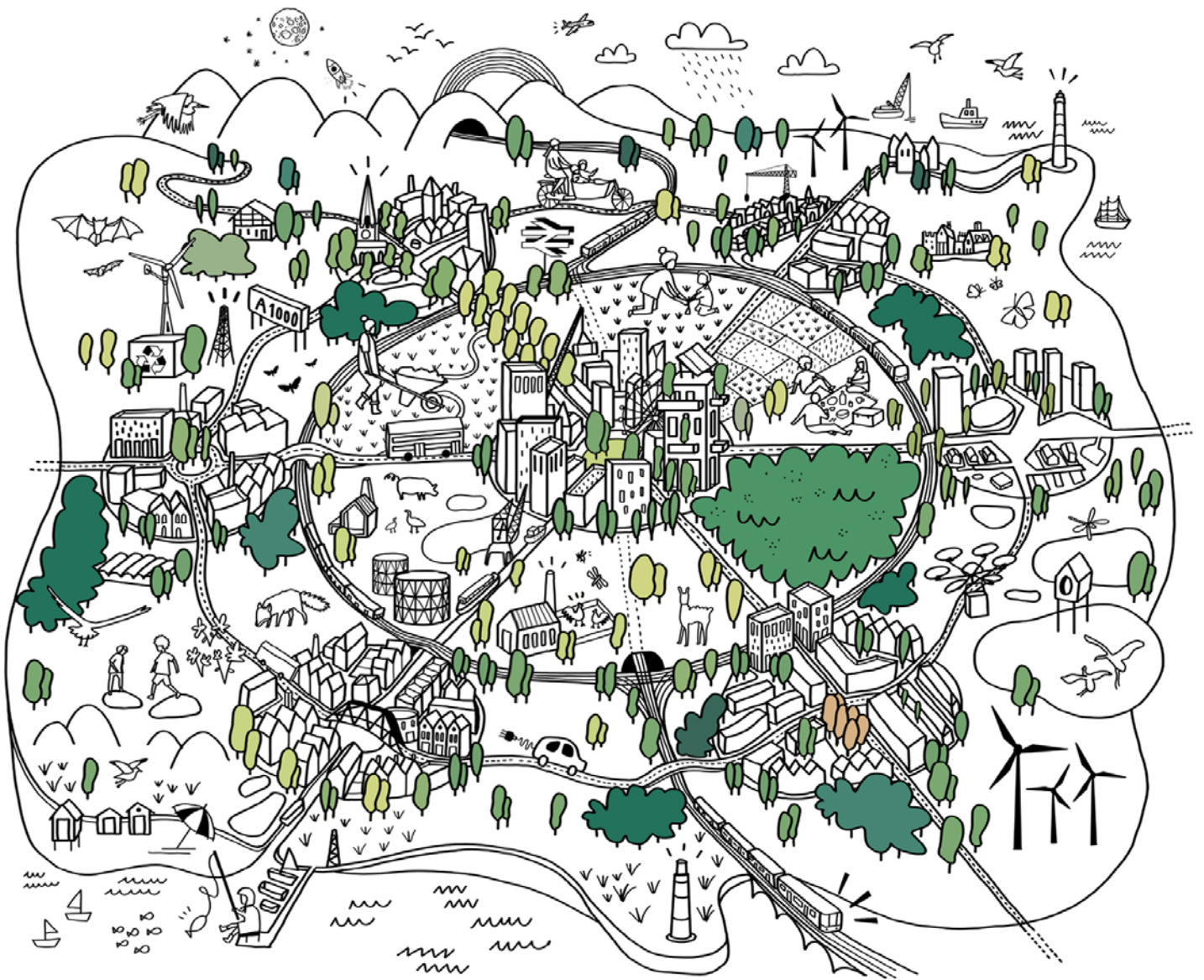


# FUTURE PLACE

Unlocking the Potential of Places



The **Royal Institute of British Architects** champions better buildings and places, stronger communities and higher environmental standards through the practice of architecture. With government and our partners, we work to improve the design quality of public buildings, new homes and communities.

**Homes England's** mission is to intervene in the market to ensure more homes are built in areas of greatest need, to improve affordability. We make this sustainable by creating a more resilient and diverse housing market.

The **Local Government Association** works on behalf of our member councils to support, promote and improve local government. We aim to influence and set the political agenda on the issues that matter to councils so they are able to deliver local solutions to national problems.

**Local Partnerships** helps local authorities with their responsibilities to shape and create place-based growth, by working impartially and collaboratively across all parts of central, local and regional government and the devolved administrations.

The **RTPI** champions the power of planning in creating prosperous places and vibrant communities. As a learned society, we use our expertise and research to bring evidence and thought leadership to shape planning policies and thinking.

The **Chartered Institute of Housing** supports housing professionals to create a future in which everyone has a place to call home, and to ensure that homes are genuinely affordable, safe and good quality, in a community that is thriving.

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# Foreword

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The Future Place initiative was devised to give new impetus to good practice in placemaking. This report highlights the first exemplars from the initial round of the Future Place programme.

The breadth of organisations supporting Future Place reflects the value of bringing together the processes of planning and delivery, with clear-sighted design, to create successful places and deliver better outcomes for people.

Placemaking has never been more important: it has the new urgency of multiple challenges – from climate change and resilience to economic and demographic change – which face our communities, towns and urban centres. Tackling these pressing issues will require multiple cross-sector interests and disciplines to work together decisively, rapidly and creatively.

This approach to placemaking encompasses strategic level thinking about how towns, cities and city-regions might develop – whether through designing interventions in the public realm, extending and building new settlements, rethinking the occupation of space or through regenerative development.

Critically, Future Place is a partnership which focuses the remits, skills and resources of a range of national organisations with an interest in this agenda – to support innovative planning, design, delivery and funding models at a local level through expert advice, capacity building and knowledge sharing.

By viewing the challenges of an area through the lens of place, the range of public sector policies and programmes impacting upon that place can be considered in a holistic way. This enables tailored local solutions to emerge which both join up policy objectives in a coordinated approach and deliver outcomes that are greater than the sum of the parts.

I congratulate Ben Derbyshire, then President of the RIBA, for initiating this project; Lucy Carmichael and colleagues at the RIBA for taking it forward; key players from the Local Government Association, Homes England, Local Partnerships, Royal Town Planning Institute, and the Chartered Institute of Housing who have collaborated to make the first year of Future Place such a success.

As this report shows, the first round has provided ample evidence in support of the Future Place model for developing visions for our urban and rural places, towns and cities which generate a new set of relationships to underpin delivery. As the project matures, a broader coalition of partners will be joining in support of the initiative. This will bring even greater breadth and depth to an already imaginative approach to plan, design and deliver better places for all.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Best". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Lord Richard Best**

## Executive summary

The Future Place programme has recognised the role of placemaking as the new lens through which growth and regeneration must be viewed to enable local solutions to the critical issues facing settlements, towns and cities across the country.

In order that all places in the UK optimise outcomes and fulfil their intrinsic potential, this approach must apply as much to areas in need of 'levelling up' as areas of rapid growth and high demand.

The first round of the programme brought together an alignment of key organisations – The RIBA, Local Government Association with Local Partnerships, Homes England, the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Chartered Institute of Housing – to pool their combined resources to support five Future Place local authorities. Their collective focus was to accelerate critical local placemaking challenges identified as having the potential for transformational impact.

In each case, the wider Future Place programme and targeted placemaking commission has helped to strengthen knowledge and commitment – bringing a new impetus to the authority to prioritise placemaking. As well as moving placemaking up the corporate agenda, the programme has reinforced collaborative working. Creative and innovative future thinking has been applied to the issues identified which will be acted upon in different ways.

All Future Places reported that the architects uncovered challenges and opportunities they were not previously aware of, that the programme has developed their original vision positively and that they plan to undertake further development to build on the work carried out.

The five Future Places all consider that they have benefitted from the national exposure the programme has provided both in terms of profile and senior-level relations with the partner bodies. As the programme gains in impetus this benefit should be amplified.

The RIBA Chartered Practices matched to each location have demonstrated the breadth of skills that architects bring to analysing the profound challenges places face in re-configuring to meet present and future needs. They engaged communities and developed imaginative, sustainable and inclusive place-based solutions, while responding to and articulating the essential character and culture of a place.

Each of the Future Places brought considerable existing knowledge and expertise. All five practices welcomed the opportunities the Future Place programme created for architects to work with well-informed and committed local authority clients on the strategic design of places – as well as the broader value the programme is bringing in changing attitudes towards the role of the profession in collaborative placemaking.

While every Future Place has different geographical, economic, demographic and cultural characteristics requiring a place specific design approach, a number of broad cross-cutting urban design matters emerged which merit thorough interrogation.

The Future Place programme demonstrates the need for, and value of, action research and pilot projects to innovate market-facing and practically applied urban design thinking across all of these common themes to generate robust, deliverable, fundable solutions to the critical challenges facing our towns and cities.

Sharing professional knowledge of comparable situations around the UK and internationally is central to the next stage of the Future Place programme. As the Future Place platform is established and populated, a searchable, open source resource will help identify the key relevant conditions for delivery in a particular location and inspire optimal new placemaking solutions.

All Future Places reported that the architects uncovered challenges and opportunities they were not previously aware of, that the programme has developed their original vision positively and that they plan to undertake further development to build on the work carried out.

“Future Place is a partnership for sustainable placemaking. We have established effective collaboration at the level of the national institutions who have contributed to the first year of the project. This has been replicated in the co-creation of visions for beneficial change in each of five local authorities.

We have demonstrated the essential contribution of architects as urbanists working to engage stakeholders with interdisciplinary process, each leading to a collective and distinctively local vision. As the Government considers how best to take forward the recommendations of its own 'Living with Beauty' report, we urge it to consider what has been achieved in our first year and work with us as we go forward to our second.”

Ben Derbyshire, Past President RIBA and Future Place Champion

# Future-facing Action Research

## Evidencing the Necessary Conditions for Places where People want to Live

“ We need to promote partnerships between planners and designers, centred on a localised approach and demonstrating a genuine understanding of the challenges and opportunities at each particular site. ”

Ten Characteristics of Places where People want to Live, RIBA, 2018

In October 2018 the RIBA published its report ‘Ten Characteristics of Places where People want to Live’ demonstrating the critical relationship between design quality and the rate of build-out in the delivery of affordable housing and new neighbourhoods. The report provided evidence for the link between high quality placemaking and project value, both in a financial sense and across a range of social value measures. Through case study analysis of attractive and successful new schemes, the report highlighted the ten characteristics of places where people want to live, demonstrating that these can be easily replicated both in new build schemes and regeneration projects.

‘Ten Characteristics of Places where People want to Live’ focused on residentially-led development but provided a starting point for the broader placemaking work championed by the Future Place project.

The report makes the case for a set of overarching principles for successful placemaking – starting with the strategic placemaking decisions which define the nature of development in relation to its physical and socio-economic context; describing the setting for new development emerging from the layers of existing landscape and built environment; considering the townscape and housing typologies which form an enjoyable, diverse and inclusive neighbourhoods; and outlining the character and quality experienced through high quality and authentic materials and details. The final two characteristics show how the places and homes described are future-proofed through sustainable and healthy design.

It is equally important that the right environment and conditions are in place to deliver these places where people want to live. High quality design is essential, but it must be founded in the right leadership, the right funding and delivery models, the right collaborative and innovative processes, and the right skills and resources.

The Future Place programme took the form of action research applying and evidencing in practice the following necessary conditions for successful placemaking:

**Strategic stakeholder-led planning:** A new, integrated, approach to decision making is needed which enables different stakeholder bodies and communities across a region to collaborate to develop strategic spatial frameworks with a strong place dimension which set out clear and complementary holistic policy ambitions.

**Excellent community engagement:** The community should be engaged from an early stage and in an accessible and participatory way to allow people to genuinely contribute to shaping their neighbourhoods, towns and cities. Locking communities out of the decision-making process can lead to resentment and resistance to change, and risks creating places which do not work for the people who live there.

**Local planning:** Delivering sustainable and inclusive growth requires a local approach, centred on an up to date Local Plan. The principle of subsidiarity should be uppermost, ensuring that decisions affecting both the quantum and quality of development are taken at the right level.

**Local authority capacity:** Effective plan-making and placemaking should begin with ensuring local authority planning departments across all regions are adequately resourced to develop ambitious plans. There remains extensive expertise at the local level to champion place and design excellence – provided that it is appropriately prioritised and focused. New ways of working and the opportunity to make a significant difference to a local area can reinvigorate local authority planning departments, secure experienced planners within public practice and encourage young planners.

**Leadership and commitment:** High level political and executive commitment to embracing the long term benefits of high quality design are prerequisites of successful placemaking. Promoting the strong civic leadership necessary can only be achieved if those driving the process are supported in their role to ensure the quality of the built environment

**Collaboration:** Wider collaboration between relevant local organisations across the public sector is needed to ensure adequate planning for the needs of new neighbourhoods. Innovative public-private partnering arrangements benefit public interest by optimising land-use, securing return on investment and embedding environmental gains and social value.

### 10 CHARACTERISTICS OF PLACES WHERE PEOPLE WANT TO LIVE

1. The right place for the right housing: establishing the place (in the right location)
2. A place to start and a place to stay: fostering the community
3. A place which fosters a sense of belonging: creating a distinctive identity
4. A place to live in nature: greening the neighbourhood
5. A real place to enjoy and be proud of: building an engaging place
6. A place with a choice of homes: accommodating changing lifestyles
7. A place with unique and lasting appeal: building in character and quality
8. A place where people feel at home: giving form to the idea of home
9. A sustainable place for future generations: future-proofing a place for tomorrow
10. A place where people thrive: promoting health and wellbeing

## The New Focus on Place

The publication of the *Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission Report* in January 2020 reinforced the increasing focus on quality of 'place' as a policy objective and that reinforced that high quality design can accelerate delivery and value in housing-led schemes, as well as supporting public buy-in.

“ Our built environment and our natural resources belong together. Both should be protected and enhanced for the long-term benefit of communities that depend upon them. Settlements should be renewed, regenerated and cared for. . . New developments should enhance the environment in which they occur, adding to the health, sustainability and biodiversity of their context. ”

The report identified the central role that well-designed places play in securing better public health, stronger communities, sustainability, resilience and more competitive and productive places.

Placemaking is increasingly acknowledged as the core aim which binds together multiple public policy agendas with the specific physical opportunities of a locality, and which should therefore be championed at a senior level within local authorities and their partner organisations.

Equally, the exercise of placemaking is becoming a defined discipline, bringing to bear a range of processes and techniques to inform well-considered strategic policy on one hand, and project briefing, design development and delivery on the other. Inherent in successful placemaking is the capacity to broker buy-in, encourage collaborative working and ensure that all relevant stakeholder groups have been properly and imaginatively engaged in project definition and development.

The Future Place project explores the interface between the emerging placemaking role and the challenges and opportunities this represents to design practices working with local authorities. The programme has been designed as a dynamic process through which all partner organisations collaborate to identify innovative and effective practice in this rapidly evolving area.

The priorities identified by the respective local authorities as the focus for the strategic placemaking commissions raises the question of how public-realm projects, regenerative and economic development and community engagement can be funded and delivered.



*Building Better Building Beautiful: Urban design matters for health and happiness*

While the delivery of housing remains a government priority channelled through Homes England's grant, investment and land interventions, separate funding regimes from other organisations are emerging in parallel with the advent of the Town's Fund, Future High Streets Fund and its sister High Street Heritage Action Zones initiative. Meanwhile the Department of Transport's Transforming Cities fund is enabling public realm works as well as local transport measures, while the LEPs have some place funding capacity via their Growing Places Fund.

Feedback from the five Future Places suggests that the fragmented nature of the present funding landscape makes coordinated strategic planning for regeneration and growth difficult, and resourcing successive bidding rounds is demanding on officer time and capacity. Different priorities between these funds often means that bids are written to secure the funding rather than the optimal overall objective; a balanced and imaginative approach to achieving the potential of a place.

Grasping the challenge of 'levelling up' and enabling regeneration across the country will require a coordinated approach to funding, overall aims and processes so that an overall 'place' proposition precedes and informs funding considerations.

**Gail Mayhew**, Building Better Building Beautiful Commissioner

# Strategic Planning and Placemaking

The future well-being of communities and the creation of more and better jobs in a competitive economy is being put at risk if we do not integrate high-level strategic planning for sustainability, resilience, productivity and good growth across administrative boundaries.

It is increasingly accepted that a nation's prosperity is dependent on the success of its towns and cities. In many countries, cities produce more output per worker than average and more output within growing economic sectors. Urban living can also be more environmentally sustainable, with city dwellers producing substantially lower carbon emissions than residents of non-city areas.

But in addition, the functioning of cities depends on relationships with areas immediately surrounding them. These include both the obvious links such as commuting, but also business-to-business relationships, and connections between major institutions such as universities and hospitals and the areas in which they are located. There is a growing awareness of the need for a more symbiotic relationship between cities and their broader suburban and rural hinterlands – the 'city region'. Through investment in local public transport infrastructure and intensifying adjacent urban footprints to make them more mixed use and walkable, we can substantially contribute towards our goal of reducing carbon to net-zero by 2050. This approach is well illustrated in the Exeter Future Place commission.

The role of the countryside is also changing fast with productive agriculture in a state of flux; biodiversity recovery and soil repair becoming new priorities; increasing demand for active leisure, as well as rising numbers of people wishing to make their lives in rural areas. This redoubles the need for spatial and infrastructure coordination to wisely deploy our limited land and natural resources, while enhancing the intrinsic qualities of the rural and urban areas.

Meanwhile, retail and movement technology are radically changing, and our towns and cities are adapting to this uncertainty by looking for new opportunities to rethink the high street. What is certain is that people retain a need to congregate and enjoy collective experiences, lived locally. So while many retail business models are in a state of crisis at present, care must be taken not to foreclose on the potential of our high streets and town centres to fulfil their critical role of bringing people together to live, meet, trade, work and play, and to do so on a sustainable basis, accessed by foot, bike and public transport.

