OUR FUTURE TOWN

COMMUNITY PLACE MAKING AND TRANSPORT PLANNING

CHANGING HEARTS & MINDS POLICY RESEARCH

'Our Future Town' sets out a fundamentally different approach to community place-making and transport planning.

We developed a prototype toolkit that can be used to engage with communities and help them to imagine their town's future and build consensus for positive change.

We developed the prototype with three towns across England (Biggleswade, Haltwhistle and Lyme Regis) with the support of the three professional planning and transport organisations and the involvement of a number of key civil society stakeholders.

This report asks professionals and researchers how we should engage with communities, how we might use knowledge around wellbeing and the environment to frame the future, what is the role of disciplines and specialities in the planning process and the importance of vision-making as a platform for development and making change that matters.

Royal College of Art

HIGHLIGHTS

We're facing multiple and overlapping environmental, public health and socio-economic challenges and we're trying to solve them through traditional and technocratic approaches that have made planning an opaque and, dare we say this, a boring topic for many people who live in and experience the consequences of planning in their everyday and future lives.

"Our Future Town" suggests that community place-making and transport planning should be a creative and inclusive opportunity to involve everyone in imagining and developing our future communities, a way of engaging more deeply in community interests and values, and an important part of changing people's hearts and minds when we think about the future and our beliefs.

We wanted to hear from different perspectives - people involved in research, in planning and transportation and those working in community development, both to hear their thoughts on the 'Our Future Town' approach and to learn more about the issues addressed in the report - how we engage with communities, how we use knowledge around wellbeing and the environment to frame the future, the role of disciplines and specialities in the planning

process and the importance of vision-making as a platform for development and making change that matters.

The good news is that all of these themes were considered to be important and essential elements of future-proof place-making and transport planning and we had many supportive comments about Our Future Town tools, as well as some suggestions on how to make these themes more valuable and how to make the tools easier to use.

We also heard about the problems that people experience in terms of place-making and transport and use this report to share these with you as well as illustrating some creative approaches that might turn these problems into future facing solutions. When we think about community placemaking and future transport we need to engage with a wealth of human and creative challenges.

We need to listen to each other, using language, questions and activities that dig beneath the surface, while giving communities a real sense of ownership and responsibility around the process. We need to celebrate the diversity in our communities by creating a range of ways to listen and engage with each other and we need to turn mechanical processes of recording and quantifying responses into something that is transparent, meaningful and even playful. We need to go beyond, "You said, we did" to "we're making this together - join in!"

If we are really going to make change as a community then we all need to get on the same page and learn together - not just about the risks but the rewards of change, not just the problems but about the creative solutions. We need to help people stretch beyond negative mindsets by providing compelling visual imagery and showing how physical changes to our communities can create real transformations to our social, cultural, environmental and economic wellbeing.

To help communities create a vision for their towns, we need every group to add to the whole, developing a shared vision around diverse values and ambitions rather than from the average, and using reciprocity as a creative approach so that everyone can benefit if they come together. We suggested a range of tools to help people to visualise the future but also heard how musicians and poets can help communities to weave stories about their future town.
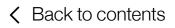
And to make change that matters, every town needs to find the magicians who bring people together, inspire local action and cajole the quiet and unsure to get involved. These magicians can be leaders, but residents and entrepreneurs need to see change that works. How can we create momentum around some quick wins so that people experience the value of change and can prepare themselves for the future or get involved? And beyond these short-term changes, we need to create collaborations and partnerships, not just locally but with other towns that are already

on the journey and with private organisations that can deliver transformation on the ground.

The future of place-making and transport planning will be community-centred and will start by asking people to think about the wellbeing of their towns and neighbourhoods, not whether they prefer a cycle path on street A or street B or whether developer X or developer Y will build an out of town big box store or turn an apparently unused wild patch of land into rows of identikit homes that are disconnected from the communities that they purport to serve.
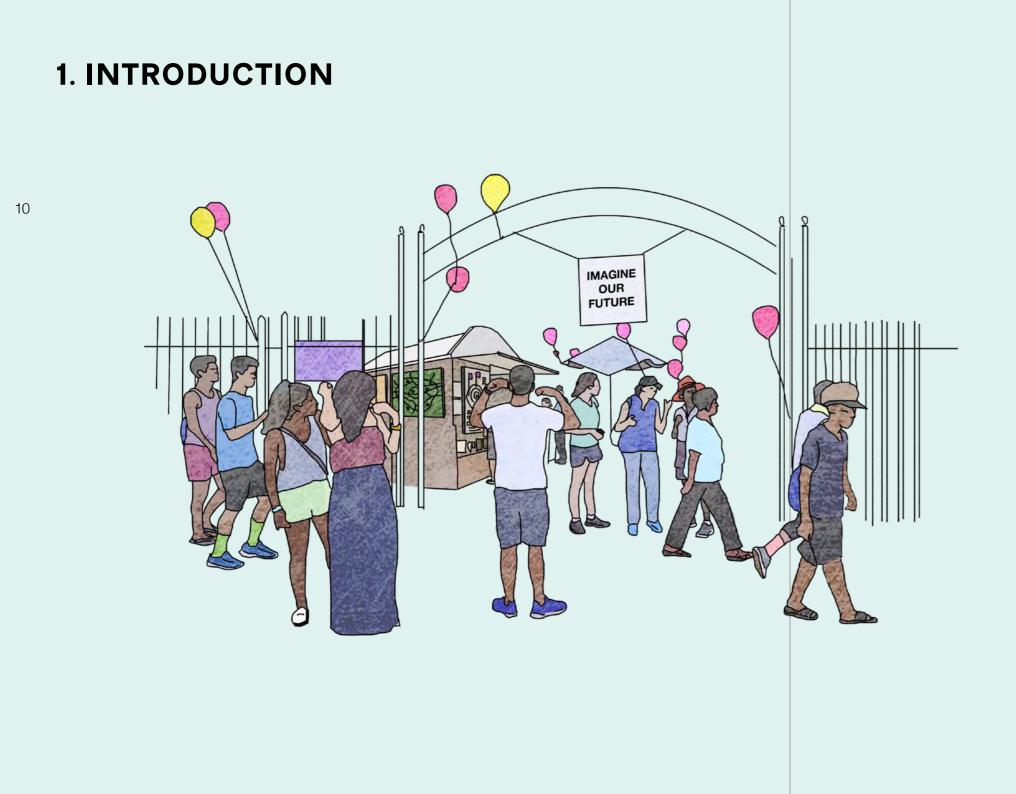
Key Themes

Transport, Planning, Community Engagement, Inclusion, Wellbeing, Environment, Interdisciplinary planning, Design, Vision

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

IMAGINE
OUR
FUTURE

"Residents actually have answers to so much. The engagements and consultations that we do are kind of do we put this bridge here, or here? ''What design is this parapet?"

Instead we should take planning out into the streets, ask deepers questions and get everyone to imagine the future town together

INTRODUCTION

Our Future Town is a project developed with people from three communities to reimagine how we can engage with the challenges of community place-making and transport planning.[1]

It arose in response to three things:

- the urgency to live differently given the fast approaching results of climate change and wider social and technological challenges.
- The fact that we are not changing people's hearts and minds either in the way we live our lives or how we plan and imagine our towns and communities.
- The evident power of using visual and creative tools to help people understand and act.

The project focussed on how we can build communities together, how we get around our towns and people's ideas and values when they think about their future. This led to a set of prototypical tools and approaches that help communities to listen to each other, learn together, imagine the future and make change that matters.2

This research used the Our Future Town's approach and learnings to understand how transport and town planning policy can be improved, taking into account the following challenges:

- The role of interdisciplinary planning and community engagement around neighbourhood, town and regional development.
- The use of vision-based transport and town planning that goes beyond 'predict and provide' modelling - which often leads to over-reliance on old and out-moded data and forecasting techniques.
- The transition to active travel planning that focuses on inclusive well-being and cross-disciplinary factors including health, education and social inclusion.
- Factor ten approaches to de-carbonisation that encourage a fundamental rethink in personal, community and professional practices.

We used workshops and surveys with people who had already been involved in the Our Future Town project, as well as other interested stakeholders, to evaluate the gaps and opportunities within the planning system and used creative bridging to imagine and visualise elements of future community-centred planning.

2. WHO WE LISTENED TO

The following organisations contributed to our research through online surveys and workshops.

- Biggleswade Garden Village Project Group
- BMW AG
- Centre for London
- Centre for Rural Economy, Newcastle University
- Centre for Smart Infrastructure and Construction, University of Cambridge
- Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation
- Community Action Northumberland
- CoMoUK
- Connected Places Catapult
- Cornerstone Property Assets
- Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site
- Haltwhistle Community Partnership
- Integrated Transport Planning
- Jacobs
- Keswick Council
- London Borough of Camden
- London Cycling Campaign

- Lyme Regis Town Council
- Momentum Transport Consultancy
- Monash University - Melbourne Australia
- National Association of Local Councils
- Northumberland County Council
- Northumberland National Park Authority
- Prudhoe Community Partnership
- RCA Intelligent Mobility
- RCA School of Architecture
- Rural Design Centre
- School of Architecture Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University
- Stantec
- Transport Planning Society
- Tyne Valley Community Rail partnership
- UK Regeneration
- University of Reading

Our participants included chief executives and organisational chairs, social value researchers, academic programme leads, project officers, human factors researchers, stakeholder engagement leads, project directors, innovation managers, development officers, design associates, research leads and fellows, design lab directors as well as infrastructure campaigners and transport planners.

The participants split evenly between women and men with around 21% between the ages of 26 and 45, 43% between 46 and 59 and 36% 60 and over, which reflects, to a certain extent, the generational inequity associated with planning and policy making in society.

