

LDN Collective

ENGAGEMENT, CO-DESIGN AND SOCIAL VALUE SERVICE LAUNCH REPORT

AUGUST 2024



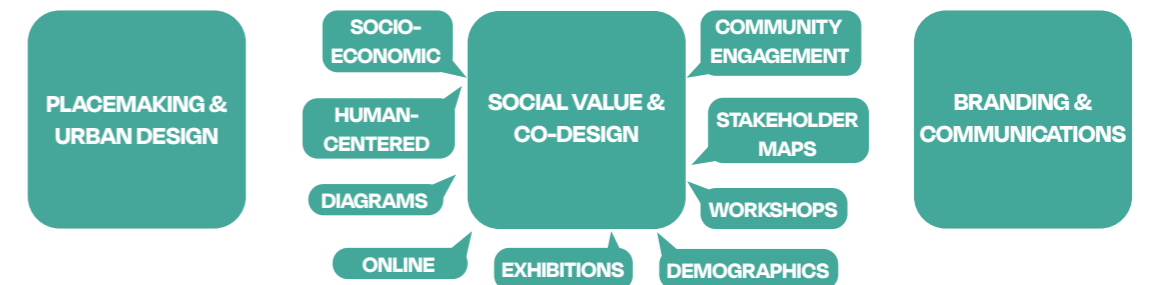
The LDN Approach

The LDN collaborative process is unique and tailor made to each project and brief. Generally speaking, one team member leads and facilitates the team, as you would expect in a traditional organisation. They act as the client's point of call and the LDN team work together as a traditional team would.

The beauty of this structure is that the client have a highly experienced team working on their project, with all team members being directors of their own businesses. So, it's not the format where you meet a director on day one and then the project is handed over to a more junior team member. Our team is consistently experienced and cohesive throughout the process with a clear team structure, roles and responsibilities. If timescales move, or deadlines need to be brought forward, we can flex and enhance our core team by bringing in team members from our own businesses to assist with resourcing.

Another benefit is that small businesses can be very nimble, and act on issues or requirements immediately, rather than having a drawn-out process of decision making internally to go through. We are all working together on other projects within the LDN Collective so have clear lines of communication and work collaboratively as any traditional business offer would (in fact, we think better than a traditional business!).

Focus Areas:



Testimonials:

" We were very pleased to work with the LDN Collective team on stakeholder engagement for the City Plan 2040. **The team stepped up to a challenging brief, supporting 10 hybrid workshops carried out over 6 weeks, based on specific places in the City and exploring complex issues -** from tall buildings to the future of offices.

The LDN team brought imagination and enthusiasm to the project, producing engaging maps and material, facilitating events and helping stakeholders explore and explain what mattered to them. "

Rob McNicol

Assistant Director, City of London Corporation

" The LDN Collective are playing a key supporting role in furthering our vision to create a globally iconic wellbeing facility for London.

The high calibre of members and diversity of skillsets makes them an incredible resource to tap into. "

James Mark

COO, Theme UK

Kindly supported by:



Meet the Team



The LDN Collective is a group of built environment experts who forge connections and create opportunities to tackle built environment issues. The LDN Collective were commissioned by the City of London Corporation for the [City Plan 2040](#).

Tim Ashwin Consulting



[Tim Ashwin Consulting](#) provide advice and analysis to support planning, funding and delivery of projects ranging from major strategic developments to local community schemes.



[Concept Culture](#) is a specialist branding and marketing agency for the built environment sector. Inspired by people, culture, and place, they thrive on the challenge of transforming your ideas into purposeful brands and powerful stories.



[Commonplace](#) is UK's leading digital engagement platform to increase positive local participation.



[ECF](#) is a creative, pragmatic, and people-centred community engagement and communications consultancy working on built environment schemes across the United Kingdom and Australia.



[Edge](#) is a fresh, innovative and exciting Urban Design and Masterplanning practice with extensive experience of delivering successful projects throughout the UK.



[You See Media](#) is a media agency that specialises in content creation and authentic storytelling for clients in the built environment sector.



