

PLANNING THE FUTURE

*A toolkit for engaging young people
in town planning*



School of Architecture Planning and Landscape

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Introduction

What is this toolkit?

This toolkit aims to introduce the concept of town planning to young people and to engage them in local planning decisions. It comprises a set of activities that can be delivered by a range of people working in planning, education or youth work. The toolkit has been rigorously tested in a variety of settings, and the result is a suite of activities that can be delivered outright or adapted to achieve specific outcomes. You don't have to be a teacher to deliver these activities, but just the creativity and drive to include young people in decisions that affect them.

It is intended that the toolkit will take some of the “mystery” out of engaging young people in the planning process. These activities serve as a starting point for a bespoke engagement consultation exercise and should only be taken as guidance. As with any other similar endeavour, preparation will be required to determine what you are seeking to achieve and the inputs and resources that you will need.

This toolkit aims to:

- Introduce young people to the idea that the environment is planned
- Engage young people directly in decisions about the built environment that affect them
- Empower young people to evaluate their own environment
- Fulfil local democracy obligations by involving a hard-to-reach group in democratic decisions
- Complement current Geography and Citizenship teaching in schools

What ages is the toolkit for?

This toolkit is designed for use with young people aged 11-18. The activities vary in difficulty and can be adjusted by the facilitator to suit the age group. They have been designed with inclusivity in mind and are suitable for young people from all walks of life.

Who is this toolkit for?

Local Authority planners, planning consultants, developers, teachers and youth workers can all use this toolkit. However, anyone interested in engaging young people in the town planning process could also use it. The table overleaf illustrates the broad range of uses, benefits and outcomes that could be achieved by different facilitators using this toolkit.

	<i>Built environment professionals</i>			<i>Those working directly with young people</i>	
	Planners	Consultants	Developers	Teachers	Youth workers
Uses	Can be delivered as part of a consultation exercise on a new development brief or live planning proposal	Starting point for an applicant-led consultation exercise, enabling you to gather views on your proposals from the wider community	Can be used to test whether a development “has legs” within the community	Can be adapted to form the basis of a creative lesson plan	Can be delivered to your youth group as part of an educational but fun session
Benefits	Enables you to gather opinions from young people across the community Fulfils obligations to consult with all of the community	Strengthen your corporate credentials by working directly with a hard-to-reach group Could strengthen your argument for a client’s planning case at the critical decision stages of the application	Demonstrates a proactive approach to working with the community Helps you deliver a socially-conscious development	Teach your pupils something new Complements Geography and Citizenship curricula Pupils are more informed about career opportunities	Increases confidence of young people to participate in local democratic processes Marries with local democracy/ engagement objectives
Outcomes	Information gathered inform a planning decision More informed local decisions can be taken	Higher quality scheme and legacy for you and your client Increased business presence and reputation	Well-informed local community who are more likely to welcome your proposals Increased reputation amongst the community	Pupils are better informed about the planning system Pupils are empowered to contribute to future development in their neighbourhood	Young people learn something new whilst having fun Young people feel as if they can make a difference to where they live

Icebreakers

The following activities are some ideas of how to “break the ice” between unfamiliar participants in a group. They are all suitable for participants between ages 11 and 18 years. These are just suggestions – feel free to use your own!

Choosing Places

Working in groups of 4 - 8, you will need a set of old postcards from a range of different places – the more varied the places, the better.

All groups can work at the same time, with the facilitator and helpers moving between the groups after the initial instructions are given. Within each group participants take it in turn to choose a postcard from those that are spread out in front of them. The group members are advised that they will need to say why they have chosen that postcard and that they will need to share their thoughts with the rest of their group. Having chosen their preferred postcard, the participant may say, for example, that they liked the colours of the buildings, or that this place reminded them of somewhere that they used to visit when they were on a family holiday, or that it is somewhere that they may like to visit in the future, etc.

The aim of the activity is to encourage everyone to choose a postcard that might mean something to him or her and then to encourage them to talk without the need of having done any prior learning about that place. It is designed to encourage everyone to say something and to contribute to a discussion without there being any sense of a right or a wrong answer. This also allows the group participants to break the ice with the rest of the group and to share some of their thoughts about what they value about a place. The icebreaker can be adapted to look at a specific place when considering how it might change in the future.

Truth, truth, lie

Working in groups of 4 - 8, you will need pens and paper.

Each person in the group should quickly write down two statements about themselves that are true and one statement that is a lie. These statements should be about themselves, their family, their interests, hobbies etc. and should be in a random order. The statements should all be believable to make it harder for other participants to guess. For example, they might have “I was born in Wales” and “My favourite food is pizza” as their true statements and “I have a cat called Casper” as their lie.