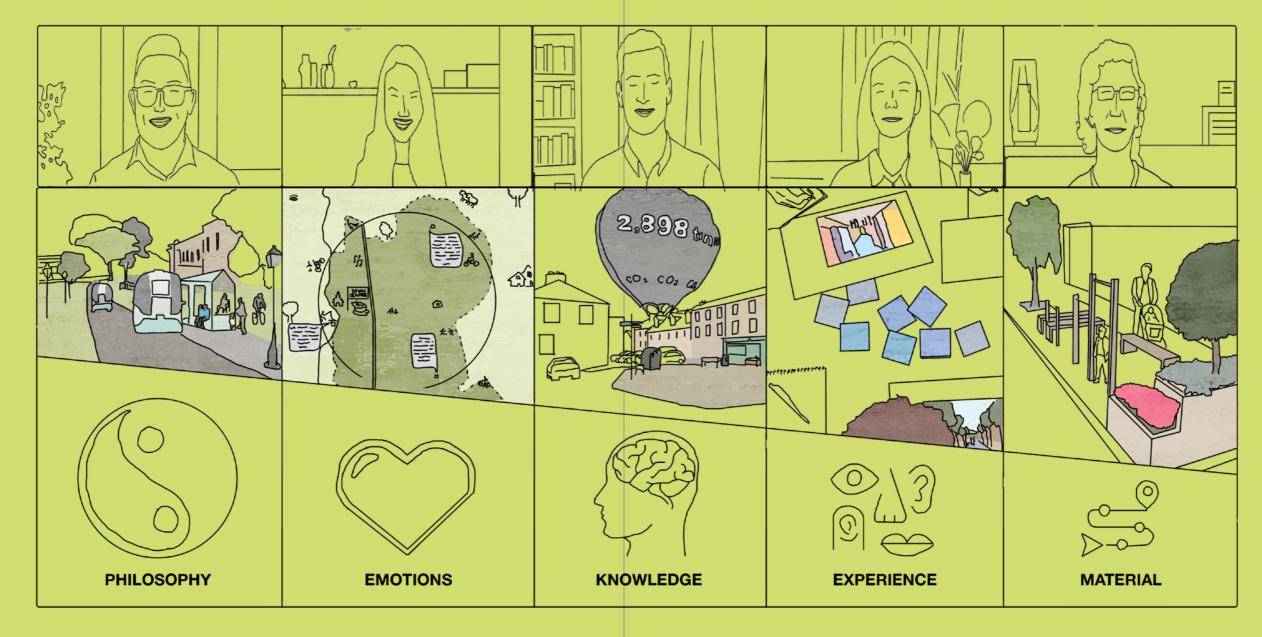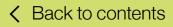# 3. WHAT WE DID

PHILOSOPHY

EMOTIONS

KNOWLEDGE

EXPERIENCE

MATERIAL

WHAT WE DID

We reviewed policy documents and research around neighbourhood and local plans in order to understand how legislation deals with the issues raised through our research questions.

We reached out to interested organisations through our project partners, stakeholders and via social media.

This resulted in 26 people responding to our online survey and 27 joining our online workshops.

The online survey asked people to rate different issues around future place-making and transport planning, explain why these issues are important and what other themes we should consider. We also wanted to know about other ambitions or frustrations and about projects that help communities to imagine the future. We also asked people to share their thoughts on the Our Future Town approach - what they liked and how it could be improved.

Our workshops were organised as a series of small group video meetings that included the use of a miro board to support idea

sharing. We asked participants to use the four phases of the Our Future Town project (listen to each other, learn together, imagine our future and make change that matters) as a framework in which to discuss community engagement, inclusive wellbeing, interdisciplinary planning, environmental impacts, vision-led planning as well as thinking about 'making change that matters' and opportunities for tactical and strategic change.

We organised ideas into the five areas of inquiry through a framework based around Challenges / Gaps / Barriers / Opportunities as well as Political / Environmental / Social / Technical / Legal and Economic Lenses. Where relevant we also identified how these ideas could be organised according to scale (Home / Street / Neighbourhood / Town / County / Region.

Once we had identified the key opportunities and challenges, we brainstormed how these issues could be brought to life in future planning activities either through planning tools and communication systems, through maps and other online systems, or through physical prototypes, future services or interventions in the public realm. We have developed a series of sketches that help readers to understand these interventions and brought them to life through a community talking about and visualising their future town.

4. WHAT WE LEARNT

"We've got all these policies, we've got all these strategies, we've got all the documents that we could possibly ever want. They tell us what to do about climate, what to do about air quality, what to do about connectivity and the barriers to connecting communities. But how do we share it?"

Sharing possible utopias and dystopias, based on the real concerns and aspiratons of the community, and getting everyone to respond will lead to a far deeper engagement.
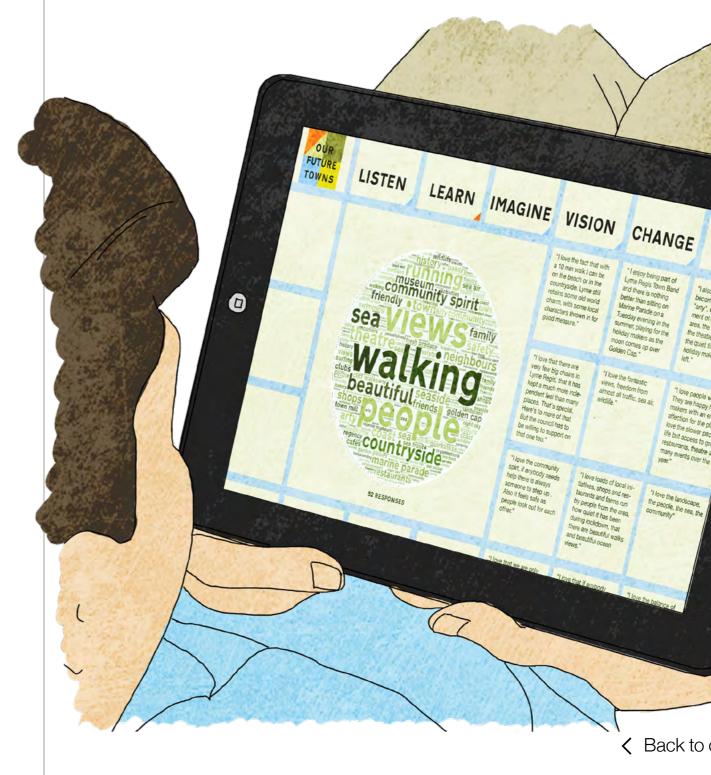
WHAT WE LEARNT

The online survey gave us high level feedback on issues that matter to people and some initial responses to the Our Future Town approach. In our workshops we were able to dig further into the issues and use conversation and open questions to identify deeper insights and ideas.

Community engagement was seen as a critical enabler as, *"If the community doesn't buy into the concept it's unlikely to achieve full potential"*. Participants also highlighted the power of community, *"Working together, we are more than the sum of all parts"*.

EXISTING POLICY

This short research project does not aim to be an exhaustive analysis of existing policy or policy recommendations, so we highlight policy tools and some of the challenges associated with neighbourhood and local plans.

Existing policy and regulation in town and transport planning centres around the development of neighbourhood and local plans and local transport plans as well as related economic, social and environmental legislation and policy levers. These systems of governance provide a framework around which development happens - either through improvements to the existing fabric and transport infrastructure or through new services and physical developments.

The Neighbourhood planning system, introduced through the Localism Act, aims to "give communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area."[4] Locality[5], the national membership network that supports local community organisations, provides support through a Neighbourhood Planning portal[6] which includes resources, networks and advice

to help communities to develop their neighbourhood plan. These resources include many ways of gathering evidence as well as suggestions to support creative engagement and leadership.

The Local Plan system[7] helps Local Authorities create "succinct and up-to-date plans … and should provide a positive vision for the future of each area and a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities."

In parallel with the development of built environment plans, local authorities are required to develop Local Transport Plans with "policies for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport" taking into account the needs of people and freight moving in and through their area, "with respect to mitigation of, or adaptation to, climate change or otherwise with respect to the protection or improvement of the environment."[8]

But while these legislative systems include statements of intent and defined processes they do not always deliver neighbourhoods, towns or transport infrastructure that communities value or places that are fit for the future.[9]

From a place-making viewpoint, many towns and neighbourhoods struggle to thrive and the past decade has seen the continued decline of high streets together with their associated cultural and civic centres. And while town centres struggle, many new developments are built around a 'sales and marketing'

agenda rather than a real desire to solve the social, economic or environmental ills that we face.

From a transport perspective, the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation state in their forward to "Better Planning, Better Transport, Better Places"[10], "For the last 20 years, governments have attempted to encourage a more sustainable approach to transport but have made limited progress. The way we currently travel is damaging our health, harming our towns, and contributing to climate change."

The vast majority of journeys are still made by car, public transport costs have been rising and we have more traffic hotspots than our European neighbours.[11]
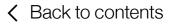
Cycling remains a minority hobby [12] with less than 4% cycling every day and almost 70% never getting on a bike. And while walking is considered a pleasure by many, just a quarter of journeys are made on foot and these are almost all less than a mile and account for only 3% of distance travelled.[13]

Recent policy reviews have indicated the need to change the planning system - from assessing local housing needs and securing first homes to extending permission in principle to major developments. These changes aim to reduce friction in the planning process and, in combination with the National Design Guide[14] and National Model Design Code[15], there is a hope

that increased supply will be accompanied by an increase in community engagement, quality and sustainability, as well.

The results of these proposals are yet to be experienced, but the social, environmental and economic challenges of the next ten years will not lessen unless radical changes in approach and delivery are made.

Researchers and practitioners have examined how community engagement, a focus on wellbeing and environmental restoration and the need to place holistic vision-making at the heart of planning, will bear fruit both in terms of short and long term human value, but they also recognise the challenges of integrating these strategies in an effective way.

As Lynda Addison writes "How we plan and manage the places we create for people affects health and wellbeing. The issues we face –of growing health inequalities, obesity, ageing population, housing need, globalisation and climate change – are all cross-cutting in nature."[16]

According to Franklin, community led placemaking activities remain "fragmented, marginal and disconnected from local government strategies"[17]. And while "interdisciplinary teams are likely to be better prepared to identify policy and practice solutions than individual investigators"[18] and "planning can be an "enabler of urban health"[19], the silos within central and local government still prevent truly interdisciplinary approaches.

Researchers have been investigating the relationship between behaviour change, covid-19, deliberative engagement mechanisms and climate action, suggesting that, "there is a need for a clearer social mandate between citizens and the state."[20] We are also recognising that "technical knowledge ..characterised by instrumental, means-end rationality" is not the only form of knowledge that we should leverage and Vigar recommends that, "a more explicitly communicative, trans-disciplinary mode of governance would help to challenge the power of political rationality."[21]
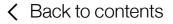
If deliberative processes are used within local placemaking and transport planning, we also need to investigate the role of the facilitator in supporting, influencing and perhaps manipulating the outcome of these activities.[22] How can design and planning professionals provide the right set of ingredients to help the government and communities deliver the changes that will make our towns healthy and sustainable places for our children to grow up and thrive?

