The **place** pocket guide
to **engagement**

creating places that people love

STRIDE TREGLOWN

People are at the heart of everything we do.

They make us who we are. They tell us if a project is good or not.
They work with us to shape future places for the better.
Our culture is built around these people-led principles: open-minded values,
honest ethics, trusted advice and thoughtful innovation.

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Introduction: Place and engagement

Place by Stride Treglown is dedicated to the design and delivery of community-focused, cohesive and positive places. We do this by using our highly collaborative approach to support clients and stakeholders, engage with local communities and lead or assist multi-disciplinary specialist teams.

This means that we seek to use the best methods of communication with everyone involved in the project to ensure every stakeholder is well-informed and integrated in the design process. It also means we put a great deal of value on understanding the people and environments that are connected to our projects because we know that this is the way to create genuinely successful places.

We stand by the belief that as consultants, we provide the expertise for design, and as the future inhabitants and stakeholders of a project, the local community are the experts of the place.

Design experts: Stride Treglown

+

Local experts: The community

=

Genuinely successful places focused on enabling communities to thrive

Purpose of this document

This is a pocket guide that sets out what we, in the Place team at Stride Treglown, believe is best practice for engaging with people as part of architectural, urban design and landscape projects.

The Place principles for working with local stakeholders

LISTEN

As part of the brief setting stage, rigorous research and investigation is needed to get under the skin of a place and its people. We seek to ask as many questions as possible - and listen, without assumption or judgment, to the answers. *What works well here? What defines the positive character and culture of the place? What are the challenges? What are the aspirations of the community?*

DEFINE THE SCOPE OF INFLUENCE

Provide the local community with a well-defined scope of influence. If the height of the buildings is dictated by viability requirements, don't give the impression that the local community might have a say in defining it. Instead be clear about what design choices they can influence in the project.

CO-CREATE A VISION

Establish a shared vision or brief for the project. This needs to be a concise document that all stakeholders, including the local community, have contributed to. In some cases, a residents' brief may be created as a stand-alone document. The vision should be an output from the initial background research and investigation and it will help to establish an audit trail for statements of community involvement.

CO-DESIGN A PROPOSAL

Provide design proposals with an open mind and be receptive to critique, debate and review from stakeholders as part of the design development. This should be carried out in a positive and engaging way with the awareness that a more sustainable and supported design outcome will come out of designing in a collaborative way.
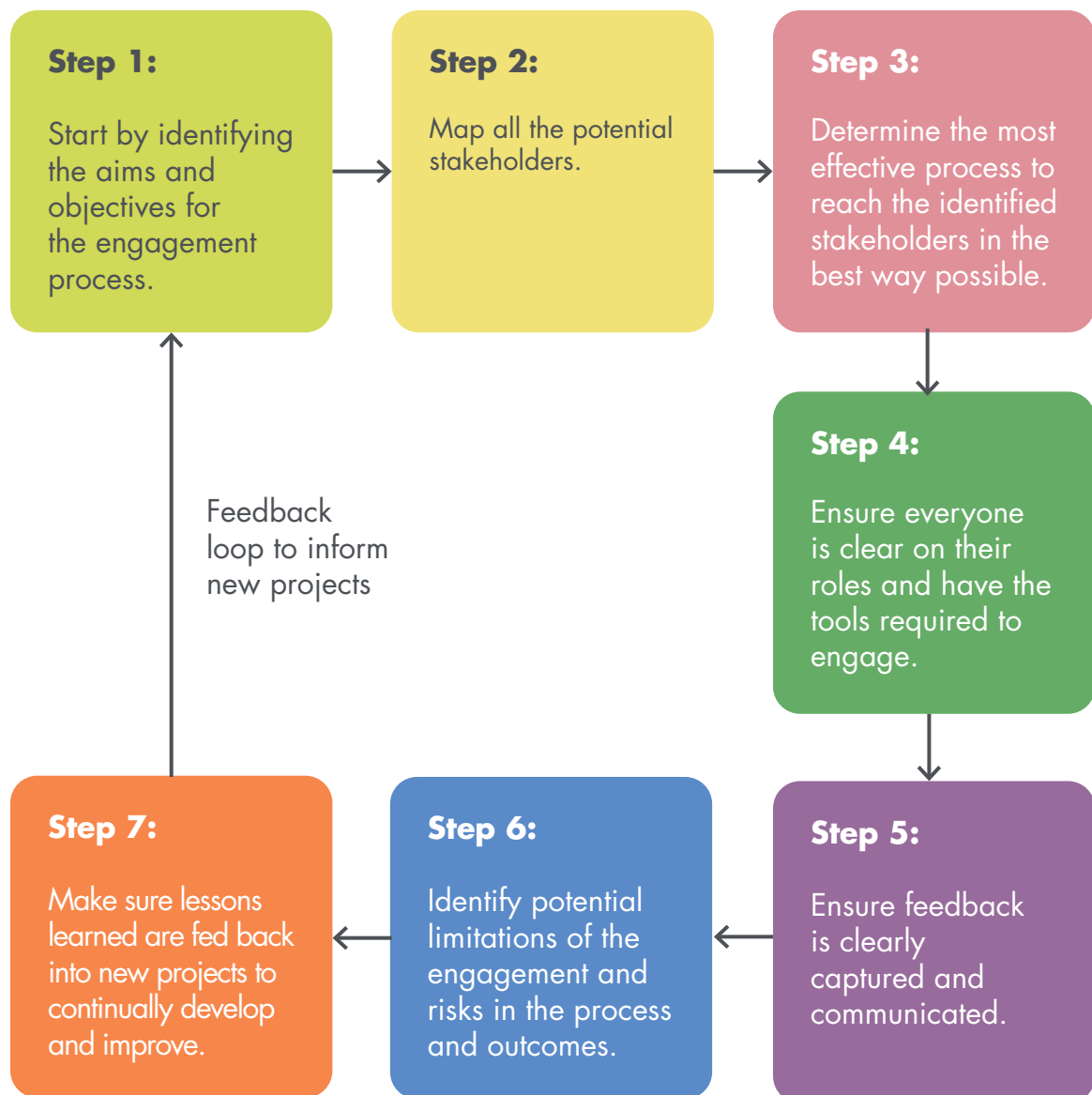
RECORD & FEEDBACK

All responses received from stakeholders must be recorded clearly to develop evidence and to highlight where issues are common across a community. Design issues must be fed back to the design teams for review and non-design issues must be shared with the client - hopefully enabling the relationship between the client and community to strengthen and flourish as they are addressed later in the project.

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY

Give clear explanation about why decisions have been made, or not been made. Planning policy and viability are important and fair reasons for some decisions to be made and it's important to share these. Use language that is clear, simple and to the point. Show images that are easy to understand by everyone.

Process

The following pages set out a process for developing an effective engagement plan, based on the following seven steps:

Step 1:

Start by identifying the aims and objectives for the engagement process.

Step 2:

Map all the potential stakeholders.

Step 3:

Determine the most effective process to reach the identified stakeholders in the best way possible.

Step 4:

Ensure everyone is clear on their roles and have the tools required to engage.

