

Cambridge Road Estate

Designing a new community with young people in Kingston



Summary

This report describes how young people have been engaged so far in regeneration of the Cambridge Road Estate in Kingston. It explains in detail how we worked together with a group of 18 young people who learned about design, shared their experience of living in this area, analysed different spaces on the estate and directly influenced the masterplan. It has been written both as a record of the project and to help other councils and developers make better places by involving young people in the process.



Young people's neighborhoods matter to them, as numerous studies have revealed. Yet regeneration programmes, even ambitious ones, often fail to engage effectively with young people and they are left having had little or no impact on the proposals.

This project set out to do things differently. We sought to bring young people into the heart of the discussion about their future estate, by engaging with them on their own terms and in ways that are most useful and effective for them.

We have worked with a group of 18 young people to help them understand and influence proposals to build new homes and facilities on their estate. Woven into the sessions were exercises

in skills building, listening and analysis that provide a rich resource for the development team going forward.

Young people are a significant minority and as children are a protected group under the Equalities Act 2010. Good participation and engagement means beginning by understanding their needs and the best way to do that is to listen and to hear what they have to say.

When it comes to the places where they live, they have particular insights and will know their neighbourhoods very well, using the outside spaces to hang out, 'chill' or play. They need a variety of spaces to be able to freely choose what they do, they need to feel safe and they welcome the presence of adults in their world.

'We should get involved in the regeneration of this estate, because we live here'

They also face challenges and will tell you of their fears about knife crime and their frustration that spaces become unavailable and unsafe after dark, which in the winter months makes life restricting.

The sessions, carried out in April and June 2019, were facilitated by ZCD Architects and took place in the Tadlow Hub, a community space on Cambridge Road Estate and outside on the estate itself. There were eighteen young people in total, whose ages ranged from 14 to 20 years old. Ten of the group live on the estate itself, the others spending time there visiting friends and relatives.

The group took their role seriously, they spoke articulately and clearly about their lives in their area and felt they were listened to and taken seriously.

Importantly the young people were paid. This was designed to respect their time and expertise, motivate attendance and allow us to work hard as equals to a common brief. They were ably supported by youth workers, who were introduced to the project before it commenced. We are indebted to their energy and enthusiasm and the way in which they value and respect their cohorts is a source of great inspiration.

The youth services were Fulham FC Foundation, Oxygen and Achieving for Children.

This Report

Listening to young people and understanding the issues that affect them is the first step in effective engagement and can generate commercial and social value in the long term. This project weaved in lived experiences through specific exercises that analyse the public realm and look at how layout and management might be having an impact on their lives. The findings demonstrate how young people are able to effectively communicate with a professional team, engage in complex urban analysis and potentially have a meaningful impact on a future development.

The report begins with the background and objectives behind the sessions, which are underpinned by child friendly city research methods and good practice being developed in London and elsewhere.

The main findings from the sessions are presented, along with suggestions of further work to be undertaken in the future. The observations and ideas of the young people are inspiring, relevant and deliverable given the potential programme.

The remainder of the report explains the structure of each session and presents the findings in detail. It includes young people's analysis of four spaces within their own neighbourhood, revealing how their own feelings of freedom shift after dark as well as more nuanced observations about connectivity.

By the end of the sessions we have been able to provide the young people with the skills that they need to potentially continue their involvement on the project and help meaningfully shape the masterplan and layout of the estate. We have also introduced the development team to our way of working and analysing space.

This approach is intended to benefit everyone involved and could have far reaching positive outcomes for the community and the project going forward.

We also want to put on record our thanks to all of the young people who took part. You were great.

Cambridge Road Estate

The modern day Cambridge Road Estate was built in 1969. Today there are around 1,810 people living in this community¹, contained in 832 households, including 653 homes for social rent with the remainder leasehold or freehold properties. Children and young people aged 0 to 15 years old make up 26% of the community.

