

Creating healthy places:
bringing active design to life



Contents

1. Introduction
2. Insights from the expert panel
3. Event outputs – resulting themes
4. Next steps

“The event managed to combine ambition with humility and tremendous energy - a superb platform to move forward from.”

Andy Mytom
Partner
David Morley Architects

1. Introduction



James Stone
Managing Director
Lands Improvement

A chartered surveyor by background, James has a wealth of experience across all aspects of strategic land activity, including acquisition and land assembly, planning promotion and infrastructure delivery and sales.

James has been at the forefront of a number of projects at Lands Improvement, such as the acquisition and successful delivery of the Frythe development in Hertfordshire; promotion, securing planning permission and sale of a 1,500-home development in Wantage; and overseeing the planning, servicing and sale of consented development land which has delivered over 3,500 new homes in the past five years.

James has a keen interest in planning and housing policy and is enthusiastic about delivering high-quality, enduring places to meet the nation's housing challenges.

James opened the event and presented Lands Improvement's vision to create positive legacy of Healthy, Happy Places, and the importance of active environments in doing so.

He set out the reasons why Lands Improvement had decided to host this event – the desire to deliver, the frustrations in not always being able to do so, the desire to learn and be part of a wider conversation.



"We don't get these events from our larger developer clients, it's nice to see that this sort of aspirational thinking and thought leadership is being addressed by Lands Improvement."

Paul Gibbs
Managing Director
David Jarvis Associates

2. Insights from the expert panel





Nick Evans
Head of Planning and Active Environments
Sport England

Nick has overall responsibility for Sport England statutory role on the protection of playing fields and ensuring the land use planning system helps deliver sport and physical activity into everyday life.

He is currently leading on the delivery of Active Environments - creating the spaces and places for us to be physically active in our everyday lives, which forms part of Sport England's published strategy Uniting the Movement.

He has a particular interest in Smart Cities and is passionate about data and how this can be used more effectively in planning. Nick has led on a number of data related projects at Sport England including Active Places, and the initial development of the OpenActive programme with the Open Data Institute.

Nick set out the importance of Active Environments within their 10-year strategy, Uniting the Movement, and the central role it plays in meeting their objectives.

There is a huge amount of inactivity across the population, and 80% of all activity undertaken is through walking, cycling, running and active travel.

He flagged the importance of place design on public health, and the reasons why Sport England have placed their focus on creating active environments that support physical and mental wellbeing.

Their recent design guide – ‘Active Design’ sets out best practice on how we can design the built environment to meet the foundational principal of ‘Activity for All’. This not only benefits health, but equally meet other priorities such as reduced emissions and more social inclusivity.

Nick concluded with three key takeaways of ensuring user centric design, co-creation and remembering to consider how spaces would be activated once delivered.



Amy Burbidge
Head of Design
Homes England

Amy is an urban designer and masterplanner at Homes England, where she heads the Design and Master Development team focused on improving design quality of Homes England's projects and acting as client support to the regional teams who manage the projects.

Her interests range from strategic urban design at a settlement scale, to detailed street design, but are all about better placemaking for happier, healthier places.

Amy also sits on the Cambridge Quality Panel. She is by background an archaeologist and historic conservation specialist before moving into the world of urban design and masterplanning.

Amy set out Homes England's design objectives, and the importance of interconnectedness and thriving public realm in mitigating social isolation, health and wellness.

She highlighted the clear parallels in design in designing for climate and designing for people, particularly in regards to transport planning.

Enabling physical activity doesn't just benefit the individual, it can create positive social contact and help with the forging of communities.

To finish, Amy set out some of the tools that she uses to best plan and design, from Space Syntax through to Building for a Healthy Life, Building with Nature and Streets for a Healthy life, as well as more broadly the need to take a Vision and Validate approach to design.



Deborah Fox
Placemaking Lead - Healthy Streets
Surrey County Council

Deborah leads placemaking in Surrey County Council, working with a team of specialists to deliver a £30 million capital programme to revitalise Surrey high streets and village centres.

Deborah is a champion for 'Healthy Streets for Surrey', the adopted Surrey street design code, in retrofit situations demonstrating the County Council is leading by example on beautiful, sustainable and safe design.

She previously led place commissioning at Essex County Council and was a design champion in the government's commission for architecture and the built environment.

Deborah's presentation set out the thinking behind and desired outputs of their recently published Healthy Streets for Surrey Design Code.

Healthy Streets for Surrey was created for both retrofit and new build. The aim of the code is to rebalance the purpose of streets, away from purely it's movement function to include their role in health, happiness, prosperity and sustainability.