Feedback loop to inform new projects

Step 7:

Make sure lessons learned are fed back into new projects to continually develop and improve.

Step 6:

Identify potential limitations of the engagement and risks in the process and outcomes.

Step 5:

Ensure feedback is clearly captured and communicated.

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Purpose: Why engage

Engaging with and listening to stakeholders; the people who will use, manage, understand, operate or neighbour a new building or neighbourhood; is the key to delivering a project that is truly fit for purpose. It is also a statutory requirement for most projects (see below). Beyond this, **well-designed and delivered engagement** has the potential to deliver so much more:

• The building of local relationships and transparency in information sharing can establish support for planning applications, increasing the likelihood of a successful application and ensuring a smoother design and delivery process.

• It can be a catalyst for social value – giving independence, empowerment, aspiration and resilience to the community, enabling them to influence and shape the place they live and work – particularly when hard-to-reach groups are targeted.

• Through training and workshops it can develop the stakeholder's skills and give them better understanding of the design and development process. Not only does this build their confidence and awareness of the planning system, but also enables stakeholders to be more meaningfully involved in the design process.

• It can create a sense of community ownership for the place, so it is respected and looked after by local people once completed.

• Where there are multiple stakeholders co-locating in a building or masterplan, the design development process can create a relationship and cohort cohesion, which should contribute to easier sharing and goodwill when in operation.

• It can reduce the risk of design changes at later stages of the design process, helping to stabilise the programme and cost assumptions for design teams.

• It can ensure that projects are more responsive to the local and wider social, environmental and economic context, providing wider benefits to more of the local community.

It should be noted that as well as adding value, engaging with stakeholders is required for most planning applications and also if the project intends to be accredited by **BREEAM Communities**. It is essential that the engagement requirements for planning and BREEAM are determined at the start of the project by checking the relevant websites or with the planning or BREEAM consultant.

Step 1 summary:

The first step for an engagement strategy is to be clear about the aims and objectives for communicating with stakeholders. This will be key to targeting the right people and tailoring the engagement in the most effective way.
So the key question to be answered is 'why are we reaching out to stakeholders?'

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Stakeholders: Who to engage

Ensuring that all potential stakeholders have the **opportunity to have their opinions heard is critical.** It is therefore important to work closely with the client and design team to establish who the stakeholders are for each project, paying particular attention to those who might be hard to reach, such as minority groups (see Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics, adjacent).

Naturally, it depends on the type of project but typical stakeholders might include: local residents, tenants and resident associations; schools; service providers; heritage groups; council members; youth groups; and local businesses. The full range of stakeholders and their reason for involvement will be broad.

It's important to remember that vocal members of community will be forthcoming, whereas hard to reach groups, who may have very different opinions and contributions, may need to be sought out and invited to get involved.

At this stage it's useful to refer to the Equality Act 2010 and also check the Local Authority's Statement of Community Involvement where the project is located. This will have any local policy and guidelines that should be followed in terms of stakeholder groups. Local policy and guidance will also flag up any Neighbourhood Forums or identify community groups who are already represented in the local area.

For certain projects, such as community centres and residential neigbourhoods, it can be really beneficial to work with young people. Here, making contact with local schools may open up opportunities to engage with children and young people, as well as identify any planned family or community events to attend.

Step 2 summary:

Map all the potential stakeholders, identifying their current status and needs for engagement. This is best done in the form of a schedule and corresponding location map and should include:

- their reason for being identified
- what influence they have over the project
- their involvement in the project so far
- identify any areas that the stakeholder is likely to be most interested in
- record any conversations already had
- any planned meetings or events that the stakeholder may already have booked in – e.g. community group meetings

Set out a clear explanation of each of the stakeholder's scope of influence over the design of the project so they are clear from the start where they will be able to shape and impact the proposals.

Be clear about other factors which will influence design decisions, such as planning policy and viability.

Stakeholder types	Example
Client	Development, delivery, management and maintenance teams
Statutory stakeholders	Environment Agency, Highways England, Historic England etc.
Community based organisations and individual community members	Youth groups, community groups (which may include hobby and task groups), resident associations, local residents
Business community	Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), or individually targeting local businesses
Local authority departments and individuals	Policy team, development team, highways, open space, park and building maintenance, fire department, councilors and members. Many in this group are statutory stakeholders and it should be noted that these are different for Wales and Scotland
End users	The intended users of the building, neighbourhood or place

Equality Act 2010: Protected characteristics

As set out in the Equality Act 2010, it is against the law to discriminate against someone because of:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race, religion or belief
- sex and sexual orientation

These are called protected characteristic and should be carefully reviewed and accounted for when developing the engagement strategy. See https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance for more information.

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Process: How to engage

Engaging with stakeholders is not a quick fix. 'It is an ongoing cumulative process enabling relationships and trust to build and strengthen over time.' (Community Planning Toolkit)

Based on the aims and objectives identified in Step 1, **an engagement plan should be devised** that is based on tried and tested techniques that are bespoke to the place and people. It should be tailored and programmed into the design process to ensure that any stakeholder feedback is received in time to be accommodated in design development and amendments.

A member of the team should be identified to lead the engagement strategy and activities so that they maintain overall responsibility for the process. This is important so that actions are not forgotten and that activities are well-managed and delivered.

The methods of engagement should be based around a **clear decision on the degree of participation** that each stakeholder will have. Arnstein's ladder of engagement and participation is a recognised hierarchy from which to identify a level (see adjacent). The higher the degree of participation, the greater quantity and breadth of engagements events will be required, typically with outcomes to match.

Other suggested actions checklist:

• Make sure that any individual event has a clearly defined objective that supports the wider aims of the main engagement strategies.

• Where possible, create steering groups to enable more focused conversations with representatives of a community, who will act as a feedback loop. When a steering group is created in a fair and inclusive way, these focused conversations tend to provide more tangible outcomes.

• Create a mix of engagement events and activities - as indicated in the table on pages 15-16. This is essential to provide accessible and inclusive engagement that can reach all stakeholders.

• Communicate in plain English and provide translations where members of a community need it.

• Always allow time in the programme for engagement material to be signed-off by the client, well in advance of the event.

• Storyboard and plan engagement material.

• Discuss with the client any engagement that may have previously taken place to be clear on what information has already been shared or asked of with the stakeholder group. This is important to show stakeholders you have done your homework, to avoid asking the same questions twice and to reduce the risk of consultation fatigue.