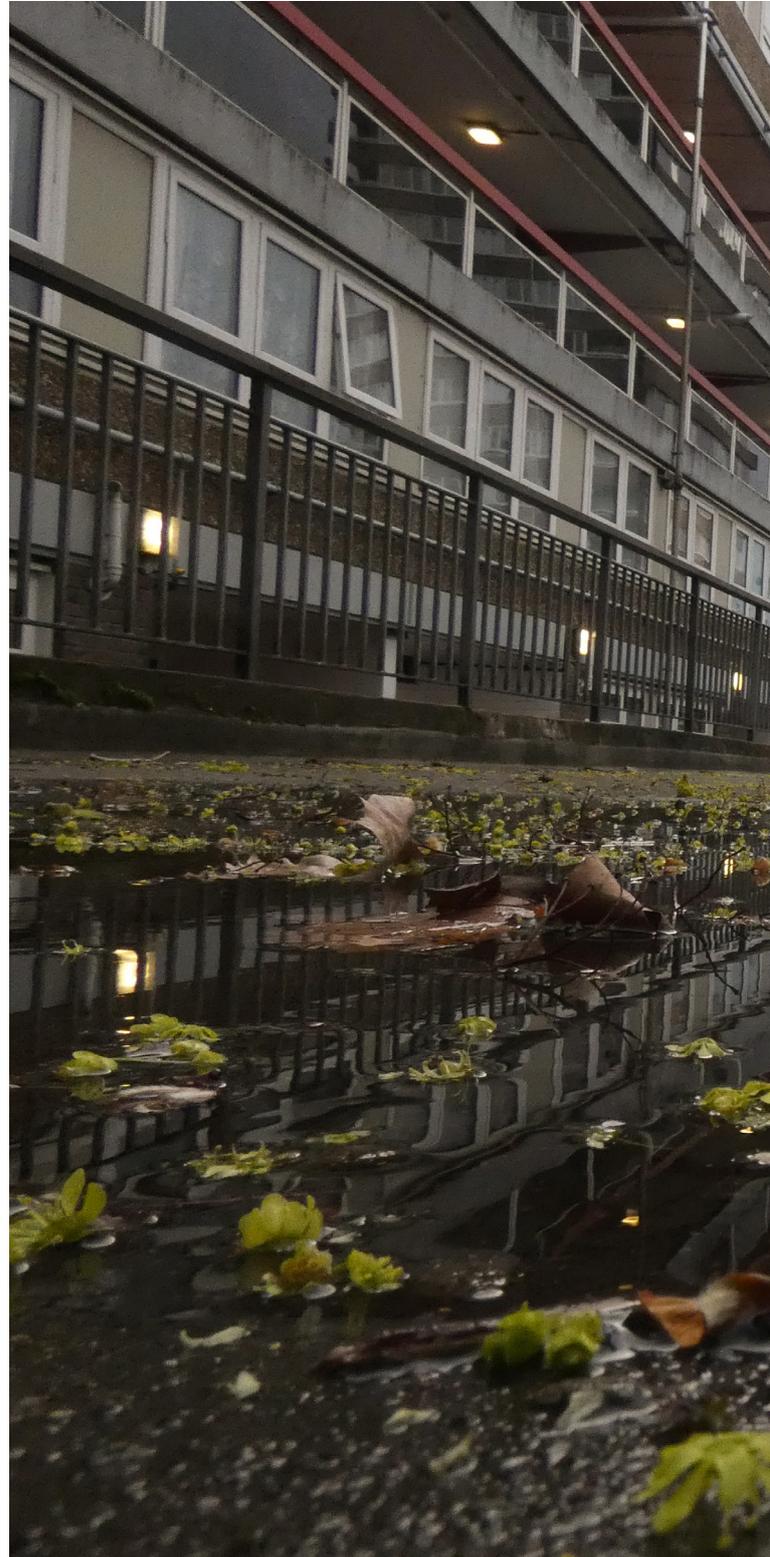
It is an ethnically diverse area with nearly half (45%) of the residents from ethnic minority backgrounds. Nearly a quarter of households on the estate have nobody aged 16 or over speaking English as a main language².

It is also the most disadvantaged area in Kingston with an Index of Multiple Deprivation rank of 4,711 which places it in the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in England³.

The estate itself is arranged in four 15 storey high-rise blocks alongside five storey blocks with elevated walkways and some two storey houses. Some facilities exist including a hall, a hub, play equipment and a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA). Cambridge Road Estate has three community organisations and many people working to make this a place where everyone can thrive.

This is the borough's largest regeneration programme aiming to deliver approximately 2000 new homes over the next 10-12 years, including more social housing, better community facilities and outdoor spaces. The masterplanning process began in the spring of 2019 and the final proposals will be subject to a resident ballot planned for early 2020. Eligible young people over the age of 16 will be able to vote.

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- 1 LSOA 2017 Mid year estimates, ONS
 - 2 2011 Census, ONS
 - 3 2015 English Indices of Multiple Deprivation, DCLG





Background and objectives

Participation in the planning and development process is often focussed on dealing with abstract ideas rather than the realities and experiences of children's lives. These processes lack a thorough understanding of the complex systems that underpin children and young people's relationship with their local neighbourhoods.

Where research has been carried out in this area the focus is often on children and young people as future citizens and providers, or as a member of the family unit. Far less representation is given to their voices and lived experiences (Farthing 2014). This absence of voice leads to a lack of knowledge within professions responsible for managing and delivering development and change. Professionals are neither well equipped to advocate for children's needs nor suitably engaged in how to do so (Clark et al 2015).

Involving children and young people in the physical changes going on in their local area is essential, but to what degree are their voices being heard and are we even approaching participation from the right perspective? Asking residents 'what do you want?' can be problematic and does not address some of the underlying issues or fully represent everyone in the community.

In short, the current policy system fails to present children as legitimate citizens, with their own agency and capable of articulating their own experiences. Children, young people and their lived experiences are poorly represented and therefore largely unable to influence built environment policy. Unless challenged this situation will endure, relegating children to bit-players at best, or harnessing them to promote competing political agendas.

An excerpt taken from 'Neighbourhood Design: working with children towards a child friendly city' by Dinah Bornat and Ben Shaw.



Our Objectives

The aim of this project was:

- To engage with a group of young people who live and visit the Cambridge Road Estate in order to better understand the way in which they use their local neighbourhood.
- To provide this group with the skills needed to effectively communicate their needs as well as interrogate an evolving masterplan.
- To introduce this group to the development team and the masterplan proposals on their own terms.
- To allow the young people to suggest the most effective ways of continuing their engagement as well as how best to reach others in their community so that they can have their views taken into consideration as well.
- To work with local youth services to build capacity and skills that would be both beneficial for the young people as participants and the engagement process going forward.

The first two objectives are listening and skills building exercises and are carried out side by side in the first two sessions.

