



COMMUNITY PLACE MAKING AND TRANSPORT PLANNING

A GUIDE FOR IMAGINING OUR FUTURES TOGETHER



“Then something clicked
and the day quivered and rang like a question mark!
Why grit your teeth in the gridlock now the commute’s
a superfast hop and a skip from toothbrush to keyboard,
from bed-hair to screen-call?

Why wrestle with glitches and gremlins
or tussle with gubbins and gizmos, or idle and churn
in the swirling pit of the buffering wheel
now you’re fine-tuning the senses, enrolling for real life,
getting to grips with arts and crafts
that were only a keystroke away all along -
you’re a rhythm guitar, a poem, a garden, a song...”

*Excerpt from Simon Armitage’s poem ‘something clicked’
– a reflection on life in 2020*

Our Future Town aims to create a bridge between ground-up community transitions and strategic and sustainable place making and mobility planning

With thanks to the communities of Biggleswade, Haltwhistle and Lyme Regis



CONTENTS

Preface	Listen	Learn	Imagine	Change	Appendices	196
Introduction9	Listening to each other22	Learning together82	Imagine the future156	Barriers to change182	Next Steps198	
How ‘Our Future Town’ works10	Our findings so far28	<i>Learning about...</i>	Our future town overlays158	Creating our community forum – who’s in our team?184	Approach and methods200	
The communities we worked with14	Beliefs about the future54	community place-making86	Our future town board game170	Creating a roadmap for change186	About the team, partners, stakeholders and communities202	
Guide overview18	Utopias and Dystopias64	sustainable transport92	Our future town augmented reality174	Tactical changes to get us started188		
	Reflections on the listening tools68	current lifestyle100		Costs and benefits and partners190		
		our shared future108		Celebrating change through events and activities192		
		Making knowledge local and personal114		Encouraging everyone to get involved194		
		Things we can change together119				
		Learning from places we love140				

PREFACE

- 6
- This project arose for a number of reasons:
- The desire to develop and test a collaborative approach to community place-making and transport planning that puts shared vision-making, rather than ‘predict and provide’, at the centre of our planning and development agenda.
 - The urgent need to help each other to live differently given the fast approaching impacts of climate change as well as other social and technological challenges.
 - The evident value of creative approaches in helping us all to feel, understand and act differently.

In response to this and wider challenges about the future, designers from the Royal College of Art supported by the professional bodies of the Transport Planning Society, Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation, Royal Town Planning Institute, and private organisations, Integrated Transport Planning, UK Regeneration and Malcolm Baker Consulting, have come together to seek a better way forward.

Together with partners from councils, civil society and charities, the RCA have connected with three rural communities around England - Biggleswade in Bedfordshire, Haltwhistle and surrounding parishes in Northumberland and Lyme Regis in Dorset - so that we can understand their beliefs, feelings and knowledge about their towns.

We used their experience and knowledge to develop a set of tools that will help communities to reimagine how they can develop their town’s together, improve the ways they get around and how they might share their ideas for the future in more collaborative and supportive ways.

As Lynda Addison OBE, former chair of the Transport Planning Society and chair of CIHT Sustainable Transport Panel says, “We need to create a “plastics” moment, as Sir David Attenborough did for oceans, in the approach to community and transport planning. We want to create places where local services and activities are truly local or accessible and we need to give confidence to all sectors of society that this is deliverable, essential given the major challenges in society, and effective. This will require a paradigm shift in thinking and action and will only be achieved if it is supported and led by local communities as well as politicians and industry partners.”

This document shares insights and a prototype proposal.



INTRODUCTION

Our Future Towns is a project developed with people from across the country to reimagine how they can engage with the challenges of community place-making and transport planning.

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There are many challenges that communities face that are beyond the issues that we cover in this project, but we hope that this document and the accompanying presentation and assets will help you bring people together to talk about the things that matter in your town and to see how we can build on each other's knowledge as well as the great ideas that are happening across the UK and around the world.

Our focus is on how we can build community together, how we get around town and ideas about the future.

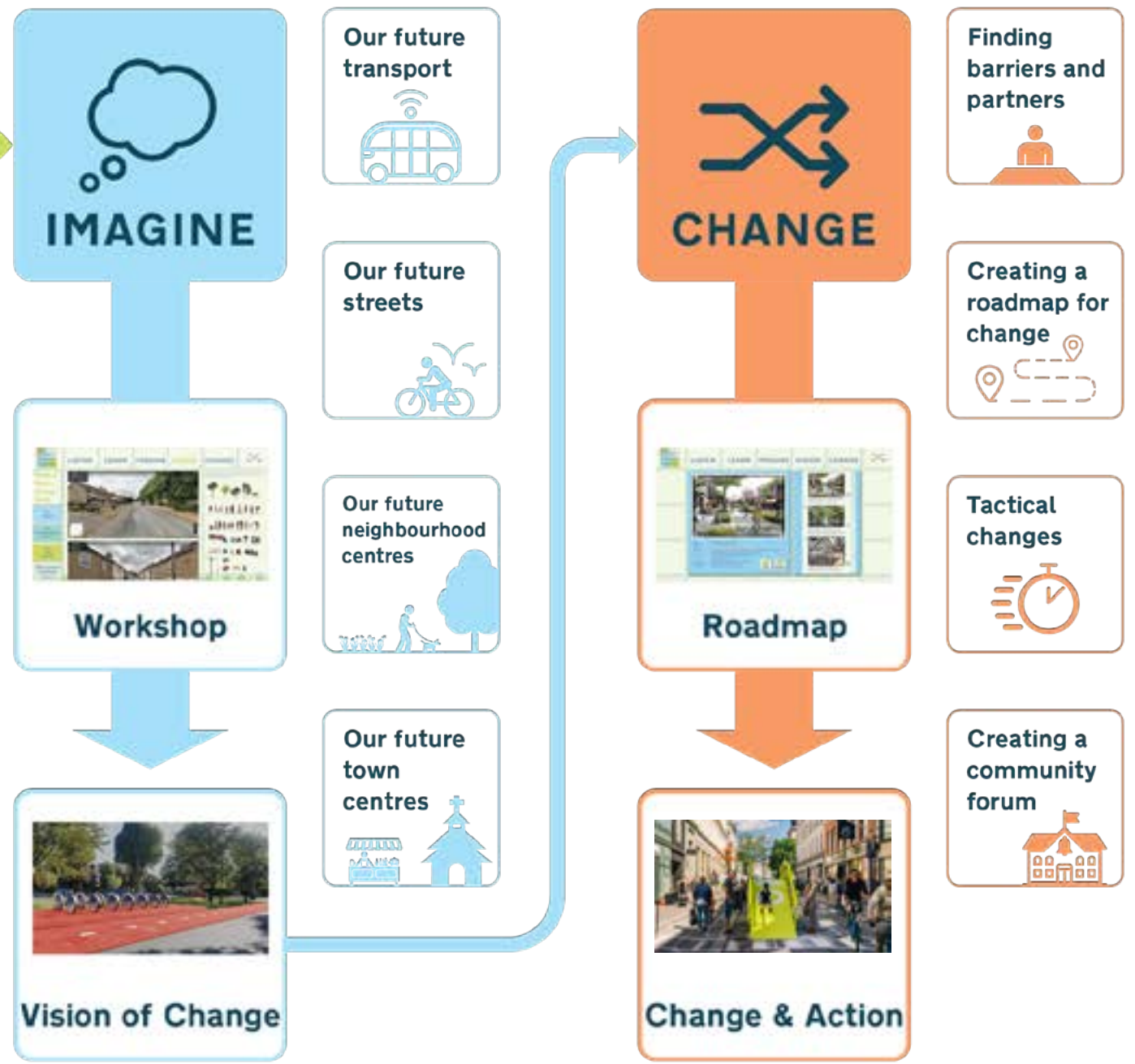
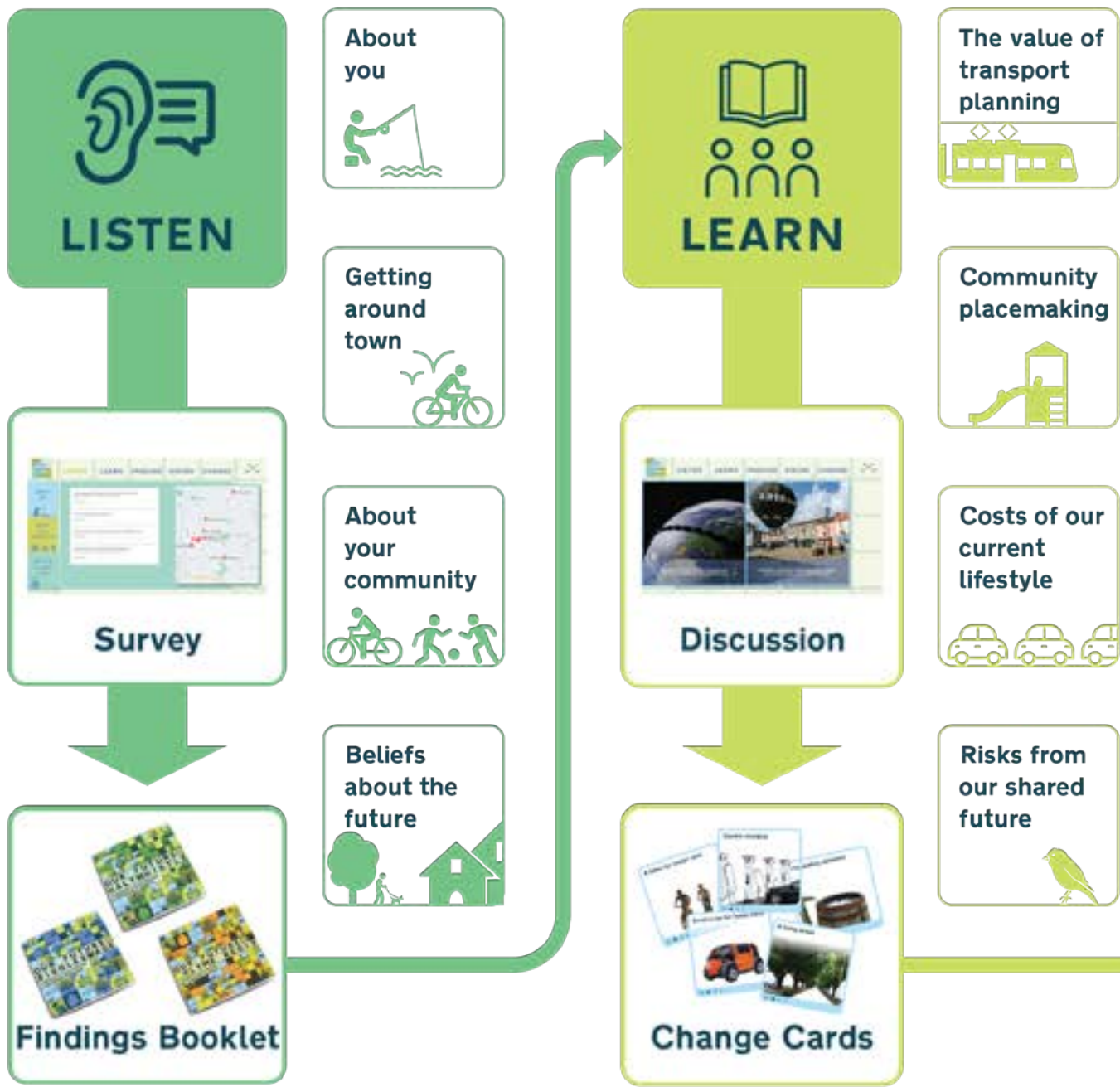
HOW 'OUR FUTURE TOWNS' WORKS

10 OUR FUTURE TOWNS is a creative and playful set of online and offline tools for community place-making and transport planning that will help communities and planners imagine their future towns together.

Inside the virtual box we share a collection of activities that help existing communities and potentially new developments to:

- 1 LISTEN TO EACH OTHER**
- 2 LEARN TOGETHER**
- 3 IMAGINE THE FUTURE**
- 4 CREATE CHANGE THAT MATTERS**





THE COMMUNITIES WE WORKED WITH

14 To support the development of this approach we worked with community leaders from three towns across England - Biggleswade in Bedfordshire, Haltwhistle in Northumberland and Lyme Regis in Dorset. Each town had its own particular issues and the aspirations of each community leader can be seen below.



COMMUNITY LEADER ASPIRATIONS

16



Julie Gibbon
Chair of Haltwhistle community Partnership

A place to live, work and visit that provides, in a sustainable way, fair and equitable access for all to transport, energy, food, goods, services, employment, health, housing, education and the environment.

We need innovative ideas and collaboration.

We need to raise awareness and engage our communities, businesses and public bodies and change mindsets to think of social, health, happiness and well-being outcomes as being the profit, whilst also covering costs that include paying staff and not just relying on volunteers.



Madeline Russell
Mayor of Biggleswade

A town that thrives by moving into the 21st century

Building on its history as a market town and important for its surrounding countryside

A solution to East/West connectivity in the town without needing cars.

We have had a study done by David Edwards of Place Shape and this is the issue which he highlights. We have great connectivity north/south with the railway and the A1.



Belinda Bawden
Green Party Town Councillor, Lyme Regis

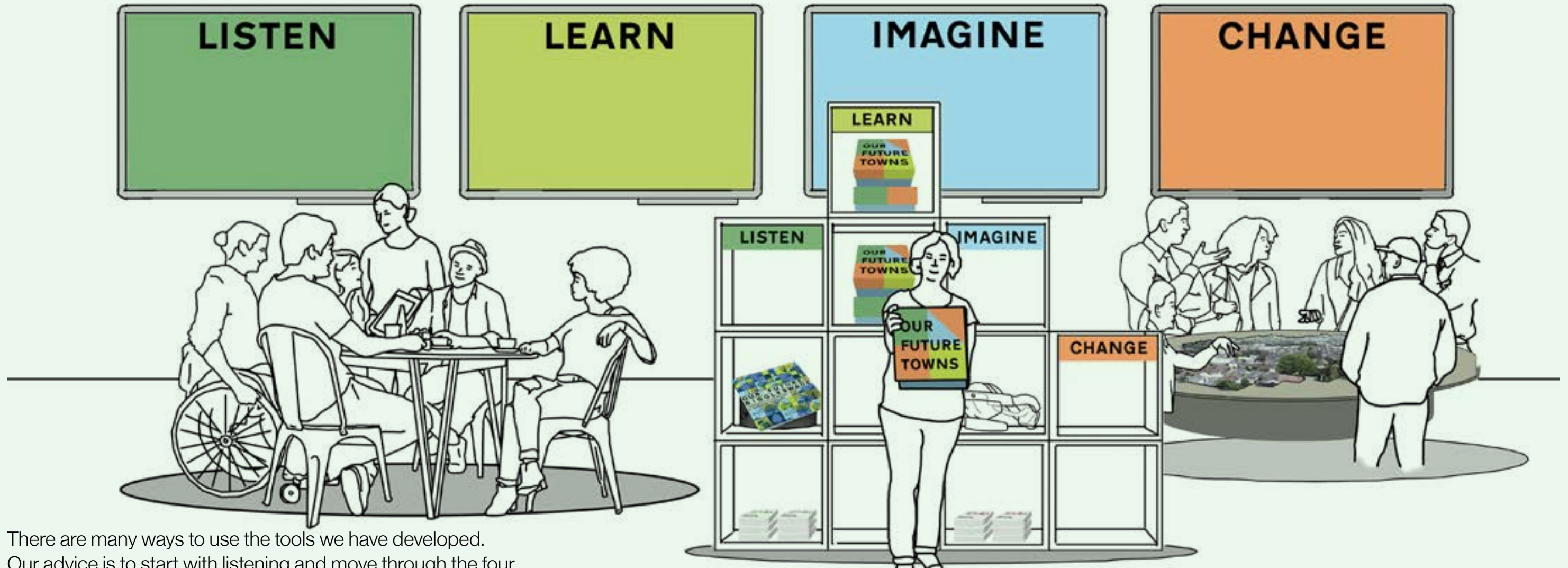
Much more community engagement across the board.

We'd love ideas on shared purposes and common goals. We'd like healthier ways of living with much less dependence on seasonal jobs with low wages and no security; much less traffic in the town centre and more manageable visitor volumes.

How can we suggest creative solutions which will be seriously considered by stakeholders and decision-makers? Is community support the key to unlock the barriers to new ways of tackling the changes needed to improve the life chances for our residents?

17

GUIDE OVERVIEW



There are many ways to use the tools we have developed. Our advice is to start with listening and move through the four stages as a community and practitioners together.

[◀ Back to contents](#)

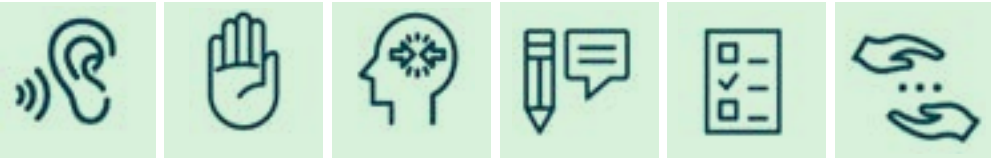
LISTEN

[◀ Back to contents](#)



LISTENING TO EACH OTHER

Before we can make any change in a community, we are best off listening to as many people as possible. Not just those who have become leaders and those with resources but everyone - from young and old, rich and poor, people who give a helping hand and people who need a helping hand too. We start by asking people to be thoughtful and creative; to think about everyone's well-being in the future and to help your community become healthier, more vibrant, inclusive and resilient. People can answer as much or as little as they'd like, but the more we can share, the more we will be able to learn together. From a 'systemic perspective' we use the listening phase to not only understand people's practical concerns but also, and as importantly, their philosophy and feelings about their community and the wider world.



Pay attention Withhold judgement Reflect Clarify Summarise Share



A LITTLE ABOUT YOU



ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY



GETTING AROUND TOWN



BELIEFS ABOUT THE FUTURE

A LITTLE ABOUT YOU

Tell us a little about you, for example, what you do and enjoy, what frustrates you and what you hope for in the future

What do you value?

This could be in yourself, in other people or about your town

I



NEXT >

Which of these terms are relevant to you?

Choose as many as you'd like

- ☐ Apprentice / Learner / Student
- ☐ Artist / Design / Craft / Creative / Dancer / Musician



NEXT >

What skills would you offer to help create a better town together?