There is increasing evidence that 'place' also performs a strong role in productivity. By making work, home and leisure more proximate, people are enabled to live more productive, fulfilling lives and enjoy greater wellbeing. This means that in appropriate well-connected locations there is an opportunity to intensify settlement footprints to enable people to live more locally and productively. This can only be achieved if strategic planning and high-quality design are aligned. International experience further underlines that high quality places are more competitive places and are in the vanguard of attracting young dynamic businesses, people and therefore investment. Again, design and well-informed strategic scale planning has a role to play in delivering on this.



© Hilton Barnfield, *Interrelationships across the region*

There is an urgent need to recognise that people-oriented agendas such as education, skills, housing, wellbeing, health and social services have been driven by national institutions concerned with ensuring uniform provision but consequently poorly adapted to local urban contexts, and the reality of interfacing with high quality placemaking and regeneration on the ground. Critically, different layers of government (national, city-region and neighbourhood) need to be properly empowered for their respective tasks and to work together effectively. It is equally important for the different sectors with responsibility for policies in urban areas to work together within those places.

All of these core national policy objectives are delivered locally and have a place dimension which needs to be taken into account. Equally, it is important for the different sectors with responsibility for policies in urban areas to work together within those places. While there is some good practice around the world, this is not happening as much as it should. The solution is what we call "strategic planning". Successful cities and their surroundings need efficient transport, skilled workers, high quality housing, good public space and amenities.

In different countries, the critical challenge of marrying local concerns and wider issues across city-regions and other areas is being faced in a number of ways. Spatial planning is a discipline and profession which is critical to this process. On the one hand, how societies respond to this challenge has a strong influence on the effectiveness of spatial planning. On the other hand spatial planning provides sound insights into finding solutions.

The RTPI has looked at how planning has worked to cross administrative boundaries in a number of settings. We found that cooperation between local authorities brings major benefits to all the councils in a given area. Establishing informal channels of cooperation across wider civil society is a key factor in this process.

Following the principle of subsidiarity, it is clear that arrangements for strategic planning benefit from being locally designed. However, many national governments have not always followed this advice. Many attempts at successful strategic planning have floundered due to insufficiently wide scope. Strategic planning needs to cover a wide range of areas of public policy.



Failing to achieve deep political involvement, is one reason why effective strategic planning can be unduly limited. While all local stakeholders and the public are important in plan preparation, engagement of business can not only be elusive but also critical.

These are issues which are of core concern to the RTPI and its involvement in the Future Place programme has aimed to show how productive collaborative multi-scale planning and design can be. Future Place addresses this combination of strategic and specific placemaking through a series of exemplar projects. Inverting the top down process of planning, it starts with the place, within the context of the strategic scale issues. Each of the five locations illustrates different geographical, property market and urban design challenges. However all of the placemaking commissions highlight the complexity of translating high level visions and policies into robust, deliverable projects.



© RTPI, Glasgow City Council

The opportunity to embrace spatial strategies as the means by which to bridge high level thematic policy and placemaking is at the heart of the RTPI's interest in the Future Place programme. The five Future Place commissions have shown how all of these issues – sustainability, resilience, productivity, education, skills, housing, wellbeing, health, social services and transport – can and should be reconsidered and mediated through the lens of high quality placemaking. Each of the projects, in different ways, addresses a set of high-level policy ambitions and translates these into placemaking strategies.

The translation of strategic planning to work on the ground requires expertise from a range of professional backgrounds and skills. Inspirational and innovative emerging design must be grounded in the wider framework of clear strategic spatial, economic and infrastructure planning. It is through the combination of systematic planning using all of the innovative tools available – from spatial modelling to collaborative stakeholder involvement – married with innovative design that we will solve the urgent challenge to make all parts of the country competitive, productive, resilient and liveable.

The RTPI fully supports the focus of the Future Place programme on five places at a critical moment of change. As the programme evolves, there is a real opportunity to embrace both the particularity of the creative design challenge at a local level and system issues at a strategic level to achieve the genuinely transformational placemaking that will secure future health and economic growth, productivity and resilience.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Be locally driven**  
Governments can try to enforce mechanisms for strategic planning but these are less likely to work than when they emerge locally.
- **Cover more than just housing**  
Some past attempts have covered only “housing numbers” which means the key infrastructure needed is missing.
- **Have strong local political buy in**  
Unless the politicians across the wider area buy in to the process, it will stall in implementation.
- **Demonstrate close links with business**  
It is often hard to get businesses to engage with strategic concepts but unless you try, key support will be missing.
- **Reach beyond the boundaries of the strategic planning area**  
No geography is perfect and establishing a relationship outside the area planned will be the best way forward.

# Delivering a Better Future

At Homes England we have a very clear mission – to get more homes built in the areas of greatest need. But we also recognise that creating great places which future generations will want to call home involves more than delivering housing numbers.

“ Good placemaking requires a combination of leadership, vision, skills, expertise and collaboration. In practice, this means we must work with partners across the public and private sector to create a more resilient and diverse housing market to support that common ambition. ”

The Future Place programme, led by RIBA, is one of the ways in which Homes England is engaging in joint ways of working. The initiative, which seeks to unlock placemaking potential at local level, has enabled the agency to build even stronger ties with partners.

Through Future Place we've engaged with Local Government Association, Local Partnerships, RTPI, CIH and RIBA to provide mutual support and exchange ideas as well as share knowledge and approaches on design and future thinking.

Ultimately, however, the way in which this combination of expertise is applied in real places is what makes a difference. It is clear to us that local authorities are at the heart of the housing solution, and the programme has served to build better links with local authorities with appetite for growth.

The broad mix of local authorities participating in the programme brings into sharp focus the variety of challenges faced by different places. No two housing markets are the same and it would be wrong for Homes England to apply a one-size-fits-all approach. We know that there are local obstacles to delivery and that we must be guided by local insight and leadership to meet local needs.

Since the Agency was established in January 2018, we have sought to act by using a tailored mix of land, money, people and powers to support local ambitions. Within the Future Place programme, each of the local authorities in the programme came with a specific ambition in mind.

There was a broad range of aspirations – from Bradford seeking to find innovative ways to consult diverse communities, Gateshead aiming to make meaningful improvements to health and wellbeing, Great Yarmouth's desire to stimulate heritage-friendly growth, Exeter looking for opportunities for high density placemaking and North Northamptonshire seeking to make the most of infrastructure.

In each of the cases we gained valuable insights from the design-led solutions that emerged from the five architects selected to support the programme. Using our market-knowledge and development expertise, we acted as a critical friend to local authorities and architects to ensure the thinking was practical as well as visionary.

More broadly, we've also shared a mix of best practice, innovative delivery models, cross-sector collaboration and capacity building.

Where appropriate, we've explored new market-making opportunities, instigating collaborations between the local authority and private sector developers and registered providers.

Whilst as a national agency we operate across the country, our work within the Future Place programme is most developed in Exeter. Here we are supporting the Exeter City Council to meet the challenge of high growth and affordability pressures.

Exeter City Council selected local architects Hilton Barnfield and the urban designer David Hawes as its Future Place team to devise a strategy for unlocking the placemaking potential of Exeter. The focus of the approach has been to deliver a vision for higher density, mixed-use, car free and carbon neutral development which promotes healthy and active lifestyles.

The Future Place team has done this by mapping out the distinctive 'districts' that make up the city and highlighting the design elements required in each of these separate areas to deliver the overall vision – essentially producing a clear and usable 'toolkit for future placemaking' that can be used to draw up new masterplans and guide future development.

Homes England has built a strong relationship with Exeter City Council and, following this initial groundwork, the team have been re-commissioned to develop and refine the toolkit. It will be used to engage with developers, key stakeholders and local communities. In time, this toolkit may also be embedded within local planning policy and delivery strategies. It's been great to support the project to flourish from a common set of ambitions to a tangible product that can be used to deliver a better city for future residents.

But what Homes England has learnt with Exeter Council doesn't stop here. The methodology can also be applied in other places to shape future visions for towns and cities and frame masterplans for large-scale new communities and what we've learnt in terms of collaboration and knowledge sharing applies everywhere.

“ Ultimately, it is only by collaboration, knowledge sharing and practical toolkits such as the one designed through Future Place, that we as an industry will deliver on the Government's aims of promoting better design across the country, shaped by what local people actually want. ”



Homes  
England

# Local Solutions to National Problems

The LGA and Local Partnerships are pleased to have supported the Future Place programme and the five selected places to unlock and showcase local potential for placemaking. Councils play a pivotal role in delivering meaningful change for their places and helping to create high-quality sustainable communities where people want to live, work and enjoy their time.

With the premise of promoting strong leadership and collaborative working across the private and public sector, the Future Place programme provides an opportunity for councils to be innovative, build on local skills and capacity, and share knowledge and best practice in future place-based thinking. In turn, this stimulates wider benefits for the local government sector as a whole.

Local Partnerships is a joint venture between the Local Government Association, HM Treasury and the Welsh Government tasked to facilitate change by working impartially and collaboratively across all parts of central, local and regional government and the devolved administrations.

The Future Place programme brought placemaking to the core of the offer. Local Partnerships were pleased to support each of the five Future Places with a range of workshops and capacity building advice to help identify local needs and potential solutions to kick start innovative ways of building partnerships, ensuring strong local oversight and enabling delivery. The Future Place partnership offers a new impetus to assist localities achieve their place vision and create synergies between all local interests to achieve this.

“ After the successful work of the five Future Places in the first year, the LGA and Local Partnerships are delighted to continue the partnership with RIBA, Homes England, Historic England and the RTPi to support and champion the roles of councils to achieve their placemaking ambitions. ”

Cllr David Renard, Chairman of the Economy, Environment, Housing and Transport Board



© Local Partnerships, Common themes and lessons

“ It’s widely recognised that we urgently need more homes of all kinds – but it isn’t simply about the numbers. It’s vital that we are enabling and creating good quality, attractive places for people to call home now and in the future in communities and neighbourhoods which are thriving and sustainable. It’s fantastic to see the programme support and nurture the five Future Places as they have designed and begun to deliver their ambitious plans to meet their specific local needs and circumstances. The learning they have gathered through this experience will be tremendously helpful to others embarking on a similar journey. ”

Gavin Smart, Chief Executive, CIH



# Future Place Programme

## FUTURE PLACE | PARTNERSHIP

In 2018 a partnership between the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), Local Government Association (LGA), and Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) launched a programme to unlock placemaking potential at local level through quality in design, future thinking, and knowledge sharing; Homes England joined the partnership soon after.

## FUTURE PLACE | OBJECTIVES

The Future Place programme was designed to identify the potential of innovative delivery, design and funding models to support best practice in placemaking, as well as encouraging cross-sector collaboration, capacity building, and knowledge sharing. An overall aim of Future Place was to demonstrate both the potential and necessary conditions for successful placemaking regardless of the size, type or location of a place – or the budget available. The replicable lessons learned from the partners' engagement in each of the Future Places will be evaluated and disseminated for the benefit of all local authorities across England which share their ambition for positive change.

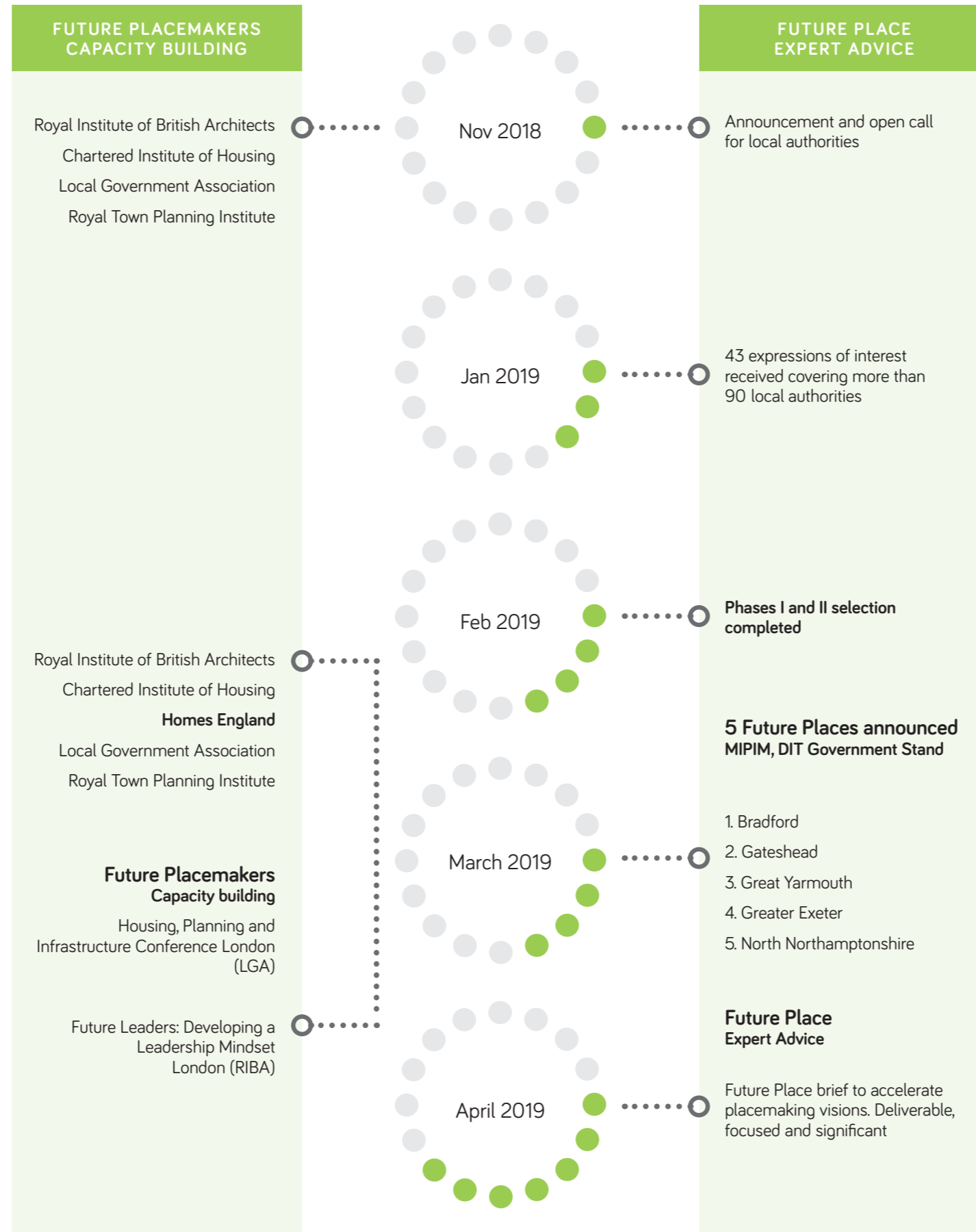
The project has brought together the efforts of a range of leading national agencies and institutions within the built environment sector to focus and coordinate their placemaking resource and capacity on places which are at the right point in the process to benefit from a kick start to bridge the gap between their vision and delivery. As Future Place gains momentum, further partners will be engaged in this coalition for placemaking excellence.

## FUTURE PLACE | CAPACITY BUILDING

Each Future Place was encouraged to identify and nominate a maximum of two upcoming future leaders from within their authority and/or other sector partners in the locality. These 'Future Placemakers' were invited to participate in a leadership and capacity building programme to reinforce the role of 'informed' client leadership in placemaking; at least one identified from the local authority planning and development team and one from a different team or collaborating institution.

### Future Placemakers

- Saira Ali – City of Bradford District Council
- Stephen Broadbent – City of Bradford District Council
- George Marshall – East Devon District Council
- Anthony Moore – Great Yarmouth Borough Council
- Julia Devonshire – Great Yarmouth Borough Council
- Anthony Longley – North Northamptonshire JPU
- Fergus Pate – Teignbridge District Council
- Andrew Ford-Hutchinson – Gateshead Council
- Luke Wrigley – Gateshead Council



## FUTURE PLACE | CRITERIA

Local authorities were invited to apply to the Future Place programme by demonstrating a clear vision for their place, with a focus on improving and enhancing sustainability and wellbeing. A key criterion for selecting the Future Places was the extent to which participation in the programme would provide a catalyst to develop or promote visions for their areas. Joint submissions from adjoining local authorities within strategic planning areas and entries from a diverse range of types of places, administrations and contexts were encouraged. Local authorities were also asked to demonstrate senior level buy-in and support, and a willingness to engage collaboratively with the Future Place partners in the capacity building, expert advice and knowledge sharing strands of the programme.

## FUTURE PLACE | SELECTION

Five Future Places were selected by senior representatives of each partner organisation following a call for expressions of interest. The places chosen to participate – Bradford, Gateshead, Greater Exeter, Great Yarmouth and North Northamptonshire – reflected a geographical, political and market spread, allowing a representative range of placemaking issues facing towns and cities across the country to be explored.

While each place is very different, all five places were determined to deliver meaningful change, and already work in collaboration with public, private or voluntary sector partners to develop and advance innovative placemaking strategies.

## FUTURE PLACE | EXPERT ADVICE

Following the selection of the five Future Places, a needs identification exercise was undertaken to clarify where each authority would benefit from receiving expert advice from the Future Place project partners. This identified a long list of key issues, ambitions and opportunities that the authority had prioritised for action in support of their vision. Following an analysis of the range of needs at a workshop with representatives from each of the Future Place partners, enabling capacity from the partners was identified to help unlock these issues.

The Future Place model focuses on identifying places which would most benefit from the injection of capacity and expertise to galvanise existing support on the ground and accelerate change. The different challenges and needs identified by each of the Future Places demonstrate how design, in different ways, can contribute to the transformative development of places.

