

SEEN AND HEARD
A CHARTER WRITTEN BY YOUNG ADULTS,
FOR YOUNG ADULTS, TO DEVELOP
PUBLIC SPACES FOR THEIR GENERATION

VOLUME 1

WORKSHOP

Seen and Heard Volume 1 of 4: Workshop

This document is complemented by a series of reports which cover various outputs of the project Seen and Heard. Volume 1 summarises the methodology and pedagogical approach behind the workshop sessions with members of the Blueprint Collective and Brent Youth Parliament. Volume 2, 3, and 4 contain the outputs of those workshops; the Blueprint Collective Youth Charter, a set of policy recommendations, and a Design Guide, respectively. Volume 4 is to be published separately.

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MAYOR OF LONDON



FOREWORD

In February 2018, the London Borough of Brent was awarded the title of London Borough of Culture for 2020. Brent's winning bid stood out because it unashamedly placed young people at its heart – promising an exploration of what culture means to them in the 21st century. Fast-forward two years and there are over 100 young people driving Brent's year of culture. This group of young people are known as Brent 2020's 'Blueprint Collective'. A self-described part-pressure group, part think tank who are invested in every aspect of Brent 2020.

Whilst developing the programme, a common theme that our young advisors talked about was how many public spaces are not built to accommodate young adults or their needs. They described how they were more likely to be treated as a security risk than as users or stakeholders. It is the Blueprint Collective, along with Brent Youth Parliament, who have authored the Seen and Heard project. Together, they have explored how young adults could be supported to have their voices heard in the development of public spaces in the future.

Seen and Heard is now a Charter, written by young adults, for young adults. It is a series of policy recommendations and practical guidance tools for local authorities and developers to adopt into their city planning. Wembley Park developer Quintain, and Principal Partner of Brent 2020, sponsored the project and offered the group a plot of land to put their recommendations into practice. We partnered with LSE Cities to help us deliver the programme and guide the young adults through the design, policy and research processes as part of their journey.

From here, Seen and Heard becomes a campaign led by young people and amplified over 2020. Please help us by joining the debate, sharing the charter and inviting the Blueprint Collective to tell you more about their work.

Lois Stonock
Artistic Director, Brent 2020

WORKSHOP METHODOLOGY AND PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

The following report details the workshopping process throughout this project. The report consists of three parts. The first part outlines our methodology and pedagogical approach in facilitating this series of workshop sessions, whilst also summarising each workshop. The second part evaluates the process, reflecting on what was learnt from the participants and what could have been improved, on behalf of the facilitators. The final part provides a summary of each of the project's outputs and the audience they are primarily intended for, as decided by the participants.



^Model making. Image: Catarina Heeckt

METHODOLOGY

The workshop process followed a logic of 'deconstruction' and 'reconstruction' over eight sessions. Across a two-phase approach, assumptions about privatised public space in the context of contemporary youth culture in Brent were challenged to produce a more nuanced and robust framework for designing public spaces with and for young adults. Through the first 'deconstructive' phase, we aimed to arrive at a set of principles that described what the young members of the Blueprint Collective (BC) valued most in publicly-accessible spaces. During the second 'constructive' phase, we then translated these principles into three outputs:

- An outline design and design guidance for a portion of White Horse Square in the Wembley Park development
- A Youth Charter outlining the BC's call to action for other young people in the borough
- A set of policy recommendations on privately-owned, publicly-accessible spaces, and youth culture.