She also made the clear point that design is only the start – activity programmes such as ‘Surrey’ Active Journey’ and providing incentives, rewards and information are also vital to enabling activity on our infrastructure, as well as targeted campaigns to enable those ordinarily not active.



Kelly-Marie Rodgers
Strategic Lead - Healthy Active Places
Greater Manchester Moving

Kelly-Marie is the Strategic Lead for Healthy Active Places at Greater Manchester Moving.

Kelly supports Greater Manchester's places and spaces to become healthier and more active: acknowledging the built environment's impact on our communities, enabling more active, healthy and sustainable lives for all.

As a qualified architect within the Public Practice programme, she brings her knowledge and experience of design and design processes.

Kelly-Marie provided insights as to how Greater Manchester Moving approach their work in their mission to enable Active Lives for All.

She set out their system approach to tackling the issue, ensuring they consider all aspects across culture, policy, physical environments, organisations, social networks and the individual.

She homed in on three of these areas, setting out examples of their approach:

- the cultural layer and in particular challenging inequalities
- the organisation layer - working across and with many partners to positively change the lives of people across Greater Manchester
- The individual layer - the importance of understand individual needs and getting the right voices heard



Matt Roebuck
The Active Urbanist

Matt has worked in healthy place shaping, sport for development, public health, relationship management, research, communications and journalism across the U.K. and overseas.

Following a Churchill Fellowship on the topic, The Active Urbanist now uses this breadth of experience to support the adaptation of sport for our built and natural environment and the adaptation of those environments to support people's movement, play and activity across Europe and the U.K.



The title of Matt's session was 'Stop Building for Sport'.

Why are so many facilities so one dimensional with limited benefit for communities?

Matt set out a clear challenge to the room – the fact that so much of what is delivered in terms of sporting provision is not meeting the needs of the majority of people, and in fact actively puts people off.

Why can't we deliver sporting spaces and active environments spaces for people which are:

- Sociable
- Inviting
- Accessible
- Flexible
- Inclusive

Matt showed great examples from across Europe of where the outcomes of 'flexible, acceptable and sociable' have been incorporated, as many less successful examples of where they haven't.

He questioned society's desire to fence people in for sport, limiting sociability and inclusiveness.

Matt showed how sport can 'fit in' around existing structures and how public infrastructure can be activated for use and introduced the concept of Legitimate Peripheral Participation – social spaces with sport around it.

Matt concluded by stating that starting small and testing activity in a space was a great way to 'get people started' on the path to activity and involving them in the ongoing design process.

3. Event outputs - resulting themes





Each table of attendees were posed a question to consider - to propose the most impactful changes they would make to improve placemaking outcomes from the point of view of a specific stakeholder.

The themes that emerged from the speakers and workshops can be summarised as:

Ways of working

No one can do it alone. There are so many stakeholders involved that all parties need to work together. How we approach placemaking must be through developing partnerships, through collaboration with a 'one team' mindset working with a clear vision.

A vision

A vision, created together as 'one team' from day one with buy-in and understanding from all. The acknowledgement of all stakeholders and the clear setting of a vision that everyone works towards together, for the overall success of creating an engaged community.

Community

Early engagement is critical and seeking a full 360 degree understanding and appreciation of all community groups and stakeholders. Community ownership of the legacy needs to be planned at the beginning and integrated throughout the process.

Policy

The need for clear and defined policy to create certainty is true across all sectors and is very much the case in placemaking and the creating of healthy active places. Implemented policies need to have a long-term approach, have continuity of objectives with joined-up, shared targets and goals. This then gives resource clear direction.

Resource

It is acknowledged that there is a resourcing gap, with placemaking often relegated behind other day-to-day priorities. There needs to be sufficient funding for appropriate levels of high calibre resource with local authorities, with the ability to take a strategic view on design and planning matters.

4. Next steps





This event had insightful speakers that challenged the norm, energised participants, a very healthy discourse and some clear outcomes and themes.

However, it was just the start. It was clear there is a cross sector buy-in to delivering healthy active places, a clear recognition of the challenges and difficulties involved and a strong desire from all to make a difference.

Lands Improvements will be harnessing this energy over the next few months to dig deeper into the themes and challenges raised, with a programme of workshops, walkshops and seminars. Please let us know if you would like to be part of this journey.

“Lots to take away – mostly the collective desire to deliver positive places, and the fact that we are lucky enough to have a client who talks the talk and walks the walk in relation to the sites that you are delivering.”

Hannah Leary
Planning Director
Stantec





Lands Improvement



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