# Future Place Programme

## FUTURE PLACE | CAPACITY BUILDING

The Future Placemakers programme consisted of a series of workshops, conferences and master classes hosted at the RIBA and with partner organisations throughout the year, focused on emerging leaders within the local authority teams, and which addressed a range of placemaking, planning and leadership themes.

In response to feedback from several participating authorities, the scope to provide additional training for more senior staff on the hard skills associated with delivery and design enforcement is being explored, taking into account the time cost to the authority of releasing senior staff for training. In addition, the potential to engage Council Leaders in the challenge of placemaking will also be addressed.

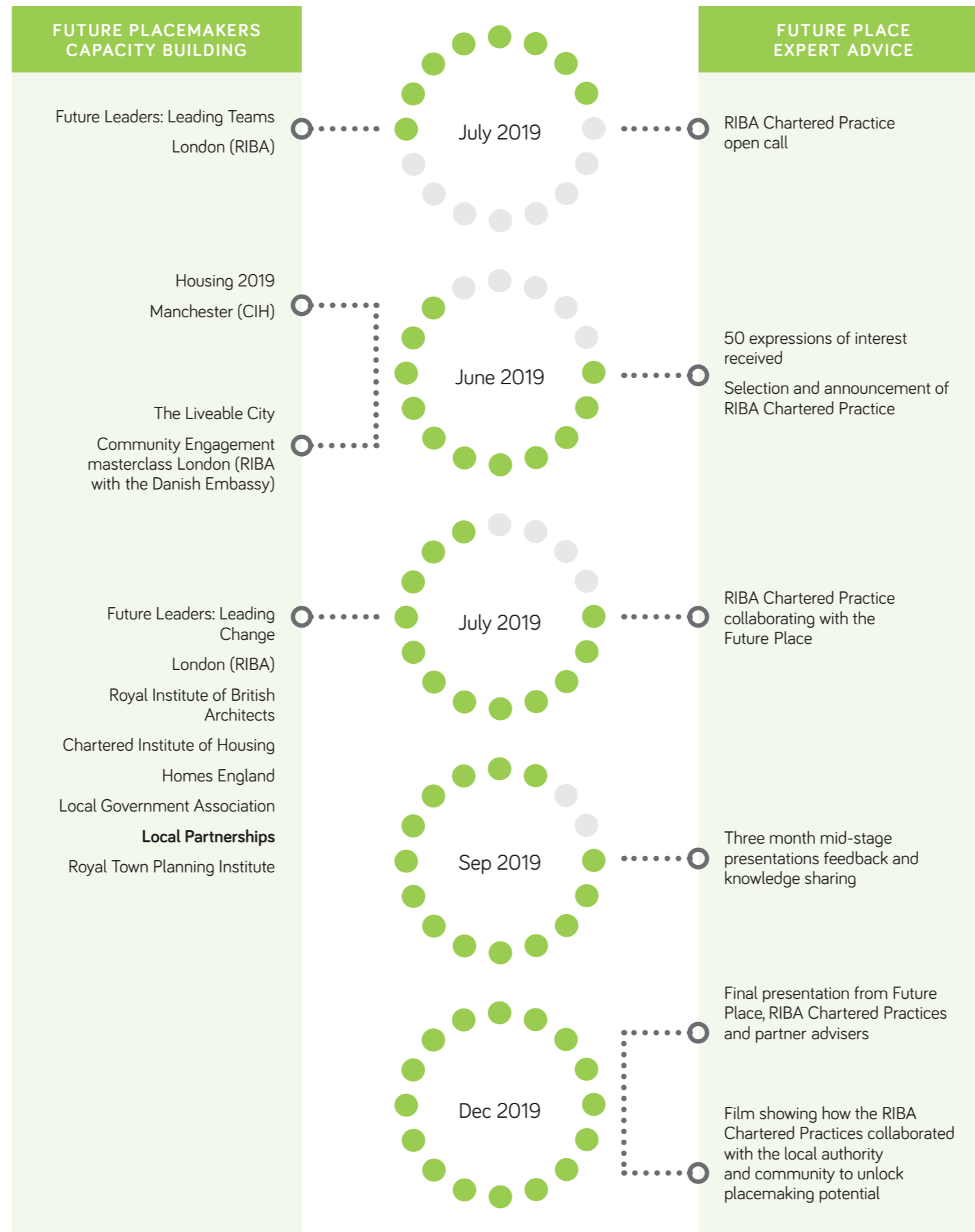
## FUTURE PLACE | EXPERT ADVICE

The partner support was allocated to optimise impact, with Local Partnerships joining the partnership as the LGAs delivery capacity providing 5 days' advice for each Future Place on effective governance structures, housing delivery vehicles and public sector stewardship. Homes England helped to convene public and private sector industry partners, and in the case of Exeter direct engagement with the strategic masterplanning process.

## FUTURE PLACE | KNOWLEDGE SHARING

A central objective of the Future Place programme is to share replicable knowledge with other local authorities and placemaking professionals across England. A digital resource has been created to share best practice and processes identified from the first round of the Future Place programme. The initial stages of the placemaking commissions were captured on film and edited to communicate the process of community engagement and collaboration with the local authority, as well as the development of the briefs into the final illustrated strategies.

The knowledge sharing resources will encourage well-founded future thinking, rooted in collaborative engagement processes, and prioritisation of the right skills, processes and resources to underpin inspired and deliverable placemaking.  
[www.architecture.com/future-place](http://www.architecture.com/future-place)



## FUTURE PLACE | PLACEMAKING BRIEF

The needs identification exercise drew out where the focus for the RIBA Future Place Commission should lie, alighting on an area of replicable interest with a challenging design innovation dimension. The issue identified was then developed into a project brief by an RIBA Client Adviser. This became the basis for a commission to develop an illustrated strategy awarded to an RIBA Chartered Practice.

## FUTURE PLACE | RIBA CHARTERED PRACTICE

This exercise was followed by the selection of design teams – chosen for their match to the design challenge that had been identified – to develop a visionary, transformational response. A panel including representatives from the RIBA and external experts Sadie Morgan and Petra Marko, advised the local authority representatives on the selection of the practice based on clear criteria, including: understanding of the brief and client objectives, strategic and creative design approach, collaborative working relationships and a track record of client and stakeholder engagement, relevant experience and effective communication. The final selection was made by the local authority.

Given the relatively limited budget and timeframe, the intention was not to produce a fully resolved design solution, but rather to rapidly bring high-level design thinking, analysis and a creative response to jump-start an aspect of an emerging placemaking vision or the processes that contribute to it.

## FUTURE PLACE | REVIEW AND FEEDBACK

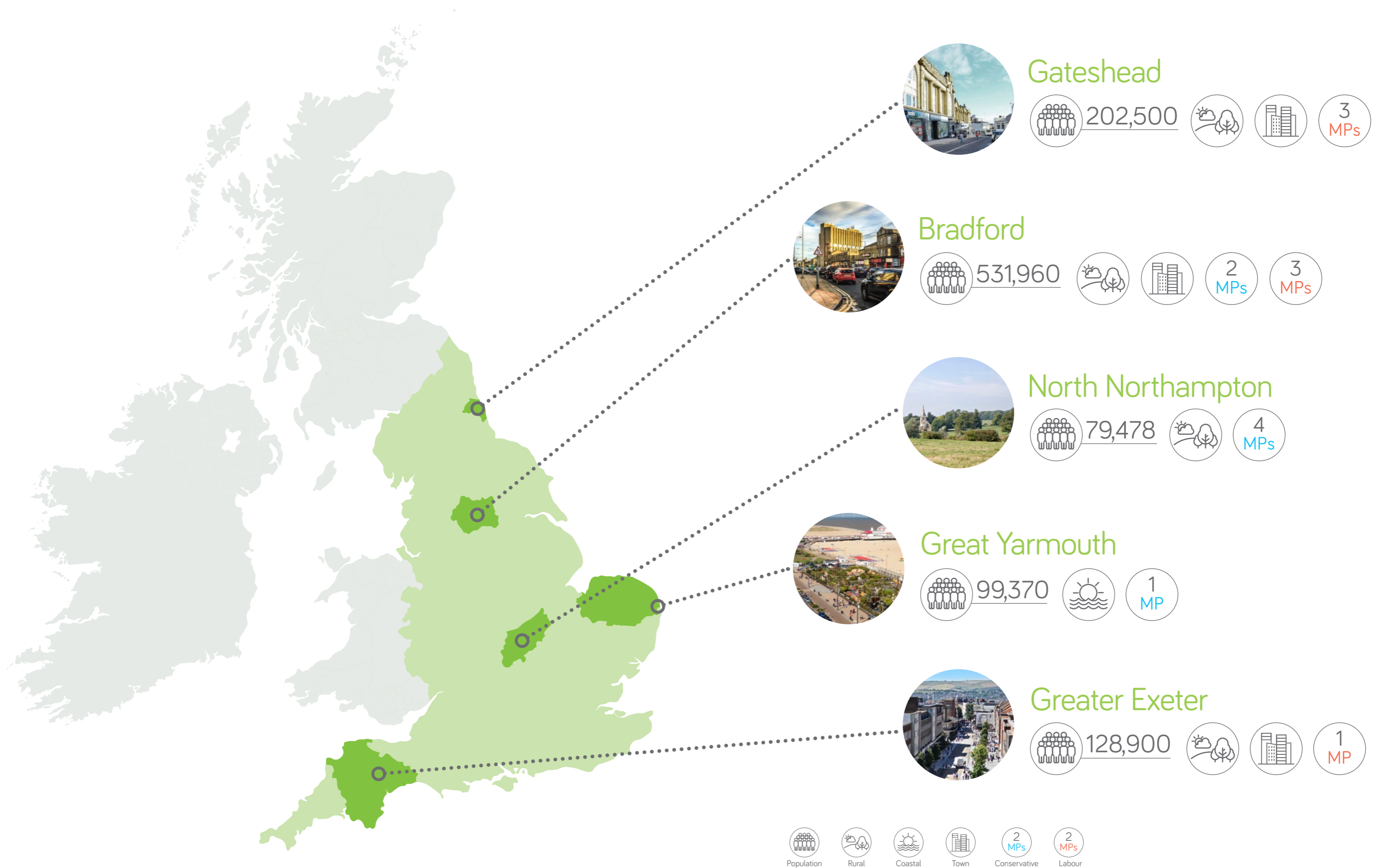
Mid-stage and final presentations brought together local authority teams, programme partners and the design teams to present the commission briefs and share initial design approaches, and then the final proposals. This was also an opportunity for mutual sharing of experience, feedback and best practice.

## NEXT STEPS

**With the project submissions finalised, local authorities are now looking towards how the learning and ideas will be put into practice and, in some cases how projects will be delivered.**

Through discussion with participating authorities, designers and partner organisations the next steps to refine and develop the programme for the next round have been identified.

# Five Future Places



Population  
 Rural  
 Coastal  
 Town  
 2 MPs  
 2 MPs

**Local Authority:** City of Bradford, West Yorkshire  
City and Metropolitan Borough Council status

**Area:** Urban with rural hinterland

**Administration:** Labour-led council  
3 Labour and 2 Conservative MPs

**Population:** 537,000

**Demographics:** 29% under 20; 150 languages spoken; 12% digitally excluded

**Planning:** Core Strategy adopted in 2017  
Bradford City Centre Area Action Plan adopted 2017.

**Place Assets:** Cathedral Precinct, City Centre, Goitside and Little Germany  
Conservation Areas

**Environment:** South and West Yorkshire Green Belt

**Housing Targets:** 4,000 new homes to 2037 in Bradford City Centre

**Deprivation:** 13th most deprived local authority in England; 22% children living below poverty line; 13% working age people without qualifications



## FUTURE | PLACE

Born out of the industrial revolution, Bradford has a rich cultural and architectural heritage and a city centre that is ripe for regeneration. It has a strong history of new communities settling and creating prosperous, happy lives, and there is real strength in the diversity of its people, who speak more than 150 languages and benefit from an abundance of international connections. Bradford is also home to the youngest population in England; and has space for redevelopment and growth within its urban footprint as well as opportunities to repurpose buildings. It is a confident place: 'a great northern city' with a rich history and a growing, diverse and aspirant population.

“All high quality places come from people’s visions for those places. But this needs to be managed so that all voices are heard.”

Elizabeth Motley Head of Architecture, Integreat Plus



Bradford City Park

## FUTURE | VISION

The City of Bradford District Council has a strong vision to transform the city centre by creating new homes and economic opportunities: to attract and retain young and diverse communities, and enable new and sustainable ways of living.

The council is committed to taking a ‘bottom up’ approach to ensure that people are at the heart of the transformation. In particular, in order to future proof schemes and initiatives as they emerge, Bradford is keen that young people are positively engaged in the planning and design process, to inform plans for the repurposing of the city centre. Recognising that creativity and innovation are most powerful when ideas from different groups of people come together, the city is looking to find new ways to draw on the youth – and diversity – of its population.

## FUTURE | OPPORTUNITY

Bradford city centre is full of character and potential, with a unique architectural heritage, including many listed buildings, and its dramatic topography at the junction of three valleys combined with diverse social and cultural assets. These assets and legacy offer much scope to reconfigure the city footprint and repurpose buildings for the needs of both the present and future.

Linguistically diverse and with an abundance of international connections, Bradford is a truly global city. Drawing on Bradford’s people asset – and human capital – is pivotal to bringing new and relevant thinking to the design of the city’s future.

The Future Place programme offered an opportunity to kick start the process of updating the 2015 ‘City Plan’ and 2017 ‘City Centre Area Action Plan’, to reflect the changes and challenges Bradford faces by stemming the emerging vision for Bradford’s young and diverse population.

## FUTURE | CHALLENGE

The City Council identified a range of challenges through discussion with the Future Place partners that it sought to unlock through participation in the programme which required input and capacity building:

**Updating the City Plan** to reflect current circumstances and new opportunities.

Influencing the development of key projects by engaging hard to reach communities with a particular emphasis on young people.

**Identifying innovative ways to engage and consult communities** on the future vision and strategy for the City Centre, and to future proof the emerging strategy.

**Tailoring projects, public services and infrastructure** for Bradford's constantly growing and changing young and diverse future communities.

**Developing a design code and streamlined delivery process** for new public realm, placemaking and infrastructure.

**Attracting good quality developers** to take on projects in key urban village locations to create a new standard of quality to fulfil the potential of the city centre.

**Securing investment** to repurpose historic mills and warehouses and bring them back into use.

## FUTURE PLACE | CAPACITY BUILDING

The Future Place programme improved knowledge of, and commitment to, placemaking within the Council's leadership team as various departments pulled together to support the bid.

Officer understanding of placemaking deepened through participation in the capacity building sessions, which proved to be an important and popular part of the programme. Sector-relevant events offered an opportunity for future leaders to develop new skills and to meet other Future Place representatives to discover common challenges and solutions. This included a workshop hosted by the Danish Embassy delivered by Stephen Willacy, Chief City Architect in the Municipality of Aarhus, which gave an insight into a different, exciting and practical approach to placemaking and community engagement that was very relevant to Bradford's project.

Following engagement in the commission, there is noticeably increased enthusiasm from stakeholders to be involved in placemaking discussions and strategy.

The local authority report that, while overall knowledge has increased, this is only the start of the journey. Capacity will increase further as they put the engagement strategy into practice and actively collaborate with communities.



© Integreat Plus, *The purpose of community engagement*

## FUTURE | PLACEMAKING BRIEF

The placemaking challenge the council identified in their bid to the Future Place programme was for a strategic resource – in the form of a manual – to support officers in design consultation to help positively engage younger people and excite their interest in shaping the future of their city.

The project brief looked for consultants to design new methods of engagement, public communication on projects and co-creation practices. The local authority saw the commission as a means by which to draw upon relevant best practice examples from elsewhere (UK, Europe, and beyond) to learn from and test good practice in public engagement, and embed good practice that has historically been developed locally.

“ This project is looking at how a whole community can own and shape the future of the city centre and see it as belonging to them. Only by bringing all of the experience, talent and creativity to bear in concert with people of this place will you get the best result. ”

Kersten England, Chief Executive,  
City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council



© Integreat Plus



# Bradford

## FUTURE | PRACTICE

Integreat Plus is a social enterprise consultancy which provides architectural, planning and economic development support to help deliver strategic ambitions for places. Although the current consultancy was established in 2011 to take forward Yorkshire Forward's placemaking capability, the team has worked with Bradford City Council for over 15 years. At the heart of Integreat Plus' work is enabling collaborative working practices between local authorities, communities and professionals from across different disciplines to act as a catalyst and broker for inclusive visions, local distinctiveness and high design aspiration.

In addition to their significant directly relevant local experience, Integreat Plus were selected for the tailored engagement methods they proposed to suit the needs of segmented demographic groups – considering not only ethnic and national origins, but also language, religion and belief. The communication skills which are core to reaching different audiences – brought by including a graphic designer on the team – were evident in the engagingly illustrated submission.

Design team:

### INTEGRATE PLUS

Elizabeth Motley, Robbie Ormond, Jonathan Morrison, Jamie Wilde



© Integreat Plus, Setting up an 'Urban Room' fostering meaningful connections between people and place

“ All high quality places come from people's visions for those places. But this needs to be managed so that all voices are heard. ”

Elizabeth Motley Head of Architecture, Integreat Plus



©Integreat Plus, 8-step approach to community engagement

## FUTURE | PLACEMAKING STRATEGY

Integreat Plus' response to the commission is an illustrated long-term framework for community engagement and civic participation in Bradford which will help local authority officers design good stakeholder processes with a focus on ensuring that the voices of groups often absent from participation are heard when updating the 2015 'City Plan', 2017 'Area Action Plan' and related place-based projects which will follow.

This aims to help break down the gap between top down decision making in planning, city design and placemaking and the needs and wishes of end users. The strategy provides a generic toolkit designed to develop bespoke and locally responsive engagement programmes and exercises to support a variety of projects and proposals as they emerge.