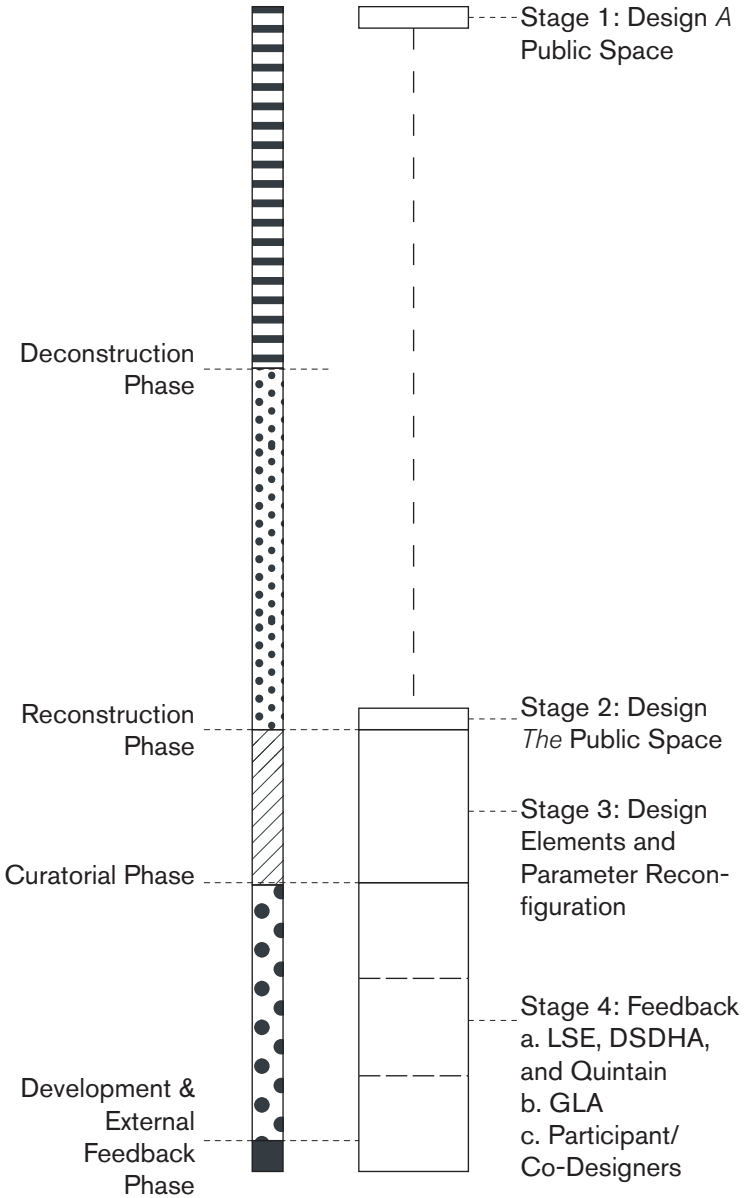
SESSION SUMMARIES

Session 1 - Design A Public Space

For the first session, we worked with the participants to respond to initial ideas around public space and identity in order to produce a set of conjectures on what makes a 'good' public space. The participants worked in groups during this session to produce a set of models that visualised these initial ideas.

This session was supported by Alpa Depani, an architect, lecturer, author, and urban designer who introduced the participants to her research on small-scale public realm in global cities and closely aided in their design work.

Workshop Design
Process Process



Session 2 - Where is "For You"?

During the second session, these conjectures were then interrogated and explored through a set of reflexive exercises in which participants positioned themselves at the centre of the question: where is for you? Exploring notions of both public and private spaces by looking at participants' own, highly localised, experiences of each also created a unique way of introducing the participants to a variety of architectural and socio-political design issues that shape the discourse around public realm design today. This set the stage for the participants to then utilise or critique these issues, and the discourses that encompass them during the latter phase of the workshopping process. During the second session, this process culminated in the production of a series of collages, highlighting what notions of 'for you' looks like for the participants', as well as a series of maps describing, cartographically, both specific and generic days in the participants lives.

This session was supported by current and former Brent residents, Nathaniel Telemaque, an artist, photographer, writer, researcher, and Dhelia Snoussi, youth worker, filmmaker, researcher and curator. Both practitioners offered their unique professional and local experience to the participants, critically aiding in what became a deeply personal and reflexive session.