In the third session we were able to introduce the group of young people to the masterplan and members of the development team. In this session we explored the ways in which a common language around play, hanging out and public realm can be explored on young people's terms. This is a critical aspect of engagement and will be essential for meeting the draft London Plan policy objectives around engagement, play and children's freedom to get around their local area (known as independent mobility).

By the fourth session the young people were able to talk clearly to the project architect and development team, who quickly picked up that the way in which they used space is fluid and varied.

Overall, the sessions were carried out in a professional and engaging manner and the young people took their role very seriously. Their input was structured and they were given various tasks to carry out, analysing space and explaining how spaces operated in their neighbourhood. This way of working introduces them to complex issues of urban design and has given them the skills to be able to consider the public realm and to start talking confidently to professionals about how they use it and what they need.

The fifth objective was to suggest how future engagement could be as effective as possible, reaching more young people on the estate to give the engagement some breadth, as well as suggesting additional presentations with a core group of young people who will be able to interrogate the evolving masterplan further .

By focusing on the public realm, we have been able to think about the way in which spaces form a neighbourhood and how the surrounding buildings, layout, uses and management of these places are working for young people. There are some emerging and important aspects that are likely to be having an impact on their lives and we set up a structured examination of these as we explored their local area.

This process takes young people seriously and also teaches us, as professionals, how best to understand the impact our designs can have on a neighbourhood. We believe this is the first step towards creating inclusive communities. It challenges the way in which professionals might approach a strategic masterplan, and also gives young people the tools to start engaging with a complex project, providing them with a language they can use to react to and interrogate proposals as they emerge.

Engagement methods

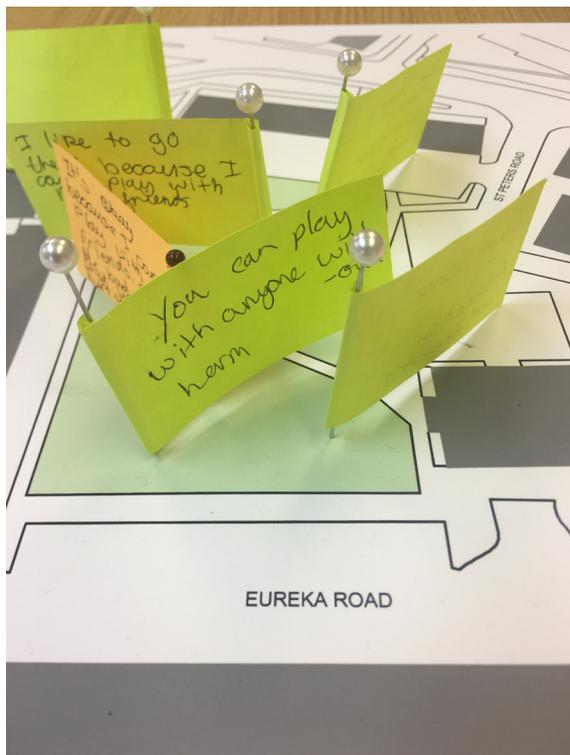
We used analysis and mapping techniques that are designed to be understood by professionals and non professionals alike. These focus on the use of space by children and young people, engaging with them on their own terms and a process of both listening and teaching new skills.

Mapping lived experience - the traffic light system

The first of these techniques is a listening exercise called the traffic light system. It is based on a *play sufficiency* model developed by Mike Barclay and Ben Tawil in Wrexham, Wales.

Young people are asked to assign a colour to a space depending on how free they are to do what they choose there:

- Green - free to choose what you do there
- Orange - regulated to some extent
- Red - restricted



We did this first on a map and then in identified spaces on a walking tour.

Young people will know the spaces in their neighbourhood well and they find it easy to categorise spaces in this way. They do not always agree and it opens up a conversation about events and experiences in these spaces.

Transport, activities and buildings

The second exercise was carried out on the walking tour and is more analytical and skills based, looking at the aspects of each space in more detail. We used icons (shown opposite) to represent car, cycle and pedestrian usage as well as activities that can occur in the space. The young people were asked to think about the buildings around the space, on the ground and upper floors.

This analysis allows us to start conversations with children and young people about the impact of vehicles and parking, as well as active frontage and overlooking, all of which are important planning and development considerations. We know from conversations and observations that children and young people use spaces that are well overlooked and easily accessible from homes. Their analysis of the space, in terms of how they feel there and what the space offers, allows us to have conversations about the more complex aspects of the public realm that are valuable for the brief and design.

THE SPACE

Transport

T1		Road
T2		Cars and people share
T3		Cycle route
T4		Car parking
T5		Safe crossing point
T6		Pavement
T7		Car free space

Activities

A1		Space to run around
A2		Space to play ball
A3		Play area
A4		Space to hang out
A5		Seating
A6		Community building: eg youth centre

BUILDINGS AROUND

Ground floor

G1		Shops or restaurant
G2		Office
G3		Front door to house
G4		Entrance to flats
G5		Blank , bins or garages

Upper floors

U1		Deck access
U2		Balcony
U3		Windows
U4		Blank elevation
U5		Shop or offices

Heat map analysis

ZCD Architects have developed a 'Heat Map' system from extensive observational work. The third exercise was a way of categorising and comparing each space, using this system, based on how accessible, overlooked, car free and en-route to another space it is.

We now know that spaces that offer all of these aspects tend to be better used by children, young people and other age groups in the community. We know that when some elements are missing they are less well used.