UK Major Greenhouse Emissions 1990 - 2018

- Energy supply
- Transport
- Public
- Residential
- Agriculture
- Industrial processes
- Waste management

Cycling and walking remain minority hobbies whilst transportation becomes the largest source of greenhouse emissions

ONLINE SURVEY

Our online survey asked people to rate the importance of five key issues when they think about the future of place-making and transport planning. The majority of participants rated all five issues of high or medium importance with community engagement, the environment and interdisciplinary planning ranked slightly above inclusive and active wellbeing and vision led planning.
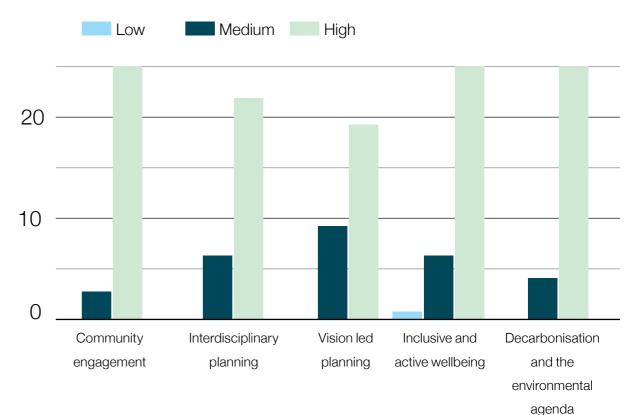
Why are these issues important to you?

Many participants felt that all five themes overlapped, and a holistic approach was needed to address complex needs. Indeed, it was the only way to, *"future proof our communities"* and that they form the, *"basic tenets of sustainable urban development and planning"*

"Planning needs to be holistic. To concentrate on just one dimension or one issue risks having unintended consequences"

The inability of planning to engage proactively in this holistic approach points to silos within the planning process as well as a lack of appreciation, and investment in, holistic planning tools.

Think about these issues and tell us how important you think they are in the context of future place-making and transport planning

Community engagement

Community engagement was seen as a critical enabler as, *"If the community doesn't buy into the concept it's unlikely to achieve full potential"*. Participants also highlighted the power of community, *"Working together, we are more than the sum of all parts"*.

"A community-derived vision creates a big message and the sense of urgency. This is needed to orientate the endless decisions required for successful implementation. And it needs to be inclusive of transport/retail/residential/eco requirements to understand reciprocity between each discipline. What is/can be reciprocal offers a good opportunity for a creative phase."

The challenges in community engagement essentially revolve around questions of how we listen, who we listen to and the ways in which we do this. Innovations in digital engagement have increased the opportunity to reach more people in a community, but simply asking people to comment on proposals or identify things that annoy them, is not enough. We need to turn this listening phase into a more creative and inclusive experience that gets communities excited about their future and engaged in sharing their skills and values, their hopes and their concerns, as much as their knowledge about the places that make them frown and the journeys that make them smile.

Decarbonisation and the environmental agenda

As one respondent said, *"The climate and ecological crisis is the biggest challenge mankind has faced & we need new ways of thinking, working and collaborating together to survive into a future worth living."* Despite its critical nature, planning still allows unsustainable development and, *"there is plenty of planning which does not produce the necessary results, which it might if the community was effectively engaged"*

But while climate and decarbonisation agendas were vital, transport remains an area that is not being addressed effectively. One correspondent points to the benefits of, *"shared mobility and mobility hubs"* but acknowledges that community engagement is important if we are to reach everyone. Despite the interlinked nature of transport, place-making and accessibility, transport specialists still believe that *'convenient, reliable and consistent'* travel solutions are viable through a focus on low-carbon transport rather than through a greater focus on place-making, accessibility and more shared and active ways of getting around.

Interdisciplinary planning

The interdisciplinary challenges in planning were highlighted by a colleague who works at Hadrian's Wall, one of the most important cultural and heritage sites in the North of England.
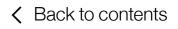
"Apologies they are all marked as high, but they seem to be very much interwoven. They are important to me as they all impact upon people's lives, and have the capability to enrich residents physically and mentally, and provide better jobs and opportunities."

Within this statement we see the rich connections between identity, wellbeing, community, economics, place-making and transportation. We see that the current methods of planning are unable to integrate these issues and suggest that this is partly because of the complex inter-relationships, partly because of the knowledge gaps within the planning process and partly because place-making and transport planning does not benefit adequately from the rich knowledge and expertise of non-built environment professionals - again pointing to the silos that exist within the process and the lack of value that is placed on place-based planning in the context of social, environmental and economic development.

Inclusive and active wellbeing

"We need greener, more active communities. By starting here, countless more benefits are realised including decarbonisation, positive wellbeing, economic advantages"

The idea that active and healthy communities might lie at the heart of planning seems to be uncontroversial but there is little evidence that it has a central seat at the development or planning table or that it is factored into most developer's spreadsheets.
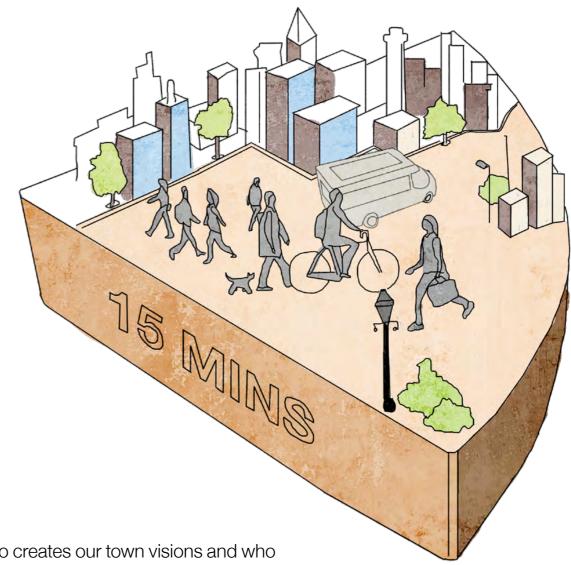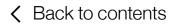
Vision-led planning

While vision-led planning received fewer top marks in our survey, respondents recognised that a vision led approach would achieve greater community involvement and that, *"many of these issues overlap or could be similar - vision led planning would imply including environment and community etc. ultimately to be impactful one needs vision to identify and see and engagement/interdisciplinarity to deliver"*

The interesting question to ask might be 'what do we mean by vision'? In the context of planning this might mean 'assessment of housing need' or 'risk of flooding' or "predict and provide" transportation management, based on past trends or future 'market assumptions.' Are these the right approaches to 'vision-led' planning or, alternatively, are we looking for the 'master planner' to create a vision based on some sort of creative insight, whether that be Ebenezer Howard's Garden City or Carlos Moreno's 15-minute city today?

And, if neither of these approaches is correct, is it possible for a diverse community to develop a shared vision for the future of their towns that includes improvements to the public realm, changes to the way they get around and room for new development too? There have been many examples of community led development planning and there are examples of networks, such as the Transition Towns network [23], that have pursued bottom up transformation, but there remains a huge gap between their aspirations and the interests of mainstream developers, landowners and policymakers.

Who creates our town visions and who decides what models we follow? How varied would they be if towns could develop their vision together?

What other issues are important to you when you think about the future of our towns?

While the themes that we raised were important, many people identified other issues that extend and develop the remit of planning. They show the richness of planning and the challenges that policy makers may have in creating a framework that incorporates the complexity of place-making and transport planning.

"Political will to create change, policy vs practice, business engagement (and case-making), data and evidence, examples and real-world video, photos, case studies, funding streams and government guidance."

From a social perspective, people identified broader issues such as quality of life, gender mainstreaming, equality of access and opportunities for everyone, as well as inter-generational solutions.

"Quality of life - equality, accessibility, inclusion, social value"

"Connectivity - social, physical and digital"

"promote community cohesion through things like mixed sizes of flats/housing together so different groups .. to interact and so promote understanding, lessen feelings of isolation"

The way we **use our land** brought up the need for mixed use developments, as well as flexibility and the attractiveness of town centres, from the perspective of the people who live in a town.

"The attractiveness of town centres to the people who live in them, as opposed to the towns being purely residential places with no other purpose."

"Need to understand the dynamic changes of shopping and leisure behaviour that will affect the role and use of towns."

"Access to green spaces and public places that can feel safe and intimate to encourage interactions"

"Adaptability of our towns to respond to different pressures and to help prevent the highstreets emptying out and dying off. Spaces being able to be flexible and fluid when it comes to its change of use. Promotion of mixed-use developments, to ease issues of struggling retail, affordable housing, and the environment."

"...the beauty of new developments, keeping vernacular styles and materials, and greenery, to root the area to its heritage or homage to it"

Thinking about **transport and getting around**, people mentioned access to services and leisure - not just routes and public transport options but also extended timetables and alternative ways of getting around beyond the private car.

"Access to amenities, services and leisure (for example evening performances requiring public transport after 23.00 to get home)"

"The pandemic has highlighted the need to move away from the car-centric /convenience role of towns to more active-travel and leisure."

The **economic perspective** included a need to think about long term work patterns and the needs of local businesses as well as the availability of work and the affordability of high-quality homes.

"Awareness of agendas of firms/regions of and awareness of job providers - partner places locations frequented for connectivity"
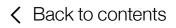
"Spatial inequality, marginalisation in the digital city / economy"

A few mentioned the need to develop a **plan for infrastructure and services** - including the upgrading, greening and resilience of our primary services and the quality of health and education in our towns.

"Power supply and Sustainable Transport and Travel."

"Effectively evolving our aging infrastructure."

The perspective of professionals in the planning and transport fields was also raised, questioning whether it was always focussed on community needs and whether this knowledge was holistic.

Tell us anything else about your ambitions or frustrations when you think about the future of our towns?

Participants shared concerns and frustrations around the intent of business as well as the ownership and financing structures that strip control away from citizens; the lack of leadership and vision from powerful players and politicians who control the debate as well as the process; fear of change and a desire to look backwards. And beyond the leadership, power and planning process itself, there are concerns that places are being developed around finance and profit rather than around people and the environment that we share, as well as social, economic and technological pressures that have turned people inwards and stripped the idea of community from place-making and transport planning completely.

"Big business comes to our community and doesn't give back to our town - then pull out!" "So much is out of our control - land ownership, developers, finance, planning, etc"

"Lack of vision; lack of strategic thinking; too many barriers to change; Good Ol' Boy mentality, faux-nostalgic desire for the past."

"Planning rules, overstretched planning department, money being spent wastefully, commercialisation, politicians (at all levels)."