The aim of the game is for the group to work out which one of each person’s three statements is a lie. Going round the group in turn, each participant should read out their three statements and the rest of the group should make a guess as to which ones are truths and which one is a lie. Encourage them to confer with each other and ask questions. The game ends when everybody has read out his or her statements and guessed everybody’s lie correctly.

Who am I?

This is a fun game to play between 4 - 8 people. You will need pens and a pad of post-it notes.

Each person in the group should think of a famous person - a musician, TV personality, film star etc. - and write their name on a post-it note. They must not show this to anybody else. Encourage the group to think of somebody that you as the facilitator will have heard of!

Gather in the post-it notes from all participants and hand them out back out in a random order with the names placed face down. The participants must immediately stick this post-it note on their head without looking at it or revealing the identity of others.

The aim of the game is for each participant to guess whose name they have stuck on their own head. Going round the group, each person must ask the rest of the group one question per turn to try to determine "who they are". They must only ask questions that generate a yes or no response. For example, they might ask, "Am I a boy"? They cannot ask, "Am I a boy or a girl?" as this would not get them a definite answer. If they get a question right, they can have another go. If they get a question wrong, their turn is over.

Going round the group a turn at a time, they must remember the answers that others give them. If they think they know who they are, they can guess on their turn. If they guess correctly, they have won. This game can continue until one or all participants have guessed who they are.

Activities

Activities at a glance

Activity	Number of participants	Duration	Description
<i>Questions and answers</i>	Groups of 2 - 30	5-10 mins	Finding out what people know about town planning
<i>Card activity</i>	Groups of 2 - 6	10 mins (plus 10 mins for extension task)	A fun introduction to the concept of town planning
<i>Visioning</i>	Individual or groups of 2 - 3	15 mins	Thinking about the future of an area and how to get there
<i>Cognitive mapping</i>	Individual	15 mins for drawing, 10 mins for annotation	A fun drawing exercise thinking about the environment around you
<i>Diamond ranking</i>	Individual or groups of 2 - 6	15 mins for drawing, 10 mins for annotation	Sharing opinions on places and proposals in an interactive way
<i>Dot voting</i>	Groups of 2 - 6	30 mins	Thinking about issues and agreeing on solutions
<i>Create an intervention</i>	Individual or groups of 2 - 4	15 mins	Proposing and visualising changes to the environment

Questions and answers

Finding out what people know about town planning



Groups of 2 - 30



5 mins (additional 5 mins at the end)



Flipchart paper, pens

How it works

The question and answer activity is designed to motivate participants and get them thinking about what they already know and what they have learned. This activity requires a large flipchart paper attached to a board or somewhere where all participants can see.

Before carrying out engagement with young people, it is important to find out what they already know, as this could change the dynamics of the session completely. This task is about asking open-ended questions that will stimulate discussion and will encourage people to talk freely. Here are some examples:

- What do you know about town planning?
- Who should care about town planning?
- Why is town planning important?
- What do you like/dislike about your area?

You should note down their answers on flipchart paper in the form of a list or mind map. These questions can then be asked again at the end of the session to see what they

have now learned. Taking these answers down on a fresh piece of paper, you can put them both side by side to compare how they have progressed in their learning.

Outcomes

Doing this task will tell you what your participants already know about town planning and get them thinking about what the concept may involve from the outset. It is also a way to ensure that the session has been successful by reflecting on what has been learnt at the end. Generally, more answers will be given at the end of the session.