The [Quality of Life Foundation](#) is a UK charity committed to improving people's quality of life by changing the way the housing industry and government acquires, plans, designs, builds and manages homes and neighbourhoods.

What is ENGAGEMENT?

Doodle your ideas! 😊

LISTENING
+ communicating

Early,
Open,
Continuous

PLAY!

Overview

The LDN Collective launched their engagement, co-design and social value service on Wednesday 17th July at the Seven Dials Club in Covent Garden, supported by ECF, Tim Ashwin Consulting, edge Urban Design and Concept Culture.

The new service is based on the premise that bringing together adjacent, yet different experiences, and applying those to built environment projects will get the very best outcome for scheme sponsors and developers, local government, and most importantly the communities they interact with.

The launch event began with three introductory presentations:

- Oliver Deed, ECF, on engagement.
- Hannah Smart, edge Urban Design, on co-design.
- Tim Ashwin, Tim Ashwin Consulting, on social value.

These presentations provided attendees with background on each element of the new service offering, and examples of best practice in operation.

This was followed by an 'open mic' session in which attendees shared their good and bad experiences of engagement, with several interesting stories told! Then, a workshop activity took place in which attendees discussed how to approach engagement, co-design and social value in two hypothetical case study scenarios formulated by the LDN Collective team. The session ended with reflections on the event in an open mic format, with individuals sharing what they learned from the session.

This report sets out the learnings that were drawn from the session, based on the notes taken by table facilitators, and the feedback given at the end of the two rounds of workshop activity. Some conclusions are drawn but, ultimately, we leave it to the reader to absorb the information and draw their own conclusions from what was discussed at the event and summarised here.

A future session is planned for later in 2024 so watch this space.

Workshop Activity

Participants were split into tables of between 6-10 people, with a member of the LDN Collective facilitating and taking notes at each table. They were given the following two hypothetical scenarios of development projects, and were asked to consider how they would approach engagement, co-design and social value for each. Facilitators from each table fed back to the room at the end of each activity. This feedback was captured on a flipchart at the front of the room.

Scenario 1: Urban Regeneration

Background

A public authority has a large piece of unused, former industrial land of around 15 acres, which has the potential to deliver several hundred new homes, commercial space as well as social and transport infrastructure. A development partner has been selected for the project, and your table has been appointed to provide engagement, co-design and social value services as part of the team.

The development is located across two different local authority areas. It is situated close to an existing, long-established local community that has yet to be engaged on the project. There are various local stakeholders with an interest in particular aspects including water and transport infrastructure. It is unclear how the community and local stakeholders will react to proposals to redevelop this site.

The client team and the development partner are keen to ensure the local community and stakeholders are brought into the process as soon as possible, so they can have a meaningful say in how the proposals develop. The client team are keen for that to start as quickly as possible (at RIBA Stage 1...or arguably Stage 0!).

Your task

Please consider the following questions:

- What does the optimal engagement and co-design programme look like for this project?
- How can engagement and co-design be used to support proposals to deliver social value through the project?
- What types of activities could be used to successfully ensure the client's objectives are met?

Findings

Participants proposed various methods of engagement that would be suitable for an urban regeneration project. One suggestion was to engage with the community at local events such as festivals and fairs, noting engagement teams should go out to the community rather than expecting the community to turn up for the sole purpose of giving feedback. A proactive approach of going out to the community was favoured.

Most participants felt engagement should happen as early in the project as possible, to give the community a genuine say on the design development process. One table suggest local people could choose the engagement team themselves and ask the community how they would want to be engaged by the project team. There was also an emphasis on the need to have a diverse engagement team to unlock opportunities with those who are harder to reach, and on the need to utilise digital engagement, to give individuals a choice in how they responded to the process.

Another recommendation was to host co-design workshops with the community and hold them early. By promoting participatory design, it was argued the project could better reflect the needs and desires of the community. It was also noted that prior to engaging in co-design, it is important to establish the trust of the community, and to engage in a co-visioning session to establish a shared interest on what might be achieved.