Session 3 - "Reality Check"

For the third session the participants went on a guided site visit of Wembley Park led by representatives from the developers, Quintain. This aimed to introduce the participants to some of the practical parameters involved in designing public spaces. The walk instead raised a

number of quite personal and emotive issues for the participants which significantly changed the course of this particular session. In response, Session 3 became a critical point in the process whereby the participants voiced their concerns regarding regeneration and gentrification in the borough, and also expressed their angst at the inequitable nature of urban change there. Allowing for a critical dialogue between facilitator and participant in this session (in addition to lively debate between the developers and the participants) proved crucial at this stage in the process, with the discussions and learnings from Session 3 going on to heavily influence the project's outputs.

This session was supported by Hannah Alderton from DSDHA, who is a landscape architect for White Horse Square in Wembley Park, and James Brierley and Julian Tollast, Development Manager and Head of Master Planning and Design at Quintain respectively. Both Hannah and the Quintain representatives offered a unique insight into the delivery of public space, but were also receptive to the participants' questions, compliments and criticisms, many of which opened up the space for the discussions that defined Session 3. In addition, Nathaniel Telemaque returned to offer his experience and support to the participants.

Session 4 - Principles

The fourth session aimed to flesh out some of the ideas that had arisen from the previous session and document them as principles from which to start the 'reconstructive' phase of the workshopping process. Together in this session we explored not only methods of creation but also dissemination, and looked at different ways young

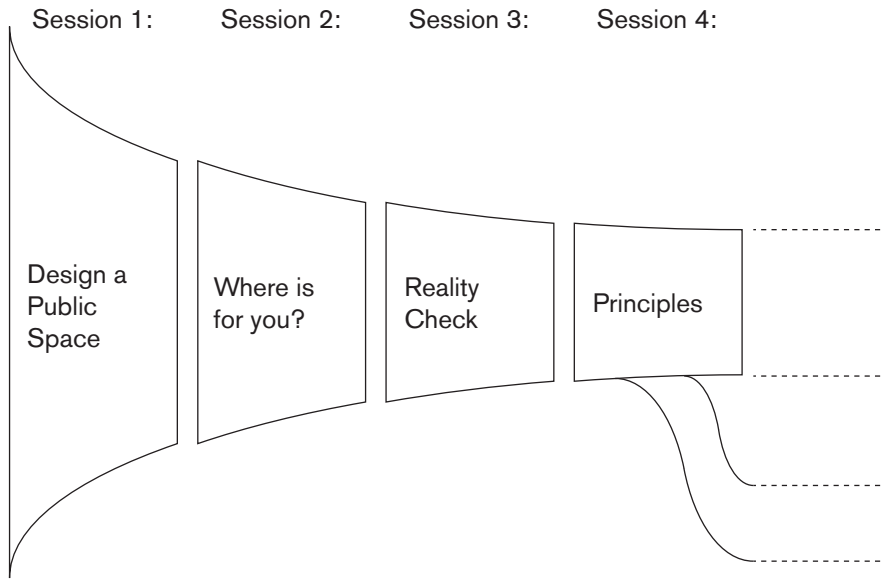
adults might get their ideas and needs heard effectively. This would go on to determine both the final form and intended audience of the Blueprint Collective Youth Charter.

This session was supported by Anna Himali Howard, a director, theatremaker, and artist. Introducing the participants to her work, which looks at DIY zine-making as a means of effective information sharing within her local community. Anna provided decisive insights into how the project's outputs might be best disseminated and for whom they should serve.

Session 5 - Design *The Public Space*

The fifth session signalled a clear break from the 'deconstructive' phase and start of the 'reconstructive' phase. During this session the participants used the principles they had devised throughout the previous sessions to inform a site-specific public space design for Wembley Park, which materialised in the form of a model. Participants then presented these models back to their peers, explaining important design aspects and key ideas behind the models that would also inform the Youth Charter and the policy recommendations.