The toolkit consists of three parts. Part 1 sets out Integreat Plus' engagement proposition based on a core three-step approach – framed as Inform, Listen, Shape – which can be refined and tailored to maximise engagement and interaction to provide the most useful feedback for Bradford. To successfully apply the three-step approach, Integreat Plus also developed a set of nine principles for meaningful engagement.

Part 2 of the toolkit sets out an eight-step approach to structure the design and programming of engagement activities. This includes mapping out the relevant stakeholders, and determining the appropriate type, timeline and method of engagement. It proposes how outcomes can be assessed and the impact of a particular approach validated to influence future engagement processes.

Part 3 describes twenty different tested engagement techniques to work in partnership with local people through innovative and participatory methods, setting out the target purpose, target group, and resources required. These include setting up an urban room or youth council, through to co-design charettes, walking tours or a disposable camera project.

## FUTURE | IMPLEMENTATION

The community-led placemaking toolkit which has resulted from the Future Place commission will be put into practice on emerging projects. It will feed directly into the on-going process of engagement that will shape the refreshed City Plan and Bradford City Centre Area Action Plan.

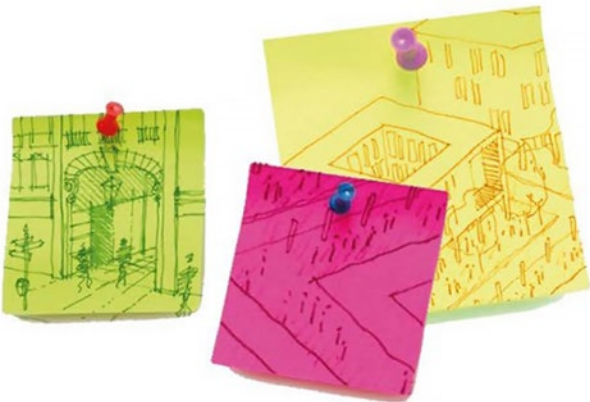
The toolkit will also be used to inform stakeholder engagement across a range of projects that are in development or in the pipeline. This is expected to encourage community involvement and active participation in the co-production of public spaces, buildings, streets, and neighbourhoods within the city centre. Bradford City Council envisage applying the guide as they develop masterplans for the following schemes:

**'Top of Town'** – the regeneration of a struggling retail area framing a masterplan to repurpose it to meet contemporary retail and social needs.

**'Southern Gateway'** – a project to establish a vision and brief to take forward the regeneration of a 100-hectare site to deliver housing and employment growth in response to the location of a future Northern Powerhouse Rail station.

**Public Realm Design Code** – a city centre design code the city council plans to commission; the toolkit will be used to engage all relevant user groups to ensure that a robust approach is taken to the design.

It is anticipated that the effectiveness of the guide as applied in action will be tested and developed further on the basis of feedback.



©Integrat Plus,, Co-design Charettes

## FUTURE | IMPACT

Bradford has a track record of success in adopting a consistent and long-term approach to regenerating the city centre. The creation of the toolkit and its adoption in practice adds a new layer to the innovation and quality inherent in the city's approach. The Future Place programme acted as a catalyst to bring forward new approaches to community engagement as a step towards refreshing the strategic plans that will set out a future framework for Bradford's regeneration and growth.

Within the authority, the commission has increased the profile and importance of community engagement in placemaking and the definition of new projects. As a result, Bradford are writing the requirement for robust consultation into project briefs and factoring resourcing into strategies. All partners feel they have a better understanding of methods to involve diverse groups.

The toolkit was further welcomed as an opportunity to work with other towns and cities to share knowledge and experience. The strategy is already influencing joint work with external partners and has helped to support funding bids. Overall, involvement in the Future Place programme has helped to raise the profile of Bradford and its regeneration priorities.

The initiative will complement Bradford's successful bid to the MHCLG Planning Delivery Fund programme to deliver higher standards of design. Demonstrating robust and thorough stakeholder engagement and participation in the design process will be a critical part of this. The following elements of the programme will provide opportunities to test the engagement guide:

**A masterplan for a new City Village** focused on the 'Top of the Town' area

**The planned relocation of the market** closer to the retail core, releasing vacant land to create a new mixed-use neighbourhood of up to 1,000 homes

**A Bradford Housing Design Guide** to set out expectations and design quality standards for new residentially-led development across a range of contexts and scales

## FUTURE | LESSONS LEARNED

- **Take the time to prioritise developing the right processes before defining plans and projects:** The initial prioritisation of process before moving on to defining plans and projects reflects many years of experience of regeneration in West Yorkshire.
- **Engage positively and creatively with diverse and evolving communities to shape the future of a place:** Bradford's dynamic approach to addressing the needs of multiple and evolving communities with confidence and creativity is a model for other diverse towns and cities.
- **Develop and implement a robust but flexible approach:** The Future Place commission has provided a robust and flexible engagement toolkit that will ensure all future planning and placemaking is shaped to meet the needs of future communities.
- **Develop approaches to engage distinct town-centre user groups:** The kit of parts approach can be applied to address the various specific needs of different identified groups who use the public realm, including older people, women, families and business users.
- **Use placemaking as the focus for cross-departmental collaboration:** The process of designing a Future Place vision can act as a vehicle to coordinate efforts across a local authority around a shared goal.

<b>Local Authority:</b>	Exeter City Council, Devon, City Council status
<b>Area:</b>	Urban with rural hinterland
<b>Administration:</b>	Labour-led Council, Exeter constituency: 1 Labour MP
<b>Population:</b>	Exeter 130,000; Greater Exeter: 490,000
<b>Demographics:</b>	20,000 commute into Exeter per day; expected to grow by 25-30% in the next 20 years. Student population: 22,000 students
<b>Planning:</b>	East and Mid Devon. Teignbridge & Devon County Council working on a Greater Exeter Strategic Plan
<b>Place Assets:</b>	20 Conservation Areas, medieval street pattern partially preserved, relatively unbroken historic skyline
<b>Environment:</b>	Exe Valley, bounded by Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks East Devon AONB to the east. Target to become carbon neutral by 2030
<b>Housing Targets:</b>	12,000 new homes planned to 2040
<b>Deprivation Index:</b>	Overall levels of deprivation are lower than national average. Urban areas less deprived than most in the UK, rural areas amongst the most deprived



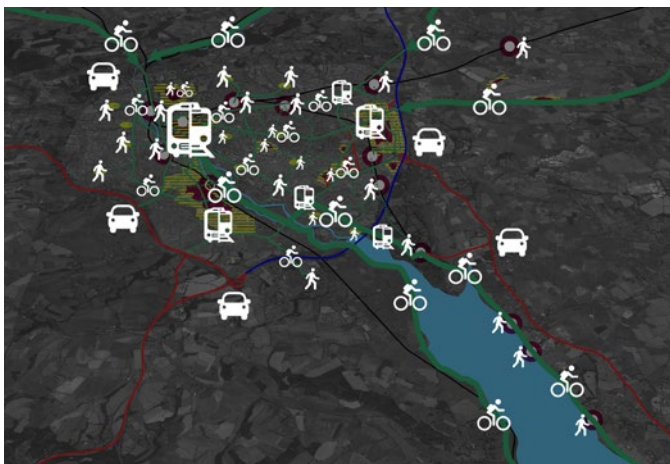
## FUTURE | PLACE

Exeter is one of the fastest growing cities in the UK. It sits within a network of thriving villages and coastal towns recently defined as 'Greater Exeter' that together represent a population of around 450,000. As the county town of Devon, it also serves a wider rural hinterland. A range of cultural and educational facilities in the city centre – combined with its location in beautiful Devon countryside, within easy reach of the coast and moors – make it a highly attractive location.

A group of five local authorities has formed a joined-up vision for the wider Exeter area – the 'Greater Exeter Strategic Plan'. Growth plans aim to: make public transport quicker and more convenient; promote active travel; intensify land use at appropriate locations within the city footprint to support more sustainable living and working, reconnect the centre with the River Exe, and create more green spaces to encourage healthier lifestyles.

## FUTURE | VISION

By 2040, Greater Exeter wants to be a global leader in sustainable living and one of the most active, healthy, and accessible cities in England. Greater Exeter's shared vision for growth is as a connected city-region consisting of thriving linked urban and rural communities at all scales set within exceptional surroundings.



© Hilton Barnfield, 'Compact City'

This is embodied in the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan reflecting the RTPI's call for more coordinated strategic scale plan making as a pre-condition to great Future Places.

This envisages vibrant settlements linked by a sustainable multi-modal movement system taking advantage of the beautiful south west coastal setting – that attracts academic and high growth businesses and investment to benefit from a low carbon economy. The Council is committed to innovation in the design and delivery of new homes at a city, neighbourhood, block, and street level.

It aspires to achieve higher densities at key points across the city centre with appropriate commercial, social and transport infrastructure to create vibrant, and successful walkable neighbourhoods. Exeter has published the Liveable Exeter Vision, which sets out a transformational housing-led ambition to deliver 12,000 new homes across 9 strategic sites by 2040. The strategy aims to create car free, high density, zero carbon sustainable communities.

## FUTURE | OPPORTUNITY

Greater Exeter embraced the opportunity to participate in the Future Place programme to help to ensure that placemaking is at the heart of its innovative approach to the challenges faced by their varied communities. Participation was supported by all four chief executives of the Greater Exeter District Councils, as well as Devon County Council, whose joint ambition is to create "Liveable Exeter: A compact global city of linked neighbourhoods".

The partners hoped the exercise would help to clarify the key challenges the city faces and crystallise thinking about future best practice, which they regard as "of seminal importance to the full 20-year horizon we are planning for."

The Future Place programme also offered an opportunity to develop skills and leadership capacity in seeking to achieve this step change in the quality of placemaking and the pace of delivery, through a joined-up and interdisciplinary approach.

Due to its 'garden city' status, Exeter already benefits from the resource and enabling capacity from locally based Homes England.

## FUTURE | CHALLENGE

The critical challenge for Exeter is to identify opportunities for higher density, sustainable neighbourhoods across Greater Exeter, taking into account aspirations for inclusive, healthy growth set out in the vision for 'Liveable Exeter'. Specific issues identified through discussion with Future Place partners that required input and capacity-building were:

**Accommodating inclusive growth** in a responsible way with the most efficient use of land, optimising density and creating a vibrant neighbourhood which supports the retail and social needs of the residents.

**Identifying opportunities for higher density** to address the key challenge inherent within the vision – how best to accommodate taller buildings within the context of a sensitive setting.

**Reducing car use** and shifting to sustainable multi-modal movement to create an active and accessible city.

**Encouraging healthy and active lifestyles** by providing a high quality and accessible built environment and green spaces, with great arts and cultural facilities.

**Engaging residents and local communities** in the design of their neighbourhoods' to prompt and lead a conversation around design quality at a neighbourhood level.

**Engaging the wider development industry** to achieve wider ownership of the vision .

**Enforcing design quality to embed high quality outcomes** in the emerging Greater Exeter Strategic Plan and associated strategic development proposals through high quality masterplanning, design codes and a design champion of national standing.



© Exeter City Council, 'Liveable Exeter'

“ We need to change the narrative on housing, building more homes which are affordable and better designed as part of well-planned neighbourhoods. ”

Ian Collinson, Senior Partnership and Business Development Manager, Homes England

## FUTURE PLACE | CAPACITY BUILDING

The Exeter Future Placemakers found the review sessions at the RIBA with the other Future Place teams, partner representatives and built environment experts helpful for identifying best practice, generating new ideas, developing contacts, and for sharing similar problems and frustrations.

The Exeter team reported that the Future Place programme helped cement the existing working relationship with Homes England, and broke down perceived barriers between architects and planners in delivering a shared common vision.

The piece of work commissioned – mediated through the Future Place partners – helped to focus discussions between the local authority, Homes England and Local Partnerships around practical delivery and design aspects of the principle of sustainability and intensification, which had been embedded in the plan.



© Hilton Barnfield, Illustrated toolkit for future placemaking in Exeter

## FUTURE | PLACEMAKING BRIEF

The placemaking requirement was to help translate a transformational plan to deliver 12,000 new homes in Exeter for the period 2020-2040 into a physical design proposition for a series of linked neighbourhoods reflecting the principles of active, sustainable design set out in the Liveable Exeter Vision.

The aim was to draw together policy strands – for more concentrated growth and walkable neighbourhoods in proximity to public transport – into an urban design approach that might be applied across a range of site-specific scenarios.

The Future Place brief was therefore to produce a generic site assessment methodology to consider how sites across the growth area might be optimised to intensify land use within the vicinity of interchanges and to support modal shift.

The Future Place commission sought to articulate a visual expression of the connected city-region policy to inform discussions with stakeholders and communities, as well as plan making. A core driver for the council leadership was to improve quality in the built environment to make the higher density developments needed to deliver Exeter's ambitions for sustainable growth acceptable to existing residents.

# Exeter

## FUTURE | PRACTICE

Hilton Barnfield are a young RIBA Chartered Practice with a keen interest in sustainable placemaking and contextual contemporary design within urban and rural contexts. Their team includes urban designer DHUD who brought experience of designing at all spatial scales.

The local authority clients wanted a bespoke Exeter-centric solution and were keen to work with a local practice. The programme offered an opportunity to engage with a talented young firm – based locally but with international experience, and with a stake in the future of Exeter. Hilton Barnfield were also selected for their typological approach which demonstrated a fine grain understanding of how to increase walkability through a variety of settlement forms. The architects proved to have a critical skill in envisaging how to create great places and analysing how the critical factors that make successful places are assembled. They developed a language which will help Exeter to test this thinking with the public and developers.

Design team:

**HILTON BARNFIELD AND DHUD**

Rob Hilton, James Barnfield, David Hawes

“ The Future Place initiative is the means by which we can develop some of the tools and provide a framework for developing some really exciting and visionary masterplans. ”

Ian Collinson, Senior Partnership and Business Development Manager, Homes England

## FUTURE | PLACEMAKING STRATEGY

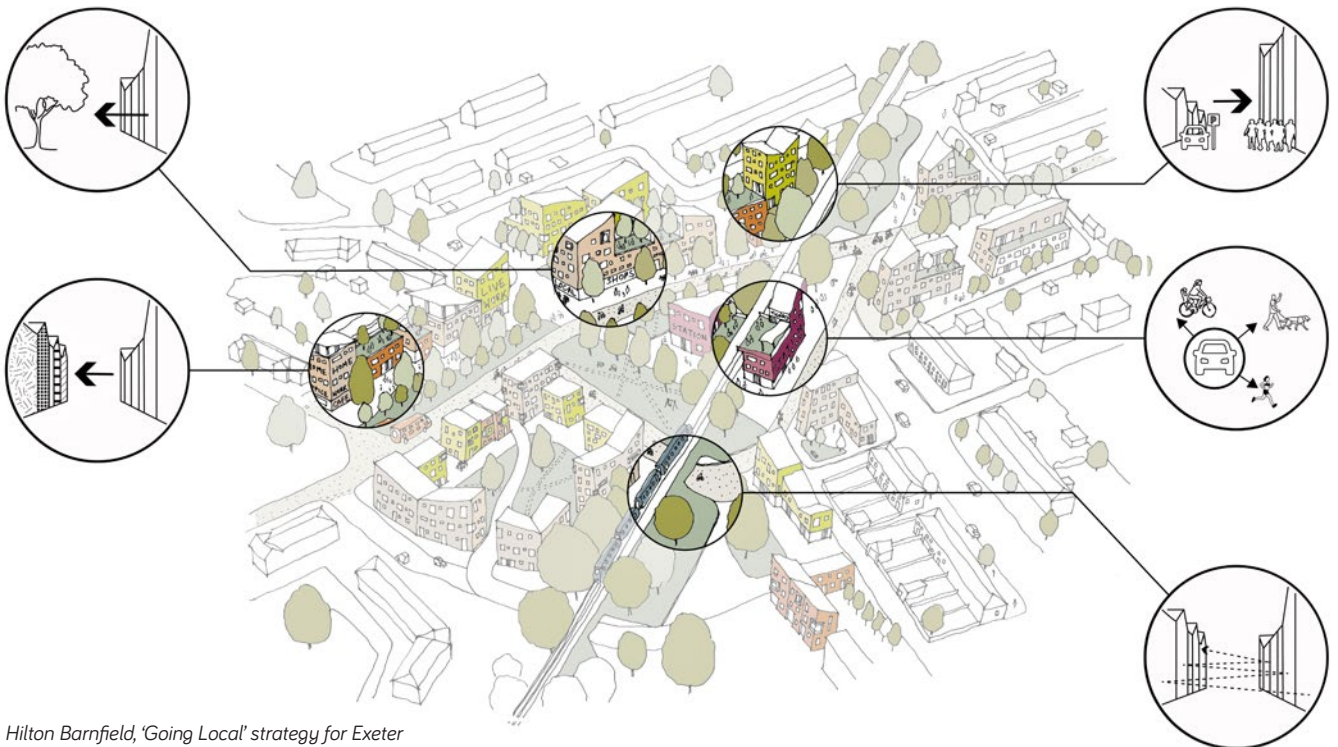
The final output is an illustrated toolkit for future placemaking in Exeter, which sets out a methodology for designing higher density, car free, sustainable neighbourhoods throughout the city. One of the early challenges was to tie the brief down to a manageable ambition. The design team proposed a specific vision for a broad strategic approach to achieve more sustainable growth across the connected city-region in future. The City Council and Homes England worked with them to focus in on specific sites and to tie their overall thinking into the Exeter context, and projects under development. The project brief was therefore focused on considering the challenges of intensifying land use at key sites across the city, and opportunities for placemaking to support sustainable, healthy lifestyles.

The four-part methodology developed identifies five distinctively Exeter drivers for social and economic change; ‘fertile surroundings’, ‘turning back to the river’, ‘grey to green’, ‘going local’ and ‘the compact city’ – which take account of the aspiration to re-establish Exeter as a ‘city around the river’, improve connections and limit sprawl – particularly given the city’s sensitive setting.