We asked the young people to categorise spaces in the same way that we do. We find that they are quick at picking up the system, and this allows us to have conversations about overlooking and connectivity and also to unpick where some of the danger spots or less well used areas are. The Heat Map adjacent on page 15 shows this.

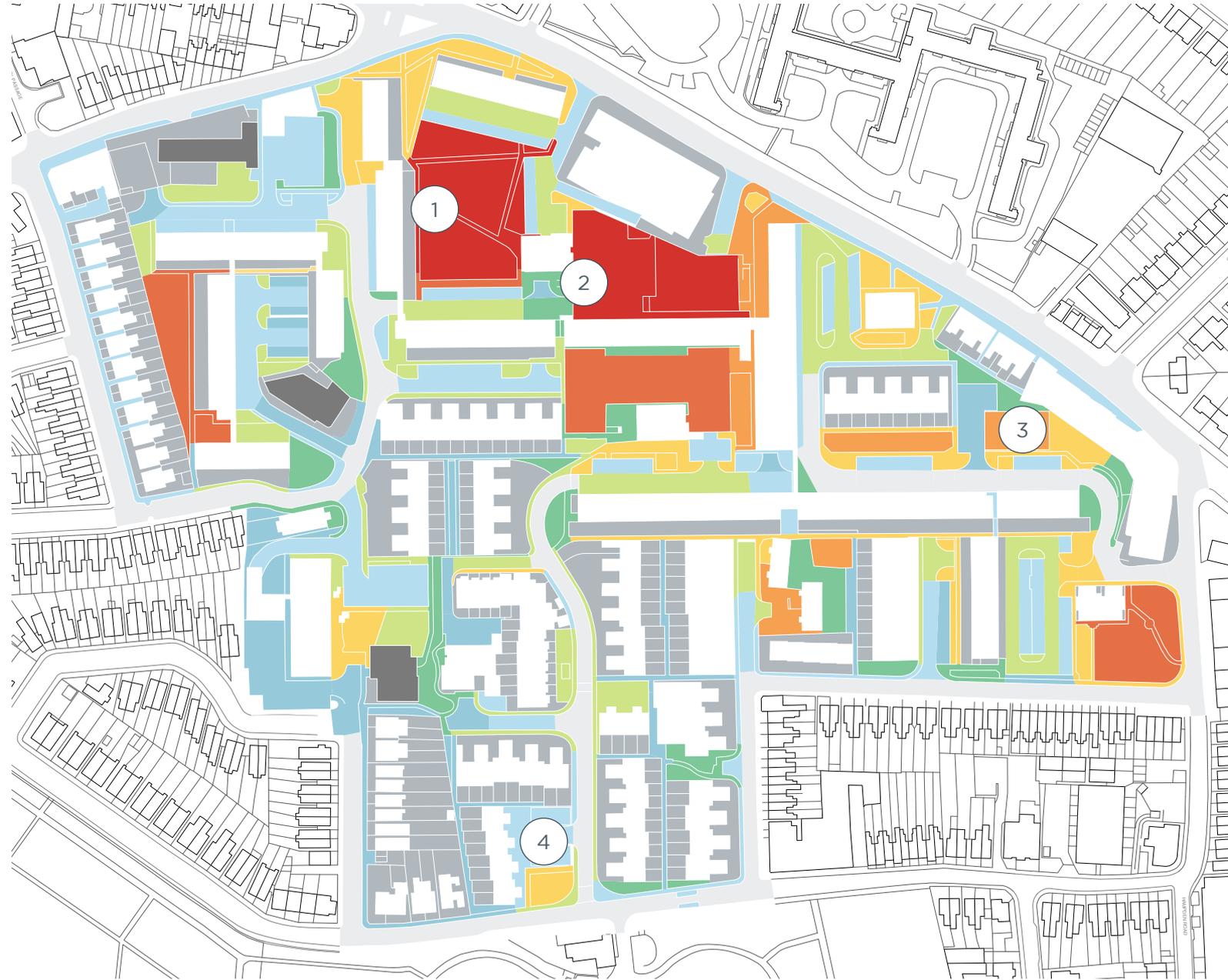
Behind this exercise is more skill building, but it also doubles as a conversation and analytical tool. Interventions and masterplans can be analysed using this same method, which will allow young people to interrogate proposals on their own terms. It is also an excellent visualisation of play and 'independent mobility' which have become policy objectives in the London Plan.

Opinions about the space

Our final method was to ask more general open questions which allow young people to give their thoughts about each space, including what they might like to see that would improve it. This is another listening exercise and is helpful to compare to the traffic light analysis. For example we found that spaces categorised as green were places they say they often visit and like hanging out in. They are good at pointing out detailed improvements that would allow them to spend more time there, for example meeting friends or playing football.

As well as structured survey sheets, we also used video and discussion sessions to record their opinions, building up a rich resource of the spaces around the neighbourhood.

Cambridge Road Estate Heat Map



Spaces visited during walking tour analysis

- 1 Madingley Green
- 2 Podium Playground
- 3 J Pitch
- 4 Willingham Way

Heat Map Key

- Accessible, overlooked, car free, en route
 -
 -
 -
 -
 - In-accessible, not overlooked, car only, isolated
 -
 - Private space/rear gardens
 - Roads only
- ↕

Sessions



Session One

The first session started with three ice breaker questions. This allowed the young people to quickly introduce the local area to us, the outsiders, and also to set the scene by focusing at a neighbourhood level. The first question was:

‘What is your favourite memory growing up in the area?’