This session was supported by author, editor, urban designer and landscape architect Meaghan Kombol, who showed the participants a variety of her landscape works and design interventions. Meaghan provided crucial support with this session's design process, aiding the participants in balancing practical parameters (such as scale, materiality, and layout) with conceptual rigour.



Session 6 - Presentation at the London School of Economics

In the sixth session the participants had the chance to review the terms of their Charter and policy recommendations - both of which we had cohered into lists between the fifth and sixth sessions - and their space designs. They then presented these back to professionals at Quintain and academics at the London School of Economics (LSE) whose feedback helped define a number of social and strategic aims for the space.

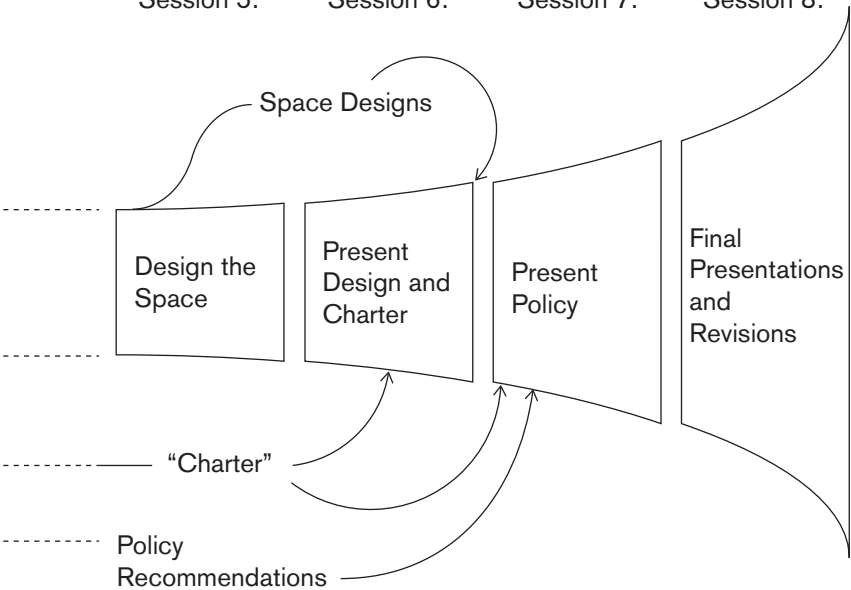
This session was supported by Ricky Burdett and Suzi Hall from the LSE, alongside Julian Tollast and James Brierley from Quintain and Hannah Alderton from DSDHA, all three of whom were involved in Session 3.

Session 5:

Session 6:

Session 7:

Session 8:



Session 7 - Presentation for the Greater London Authority

In the seventh session the participants reviewed the policy recommendations and presented them to planners, urban designers, policy-makers and researchers from the Greater London Authority. Feedback from this session further shaped the recommendations and helped to confirm their relevance in London's current political climate of development.

This session was supported by the following representatives from the GLA: Kathryn Timmins, Paul Harper, Lara Goldstein, Coral Flood, Melissa Meyer, Alex Marsh, Tim Rettler and Angela Farrance. Mario Washington-Ihime from the Centre for London was also in attendance.

Session 8 - Finalising the Charter

The eighth session experimented with a role-reversal whereby we, as facilitators and co-designers, presented back to the participant co-designers. The purpose of this was twofold. The first was to act as a litmus test for the authenticity of the work that we had embarked upon in bringing the participants' work together into formats that could be read and understood by their desired audiences. The second was to ensure that the collaborative process' final, authorial decision was made by the participants, emphasising their joint position as co-designers.

This session was supported by Verity-Jane Keefe, a visual artist working predominantly in the public realm to explore the complex relationship between people and place. Verity offered insights on the variety of methods she uses in her work across mediums from moving image, text and installation to critically challenge assumptions we were making around the production of the Charter.