"Cities and towns are being transformed based just on profits. Communities are destroyed and substituted with nothing else. The cultural and social texture of many cities around Europe is going to be replaced by new textures based not on human interactions but on profits and e-commerce. We live together but not joined anymore to each other."

"We know what we need to do, we often lack the tools to ensure that's what everyone agrees to do, or to make it happen on the ground. We are often snared in a complex and political process that tends inherently towards the status quo."

Many participants wished for the planning of places and transport to follow the principles of sustainable development - whether that relates to a move away from personal cars towards shared and active mobility alternatives, or in reference to the circular economy. In parallel, people identified the need for more smaller scale interventions - whether associated with quirky details and independent businesses, physical interventions like green roofed and solar powered bus stops or the deeply personal relationships that arise through our diverse personalities or the simple act of sharing. These aspirations also point to the need for a rich debate about what is a 'sustainable town' for the twenty first century and how this compares or relates to a 'sustainable city'.

"A healthy, happy population, local jobs, excellent visitor offer, integrated transport (people and goods) to rural homes and small villages, circular economy with buying locally made/produced items as well as buying as much as possible locally without it costing a lot more."
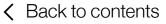
"Towns that are easily accessible physically (particularly for the elderly), safe, clean, and attractive. Ambitions being in lots of little bits of green tech, (solar on bus stops for example) and friendly places (being normal to see green walls, and bee friendly sedum roofs all over a place)."

"The ambition of architecture has largely shifted from form to logistical complexity. Still very clever, but clever on a large scale. ...Local food and local businesses better supported; cap the number of fast-food outlets. I want to be able to walk down my own high-street virtually, and consolidate delivery from a range of shops, and not be displaced to Amazon if I can't make it in person."

"I want a city that impresses at a small scale, with quirks and details, old pubs, misfits. A city should smile."

Could you tell us about any projects you are working on or know about that are helping communities to "imagine their future together"?

Participants identified a range of projects that they were working on to help us 'imagine the future together'. These included projects developed by industry and academic partners including Stantec's Better Places Social Value Toolkit[24], work done in cities as diverse as Singapore and Melbourne around zero carbon transitions[25] and local engagement and social investment in heritage landscapes. They also highlighted technologies that might support future place-making and transport from AI tools to support vehicle autonomy[26] and web platforms that increase social cohesion[27] & wellbeing in the neighbourhood[28].

Survey Responses

"We have developed a methodology based of four approaches; Design-Driven Innovation, HCD, Participatory Design, and Product-Service System in order to imagine the future and then transforming those ideas into solutions that can be implemented today, though providing guided steps towards that future. Better Streets for Enfield community group."

"Net zero Precincts project here in Melbourne which over the next four years is modelling how a population of a precinct can transition to decarbonisation."

"hayden.ai has some interesting ideas about how to incorporate AI in traffic flow. Singapore is also good for integrating green futurism into urban planning. BMW Designworks has also looked at re-appropriating parking spaces. MyMendip. co.uk is a good initiative for community building. Nebenan.de is a retail space for neighbourhoods."

"Community-led housing in the UK. Housing cooperative projects in Barcelona. Community-level developments in China."

"Considering last mile logistics, digital exclusion."

"The Hadrian's Wall Community Archeology Project (WallCAP). The Heritage Action Zones and their consultations at this time in Hexham in Northumberland and Maryport in Cumbria, also the Community Action Northumberland, who are supporting village halls to thrive and serve their communities in future."

"Better Places Toolkit"

What do you like about the Our Future Town approach and tools?

We received many positive comments on the "Our Future Town' approach, especially the desire to ensure that everyone has an equal voice in the future, the richness of the codesign process and the aim to create a progressive consensus rather than to force through a particular and generalised vision of the future. Participants saw visualisation as an important tool and recognised that an open and engaging approach leads to far richer understanding than traditional surveys.

"The visualisations are a crucial way, I feel, to give people optimism and a sense of agency and influence in being involved in their own future places."

"The clarity of the approach, the use of graphics and images and the use of AR in helping to visualise a new transport future."

"Co-design of futures and understanding values of today, takes the holistic view of what people want then you can address aspects of the system"

"I was surprised, delighted and very excited to read the report. It was insightful and so much better than interpreting statistics"

"They create a progressive consensus, enabling many community participants who might otherwise be conservative about change to embrace it"

"I love the comparisons you make as they really bring the ideas to life - for example needing to plant a wood the size of Haltwhistle each year to offset the carbon"

How could we improve the Our Future Town approach and tools?

While we had positive comments, we also received excellent suggestions on how this approach might be improved.
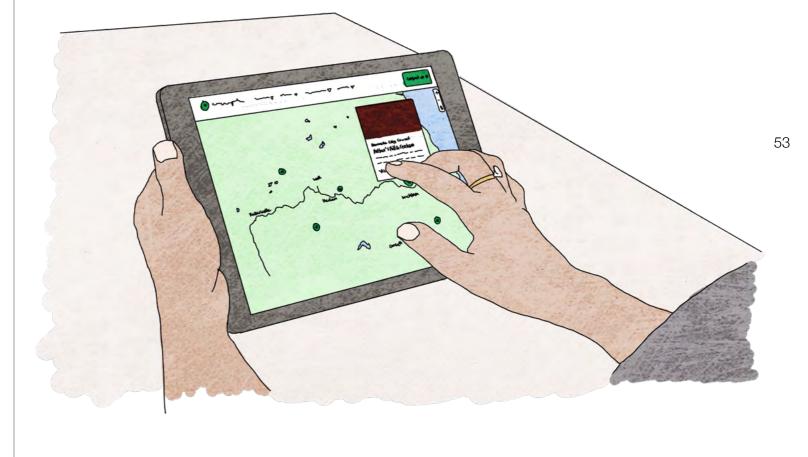
We need to develop a richer set of tools to engage with a variety of groups within a community - and potentially focus on or prioritise the voices of those who are excluded (young, insecure, minority, disadvantaged); and ensure that the ways into the experiences and the outputs from the approach are inclusive and engaging too.

While there is a mantra in government, and across business, for 'digital by default' we need to find ways of bringing the approach to life unless we believe that all of our lives will be mediated through digital screens.
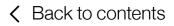
And most importantly we need to find a way to make this approach simpler and cheaper if we are to actually achieve the change that communities need. Participants also asked for us to consider how this approach can engage with 'real project proposals' as well as engage with non-rural environments - the future suburb and the future '15 minute' city neighbourhood.

"Possibly helping us ensure we reach all the different people in town e.g. those with no digital access, the less mobile, definitely young people. Ideally if we could find a way for the different groups to be at the same meetings/online sessions so we can all listen to their views and hopes for their futures spaces."

"Ensure that there is accessibility, in some form or other, for those who are not digitally connected or competent."

"There has to be a place for consulting on 'real' projects that have been worked up behind the scenes to a certain extent and to facilitate open discussion on these. This is where the reality and trade-offs come to light."
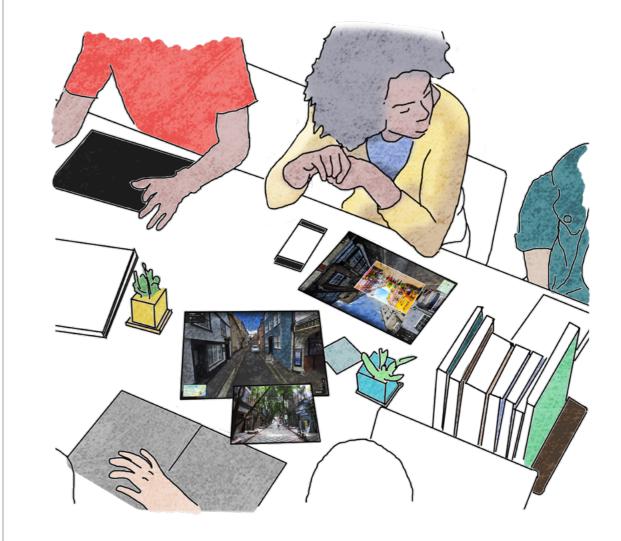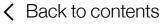
GROUP WORKSHOPS

Unlike the online surveys, the group workshops allowed a much richer discussion around the topics of engagement, knowledge sharing, vision and change making.

This section is divided into four parts, listening, learning, imagining and changing and, within each section, we attempt to identify problems and solutions across these different themes through different lenses (political, environmental, social, technical and economic).

Each section begins with a summary of the key opportunities that we heard about and we have tried to illustrate these opportunities through visions for a future town. If we really listen, learn, imagine and change together, what might our places become in the future? Are these visualisations *"motherhood and apple pie"* as one participant commented or are they achievable futures if we really engage with communities as owners and designers of their future towns?
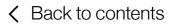
LISTENING TO EACH OTHER - COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We need to listen to each other, using language, questions and activities that dig beneath the surface, while giving communities a real sense of ownership and responsibility around the process. We need to celebrate the diversity in our communities by creating a range of ways to listen and engage with each other and we need to turn mechanical processes of recording and quantifying responses into something that is transparent, meaningful and even playful. We need to go beyond, "You said, we did" to "we're making this together - join in!".

We asked participants to think about who we are asking, what we are asking and how we are asking people about their community's future.

From a political / decision making perspective, there was a lack of collective understanding about the benefits or methods of engagement - a reliance on formulaic questions, the use of highly developed proposals for 'consultation' and a lack of 'collaboration' as the essential quality behind a shared vision for the future.