There were eleven responses, five were about sport - playing in the J Pitch (one in the dark!) or playing football. One was a game called ‘manhunt’ which can be played around the estate. There was one memory about the park, one about the youth club and one about a sports club. Only two were ‘indoors’ - one was being at home and one was moving house.

There is a common misconception that children no longer play outside, which is misleading and unhelpful. Our research shows that they do and that they value play highly. We also know that the desire to play outside extends into teenage years. Young people may feel

more comfortable calling play ‘hanging out’ or ‘chilling’, but it is essentially the same thing: an important social activity which should be valued as highly by professionals as it is by the young people themselves.

The second question was:

‘Right now, where is your favourite place to hang out in your area?’

Of the eleven responses, only three were indoors ‘at home’. Three were the J Pitch, two were Cambridge Gardens, two were Kingsmeadow and one a friend’s yard.

Cambridge Gardens and Kingsmeadow are spaces nearby and show that young people value external spaces in their local area and are not restricted to their own estate.

This is important as having the freedom to roam and meet friends is an essential part of growing up and gives young people the confidence to be able to access the cultural and employment opportunities on their doorstep.

The third question was:

‘Where is the worst place?’

The fourteen responses to this question were extremely revealing; stairs, lifts, bikes and bin areas were mentioned nine times. Two of the responses were the tower blocks; Madingley and Brinkley and two were more personal ‘my area’ and ‘near Z’s house’.

Stairs, lifts, bikes and bins are *vertical circulation* and *ancillary spaces*. The layout and siting of these spaces is critical, but are often tucked away and unsafe. Young people are highly sensitive to this kind of poor planning, they need to use these spaces frequently. Phased development can have a further negative impact in the same way, as connecting routes become convoluted and poorly overlooked.

The message from the responses to these initial questions is clear: How important the external spaces in a neighbourhood are to young people and how vital it is to get the connections between these spaces and their homes right.

After the ice breaker session we asked the young people to gather around a map of their estate and to use the traffic light system to place green, orange or red flags in spaces to describe whether they felt free, regulated or restricted. They were asked to write on the flags to indicate something about the space. This exercise was repeated again in the third session, with other members of the community. Each time it revealed both where the problems lie, but also that there is no one opinion as to how a space works. Spaces can be both ‘red’ and ‘green’, with even the same person indicating both.

After the map work, we divided the young people into four groups, giving each one a camera and asked them to explore their estate and take photographs. Young people are hugely creative when it comes to photography and some of the resulting images were so good they have now been exhibited.

‘instagram’

The final activity in this session was to make short videos, practising their interviewing techniques. We created an Instagram account for the group and invited them each to log on. They recorded conversations about their local area.

We have used this same instagram account: [cambridge.road.estate](https://www.instagram.com/cambridge.road.estate) to showcase the photographs.

Session Two

During the first session we used the map to select four places that they would take us to on the walking tour (see p13)

- ① Madingley Green
- ② Podium Playground
- ③ J Pitch
- ④ Willingham Way

In this session we visited each of the spaces and worked in pairs or threes to fill in survey sheets and analyse the space directly in-situ using the methods described on pages 10 to 13: traffic light system; transport activities and buildings; heat mapping and more general opinions.

For the traffic light system we asked them to assess the spaces according to use by different age groups, both during the day and after dark:

- 0-12 (years)
- 13 -20
- 13-20 with a physical disability
- 13-20 with a learning disability
- 20 to 65
- 65+

On pages 20 to 23 are the results of the traffic light assessments and what the young people feel is good and bad about each of the spaces.

Surveys like this are not statistically significant, but they are a basis to start a conversation. During the fourth session the young people were able to talk again about these spaces with the development team.

The survey results revealed that both Madingley Green and the J Pitch are well used by young people. In general the group reported they are using Madingley Green less, now that they are teenagers, with a similar number saying they are using the J Pitch more as they have got older.

Their traffic light results indicate that they feel Madingley Green is predominantly 'regulated' for most age groups, although more 'free' for younger children. After dark this shifts, although notably not so for their own age group. This suggests that they feel safe here which could be due to the 'open' nature that they describe and the level of overlooking which they all recognised. These points should be noted when it comes to the masterplan proposals.

The podium playground is more complex, it is less obvious to them what they can do here on a daily basis, although some describe riding their bikes around. Many of them do come here however, it is accessible, car free and well overlooked, but a number of them have pointed out the step access which is problematic. It is an area, again which they feel does not change much after dark in terms of how they are able to use it.

The J Pitch is the most popular for their age group, but their attitude shifts after dark and they feel less free to do what they choose there. Some of them felt it was less well overlooked than the green and they all are sensitive to the presence of cars, both moving and parked.

Session Three

The third session was held at the summer community event on a Saturday in May. As well as having an opportunity to view the masterplan proposals, there were games and entertainment for the residents throughout the afternoon. The session itself was an opportunity for young people to meet and talk to other residents and for them to showcase some of the work carried out so far.

Ten of their photographs were mounted and displayed in the regeneration offices. The map was laid out again for other residents to add their red, orange and green flags and the residents were then invited to join a discussion session with a group of young people.

The discussion focused on how young people use space to hang out and play and began by asking everyone to recall their favourite memory growing up. For most people that memory was outside, with other children and had an element of risk involved. It was a leveling experience, and revealed to the adults that indeed young people do play out, that they make friends with other children and young people, including new-comers and that some of them had roamed quite far from home, one as far as Teddington Lock, almost three miles away.