^Touring Wembley Park. Image: Catarina Heeckt

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

In devising this workshop series we were cautious to meaningfully define the 'co-design' process in a way that ensured an equitable arrangement of labour whilst prioritising the ultimate authorship of the participants as co-designers. Ensuring an equitable balance between facilitator and participant labour during the workshop first meant designing a process that valued different types of labour whilst also acknowledging where, within the wider context of this workshop series, both hierarchies and value exchanges had been predetermined.

The young participants were not paid for their labour and contribution to the Seen and Heard workshops, although all travel and food was paid for. As such, the first predetermined hierarchy - for ourselves as facilitators - was to acknowledge our position as paid contractors as well as educators, in relation to the participants' assumed positions as willing volunteers and students. In this position, a predetermined value exchange might be understood as being our disciplinary knowledge and expertise in exchange for the participants' time and cooperation.

However, our decision to position the participants as co-designers was fundamentally a decision to value not only their time and cooperation but also their tacit local knowledge and expertise. As this was not valued fiscally (i.e. through direct payment) in the process we were therefore careful to establish sensitive time constraints on the participants' labour and to ensure to present a variety of tangible upskilling opportunities throughout the process (such as further workshop opportunities,

meaningful interaction with facilitators and invited experts/guests, and exposure to upskilling opportunities outside of Seen and Heard). We also aimed to recognise the emotional investment of each participant, as many subjects raised in the workshop involved considerable personal reflection on, or discussion about, issues that may have been either psychologically or geographically close to home. In acknowledging this, it was important that both facilitators and invitees dealt with participants' aspirations for the project sensitively; not overstating the results of certain outputs will engender complicated and extensive processes (i.e. the space design leading to the built public space in White Horse Square) but instead emphasising the utility and tangible benefits of the processes behind their realisation.

Prioritising the ultimate authorship of the participants in the project also often meant a continuous process of 'checking ourselves', ensuring that the knowledge and skills we provided offered a platform for the ideas and expressions of the participants rather than seeking consensus for predetermined ideas developed elsewhere. This was achieved in a variety of ways. One example was the attempt to delicately balance commonplace, disciplinary knowledge regarding public space design with the participants' tacit, experiential knowledge. Another was the attempt to only work with previously discussed ideas during the curatorial stages of the space design, Charter, and policy recommendations, prior to their final presentation.

WORKSHOP EVALUATION

The project offered important learnings, many of which are manifest in the terms and principles of the workshop's outputs and can be read in-depth in the next section and in Volumes 2, and 3. However, there were also a number of important process-specific learnings that are the focus of this section. Their documentation here aims to aid in the future delivery of similar projects.

LEARNING 1: TIMING

Many of the workshops' successes relied on their programmatic flexibility. The direction of each session was able to sensitively shift with the concerns and interests of the participants just as with the inputs of the facilitators and invitees. However, flexibility with timings was also of crucial importance. During the project, a '10 am start' quickly became a euphemism for 'just before or after 10:30'. Though it often meant workshops ended slightly later, this half-hour liminal period before the official start - in which participants would slowly arrive in dribs and drabs - offered an important informal opportunity for us to get to know the participants outside of the intensity of the workshop, and vice versa.

LEARNING 2: MEETING AT EYE-LEVEL

The logic we chose to follow in this series of workshops necessitated withholding, or at least managing, information at certain points in order to produce outcomes that would feed constructively into the project's final outputs. One example of this was choosing to omit possibly restricting site-specific information from the first model-making task in Session 1. Another was the choice to begin the series by focusing



^Workshop session. Image: Catarina Heeckt

on a purportedly technical understanding of public space over a more nuanced, socio-political one, which we aimed to introduce later (e.g. concentrating on the spatial and physical properties of public spaces before introducing the social and political structures that define them presently and historically).

