar energy, which will contribute positively to the local landscape.

**b. The proposal is related as closely as possible to the existing settlement pattern, existing services and accessible places;** The proposal is located on the settlement boundary, and enclosed by existing housing and community facilities. Surrounded by the football club, and adjacent to the A69 and adjacent bus stop.

**c. It will not have an adverse impact on the operational aspects of local farming or forestry.** The proposal implies no adverse impacts.

**2. Within the parameters of the above criteria, particular support will be given to:**

**a. Developments on farms which would add value to farm produce on-site and provide other supply chain opportunities in the County therefore reducing the distance products need to travel**

**during the production process;** The proposal includes regenerating unused agricultural land for community gardening to grow local food produce, thus reducing food miles.

**b. The further diversification and development of educational facilities where these will help to further enhance Northumberland's rural economy and training opportunities for rural professions, particularly those in relation to the County's further and higher education offer;** The proposal will enhance educational opportunities and training opportunities within nature based and horticultural professions, offering work experience, alternative education provisions, training courses and apprenticeships.

### **Policy ECN 14 Farm/ rural diversification**

**1. Rural diversification developments will be supported if the proposed use is:**

**a. Directly related to agricultural, horticultural or forestry operations, or other activities, which by their nature would require a rural location.** The proposal is for a community garden; horticultural activities, education and training courses.

**b. For leisure, recreation or tourism activities that require open land in a countryside location.** The proposal involves outdoor leisure, recreation and tourism in a natural setting, requiring an open countryside location.

**c. A business or employment generating use that complies with Policy ECN13.** The community interest company, The Nurture Project CIC, has 'enhanced employment opportunities' as one of the social impact objectives; the proposal will generate opportunities for work experience, training and paid employment for the local community, in addition to hosting events at which local people can sell good: crafts, food etc.

### **Policy STP5 Health & Wellbeing**

**1. Development which promotes, supports and enhances the health and wellbeing of communities, residents, workers and visitors will be supported.**

The social objectives of The Nurture Project CIC are to benefit and enhance the health and wellbeing of participants through outdoor educational experiences. The proposal for the creation of the community garden is to facilitate opportunities to meet these objectives.

**2. Development proposals will be required to demonstrate where relevant, and in a proportionate way, that they:**

**a. are safe, comfortable, inclusive and attractive and prioritise pedestrian and cycle movement;**

The aim of the community garden is to provide a safe, inclusive and naturally beautiful environment for the whole community to utilise. The site design is fully accessible to all, including wheelchair accessible entrance and pathways, with bicycle parking on site. Plans to include ebike charging facility with solar / wind power in the future.

**b. have a strong sense of place which encourages community cohesion and social interaction;**

Improving social cohesion and reducing social isolation is one of the core elements of the project, the aim is to provide multi generational experiences for the community to develop a strong sense of belonging.

**c. provide access to a range of facilities including public transport, health, education, social care, green spaces, sport, play and leisure facilities;**

The community garden will provide a safe and welcoming environment for all to access a range of facilities to benefit health, wellbeing, education, training, employability skills, volunteer opportunities, environmental arts & crafts, play and leisure activities. In a thriving green space designed to benefit the holistic wellbeing and development of participants. Programmes facilitated by The Nurture Project CIC may be used as social prescribing and/or alternative education provisions. Green care and ecotherapy, amongst other outdoor activities in a green space are highly identified as beneficial to the health and wellbeing of participants.

**d. include appropriate green and blue infrastructure wherever possible, responding to opportunities to contribute positively towards urban greening;**

The community garden design will regenerate an unused, neglected plot of land, creating a beautiful natural environment for both people and biodiversity to thrive.

**e. are designed to promote and facilitate physical activity, and healthy lifestyles;**

Physical activity in a green space is highly beneficial to the holistic wellbeing and development of people of all ages. Healthy lifestyles will be promoted through physical activities and dietary education, alongside the benefit of access to local healthy produce.

The sensory garden will provide a safe space for children and young people, including those with special educational, mental, emotional and physical needs or disabilities to engage in physical activities which develop their core sensory systems, leading to improved sensory and perceptual motor skills.