DIGITAL MAP

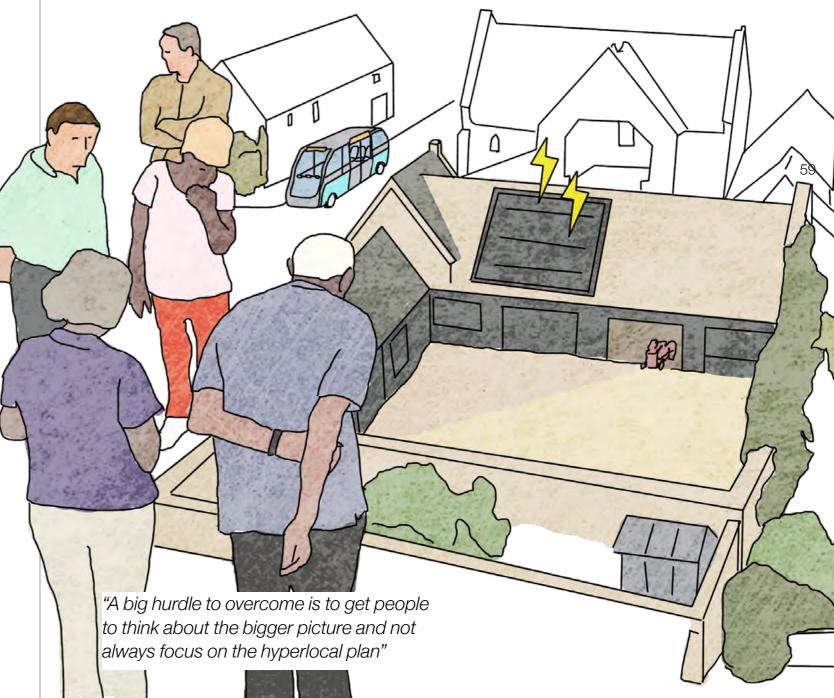*"The mayor has a very narrow understanding of what community engagement is.."*

Local authorities rarely suggest that they are building a 'vision of their collective future' or focus on the longer-term objectives that are needed to build sustainable futures for everyone. Changes to planning budgets and the outsourcing of community processes to people and organisations that have lost a deep relationship with a community has led to the death of creativity in the discipline and a replacement with statistics and normative ways of approaching consultation. Politicians and professionals are shying away from the immersive and value creating experience that comes from engagement - perhaps because their only experiences are the negative ones that often come out of the town hall boxing ring.

"We've got all these policies, we've got all these strategies, we've got all the documents that we could possibly ever want. They tell us what to do about climate, what to do about air quality, what to do about connectivity and the barriers to connecting communities. But how do we share it?"

"So much of this is tied up in political will. And the will to do what's right"

"Unless you've got a planning degree and even if you do have a planning degree, it could be impossible that you understand what it means and local authority officers are strapped for time, but there's no standardisation around how to write content around community engagement"
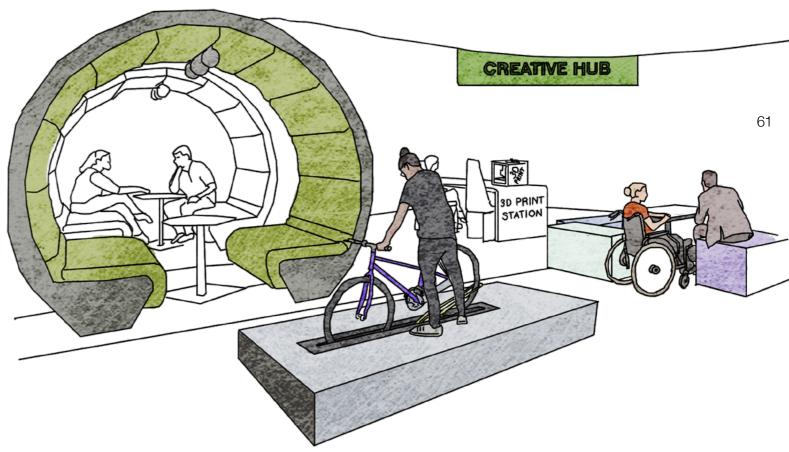

"A big hurdle to overcome is to get people to think about the bigger picture and not always focus on the hyperlocal plan"

"Queens Park Parish Council [29] acts as a go between to organise events for people to go to and speak to. They have given people power to speak up."

Communities do not feel that they have any ownership of the environment, the public realm and public services, whether these be environmental spaces or mobility networks. When we ask them to engage with their future, they do not believe they have any chance of changing them together and on the flip side, many don't feel they have a responsibility to their public realm. Yet, community ownership, agency and responsibility are possible and policy makers have a choice whether they see public environments and services as simply objects for provision or potent sources of community vision and action.
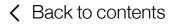
We also heard many deep social challenges and problems associated with community engagement. Our media environment has created polarisation, quiet voices are becoming quieter and the majority view can appear to be based around the average rather than around a collection of minorities. How we engage lacks depth and yet every community has a rich resource of associations, charities, schools to listen to. We haven't built vision making into a continuous process and made listening about the future an integral part of our community culture and many of our efforts to bring multiple projects together makes people nervous about sharing their views.

"People don't often think it's theirs or have a perception on what they can and cannot engage in."

Providing creative hubs that help people take ownership of the future will help

We do not treat residents as the experts in their communities and they aren't given the encouragement to develop and share their voices. And while digital tools are engaging with more people, some participants questioned the 'quality' of this channel. Does it just provide a megaphone to voice strident opinions or might it be tuned to deeper thinking?

"Residents actually have answers to so much. The engagements and consultations that we do are kind of do we put this bridge here, or here? ''What design is this parapet?"

And while Our Future Town asked people to think about the wellbeing of the whole community in the future, we were quizzed about what is meant by 'wellbeing' and whether this is a shared interest at all. A further point is that many consultations focus on negative issues - the problems we face - rather than positive visions. Can we turn listening around, so that positive perspectives are encouraged and elicited instead?
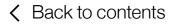
"...used to be a forum that existed that was a successful platform + a news sheet that was a continuous engagement process. Reaching a wider audience is key."

When participants discuss 'community engagement' related to their wider town or region, the social challenges become more complex. At these scales, issues may become more sophisticated, covering transport, infrastructure, economic

"Engagement/consultation often just hears from & listens to the usual & most privileged/ vocal suspects"

"Social media leads to binary views e.g. you can't knock that building down"

development, education, public health and environmental resilience. Can residents engage with these issues or should they be left to experts? If they do engage, are we using the right language and focus when we talk about the future? So much of planning suggests that it is all based on 'economic' development and growth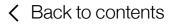, whereas the real future growth may actually come from social and environmental quality rather than an abstract understanding of economic progress. And this focus on economic growth, mistakes the value of much physical infrastructure as we move towards a future based on restorative, circular and connected communities or even into a world where craft, care and creativity form the bedrock for our future wellbeing.

"I work in social value - there is real potential for engagement to shape design outcomes. I'm interested to see more examples of this going forwards"

The technical problems associated with the listening experience include the 'mechanical' and 'obscure' qualities of online engagement. Are we expecting mechanical responses or are we feeding community imagination? And is the process itself meaningless and unengaging? Do communities really feel like they are going to affect the future in a significant and tangible way, or is this the domain or landowners, investors, large enterprises and politicians alone? Does technology enable a form of synthesis that can be understood by

"..that lack of diversity. We never hear from kids. We never hear from the elderly actually, quite often, we never hear from disabled people. We never hear from a whole variety. You know, our BME population is not engaged with…"

communities or is it only able to output data about the future? Does technology restrict input to the tech savvy and mathematically minded? And are we able to break down the silos between different public bodies so that higher level community knowledge can feed into shared visions for our public good; people within these silos are rarely connected effectively let alone the technology that they use.

"How inclusive is a typical survey? Or letters with a long URL to go to and fill in. Who wants to fill a letter and send off a letter?"

"But I think digital first has to be digital by design, rather than just relying on technology at the end, it's about inclusivity, and improving the accessibility of the planning system."

"How to feed imagination so that utopia isn't just the town without traffic jams"

Last, but not least, the economic challenge that is used to situate place-making and transportation is often fundamentally flawed, dividing the town's purse between the value created by its citizens and the costs spent in supporting its public realm. This cost-benefit decision making process does not deliver 'a vision' but a spreadsheet and many communities feel frustrated by the lack of positive change, especially at a grassroots level. Participants felt that cost benefit analysis simply does not deal with a communities' physical and emotional needs and

in particular, the purse string holders at county or national level (and even the gatekeepers within a town council) have little interest in the health and wellbeing of a smaller neighbourhood or rural community.
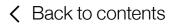
"There are no resources for a collective engagement process within planning and development"

"..very hard to justify anything on just a financial basis or argument.."

"Salespeople from developers sending out reports rather than speaking with people"

"Job providers have a big impact on goals of the town I noticed, even if the output of the company might not be what society is specifically asking for …"
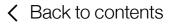
LEARNING TOGETHER - INCLUSIVE AND ACTIVE WELLBEING / INTERDISCIPLINARY PLANNING / ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

If we are really going to make change as a community then we all need to get on the same page and learn together - not just about the risks but the rewards of change, not just the problems but about the creative solutions. We need to help people stretch beyond negative mindsets by providing compelling visual imagery and showing how physical changes to our communities can create real transformations to our social, cultural, environmental and economic wellbeing.

In the learning together phase, we asked participants to consider issues around wellbeing and active travel, environmental impacts and the interdisciplinary nature of the planning process. What can we learn together, where might this knowledge come from and how can it be shared and presented in ways that have a meaningful impact on our shared understanding of the future?

Participants were concerned that communities don't understand why change is necessary or what the overall objectives for change might be. Targets are often fashioned around technical jargon and people don't know what these

"We need to reframe the structure of everything to focus on health and wellbeing and changing our view on the environment can improve people's health and wellbeing, which then impacts and influences how we change our daily routines"

things really mean for them. Using language, visuals and data together in ways that people can relate to at a local level was seen as an important opportunity, but it needs to be done in ways that people trust.

"Saying you can all carry on exactly as you are. Don't worry, don't panic at the same time, saying panic and worry. And here's why it doesn't make any sense. So, I think that we need clear leadership, when you talk about changing towns."

"The message isn't getting through. We need to explain things in a different way. It's not just politics but also planners and developers"
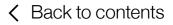
"Government has squeezed the creativity out of planning, to try and create a structured and organised approach to planning"

"Demonstrate how to 'Design a better way' as opposed to legislate a way"

There was a feeling that there is a collective ignorance around the environmental challenges that we face both locally and globally and not enough connection between the value that nature brings to our lives, within our towns and through our transport choices. And while the crisis that we face is immense, participants are keen that necessary changes are framed within a positive and shared vision rather than through doom and gloom. Learning together can create the tipping point that is needed to achieve more radical change.

"Show the "Do nothing" scenario - what impacts does a community face if it doesn't change"

"There are prototypes. I think that a picture paints a thousand words, I think if you do something on a small scale and people can see, then that's gotta be a good way."

"It needs tipping points as happened with smoking and petrol cars and seat belts"

The social component of learning includes the challenge of dealing with 'them versus us' in the planning process and a feeling that local knowledge has less value and less weight than development finance or professional expertise. Learning should also avoid an attack on lifestyles but aim to work with underlying motivations for change and identify how we can use smaller tactical changes to support alternative futures. Mobility in particular has become a very individualistic choice and very few realise the actual cost or impact of our communal behaviours. We also lack platforms to 'synthesise' knowledge or engage with the conflicts between short term and practical needs and longer term but valued changes.