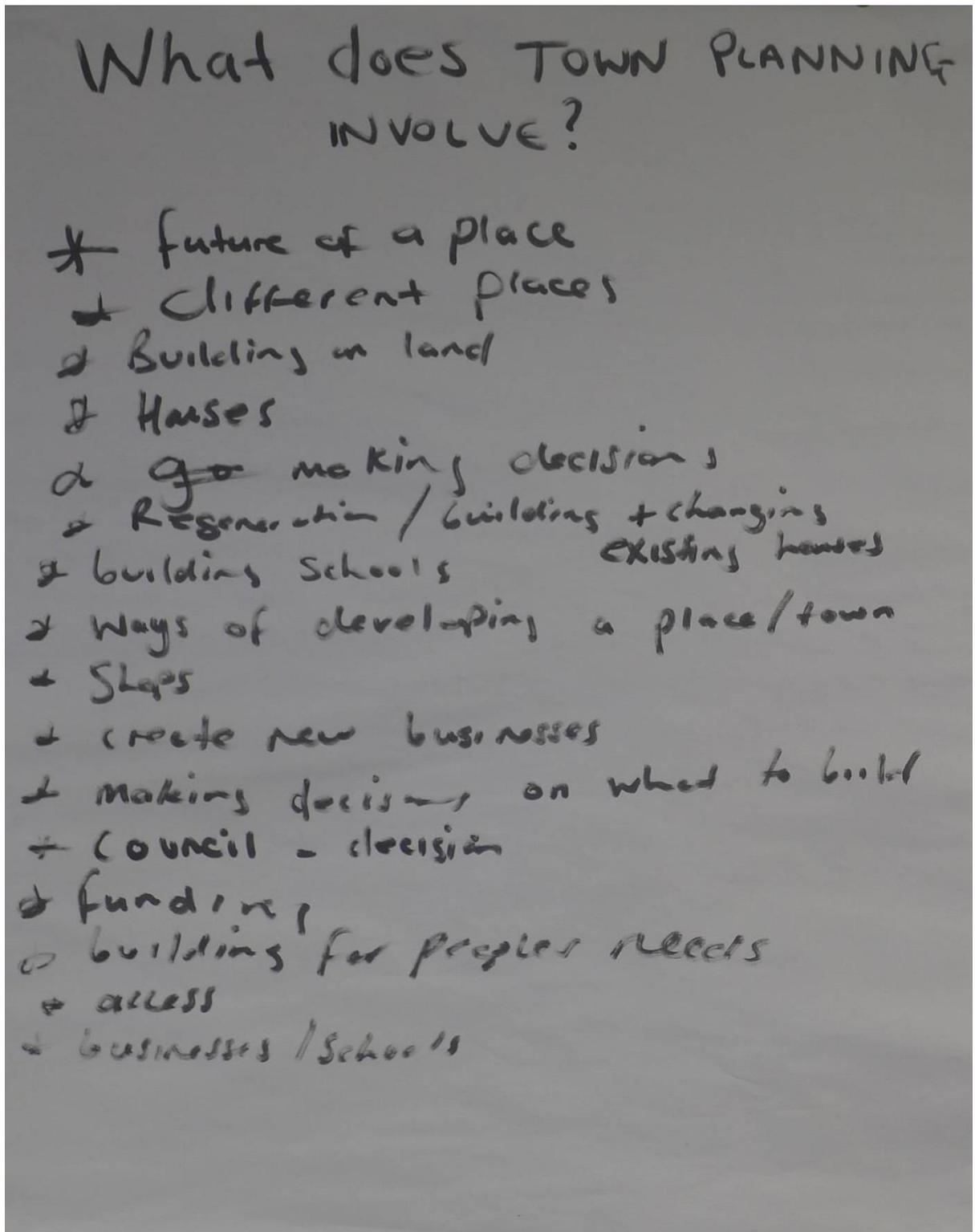
Links to planning

This activity is particularly useful to planners looking to consult young people on live planning proposals. It can be used to get participants thinking about what town planning involves and is a great way to kick off discussion.

Next steps...

Asking further questions can extend the questions and answers activity. This will allow you to explore what participants know about their environment and in what ways they may see it as having been 'planned'.

An example of the types of answers young people might give by the end of the session.



Card Activity

A fun introduction to the concept of town planning



Groups of 2 - 6



10 mins (plus 10 mins for extension task)



Set of activity cards per group (see appendix 1), scrap paper for notes

How it works

The card activity is an educational game designed to allow participants to think about what town planning is and how it influences their day-to-day life. It serves as a useful kick-off activity for an extended engagement session and can easily be adapted to cover a wide range of subject areas or targeted at a specific project. This activity requires a pre-prepared set of cards. A sample set is provided in Appendix 1, but you may wish to add your own images to these.

Dividing participants up into groups of 2 - 6, they should sort their set of cards into piles – the ones they think are town planning related, and the ones they do not. The activity can be framed in a number of ways depending on the age and ability of participants. For example, participants can be asked to imagine they are in charge of planning a new town and must decide which things the planner must think of.

The participants should 'deal out' out the cards amongst themselves so that everybody has a chance to participate. The participants must then decide as a group if the topic pictured on the card represents, is related to, or is influenced by planning. This is an opportunity to build a discussion amongst participants about the nature of planning. The group will then begin to compile two stacks of cards, a 'yes' pile and 'no' pile. Participants should continue to take it in turns, setting down a card until they have all been discussed and sorted,

The purpose of this activity is not to simply identify aspects of planning but to demonstrate that planners have a lot of things to think about and that planning has a far-reaching impact on everyday life.