**f. prevent negative impacts on amenity;**

The design of the community garden has considered and mitigated any negative impacts on amenity, with sensitive consideration to neighbouring properties. The design will enhance and beautify the open countryside, and provide part of a nature corridor connecting the A69 with the river.

The placement of larger structures is along the South boundary, out of line with neighbouring windows to prevent blockage of sunlight. This is also considered in the careful planning of tree planting, ensuring that large trees are planted along the North boundary, not in front of neighbouring properties.

Open hours are within daylight hours, therefore minimal lighting requirements: small solar lights will be situated at ground level, so as not to create light pollution.

The sensory garden, which would be the noisiest activity area (the sound of children playing) is located on the East boundary, at the furthest away point from neighbouring properties.

It is noted that the site is situated adjacent to the Football Club, an invaluable community facility which provides multiple benefits to many people. The noise impact of small numbers of children learning and playing in the community garden will be insignificant compared to the football club and create no negative impact to the club.



**g. protect, and alleviate risk to people and the environment, support wider public safety, and do not have a negative impact upon ground instability, ground and water contamination, vibration, air and noise pollution.**

The site is designed to provide a safe environment, promoting and supporting public safety.

The Nurture Project CIC holds all relevant training, qualifications, Health & Safety policies, Risk Assessments and Safeguarding policies, procedures and Insurances to facilitate a safe community garden for public use.

Ground preparations will include the installation of permeable grass mats to create a suitable surface for pedestrians, bicycles, pushchair and wheelchair users.

The permeable surfaces, pond, water harvesting and tree planting to absorb surface water will mitigate flood risks.

No vibration / air pollution.

Noise pollution: minimal: children playing, as above.

### **Haydon Parish Neighbourhood Plan**

The creation of the community garden would address many of the objectives and key issues of the neighbourhood plan through this sustainable development:

Addressing sustainability and climate change.

Enhancing the natural environment, landscape and biodiversity.

Enhancing community facilities and services.

Promoting tourism and boosting the local economy.

Supporting employment opportunities, training and skills development.

Promoting community cohesion and addressing anti-social youth behaviour through diversionary activities and education.

Nurturing a thriving and vibrant community that will be more resilient in the face of climate change.

Improving quality of life through numerous health and wellbeing benefits.

### **OBJECTIVE 1. Sustainability and climate change**

**Focusing the majority of development within the settlement boundary and ensuring all new development is sustainable and takes a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change. This includes:**

- **Embedding a commitment to sustainable design, construction and use;**
- **Fully understanding and addressing the current and future implications of flood risk;**
- **Contributing to reducing the carbon footprint of the parish; and**
- **Prioritising energy efficiency and use of renewable energy in existing as well as new development and reducing fuel poverty.**

The site is located at the boundary of the settlement area, surrounded on the North and East sides by the existing community facilities at Haydon Bridge Football Club. The project is focussed on adapting to climate change through a sustainable design, recycling and reusing materials within the construction and uses.

Tree planting, pond and water harvesting to mitigate flood risks.

Reducing the carbon footprint of the parish through tree planting, reducing food miles, recycling wood and composting green waste.

Renewable energy use through solar and wind power for lighting, composting toilet and Ebike charging point.

One of the key educational focuses of The Nurture Project is to educate, support and encourage the community in relation to aspects arising from the climate and ecological emergency.

### **OBJECTIVE 3. Natural environment**

**Protecting and enhancing the distinctive character of Haydon Parish, especially in relation to the landscape.**

**Planning positively for the creation, protection and enhancement of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure.**

**Safeguarding spaces that are important to the community and the character of the area.**

**Encouraging and supporting community led projects that enable Haydon Parish to both reduce its carbon footprint and enhance biodiversity.**

The community garden is designed to enhance the character and landscape of Haydon Parish through its natural design, to create networks of biodiversity through the creation of a Forest Food Garden and pond, enabling Haydon Parish to reduce its carbon footprint and enhance biodiversity.

The polytunnel will provide a space to grow pollinators to be distributed around the village.