"Mapping things physically makes sense to people. Creating diaries for people to engage with."

"Will trade-offs occur due to people not being worried, aware or engaged? How do we message things that are meaningful and engaging in a way that will make valuable differences?"
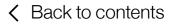
"How to engage with the disheartened?"

"Visitor payback initiatives. Crowdfunding for issues. People are making positive decisions as they can see an end goal"

How can we use crowdfunding and local currencies to support idea creation and sharing?

"That wasn't invented here. To overcome this, we develop and start with community engagement from the beginning"

"Get people out of the mindset that they won't listen. We aren't anyone important so why bother? We are too small compared to the voice and power of big companies…"
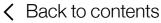
We don't use existing community groups (like charities and associations) to share knowledge or get their help to make this knowledge valuable to their communities. Feedback or discussion 'as a community' is rarely carried out successfully. Knowledge sharing is also seen as a 'moment in time', with engagement stopping at the end of the consultation period. Both local knowledge and professional experience often vanishes, and the process has to start again when future projects start up. Participants also feel that the planning process including knowledge sharing is delivered in a dull manner, leaving confusion and disinterest in its wake.

"Recognising what people are doing in other places and what people find good, safe or enjoyable about other places. Everybody has something to bring to the table."

"We do collectively want change - show that the community isn't just very loud NIMBYs"

"Providing digital knowledge online for people to view and navigate"

IMAGINING THE FUTURE
- VISION LED PLANNING

To help communities create a vision for their towns, we need every group to add to the whole, developing a shared vision around diverse values and ambitions rather than from the average, and using reciprocity as a creative approach so that everyone can benefit if they come together. We suggested a range of tools to help people to visualise the future but also heard how musicians and poets can help communities to weave stories about the future too.

In the imagine stage, we asked participants to consider 'vision-led' planning from three perspectives: a traditional and data centric 'predict and provide model'; a system of planning based around 'development / developer' vision - where a community is offered a vision of the future and asked to 'comment' on what they like or don't like; and a 'community-led' vision-making approach similar to that proposed in the Our Future Town methods.
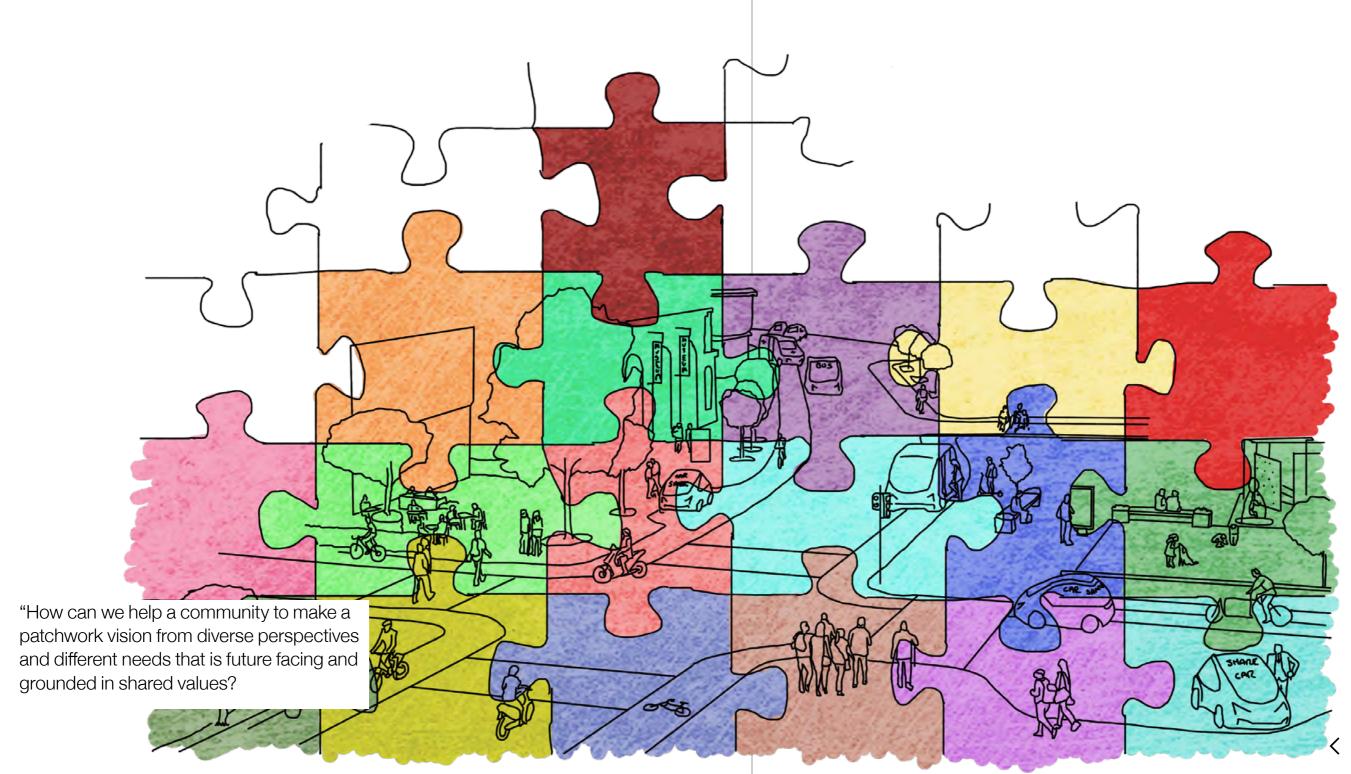
The previous phases of listening and learning will already highlight reasons for change, opportunities and challenges that we need to address as well as identifying groups of overlapping needs and interests within a community. But they won't yet have developed consensual answers to the questions around 'what does the future look like' and 'how are we going to get there'.

While we suggested a range of tools - from drag and drop and collaged street views and maps to playful games and augmented reality, we didn't formalise the process through which different community ideas might come together to form a communal vision.

The current 'predict and provide' method was seen as a top-down and centralising approach that takes decision making away from local communities. As one participant said, *"Predict & Provide hits government targets … but stats and targets are not a good measure of future residents' visions and they don't inspire those living in or moving to a town."*

If we are going to use statistics to model the future, then perhaps we need to be more creative in the ways we use them, *"capturing attention in a visual and engaging way"* to help people understand the implications of trends or tipping points on our future lives and to explore alternative futures through data.

"Predict and Provide is useful as a "reality check" but totally hinders agency, choice and contestation, disempowers communities"

The typical developer or development led vision was seen as valuable - in the sense that it helps people to visualise what the future might look like, but unhelpful because it wasn't invented by or for the community as a whole and is often driven by particular interest groups or focussed on a particular challenge - developer profit, economic development or the 'tourist pound' - rather than more insightful and strategic challenges.

"How can we help a community to make a patchwork vision from diverse perspectives and different needs that is future facing and grounded in shared values?
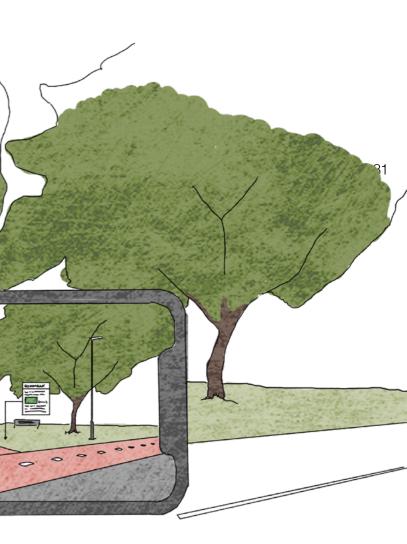
But while participants like the idea of community-led vision making they are also concerned about how this can be delivered successfully. Questions include, 'who is driving this vision', 'how can we justify or pay for the time and resources needed to develop a holistic vision', 'how can we really engage with a diverse community to develop this vision together, on an equal basis.', 'how can we synthesise different voices', and 'how can we fund a vision for the future that is not simply driven by economic interests alone'?

Who is driving the vision: The local council is the obvious democratic organiser of the local plan and transport plan, but participants were concerned that past experience might colour community perceptions? While the Our Future Town approach was developed with a range of partners (a mayor, a green party councillor and the chair of a community partnership organisation) the challenge remains to be true to the process, to ask the right questions and to ensure that everyone has an equal voice. Organisations like the sortition foundation[30] can help to set the ground rules to, in their words, *" ... bypass the powerful vested interests ... and create a real democracy of the people, by the people, and for the people."*

"Because nobody's going to listen. Nobody's going to take any notice of what I have to say about it, it's the same with housing."

"How do we actually attract a new generation? And one way to do that is to spend more time asking the younger people who live there what they want."

How can we justify and pay for the time: Participants recognised that creating a holistic vision will take effort and suggested a number of approaches to deal with this challenge? One participant asked us to consider how 'quality and speed can work in unison' and how 'quick wins' can help to draw the community together around change. We would also do well to look at novel development processes including the use of design sprints and how software development frameworks like GitHub can support this sort of 'open source community development'[31]
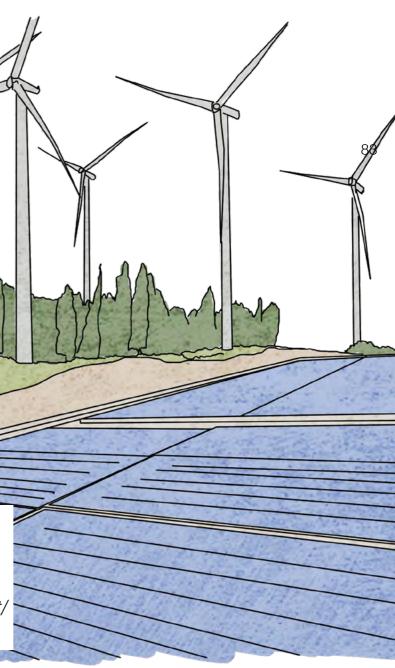
"Don't raise expectations too early - The lack of communication and engagement throughout can discourage residents from getting on board with a future vision."
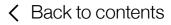
"No time or resources for leaders/spokesperson to invest themselves in the process. Resource intensive processes. How can we change mindsets around the funding process and gaining willingness from people to invest their time?"

How can we really engage with a diverse community: Participants valued the range of 'imagine' tools that we had proposed and felt that alternative approaches such as augmented reality would help to draw younger people into the conversation, but they recognised that the 'future' is not the priority for teenagers, despite the fact that Covid has made everyone more aware of what is working and not working in a community and "young people especially have begun to get engaged."