The conversations challenged the traditional methods of talking about fixed equipment playgrounds and MUGAs and turned to climbing, roaming, cycling and hanging out. The type and variety of play chimed with the adults' memories and brought the concept of 'freedom to play and hang out' to life.



Madingley Green

'It is a big green area where loads of kids that live around the green come to play...people can run around and play 'it' or manhunt... over there you play football and there's this whole bit where you can just run around.'



The Podium playground

'This is where most people play football and the community get together to play games and all the children in the other flats around.....This area is connected to Madingley Green and overlooking it are houses so it is easy to come to.'

Session four

In the fourth session we repeated the play memory discussion with the group, who were joined by members of the development team. The large number of people present, approximately 18, meant that the discussion was less forthcoming. In general it is preferable to limit group sizes to between six and eight, to allow more natural conversations to occur.

Despite this, the tone of discussion was well set and the architect, Sui-Pei Choi from Patel Taylor, was able to present the scheme to the group in such a way that they could understand the arrangement of buildings, the external spaces and the way in which they would move around the neighbourhood. They discussed cycling, tree climbing and sports amongst other activities, and were able to articulate the importance of flexible spaces and having other adults and neighbours around, rather than being tucked away out of sight.

The second part of the session took the group outside and back to three of the spaces studied in session two; Madingley Green, Podium Playground and the J Pitch. They logged on to the Instagram account and made short videos about the spaces, talked more to the development team about what they do there, what they like and what they don't like. In one video they talked about the importance of the engagement project and about how other young people ought to get involved.

To finish the session, they returned to Tadlow Hall for an ideas exercise for further engagement work with young people and the community. The results of this exercise are captured on the next two pages.

Young people's thoughts

What is CRE like now?

Young people told us that they need places they can hang out with their friends, particularly in winter and when it is dark. They need:

What would make things better?

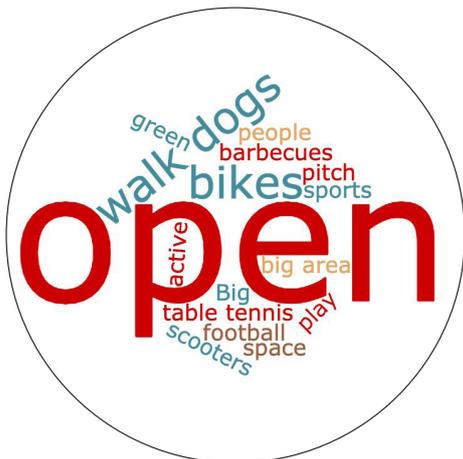
The spaces could be better cared for and have more benches for hanging out on with friends. Some games are harder to play because of the layout too.

What is good about CRE?

- Chill/hanging out
- Riding bikes around
- Climbing
- Football on the green and J Pitch
- Table tennis in the podium playground
- Manhunt
- Barbecues in the summer
- Open spaces
- Other people being around
- Playing football with friends
- There is lots of green space

What would make things better?

- Better lighting
- Stop speeding cars
- Mend the broken fences
- Seating/benches - these need to be good to hang out on, not wooden types with arms.
- Safe spaces where other people hang out
- Trees need to be in better places - not in the middle of a green space as this stops football
- Shade
- Clean floor
- A place to play basketball and cricket
- A bucket swing



Ideas for good engagement

An instagram account was set up and named after the project: [cambridge.road.estate](#). It has videos and images taken by the group and could continue to attract young people. This is an example engaging on their terms, using a platform they are familiar with.

Using Instagram

Each of the group has access to the account and can post new images.

The photographs from the exhibition will be uploaded onto the account

People can be tagged and the group can share with their friends and family

It can be used to advertise events

It can be used to share thoughts about spaces in the estate

'the bigger the conversation, the better it will be in the long run'

Other methods

Using pins on maps works well

The group understood the proposals that the architect presented

Would like to see a new model that reflects the new proposals

Would be good to populate the plans with their ideas/wish list

Those that came, enjoyed the community event

Better signage across the estate, advertising the event

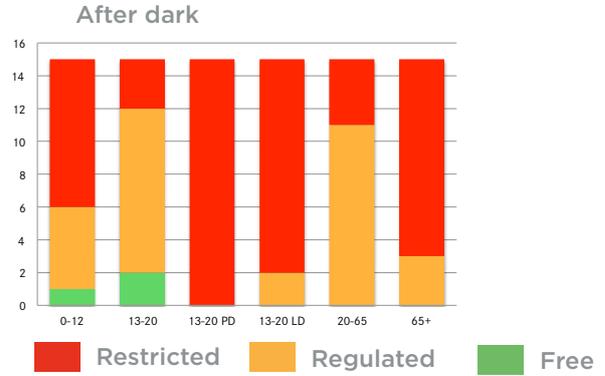
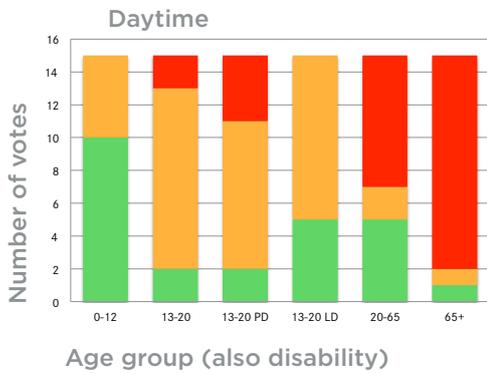
Flyers through people's doors