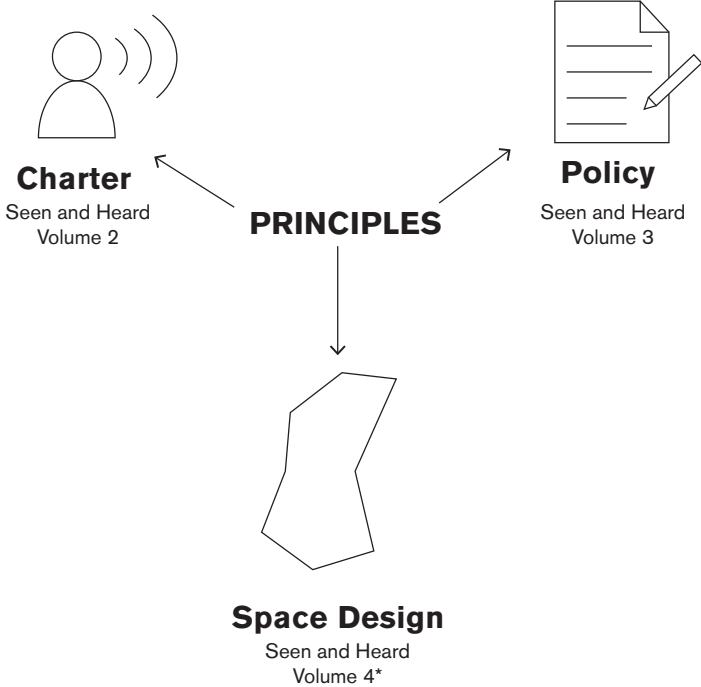
However, Session 3 taught us that the importance and relevance of certain topics to participants will eventually define the discourse of the workshops. The personal proximity many participants felt to inequitable urban development in the borough was striking and forced us to quickly rethink our approach for that session, opting for an afternoon session of deep discussions on the histories and realities of development and displacement in London

instead of what was pre-planned. From this experience we took an important learning. Whilst managing information is a standard part of any workshopping process, when working with young adults it is important to recognise and respect the possible immediacy of their relationships with their changing built environments. In doing so, as facilitators, we should not underestimate the consequential desire for information (outside of the strict confines of the project programme or schedule) that young adults will have, especially information that may help demystify what often feels like an intensely despairing situation.

LEARNING 3: UNLEARNING

Although these workshops illuminated an array of important commonalities between the identities and circumstances of both facilitators/invitees and participants, they also highlighted fundamental differences. The participants' attitudes to aesthetics, to the socio-political limits of privatised public space, to what is desirable in welcoming spaces, and many other topics, were often far removed from ours and even further removed from many disciplinary norms. However, each varied and discordant position on these topics provided a crucial insight into different notions of 'spaces of belonging' and signalled, to us, the need to often estrange our learned, disciplinary sensibilities in order to recognise and value these factors appropriately. Though some way from complete 'unlearning', these experiences felt in many ways like the start of such a process.

WORKSHOP OUTPUTS



* to be published separately

From the first three workshops we were able to establish a set of principles for the design, delivery and management of public space for young adults. These went through 'translation exercises' where each project output conveyed the principles in different ways, reflecting their respective audiences. The following section outlines each output in terms of 'what' they are and 'who' the audience is:

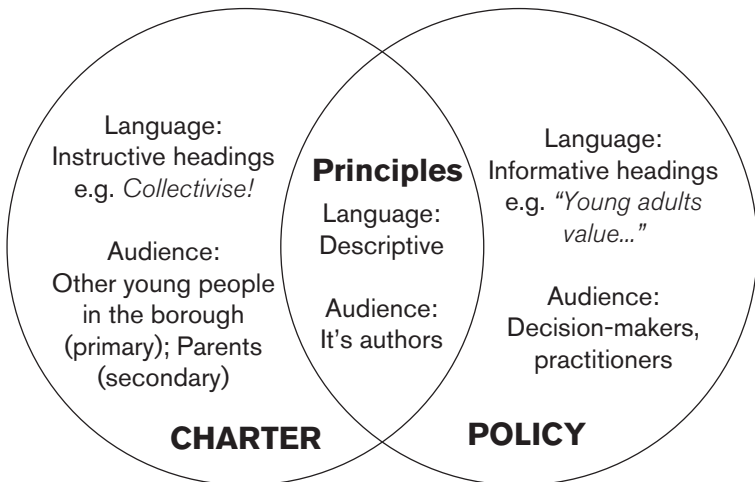
OUTPUT 1: YOUTH CHARTER

What?