One participant mentioned that visual tools are not the only way to engage with communities and this brings up the fact that other creative techniques can be used if we are willing to take a few risks - how might we use poetry and music, writing and model making to connect people to possible futures? And how do these creative tools fit into the deliberative process that emphasises the importance of reflection and

"Breaking past just a vision for economic benefit and being able to connect and communicate with decision makers. There's a lack of showcasing important infrastructures (power/education/transport/etc.)"

informed discussion in decision-making?

"Imagination can let you see what is possible and what isn't. Build on the post Covid groups and ask, 'what to hang on to and cherish?'"
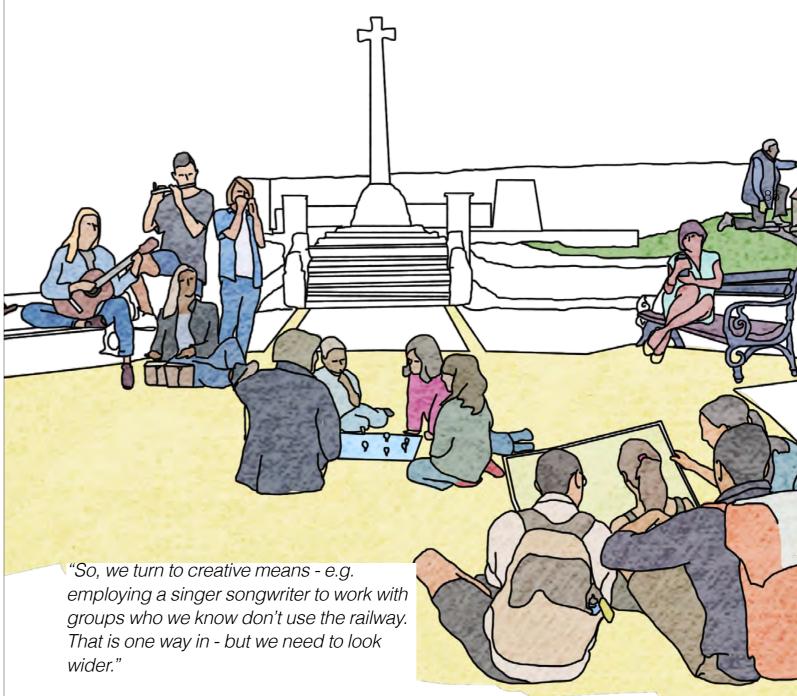
"It's the questions that we ask people who aren't transport planners, who aren't engineers, who aren't invested in this world that are so important."

"There is no planning platform in which people are able to visualise their thoughts and for it to be collected and synthesised."

"Ability to create it yourself - e.g. Sims/Minecraft"

How can we synthesise different voices: We were asked about the process of bringing together different components of a vision into a single holistic vision. Techniques discussed included making sure that every part of a community is involved in creating their vision - a town vision for the young, the old, the parent, the child. But we were also warned that these perspectives do not always create the overlapping opportunities that bring a community together both around its public realm and its transport infrastructure and choices. Perhaps, an alternative approach is to build on the values that a community shares and to help different groups to add ideas around each of these value domains?

"Lack of integration with current amenities when building current visions. How to bridge the gap between what the community says and what decision makers do. There is a lack of awareness of payoffs for changes shown in current visions."
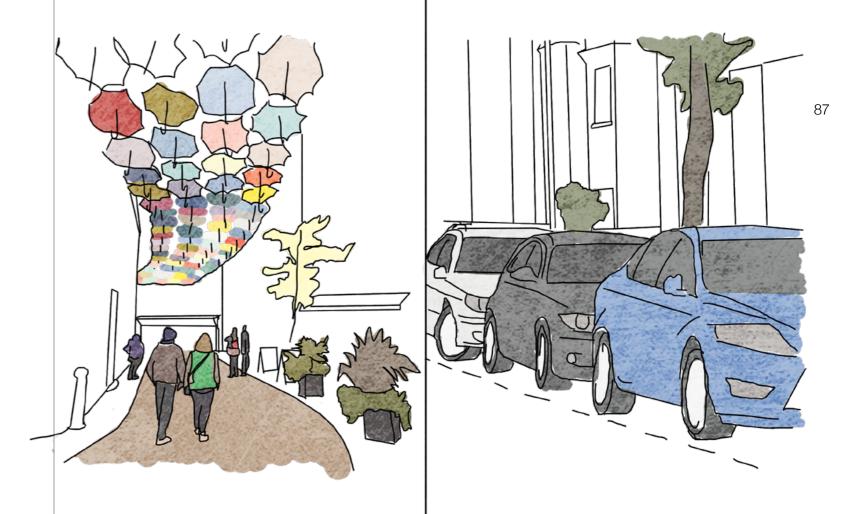

"So, we turn to creative means - e.g. employing a singer songwriter to work with groups who we know don't use the railway. That is one way in - but we need to look wider."

"Participative activities are imperative to a successful and valuable future vision. Can we plant seeds in community minds to get them to change behaviours?"
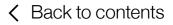
"There's a lack of combined focus on both long- and short-term goals/visions. Thinking about bigger picture / Connecting communities / Not to have a them and us scenario"

"Build on post COVID groups / build on shoulders of others"

"What people see is more important to them. People don't all think in the same way and don't have the same values as others. People should be able to play with how a town looks and works"

"Honesty in what's achievable. Using best practice / case studies can help guide what is possible."
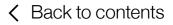
MAKING CHANGE THAT MATTERS -
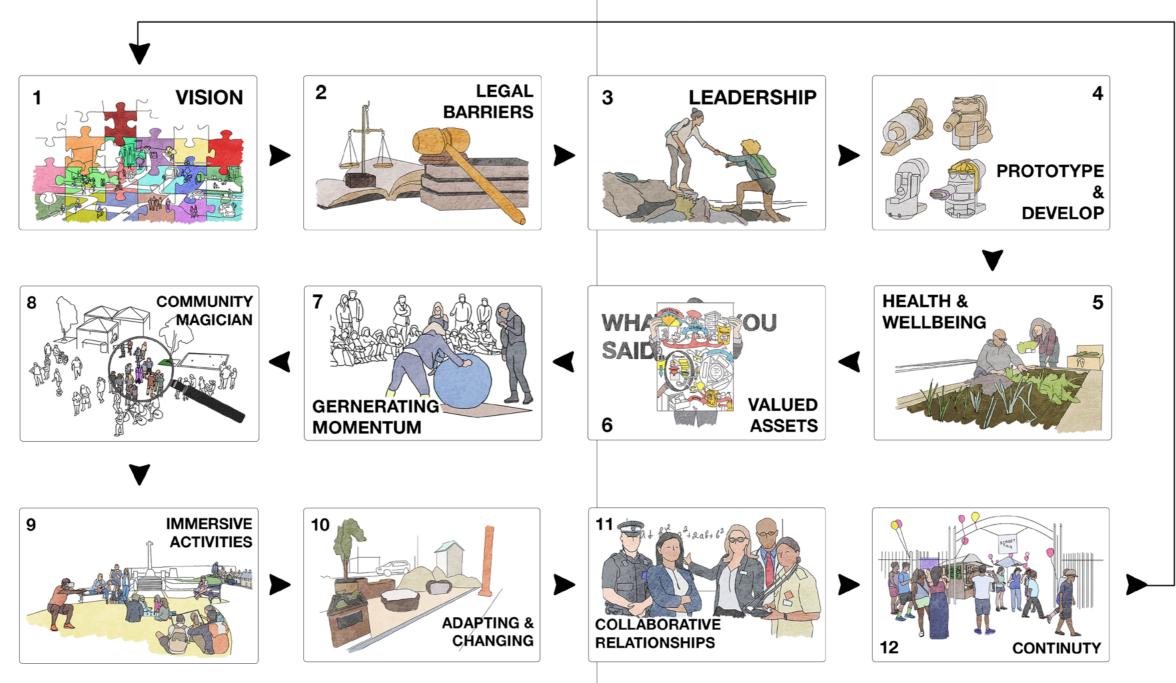# TACTICAL AND STRATEGIC CHANGE

To make change that matters, every town needs to find the magicians who bring people together, inspire local action and cajole the quiet and unsure to get involved. These magicians can be leaders but towns folk need to see change that works. So how can we create momentum around some quick wins so that people experience the value of change and can prepare themselves for the future or get involved? And beyond these short-term changes, we need to create collaborations and partnerships, not just locally but with other towns that are already on the journey and with private organisations that can deliver transformation on the ground.
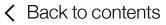
At this point, the community has developed a holistic vision for the future and now wants to make it happen. The final area of discussion centred on the tactical and strategic changes that communities can make. A road map for change must include short term tactical changes and longer-term strategic partnerships including funding, key steps and ways of measuring and maintaining success (social, environmental and economic). We wanted to understand what else communities can do to make change that matters - that delivers on community agendas and their responses to inclusion, climate change, place-making and

"State employees have lost the connection between all stakeholders. You need these "magicians" in the community and power needs to be given to these people."

1 VISION

2 LEGAL BARRIERS

3 LEADERSHIP

4 PROTOTYPE & DEVELOP

5 HEALTH & WELLBEING

6 VALUED ASSETS — WHAT YOU SAID

7 GERNERATING MOMENTUM

8 COMMUNITY MAGICIAN

9 IMMERSIVE ACTIVITIES

10 ADAPTING & CHANGING

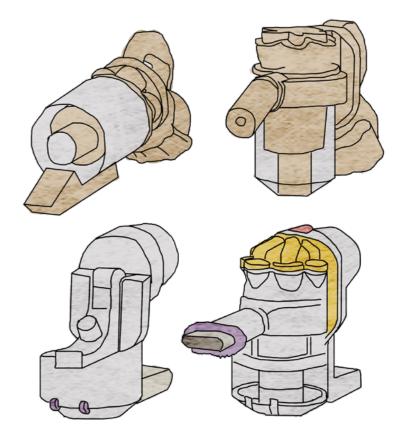11 COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

12 CONTINUTY

transport futures. What areas should be addressed, what barriers do we face and who else should be considered when planning our futures?

Participants recognised that a major barrier to change exists within legal frameworks that align to economic or political divisions rather than with community needs. To overcome this barrier, a community needs to bring a sense of stewardship into the planning process and to appoint or support a local champion, or group of champions, who can act as a figurehead to drive investment and encourage community involvement. This group of champions should put community wellbeing at their heart and break down the silos that exist between different stakeholders.