Arnstein's Ladder: Degrees of Citizen Participation, 1969
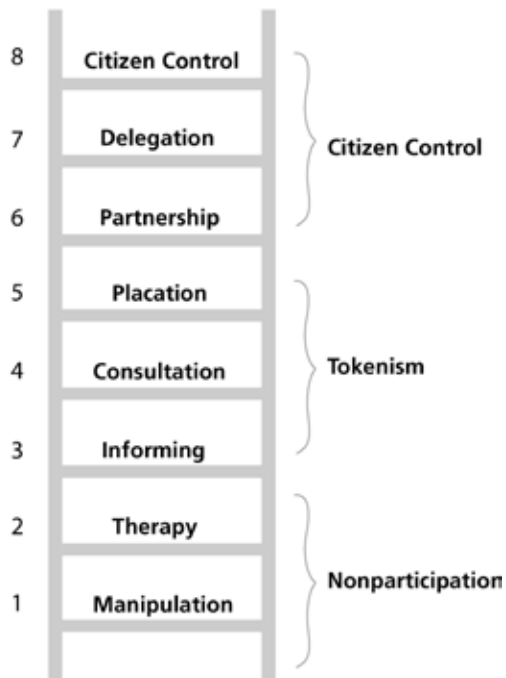
This ladder shows the varying degrees of participation and engagement that can take place on a project.

In the past participation has typically been carried out between the degrees of 1-5. However, there is a current industry shift to develop social value, sustainability and fitness for purpose by operating in the degrees of 6-7; Citizen Control.

Each project will have different requirements, but a key aim and ethos is to deliver projects of high social value and therefore operate engagement plans with a high degree of stakeholder participation.

Definitions of the higher rungs are as follows:

Partnership - enables stakeholders to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional power holders.

Delegation - stakeholders or citizens obtain the majority of decision-making roles.

Citizen Control - citizens obtain full decision-making roles.

Step 3 summary:

Design and develop the engagement plan based around:

- the aims and objectives of the engagement
- the design programme
- a mix of engagement events that work with the stakeholder's needs
- a clear understanding of the level of participation that stakeholders will have
- realistic sign-off times

Different types of engagement,
their opportunities and challenges

Create a **mix of engagement events and activities** - as indicated in the table below. This is essential to provide accessible and inclusive engagement that can reach all stakeholders.

The information in the table is primarily sourced from Community Planning Toolkit, Community Engagement, by Community Places.
www.communityplanningtoolkit.org

Type of engagement	Purpose	Opportunities	Challenges
Public drop ins / exhibitions	Provide information and receive feedback from a large audience. The meetings can be organised to have small group discussions and give opportunities for question-asking and influencing the agenda.	• Enables large numbers of people to have their say • Provides an opportunity to explain processes, give information and gather feedback • Demonstrates openness and transparency • Can attract publicity or be used as a launch event • Enables participants to develop networks	• Unlikely to be representative - not everyone has the time or inclination to attend • Attendance is often low unless people feel personally or deeply concerned • Some people are likely to be inhibited from speaking in a large group • Traditional formats can limit audience contribution and lead to conflict • If confrontational it may lead to poor media publicity
Digital engagement and media	There are a variety of web-based engagement processes to choose from such as online discussion forums and blogs, social media, online surveys and digital interactive engagement apps and platforms. Web based activities enable people to choose where, when and for how long they want to participate.	• People can choose a convenient time and place to participate • Particularly useful for those who may be homebound e.g. carers, elderly people, parents with young children • Can create debate and exchange of views • Cost effective • Can reach large numbers • Less time consuming than attending a workshop or meeting	• Some techniques may require a moderator to manage comments, this can be expensive and time consuming • Excludes those without access to the internet • Needs to be publicised to generate interest • Some people may feel intimidated
Focus workshops	Workshops and focus groups allow people to discuss their ideas in an open and relaxed atmosphere. Workshops can take a variety of formats. They can be designed to exchange information; to discuss strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of an idea or project; to obtain ideas and innovative thinking for a way forward for a project	• Encourages active discussion in a welcoming environment • Time and resource efficient way of identifying and clarifying key issues • Conflict can be more easily handled in a small group • Can be designed for a specific purpose • Can be directly targeted at excluded or 'hard to reach groups' for example young people or ethnic minorities	• With small groups, it is difficult to be sure all stakeholders or interests are represented • Workshops can be dominated by articulate and confident individuals if not carefully facilitated • Requires experienced facilitators
Forums / Steering group meetings	A forum or steering group is a regular meeting of people who represent a group or organisation and may be issue or area based. Those involved typically comprise members of civic, political, professional, economic or social groups from a local area.	• Regular events help to maintain momentum, commitment and enthusiasm and encourage wider participation as the activities of the forum develop • Can be an effective way of involving excluded or hard to reach groups by creating an arena directed towards the concerns of specific groups • Can address specific local concerns	• Often comprises of representatives from existing groups rather than individuals from the community • May become 'talking shops' rather than action-oriented • Potential to become rule-bound and bureaucratic • Potential for confusion or conflict over the respective roles and responsibilities of local representatives

Community surveys	Questionnaire surveys can be undertaken to identify the needs and views of a large number of people in a standard format.	• Can gain the views of a large number of people • Useful for obtaining quantitative data • In principle data can be compared over time or with results from elsewhere • Useful for identifying and evidencing need	• Need to be well designed and coded to get 'usable' answers • Large questionnaire surveys are time consuming and labour intensive • Information may be limited • Do not offer any real sense of community engagement or provide an opportunity for people to exchange views • Typical response rates are between 10- 20%
Street stall	Street stalls consist of outdoor displays such as idea or information walls which can be used to capture the views and comments of large numbers of people. Maps and plans for an area or project can be displayed and passersby asked to comment on particular issues and themes, generate ideas or vote for particular activities or facilities.	• Can collect the views of large numbers of people • Interactive • Engages and generates interest • Can reach people who may not normally participate	• Can generate a large amount of data • Requires advance planning and preparation • Requires several facilitators to engage with people • Event may be affected by weather conditions
Community mapping and photography	Maps and photos of an area are used to illustrate how stakeholders view their area. This can include what they like, dislike, or hope for as improvements. Discussions should be facilitated to explore issues, build consensus or identify areas of conflict.	• Stimulates discussion • Develops a sense of community ownership • Can help people see and understand their community in different ways	• Can generate ideas which are not possible to implement • May be difficult to interpret participants' ideas • Participants need to be familiar with the local area
Newsletters / leaflets	When working in a community for a long period of time, paper and digital newsletters are useful to keep stakeholders informed on progress, decisions made and upcoming events.	• The same information is shared with everyone • The information should be received by everyone • If done on a regular basis it can build trust and transparency • Keeps everyone up to date with related community events	• Requires regular work if published on a regular basis and content needs to be designed, developed and signed off. • Paper newsletters need to be carefully distributed among all stakeholders, which can be time consuming if there are a large number
Study trip	Visiting similar completed projects with stakeholders and providing opportunities for them to talk to people who have gone through the same process or operate/use a similar type of new development provides a useful environment for stakeholders to ask questions about the process and witness the potential outcomes.	• Opportunity for stakeholders to understand how people in a similar situation dealt with the project • Can be very inspiring and help change assumptions about issues • Can spark discussion • Can be good to get out and away from the development area to look at things from a new perspective	• May need organised transport to get stakeholders to the study area • Can be difficult to organise a time that works for all stakeholders and the community that are being visited

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Resources: What is needed to engage

Once the engagement strategy and plan has been established and detailed, the next step is the **effective implementation of the engagement**. This needs careful project management to ensure the events are successful and the identified outcomes are achieved.