Work related, hobbies or interests

I



NEXT >

Is there anything about where you live that is stopping you from achieving your hopes and ambitions?

I



NEXT >

Examples

ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY

Where you live and places you love

How long have you lived here?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1 to 9 years
- ☐ 10 to 19 years
- ☐ 20 or more years
- ☐ All of my life



NEXT >

What do you love about where you live?

E.g. a special place in town or people and organisations that make it special

I



NEXT >

What drives you nuts about where you live?

E.g. a place that needs improving or things that don't work well.

I



NEXT >

Tell us about another town or city that you love

E.g. a place you visit on holidays or somewhere that you enjoy walking around on a weekend.

I



NEXT >

Examples

< Back to contents

GETTING AROUND TOWN

How you get around and what makes you smile

What do you value?

This could be in yourself, in other people or about your town

I



NEXT >

Which of these ways of getting around are important to you?

- ☐ Bus / train travel
- ☐ Cycling / scooting
- ☐ Driving
- ☐ Mobility scooter / wheelchair
- ☐ Motorbiking



NEXT >

Tell us about a journey or everyday experience where you live that makes you smile

I



NEXT >

Tell us about a journey or everyday experience that needs improving

I



NEXT >

BELIEFS ABOUT THE FUTURE

Have a think about the future of your town

During lock down, what did you discover about your town that made you feel positive about the future?

I



NEXT >

Describe your ideal future town in a few words

This could include words, images, sounds and feelings

I



NEXT >

Which of these issues worry you?

- ☐ Political differences
- ☐ Environmental issues like climate change
- ☐ Social issues like illness and isolation
- ☐ How technology is affecting your life



NEXT >

Is there anything about where you live that is stopping you from achieving your hopes and ambitions?

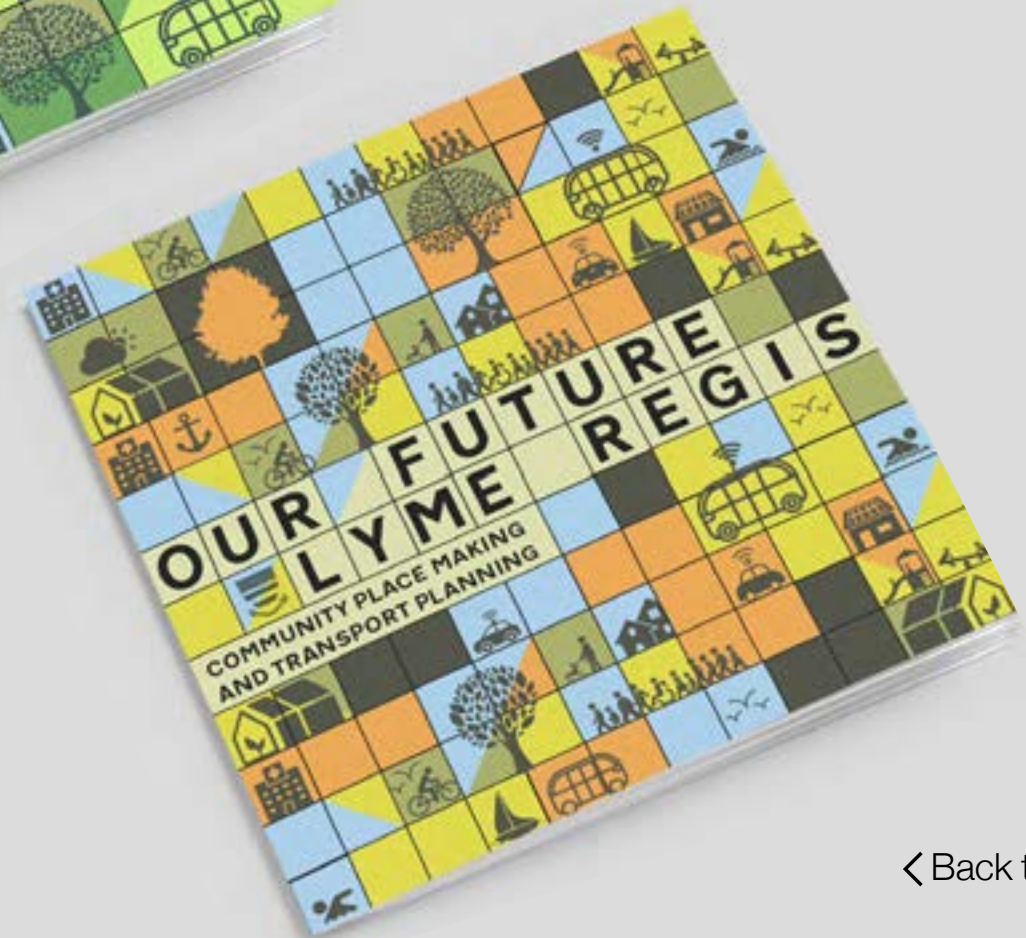
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NEXT >

OUR FINDINGS SO FAR

We use the findings from this listening phase to create a sketch portrait of your town and the things that matter to your community and share this back as a booklet containing maps, diagrams, facts and even poetry.

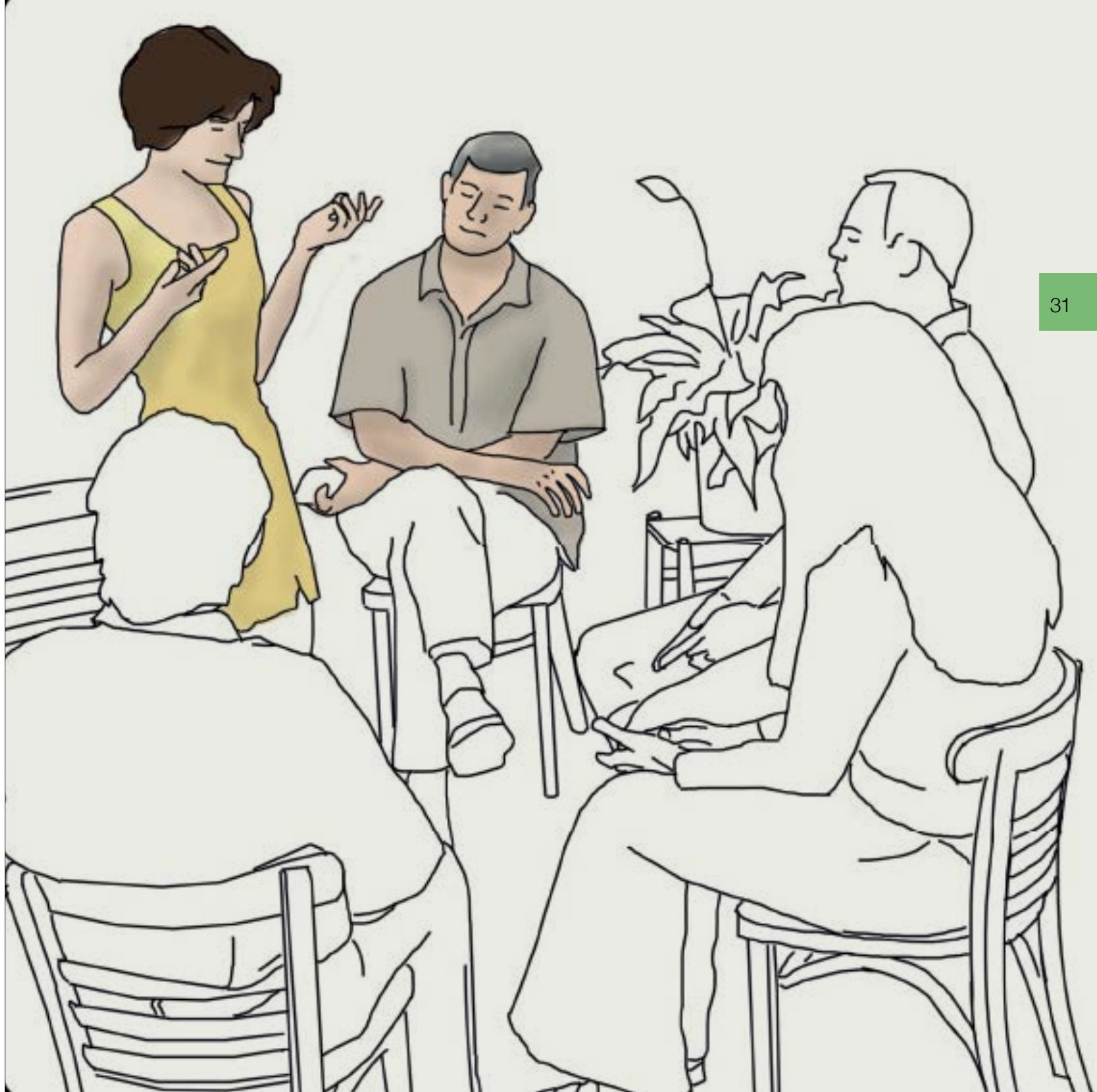


A LITTLE ABOUT US

This contains a description of the contributors so far, what people value, their secret skills and their ambitions for their town and community as well as some of the barriers to making change happen. People share what they love about where they live and what drives them nuts too.

The following pages show our findings from Haltwhistle but you can download the initial findings for all three towns below:

- [BIGGLESWADE](#)
- [HALTWHISTLE](#)
- [LYME REGIS](#)



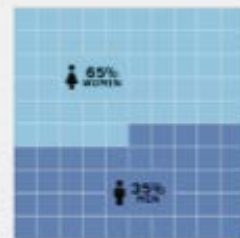
WHO ARE WE?

“ We are parents, creatives and healthcare professionals. We work for local businesses and may be retired, some of us are artists and some are crafters. We are students, apprentices and providers. Some like to teach and some are dancers. We're musicians, carers and scientists. A few of us are makers, menders and farmers...

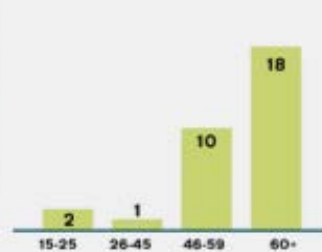
How about you?

We moved for the surrounding countryside and to be close to family, we grew up here and discovered that we loved the quiet, slower pace of village life. We wanted somewhere with connections to work or needed somewhere affordable, we came to teach and enjoyed the tight-knit community.

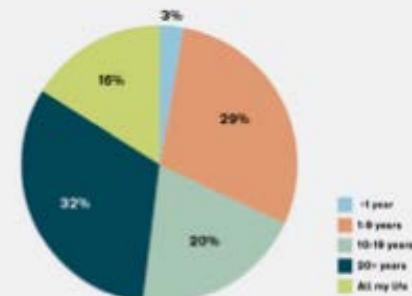
IDENTITY



AGE GROUP



YEARS OF SETTLEMENT



We value honesty and community, loyalty and integrity, our health, our family and our friends. We value the environment and countryside; nature, history, contribution and connection.

We treat everyone with care and respect, we value inclusivity and listen to our community. Some of us are Christian and some of us value the future, to keep climate change in check. We value kindness and empathy, we value time and space in nature and want to walk our dogs everywhere!

We are nestled in countryside and we praise the independent shops we have, but our health is important too. We love the friendliness of our neighbours from Greenshead to Haydon Bridge and the hub of travel and activity we could offer . We value self-sufficiency and want engagement with newcomers and tourists. Haltwhistle exists! We are not closed!

SOME OF OUR SECRET SKILLS

“

→ We have practical local knowledge and know our area, we organise teams in the community and work with enthusiasm. We're interested in community, engagement, connection and the economy of the town; we can manage projects and are experienced fund-raisers.

→ We want to stop spending money outside of the community's interest, we are creators; crafters of garments, accessories, shoes and toys. We have networks in farming and access to natural materials in fleece, wool, textiles. We're practised coffee brewers and hospitality is our middle name. We're gardeners and believe in voicing small changes, using our hands and getting stuck in with a 'can do' attitude.

WHERE WE LIVE

What are your hopes and ambitions for your community?

→ A stronger local economy led by our small businesses and regional green networks. We want to provide employment opportunities for younger generations, with local authority that respects us as much as we respect each other, through realising the value of Haltwhistle. We want new models that ensure the sustainability of local business in environment and economy.

→ Better transport links with our Parish neighbours and nationally from Carlisle to Newcastle. Accessible, inclusive and convenient travel options that are as flexible as our cars. We came here for the countryside and won't forget the rural lifestyles we live, but we need good, green connections that are integrated with the community and surrounding towns.

→ More cultural events in town; art galleries, restaurants, a theatre, wellness centre, adult education, support for independent shops, ultimately new ways of thinking. To foster social cohesion and respect between cliques in town.

”

“ → Recognition on the map as the welcoming community we are. Attractive to young families, eco-tourists and new ways of thinking to mix with our historic town. More integration, social cohesion and public respect, less antisocial behaviour, binge drinking and joblessness. Policing schemes for local enforcement and a feeling of security to make people proud to come to Halty, not pushed to the edge of the county.

→ Let's focus on new developments that centre around community and build our economy! We need to continue to share but think of the younger and quieter groups in the community also. We need to be accepting of tourists and the value they bring, and hopeful of the new demographics and ways of thinking that will follow. We need to create affordable and convenient buses and train lines to reduce congestion. That means prioritising our space for community and public space, rather than one car each. That means sustainable energy networks and more green business to attract respectful eco-tourism. ”

What challenges and problems do you want your community to overcome?

Social and Economic Development

- "tourists play a great part in the town"
- "more employment prospects"
- "busier town"
- "younger community members leave"
- "only embraces a limited range of residents"

National and Local Aspiration

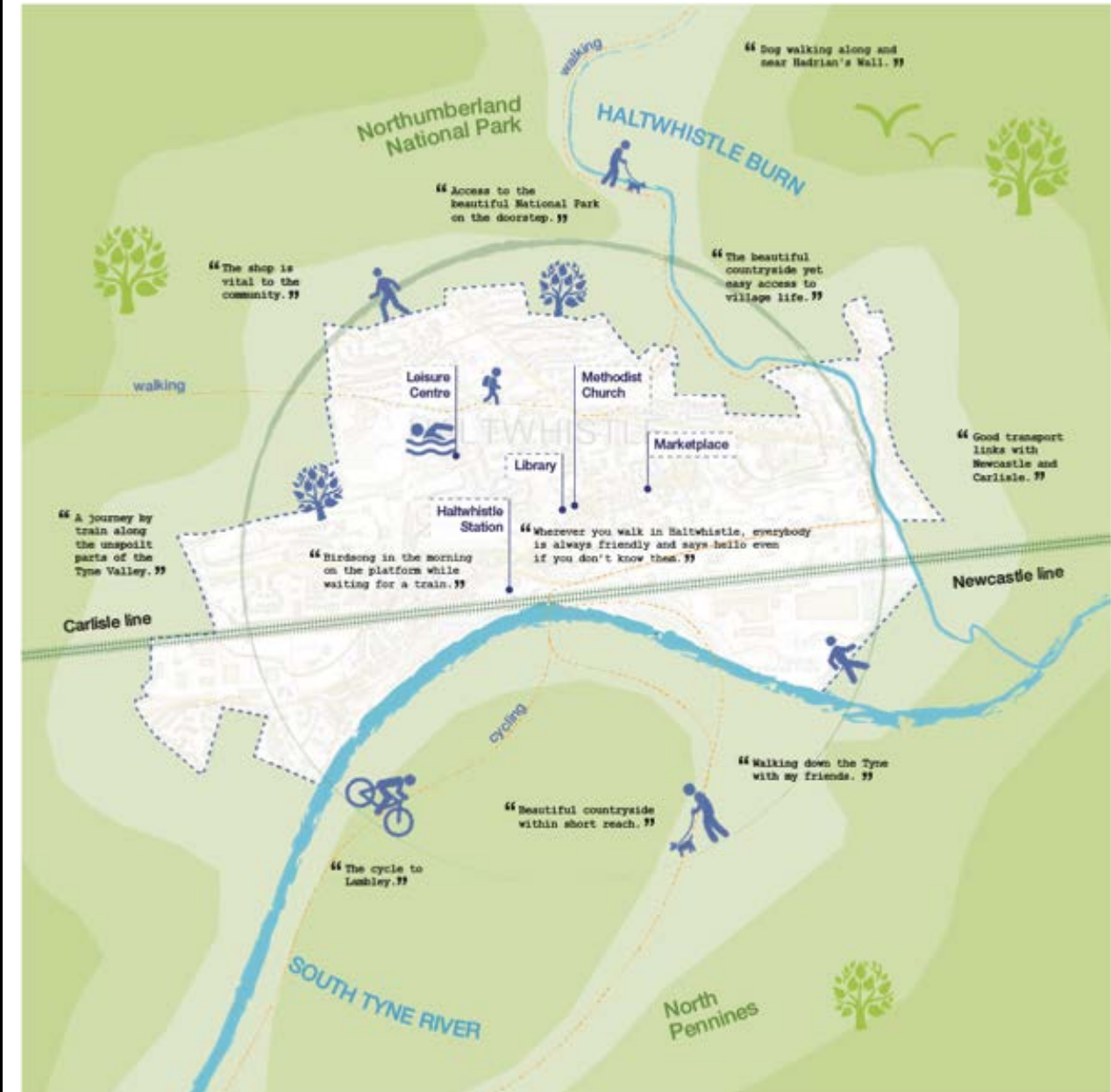
- "feeling ignored by central government"
- "completely overlooked"
- "the town needs to fight for recognition"
- "too many people have a poor idea of Haltwhistle"

Any barriers?

We need more two-way conversation with local and national authority that leads to practical action. We need coordinated integration of our social conscience with economic return and environmental care. We don't want to rely on cars that take over our town, but we need accessible bus routes and frequent train services to achieve this! We need new developments to feed back value to the community. And if that isn't enough let's re-imagine education for all and make the countryside even more accessible for visitors!

What do you
love about
where you live?

The beautiful countryside. 🌿 The village life. The countryside with town access. The local shopping. 🛒 The shop is vital to the community. Open countryside. Open space. The landscape and wildlife. 🌳 Countryside and fair transport links with Newcastle and Carlisle. The beautiful national park on the doorstep. 🏞️ The good transport links for non-drivers. 🚗 The beautiful countryside within short reach. Views. Community. Neighbours. Friendly people. 👥 The warm community. I know lots of people here so I feel part of it. We are friendly, respectful and helpful. Warm and welcoming people. The surrounding parish communities. Easy access to the shops Train station. 🚂 A good bus service. 🚌 Great place to bring up children 🧒 before they move away. The calmer pace of life. Lots to get involved in but if you want to keep yourself to yourself then you can. Access to many wonderful areas. the quiet life. The town is peaceful. Town has great pubs. 🍺 The surrounding countryside 🌿 is good for the soul. I love living in a village. Neighbourliness and community spirit. Accessibility to medical care. 🏥 Almost all required shopping can be locally obtained. Community spirit. Individuals come forward to help others. We are quick to pull together in a crisis. We are willing to engage online. We volunteer to help the vulnerable.



ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY

In this section, communities share knowledge about places they love and places that need improving as well as suggestions about other towns that they love. Often these favourite towns have physical qualities and elements of infrastructure and transport planning that promote walking and create a vibrant sense of community.

Each community has its own favourite places based both on the experience of those who live there and on the proximity and relationship that these towns have with the community itself. These places can provide great source material to inspire place-based, street and mobility design choices and can form feedstock for site visits, potential local partnerships and ideas to include in later stages of design development.



SPECIAL PUBLIC PLACES



- We love the open countryside, with easy access to the landscapes and wildlife that surround town. We enjoy the National Park from the Burn and dog walks along the South Tyne. The fresh air and views of fells that are good for the soul.
- We enjoy the quieter pace of village life. Living close to the shop at the centre of town and the Leisure Centre for the kids. Our family lives nearby in Gilsland and Brampton, our children go to school in Haydon Bridge. We love that our community is all around us.
- We go to the coffee mornings every week at the Methodist Church to raise money for local groups, which you have to book weeks in advance! We go to Young & Sweet at Hillside and take part in the social culture. We like it when everything's in walking distance.
- The main street is the centre of town, with Our annual Haltwhistle Carnival bringing everyone together for a bit of fun. Our marketplace is a space for everyone with our independent shops, cafés and pubs.

Tell us about a public place in your town that needs improving

- The main streets need more shops and restaurants, nice places to eat and more options for residents, young and old. The Riding Mill village shop shut several years ago and local residents set up a community cafe but we need more options for social hubs.
- We need more things for young people to do, we don't just want cafes and pubs! We want a vibrant town centre without dog waste and litter in the streets. We want to have options of where to spend time in town with friends.
- We're worried about the abandoned places around town; the scrub land by the river, disused train tracks, Hadrian Park and the old cast mine on the edge of town. These should be used for the community's benefit!
- We need more cultural events in the town centre, with social spaces that encourage learning, activity and a relaxed atmosphere.
- We need to restructure the way we position our cars in town, frequent parking on double yellow lines and taking up so much space that could be used for cycle routes to Greenhead and Haydon Bridge.

Tell us anything else that you think is important to know about your town and its people

- We have a prime position between the National Park and North Pennines, between Newcastle and Carlisle, between our neighbours in villages from Gilsland to Haydon Bridge, from Haydon Parish to Upper Denton. We have an opportunity to be a hub for our surroundings!
- Our younger people are growing up with fewer and fewer job opportunities locally, but there aren't sufficient transport links to commute. We need to shift our focus towards young families and make it attractive as a place to live and bring up children!
- Everyone knows each other, news travels faster than you would believe and if we hold onto the cliquey groups we currently have there will only be more separation. We are great at helping each other but we need to work harder to integrate our communities into one harmonious place that can agree on big projects for change. ”



Tell us another
city or town that
you love

Bridport
Bath
Salisbury
Hexham
Edinburgh
Ely
Bristol
Bambrough
Whitby
Filey
Hawes
Leyburn
Newcastle
Blackpool
Scarborough
York
Chester
Durham
Stroud
Poole
Keswick



Findings from Haltwhistle



[Back to contents](#)

GETTING AROUND TOWN

In ‘getting around’ we see which forms of transport people use regularly and why they value them. We hear about the journeys that make people smile and the experiences that need improving. While driving is a key part of town life it is often valued no more than public transport and walking and it rarely makes people smile.

People highlight the opportunities to improve public transport links and to make active travel easier and safer while complaining about the problems of car-based transport in terms of poor behaviours, traffic jams, pollution and noise as well as the cost and perceived lack of parking.



VALUE OF TRANSPORT



EVERYDAY JOURNEYS THAT MAKE US SMILE

“ → Walking makes us smile, whatever form it takes! Getting out into nature and finding a clear view down the valley. Seeing the fells, hearing birdsong and seeing lambs for the first time in spring.

→ We walk our dogs down to the South Tyne River and up near Hadrian's Wall, smiling at the families and other walkers along the way. When you pass back through the town wherever you are in Haltwhistle, everybody is always friendly and speaks even if you don't know them. ”

“ → Travelling to and from the paths to Hexham, Beltingham and our other countryside neighbours. Along the Stanegate, up the Burn and on the unspoilt parts of the train route through the Tyne Valley.

Tell us about a journey or everyday experience that needs improving

→ Getting east to Haydon Bridge and west to Greenhead. There's no incentive for efficient active transport to our neighbouring towns. We need more protection for cyclists, separation from cars and places to lock up when you get there!

→ The train service needs serious attention; more lines to and from Newcastle and later into the weekend so we can get back from the theatre. The old carriages need updating and we need to nudge people away from disorderly behaviour in-journey, fuelled by booze from parties or match days.

→ The buses are irregular and unreliable, with roads filled with cars, potholes and poor surface quality. The tight corners sometimes make poor bus drivers have to back up down small streets!

→ The A69 trunk road needs improvement from Hexham to Carlisle, too much traffic on and off the single carriageway with no one way systems to control flows of vehicles.

→ We need cleaner waiting areas on platforms for Haltwhistle Station, to make it more of a social hub to discourage antisocial behaviour. ”



BELIEFS ABOUT THE FUTURE

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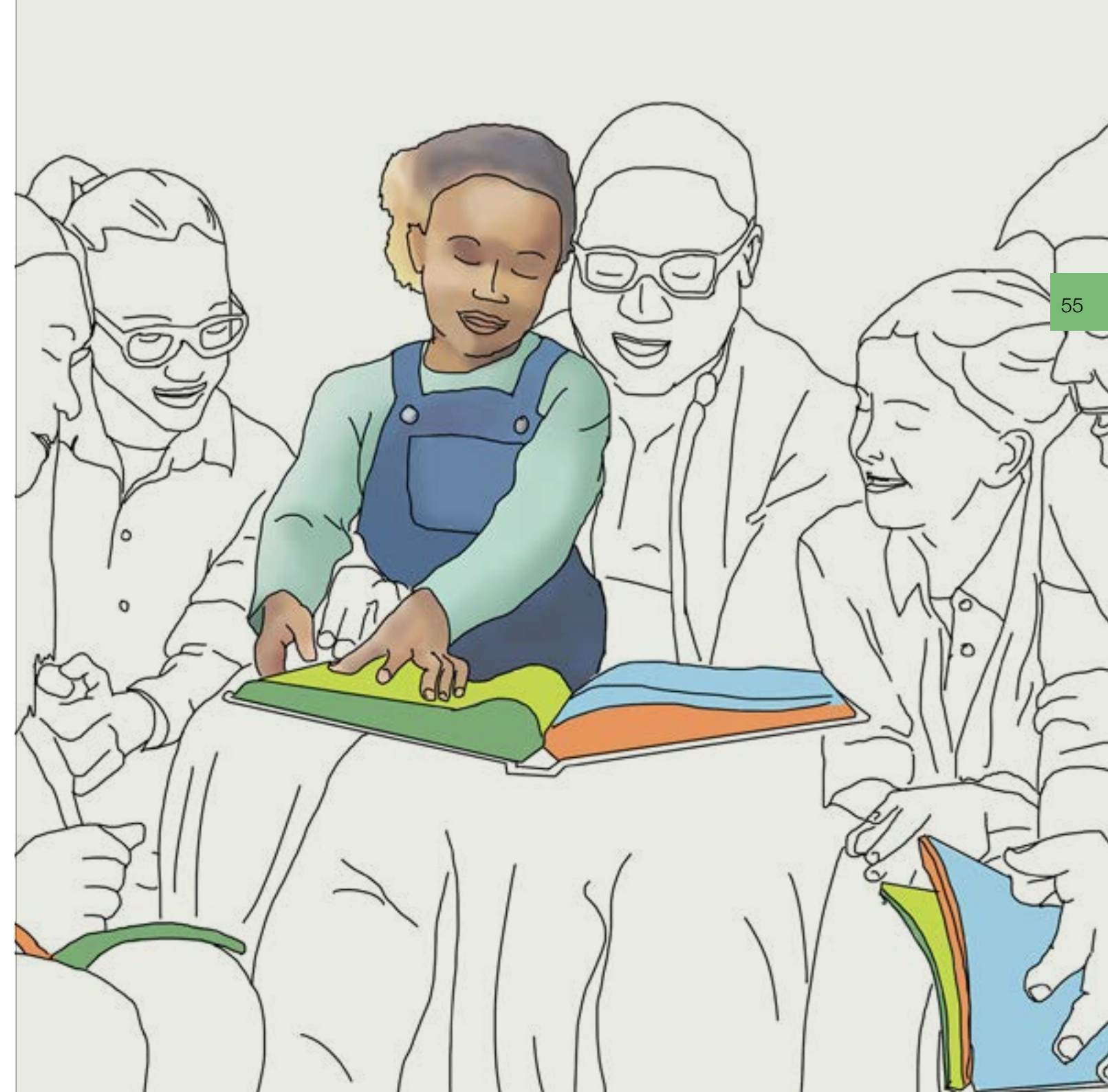
In this final section of our learning activity we listened to people's feelings and beliefs about the future - both things that make them optimistic and things that worry and concern them. Most of the responses showed that 'helping each other' lies at the heart of community optimism and the lack of concern for the needs of others - the elderly who may be vulnerable and the young who's futures are at risk - form the kernel of pessimism about the future.

This collective wisdom also shows that issues around economic inequality, the environment and social isolation were considered important issues that need to be addressed, while political differences and the impact of technology were either less of a barrier to the majority or potentially of value.

We used this section to highlight what a future town might include and created some key diagrams illustrating larger infrastructure opportunities.

[◀ Back to contents](#)

55



LOCKDOWN OPTIMISM

“ → During lockdown we helped each other! We pulled together and assisted in deliveries, groups helped other groups, individuals pitched in what they could, The C19 Voluntary Response Group was formed, which we hope will continue in the future for other voluntary efforts. The town really got involved to help in a time of crisis.

→ People were even more friendly which kept in our minds what we continue to love about Haltwhistle – the people.

→ We weren't short of space! There was enough room to exercise freely and still get into nature on the doorstep.

”

LOCKDOWN CONCERNS

“ → We're so concerned about the falling economy and the survival of our small businesses in and around town. So many tried to help with deliveries etc.

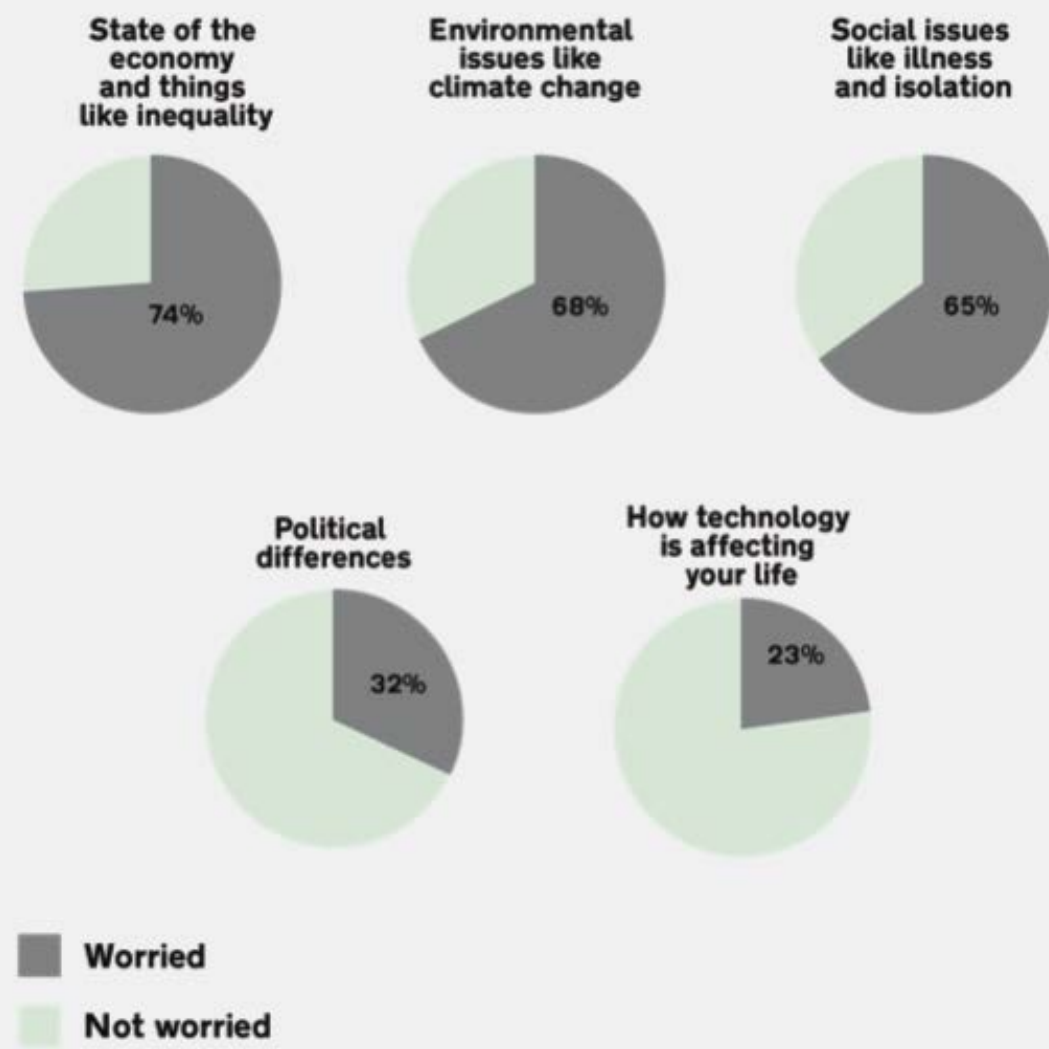
→ The emergency funds have been used so will there be support from local government and Councils? Requests were falling on deaf ears before so who will we count on in the years to come?

→ We fear for the health of our elderly and vulnerable population, that the uncertainty of the virus makes for very risky times and life only becoming much harder from now on.

→ Our education was all online so qualifications were a real worry! Whether we can get the focus we need to make a place at College, all the while some people treating younger generations as if they're to blame.

OUR IDEAL FUTURE TOWN

- We want a vibrant place that puts the focus on the people that live here. A steady buzz of life in the centre of town and attractive to new people that respect our countryside, integrating with our community and taking part in our way of life. We want to be welcoming and open to provide a friendly and accessible environment for everyone.
 - We want more independent shops and going out options for food and theatre. A variety of amenities between our Parishes; art galleries, garden centres, cafés, social centres and a prioritised library. We need sociable areas that discourage poor behaviour and nudge people to take part in community activities.
 - We want to be a walkable town, taking space back from parked cars and pedestrianising our main streets for events in town. Frequent, flexible links from Bampton to Hexham with routes that encourage an active lifestyle.
 - We want bus routes across Greenhead to Bardon Mill to not to cost the earth. We need a regular, revitalised train service between Carlisle and Newcastle that makes for a
- ”

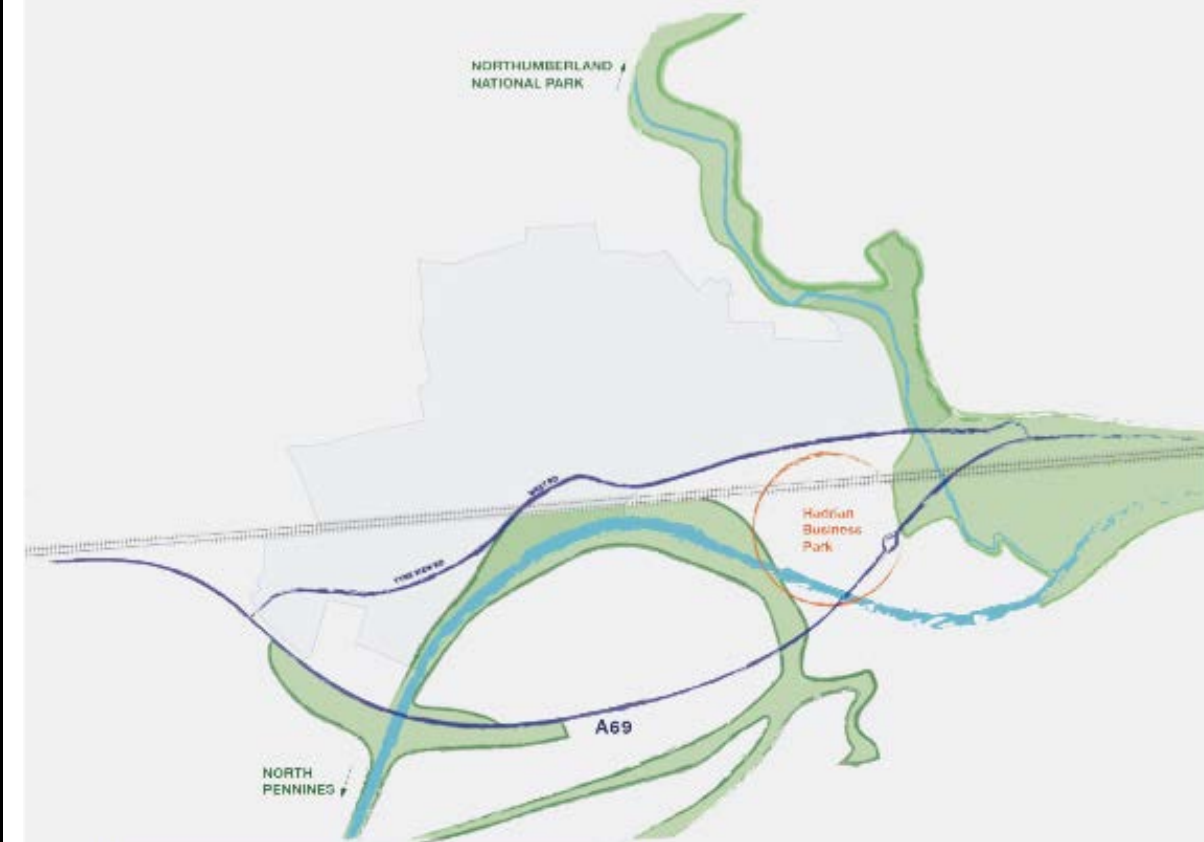


“

scenic and relaxed experience. We need a school bus to get to College in time for class and a flexible service for Zigzag days.