"A figurehead or group to be able to make these things happen. People like to engage but are relatively lazy and may forget what has been said or done. It's very easy for things to fall off people's radar"

"Bringing in the education sector to the planning system. Make part of education to be about the local area and the value of places"

"Bring in cultural value and heritage. This is something we need to be able to celebrate and for it to continue to work in times of difficulty like pandemics and recessions"

As part of the development process, communities were encouraged to prototype and develop solutions, "borrowing ideas from tech - minimum viable product, prototyping" and making changes across a range of community activities so that "people can make change without huge financial support or official backing" and then gathering rapid feedback to support larger scale investment.

"Once vision is agreed there is a need to work with the community on the priorities but also establish a collaborative partnership with the service delivery players, so everyone is clear on the actions, priorities, programme and implications including funding"

"Get diverse views on future infrastructure design - How can we gain data and information from quick wins developed by the community?"
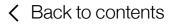
Participants felt that health and wellbeing should be a driver of change, with priority given to things that had an immediate impact on communities. Communities can use dashboards to monitor progress, but some cautioned that dashboards might stop people asking questions and not look at future development. The aim of a dashboard is not simply to measure change but also to understand, "how people are perceiving the changes"

"Seeing change. Matrix of things that are really hard to do or this is really easy to do."

In parallel with a health and wellbeing agenda, we heard that communities need to focus on valued assets to ensure that these are being used well. This may be heritage buildings or green spaces, and both provide opportunities for more community involvement and collaboration.

"Dementia friendly / Mindful of any wellbeing dashboards what does it actually track / narrowing views"

A key challenge will always revolve around generating and maintaining momentum, with small communities finding it hard to engage more than the active minority. Participants recommend a mix of physical and digital engagement and look at the way in which art / performance / creativity and experiments can start the process of physical change.
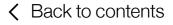
"Bringing people together for a shared goal (e.g. creating a better space) or bringing people together to give something to them (we've given free rail travel to a group to help them 'bond as a group')"

Every community needs magicians and community champions who can help to dissolve tension within a community and overcome the culture of pointing the blame elsewhere? This network of collaborators doesn't have to be specialists in planning or transport (and more than likely they won't be) but they can fill buses and get people to bring something to the party. The challenge for community development is not just to find these people but to reward them and support their active involvement over a long period of time.

While 'change making' can be seen as an infrastructure rather than a social challenge, we heard that it was not enough to 'build it and they will come'. Instead, new infrastructure should be developed as an immersive activity, connecting with local knowledge and local groups and actively involving different interests. Planting

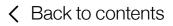*"Art and performance - think about the symbolism of some XR protests"*

wildflowers along the new cycle route or creating walking routes that specifically connect disadvantaged communities with things that they value.
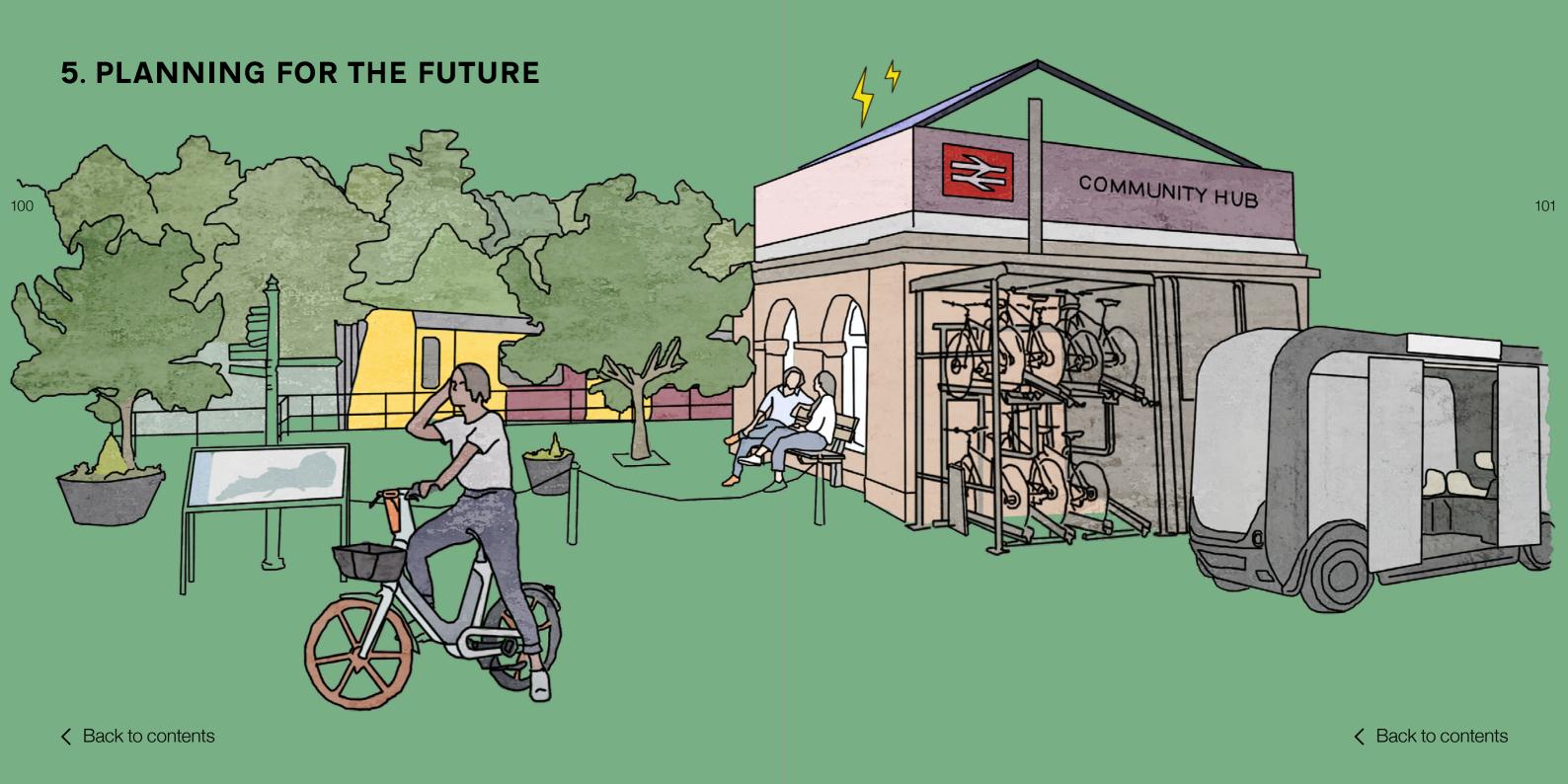
We also heard that many communities are disappointed by changes at the beginning so it's important to recognise that things will need to adapt over time. We shouldn't fall into quick fix scenarios and we should accept that not everything will work first time. Change is not a moment in time but a continuous process, so continuity is a vital part of the experience. So many times, political agendas, changing personnel or external forces stop change from happening and create new priorities that are no longer connected to the original vision.

COVID has highlighted that there may be huge changes in the way we work and live and it's also highlighted our passion and drive to establish collaborative relationships. How can a collaborative neighbourhood maintain and manage changes? How can planning and planners enable these collaborative relationships and how can neighbours be given more responsibility for making change? This cannot just be about allowing people to plant flowers around trees, shutting a street temporarily for a children's party or allowing people to use their parking space for a bench. It needs to grow beyond individual actions and support larger endeavours that showcase what communities want to achieve at scale and bring to life the energy and atmosphere for change.

"How can a collaborative neighbourhood maintain and manage changes?"

5. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

COMMUNITY HUB

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Government is awash with strategies for future challenges and the world of transport and place-making is dominated by planning requirements, processes, surveys and consultations.

In transportation, we read a bold vision for cycling and walking[33], a new national bus strategy[34], a strategy for the future of mobility in urban environments[35], a call for evidence around rural mobility[36] and "decarbonising transport - setting the challenge"[37]

Government wants "a future where half of all journeys in towns and cities are cycled or walked", "buses to be both tools of inclusion and the transport of choice", and "cleaner transport, automation, new business models and new modes of travel (that) promise to transform how people, goods and services move."

In place-based planning, a new National Planning Policy Framework[38] "promotes a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the

environment; mitigate climate change and adapt to its effects". This will be achieved by "asking for beauty, refusing ugliness and promoting stewardship"[39] and will be supported by a National Model Design Code[40] that sets "design requirements that are visual and numerical wherever possible to provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area"

This research suggests that the scale and speed of transition that is needed to meet the climate emergency as well as the growing and unequal impacts of development on communities will need to go far beyond traditional consultation, codification of physical development and markets for land use, buildings, infrastructure and transportation.

Consultation will need to be replaced by deeper forms of listening and dialogue that encourage communities, professionals and policymakers to consider their philosophical and emotional response to their towns and the future. We will have to open these questions, and the answers, out, beyond the loudest voices and the richest purses, so that we can hear from young and old, those in need as well as those in places of power. We need to go beyond, "You said, we did" to "we're making this together - join in!"

A local plan and the associated transport plan shouldn't start by codifying physical plans and infrastructure, but with a conscious effort to share knowledge around the challenges we face and the creative solutions available for communities. This knowledge should help communities to think about their health, their wealth and their environment in deeper ways and use local interdisciplinary knowledge to strengthen the links between these different spheres.

We should be inspired by places that we know and use rich imagery and media to makes these issues relevant and meaningful and also show the changes that we can make to our public realm and transport network; at different scales - the street, the neighbourhood and the town; across different dimensions - health and wellbeing, inclusion and access, the environment and the economy; and through different lenses - the needs of children, the young, families and older people as well as those of enterprise and nature.

Vision-making will not create or support behaviour change or affect people's hearts and minds if it is based purely around a 'coding plan', 'area types', and 'masterplan' plots. Instead a local design code needs to share a vision of the future based on community values, beliefs and concerns. It should help people imagine, express and explore future experiences and material changes and this shared vision should be a living document owned by the community as a whole rather than simply act as a guide to speed

up development decision making. And its development should support reciprocity as it seeks to balance needs across different time frames and different interests.

Finally, making radical change at a community level will need collaboration and partnerships between towns, between businesses and communities and between different parts of a community. It will require that the roadmap for change delivers benefits to a range of groups so that everyone can prepare for and get involved in their future towns together. Making these links will require leaders who can make and sustain these connections and relationships.
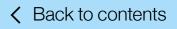
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