The **following checklist** identifies issues that should be considered:

• **Define clear roles and responsibilities** of all the team, ensuring different members of the team are responsible for getting participants to sign in (check GDPR compliance), document the event with photos, be on hand to answer questions and support participants to log their feedback.

• **Agree the message.** The whole team should be equipped with a crib sheet giving clear statements about the messages that are to be shared and discussed. This should also include any information that is confidential and not to be discussed.

• **Be creative and adaptable.** Working with new people in new places means things may not always go as planned. Be expectant of plans to change and be flexible to accommodate challenges as they arise.

• **Be human.** Remember we are all people trying to communicate in the best way possible. Present yourself in a way that levels you with the stakeholders you are engaging. So for community engagement events, take the 'consultant hat' off, wear jeans, ask how their week has been and speak in plain English. Always be approachable and professional.

• **Look for existing events** that the stakeholders may already have arranged, which you can be a part of. For example, local businesses may have a quarterly forum meeting, which presents a great opportunity where they will already be meeting. Make it easy for stakeholders to get involved.

• **Determine the best ways to interact with hard to reach groups**. For example, in Muslim communities many women's lifestyles are based around the house and men may take a lead role in attending events. By locating engagement events near parks and play facilities where women are likely to visit with children or at an existing women's meet up. It may enable more diverse involvement.

• **Put accessibility at the top of the list.** Make sure the event is located in a place that is accessible for everyone, and that material used includes clear information in plain English. If there is a group of stakeholders with a different first language, get the material translated and try to bring a native speaker onto the delivery team to enable the best communication.

• **Communicate clearly** in all senses, from graphics, to text, body language to speech. Don't mumble; know the message. Don't use technical jargon, but provide clear information.

• **Take photos.** Even better, get stakeholders to take pictures and share them with you too. Documenting the event is critical to show the story and keep anyone who missed it up to date.

• **Make sure there's a cup of tea** and a biscuit on offer, or a glass of water at the very least. It's polite and shows you value them and want them to feel comfortable.

• **Where possible, make it fun.** Face painting for kids while their parents look at proposals is a way for events to be dynamic and playful and help to break the ice and make them more engaging.

Step 4 summary:

Plan engagement events to be really effective, with stakeholders feeling welcome, valued and respected and leaving with all the information and documentation you need to move the project forward.

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Recording: Documenting responses

The feedback that is recorded will be bespoke to each event. However, the way it is recorded should always be detailed and systematic to avoid missing information and to enable a thorough review of, and response to, the feedback provided.

Stakeholders may be asked to provide feedback on forms (online or paper), post it notes on boards, online surveys, drawings (particularly for children's workshops) or verbally. When deciding how to ask for feedback it's important to **select a method that is appropriate and available to the type of stakeholder**. For example, engaging with students for a university building means that online feedback will be accessible to all stakeholders. Whereas working with vulnerable or deprived groups in estate regeneration projects is likely to mean that access to the internet is not available to everyone. Similarly, when working with children it may be that they prefer to express themselves or be more creative through drawing, rather than through words.

Feedback received online is likely to provide automated summaries of the results, which can provide a quick method for analysing and evaluating the information. Information received on paper will require time to allow for manual data entry of the feedback into one collated file (most likely Excel or Google Sheets). Make sure you allow for this time in the project programme and budget.

A **clear summary of feedback and table of all results** should be prepared and be available to all. It benefits all parties in the following ways:

• **Clients:** It gives them a record of the process and means they can review non-design related issues to see what actions beyond the design process may be required (e.g. estate management). They will also need to be part of agreeing how to take forward potential design changes that come out of the engagement.

• **Design team:** The full design team need clear information on the issues raised and proposed in order to discuss how changes and development can be accommodated alongside other constraints.

• **The stakeholders and event attendees:** It's essential to provide a summary of the feedback to the stakeholders to provide them reassurance (and build trust) that their opinions have been captured. It is also useful to include a column for how the team have responded to the comment, and why. This gives transparency on actions and shows how the issue has been dealt with.

• **Local Planning Authority:** All of the data that is created will support the development of the Statement of Community Involvement which will be needed for the planning application. Rather than seeing this as a tick-box document, it can be an interesting narrative and companion to the Design and Access Statement, which shows how meaningful stakeholder engagement was a dynamic tool for the design development process.

Step 5 summary:

Ensure feedback is clearly captured, summarised and communicated to key parties.

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Limitations and risks

Be upfront and open-minded about where engagement events and processes are limited or restricted. This means risks and challenges can be mitigated as much as possible early in the project, and gaps or overlaps in the process can be identified.

If an event has a poor turn out review why:

- Does the timing of the event make it difficult for people to attend due to other commitments?
- Was it advertised enough and in the right places?
- Do stakeholders feel like their voice matters to make it worth attending?
- Is the location hard to reach?
- Do stakeholders understand the purpose of the event?
- Are the stakeholders experiencing consultation fatigue?

For each place and project the context and community is different - and so what may work well in one project may not work on another. It's important to be open about where things aren't working as well as they could be so that the project and engagement strategy can adapt through the process.

Discussing engagement risks or concerns at the start of the project with all members of the team also means that these can be tackled head on, preparing everyone to manage them in the best way possible.

Step 6 summary:

Identify potential limitations of the engagement and risks in the process and outcomes.
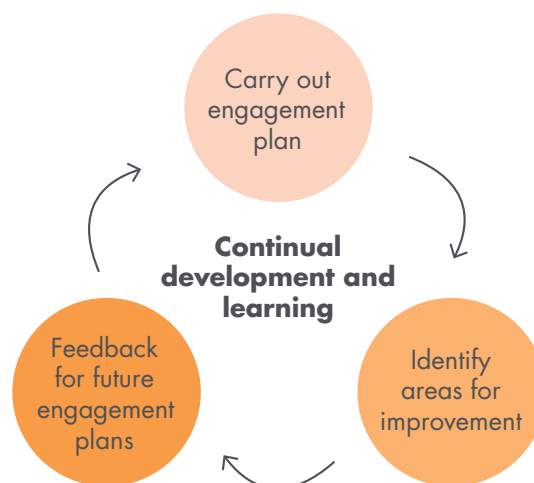
7

Full circle learning: Research and development

Getting the process right leads to the most successful outcomes. But establishing the right process requires regular review and development - great stakeholder engagement can't be a one trick pony. The available tools evolve, preferred communication techniques change and development and procurement processes are varied too. New and bespoke ideas may provide exciting opportunities for other projects.

If possible, ensure that you go back to a project six months to a year after occupation to engage with the users and stakeholders. Feedback on the project outcome and design process should be sought internally and with clients as part of the review and development process.

Documenting engagement on projects not only supports the development of statements of community involvement for planning applications, but it also provides a record of learning; identifying what processes were successful and which methods need improvement and development. This learning can then come full circle within design teams to bring the most up to date processes to all new projects.

Carry out engagement plan

Continual development and learning

Identify areas for improvement

Feedback for future engagement plans

Step 7 summary:

Engage with users post occupation. Make sure lessons learned are fed back into new projects to continually develop and improve.