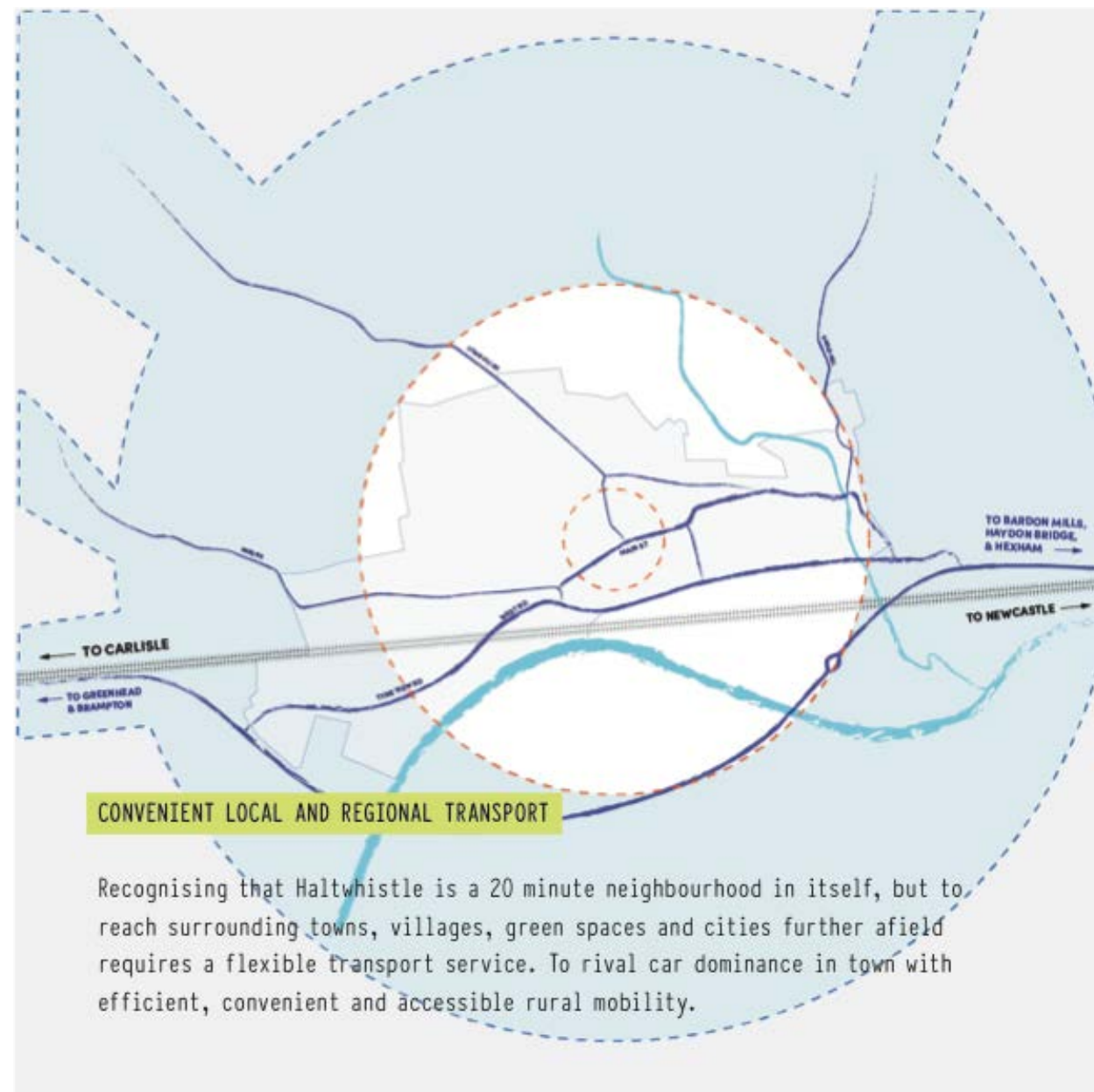
- We want to be an inclusive and welcoming space for people visiting and moving in. We are proud of our walking routes and want to show them off from a beautiful, interesting hub with the National Park on the doorstep.
- We want to be less reliant on our towns next door, be more self-sufficient and use local green energy in respect of our environment! We want local produce to fuel our small businesses in town, to not have to drive to the theatre!
- We want to be more spacious, to bring the green into the centre of town, to provide co-operative spaces that can be shared by young and old.

”



ECO-TOURISM FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Boosting eco-tourism throughout and around Haltwhistle to attract visitors with similar values to residents that respect and admire the countryside. Bringing new economic value to the connection of green routes, allowing small businesses to thrive.



What else do we know that will help us to create a better Haltwhistle together?

We need to come together as a town and imagine a better economy for everyone, not just a selected few. We need to be ready to change but keep what is good about the past. We need to be optimistic and ambitious because communities are created together! We need to break down silos - because everything is connected in the end. We need to take notice of what we do each say. We need to become a transition town! We need neighbourhood centres as well as town centres and our planners should care as much about our open space as they do about housing and development. We need to imagine the future and be prepared to debate through our differences.

UTOPIAS AND DYSTOPIAS

64

Each findings booklet ended with a key view of the town re-imagined as a future utopia or dystopia.

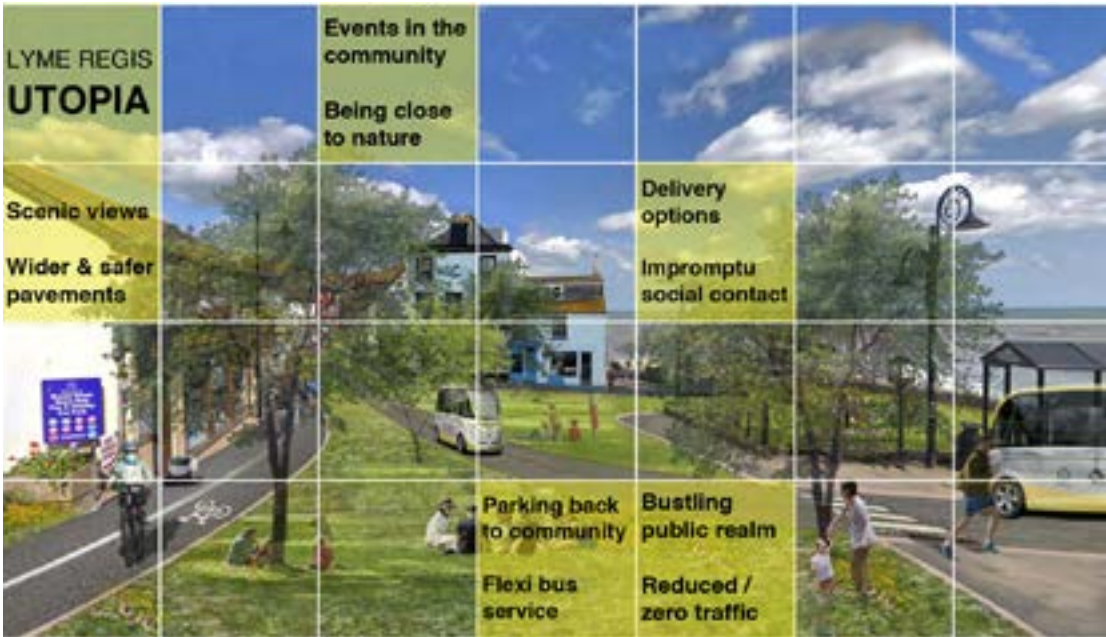
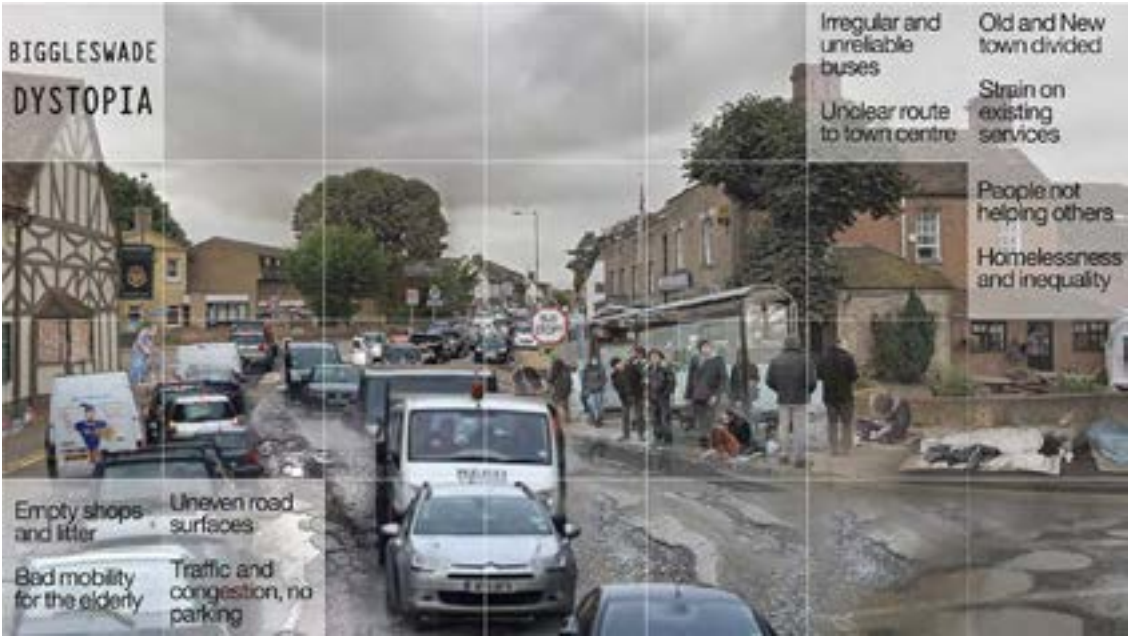
The utopian perspective included a summary of people’s ‘hopes and opportunities’ and highlighted things that people felt optimistic about when they thought about the future.

The dystopian view was based on their ‘concerns and worries’ and shows the issues that people are pessimistic about.

These images act as ‘thought containers’ that reflect possible futures back to the community and can be used to enable richer conversations about the future, ensuring that the town does not simply focus on overcoming the problems that they face but that they might embrace a positive and inclusive future.

65





REFLECTIONS ON THE LISTENING TOOLS

The aim of the listening phase was to understand the underlying philosophy and feelings of each community and to connect these to issues of place-making and transportation.

All of the communities identified the need to improve and strengthen their community centres, highlighting the diversity of places that help to form social and economic hubs for their towns. This included the surrounding countryside, the schools and leisure centres, the churches and marketplaces, the train stations and public transport hubs. They also recognised that these centres were not defined by economic value alone but by social connections and intrinsic worth.

They identified the need to connect these centres with streets and infrastructure that were pleasant places to walk and cycle along, not just a convenient route to drive through, but places that people actually want to stop in and enjoy.

They identified other towns that had retained and improved their historic centres, often providing pedestrianisation schemes to make their centres walkable, restricting cars from

key areas and providing alternative means of getting around including improved walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure.

The community leaders were pleased to see that, by asking open and thought-provoking questions, we were able to collect positive comments and suggestions but they wanted to see and hear from a more diverse set of voices including younger people. This spurred us to use social media to connect with different groups - for example, instagram and facebook - as well as making use of local newspapers.

Our findings showed that there was a gap between the aspirations of a town and the financial resources and interests of the local and county councils. All three towns (or local county councils) had declared a ‘climate emergency’ or agreed that they should tackle climate related issues, but they were not prepared or able to devote resources and public engagement to create a shared vision for radical change. The reasons for this gap between words and action included the lack of community drive, the inability of people to pull together with a common vision, the lack of public funding and the expectation that current rights and expectations around the car, for example, would remain into the future.

There were also concerns that small towns do not have the power to implement changes, either because their size reduces their ability to provide neighbourhood level support, effective walking and cycling facilities, funding for public or shared transport solutions, or because roads and highways were the responsibility of the county council, who often had different priorities.

Using social media like instagram to connect with wider audiences



As one of the community leaders said, ‘Utopia is what we need but it's impossible to achieve without a radical change of mindset’

The listening tools could also connect with established map-based community engagement platforms, provide live-feedback of major issues to support wider engagement and provide a visual interface that helps different parts of the community engage at different levels.



Biggleswade

Feedback from community leader

- › Our report is in line with the mayor's expectations
- › Good to see positive comments on town (more used to negative attitudes)
- › Already exploring / acting on a number of issues including an improved interchange at the main station, a cycle lane along London Road and changes to the town centre
- › Challenges include:
 - Poor cycling and walking legibility
 - No public money for public transport
 - The car is an expected and necessary right for everyone and there is no drive at a community level to change this.
 - Park and ride not feasible for a small town.
 - People aren't really pulling together with a common vision.
 - Town not large enough to support neighbourhood centres or better central facilities without business support

[Back to contents](#)

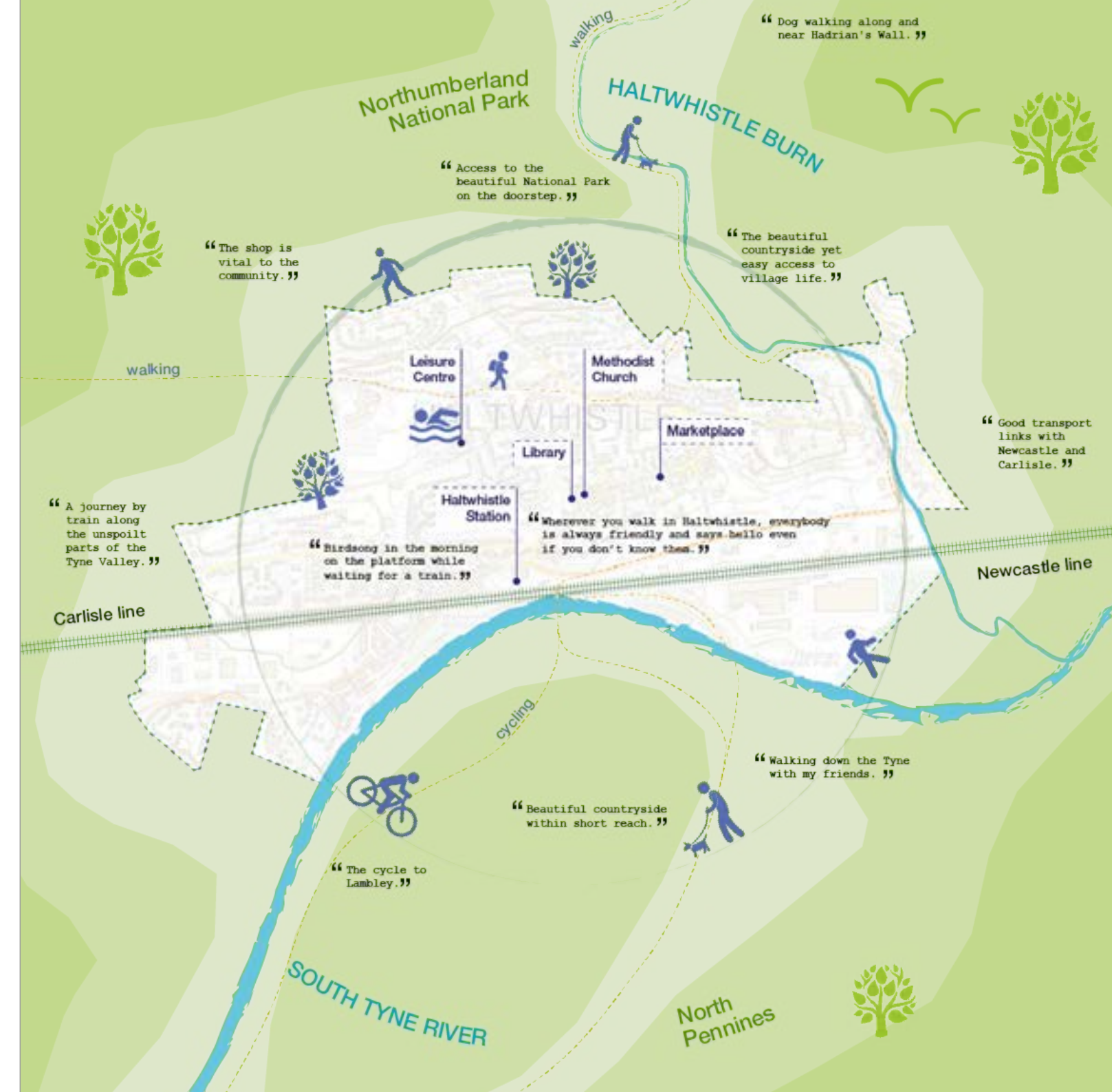


Haltwhistle

Feedback from community leader

- › Delighted to read the report
- › Would like to reach other voices
- › Difficulty of creating a vision for radical change
- › Opportunities:
 - Pedestrian friendly centre
 - Shared transport for everyone
 - A more visible walking and cycling network
 - Mobility hubs as community and logistics centres
 - Need to engage with the entrepreneurs
- › Challenges:
 - Car is the only way to get around for many journeys
 - Lack of a 'not for profit' perspective
 - Lack of holistic thinking

[Back to contents](#)