In terms of generating social value, it was felt the project team would need to conduct a thorough needs assessment to understand current community uses and identify missing amenities. This would need a mix of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, with stakeholder engagement suggested as a way of augmenting desk-based research. This helps ensure that the project addresses the specific needs of the local population, thereby enhancing its relevance and impact.

In summary

When it comes to an urban regeneration project on the scale suggested, participants felt the following:

- A proactive engagement approach that seeks to go to people, rather than expect them to come to us, is preferred.
- Early engagement is great engagement.
- Where possible, let communities choose who engages them and how.
- Participatory design and co-visioning will establish trust with the community.
- A thorough needs assessment will identify ways the lives of existing communities can be improved.

Scenario 3: Public Realm

A local authority is bringing forward land in a city centre location and delivery of the scheme is in one of the most deprived areas of Multiple Deprivation.

The scheme has outline planning consent and is subject to a reserved matters planning application. The future of the public realm on the site will be addressed in a reserved matters planning application to address issues associated with an

Public Realm Scenario

Background

A local authority is bringing forward a proposal to redevelop an underutilised area of land in a city centre location and deliver up to 500 affordable homes with mixed tenure. The scheme is in one of the most deprived areas in the country according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

The scheme has outline planning consent, and the local authority now want to move to a reserved matters planning application. They plan to consult the community on the future of the public realm on the site. There is the potential to include a linear park to address issues associated with an underpass that connects the area to another for cyclists, pedestrians, and wheelchair users.

Your table has been appointed to work with the landscape architects to get the community and stakeholders involved in the process of designing this new piece of public realm.

Your task

Please consider the following questions:

- How would you adapt your approach to engagement, co-design and social value for a scheme of this smaller scale?
- How can social value be maximised, given the comparatively limited scope of the project?
- What variations in approach could be taken to co-design this piece of public realm?
- Given the demographics of the local area, would your approach differ to how you would approach a similar scheme in a wealthier area?

Findings

When considering engagement, participants focused on how hands-on engagement would help to involve various age groups and demographics in the process. One suggestion was to incorporate community planting initiatives and school competitions and use that as a means of collecting feedback on the proposals. These activities not only engage different segments of the population but also foster a sense of community ownership and pride in the development process, which will last beyond the engagement campaign.

It was also noted that it is important to use the process to establish what issues exist in the community currently, to walk through the public realm to understand the day-to-day experiences of the local community, and to find out the perceptions of the community towards their area. For example, what is classified by some as a deprived area may not feel deprived to the community as it may be rich in other ways, and this should be reflective in the narrative of the engagement process. Moreover, although it may be a smaller scale project, it will not feel small scale to the community, which must be also considered.

Regarding co-design, participants highlighted the importance of holding co-design workshops

in the public realm itself, to help understand how the proposals would tangibly affect the area. Workshops could also incorporate physical models of the area, an element of gamification, and the use of virtual reality and augmented reality to bring proposals to life.

In terms of maximising social value, the importance of collaboration with local organisations was highlighted. Partnering with local schools, artists, and community groups ensures that the project reflects the character of the local community. Engagement could also focus on developing skills of members of the community to add social value, for example by holding a cookery class and engaging with people during or after the class.

In Summary

When it comes to a public realm project on the scale suggested participants felt the following:

- Use hands-on engagement methods to reach different groups and gain constructive feedback.
- Where possible, use tools like community planting to create a long term sense of local ownership.
- Seek to understand local perceptions of the area and avoid using loaded terms such as "deprived" or "small".
- Co-design workshops could use VR or AR, or incorporate physical models into the engagement process.
- Identify local groups to partner with to create social value.

Conclusion

The launch session was the first of several events the LDN Collective will be holding as part of our commitment to sharing best practice in the fields of engagement, co-design and social value. Over the coming months, we will continue to expand on the lessons-learned process.

We would like to thank everyone who attended, and members of the LDN Collective who facilitated the process.





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