

SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS: VISIT TO HOCKERTON HOUSING PROJECT JULY 2026

It was rather fitting that we visited the Hockerton Housing Project on a baking hot day when we were officially having a heatwave. Our beautiful planet is not happy with how the majority of people are treating it and in a very short space of time it is beginning to fail.

But to give us all hope for the future there are always people who stand out from the crowd and are prepared to fight hard for an alternative view of life, and to try and work with nature. We met such people at Hockerton where it quickly became clear that this eco-housing project, just over the border in Nottinghamshire, is much more than an experiment in how to construct environmentally-friendly houses.

Our guides, themselves owners of these homes, were so kind to share their experiences and their homes with us. It is hard not to be swept along by their infectious enthusiasm. There are only 5 eco-houses on this site and the owners, including young children, are living their lives entirely off-grid. To do so successfully as well as happily and healthily, this tightly-knit, interdependent community must buy in totally to its principles and the practical demands on their time and skills that this will require. From growing much of their food to managing the supply of both potable and non-potable water, from maintenance work on site to undertaking the project's administrative tasks and contributing to educational projects every member of the community is required to make a significant and regular commitment.

It is obvious that choosing to live in such a sustainable way requires a lot of hard work. Even being part of creating the enviably productive smallholding which looked most appealing on the day of our visit would, when there is a biting cold wind in the winter and the clay soil is sodden and sticky on the boots, no doubt be a completely different story!

The most astonishing thing about the whole project is that the architect plans were submitted in 1994 – over 30 years ago and yet still the building industry is largely following a traditional model rather than adapting to the demands of life in a rapidly changing climate. If more people knew about the alternatives available would they invest instead in a property and indeed a lifestyle that was responsive to our changing environment?

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