8: Case studies

The following case studies give examples of engagement techniques that have been used by Stride Treglown to meaningfully inform and integrate key stakeholders in the design process.

They include:

- **Royal Holloway University London** - using digital engagement to keep staff and students informed.
- **Congresbury Village Hall & Community Centre, North Somerset** - co-designing with a local community to develop their community centre scheme proposals.
- **Paignton Town Centre Masterplan** - using a mixture of workshops and drop in events to develop designs for a town-wide masterplan.
- **National Maritime Museum -** collaborating and co-designing with departmental staff to get the building strategy right from the start.
- **The Deaf Academy** - focused workshops with staff and students to get this bespoke building type working in the best way possible to suit the needs of the users.

Royal Holloway University London Planning Framework, 2019

Project summary
Stride Treglown's Planning team was appointed by the University to coordinate a series of ten separate development projects being undertaken by different teams, some of which included Stride Treglown's architectural studio. The individual projects varied significantly in scale and programme; they included a new faculty building, road infrastructure, landscape works, a large student accommodation village and an enterprise centre. Our role was to keep stakeholders informed of progress on each project and assure them that the University was working hard to deliver change across the campus coherently.

Aims and objectives of the engagement
The aim of the engagement was to present the ten individual projects to the on-campus academic community, as well as the wider local community, in a logical and unified manner. This approach helped to better inform people of the proposed changes, enabled stakeholders to provide feedback at the appropriate time, and helped to eliminate confusion with such a variety of development projects in the pipeline.

Who did you engage with and why?
Being a university campus, we engaged with the university's students and staff, as well as the local communities to the north in Englefield Green and to the south east. Some of the individual projects were of greater significance and relevance to the academic community, while the neighbouring community was more interested in other matters. The neighbouring community had been very vocal in previous engagement on the campus masterplan, so it was important to get them involved in the process again.

Techniques used to engage with stakeholders
Due to the varied nature of the individual projects, one of the most important and effective techniques was the rolling programme of monthly drop in sessions in the library on campus. This allowed us to focus attention on a small number of projects in any one month, especially if one of them was reaching a particular milestone, such as an imminent planning submission.

The other key technique was the digital repository we created on a standalone website linked to the University's main website. This portal provided all the information made available to the public for each project, as well as providing useful background information on the campus, such as the University's site management strategies and the campus masterplan. Also provided were digital surveys, information on project programmes and the engagement boards used in the drop-in sessions.

What aspect of the engagement was particularly successful?
The University risked creating confusion if there hadn't been an overarching engagement approach. The ability to use this approach to adapt to changing priorities and pressures was well received, and made it very easy to use. Minor updates to a project, which might otherwise have not been deemed to be significant enough to warrant a standalone engagement session, was easily given a platform within the wider engagement process.
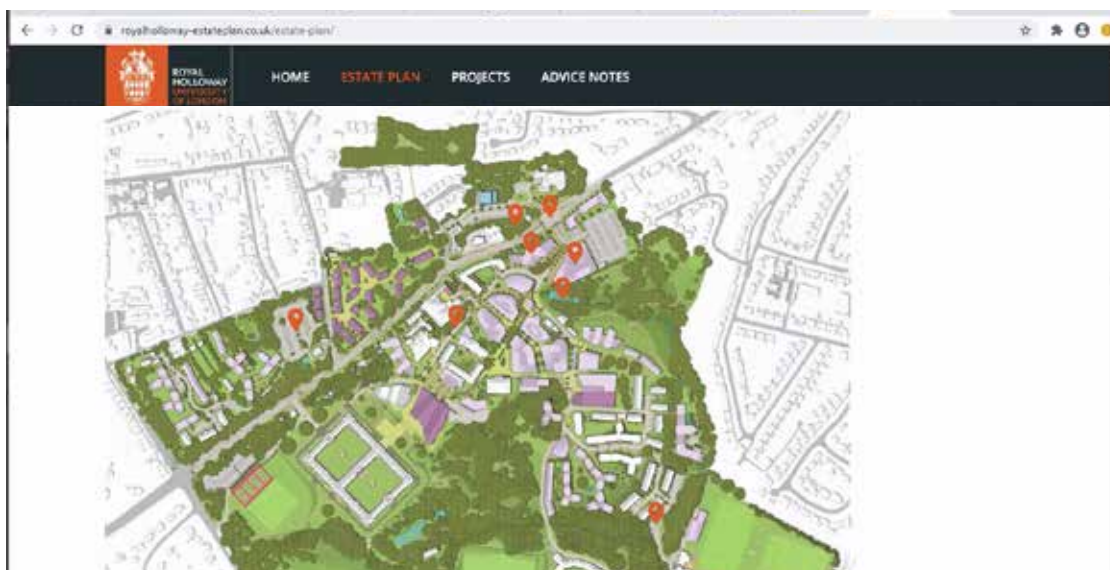
Congresbury Village Hall & Community Centre
North Somerset, 2014

Project summary
Stride Treglown was appointed to undertake designs for a new multi-use building on behalf of Congresbury New Village Hall Development Trust and the local community of Congresbury, North Somerset. The proposed development looks to replace the existing Recreation Club, which is in a poor state of repair, and small Tennis Pavilion with a new village hall and community centre building. The brief was to accommodate all the existing activities, including cricket and tennis, as well as offer a wide range of additional sports and activities, some of which do not currently exist in the village. These included a large multi-use hall and community café.

With a strong community ethos, it was appropriate for the project to follow the Community Right to Build route to obtain planning. Community Right to Build acts are similar to a Neighbourhood Development Order where a local group can submit applications for small-scale development that benefits the local community. This meant Congresbury New Village Hall Development Trust could access further grants and funding for the project.

The project successfully obtained planning consent via an independent examiner review, then a 70% successful referendum vote in November 2016.

The project has a tight budget of approx. £2m construction value. Fundraising efforts are ongoing to enable technical design to begin and secure contractor input. They are keen to maintain the community rhetoric and hope to include local trades, materials and members of the community in the build process.

Aims and objectives of the engagement
With the Community Right to Build process, one half of a community organisation's members must live in the neighbourhood area, and the development must be proposed for the benefit of the community, not for private gain. Proposals are subject to testing by an independent review, and is ultimately decided by a community referendum. If over 50% of the villagers who vote support the proposal then the local authority (in this case, North Somerset District Council) will 'make' the order, the equivalent of planning consent.

The engagement process was critical in such a community-oriented project. We wanted the local community to feel they had a part in the design process - that it wasn't just designed by us. We felt this was key for the local community to support the proposal in the referendum and ensure a successful building best suited for their needs and uses.

The key aims of the engagement were therefore:
• Make sure the building was flexible and suited for multi-use for all end users and key stakeholders
• Involve as many end users and key stakeholders in the design process and maintain a community ethos throughout the project
• Ensure the proposal is supported by the local community to achieve a successful referendum result

Who did you engage with?
• Key stakeholders and end user groups
• Wider community
• Local Parish council

Techniques used to engage with stakeholders
As well as a public consultation event where members of the Parish Council, local newspaper and interested parties attended and shared feedback on the design, we also carried out the following more focused activities:

• A key stakeholder meeting to understand more clearly the activities that were to take place in the new building and the user group requirements. This involved an activity for people to use cutout coloured card areas to spatially organise preferred layouts and understand required relationships between areas.
• We gave presentations and had regular meetings with a steering group.
• Congresbury New Village Hall Development

Trust members and other key stakeholders also played a key role in the engagement activities by sending out leaflets, surveys, and doing community events to help spread awareness and include other members of the community in the design process.