Lyme Regis

78

Feedback from community leader

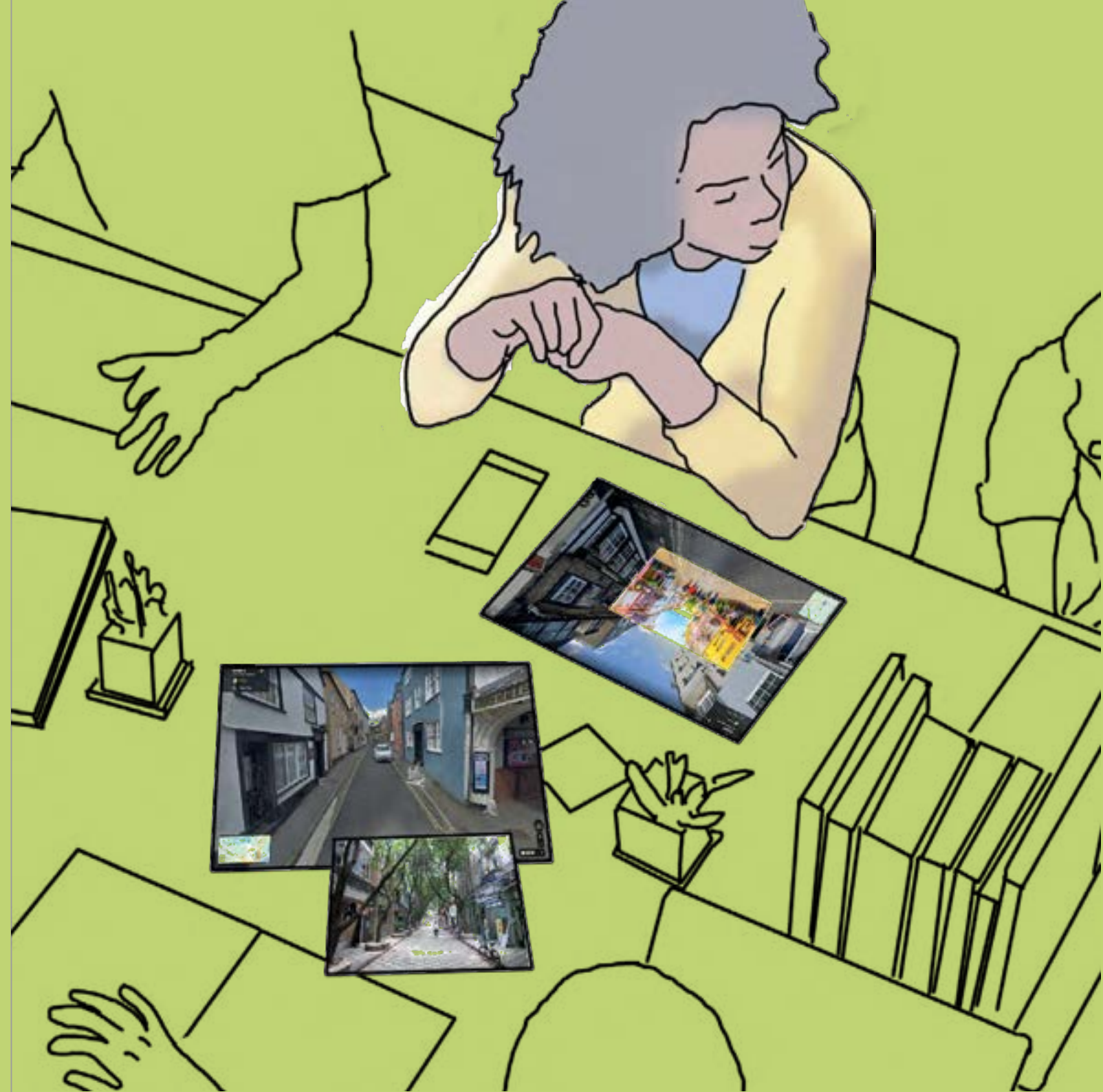
- › I love your description of who we are - poetic, positive and purposeful. Some changes in mindset might be needed to encourage different visions of possible futures.
- › Some tensions can exist:
 - locals vs tourists; locally born vs 'incomers'; old vs young
- › Geographically and socially hard to create change:
 - Hilly Terrain; Narrow roads and through traffic; Elderly Population
- › Very little local shopping (mainly caters for tourists)
- › No space to reimagine the public realm:
 - we need to work together to plan better access and services for families and the less mobile which will benefit everyone
 - Younger voice isn't always heard
 - Youth activities shut down
 - Better opportunities in larger towns
- › Opportunities for multi-generational spaces and activities, perhaps using our stunning open spaces, to bring the community together.

[← Back to contents](#)



LEARN

[◀ Back to contents](#)



LEARNING TOGETHER

82

The opportunities and challenges generated through listening to the community create a powerful picture of a town’s people and its environment, highlighting not just place-based and infrastructure challenges but also showing the social and human connections that underpin each town.

But while there is often an instinctive understanding of these issues, communities are not necessarily the ‘experts’ in either place-making or transport planning so this phase aims to provide everyone with knowledge, some new and some already known implicitly, which will help everyone to re-frame what issues need to be considered and what things we can change if we pull together.

It also aims to build a wider consensus and connections between different groups so that change can be made through shared knowledge and collaboration rather than through more competitive or reductive approaches.

KNOWLEDGE TO SHARE

83

When we think about our public realm and how we get around we can immediately go straight to the solutions and forget that for many of us, these solutions look like they were invented by somebody else rather than developed collaboratively. To help move towards a shared mindset we wanted to explain some of the benefits of sustainable place-making and transport - healthy and vibrant communities - as well as some of the costs of our current behaviour - isolation, pollution and reliance on costly infrastructure - as well as risks from our common futures such as the climate crisis, environmental risks and technical redundancy.

These ‘knowledge cards’ give everyone in our town a little knowledge about the benefits of community place-making and the costs and challenges if we don’t make changes. At a simple level, we ask ‘What do you think and feel about them and how could we make them more relevant to our future?’



VALUE OF COMMUNITY PLACE MAKING

- › The value of making decisions together
- › The value of neighbourhood centres
- › The value of great town centres
- › The value of green routes
- › The value of circular communities
- › The value of inclusion



VALUE OF SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

- › The value of sharing mobility
- › The value of cycling
- › The value of electric mobility
- › The value of public transport
- › The value of walking



COST OF OUR CURRENT LIFESTYLE

- › The cost of pollution
- › The cost of isolation
- › The cost of our roads
- › The cost of our cars
- › The cost of poor town centres
- › The cost of poor neighbourhoods



RISKS FROM OUR COMMON FUTURE

- › The cost of hotter summers
- › The cost of wetter weather
- › The cost of rising seas
- › The cost of inequality
- › Global impacts of climate change

LEARNING ABOUT... THE VALUE OF COMMUNITY PLACE- MAKING

86

Community place-making starts with people talking about the place they live together. There is evidence that making decisions together, in an inclusive way, leads to better decisions, better relationships and a higher likelihood of delivering the changes that people have agreed on.

This set of knowledge also identifies the benefits of strong town centres - often marked by a high quality public realm, diverse services, good public transport and walkable streets that are connected to neighbourhood centres through a legible network that joins residential streets to active green spaces.

'We want a vibrant town centre without clutter in the streets, railings, traffic, litter.' Biggleswade Residents

[◀ Back to contents](#)



It also shows the value of re-imagining the humble post office, village pub, corner shop and, as yet, undeveloped patch of green space. How might we put as much emphasis on the network of neighbourhood centres as we do on the town centre itself and how can this ‘network of centres’ create a local richness and diversity that encourages activities and new connections?

‘We want to be more spacious, to bring the green into the centre of town, to provide co-operative spaces that can be shared by young and old.’ Haltwhistle Residents

One way to support this network of smaller centres is to build green and legible routes that encourage everyone in a town to explore the diversity of their town rather than feel restricted to their local streets or a single town centre. Developing these routes to support active mobility builds on the pleasure of walking that many people value despite the lack of coherent investment.

The Value of Making Decisions Together



Involving the community in decision-making leads to public understanding of the initial problem, with longer lasting democratic solutions that are likely to directly impact the community involved.

Add suggestions:

I

The Value of Neighbourhood Centres



Centres act as a focal point for an area, reducing isolation and improving local aspiration within towns.

Add suggestions:

I

The Value of Green Routes



Time spent in nature and green settings improves focus and wellbeing, and even helps with attention deficit disorder in children and adults.

Add suggestions:

I

The Value of Circular Communities



Using circular models for products and services creates a closed loop that designs out waste and pollution, keeps materials in use, regenerates nature and keeps money in your community too.

Add suggestions:

I

The Value of Great Town Centres



Pedestrian zones in town centres have boosted foot traffic by 20 to 40%, retail sales by 10 to 25% and property values by nearly one-third after traffic calming measures were installed.

Add suggestions:

The Value of Inclusion



Searching for isolated voices in your community combats loneliness and social divide, improving collective empathy and understanding.

Add suggestions:

I

LEARNING ABOUT...

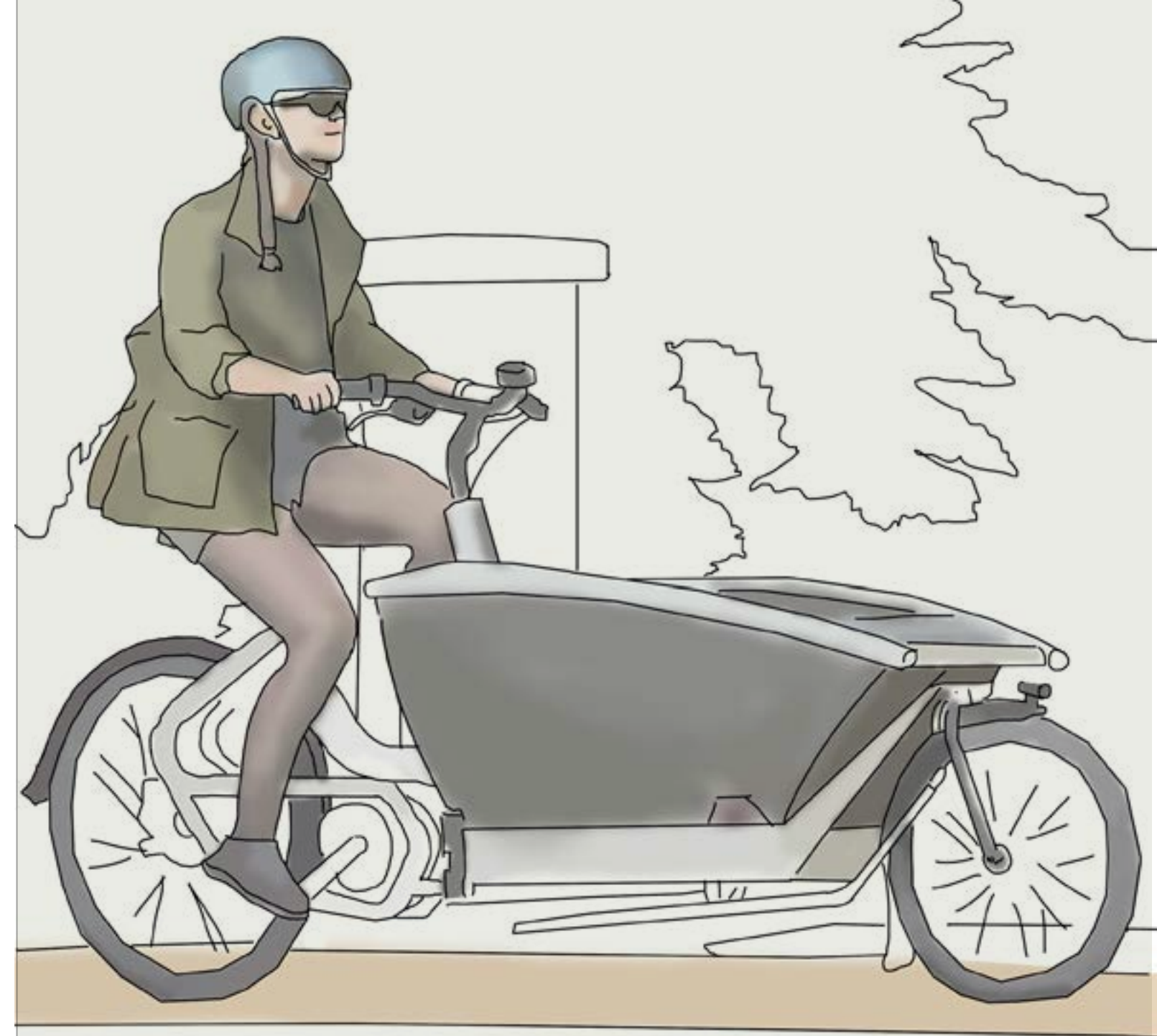
THE VALUE OF SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

92

Sustainable transport can't exist in isolation from community place-making and many of the key features of more active and effective travel can only happen if our towns are vibrant places to live.

The most valuable forms of sustainable transport are those that help to keep us healthy and active including being able to walk to visit our friends, to pick up everyday needs from the local shops or simply to enjoy the pleasures of a stroll to the park or to the town centre. But this will only happen if the routes and connections are safe and attractive and if our community values and makes use of local neighbourhood centres.

While many people in rural or town settings value independent and personal mobility (often in the form of a private car), sharing mobility is actually more widespread than often thought.



In the towns that we worked with between 15 and 25% of households do not own a car and many young people, families and older residents rely on informal car sharing to get to school, to work or out and about. Formalising car-sharing through peer to peer or car club services has the potential to increase car free households significantly and provide significant benefits in social interactions and inclusion, economic savings for individuals and the community at large, better land use as well as significant long term environmental improvements.

Cycling infrastructure may not be the immediate concern for small towns and rural communities, with only 1.5 % of journeys being made on a bike in the UK. But even though it currently represents a small percentage of journeys, cycling is valued by 20% of people in our towns and regularly mentioned as a way of getting around that makes people happy or causes frustration because of poor and unsafe cycling provision.

‘There’s no incentive for efficient active transport to our neighbouring towns. We need more protection for cyclists, separation from cars and places to lock up when you get there!’ – Haltwhistle Residents

And while electric cars are becoming more common in our cities, many people worry about ‘driving range anxiety’ and misconceptions around charging and maintenance continue. While electric cars alone are not the solution to our future towns, they will play an important role. Government would do well to follow the lead of countries like Norway to ensure the incentives and infrastructure is in place to encourage adoption and take older and more polluting technology off the road.

Public transport ranks close to private vehicles when it comes to transport that town dwellers value and this is true despite the 30% reduction in funding for bus services that has occurred over the last decade. Rural bus services that connect local towns to regular train services shouldn’t be seen as a stopgap for the under-privileged but a valued service that works for everyone.

‘We need new homes to be better quality or not built at all and to get rid of traffic, we need our bus system to work!’
Biggleswade Residents

Of all the modes of transport available to our towns, walking is valued by more people than the private car. Walking makes people smile, connects them with their neighbours and nature. But it is also a challenge for some, ‘.. the roads aren’t good for walking, unpleasant and busy with narrow pavements on a camber ... and unlit pavements with harsh shadows ... at night’. The value that people experience through walking is not just felt by individuals, but borne out by any number of financial assessments that show walkability as a cost-effective way of improving health and also as a key indicator in the value and commercial success of town centres.

‘We love to walk and explore the town gardens, the woodland outskirts and the coastal cliff paths. Langmoor Gardens first thing in the morning is such a pleasant sight’ Lyme Regis Resident

The Value of Sharing Mobility

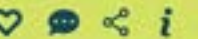


Car clubs reduce parking congestion as well as reducing traffic on the road. They can also give you access to multiple types of cars without spending on ownership.

Add suggestions:

I

The Value of Public Transport



Public transport reduces accidents, congestion, CO₂ emissions, increases lane capacity and lowers fuel consumption.

Add suggestions:

I

The Value of Cycling



Cycling improves mental well-being, promotes weight loss, builds muscle, is low impact and saves time. If we achieved Danish levels of cycling in the UK, it would save our NHS £17bn within 20 years!

Add suggestions:

I

The Value of Walking



Walking helps you to meet people and get to places while reducing depression and anxiety, your risk of heart disease, stroke and even improving the quality of your sleep. What's not to like?

Add suggestions:

I

The Value of Electric Mobility



Electric vehicles are cheaper to run, reduce emissions and are quieter too. Small EVs, especially if they are shared, can help to reduce congestion and the demand for parking space.

Add suggestions:

LEARNING ABOUT... SOME COSTS OF OUR CURRENT LIFESTYLE

While technology has brought many benefits to our lives, modern techno-economic systems have not delivered these benefits fairly and there are many externalities associated with our current lifestyles that are not adequately addressed.

These costs include local noise and pollution, social isolation, unequal or unfair land use, the cost of roads and cars as well as the social and economic consequences of poor neighbourhoods and decaying town centres.

At a human level, 68% of people in Britain describe their neighbours as strangers and half do not feel part of a good neighbourly community. Streets with high levels of traffic are far less friendly than those with low car use, with a 2011 study in Bristol showing a reduction in 'street friends' from 5 to 1 depending on the volume of traffic on the street.



‘Isolation is a major problem, but is continually improving. The community spirit is returning and people are communicating.’ Lyme Regis residents

While cars provide many social benefits, these benefits do not come without significant costs. Vehicles are responsible for around a quarter of all air pollution and contribute to the early death of 10,000 people a year.

We also have to contend with the truth that young people who depend on cars for transportation and do not have safe and easy access to school by walking or cycling are not only likely to feel less independent but more likely to become unfit and unwell - with a third of children leaving primary school overweight or obese.

‘We need to shift our focus towards young families and make it attractive as a place to live and bring up children!’ Haltwhistle Residents

Roads are considered vital infrastructure for our towns and without them many people would be isolated and alone. But they come with a cost and many road building schemes do little but delay the inevitable rise in traffic that comes with building more roads. Beyond the pollution from noise and emissions, roads also sever communities, increase the risk of social exclusion, stop us from walking and reduce the chances of building stronger local communities.

Car based developments also use land inefficiently, with upwards of 40% of land given over to roads and parking against 20% for low car communities. New UK housing developments often provide more space for cars than they do for homes or for nature.

Beyond the human, economic and environmental cost of cars and roads, we also need to understand the cost of poor town centres and poorly served neighbourhoods.

Around 16% of shops and retail outlets are now vacant and the number of shoppers on UK high streets has fallen by 10% in the

past seven years. While our dependency on cars alone is not the reason for this fall, the combination of the internet and traffic clogged town centres go together to create a spiral of decay.

And, if some of our town centres are in a terminal state, many of our neighbourhoods and small villages have already become ghost towns with village post offices and once thriving pubs turned into residential conversions or boarded up to become vandal prone non-building sites.

‘The village shop shut several years ago and local residents set up a community cafe but we need more options for social hubs.’ Haltwhistle Residents

The Cost of Pollution



An Oxford University study has shown that air pollution from cars and vans costs our NHS and society in general more than £6 billion per year.

Add suggestions:

I

The Cost of Our Cars



The total cost of buying and running a car over 5 years is more than £25,000. For a small town of 3,000 people this amounts to around £20 million each year!

Add suggestions:

I

The Cost of Isolation



Over half of people aged over 75 live alone, with two-fifths of older people saying that the television is their main company.

Add suggestions:

I

The Cost of Poor Town Centres



Towns that do not prioritise people in their centres feel unwelcoming, congested and unsafe.