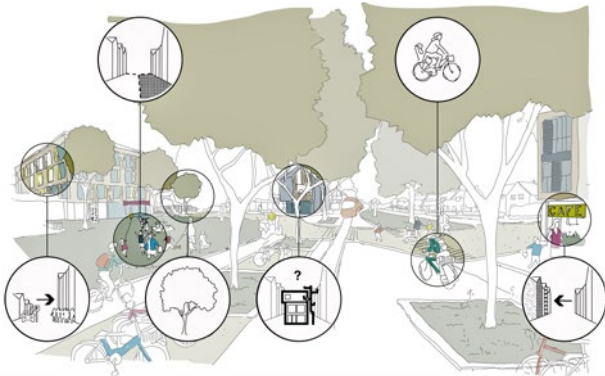
The second ‘tool’ enables recognisable districts to be defined and measured against the five drivers for change. Thirdly, the toolkit sets out twelve design principles for car free sustainable neighbourhoods in the Exeter context. Piloting the toolkit on the city’s priority brownfield opportunity sites forms the fourth method in the process.

The partners acknowledge that the very substantial body of work produced by the design team went above and beyond what was expected of them in addressing the commission. Following advice from Homes England, Exeter City Council has decided to extend the brief to bring the strategy to fruition.

a TOOLKIT  
for FUTURE  
PLACEMAKING  
in EXETER



© Hilton Barnfield, 'Going Local' strategy for Exeter



© Hilton Barnfield, 'Grey to Green' strategy for Exeter

## FUTURE | IMPLEMENTATION

The placemaking toolkit and communication materials setting out the visionary approach to the growth and intensification agenda interrogated by the Future Place programme will be published late Spring 2020 based on the Future Place work. The toolkit commissioned under the Future Place programme will be developed further. The team is working collaboratively with Homes England and Exeter City Council to align the proposition more clearly to the objectives of the Liveable Exeter agenda, and other city partners, testing the analysis and design principles through engagement with wider city stakeholders, and reviewing and updating the strategy, with the ultimate aim of informing future policy development and masterplanning.

## FUTURE | IMPACT

A robust, visionary piece of work was developed through the Future Place programme which refined existing strategy into a practical tool. This will help to inform community engagement, future practice, and potentially policy as to how key sites might be intensified to support the connected Greater Exeter growth proposition.

Exeter was recognised as a 'Garden Community' by Government to support the managed growth of the city-region. The "Greater Exeter" joint working arrangements between East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon and Teignbridge District councils provides the basis for a joined-up strategic approach to growth, infrastructure and regeneration. In the next twelve months, the authorities intend to publish their draft 'Strategic Plan' for the new Exeter subregion and launch a transformational housing plan for the City to deliver 12,000 new homes between 2020 to 2040 – an example of the RTPI's call for a more strategic approach to sustainable growth in action.

The Future Place project will inform the Greater Exeter delivery partnership's on-going enabling of development in line with the principles set out in the strategic growth plan to support sustainability and placemaking. Participation in the programme has already moved placemaking up the corporate agenda, and the toolkit will help to align city stakeholders and partners around the vision for growth to help set the thinking and quality aspiration for future developments.

## FUTURE | LESSONS LEARNED

- **Secure high level political and executive buy-in:** There was a high level of commitment from the Council leadership downwards – both political and executive. Participation in the Future Place programme was signed off by all four chief executives of the Greater Exeter District Councils and is supported by Devon County Council whose joint ambition is to create "Liveable Exeter: A compact global city of linked Neighbourhoods".
- **Draw on and coordinate existing capacity:** The project had the benefit of an established capacity to support placemaking and growth delivery through the Garden Community Programme and interventions from Homes England.
- **Work in partnership across the public/private sector and administrative boundaries** ideally to a joint plan – for sustainable strategic growth. Collaborative working between Exeter City Council, Exeter and a range of public sector partners, including Homes England, Sport England, The National Infrastructure Commission, Local Partnerships, One Public Estate and private enterprise is a model for strategic level policy making and delivery which could beneficially be applied elsewhere.
- **Set an ambitious but deliverable spatial vision in partnership for delivering policy/culture change:** The partnership's joint approach to defining a coordinated sustainable growth model, underpinned by a visionary multi-modal movement ambition and combined with spatial planning, will be a pilot which will have application elsewhere.
- **Adopt an evidence-based methodology to creating compact sustainable places:** The guide to footprinting land use to support walkable, sustainable mixed-use communities emerging in locations appropriate for intensification could become part of a generic approach following testing.
- **Select design teams on the quality and merit of their approach:** Exeter were willing to engage a smaller and less well established practice based on their approach to the brief and now plan to recommission the team based on the different perspective they brought, their collaborative and innovative approach and the quality of the strategy.

<b>Local Authority:</b>	Metropolitan Borough of Gateshead North East of England
<b>Area:</b>	Urban with rural hinterland
<b>Administration:</b>	Labour led Council, 3 Labour MPs
<b>Population:</b>	Gateshead 202,500 Tyne and Wear 1.36M
<b>Demographics:</b>	Increasingly aging population Student population increased by 151% between 2010-2016
<b>Planning:</b>	Gateshead and Newcastle Joint Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan adopted in March 2015
<b>Place Assets:</b>	Rich historic environment with 22 Conservation Areas BALTIC Centre, Sage, Millennium Bridge and Angel of the North
<b>Environment:</b>	North East Green Belt. 13 miles of River Tyne frontage.
<b>Housing Targets:</b>	11,000 new homes are planned for 2030
<b>Deprivation Index:</b>	47th most deprived local authority of 317 in England



## FUTURE | PLACE

Gateshead lies on the south bank of the River Tyne opposite the city of Newcastle. The borough has a joint urban core with Newcastle, as well as a number of smaller urban centres and busy employment centres. Around two thirds of Gateshead is rural with numerous small villages stretching into the greenbelt. Automotive, games and animation, and advanced manufacturing are new industries at the heart of Gateshead's future economy. The growing population is weighted towards older people, however the borough is keen to attract and retain young working age people and is increasingly popular as a student destination. Gateshead benefits from the Tyne and Wear Metro, which is a rapid transit and light rail system serving the metropolitan area. The borough nevertheless experiences high levels of through traffic and has a legacy of separated land uses, which may also contribute to car dependency. It is also home to one of Europe's largest shopping centres, the Metro Centre.

## FUTURE | VISION

Gateshead has huge ambition to accelerate the transformation of the urban core through placemaking to tackle inequality, encourage better health and wellbeing and retain and attract residents, visitors and businesses. This area includes Gateshead Quays - Baltic, Sage and New International Conference and Exhibition Centre; Baltic Quarter; Exemplar/High Street south and the Town Centre.

This vision sits at the heart of Gateshead's adopted regeneration strategy 'Fit for a City' which aims to deliver a centre with a distinctive identity, promoting healthy living and quality of life for all residents. Further aims are to make it a green, vibrant place incorporating a balance of uses, which encourages entrepreneurship and business growth. To deliver this, Gateshead is looking to enhance its core place 'offer' to create a strong town centre destination with unique character, which will complement the traditional offer of Newcastle city centre. This sets the foundations for a new urban economy south of the Tyne to attract vibrant and new businesses and talent. By reinforcing the centre of Gateshead as a destination, it will be a place where walking, cycling and community gathering are prioritised, rather than suffering the consequences of through traffic.

The Council's 'Thrive' strategy builds on this vision, and commits to creating a lively, connected, all age-friendly town centre that promotes health, wellbeing, social interaction and a better quality of life. The strategy sets out and promotes the following values: a distinctive identity; fun and vibrant; green and sustainable; attractive and inviting; nurturing and inclusive; growing and developing economically; varied, balanced uses; connected and accessible; healthy and prospering.

## FUTURE | OPPORTUNITY

Gateshead is an innovative council with a track record of regeneration success. It has ambitious plans for the transformation of the borough including the delivery of the regeneration of the urban core and a series of housing projects to deliver 11,000 homes across Gateshead by 2030.

Engagement with the Future Place programme aimed to provide a dynamic to draw together a series of spatial policies through the design of a high level masterplan framework for the urban core. By bringing a stronger physical focus, participation in the initiative offered an opportunity to help Gateshead refresh the Fit for a City Regeneration Strategy, embedding current initiatives and priorities, and connecting a series of planned capital projects.



Areas within the urban core of Gateshead

## FUTURE | CHALLENGE

Gateshead Council identified a range of challenges through discussion with the Future Place partners with a focus on addressing inequality, and defining the town centre in relation to Newcastle which required input and capacity-building:

**Reviewing the 'Fit for a City' vision** to ensure that the strategy (published 2008) remains fit for purpose, developing a deliverable framework to achieve the Council's 'Thrive' agenda and meaningful change in the next 10 years

**Planning for a series of major capital projects** which will impact on the urban centre, and will need to be considered in the light of the 'Thrive' agenda to secure equity, health and wellbeing for all, including the redeveloped interchange building.

**Breaking down the road barriers** to increase opportunities for walking and cycling, to link the central core with the Quays, BALTIC and the exemplar housing areas.

**Engaging communities and civic leaders** in the vision for and delivery of a healthy town including establishing a Future Gateshead Leadership Board comprised of the next generation of local stakeholders.

**Transforming the declining Gateshead Shopping Centre** into a retail and leisure destination to renew the attraction of the centre in line with ambitions to secure the support of the Future High Street Fund.

**Raising profile and increasing investment** by better understanding the Gateshead 'brand' and developing a communications plan to celebrate Gateshead as a distinctive destination for visitors and investors.

**Designing a new governance structure** which ensures that the central town centre area forms part of the wider vision and delivery strategy for the urban core as a Future Place.

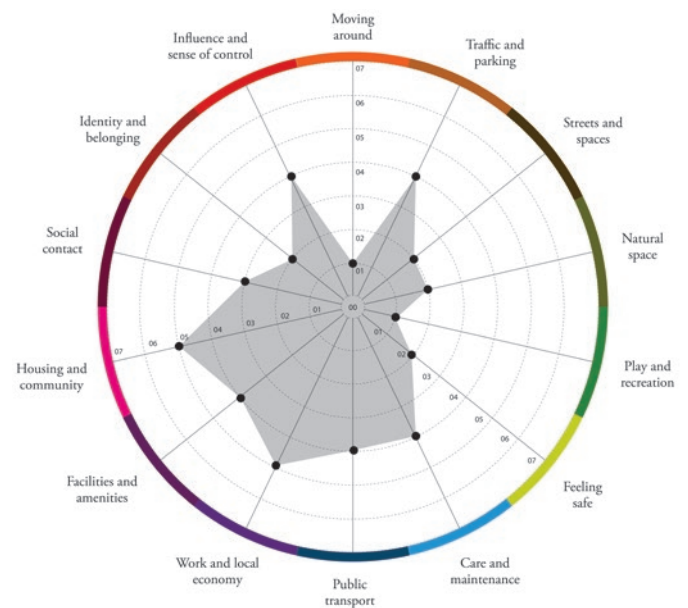
**Identify opportunities for improving connections** between the Central Town centre, Quays and Baltic Quarters and Southern Gateway for pedestrians and cyclists based around Healthy Place principles.

**Supporting bringing forward new development sites as priority housing projects** including the town centre 'Freight Depot' and High Street South sites and other community-led housing within the 'Exemplar Neighbourhood'.

## FUTURE | CAPACITY BUILDING

Gateshead met Local Partnerships for an exploratory meeting to help identify areas of need to enhance performance, build capacity and support delivery. The focus of Local Partnerships' input was to work with Gateshead to review the current governance arrangements and develop a more outward facing governance and oversight structure to better reflect government requirements. These arrangements are required to manage the investment programme for a local growth deal to support infrastructure, housing and regeneration.

A range of Gateshead staff took place in capacity building events throughout the year, which broadened the knowledge of placemaking within the authority. The Future Place commission was featured at the Homes England's All Staff Conference which took place in Gateshead, raising national profile and helping to cement partnership relationships and build impetus.



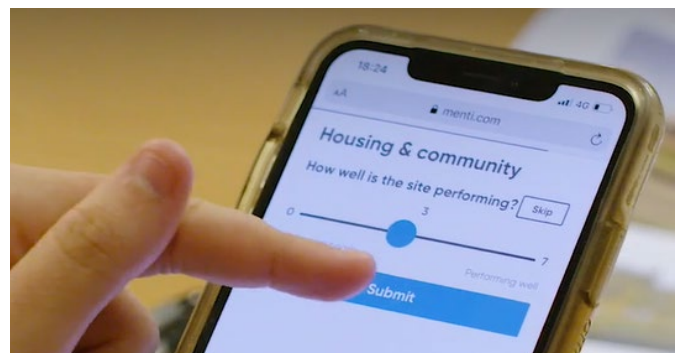
© GT3, Illustration highlighting responses from local residents of 14 key place standard themes

## FUTURE | PLACEMAKING BRIEF

The transformational placemaking challenge identified by the Future Place commission was to link the town centre with the riverside to maximise local benefits and regeneration of the Quays, and to link the centre into surrounding communities and exemplar neighbourhoods to encourage active lifestyles, walkable communities and social interaction.

This initial brief for the Future Place commission was wide ranging, seeking design input into an overall strategy which would help to provide an urban design approach to address the challenges identified. The overarching ambition was to transform Gateshead town centre into an attractive, inviting and inclusive destination serving local residents and the widest catchment population. Tackling inequality amongst residents was a core objective – both by enhancing health, wellbeing and quality of life for all, and ensuring businesses and retailers prosper. The Council also sought to move from car dominated movement to walking, cycling and public transport to support sustainability and wellbeing through mixed use urban footprinting and public realm design.

After initial input from the designers the brief was focused on the immediate area of the town centre to support the emergence of a high-level masterplan for the urban core, identifying key physical principles to enable a site specific, deliverable outcome.



Engaging under 25s via a Vision Workshop



# Gateshead

## FUTURE | PRACTICE

GT3 Architects are a multidisciplinary practice with offices in Newcastle and Nottingham whose focus is 'People Architecture'. The practice brings together a range of architecture, urban design, stakeholder engagement and environmental psychology skills. The Future Place team comprised colleagues with deep ties with Gateshead for whom the project was an exciting opportunity to influence the future of their hometown. Their approach to urban design and masterplanning is methodology-based, and they brought strength in briefing, urban analysis and systematic engagement practice to the commission.

Design team:

### GT3 ARCHITECTS

Simon Dunstan, Paul Reed, Nicola Irving,  
Carys Thomas-Osborne, Michael Simpson

## FUTURE | PLACEMAKING STRATEGY

A high-level masterplan was created to re-imagine the potential of the town centre in the light of current challenges and opportunities. This aims to 'knit together' a range of key projects already underway, including new communities and major new cultural facilities, and underpin recommendations for substantial physical changes to the public realm to support walkability and healthy lifestyles.

The design team followed a tested methodology to structure the project: 'Understand, Articulate, Optimise and Refine'. Drawing on their experience, the consultants worked with the local authority to clarify and agree the project brief. A systematic place analysis was then undertaken. This processed data available through council surveys against the consultant's 'place standard' and scored the existing experience of the urban centre against 14 Place Standard key themes. Through this, the team identified a lack of participation by younger age groups and set up a youth outreach event to redress the balance of inputs.

Finally, the design team undertook a physical survey of the location, testing their professional response to the town centre against the 14 Place Standard themes. Through this analysis, taking account of the outcomes of the youth workshop and the designers' professional survey, different priorities emerged reflecting shifts in perception of the centre.