'In this project we have been able to say what we want to happen in the future'

'The good thing about this project is that it takes young people's opinions and makes something out of it'

Survey results

Madingley Green



What is good about the space

- Its open and easy to get to
- Its a big area, there are people around
- Open space
- Open and green
- Football, walk dogs
- Its open, you can do a lot of sports or walk dogs

What is bad about the space

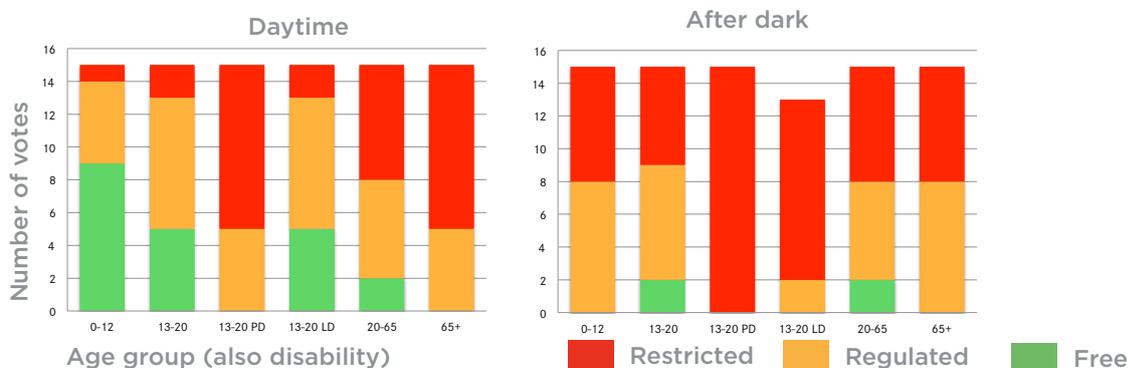
- Lights don't work
Too many parked cars
- On a hill. Trees in random place. The fence
- Dog poo. Neighbours complaining
- Patchy grass. Broken fences. Uneven ground. Random bench
- Its quite boring
- Its crowded by the flats and cars

What would make this space better?



- New grass. More benches. Fix fence
- Equipment: a bucket swing!
- Flatter, more benches
- Goals and things to do
- Football goals. No trees. Better fence
- Make it safer

Podium Playground



What is good about the space

- Active
- Open. Big. Can play table tennis
- Open lots of space
- Good for bikes and scooters
- Its open. Good for children to safely ride bikes
- Very open. Chalk on floor. We have barbecues here in the summer

What is bad about the space

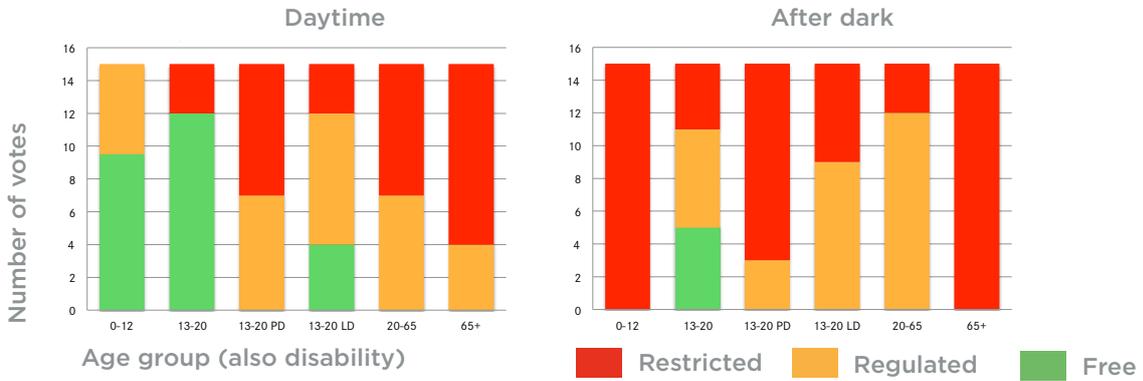
- Not enough facilities
- Not accessible for disabled people. Gangsters around sometimes
- Neglected. When it rains the playground is unusable
- Stuff is in random places
- Not much to do
- No wheelchair access

What would make this space better?



- Remodel the whole area because its just used as a cut through
- More lights and equipment. More cameras
- Skate park stuff. Ramps. Better lighting
- More facilities
- More things to do. Mini football pitch
- Benches

J Pitch



What is good about the space

- You can do what you want
- There are places to play
- The concrete pitch
- Fun

What is bad about the space

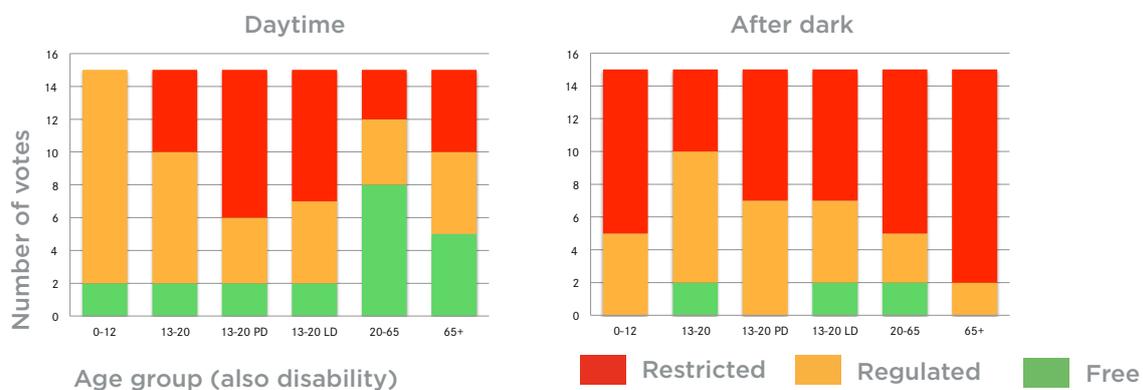
- Cars surrounding it
- Gangsters
- After dark there is only one light
- No lights when dark

What would make this space better?