What were the key findings?
We were able to determine what the key relationships were between spaces for different users, groups and activities. We also learned that flexibility of the internal space was really important.

How did this impact the design development?
It meant a smaller footprint could be achieved with flexibility of multi-use areas within a tight budget. It also meant that the design was directed and supported by the community and end users; critical for planning and also invaluable to support the building management post completion.

What aspect of the engagement was particularly successful?
Everyone was really engaged with the activities and felt they were involved in the design process. The success of the engagement can be seen through 70% successful referendum result, one of the first projects in the UK to achieve planning consent via CRtB.

What could have been done better?
1. The layout went through a lot of iterations. This is inevitable with the number of stakeholders and end users but perhaps could have been controlled better by us with definitive rounds in the design process. We were all relatively new to this engagement style and we hadn't anticipated how far we would have to accommodate changes and iterations.

2. Understanding the funding avenues available to the client and subsequent budget from the start. Due to the Community Right to Build process being recently launched at the time, budget goalposts changed several times throughout the project, which ultimately changed the brief during the design process.

Paignton Town Centre Masterplan, 2015

Project summary

Stride Treglown was appointed to prepare a Town Centre masterplan for Paignton within the context of the emerging Torbay Local Plan. The strategy was designed to align with relevant plan policies and local needs. The Torbay Local Plan identifies the need for a rejuvenated town centre, harbour and waterfront.

Policy SDP2 of the Local Plan (Paignton Town Centre and Seafront) outlines a series of key employment and housing sites, the latter noting an aim to deliver 460 dwellings within the town centre in the period to 2032. Policy TC1 Town Centres provides further support for these aims. Other policies recognise the seafront, harbour side and Green Coastal Park as locations for retention, improvement and as locations for new attractions/facilities, including Paignton Harbour.

Aims and objectives of the engagement

The aim of the programme of consultation was to ensure that the Paignton Town Centre masterplan reflected the council's brief to prepare a viable and deliverable rejuvenation of the town centre which responded, where possible, to the views of the local community; and is fully informed by the constraints and opportunities associated with the masterplan area. The Consultation and Engagement Strategy for Paignton Town Centre was guided by a set of Key Objectives. These included, but were not limited to the need to:
• identify and engage with a wide range of local people, key individuals and organisations to obtain their views on the regeneration of the town centre;
• confirm those key constraints and opportunities that the masterplan would need to address;
• encourage dialogue between a wide range of stakeholder groups and individuals;
• facilitate dialogue between the design team at Stride Treglown, the local community and key stakeholders;
• build on past consultations;
• facilitate an informed contribution by participants through the clear presentation of area study information; and
• clarify the masterplanning process and how participants could best get involved.

The consultation was carried out in distinct phases, over a period of several months. This staggered approach allowed the development of the masterplan to be informed by the feedback received, and to present the feedback to interested parties.

Techniques used to engage

In order to ensure that a wide range of local residents could be involved in the masterplanning process, web based consultation as well as a Drop in Day were organised. The venue for the Drop in Day (Paignton Club) was chosen as an accessible venue for people living and working in the town.

An online survey was prepared and was extended to run for a total of 6 weeks to allow people additional time to respond. Hard copy questionnaires were available at the venue and stakeholder workshop days.

The Drop in Day was widely advertised. A flyer was designed in consultation with Torbay Council and Paignton Neighbourhood Forum. This invited people to the Drop in Day and provided contact details for the Stride Treglown team. Around 700 flyers were delivered around the town to residential dwellings and commercial properties. The Drop in Session was also publicised through the Torbay Borough Council website and via email to a range of community organisations, businesses, schools and colleges. A list of those organisations that received the flyer via email was jointly prepared with the Council.

Who was engaged?

Using our Communication Matrix as a base, a list of key stakeholders was drawn up in consultation with Torbay Council. Selected stakeholders were invited to an interactive workshop. As many landowners and developers as possible were contacted, as well as; statutory consultees, local business organisations, developers and community based organisations.

In order to ensure that all those attending the Drop in Day and Stakeholder Workshop were informed of the key constraints and opportunities in the area, a summary of the site analysis carried out by the Stride Treglown Masterplanning team was presented on a series of boards and exhibited at both events. The results of the analysis were also provided on the Stride Treglown website and

advertised via a link on the online survey as well as through the Torbay Council website.

A review of previous consultations was carried out. This helped to inform the site analysis and to identify key questions for the masterplan consultation and interactive sessions at the facilitated stakeholder workshop.

The Drop in Day and stakeholder workshop were designed to inform, maximise the dialogue between participants and the design team, and facilitate dialogue between participants. The Drop in Day was also viewed as an opportunity to inform people of the masterplanning process and how they might best get involved.

60 people attended the Paignton Town Centre Masterplan Drop in Day. Participants generally spent at least an hour discussing the masterplan with the Stride Treglown team, the result being good quality and in-depth feedback from those that attended.

A number of themes emerged throughout the day, which focused on ways in which people felt the town should be improved. Opinions and ideas on a number of key potential development sites in the town were also sought. The stakeholder workshop was held on the following day. The session was attended by representatives of the following organisations, including but not limited to; Paignton Harbour Master, Torbay Business Forum, Paignton BID, Community Partnership, Paignton Neighbourhood Forum, Torbay Development Agency, Residents Saving Victoria Park, English Heritage, Paignton Heritage Society, residential association, Local Ward Councillors and representatives from the Strategic Planning, Highways and Urban Design & Conservation departments of Torbay Council.

What were the key findings?
The stakeholder workshop revealed a similar range of issues to the Drop in Day on 23rd April. Paignton's strengths were highlighted,

and participants felt these were often not well advertised or marketed. In particular, participants highlighted the beach, the range of activities on offer, the steam railway, independent retailers, harbour area and proximity with Brixham/ Torquay as positive attributes.

A number of key stakeholders were unable to attend the workshop sessions. Therefore follow-up meetings were attended, telephone calls and emails were exchanged with a range of stakeholders in the following 3 month period in order to obtain their feedback on the initial concept plans for the town. An extended Stakeholder consultation list was drawn up with input from Torbay Council and Torbay Development Agency.

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was submitted to the Council with the Draft Masterplan and underwent a separate formal round of consultation. The SCI identified 12 areas where the Paignton Town Centre Masterplan had been developed and/or amended to accommodate the views, ideas and responses from local residents, businesses, community organisations and statutory consultees.

The second round of consultation generated a high degree of support from a wide range of interests, including those who were originally concerned with the scale of change proposed. The Masterplan has been subsequently revised to address technical issues and "next steps" in relation to drainage and water management and is soon to be endorsed as a Supplementary Planning Document.