### **OBJECTIVE 5. Vibrant and thriving community**

**Retaining, protecting and enhancing our valued community facilities, reducing the need to travel outside Haydon Parish and thus reducing our carbon emissions.**

**Protecting and enhancing the village centre as a service centre, through supporting and encouraging local businesses to thrive and new businesses to emerge, thereby making Haydon Parish more resilient to global shocks.**

The community garden will enhance community facilities, providing a community hub for use by the whole community, reducing the need to travel, and promoting sustainable travel by walking, cycling and public transport.

The creation of the community garden will enable The Nurture Project, a not-for-profit organisation to thrive, providing employment opportunities for local people and engaging the community in environmental living practices. Developing a thriving community, increasing resilience to the climate crisis, and increasing multi generational community cohesion following the isolation periods of the Covid pandemic.

The project will provide a range of beneficial educational and recreational services for all generations: older people, families, young people and children. The site is designed to be fully accessible to cater for the needs of each individual.

The Nurture Project will facilitate a timetable of activities, including time slots for local people to book the site for community uses that will provide benefits to the community. Enabling the community access to an additional community space to provide services.

### **OBJECTIVE 6. Local economy**

**Supporting the economy of the plan area, including the expansion of existing businesses and attraction of new businesses to the parish, thereby reducing the distance of travel to work and the level of carbon emissions.**

**Encouraging businesses to reduce their carbon footprint and welcoming businesses**

The community garden will provide the expansion of The Nurture Project, providing volunteer and employment opportunities for local people, thus reducing travel and carbon emissions. The project will reduce the carbon footprint of the Parish, as above.

## **OBJECTIVE 7. Accessibility and transport**

### **Enhance opportunities for walkers, cyclists, horse riders and those with disabilities; and mitigate the impact of traffic in Haydon Bridge.**

The site is located within walking distance of the whole village. Sustainable travel will be promoted.

Accessible to all, with wheelchair / bicycle / pushchair pathways throughout the site.

The site is adjacent to a local bus stop, and within walking distance of the train station.

There is a disabled drop off point for disabled vehicles on site.

The Nurture Project has permission to utilise the existing car parks at Haydon Bridge United Football Club, which are located adjacent to the site.

## **Benefits**

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### **Environmental Enhancement:**

Tree Planting: regenerate and beautify a neglected plot of land, enriching the open countryside, enhance the local environment through the creation of habitats, increase biodiversity of plants and wildlife, provide a source of healthy food, carbon sequestration, improve water infiltration, improve soil and air health, create windbreaks and sound breaks to neighbouring properties.

Food Growing: growing and sharing sustainable local produce, reducing food miles, composting green waste, promoting self sufficiency and sustainable living practices.

Wildflower Meadow: Enhancing pollinators and biodiversity, beautifying the area.

Provide a polytunnel to grow plants to enhance areas throughout the village and encourage pollinators.

Composting to enhance soil quality and reduce waste.

Recycling wood to create new habitat boxes, increasing habitats and reducing waste.

Water Harvesting from wooden shed structure to reduce water fall and utilise water for gardening purposes.

Solar energy, wind for composting toilet. Ebike charging point, encouraging active travel.

Engaging the community in sustainable living practices, educating and enabling young people to care for their environment.

### **Community Benefits:**

Enhancing the holistic wellbeing of participants and the community through:

Enhancing the physical health of people by providing a safe outdoor community hub, at which people can engage in multiple physical activities. Providing healthy dietary education and access to local healthy food produce.

Providing a safe natural sensory garden for young people to explore and develop their sensory systems.

Improving community cohesion, reducing social isolation, and creating a sense of community space for all ages.

Providing a range of educational sessions, work experience and employment opportunities for the whole community.

Nurturing the development of children and young people through experiential learning, developing social and emotional intelligence, physical and practical skills, intellect and cognition.

Providing positive experiences for our young community to divert anti-social behaviour.

## **Summary**

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The consultation period has provided much positive feedback and demand for the project, alongside considerations for the design of the physical space, from both the local community and the pre-planning advice from NCC.

The Nurture Project CIC has designed the natural space to mitigate any negative impacts, and to enhance the natural environment and quality of life for the community in line with the Northumberland Local Plan and the Haydon Parish Neighbourhood Plan.

Any further information can be requested from 