Add suggestions:

I

The Cost of Our Roads



A mile of new motorway costs £30 million and contributes to carbon emissions in construction and use, noise pollution and wildlife loss in the surrounding area.

Add suggestions:

The Cost of Poor Neighbourhoods



Neglected areas not only impact residents' mental well-being and opportunities for recovery, but also increase costs on the NHS and adversely affect violent crime rates.

Add suggestions:

I

LEARNING ABOUT...

RISKS FROM OUR SHARED FUTURE

108

The topics of climate change, environmental loss and technological redundancy often feel overwhelming and many feel that even talking about these issues can create barriers to change. But, rather than pushing them under the carpet or placing them on the 'too difficult' pile, we feel that they are important subjects for people to discuss in the context of town and transport planning.

They may present us with issues that feel out of our control but local communities are intimately connected to central governments and it is only through multiple groups, working at different scales and across different areas of life, that we will be able to integrate these larger challenges into the changes that we need to make to our towns and our everyday lives.

While we regularly see images of melting ice, hurricanes, flooding and forest fires on our news and in social media, we are also affected by these changes closer to home.

In the UK, rising temperatures will increase crop failures, make our homes and other buildings more uncomfortable or harder to stay cool in summer and lead to an increase in heat stroke in more vulnerable people.

Wetter weather has already caused an increase in flooding and the cost of flood protection and insurance in the UK. Haltwhistle's local authority has recently spent £1.5m on flood protection from the local burn and Lyme Regis spent over £60m to protect the seafront since 1994.

'Seeing nature thrive whilst no one was about. Hearing birdsong and seeing beautiful hedgerow flowers that popped out. Being out with the Garden Growers has brought many of us together.' – Lyme Regis residents

While coastal erosion is mainly caused by weather impacts, rising sea levels are also causing problems for low-lying regions. The Thames flood barrier alone cost over £500m and there are now plans underway to construct an even larger flood protection system to deal with locked in sea level rise.

Beyond the UK, climate change is causing significant global impacts and these will be felt in the UK through increasing climate-related refugees, increased costs / reduced availability of certain foods. While we can pretend that these effects are remote, the real impacts to issues like social, political and economic stability are likely to be large!

‘Some of us are Christian and value integrity, and some of us value the future, to keep climate change in check.’
– Biggleswade residents

And, while David Attenborough has been rightly praised for his work in identifying the perils of plastics in the ocean and the loss of nature reserves around the globe, we find it hard to connect his passion and knowledge to the design of our towns or our everyday lives. But, connections are there if we look and during the pandemic many of us noticed the sounds of bird life and the role of the natural world in our streets and green spaces.

‘We value the environment and countryside; nature, history, contribution and connection.’ – Haltwhistle residents

The Cost of Hotter Summers





Summer heat waves increase water consumption by 30% in the UK, with garden sprinklers using 1,000 litres of clean drinking water in a single hour.

Add suggestions:

I

The Cost of Inequality





The effects of inequality in society can be measured in financial terms through its impact on health, well-being and crime rates, costing the UK £39 billion per year.

Add suggestions:

I

The Cost of Wetter Weather



One in six households are at a risk of flooding; which means that the average UK household is currently more likely to get flooded than burgled.

Add suggestions:

I

Global Impacts of Climate Change



Climate change is affecting food supplies and natural environments, driving people from their homes and jeopardising lives, increasing conflict, poverty and hunger.

Add suggestions:

I

The Cost of Rising Seas



The UK has around 2,300 km of artificially protected coast, the longest in Europe. Annual damages due to coastal erosion are expected to increase by 3-9 times, costing up to £126 million per year by the 2080s

Add suggestions:

I

MAKING KNOWLEDGE LOCAL AND PERSONAL

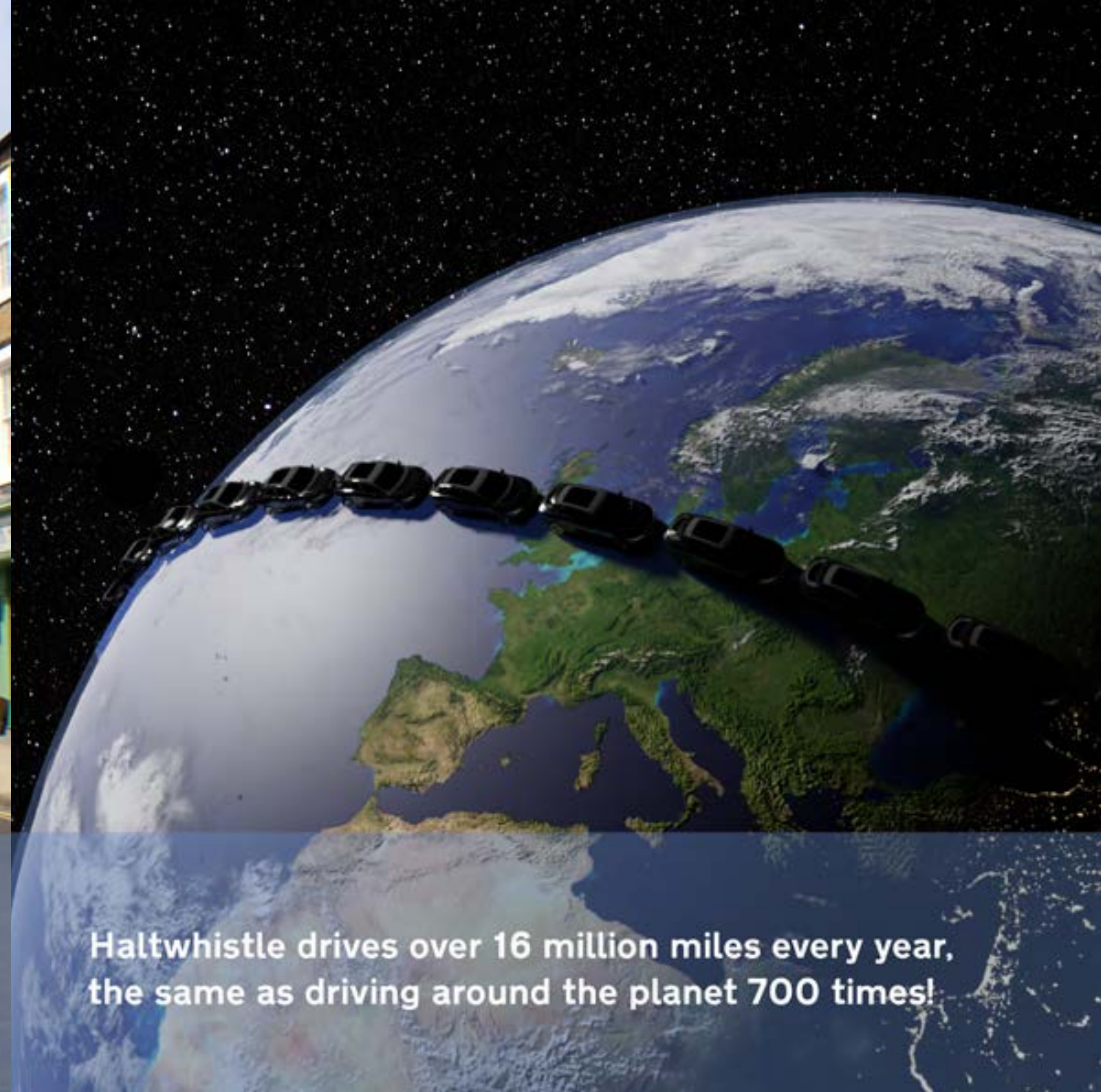
While knowledge about many of these issues is valuable, we also recognise that it can become more powerful when it connects into a local community context. The following table takes some of the facts and figures behind transport impacts as an example and turns this into information that is specific and relevant to the towns that we have been working with. Design can help to visualise this information and bring it to life in new ways as we show below.

Town	Population	Households	Cars per household	Households without a car (% age)	No. of cars in town	Annual mileage per annum	Average fuel consumption per car (MPG) estimate	Annual cost of car ownership per car (£)	CO ₂ emissions per km grams of CO ₂ per km	Town cost of driving (inc fuel, maintenance, purchase, insurance etc)	Town mileage (million miles)	Town Pollution Tonnes of CO ₂	Town mileage - number of times around the planet	No. of trees to absorb CO ₂ per annum?	Size of woodland per annum (1600 trees per hectare) m ²	Hectare's of woodland per annum (100 hectares = 1km ²)
Biggleswade	21,000	8,800	1.3	17%	11,700	7,400	45	5,300	122	£61,000,000	86 M	17,000	3,500	250,000	1,600,000	160
Haltwhistle	3,800	1,800	1.1	25%	2,000	8,100	45	5,200	122	£10,000,000	16 M	3,200	700	50,000	300,000	30
Lyme Regis	3,700	1,800	1.4	21%	2,500	6,800	45	5,600	122	£14,000,000	17 M	3,300	700	50,000	300,000	30

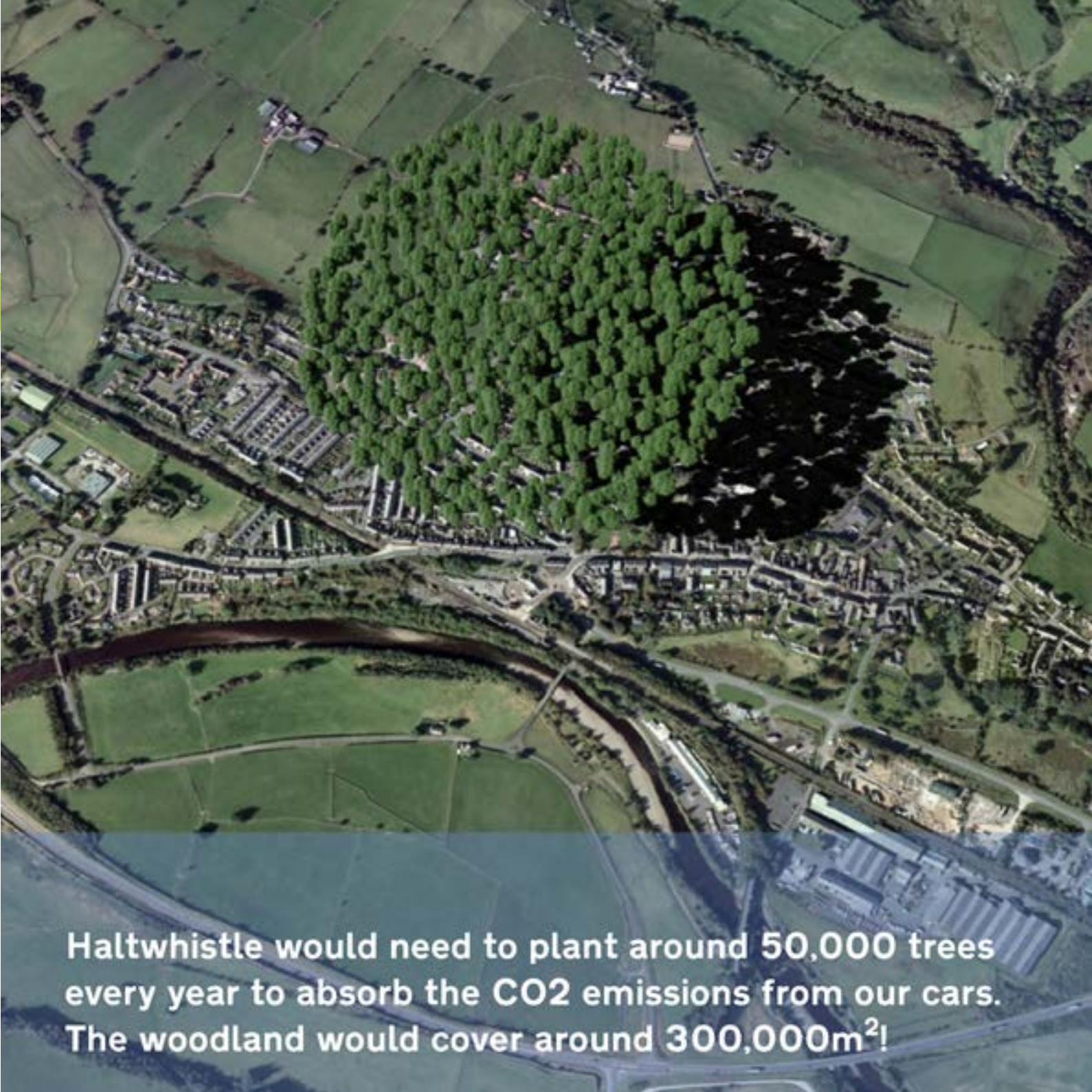
Estimates from various sources



Haltwhistle's cars produce around 3,200 tonnes of CO₂ emissions per year. That's enough to fill a balloon 150m wide!



Haltwhistle drives over 16 million miles every year, the same as driving around the planet 700 times!



Haltwhistle would need to plant around 50,000 trees every year to absorb the CO2 emissions from our cars. The woodland would cover around 300,000m²!

THINGS WE CAN CHANGE TOGETHER

Beyond sharing knowledge about place-making and transport, we have developed a series of 'change cards' to show what change might look like in your town.

The cards show changes that can be made at different scales, from how we use our homes and share our streets, through neighbourhood issues that might include improving or making better connections between our local shops, green spaces, school and GP to larger townscape issues including the quality of our town centre, the availability of public transport and the ability to share resources so that we are not isolated in our cars.

These cards can be customised by your town, based on places that are close by or that people in your community know and recommend.

LEARNING TO CHANGE...

OUR FUTURE HOME

120

While our individual homes and our streets may seem insignificant when we think about our towns as a whole, they actually form the life of our communities, like the leaves on a tree. Our homes are where so many choices are made and together they inform how we plan and manage our everyday lives.

As the pandemic has shown, for around half of the population, home might become our workplace, and our meeting room might ‘zoom’ from our kitchen table. And because of this, our homes reflect many of the inequalities that exist in modern Britain. Some people found home working a blessing, while others found it a curse. Some became closer friends with their neighbours while others felt trapped, isolated and alone.



121

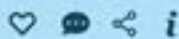
Either way, part time home working and study is likely to become a way of life for many and, as a consequence, the pressure on roads and public transport during rush hour might reduce. If this can be combined with more flexible work hours and a better understanding of the value of shared spaces then it will have a powerful effect on the design and provision of transport going forward. If we commute less regularly into our workplaces what will happen to our public transport and our cars and, if we have more time, then what is stopping us from walking or cycling with our children to school?

Beyond the issue of home-working, how else might we change our homes, in the face of covid and the challenge of climate change? Perhaps more of us will be able to grow or support the natural world from our home and turn our front gardens or shared green spaces into a present for everyone on our street or in our estate?

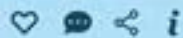
Autonomous delivery



Cycling to school



Cycle path



E-bike for short commutes



E-bikes for longer rides



Small e-car for heavy loads



Electrifying our homes



Growing at home



Mobility scooter for additional needs



Harvesting rainwater



A starter flat, granny flat or holiday let



Walking from home

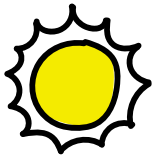


We developed alternative change card designs that can be used with different audiences. The cards can also be developed by local people, students and professionals, based on local issues, interests and knowledge.

YOUR CHANGE

e-Bike for Commutes:

If you needed to travel 12 miles to work or school the journey would take about an hour and five minutes on a regular bicycle or just 36 minutes on an electric bike.



YOUR CHANGE

HARVESTING RAINWATER



YOUR CHANGE

GROWING AT HOME



LEARNING TO CHANGE...

OUR FUTURE NEIGHBOURHOOD

126

A neighbourhood is a community that is defined geographically and socially. They vary in size depending on density and geographic or social contexts, with some understood through positive qualities like friendly interactions and support, with places where people naturally gather, while others may feel dangerous, anti-social, exclusive, isolated or derelict.

In terms of place-making, a positive neighbourhood will be easy and safe to walk around, have a well defined centre - bringing together the local park and allotment, shops, school and GP for example - with places like the church hall and other community centres that are used to support arts and crafts, well-being, sharing and community groups.



127

From a transport perspective a good neighbourhood will have infrastructure that helps to reduce unnecessary traffic and isn't cut in two by a busy road. It could have an attractive bus stop near the neighbourhood centre for people to get into town and a hub where people can access shared resources including a car-club, a bike share and a repair store.

We have used an 800 metre circle as a rough approximation of a neighbourhood as this equates to a ten minute walk and ensures that most people within this catchment can easily get around by foot. This scale of neighbourhood relates to existing models like the 15 minute city but reflects the lower densities found in smaller towns and the desire to include as many people as possible in a 'walkable' catchment.

Cars, parking, roads and traffic are inextricably linked. The only way to deal with this without building more roads is to provide safe and attractive walking, cycling and public transport options and to close 'rat runs' so that low traffic neighbourhoods can develop alternative ways to use their streets.

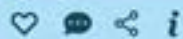
Make a square into a centre



Add a park for play and workouts



Add an allotment to grow together



Make a low traffic neighbourhood zone



Create a neighbourhood mobility hub



Share your bikes



Social bus stop



Get around in the neighbourhood shuttle



LEARNING TO CHANGE...

OUR FUTURE STREET

130

Neighbourhoods are, of course, connected by routes that are often dominated by cars and vans, leaving cyclists and walkers as second class citizens, and, in smaller towns, ignoring public transport completely. To connect our neighbourhoods successfully we need safe and attractive cycle ways and paths as well as community oriented bus services that help everyone to travel beyond their local area in a variety of ways.

We also need our streets to form a backdrop to our individual and family lives. Can we clean them up and make sure that they don't become dumping grounds for other people's waste? Can we green the verge and plant trees, create a place for birds to rest and our children to play?



131

How can we slow things down and stop our roads from becoming (or being) rat runs? Can we add some art and a place to sit and chat? Can we learn from the Dutch and their love of 'woonerfs' and the living street? Many of these issues are 'codified' but the code is often ignored and rarely leads to genuinely liveable streets.