Outcomes

This task is primarily intended to stimulate discussion, getting the group to think about town planning and what it involves. It can function as an effective resource for teachers and researchers, and can improve young people's skills of decision-making and negotiation. By going further and asking participants to complete the extension task (see Next Steps), the facilitator can gain further insight into how participants prioritise issues relating to the built and natural environment and how they conceive the planning system deals with these issues.

Links to planning

This activity is useful for planners who are looking to understand how young people perceive planning and how they think the planning system should work for them. It can help to frame further discussions in the reality of what town planning involves and what can be achieved through the planning process. In addition, the extension task can be used to gauge the priorities of young people.

Next steps...

When all of the cards have been sorted, ask participants to prioritise what elements of the planning system are most important (and least important). From the 'yes' pile, participants could be asked to agree on their "top five" cards. This can be framed as the local council only has limited resources to tackle five particular issues in this new town. The activity highlights that it is not always possible to deliver everything that participants might like from the planning system and that it is often necessary to compromise or to reach some form of consensus.

Encourage the young people to discuss and decide on their 'yes' and 'no' piles



Visioning

Thinking about the future of an area and how to get there



Individual or small groups of 2 - 3



15 mins



Flipchart paper or whiteboards, marker pens

How it works

Working individually or in small groups, the purpose of this activity is to encourage participants to think about an urban area - be it their local community or a hypothetical place - and come up with a vision for how that place will develop over time. This activity should ideally be undertaken following the card activity and extension task (pages 14 - 16).

Firstly, participants should agree on a set of priorities for development for the subject area. If the card activity extension task has been completed, then the participants will have already agreed upon five priorities. If they have not completed the card activity, priorities can be agreed upon through discussion about the area's strengths and weaknesses. However, it may prove more difficult for participants to consider the wide range of topics in the planning process; in this case, it may be helpful for facilitators to guide initial discussions or provide a list of potential issues for participants to consider in setting their priorities.

You should then ask participants to come up with a vision for their area that incorporates all of the identified priorities. This can be differentiated for different age and ability groups and can range from simple bullet point lists to several paragraphs that make up a statement of intent. Participants can then be asked to discuss their vision with the wider group, sharing and comparing what they have produced with their peers.

Outcomes

Whether used to discuss an area local to them or a hypothetical area, this activity reveals how participants would translate their priorities into action. Facilitators can gain an insight into how participants perceive the built environment as well as how they would change it, given the opportunity. The individual visions compiled within a group can also be brought together to create an amalgamated vision. Alternatively, visions produced by members of different groups can be compared to determine differences in approach to tackling common problems.