What lessons did you learn?
In relation to lessons learned, we found it difficult to engage with the younger population of the town. The Town Centre regeneration discussions prior to our engagement were politically driven in part, with two groups of interested parties leading the agenda and the debate. The degree to which previous consultations had been organised had sought young peoples' views were varied. In hindsight, the use of QR codes displayed on the leaflet drop notification may have been a helpful mechanism to engage with young people. We had also offered to attend the local school(s) in the area to talk about the masterplan as a vehicle for a discussion around place and safety. Unfortunately this was not possible, but could have supported a balanced approach that addressed the advantages and disadvantages of development, thereby supporting debate about mitigation measures.

National Maritime Museum 2015 - 2018

Project summary

The Royal Museums Greenwich's (RMG) Collections and Conservation function was spread across five sites. This created logistical difficulties when transporting collections between locations for photography and conservation treatment. The museum's previous Conservation Studio, Feathers Place, was within an old school building which did not provide the environment to best deliver their conservation tasks. The purpose of the redevelopment was to provide the museum with new modern stores, photography and conservation studios, creating a new centre of excellence for RMG's conservation work.

RMG wished to maintain and improve their operations at one site in Kidbrooke as well as allow for public tours to educate and inform visitors.

Stride Treglown provided architecture, planning and landscape services to this project with a value of £10.8m.

Aims and objectives of the engagement

Due to the bespoke nature of this project, museum stakeholder engagement meetings were organised to provide weekly progress reports and to engage staff in the design process.

Department leaders were presented with diagrams that displayed specific information from the room data sheets in an understandable and graphically interesting way. The graphics and diagrams illustrated not only data, but highlighted groups of spaces with similar requirements: identical temperature requirement, ceiling heights, intended staff capacity etc. These requirements, along with the needs of the stakeholders, heavily influenced the design and led to a well-informed, functional scheme.

Who did you engage with?

For the main engagement stage early in the project, attendees would usually include the Head of Special Projects, Head of Estates and a selection of heads of department depending on the agenda. As the end users these individuals were best placed to make design decisions relating to the everyday operation of the new facility.

What techniques were used to engage with stakeholders?

Early stakeholder engagement meetings were held weekly for 5 weeks. The purpose was to:

• Listen to the client to really understand their needs, their workflow, how they used current facilities and what was involved in their day-to-day jobs.
• Visit all the existing facilities, spread across five sites, to shadow people and departments. We collected lots of data on daily activities and cross-departmental working and communication.
• Interrogate the brief by learning more about how the museum functions in existing facilities and ask questions of stakeholders to find out aspects of the brief that were vital and parts that were 'nice to have'.
• Inform stakeholders on design development and decisions taking place.
• Collaborate with stakeholders to determine how facilities and rooms should be connected, clustered and combined.
• Test design ideas with stakeholders to ensure their needs were being met.
The stakeholder engagement plan to the left illustrates the weekly milestones covered during
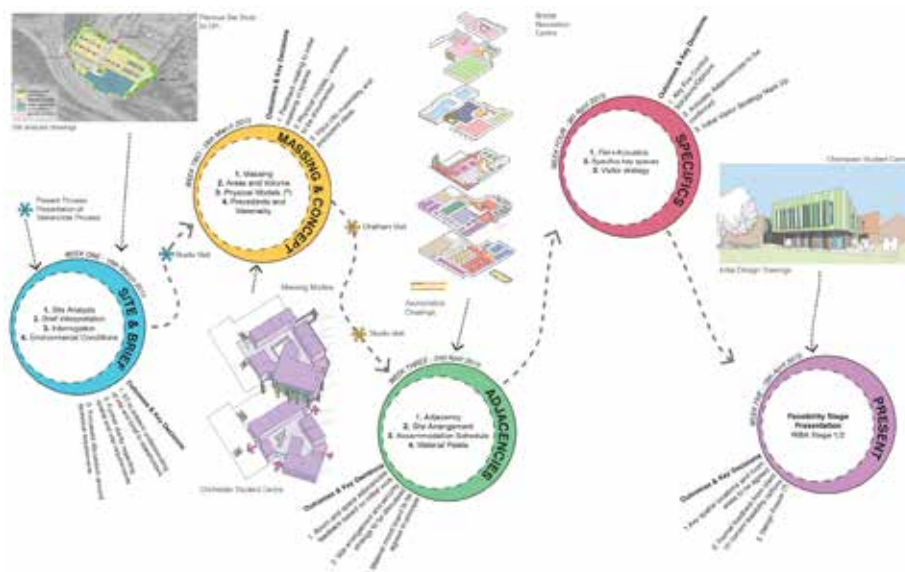
the initial 5 week consultation process.

The co-design process involved making models and compiling diagrams during each session. We focused on making clear and engaging graphics as a critical method to communicate with the stakeholders, who were not experienced in reading plans.

Diagrams and maps were made which showed things like building user numbers and department adjacencies in order to evidence visually the rationale for having connections between certain spaces. For example, the conservation lab needed to be next to the loading bay because they often they have large and heavy objects deliveries.

Simple scale diagrams displayed a room's requirements using graphics or colours to denote various parameters. So, for example, a big red circle represented a 100m2 photography lab. And a small blue circle represented a 20m2 conservation facility. This allowed the team to convey design ideas simply and quickly so that time in meetings could be spent progressing the design rather than just explaining drawings. The workshops allowed the stakeholders to see the spaces in relation to each other as the process evolved from room schedules into a plan.
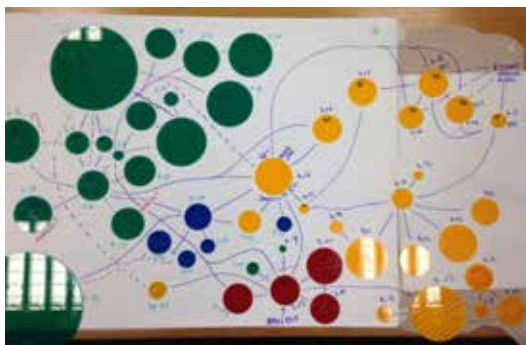
How did this impact the design process?
Involving the end user in such an active way meant that every design decision at this strategic stage was explained to the stakeholders. The beginning of each meeting would start with a recap of what was asked for in the last and the decisions that had been made over the week.

This gave us confidence that the needs of the stakeholders were being met. The intention was to create a feasibility study, driven by the end users' needs, which would meet the approval of all the stakeholders at an early stage. In this way, the chance of variations later in the process, and risk associated with time and cost, could be reduced.

By talking to the end users at the beginning of the project, we had more data and therefore more knowledge of how the building was going to be used. So when we got into the later work stages,

there were less surprises.
At the later detailed design stages of the project, the floor plans remained pretty much as they were at the end of the second round of engagement sessions. So through doing that initial engagement, we saved ourselves time down the line.

Overall, it reduced the risk of things needing to be changed at the last minute, which has huge advantages in relation to cost, specification, M&E and fire rating.