The designers then developed a masterplan framework to transform the town centre through identifying strategic moves to reorder the physical fabric and draw together the public realm:

**Rerouting a main traffic carrying route** as part of a clean air solution

**Creating a pedestrian and cyclist priority zone**

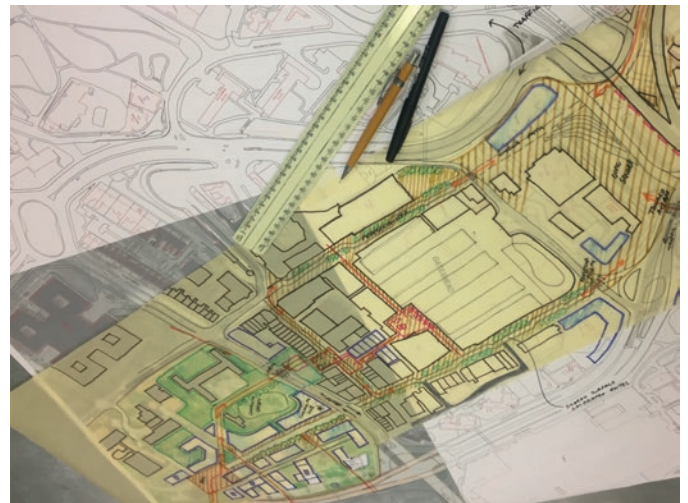
**Embedding greater route permeability and safer connections** to neighbouring residential areas

**Creating a hard landscaped civic square** to the north to forge a new meeting place and connect onwards to the quayside

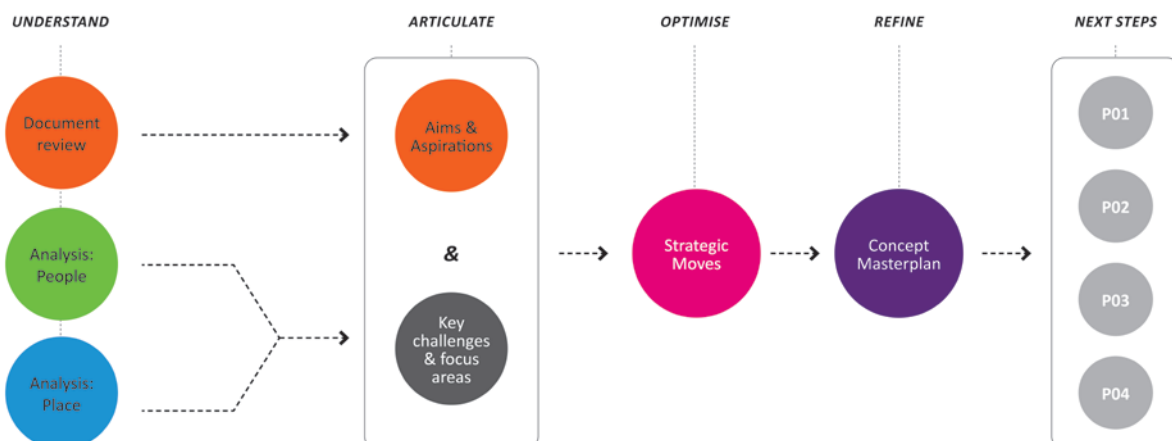
**Identifying a pedestrian priority 'retail/town centre activity loop'** as focus of the revised 'high street' offer, to optimise retail frontages and as a setting for key public buildings

**Creating a soft landscaped community square** to the south to operate as a connection and meeting place between the residential areas to the south and the town centre, with opportunities for events and healthy outdoor leisure

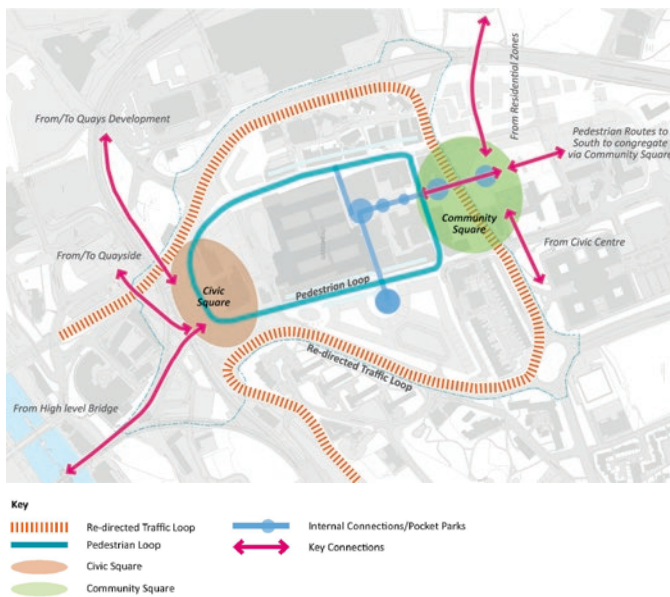
**Strengthening walking / cycle connections** from all directions into the centre



© GT3, Initial Concept Masterplan Sketch



© GT3, 'Understand, Articulate, Optimise and Refine' methodology



© GT3, An example of strategic moves overlay

## FUTURE | IMPLEMENTATION

The output of the Future Place exercise has provided a stimulus to advancing a town centre masterplan and urban design framework for the wider area, which will underpin a public engagement campaign and discussion with potential industry partners. As intended, it has also helped to update the 'Fit for a City' regeneration strategy to take account of the availability of new regeneration funding sources and the need to address challenges to the retail environment.

Resources have been allocated by the Council to commission a Delivery Plan to develop the technical design, evaluate the deliverability of the proposals and to undertake further engagement with a broad range of stakeholders. Working with GT3 Architects, the Council will now embark on a process of communication of the concept ideas and process to a public audience. The output of the Future Place project may also inform future bidding rounds for a range of relevant grant programmes.

## FUTURE | IMPACT

Gateshead Borough Council were delighted to have had the chance to receive high level design input and Local Partnerships' capacity building to help rethink how the borough's regeneration strategy might be updated to meet new challenges and opportunities, and current policy agendas. Insights gained through the project include using systematic analysis to uncover which groups to involve in consultation and project definition, and targeted participation sessions to engage proactively with identified groups.

Overall, the Future Place programme has built on Gateshead's strong experience of placemaking and regeneration, operating as a catalyst to advance thinking on a masterplan for the town centre. In particular, the Future Place programme has injected some impetus into the timetable for commissioning an updated urban core delivery plan. The evidence-based review and proposed interventions identified key urban design issues and solutions, which are being moved forward to public consultation and further technical development. This will form part of the borough's inward investment marketing strategy. Although they already work very collaboratively with an extensive range of partners, the Council reported gains in joint working between planners and highway departments.

As a practice with local roots, GT3 Architects were pleased to be able to engage with the local authority on a project of this level of scale and impact. They look forward to developing an ongoing relationship with Gateshead on future projects, and further work has already been discussed.

GT3 Architects' targeted approach to reaching out to a representative group of young people to help inform the development of the project has demonstrated the need to proactively engage with 'harder to reach' groups, and will be a model for future practice, and Gateshead will embed this in future work.

“With a well-defined brief a project can move forward at pace.”

Paul Reed, GT3

## FUTURE | LESSONS LEARNED

- **Identify all key user groups:** Successful engagement needs to identify all key stakeholder user groups and tailor outreach to involve them proactively. Structuring the stakeholder engagement to ensure that comprehensive feedback can be used to provide an evidence-based approach for the design is key.
- **Engage design thinking at an early stage:** Bringing design consultants on board from the start of the process to undertake asset analysis and site survey can bring valuable insights and references to reimagine places prior to the evolution to detailed strategies. Sitting outside the structure of authority or partnership, design teams occupy a privileged position to engage at all levels to advocate a project and help leverage partner interest.
- **Invest in systematic design analyses and briefing:** A robust and well-defined project brief enables a project to move forward at pace.
- **Draw on local experience and expertise:** Practices with a commitment to an area and a stake in its future can be a highly motivating resource to support regeneration and growth thinking.
- **Masterplan for people, not cars:** Prioritising the pedestrian and user experience within urban centres and rethinking the functioning of the public realm to deliver a new quality of place will create new opportunities for people and businesses.



<b>Local Authority:</b>	Great Yarmouth Borough Council
<b>Area:</b>	Coastal location in East Norfolk
<b>Administration:</b>	Conservative led council; 1 Conservative MP
<b>Population:</b>	Great Yarmouth 99,370; Norfolk 859,400
<b>Demographics:</b>	Benefit/Universal Credit claimants aged 16-64 years are double the national average
<b>Planning:</b>	Local plan adopted in 2015; new Development Plan Document covering housing allocations due to be adopted 2021
<b>Place Assets:</b>	'The Golden Mile' beach attracts c. 6 million visits per annum. 19 Conservation Areas and a large number of listed buildings
<b>Environment:</b>	On the mouth of the River Yare, gateway to the Norfolk Broads, Focus of England's offshore energy sector.
<b>Housing Targets:</b>	5,139 homes are planned up to 2030
<b>Deprivation Index:</b>	25th most deprived district in the UK



## FUTURE | PLACE

Great Yarmouth has historically been shaped by seasonality and extremes. At one point the port was the fifth richest town in the country with a thriving fishing industry and domestic holiday trade. This is reflected in its legacy of attractive heritage assets and thriving summer tourist industry which generates over £635m per year.

It is a patchwork of coastline, quayside and urban zones that layers sectors and industries on its peninsula, including leisure and tourism, marine energy, engineering and advanced manufacturing, and port logistics. The opening of oil and gas extraction from the North Sea in the 1960s, followed by the rise of the offshore wind industry has brought renewed economic opportunity.

However, Great Yarmouth suffers from the 'edge' location, associated transport challenges and limited economic catchment area typically connected with coastal towns. A number of complex, interrelated factors have also left a persistent legacy of deprivation, social immobility, and poor education and health outcomes.

## FUTURE | VISION

Great Yarmouth's vision is to encourage economic growth by attracting and retaining further visitors and skilled workers, including regenerating the historic town centre and better aligning the tourism, culture, and heritage offers with the future of the town as the national capital for offshore energy.



© Great Yarmouth Council, The Winter Gardens

The emerging vision anticipates that by 2025, new investment and employment in the town centre will generate renewed pride in Great Yarmouth and build confidence for the future.

The vision has been developed through a collaborative process underpinned by a strong evidence base including a need, demand, opportunity and issue assessment. The Council has ambitious plans to optimise the 13th century marketplace, for amenity and commerce. The Conge, a physical gateway to the town and key strategic thoroughfare connecting the marketplace to the station and other civic infrastructure, is the focus of regeneration. It presents significant opportunities to influence and optimise the development mix and quality of the built environment in the town centre. The Council would also like to create a vibrant, inclusive, mixed-use seafront that enables the celebration of local culture, heritage, and innovation, and which would become a regional and national attraction.

## FUTURE | OPPORTUNITY

Great Yarmouth benefits from an ambitious and outward-facing Council focused on diversifying the economy to improve social outcomes for residents, as well as regeneration that capitalises upon local strengths, including the wider heritage and cultural offer, future industries and connectivity.

There is significant scope for Great Yarmouth to capture the benefits of its growing status as the UK capital of offshore energy. Rail connections to Norwich and onward to Cambridge, Europe's fastest growing town and biggest technology cluster via the emerging Norwich-Cambridge Tech Corridor present a transformative opportunity to benefit from economic, employment and population growth. Strategic scale planning would enable Great Yarmouth to optimise its potential as a key point on this growing tech corridor which would bring opportunities in freight logistics, and a sustainable visitor and commuting economy.

Great Yarmouth saw participation in Future Place as a collaborative framework which would provide an opportunity to access specialist independent perspectives and expertise, develop leadership capacity and sector networks, and amplify existing initiatives.

## FUTURE | CHALLENGE

In addressing its regeneration challenges, Great Yarmouth has adopted a wide range of integrated, targeted interventions delivered in partnership with stakeholders to de-seasonalise, rebalance and diversify its economy. These are having a positive impact but remain somewhat fractured reflecting funding cycles. An 'overhang' of 3,500 permitted residential sites with build-out beyond 200 units per year is an indication of very difficult property market conditions.

The Future Place partners worked to identify and supply critical inputs to redress this:

**Creating a context in which investors have confidence** to support wider growth and regeneration by capturing and articulating a coherent, imaginative brand and place proposition.

**Making the most of existing heritage and culture** by targeting investment for historic buildings and minimising blight to the public realm, to improve the quality of the built environment and spur wider regeneration.

**Securing high quality development that meets the opportunity of the place** including creating and implementing a design code to secure the best environmental, social and health outcomes.

**Establishing the town as the national centre of excellence for renewable offshore energy** and marine science – as the basis of the future 'brand' identity, regeneration and economic growth.

**Rationalising the seafront retail offer and making better use of public space** to maintain vibrancy and activity and accommodate cultural and social events that celebrate local culture and heritage.

**Designing in flood resilience** to tackle the history of flooding which has led to an ongoing £68M investment in improving and maintaining flood defences.

**Embedding opportunities for creatives and communities to engage in the design process** to encourage local ownership in spatial regeneration and find a common identity through 'place'.

**Developing innovative cross-sector funding and mixed investment models** to build an investment package to uplift land values and improve social, economic and cultural outcomes.

## FUTURE | CAPACITY BUILDING

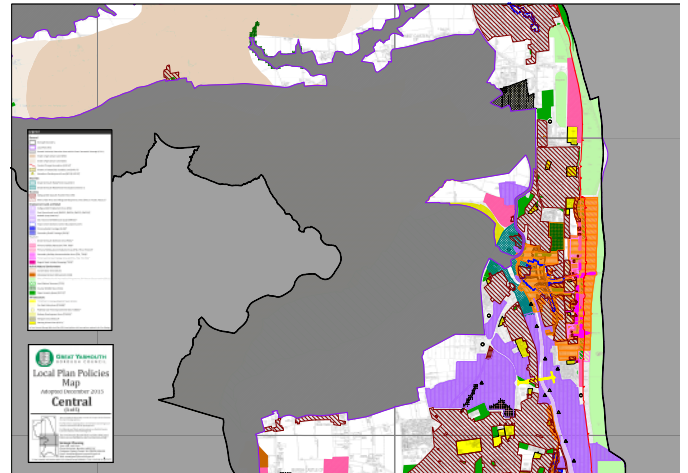
Great Yarmouth recognised the role of leadership skills in engaging in inclusive urban planning processes and driving design standards through to implementation, and the two Future Placemakers nominated participated in the RIBA Future Leaders programme.



Great Yarmouth Future Placemakers at RIBA Future Leaders

Participation in the masterclass on community engagement with the City Architect of Aarhus, delivered by the RIBA in partnership with the Danish Embassy, provided a forum to share knowledge, learn from different perspectives, and reflect on existing practice.

Local Partnerships worked with the Council to provide advice in a 'critical friend' capacity in support of a bid for a bespoke housing deal, as land values in the borough presented a significant challenge, and helped to ensure compliance with HM Treasury Green Book requirements.



Great Yarmouth Local Plan Policies Map

## FUTURE | PLACEMAKING BRIEF

Recognising the need to put 'place' at the heart of Great Yarmouth future regeneration, the Future Place programme commissioned a public realm improvement strategy for the seafront as the subject of the RIBA Open Call for architects to provide expert advice.

The principal aim of the brief was first to undertake an urban design and historic area analysis, and then to develop an imaginative strategy for the improvement of the public realm and a feasibility study for the seafront. Specific considerations for the design brief were:

Using the local characteristics, context and historic environment as a key inspiration for the delivery of dramatic physical and economic transformation through innovative, high quality urban design.

Refocusing the design of the public realm on future climate change adaptation, including mitigating the increased risk of flooding and coastal erosion.

Embedding financial viability in the plan by engaging with opportunities for housing and mixed-use development in future.

Encouraging leaseholders/freeholders, landowners and residents, to embrace change by achieving consensus on the purpose and design of the public realm through collaborative working.

“ The conceptual work on Tonkin Liu is a valuable catalyst for rethinking the seafront. ”

Great Yarmouth Council

# Great Yarmouth

## FUTURE | PRACTICE

Tonkin Liu is a multi-disciplinary design studio delivering architecture, art and landscape projects with a particular emphasis on placemaking and the use of pioneering constructional techniques. Tonkin Liu's design approach starts with looking at culture and nature to find a story about a place. Their storytelling methodology enables the creation of iconic and enduring designs with an accessible and relatable identity. Their ambition for the project was to carry out an analysis of the seafront and propose inclusive improvements to the public realm celebrating local culture, heritage, and innovation.

Tonkin Liu were selected for their visionary but achievable approach which demonstrated a sound understanding of the issues Great Yarmouth was seeking to address and translated ideas into illustrated principles. This was combined with a track record of practical experience of delivery on relevant projects.

Design team:

**TONKIN LIU**

Anna Liu, Mike Tonkin, Alex Woolgar, Hannah Anderson



Engaging the community

## FUTURE | PLACEMAKING STRATEGY

Tonkin Liu aspire for their projects to be enigmatic and enduring, like forms in nature. Through storytelling they look to uncover a project's potential, consider how this can best be expressed and make it unfold physically, using instinct and intuition to search for an ideal solution.

They approached the Great Yarmouth commission following a methodology that they have developed to understand the underlying condition, history and folklore of a place, which underpins all of their work: 'Asking, Looking, Playing, Making'. An initial public consultation exercise asked questions of a mixed community group as to how Great Yarmouth is perceived, and what their aspiration for the place is. The starting point for the project was the town's history as a vibrant holiday resort and a hotspot in the historic herring trade, characterised by a constant process of arrival and departure. The interplay between the elements that impact so forcefully on Great Yarmouth – water, wind and light – were also considered inspirational.

An iterative design process followed, shaping ideas drawn from the characteristics of place into a series of forms and concepts to intensify activity, make connections and bring together a design response that is rooted in its locality.

Key aspects of the feasibility study and spatial framework that emerged were:

**'Green Great Yarmouth'** a holistic design proposition to build inter-connectivity between the key regeneration areas and the seafront, and reclaim the town's relationship with its Broadland countryside hinterland to bring people closer to nature.

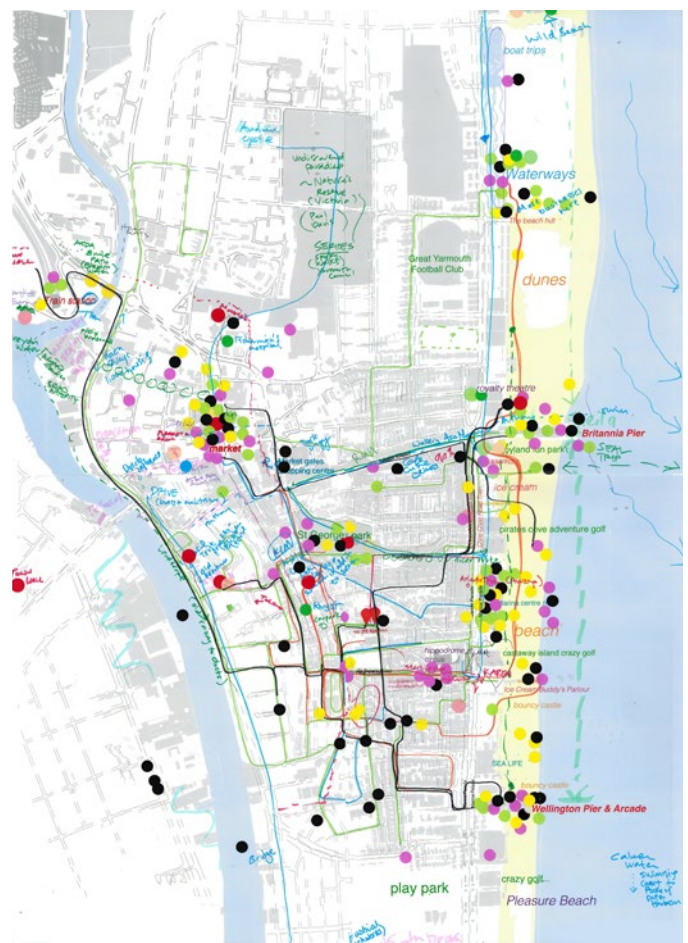
**Stitching the town centre to the seafront** by opening up vistas towards the sea and tree-planting routes to a seafront garden.