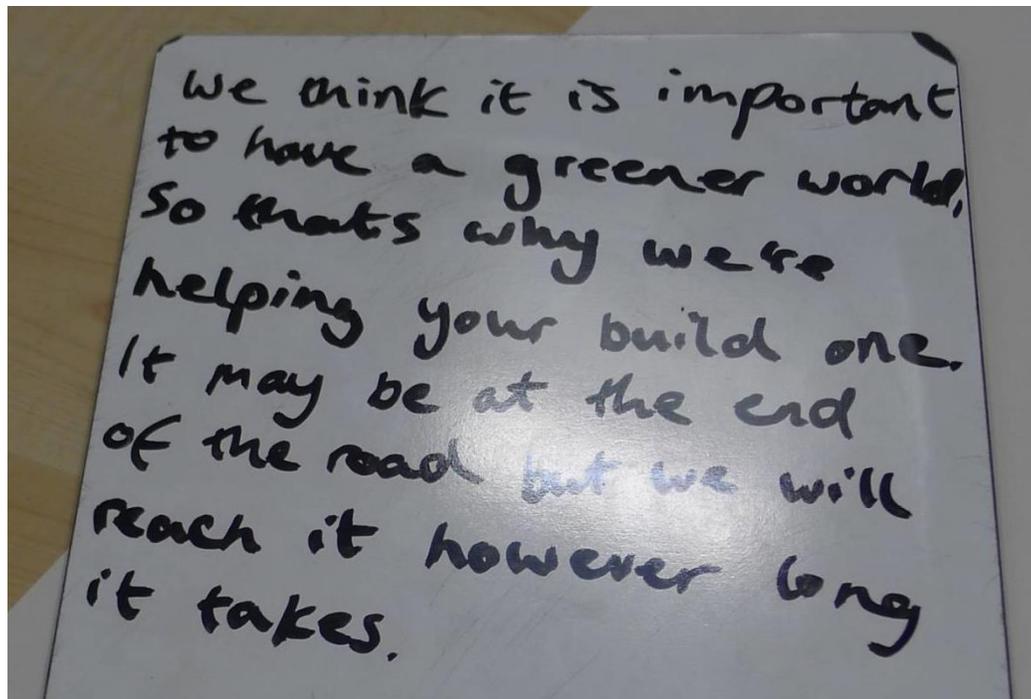
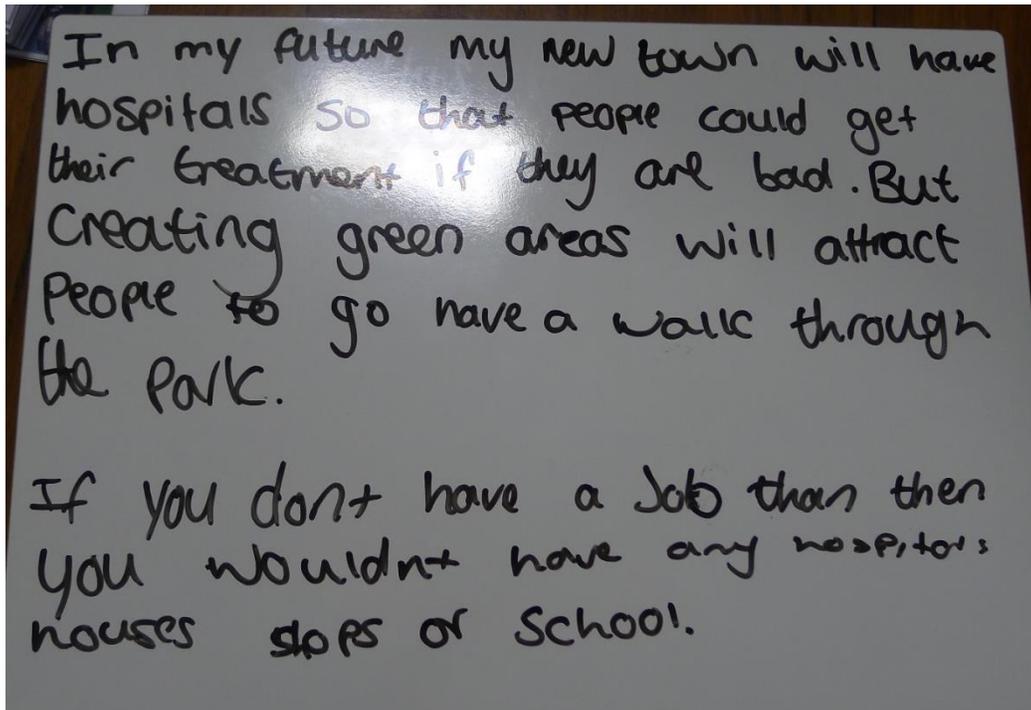
Links to planning

This activity is particularly valuable when linked to a specific development project or a live plan-making process. The vision produced by participants can be taken forward as a tangible statement of their priorities and how and where they would like to see development.

Next steps...

This activity sets the participants on the first steps to writing their own development plan. With a vision in place, they could then be asked to create a document out of it or apply it to a design. This could lead to the creation of a youth plan or charter for their area, which would outline how they would like to see an area develop in the future.

Examples of young people's visions



Cognitive Mapping

A fun drawing exercise thinking about the environment around you



Individual



15 mins for drawing, 10 mins for annotation



Flip Chart Paper, pens, post it notes

How it works

For this activity, participants should work individually to reflect on the environment around them and share views on how they feel in certain places.

Participants should draw a walking-distance route they take often; for example, from their home to school, a friend's house or the local shops. They should write down the key features and places they pass on the way, using pictures and annotations to elucidate the route they have drawn. Facilitators should get actively involved in this task by drawing a map of their own as an example and/or encouraging participants to think in detail about what they see on the way. Discussions between people should be promoted to allow ideas to be shared, and the details provided on the map will vary by age groups and ability.

Once participants have identified a wide range of features on the map, give the participants a number of post-it notes and ask them to describe in further detail how they feel about the places they have drawn. This provides more insight into how young people perceive the environment around them and the different elements that make up this.

Outcomes

This activity is a fun and creative way of gaining insight into how participants perceive the environment around them and/or an area they know well. It enables participants to share information about their local environment and the feelings they have in different places. Individual maps produced as part of a session can be compared alongside each other to see how feelings towards the same places differ between participants. The resulting data also informs you about what young people cherish about their area and what they would like to change.