- No parked cars. No speeding cars
- More lights and better stuff to do
- Making the pitch astro. Less cars. More footpaths
- Astro turf

Willingham Way



What is good about the space

- Nothing
- Buildings
- Not many cars go here

What is bad about the space

- Bollards stop cars driving through so my dad has to drive round.
- There is nothing to do
- There is no grass
- Nothing to do, just road and cars

What would make this space better?



- Get rid of the bollards
- Less roads and cars
- More things to do

In Conclusion

Engaging with a group of young people can seem daunting. Most built environment professionals have little experience and are apprehensive. This report sets out how to get over these problems and carry out successful engagement with young people. Six of the most important lessons are summarised below.

Young people are experts

The first step is to find local youth groups and work closely with them. Meet them early on and make sure they are comfortable with the sessions and have been able to make suggestions themselves. They know their cohorts well.

Remember that children and young people are members of their community, not outsiders. They are mostly very sociable and will spend time outside playing and socialising with people their own age and others. They know their area well and have recent experience of being younger children; their needs and experiences are fast changing too.

They care deeply about their neighbourhood and are sensitive to the sights and sounds, to the physical layout and the behaviour of adults. In that sense they are experts and guides and we must pay close attention to what they tell us.

Listen and teach

The second step is to learn how to listen and what skills to teach. Think of the engagement exercise as a two way

process; young people have a lot to tell us about their local area and the trick is to ask the right questions. Find out as much as you can about how they use the spaces, visit these spaces with them and watch what they do there. Give them the space and the time to talk about the way they use the places in their local neighbourhood and let them know that their input is unique and valuable.



On Cambridge Road Estate we made a number of trips outside. On one occasion we watched as they scaled the side of the podium and on another we talked about the lack of step free access to one girl's front door: 'it's really difficult for my nan to visit us' she explained. These details are important and they are challenges that can be overcome with new proposals.

There is no single answer to how to design for young people, in fact they can sometimes seem frustratingly contradictory.

Sometimes this arises from asking the wrong questions, but generally we should pay attention to the complexity. Young people offer us a transitional perspective, shifting from childhood to adulthood, operating in both worlds.

Proximity and convenience are important to young people, giving them a solid ground from which to learn to be confident citizens. Doorstep play is not only important for very young children, it matters to older children too, Think how the space outside their front doors offers both the closeness and the openness that they desire.

Use mapping and graphics to illustrate their use of space

The way in which we weave in the language of architecture and urban design into these conversations is to ask the young people to observe the physical factors themselves. Breaking these down into elements is essential as it gives any non-professional the opportunity to engage in the three dimensional language and analysis that as architects and developers we are familiar with using. The icons and spatial descriptions we use are straightforward and young people find them a simple analytical tool. This allows the development team to directly translate their understanding of the spaces they use into an improved public realm in any proposals.

Give young people a real stake in the project

It is unfair to expect young people to be able to engage on every aspect of a new development, from housing mix to massing and dwelling layouts. It is also disingenuous if their role is to validate rather than interrogate.

By focusing on the public realm, there is real potential for young people to have a meaningful impact. To do that we asked the development team to think about their own experiences of being young, playing outside and hanging out. This provides a common position from which to have a conversation and it is authentic as it deals with lived experience and cuts through the complexities of delivering a major project.

The dialogue that was set up between the development team and the young people on Cambridge Road Estate was rich and revealing and it meant that the masterplan could be presented on these terms, giving young people an opportunity to interrogate these proposals.

There is now the potential to develop the brief around their needs, to alter the scheme to meet that brief and to convey these changes back to them.

Think about the short term as well as the long

The work that this group of young people did will benefit future generations. But It is also important to consider their current experiences and the short term changes they will experience, in particular the impact of phasing and temporary works.

The young people on the Cambridge Road Estate paint a positive picture of childhood in many respects - there are strong friendship groups, there is time spent enjoying each other's company, welcoming newcomers and having fun outside. All these things must be cherished. A loss of space as well as the connections between the spaces will have a negative impact on their lives, from both a safety and a well being point of view. Talk through the phasing, looking at routes and connections and mitigate against the worst of the changes.

In addition seek to make physical improvements, such as providing new spaces and places or temporary measures to improve the public realm.

Document and communicate the process

This group of young people are advocates and experts. The way in which they use space is common to many young people and will hold true for the next generation.

Document the process and communicate it to the community and to the council so that everyone can understand the conversations and join in. Instagram may be just as powerful as a formal report and we have set up an account that could flourish as the plans unfold.

Use as many opportunities as possible to tell the story and to connect it back to their lives, show how their voices have been heard and how they have been able to have a meaningful impact.

'The good thing about this project is that it takes young people's opinions and tries to make something out of it. It's a way to show what we want on the estate.'

- Cambridge Road Estate youth panel member

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