What other benefits were there?
Well, the building was essentially designed by the people who are now using it. So when they moved in, they knew their way around, exactly the size of their room and that the new build accounted for all of their kit and machinery.

The other thing we're really proud of is the increase in the amount of communication across departments. The museum says the building has provided opportunities to connect. Not only because they're all now based in the same building, but the way that we've designed the building means that the people you need to communicate with are always just a couple of doors down the corridor. Everyone's purposefully adjacent to the people that they need to communicate with.

What did you learn that provides useful insights for future engagement?
The information required for stakeholder meetings had to be thought about carefully so that the time allotted to meetings could be used efficiently. All the information presented had to be displayed in a way that was accessible and often very complex information needed to be displayed in a way that could be understood quickly. For example room data sheets or schedules would take hours to go through, as the requirements for each space were so different.

The contractor attended the initial engagement events with the purpose of observing the discussions and decision making. This enabled the contractor to be informed on the brief-setting and concept design rationale. This meant that, once the design was developed to a stage where their knowledge of construction was relevant, they had a greater understanding of stakeholder needs and why decisions had been made earlier in the process.

The Deaf Academy
2017 - 2020

Project Summary

The Deaf Academy, a non-maintained special school formerly based in Exeter, provides education for deaf young people. Instituted 190 years ago, the charity has places for around100 students (half are boarders) ranging in age from 4 to 24. In that sense it is very unusual, combining primary, secondary and further education under one roof. All of the students at the Academy are moderately to profoundly deaf and most have additional needs, including learning disabilities, autism, multi-sensory impairments and physical disabilities.

Having been on the same site in Exeter for a number of years the Academy realised that it was no longer viable to continue mending and adapting its existing premises. A wholesale move was the only sensible option. They eventually found a developed site owned by Plymouth University in Exmouth, a short distance south from their former home in Exeter. Situated in a quiet residential neighbourhood, the elongated 5+-acre plot includes various buildings, of mixed age and quality, surrounded by an area of mature trees.

The centrally-located Owen Building, completed in 2004, was to be retained. It features a central drum atrium serving a theatre and several other spaces that could be usefully remodelled. Surrounding it was a miscellaneous collection of buildings, many dilapidated beyond cost-effective reuse, which were demolished.

The Academy bought the site in September 2016, and Stride Treglown was appointed shortly after to help them to rationalise the existing assets and design new accommodation.

The project was handed over in August 2020. Architecture, Landscape, Building Surveying and Planning teams from Truro, Plymouth and Bristol have been involved in the project.

Aims and objectives of the engagement

The needs of Deaf Students and Staff are unique and it was vital that we understood the challenges they face, both in teaching environments and also in the residential setting. We undertook research into best practice design for deaf people including the work Gallaudet University and their DeafSpace design standards. Key considerations included:
• Moving around whilst signing
• Visual communication
• Privacy
• Using reflective surfaces to give a sense of presence when you can't hear

Once we had researched these requirements we also wanted to test them with the users of our new building to check that they didn't have any additional requirements. We also wanted to engage with them regarding non deaf-specific requirements including colour and FF&E preferences.

What techniques were used to engage with stakeholders?

We engaged staff and students throughout the project through a series of meetings, presentations and physical mocking-up of areas of space in their existing building. The main aim for this was to help them appreciate what was being proposed for the new spaces in their new building. Every consultation event included a sign language translator to communicate between the design team and the staff and/or students. This was important with a number of staff being deaf too It was essential to make the events as accessible as possible.

At the beginning of the project we shadowed staff to best understand their operations and how the space worked for activities and throughout the day. Overall, about five formal consultations with staff took pace during RIBA Stage 2 and 3. We also met with a core client team for design team meetings every two weeks for two months during this key design stage too. The following focused engagement activities were included in our engagement strategy:

1. Bedroom Mock ups

We needed to collaborate with the staff to work out and agree an optimum size for the standard bedroom sizes and layouts in order to get the right balance of efficiency, design, space and light. We did this by marking out the bedroom layouts with masking tape at 1:1 scale in the school hall to occupy, study and discuss them. It was also used as a tool for carefully informing students of upcoming changes, which was a really important method to manage change with such a vulnerable user group (some of the students are on the autistic spectrum or have other complex needs).

2. Classroom design

We worked closely with staff on the classroom design. For this school a unique set up was required where every two classrooms has a break out area, which they call a Da Vinci Space – primarily a space for art and science – hence the Leonardo Da Vinci reference. It is open to the corridor and a place for students to get some space from other students in the classroom or as a space to break out or collaborate together. The key issue was to work out how much visual connection and transparency was appropriate for the classroom walls between the break out space. Full glass, or a goldfish bowl would be very distracting as students are able to communicate or 'talk' through glass walls. This

would also make it difficult for staff to have private conversations here. So 3D layout models were made with vertical clear or solid walls to discuss the best solution for the method of breaking up the classroom spaces.

3. Colours and finishes

Over two days we had several meetings with each of the members of staff responsible for different subjects, spaces and classrooms to discuss and agree the colours and finishes for every space. While this was time consuming, it was an effective way of talking it through one on one and ensuring each staff member understood, agreed and supported the choices.

What were the key findings of the engagement?

The engagement gave us a really good understanding of how the students and staff operate, and particularly enabled us to realise the differences with mainstream teaching.

At the start we were informed that teaching would be best carried out in a circle to allow everyone to communicate with each other, but through our conservations we soon learned that older students learn better in rows to reduce the distraction of them all being able to sign to each other. Therefore, an important design decision for us was to ensure that the furniture layout could be flexible so it could be rearranged to allow for different study environments.

How did this impact the design process?

Generally the engagement was fundamental in determining the design and organisation of the building.

What didn't go so well and provides useful learning for the future?

We didn't foresee the amount of time it would take to carry out these critical engagement activities. Or the time it would take to carry out the training and informing work which was needed to support this lay client group with tailored requirements for communication. Some fundamental staff changes throughout the process led to changes to the brief; we have had three different head teachers throughout the length of the project.

So our learning was the importance of recording decisions carefully to pass on from one client group to another and using this as a working and evolving brief for managing clear sign-off processes along the way.

Meet the team
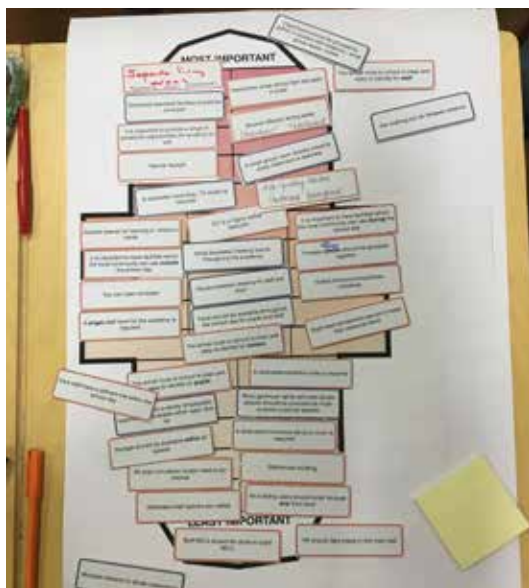
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