Links to planning

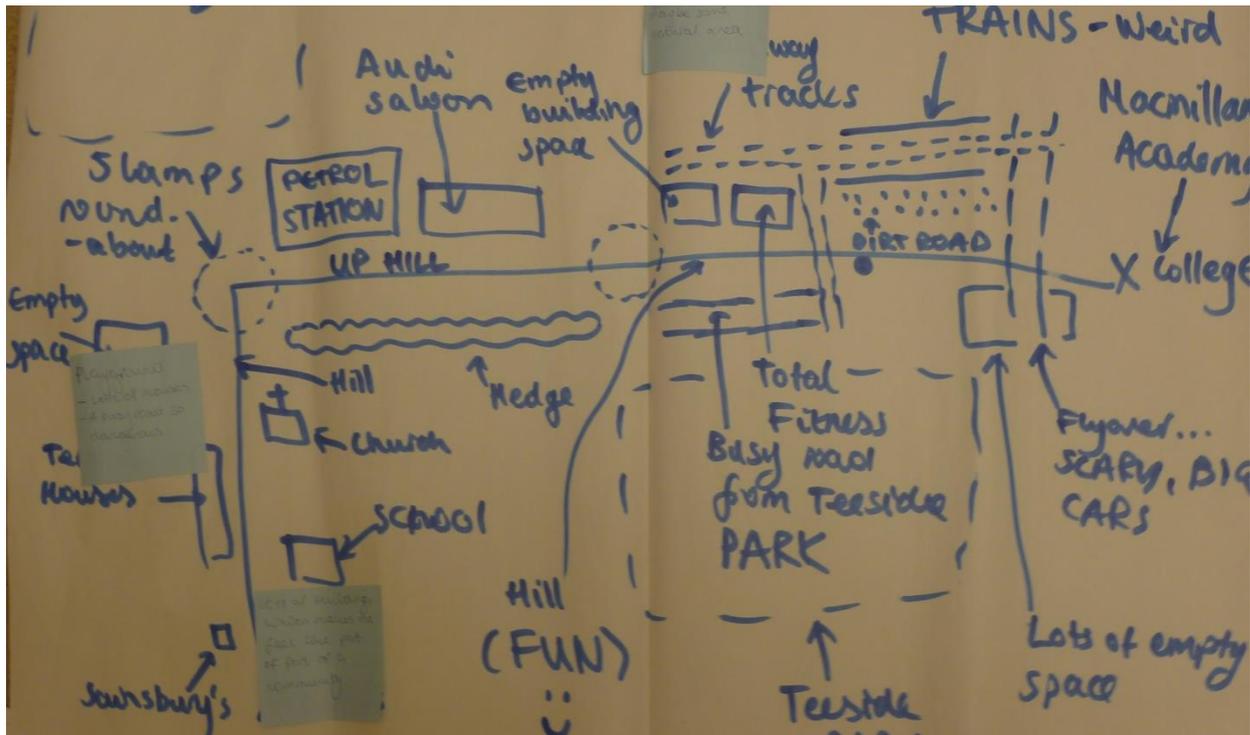
This exercise can be linked to a specific development project or plan and can be used to see what young people think about their area. The features identified on the maps will be important to them and, if they are altered, this is likely to have an impact upon the young person. It also empowers young people to make assessments of their own environment and share this with others.

Next steps...

This activity sets the participants on the first steps to assessing their environment by enabling them to reflect on the current situation. Interventions on how to make an identified feature or place better could follow on from this exercise and discussion with

stakeholders could allow for certain interventions to be worked into the planning process.

An example of a more detailed Cognitive Map, with post it notes added for further explanation



Diamond ranking

Sharing opinions on places and proposals in an interactive way



Individual or groups of 2 - 6



15 mins for ranking, 10 mins for analysis/discussion

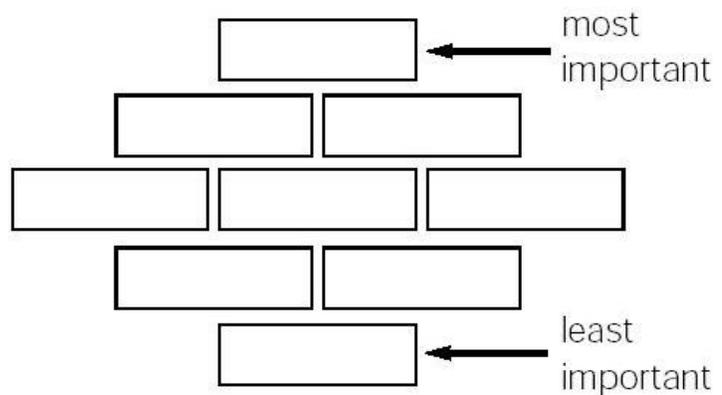


Set of 9 photographs or cards to rank; flipchart paper; glue; pens

How it works

The diamond ranking exercise is an established teaching method used to gather opinions on a current situation or a future proposal. It is usually carried out with a small group of students who are asked to rank

photographs or statements in order of preference. Using 9 photos/ statements (more can be used), the most favourable/important choice should be placed at the top and the least favourable/important placed at the bottom, with more or less favourable choices placed in between to form a diamond (see right).