**Creating a sense of arrival** and 'go to destination' through public art, legible way finding and identification of routes to unlock awareness of Great Yarmouth's heritage and cultural assets.

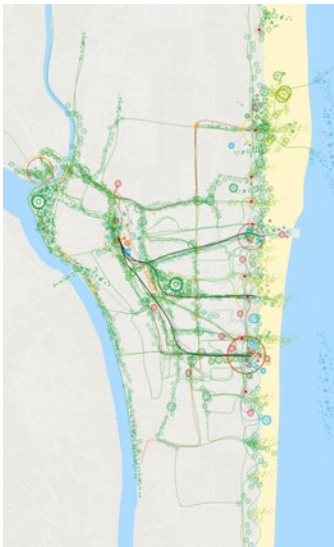
It is envisaged that through this place-based approach, connections between communities, old and young, residents and visitors will be reinforced while also bringing the year round economy towards the seafront.

## FUTURE | IMPLEMENTATION

Great Yarmouth is driving forward an ambitious Town Centre masterplan and major regeneration projects along the seafront, in addition to crafting a Culture and Tourism Strategy to help broaden and enhance the tourism offer. The Future Place programme offered the opportunity to kick start a new direction, putting place at the heart of the town's future growth and regeneration.



© Tonkin Liu, Community Engagement Map showing areas of intensity



© Tonkin Liu, *Creating a green identity*

The Council will use the exercise to reconsider the basis of a future masterplan commission, public realm works and the identification of a package of support to assist with the assembly of key properties and land to underpin the borough's regeneration.

The Council will also look to develop a design code to secure a step-change in design quality, setting a challenge to developers and investors interested engaging with Great Yarmouth. This will help to embed the wider aims of securing an innovative sustainable model of growth

based on the physical expression of the town as the leading centre of innovation in the offshore wind sector. They are also lobbying for a bespoke housing deal for Great Yarmouth. The Future Place programme will help Great Yarmouth to optimise, amplify, and advance these initiatives.

Plans to acquire a critical mass of buildings and land to underpin key regeneration projects, encouraging innovative and entrepreneurial arts-led occupation and producing a step-change in project quality were reinforced by the Future Place exercise, and the council will continue to look for mechanisms to enable this.

## FUTURE | IMPACT

The development of a visionary masterplan for the town centre is regarded as offering a “significant one-time only opportunity to engage and test-bed radical economic, social and environmental approaches for, and on behalf of, current and future generations.” Engagement with the Future Place programme reinforced the value of the placemaking approach and opened up new methods and ways of looking at Great Yarmouth centre, which will inform future planning, masterplanning and placemaking.

Participation in the programme has also brought a new profile to the town and its regeneration opportunities and issues. Specific benefits included building relationships at senior level with national partner bodies and invitations to speak at high-profile national events. Support from Local Partnerships has also built capacity in drafting funding bids.

It is envisaged that the Future Place project will influence the 10-year Tourism and Culture Strategy to embed an arts and heritage-led masterplan as a significant element of the town's tourism proposition. There is now a desire to use Tonkin Liu's conceptual strategy as a catalyst for a wider, deliverable Seafront masterplan that includes a wide range of voices and expertise.



© Tonkin Liu, *A green space for everyone: bringing people to the seafront.*

“ The Future Place programme opens up to a host of specialist expertise and innovators interested in our place and its challenges, equipping us to develop our network, leadership and capacity to tell a more confident public story. ”

Great Yarmouth Council

## FUTURE | LESSONS LEARNED

- **Work at a ‘larger than local’ level to problem solve:** In this case, considering the wider regional geography will be critical to unlocking extended catchment areas and supporting future growth.
- **Derive a compelling brand from local culture and conditions to make a place investible:** Tonkin Liu's analysis of the history, memory, natural assets and economic future of the town and Greening Great Yarmouth framework which weaves together the key historic buildings and reorients Great Yarmouth back towards its greatest natural and economic asset (and threat) – the sea – provides a consistent ‘green’ identity for the town by both connecting the town through nature and using nature to secure its future.
- **Invest in a public realm strategy shaped around visual, physical and emotional connections:** Tonkin Liu's approach to integrating the assets of a place and secure their future value – in this case a planting and waymarking strategy – provides a cost effective way to visually tie the town together, improve the quality of place, while increasing biodiversity.
- **Ground public realm interventions strongly in local engagement:** Tonkin Liu prioritised engaging the public and deliberative design processes to ground their strategy in local knowledge, desires, needs and culture.
- **Deploy high quality, visionary design to raise expectations for an area** to challenge perceptions and help to illustrate the potential for transformational market change. Great Yarmouth recognised the positive impact of Tonkin Liu's public remodelling of Dover Esplanade.

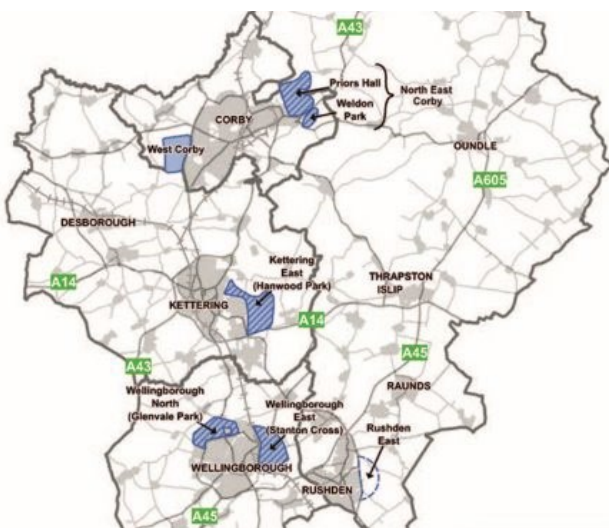
- Local Authority:** Unitary Authority of North Northamptonshire soon to be formalised
- Area:** Urban agglomeration with rural hinterland
- Administration:** Conservative Led. 4 Conservative MPs
- Population:** Wellingborough: 75,300; North Northamptonshire: 317,600
- Planning:** Joint Core Strategy adopted in 2011 covers Kettering, Corby, Wellingborough and East Northamptonshire
- Place Assets:** Town Centre is covered by a Conservation Area
- Environment:** Green Belt functions to protect surrounding towns and villages
- Housing Targets:** 40,000 new homes are planned up to 2031
- Deprivation Index:** Generally relatively wealthy with pockets of deprivation. 133th most deprived district in the UK



## FUTURE | PLACE

Northamptonshire is a largely rural county in the heart of England with several urban centres. Beautiful countryside and a range of small and medium sized towns provide a high quality of life. Close proximity to Oxford and enjoying easy access to London, Birmingham and Milton Keynes make Northamptonshire an increasingly desirable place to live.

North Northamptonshire is a new administrative entity comprised of five partner local authorities (Corby, East Northamptonshire, Kettering, Wellingborough, and Northamptonshire), which is moving towards the formation of a unitary authority in April 2021. It has had a Joint Planning Committee and Joint Planning Unit (JPU) in place since 2004. An ambitious growth strategy is set out in its core strategy, which aims to build 40,000 homes between 2011 and 2031, and create high quality Garden Communities, including a new Garden Village. The partner authorities are advancing North Northamptonshire's ambitious growth agenda – which will aim to increase the population by 25% – and ensure high quality design and placemaking.



© Fereday Pollard, Northamptonshire Growth Towns

## FUTURE | VISION

North Northamptonshire is one of the fastest growing areas in the country and has huge potential and ambition to continue to deliver a nationally important scale of growth. Its vision for growth is underpinned by an equally ambitious place-shaping agenda, supported by a spatial strategy to create an interconnected green network of urban and rural areas, to support a high quality of life and prosperous economy. North Northamptonshire has a strong commitment to improve the standard of design to ensure that only the highest quality sustainable, characterful and healthy places which people will enjoy for years to come are delivered in the future.

## FUTURE | OPPORTUNITY

North Northamptonshire's strategic location, joint working arrangements and design capacity put it in a strong position to deliver its vision for high quality growth. The recent inclusion of the combined authority within the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc presents an opportunity to plan for significant housing numbers over the next 30 years. The joint working arrangements have helped to secure design input from various sources including the Government Towns and Villages programme. The commitment to high quality is delivered through monthly cross-departmental 'design surgeries' and strong place shaping policies. Although standards are improving, North Northamptonshire recognises that there is further scope to create characterful, more sustainable places.

North Northamptonshire's participation in the Future Place programme was welcomed as an opportunity to embed place-shaping ambitions within the new Unitary Authority, raise the profile of the area with Government and the design professions, support the creation of principles and standards for well-designed, healthy streets, and developing capacity on placemaking including landscape and urban design.

“ We are enthused by the RIBA's Ten Characteristics of Places where People want to Live,' which are echoed in the policies for North Northamptonshire. ”

Martyn Swann, Principal Planning Manager, Borough Council of Wellingborough

## FUTURE | CHALLENGE

Discussion with the Future Place partners highlighted the following delivery challenges.

**Developing a collaborative engagement strategy** with elected members and senior officials to embed place-shaping throughout the new unitary authority.

**Maximising the use of brownfield land within urban areas** to support the regeneration of the town centres.

**Creating large urban extensions and setting a vision for a new garden village** at Tresham.

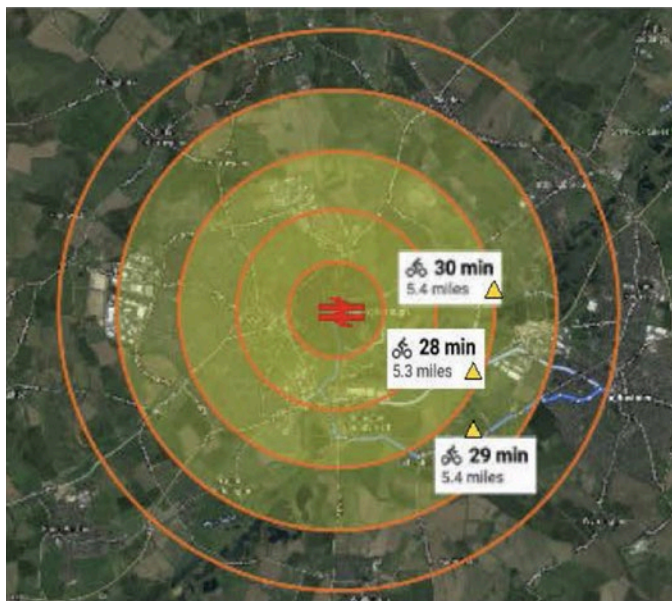
**Achieving wider health, green infrastructure and economic benefits** through public realm and smart technology improvements.

**Guiding incremental improvements for key radial routes** linking Garden Communities (urban extensions) with the town centre and implementing a pilot Corridor Management Plan.

**Maintaining high quality places and allowing them to evolve in the long term** through land stewardship and estate management.

**Considering options for direct or partner delivery to progress key sites** and developing infrastructure action plans.

**Ensuring current place shaping policy and guidance represent good practice** and will be a valuable, easily-used resource for designers and other stakeholders.



© Fereday Pollard, Promoting a shift to sustainable active transport

“ Working with architects through the Future Place programme provides creative flair and expertise, and enables us to look at things differently. ”

Martyn Swann, Principal Planning Manager, Borough Council of Wellingborough



Northampton area of interest

## FUTURE | CAPACITY BUILDING

The capacity building North Northamptonshire received through the Future Place programme was at the strategic scale. Local Partnerships worked with the Joint Planning and Delivery Unit to review viability studies across of a number of stalled small sites in the town centre. There was a particular focus on structuring partnership arrangements and mechanisms for attracting private sector development and investment partners, and on supporting delivery. This work might underpin future bids to unlock Homes England's enabling investment.

## FUTURE | PLACEMAKING BRIEF

Of the wide range of challenges identified, the Future Place commission focused on identifying a set of principles to improve the quality and character of key routes across North Northamptonshire through developing and applying a robust range of design standards to improve place quality and user experience.

This broad aim was translated into a site-specific project exploring the function and future public realm treatment of a key arterial route in Wellingborough. Midland Road connects the town centre with the station, and then onwards to a new urban extension at Stanton Cross which is being built on the opposite across the railway-line from the main centre, the proximity between the two proving an opportunity for connectivity.

It was agreed that the commission would explore a replicable approach to creating interconnected green urban and rural areas across the joint authority to create an enhanced setting for development, support regeneration and achieve the vision for wider health, environmental and economic benefits by:

- **Creating safe, pleasant, lively, and characterful streets** (and roads) for all.
- **Supporting and guiding incremental improvements** of key routes.
- **Improving pedestrian and cycle access** while maintaining traffic flows.
- **Enhancing the overall quality and character** of the route including tree planting, active frontages, and street enclosure.
- **Using smart technology** where possible.



# North Northamptonshire

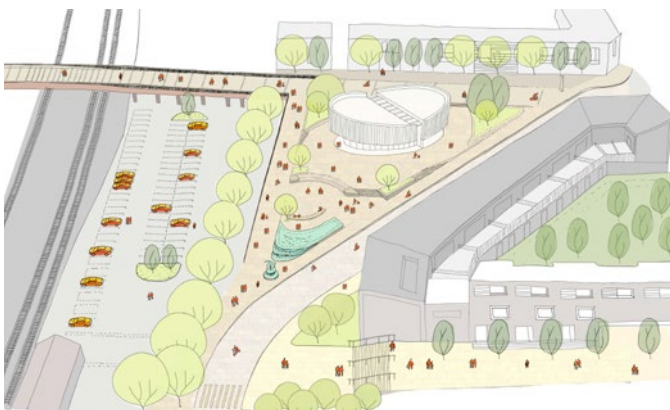
## FUTURE | PRACTICE

Fereday Pollard were selected as a practice with extensive experience of delivering public realm and landscape interventions, which are sensitised to local priorities and have a strong interest in unlocking undervalued local assets to find deliverable solutions. The multi-disciplinary team, which included architects, landscape architects and a transport interchange designer, brought a track record across a range of scales and project types, as well as experience of working with cross-authority infrastructure clients including Crossrail and Tideway. In addition to demonstrating the strong communication skills required to ensure that public realm strategies are implemented, Fereday Pollard had direct experience on the Lower Thames Crossing of embedding smart thinking in a green-infrastructure-led approach to placemaking.

Design team:

### FEREDAY POLLARD

Clare Donnelly, Jan Kroes, Annie Lennox, Natalia Gracheva



© Fereday Pollard, Welcome to Wellingborough Plaza



© Fereday Pollard, Vision for station surrounds

## FUTURE | PLACEMAKING STRATEGY

The original scope of the project was to propose enhancements for pedestrians and cyclists to Midland Road, as a radial route connecting to one of North Northamptonshire's urban extensions. Following site analysis and review of policies and forthcoming consented development, Fereday Pollard concluded that the radial route connects very poorly with the urban extension for non-motorists. The heavily traffic dominated environment was seen as a barrier to achieving the local planning policy aspiration for a 'modal shift' in transport towards walking and cycling and away from reliance on the car. The local authority therefore agreed to expand the brief to include not only enhancements to the historic route, but more radical preliminary ideas on how to address the challenges to the integration of Midland Road and Wellingborough station with the context of the future urban extension.

Fereday Pollard first undertook a landscape and townscape character analysis before developing a series of key design principles for each of the four character areas identified. The strategy also includes a detailed implementation plan for potential projects, setting out the comparative costs, speed, impact and interdependencies of each – as well as next steps.

**Town Gateway:** Proposal to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment through a review of traffic movements, narrowed road junctions, redistributed highways space, extending the natural material palette into Midland Road, improved road crossings to underpin future discussions with highways engineer and retail inputs.

**Midland Road:** Identification of design principles and propositions to enhance the 'Good Ordinary' character of the central stretch of the road.

**Green links:** Proposals for streetscape enhancements to a series of streets which run perpendicular to Midland Road including tree planting and to create clearer links and wayfinding to understated green open space assets beyond.

**Station surroundings:** Proposal to create a greater sense of arrival and better connectivity including a new pedestrian cycle bridge and a tilted sculptural public plaza, an innovation hub building and new terraced housing to complete the street frontage and act as a potential self-funding opportunity for parts of the scheme.

In the course of the commission the architects recognised the strong role that the identified route could play in connecting the new urban extension with the town core to enhance walkability and provide the platform needed for the shift in culture required. Importantly, the commission aimed to enhance the experience of arrival and departure from the station and town centre. The strategy concludes with high-level design principles to create streets for people which could be applied to other North Northamptonshire radial routes connecting to new communities following a detailed landscape/townscape analysis of the context: improve gateway points; address traffic dominance; make streets safer; create distinctiveness; maximise direct connectivity; promote intuitive legibility; enhance green infrastructure; incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage where possible; use robust and durable materials; enclose streets and deliver active frontages; avoid wide access roads.



© Fereday Pollard, *Design Principles for Midland Road*

## FUTURE | IMPLEMENTATION

North Northamptonshire has already established several place-shaping policies, which now require implementation across all five authorities. Having been developed in collaboration with key stakeholders, the Future Place study will provide a platform for further analysis, detailed projects and scheme development on individual recommendations.

In the short term, the Borough Council of Wellingborough will be considering the strategic level recommendations, reviewing the quick wins and how to develop, fund and implement the priority projects. The study will also be used to inform the Wellingborough Town Centre Design Guide.

It is anticipated that, following testing, the key principles established for the Midland Road will be applied to studies and projects on other radial routes across North Northamptonshire to deliver more attractive pedestrian and cycle environments, introduce planting to support pollution reduction and biodiversity, and improve the setting of settlements and place quality.

North Northamptonshire are soon to launch a Place Shaping Website and Supplementary Planning Document which will be a valuable, easily-used resource to help communicate design quality aspirations with local developers and communities.