Add some art



Clean it up



A living street



Make it green



A cycle store



Electric charging



No through traffic

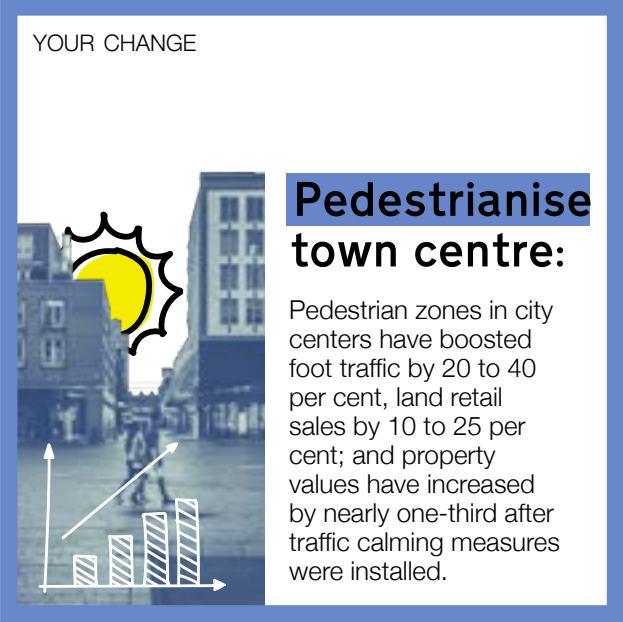


A place to play





Alternative change cards can be used to discuss town-centric issues from community hubs to support the most vulnerable through to pedestrian schemes and shared goods storage and delivery services



LEARNING TO CHANGE...

OUR FUTURE TOWN

136

Town centres bring together a public realm, public service and private commerce that, combined, deliver many of a community's needs. But they often fail to reach their full potential and many are in terminal decline. People might blame internet shopping, austerity and the centralisation of services. All of these factors contribute to their failure but poor planning has its part to play.

A town centre is only as good as its public realm and this in turn depends on its liveability and diversity. On top of the need for pedestrianised high streets, towns need effective transport systems that promote alternative ways of accessing their centres. This should include a regular and inclusive bus service, an interchange that connects different modes and, in larger towns at least, a park and ride service that provides access to the centre without the private car.



As towns become even more reliant on delivery services, a logistics hub could also be used to consolidate deliveries both for commercial and personal needs ,and these in turn can make use of smaller and smarter modes of transport including electric vans and electric-assisted cargo bikes.

The final set of ‘things we can change’ relate to the benefits of community oriented spaces, investments and decision making. These can’t be visualised as identifiable ‘changes’ to our physical realm although it's often the case that community investment has a highly tangible presence in a town. While, we can talk about our town’s future using online forums or in temporary meeting halls, a physical environment where this exists as a constantly evolving creative activity can provide a powerful focus for change. These environments can be catalysts for change and can evolve to support assemblies to discuss the future. They may also lead to a growing interest in community investment funds and community land trusts, both of which can be used to support more radical approaches to local sustainable development, including transport related investments.

137

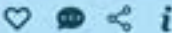
Turn your hall into an arts centre



Town bus and delivery service



Town logistics hub



Park and ride for visitors



Start sharing things with neighbours



Walkable town centre



Turn your GP into wellbeing focus



Community futures space



LEARNING FROM PLACES WE LOVE

BEST PRACTICE

In parallel, with knowledge around problems and benefits we wanted to share best practice places with each town, but we didn't want to use 'generic' solutions, so we asked each community to name some of their favourite places.

- Biggleswade loves Cambridge and Southwold
- Lyme Regis loves Falmouth and Mevagissey
- The people of Haltwhistle are inspired by towns like York and neighbouring places like Hexham.

Many of their favourite towns are not only architecturally significant but have already made changes or have environments that make them people friendly and full of life – not full of cars.

So, perhaps communities have better ideas about what makes a good town than politicians and planners? And we can inject 'a sense of place' into planning rather than 'department of transport' approved solutions?





CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge is well known for its people-friendly city centre that encourages walking and cycling but it is also making greater efforts to spread this environment across the whole city. It already makes use of a dedicated bus tramway and has plans for a future regional autonomous metro system. As a local cycling campaigner points out, ““It is the ordinary people of Cambridge who cycle; it is your parents having the courage and confidence to cycle that means children have the confidence.”



SOUTHWOLD

Southwold is a seaside town that has made its seafront a pedestrian sanctuary rather than a thoroughfare for cars. Visitors find it easier to park their cars on the outskirts of the town and new developments promote low car use. The town connects into an attractive cycle network and has a coastal clipper bus service connecting train stations and villages.



FALMOUTH

Falmouth is a lively coastal town which supports a university, a creative community with a genuine interest in the environment and a tourist centre. The streets around the port and beaches are walkable and the council has made efforts to reduce congestion with park and ride, and encouraging train travel for tourists and locals alike. The park and ride network even includes a park and float option so people can park on the outskirts and float down Penryn River to Custom House Quay.



MEVAGISSEY

Mevagissey is a classic working Cornish fishing port that dates from the thirteenth century and consequently has a narrow medieval street network that discourages cars but encourages strolling and accidental discoveries. The parish plan focuses on the sustainability of its fishing industry but acknowledges the challenge of creating a more equitable future due to the popularity of the town as a tourist destination.



YORK

York is a compact city with high cycling and walking rates as well as sustained bus use. It has been hailed as a test bed for traffic management systems and its park and ride service carries over 4 million people a year. Upcoming changes include the regeneration of its railway station as a city centre hub, the electrification of its bus fleet and improvements to its outer ring road. While some suggest that its medieval road layout contributes to its problems, it has also helped the city recognise the benefits of more people centred approaches to town centre development.



HEXHAM

Hexham was recently rated the happiest town in the UK. While this might start with a sense of community, it's probable that this community spirit comes from its historic town centre, the beauty of the surrounding countryside and its excellent links to neighbouring towns and cities by bus, rail and road. While some residents complain about the lack of parking in town, many want to give priority to pedestrians and make the town centre a more pleasant environment in which to work, live and shop.



HOUTEN, THE NETHERLANDS

Houten is a small commuter town outside of Utrecht, that like many Dutch towns, has fallen in love with the bike. It's been developed around a series of car-free public spaces and has designed the car network to make use of an external ring road, rather than internal connections, which makes the whole town people-friendly and makes it easier to care for the lives of everyone who lives in the town.



TRENTO, ITALY

Trento combines renaissance architecture with smart and sustainable systems; a slow food movement and over 400 km of cycling paths; an electric charging network and support for micro urban logistics; streets and squares designed for people and support for start-ups looking at everything from sustainable construction to the management of the environment, natural resources and circular economies.



VAUBAN, GERMANY

Vauban is a neighbourhood in Freiburg, Germany, based around “a sustainable model district”. Transport is primarily by foot or bicycle, with the suburb connected to the city centre by a tramway laid out so that all homes are within easy walking distance from a stop. Around 70% of households are car-free.



FUJISAWA, JAPAN

Fujisawa smart town is a sustainable suburb in Japan that includes a green axis to connect the community with nature, a physical plan that supports vehicle sharing and energy storage as well as sustainable built environments and infrastructure.

Which other places would you add to your favourite people-centred towns and how could we learn from each other to celebrate their richness and diversity; the small squares and streets that make them special and the strategic shifts that ensure that they will be fit for the future?

152



From left to right:
street market
in Cork, cycling
infrastructure in
Copenhagen,
pedestrianisation
in Bilbao and
Ravenna



153

IMAGINE

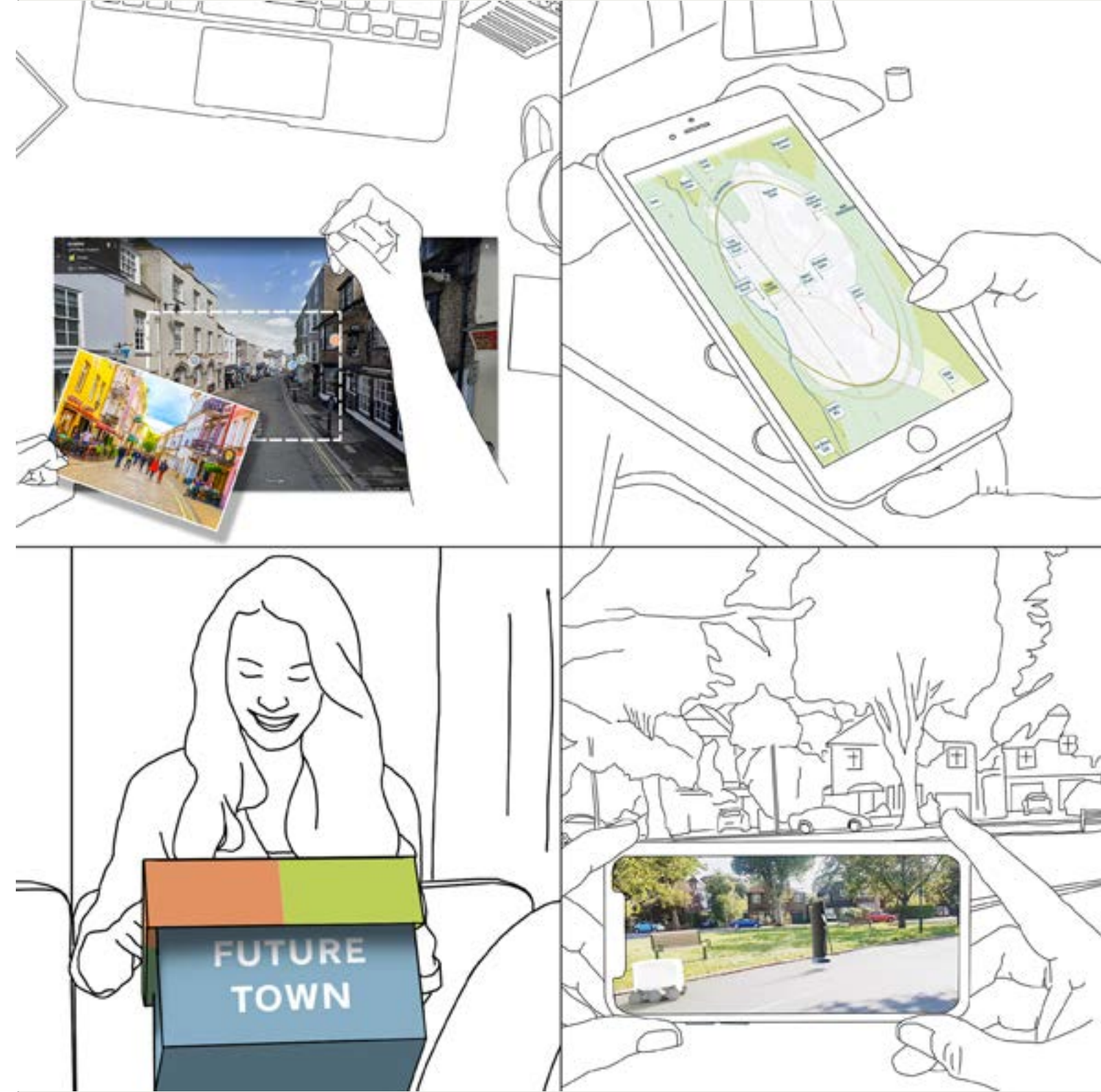
[← Back to contents](#)



IMAGINE THE FUTURE

While learning together will lead to a greater level of knowledge, shared concerns and mutual ambitions, we also wanted to develop ways to help communities to express their own creativity - to imagine their future rather than have a future imposed upon them.

So we developed a range of ways to allow people to express themselves - building on community knowledge and interests, making tools more playful and creative, and even democratising some of the technology that designers, engineers and planners currently own and control.



OUR FUTURE TOWN OVERLAYS

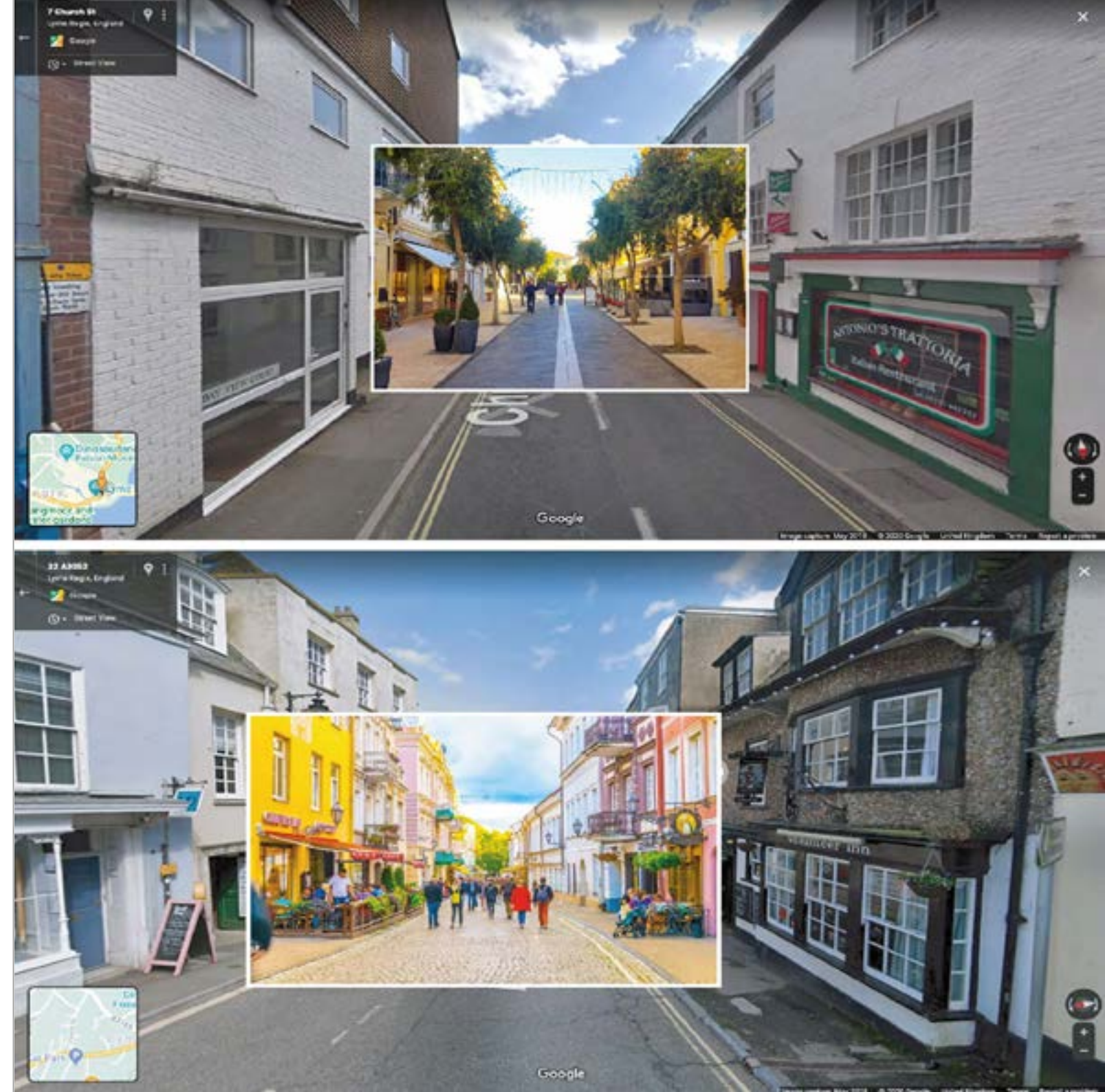
We imagined how the learning cards and best practice places that we shared could be used to discuss and visualise the future of our streets, neighbourhoods and town centres. The overlay cards allow communities to create quick and simple visions of their towns, without the skills needed to create Photoshop renders.

The aim is to provide an inclusive way for all members of the community to engage in creating future street, neighbourhood and transport links in their town and community.

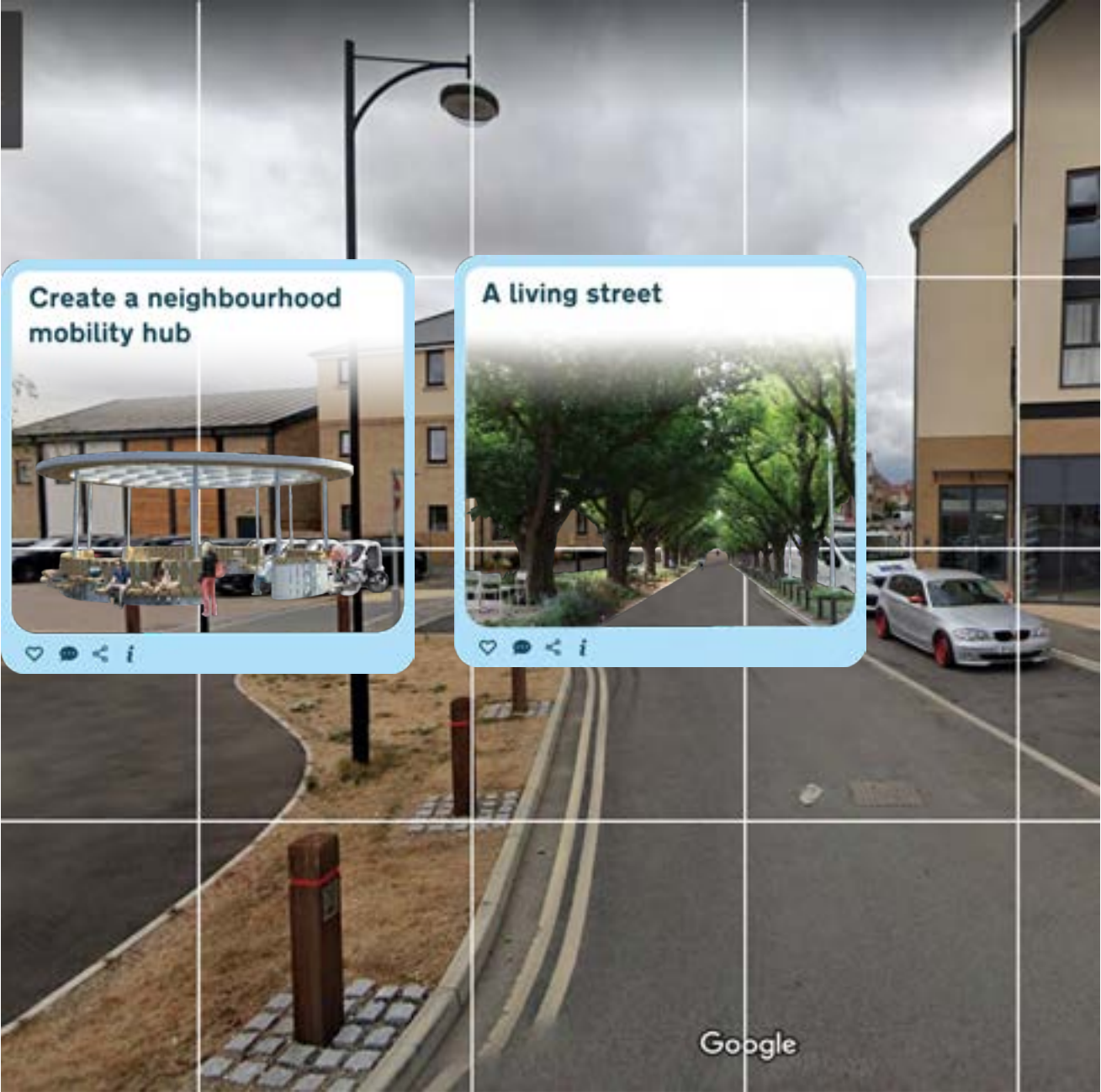
The imagine tool would come with a selection of street views of their neighbourhood, town streets and transport links. There is also a range of best practice images that can be used to overlay on the street views.