For example, a set of 9 photos showing public spaces could be distributed to each group for them to choose which public space they would be most likely to use. Discussions between students will allow them to reach a consensus as to which photograph should be placed where on the diamond. If you have time, you can ask the students to provide justifications as to their rankings of the photographs.

Outcomes

This activity is intended to gather opinions on a situation or a proposal; their placing of each photo/statement on the diamond and supporting justification is a tangible outcome for researchers, teachers and planners to use. The activity improves their team working and decision making skills and is a fun and engaging way of asking students, “Which idea do you like best?” It also encourages debate amongst all students and empowers them to share their opinions, whilst reinforcing them that their opinions are valued.

Links to planning

This is a creative way of gathering opinions about a new planning proposal or policy. It could feature as part of a community consultation event and is a simple and effective way of involving young people who may attend such events with their parents but are often not given the opportunity to speak for themselves.

Next steps...

Having decided which proposal/idea they like best, the facilitator could lead with this in getting students to design a new intervention for an area (see page 29). They would already have a starting point from which to work from and initial discussions could stem from the diamond ranking exercise.

An example of diamond ranking where young people consider which place is the 'safest'.

The feels the safest because it is a open and clean area



Safe

probably as no way around
- street side to

heavily opened
all area
lots of people around



because of a
horrors of a
pursue snafu-chant.



because it
has street lamps
so you can see
everything.



no one gets
lost in
the middle
of the street

kidnappers
fire.



Could get
Kidnapped.

someone
could steal
your bike!



UNSAFE

a lot of drug addicts could
hang around here, because
there are no CCTV cameras or police
because it is a rural area

Dot Voting

Thinking about issues and agreeing on solutions



Groups of 2 - 6



30 mins



Flipchart paper, marker pens, post-it notes in three different colours, sticky dots in two colours

How it works

This activity is a method of collecting ideas from a group regarding a particular issue and voting on a response to the issues raised. It enables all participants to make an equal contribution to a particular issue and solution.

The activity requires each participant to write ideas about a particular issue on post-it notes and vote using sticky dots on the idea that they think is the best. It can be adapted to a number of situations and topics and has particular utility in highlighting problems and identifying appropriate responses. An example topic of crime and the built environment is given here, but other topics – e.g. gathering spaces, town centres and the public realm - work equally well.

As an example, each participant in the group would be given three post-it notes of the same colour and asked to write three things about their area that make them feel safe, one on each post-it. Next, each participant should be given three different coloured post-it notes and asked to write down three things about their area that make them feel unsafe. Finally, they should be given three post-it notes in another colour and asked to

write down three solutions for how the environment could be changed in order to resolve the problems identified. Using different colour post-it notes helps to separate each issue.

The post-it notes should then be stuck onto a wall and grouped by common theme (in this example, lack of security, poor design, street improvements etc.). Engage the group in a discussion on how the post-it notes should be grouped, clarifying what has been written and giving each theme a title. Each participant should then be given five sticky dots of one colour and asked to place the dots on the post-it notes to “vote” for what makes them feel most unsafe. They can place multiple dots on one post-it note if they feel this is a particularly important issue. Then give each participant five dots of a different colour and ask them to “vote” for the best solutions.

When the process is complete, the participants will have identified things are their area that make them feel safe and unsafe and came up with their own solutions to these. In addition, taking the results as a group will give an indication as to what the greatest issues are in the built environment and how young people would likely resolve these issues.

Outcomes

This activity allows for a significant amount of analysis as it progresses. Themes are developed and emerge during the course of the activity and can be explored through joint discussions. This activity also allows participants to respond to the ideas of their peers and come to a collective decision regarding any number of issues and possible interventions. It would be most useful when linked to a particular project or issue. Alternatively, results could be compared across a number of groups and common themes/issues/interventions between them identified.

Links to planning

This activity is a powerful consultation tool with particular utility to the planning profession. It can be used in the plan making process to identify issues and popular interventions. Conversely it could be used to identify positives aspects of a location and prioritise what participants would like to retain.

Next steps...

This could inform a design for a new public space or building in their local area. Having gathered this information and put a design forward, it could be taken to a local councillor or planning department for them to consider implementing.