## FUTURE | IMPACT

Participation in the Future Place programme encouraged joint working and information sharing to achieve a combined objective across the strategic (NNJPDU) and local level (Borough Council of Wellingborough), highlighting a model of collaboration which will be essential for the delivery of successful placemaking in future.

The study provided a useful insight into the barriers to movement and connectivity at Midland Road as a key radial route into Wellingborough. The commission cut across design, transport, infrastructure and movement, highlighting the complexity of public realm design, which must layer in multiple professional specialisms. Equally it sets up challenges for public and stakeholder engagement, given the multiplicity of interests involved which can be addressed in the next stage of project development.

The commission has established a set of key principles to overcome barriers to connections along key routes, in this case the link to and from the town centre, Wellingborough Train Station and the new Stanton Cross development.

North Northamptonshire valued Fereday Pollard's understanding of the place and its challenges, as well as their future-thinking, and innovative visionary approach which represents a step towards achieving deliverable projects and further detailed work in future.

## FUTURE | LESSONS LEARNED

- **Put in place integrated governance/leadership structures:** Sustainable transport and green infrastructure by definition straddle disciplines including transport, environment and economic development, as well as planning and political boundaries. Leadership with the overview, authority, skills and resources to ensure inter-departmental and stakeholder collaboration – supported by clear governance structures – is essential.
- **Undertake a character assessment of key radial routes:** The analysis of Midland Road demonstrated that each condition is unique and needs evaluating to determine appropriate interventions, including identifying barriers to connectivity, green infrastructure potential and appropriate materials.
- **Consider the requirements of all movement modes and future proofing as early as possible in the process:** It becomes more difficult to retrofit good street design as individual development proposals become concrete. Streets in new development should be planned to optimise multi-modal accessible movement and placemaking from the outset.
- **Coordinate all physical improvements including the footprinting of new development to achieve 'modal shift':** Proposals to facilitate sustainable growth and walkability from better public transport, designing or re-engineering the urban footprint, promotion of car-sharing, electric car and bike hire schemes at key movement interchanges all need to form part of a suite of coordinated initiatives

# Knowledge Sharing

## Bradford



### Bradford Shared Knowledge

Exeter's coordinated governance approach including representation of Homes England as a key funder and delivery partner could provide a model for streamlining and securing delivery as Bradford's ambitions move forward.

Gateshead's total place approach to delivering improvements to its urban core could provide a useful lesson on the benefit of coordinating all asset and place-based strategies to deliver health and wellbeing outcomes.

Great Yarmouth's track record in attracting creative and cultural occupation of their centre to kickstart regeneration, as well as their commitment to high quality new residential schemes, could help to secure the regeneration of character areas within Bradford city centre.

North Northamptonshire's emphasis on greening key arterial routes to connect town and countryside along healthy, sustainable movement corridors could provide an attractive strategy to help connect Bradford's high quality placemaking ambition from the town into its beautiful countryside setting.

## Exeter



### Exeter Shared Knowledge

Bradford's intention to systematically engage communities in consultation and co-design would help Exeter interrogate the place and movement requirements of a range of typical future user groups from across the city region to ensure planned public realm measures and developments anticipate their needs.

Experience at Gateshead, where the Metro rail system has been serving the city region for many years, could help to develop thinking on what other factors need to be in place to encourage substantial modal shift.

Great Yarmouth's approach to proactively engaging with entrepreneurial and culturally led businesses to repopulate their town centre could equally be applied to attracting mixed-use occupation to areas of intensification.

Particularly given the beautiful setting of Exeter and the sensitivity of its location, North Northamptonshire's emphasis of greening key arterial routes to connect town and countryside along healthy, sustainable movement corridors could help extend the Liveable Exeter strategy across the wider city-region.

## Gateshead



### Gateshead Shared Knowledge

Bradford's intention to systematically engage communities not just in consultation but in co-design could help Gateshead to achieve community support and buy-in to future masterplanning, by identifying all key communities and interest groups and involving them through tailored participation methods.

Exeter's approach to governance at a city-region level to deliver a coordinated transport and land use strategy to meet sustainable development challenges could benefit Gateshead's Future Place thinking to further develop their ambition towards modal shift and healthy living.

Great Yarmouth's track record in attracting and securing creative and cultural occupation of their centre to kickstart regeneration could help secure dynamic and entrepreneurial occupation of the regenerated urban core.

North Northamptonshire's emphasis of greening key arterial routes to connect town and countryside along health, sustainable movement corridors could extend the logic of the THRIVE strategy across the whole borough.

## Great Yarmouth



### Great Yarmouth Shared Knowledge

Bradford's systematic approach to user engagement to test developing public realm proposals and engage diverse communities offers a good example to support the next stage of Future Place thinking at Great Yarmouth.

Exeter's approach to its role within the city-region could help Great Yarmouth rethink its role at a regional scale – given rail connections to Norwich and Cambridge and proximity to Norwich Airport. This could uncover opportunities for sustainable freight, tourism and longer range lifestyle commuting.

Gateshead's total place approach to considering how all of its urban core assets might be rethought to support a coordinated approach to regeneration, and commitment to putting in place the governance structure to unlock this, could provide a model for Great Yarmouth.

North Northamptonshire's emphasis of linking town and country by greening key arterial routes could create a stronger connection between Great Yarmouth and its Broadland setting and enhance its visitor appeal.

## North Northamptonshire



### North Northamptonshire Shared Knowledge

Bradford's intention to systematically engage communities – not just in consultation but in co-design – could help to achieve community support and buy-in, with communities and interest groups involved from the outset.

Exeter's approach to governance at a city region level to deliver a coordinated transport and land use strategy to meet sustainable development challenges could benefit North Northamptonshire's Future Place thinking.

Gateshead's total place approach brings interesting lessons for reconfiguring the existing urban footprint and asset base in favour of healthy lifestyles, and repositioning the place offer.

Great Yarmouth's ambition to challenge the prevailing quality of residential delivery through place identity could provide a precedent for un-locking stalled schemes by raising newbuild place quality.

# Lessons Learned

## COMMON CHALLENGES

A number of common themes can be identified across the five locations, which the local authorities are all looking to address in different ways. In each case, places are looking to:

- accommodate challenging levels of housing growth
- stimulate the economy and rethink the role of the high street and town centre
- meet the twin challenges of sustainability and resilience
- deliver walkable neighbourhoods and reclaim streets from congestion
- create greener places and deliver health and wellbeing for all.

## COMMON BEST PRACTICE

### Proactive community and stakeholder engagement

Every location shared the aspiration to work proactively with communities and stakeholders to engage much more widely in Future Place thinking, and to ensure that all key user groups interests are identified and integrated. The diverse community engagement toolkit produced for Bradford could be extended to provide a generic resource to assist thorough and engaging stakeholder participation and co-creation processes. In Gateshead, GT3 architects' analysis revealed that plans for the town centre should be reoriented towards giving young people a reason to stay and contribute to its future equity, health and sustainability resulted in seeking the views of youth groups through tailored engagement methods.

### Locally generated design solutions

The desire to secure a locally generated design solution borne out of and enhancing the character of the place and aspirations of its people was a common ambition. In Great Yarmouth, Tonkin Liu combined a community engagement exercise to understand local knowledge, desires, needs and culture with an analysis of the history, memory, natural assets and economic future to define the new green identity for the town. The North Northamptonshire Future Place project brought an observational approach to townscape analysis that is commonly used in Landscape Character Assessment, that could be further developed to provide a tried and tested mechanism for authorities to ground placemaking in its local context.

### Effective project briefing

Another critical reflection from the first round of the programme was the importance of effective project briefing to help local authorities move systematically and rapidly from broad-brush aims and visioning to a successful placemaking design exercise. At this early briefing stage, it proved useful to engage expert skill-sets to quickly assess issues and potential, and input technical know-how; the Future Place commissions demonstrated that engaging collaborative and innovative architects at an early stage can bring valuable new insights to reimagining places before moving onto detailed masterplanning.

Equally, it is at this early pre-project design stage that systematic community and stakeholder engagement can be most effective, to ensure that all critical views of different users are taken account of before developing solutions to enhance the design and obviate challenges down the line. Future Place has begun to develop a systematic approach which will inform developing professional practices to enhance the critical placemaking briefing stage.

Future Place provides a vehicle to optimise both the existing commitment, expertise and resource in local authorities through coordinated multi-agency and expert professional support.

### Coordinated multi-agency capacity building

Participating local authorities have demonstrated a deep commitment to placemaking and a ready skillset to deliver. However, lack of resource and funding represent critical challenges in almost every case. In the longer term, the Government needs to invest in building up the capacity of local authorities to undertake placemaking and support delivery. Future Place provides a vehicle to optimise the existing commitment, expertise and resource in local authorities through coordinated multi-agency support.

### Accelerator placemaking programmes

The compressed timeframe of Future Place required the local authorities to work with the programme partners at a pace and intensity, rapidly engaging and turning around decisions. This 'sprint' process has shown how working on a high-level placemaking project with an injection of external design and delivery expertise can help to reflect on and rethink standard ways of working, and stimulate new project approaches and ambition. It was widely agreed that the effectiveness of the programme lies in its ability to kick start innovative approaches and thinking, building on existing vision and good practice.

**Limited resources targeted to maximise impact**

With limited public funding available, there is a need for places to work strategically to prioritise projects for placemaking investment that will secure the most beneficial and genuinely transformational impacts in particular markets and locations. A cross-cutting approach – which views seemingly diverse areas of activity through the single lens of place – enables public funds to be focused on leveraging impact that is ‘greater than the sum of its parts’. This requires a shift both in local authority culture and procurement practice so that decisions are based on achieving social, environmental and wider economic policy outcomes as well as financial objectives.

A core principle of the Future Place programme is to identify critical placemaking needs to support growth and regeneration at the project briefing stage to target Future Place support where it delivers maximum impact. Powerful spatial modelling is increasingly being used to analyse the potential of a place, identify needs, define priorities and test options and impacts to target limited placemaking design resource on local conditions; this could be a helpful additional layer to bring in to the Future Place approach.

Although local authorities are currently held back by segmented single-issue funding regimes, Future Place offers a framework that could be built on to coordinate, prioritise and target the resources of the organisations already involved around a key project or programme. The experience highlighted in the first round suggests that a critical condition for successful placemaking is cross-departmental, cross-agency partnership working which engages positively and openly with stakeholders and private sector partners.

**High level political and officer buy-in to ‘total place’ thinking:**

Across the different authorities, the greater the high level political and officer buy-in to the opportunity and challenge of the Future Place programme, the more quickly and effectively the projects have been advanced. Feedback from the Future Places suggests that the championing of place, along with placemaking skills and knowledge, should be embedded at all levels of an authority across all relevant disciplines, while a commitment to stakeholder and community engagement and co-creative design practice should inform decision-making relating to all local authority assets.

This confirms the need for Future Place to continue encouraging and supporting ‘total place’ thinking within authorities by means of the ‘total place’ partnership, good practice resources and capacity building programme.

**Collaborative cross-authority and partnership working:**

In each location, the programme has underlined the positive impact of working collaboratively across local authority departments, and partnership working to rapidly refine placemaking solutions. The first round of the Future Place programme also demonstrated the vital role that partnership working brings to the deliverability of projects. The permanent additional resource from Homes England to work alongside the local authority to enable project delivery which came with Exeter’s ‘Garden Community’ status provides a successful model which could be extended elsewhere. Public/private partnership entities have also been engaged in other Future Places. A three-way engagement of local authorities, national agencies such as Homes England and local stakeholder partnerships presents the ideal set of conditions for the delivery of Future Places.

The spirit of collective endeavour will be developed and embedded as the programme grows. Many of the participating local authority partners and practices have expressed interest in mentoring future participants and helping to build the common body of knowledge and practice. Equally, other organisations with a shared interest in placemaking have much to contribute to the Future Place ambition and it is hoped that the partnership will grow to embrace their resource and expertise.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The analysis in this report is based on the five Future Places which engaged in the first round of the programme during 2019. The evaluation is based on detailed survey feedback gathered from the partners, architects and local authorities which sought to understand whether the Future Place programme had met its core objective to unlock placemaking potential at local level – by promoting best practice in innovative delivery, design and funding models and cross-sector collaboration, and supporting the key role of local authorities through capacity building, expert advice and sharing knowledge. It is also draws on qualitative interviews with the various stakeholders involved.

At this point, only four months after the conclusion of the programme, it is not possible to accurately measure the long-term outcomes of the partners’ support. The report therefore focuses on evaluating the best practice emerging from the expert advice provided by the partnership and the RIBA Chartered Practices, as well as the core principles and objectives of the Future Place programme. The research suggests already that the programme has demonstrated the value of innovative design for successful placemaking, uncovered challenges and opportunities and developed the original Future Place visions positively.

# Recommendations for Government

The emphasis on housing numbers over all other considerations that has dominated planning over recent years has produced a range of undesirable outcomes. This single focus has provoked resistance to the prospect of development, which has often led to challenge and delay. Given the urgent need to deliver more better, affordable homes – as well as addressing climate change, embedding resilience, better managing social care and delivering productivity – there is urgent need for a change of emphasis.

The Future Place programme echoes the recommendations of The Raynsford Review and anticipated the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission in urging Government to put place at the heart of its thinking. This is not to downplay the urgency of delivering housing numbers and affordability. However, it is through high quality placemaking and innovative design that people will be inspired to see growth as a positive force for good that enhances rather than diminishes their quality of life.

This will require:

- substantially shifting departmental and agency targets away from numerical measures towards qualitative measures.
- stronger cross-departmental engagement to coordinate policies and programmes in support of a common goal of placemaking.
- new value- and outcomes-based approaches to procurement which enable quality and wider social and environmental measures to be considered both in commissioning consultants and projects, and in the disposal of sites.

Feedback from the local authorities we engaged with in the first Future Place round has underlined the need for additional resource to enable local authorities to deliver on place potential. Equally, local authorities have emphasised the difficulty of delivering on high quality places against a backdrop of fragmented and short term funding regimes.

This underlines the need for more joined-up thinking on programmes and policies supported by a more consistent, co-ordinated funding environment. In order to deliver on place-based policy outcomes, we urge Government to prioritise finding new ways to fund development and regeneration on a long-term, stable basis.

We further recognise a specific training need in relation to placemaking arising from engagement with local authorities in the course of the Future Place exercise. While our Future Placemakers programme provided an inspiring resource for emerging team members, there is also demand for tailored, high level hard skills training on project funding, management and delivery.

With limited public sector resources, we urge Government to consider investing in scaling up the Future Place programme to multiply the benefits of the programme to support local authority placemaking and Future Place thinking across England.

Finally, at the heart of the Future Place programme is a commitment to deploy innovative design in the service of delivering more sustainable, healthier, equitable places. From our engagement with authorities and our partners we have seen that in addition to designing well at the local level, the systematic skills of the technician and planner met with creative spatial design skills, need to be applied at the larger than local – and sometimes regional – scale. As three of our projects have illustrated (North Northamptonshire, Exeter and Gateshead), the city-region is the unit of scale at which commuting, town centre catchments and sustainable footprinting of places must be resolved.

We therefore urge Government to consider how it can address strategic place-based challenges at the 'larger than local' scale to deliver sustainable settlements in the face of climate change; coordinate infrastructure and land release; mediate pressures on land and resources between the rural and urban areas; and secure economic resilience and productivity.

## THE FUTURE PLACE PARTNERS URGE GOVERNMENT TO:

- Shift departmental and agency targets to embrace qualitative measures of place as well as numerical targets.
- Support cross-departmental engagement to coordinate policies and programmes in support of a common goal of placemaking.
- Develop new value- and outcomes-based approaches to procurement to enable quality and wider social and environmental measures to be considered both in commissioning consultants and projects, and in the disposal of sites.
- Prioritise finding new ways to fund development and regeneration on a long-term, stable and holistic basis.
- Consider how it can address at strategic place-based challenges including environmentally and economically sustainable places, infrastructure and land management at the 'larger than local' scale.
- Consider investing in scaling up the Future Place programme to multiplying the benefits of the programme for local authority skills and capacity – and placemaking – across England.

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# 10 Future Place Principles

- 1** The developing Future Place Partnership is bringing together the resources of leading organisations to produce a joined up response to the challenges of making better places across England.
- 2** Place is the lens through which planning for inclusive growth and regeneration must be viewed to bring together housing, economic development, health and wellbeing, resilience and sustainability and support locally appropriate solutions shaped by communities and stakeholders.
- 3** Strategic place-based challenges of sustainability, resilience and inclusive growth, and the infrastructure and land management which underpins them, need to be considered at the 'larger than local' scale across administrative boundaries.
- 4** Targeted Future Place thinking, practice and resource mapped to locally defined needs will leverage maximum benefit from investment, whether publicly or privately sourced, delivering high quality places and improved outcomes.
- 5** Local authorities have a key role to play leading Future Place thinking across their area to enable cross cutting, coordinated and aspirational approaches. Placemaking should therefore be championed at a senior level within local authorities and their partner organisations.
- 6** The Future Place programme has acted as a catalyst to encourage and advance transformational thinking on strategic issues facing local authorities, which will accelerate change and innovation in placemaking.
- 7** Placemaking is a holistic exercise which brings together consideration of system infrastructure (water, waste, energy, movement, green infrastructure), with the design of the public realm and configuration and occupation of built space.
- 8** Architects have a clear role to play from an early stage in assisting communities and local authorities analyse their placemaking challenges, and articulating visionary and imaginative Future Place solutions.
- 9** Working collaboratively is at the heart of finding new solutions that are attuned to local needs and are cost effective. The Future Place programme has stimulated collaborative working across local authorities and between local authorities and their partners.
- 10** Robust community and stakeholder engagement in understanding the place, defining the brief and developing a design is a necessary pre-condition of placemaking. Replicable engagement and co-creation practices applicable to all scales of placemaking are a key output of Future Place.

[architecture.com/future-place](https://www.architecture.com/future-place)