Charters are typically documents which set out terms between residents, local authorities and elected decision makers. But in this case, the participants wanted the charter to be 'a call to action' for other young people in the borough, with the intention of challenging the current dynamic of urban development, particularly public space, in Brent.

Who?

The Youth Charter is primarily intended for other young people - thinking specifically about disillusioned young adults - but also to a lesser extent their parents, carers, and neighbours.



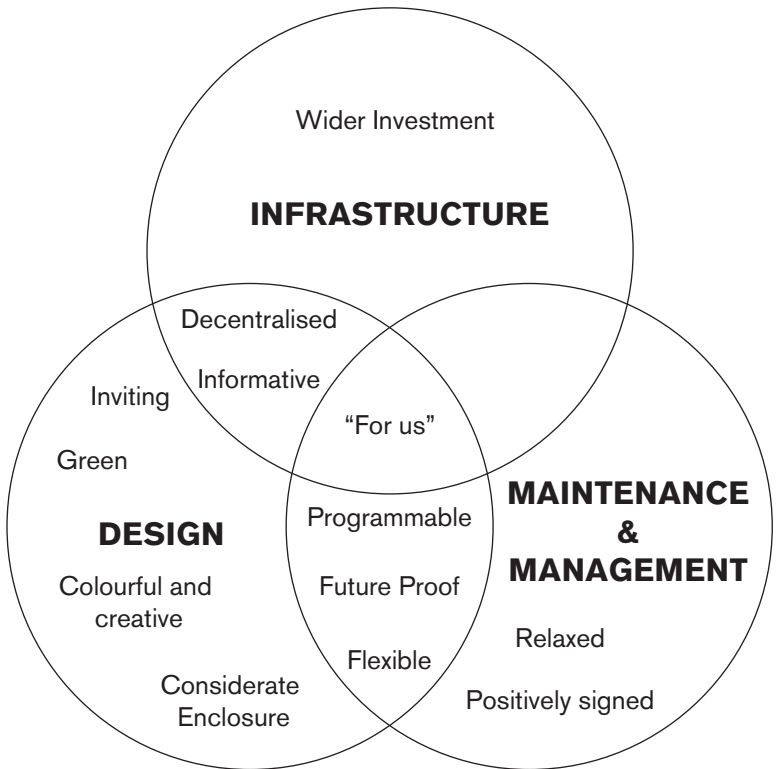
OUTPUT 2: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

What?

The policy recommendations aim to help public space stakeholders deliver inclusive, shared and locally-responsive design while planning and managing privately-owned publicly-accessible spaces with young people in mind through policy, investment and advocacy.

Who?

The document targets urban planners, architects, developers, local authorities, and national frameworks.



OUTPUT 3: DESIGN GUIDE

What?

The Design Guide, which will be published at a later date, is a guidance and advocacy document that aims to instruct and shape the final planning application submission for a section of Quintain's White Horse Square scheme dedicated to young adults in Brent. The Design Guide specifically offers guidance for phasing between RIBA Stages 2 and 3 and for affecting outstanding reserved matters that have been either excluded from or not formalised in the outline planning permission.

Who?

This document is primarily intended for the developers and planners of White Horse Square; but is also relevant to urban planners, architects, developers, and local authorities interested in working with and for young adults. The hope is to contribute to the burgeoning discourse between architectural/urban design academia and practice, in the context of co-design with young adults.



^Collaging. Image: Akil Scafe-Smith

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