Thinking about which intervention to vote for

Create an intervention

Proposing and visualising changes to the environment



Individual or groups of 2 - 4



15 mins



One photograph per person/group, pens/pencils

How it works

This activity serves as a good end task and gives them the opportunity to bring together what they have learned from undertaking other tasks in this toolkit. This task can be done individually or as a small group and can enable several ideas to be translated into real action.

Participants are asked to think about the positive and negative attributes of an existing place and come up with solutions for how it could be improved. In contrast to the dot voting, this is primarily a visual task. Providing a photograph of an area, space or building, ask them to annotate the photograph and draw or write suggestions for how the place could be improved. They could be familiar with the area in the photograph if you wish to apply the activity to a specific local project, or it could be somewhere they don't know if you just want to build their general understanding.

Outcomes

This activity is intended to gather ideas on how to improve a place, and their annotations on the photograph serve as tangible suggestions for researchers, teachers and planners to take forward. It also encourages young people to share their ideas and decide independently what changes need to be made to the built environment.

Links to planning

Planners could feed what young people have suggested into a new development brief for a site. It could also feature as part of a consultation exercise for a new or improved provision of public space for young people and is an effective method of translating young people's ideas into real built environment solutions.

Next steps...

Having identified a number of interventions, the facilitator could follow the suggestions up with a mock committee exercise. This could involve participants decide on the outcome after a short presentation of each interventions merits. This would allow participants to understand how decisions are made in practice.

Pupils decide the range of interventions to address the question that you pose

How can you make this place safer?
Byker metro



Put more lights in to make it lighter

take away this side of the walls so its more open so it will make you feel safer

stop people drinking outside it because it stops people from getting on it

take away this shelter roof thing

put traffic lights because some people dont stop at zebra crossings

take away the bushes

at the door of the Metro station have ticket barriers

change steps to a ramp so it easier

make the sign more obvious and put a CCTV camera there

more add CCTV cameras and make signs saying there is CCTV

have more police operating around here

Appendix: Card activity pack



Nightlife



Hospitals



Flood defences



Museums



Street furniture



Playgrounds



Pollution control



Leisure centres



Public transport



Car parking



Youth/community centre



Historic buildings



Houses



Cycling



Parks



Schools



Shops



Jobs



Mining



Countryside



Public Art



Allotments



Recycling



Solar panels



Security



Roads



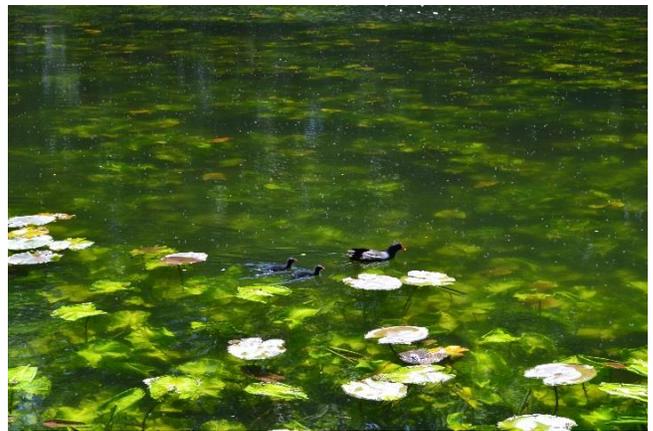
Wind farms



Iconic buildings



Sewers and public utilities



Wildlife

A note about this project

This toolkit has been devised and written by three final year town planning students (Naomi Gibson, Martin Nugent and Sean Peacock) from the School of Architecture Planning and Landscape at Newcastle University. It formed part of their final assessment for their Linked Research Project.

Throughout the delivery of the project and the testing of the activities, the project team was mindful of the University's ethics policy relating to working with the community and with young people in particular. It is recommended that users of this toolkit familiarise themselves with best practice in this field.

The 'YES Planning' project is delivered by student volunteers from the School of Architecture Planning and Landscape. Sharing their knowledge and enthusiasm for town planning with young people in the community enables the students to develop their skills of engagement whilst enhancing their own understanding of their chosen subject field. Yes Planning has also supported this final year student project.

A number of organisations have worked with the students to ensure that the toolkit activities are robust yet flexible and help to deliver successful engagement with young people. The contribution that these organisations have made to the project has been invaluable.

Further information

The School of Architecture Planning and Landscape at:

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/apl/>

The Royal Town Planning Institute at:

<http://www.rtpi.org.uk/>

The Town and Country Planning Association at:

<http://www.tcpa.org.uk/>

Local Authority Planning Departments for current projects, plans and consultations

If you would like to know more about the project please contact the project tutor, Teresa Strachan:

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School of Architecture Planning and Landscape

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