This could be an informal process that builds on places identified by residents during the listening phase, or a more formal activity where residents and professionals look at the challenges that they face and consider what they can learn from towns that people admire or from 'Global' best practice.

[Back to contents](#)









OUR FUTURE TOWN STREETS & ROUTES

We created prototype interfaces for digital maps and street views that allow people to 'drag and drop' new routes and paths for walking and cycling and identify places and buildings that needed more than just a lick of paint. People can use this to deal with real issues in their lives from worrying about how their children can walk or cycle to school safely to thinking about how they can use their streets and neighbourhood assets to make new friends and learn new skills

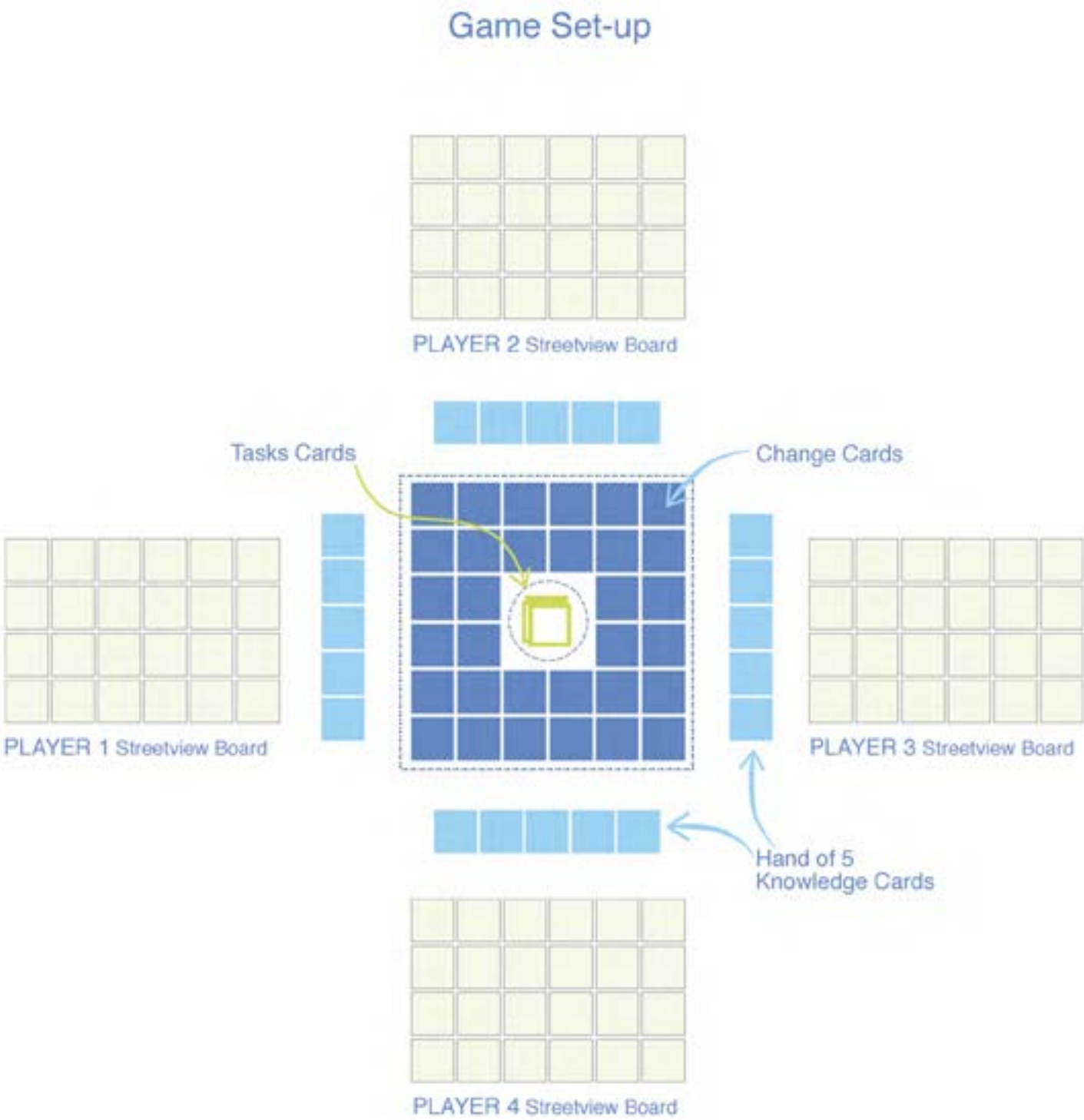
The aim of the tool is to enable communities the opportunity to identify problems and find solutions with streets, routes and transport connections all in one place. Providing a digital platform can reach a wider audience and allow people to identify and create in their own homes without an adviser or facilitator watching over them. In the drag and drop street-view, you can use 'cut-out' images of people, trees, street furniture and transport infrastructure to build a vision of your street or a community centre. The assets that are available can make use of an open commons library so that the variety of changes that people can make can grow as the community of users develops.



OUR FUTURE TOWN BOARD GAME

We developed a game that groups could use to share their knowledge around the town’s challenges and use this playful activity to respond to challenging issues in surprising and unexpected ways.

The board game can be played online through a digital interface or in the comfort of a home, cafe, office or town hall with a physical product. The aim is to bring people together to start conversations about change. Allowing members of communities to share ideas, thoughts and feelings together, instead of hearing one voice.





OUR FUTURE TOWN AUGMENTED REALITY

To complement the map and street-view tools, we proposed that augmented reality tools could also be developed that allow people to see what changes to their streets might look like on their mobile phones, laptops or tablets.

One of these tools allows residents or specialists to visualise new infrastructure superimposed over a mobile camera view of a street (in the linked animation, you can see a street view of Lyme Regis showing the possible addition of trees, planting and cycle sharing) . The mobile interface includes a range of interventions that you can choose from and then place over a live view of the street to visualise, record and share the potential interventions. An alternative augmented reality tool allows residents to 'roll out' 3d visualisations of potential infrastructure changes. In the linked animation, we show the potential integration of a new cycle lane and cycle sharing scheme at a neighbourhood green. This tool could be extended to help visualise a range of changes from transport, place-based and natural infrastructure. How might communities use these visualisations to see other people's ideas, vote on them and suggest ways that they could be improved?

[← Back to contents](#)







CHANGE

While the imagine tools provide powerful ways of discussing and visualising our future towns, there is a great deal of work needed to bring these ideas from the 'drawing board' to the real world.

At this point, we need to share our vision with town leaders, authorities and professionals but we would like to suggest a few strategic opportunities to ensure that change happens in a careful and community centred way.



BARRIERS TO CHANGE

182 Each community shared thoughts on the issues that are stopping change from happening.

‘We need more leadership locally and nationally, we need more creativity, common sense and care. We need to coordinate our efforts, build capacity and finance. We need to get rid of gridlock and keep development sane.’ Biggleswade residents

‘We need more two-way conversation with local and national authority that leads to practical action. We need coordinated integration of our social conscience with economic return and environmental care. We need new developments to feed value back to the community...’ Haltwhistle residents

‘We need more opportunities and guidance for our young people. We need more housing to keep them here. We need new homes to be better quality and for an affordable price. We need more community engagement to create enjoyment for all.’ Lyme Regis residents

While these summaries show the desire for physical change they also show frustration with current planning mechanisms and highlight a number of ways to overcome these obstacles:

- Leadership - locally and nationally - that understands the challenges of community-led place-making and sustainable transport planning
- Coordination and real partnership between local and regional planning teams with an emphasis on decentralising vision-making to a local level that feeds into a wider network of change (neighbourhoods > towns > regional visions)
- Inclusion of as many voices as possible, particularly the younger generations whose ideas are not always heard within the context of place-making and transport planning.
- Changing the financial models to move towards ‘community value’ rather than financial returns on investment. This would emphasise the costs of current behaviours, the risks of future impacts and the holistic (social, environmental and economic) benefits of sustainable place-making and transport planning.

CREATING OUR COMMUNITY FORUM – WHO'S IN OUR TEAM?

184

Our research with existing communities has shown that many people have values, skills and knowledge that they would like to contribute to the future of their towns. To ensure that collaboration lies at the heart of these projects, a community led forum, assembly or non-profit association needs to be developed to provide a community voice. This group will not replace local council representatives, but it will support, add creativity and local knowledge, and hold us all to account.

“Working together and bouncing ideas off each other. Getting sufficient feedback from the local community to influence and support decision makers” Biggleswade Residents

Creating a space for these conversations to take place, not just through the vision-making process but through the process of change is equally important. The pandemic has shown that this space can be partly online but a physical environment where people feel comfortable and excited about the future is equally important.

[← Back to contents](#)



CREATING A ROADMAP FOR CHANGE

186 Helping communities to develop a roadmap from where they are to where they want to be is a key role for planners and professionals to engage with.

Communities need to understand the barriers (social, technical and environmental), be aware of the building blocks (physical, infrastructural, financial and organisational) as well as the governance issues that will help to make change happen.

But a roadmap for change should start with a platform for sharing our philosophies and feelings, enabling people to learn together, having tools to imagine future experiences and working together to make material changes that support the whole community. Without this support, changing our attitudes and actions won't happen easily.



TACTICAL CHANGES TO GET US STARTED

188

The pandemic has shown that rapid change is possible and that tactical changes can indeed form the starting point for wider strategic objectives. But it's important that these small changes do in fact deliver tangible benefits to the community and are not seen as poorly conceived, cheap or insensitive to marginalised groups.

Something as simple as ‘paint’ can start to change our experience of our towns and it is one of many DIY interventions that will encourage community engagement. And while many of the well known urban interventions have been documented by larger cities these forms of tactical change are possibly even more valuable in smaller towns where budgets are under greater pressure. As Jaime Lerner, the radical mayor of Curitiba in Brazil once said, ‘If you want creativity, cut one zero from the budget. If you want sustainability, cut two zeros!’

These tactical changes should not just be based around

physical interventions but also on the development of social change. Transport and place-making advocates have recognised that play streets and walking buses start to build a social currency around our public realm but it's important that they are also seen as part of a wider change to our towns, not as standalone activities.

Other tactical changes could include technical infrastructure (like a connected public and community transport timetable) or financial infrastructure (such as a regional smart ticketing system). These could start with services that already exist and then be extended as new shared mobility services become available.

189

COSTS AND BENEFITS AND PARTNERS

190

A particular problem for smaller towns is the centralisation of many transport planning issues at county level, where decision making feels disconnected from local concerns. Finding ways of moving decision-making and budget control closer to these communities is critical, but equally important is the need to find innovative financing solutions that build community value rather than strict financial returns on investment.

As one of the community leaders told us, ‘We don’t have money to support multiple neighbourhood centres’ and ‘Park and Ride is just not feasible in a small town’. But in many instances there is community value in these interventions and there are community assets available that towns can build on.

Some of the community based financing initiatives could include integrating local social, health and education budgets to support active travel, capturing land value for integrated neighbourhood and mobility hubs, and making use of community investment funds land trusts to make better investments in public mobility and the public realm.

[← Back to contents](#)



CELEBRATING CHANGE THROUGH EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

192

We have open house and open gardens but we don't have an 'open street' festival to celebrate and share the best streets and public realms around the country. But it's this celebration of quality and community that will help to spread good transport and public realm design more evenly and engage more people in the design of our public space.

One of our communities, Haltwhistle, already celebrates walking through an annual festival and it could be the heart of walking in Britain as well as the geographical centre of our islands.



193

Haltwhistle's annual walking festival celebrates walking but can the people of Haltwhistle make the town itself a places that puts walking at the centre of their daily lives?

ENCOURAGING EVERYONE TO GET INVOLVED

During lockdown it was hard for us to engage deeply with each community and while we received hundreds of ideas they generally came from older residents. We made use of instagram and facebook to connect with others and started conversations that showed everyone's appetites for change.

An example of these new forms of community involvement came from young students in Lyme Regis who were asked to imagine mobility and their future town as an art and design project. As can be seen they matched creativity with diversity and developed ideas to support pedestrianisation (with the support of a travelator for people with additional needs), regional public transport (in the form of a top hung monorail similar to the Wuppertal Schwebebahn) and a boat that focuses on the pleasure of mobility rather than its speed.

The students considered young and old, locals and tourists, health and well-being, sustainability and nature and we think that it's fitting to end this project summary with the words of one of these young people,



'I have also planted more trees and greenery to help the bee population and make Lyme Regis less grey. The buildings have been painted by local artists and schools. This, in my opinion, improves the overall look of the town as well as helping to include local creative people. I am aware the travelator is not the fastest mode of transport to get around Lyme but it is sustainable and eco-friendly. This could be Lyme Regis's new selling point –The first completely sustainable and eco friendly town in the UK'

Community place-making and Transport Planning will be in good hands if we listen to each other, learn together and use our shared knowledge and experiences to plan, design and change our future towns.

APPENDIX

NEXT STEPS

198

Our Future Town demonstrates a new approach to working with communities that will support the changes we need, and that directly connects with government objectives on climate change and transport. They do this in a collaborative way that changes the dynamics of a community and supports greater local autonomy.

We have made great progress but it needs further development and testing. We are therefore looking for case study areas, organisations and resources to take the work forward. We have identified a range of areas where the approach adds value including:

- Interdisciplinary planning and engagement around neighbourhood, town and regional development
- Vision based transport and town planning that goes beyond simplistic predict and provide modelling which often leads to over-reliance on old and out-moded data and forecasting techniques

199

- A transition to active travel planning that focuses on inclusive well-being and cross-disciplinary factors including health, education and social inclusion.
- A factor ten approach to de-carbonisation that encourages a fundamental rethink in our personal, community and professional practices.

We also created a roadmap to support shorter and longer term development opportunities. These included outreach across professional, public sector and community organisations and the development of an open platform and resources that will help communities and professionals to build shared capacity and capability around this approach.

We are now establishing future partners and funding streams as well as working with existing communities and new developments to find ways of testing and developing these tools collaboratively

APPROACH AND METHODS

200 The project aims to create a bridge between ground-up community transitions and strategic and sustainable place-making and mobility planning.

We will achieve this through online and physical communications, including short animations and videos, and a downloadable ‘mobile exhibition’ that can be used and customised as part of place-based discovery workshops by local communities and planning/transport professionals who want to support radical change in villages, towns and city neighbourhoods across the country. It will help communities understand each other, imagine the future, challenge preconceptions, and make small and valued changes that connect into and build the physical foundations and mental changes needed for larger systemic impact.

The experience will be co-developed with professionals, service organisations and local communities so that they share truthful and emotionally engaging stories about people’s hopes and concerns for the future of mobility and the shared public realm in their communities, as well as providing tools

and knowledge about ‘future practice’ and ‘making change happen’. They will be inclusive - across generations and social demographics - and aim to reach both enthusiastic and less motivated audiences. The platform will be developed as a prototype service that will be trialled in three different local communities so that the team can gain feedback and measure benefits before it is scaled up. Scaling up will include opportunities to improve engagement by connecting to local partner organisations and by supporting content localisation.

Underlying our approach to this challenge are concepts embedded in system change, service design and design thinking. While the material and experiential components of ‘sustainable transport futures’ are well appreciated by professionals, the real gaps in capacity and capability (and the more powerful levers of change) exist in the differing life philosophies (mental paradigms), emotional attachments and knowledge that communities and professionals may have when they consider the way they live today and how they might live in the future.

201

ABOUT THE TEAM, PARTNERS, STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNITIES

The RCA team

Intelligent Mobility Design Centre
Chair and Director: Professor Dale Harrow

Deputy Director: Dr Cyriel Diels
Senior Research Fellow: Dan Phillips

Design research team
Daniel Vorley, Intelligent Mobility Design
Nadia Lesniarek-Hamid, Architecture
Oliver Winter, Intelligent Mobility Design
Tanushka Karad, Service Design

Communication design
Anne Odling-Smee, Design Science Ltd

Project board

Andrew Hugill, CIHT
Jackie Sadek, UK Regeneration Ltd
James Harris, RTPi
Jon Parker, ITP
Justin Ward, CIHT
Lynda Addison, MBC
Stephen Bennett, TPS
Susan Cross, TPS (Project Board Chair)



We would like to thank our partners, stakeholders and community leaders and all participants for their support.

Community Leaders

Belinda Bawden, Green Party Town
Councillor, Lyme Regis
Julie Gibbon, Chair of Haltwhistle
Community Partnership
Madeline Russell, Mayor of Biggleswade

Stakeholder group

Claire Goldfinch, NALC
Geoff Burrage, ITP
Henry Smith, Ageing Better
Jenni Wiggle, Living Streets
Jonathan Owen, NALC
Kris Beuret, SRA Ltd
Stephen Edwards, Living Streets
Steve Gooding, RAC Foundation
Susie Dunham, Sustrans
Xavier Brice, Sustrans





“... It’s a new world - you’re at school in the kitchen,
at work in the attic, in Ancient Rome in the lounge,
on Mars in the basement. Why tear out your hair
while the present dithers and loads, you deserve
to lean on the airwaves and not fall over,
to feel the hub of your heart’s heart
pulsating and purring with life’s signal.

So you’re right here this minute being your best being.
And now you’ve hooked up
with the all-thinking all-feeling all-doing version of you
why sit in the future’s waiting-room
drumming your fingers,
why lose the connection
when you could be your own greatest invention?”

*From Simon Armitage’s poem ‘something clicked’ - his
reflection on life in 2020*

Our Future Town aims to help communities share truthful and
emotionally engaging stories about their hopes and concerns
for the future of mobility and their shared public realm

