

# Heritage Trust Network Youth Forum Placemaking Manifesto

September 2024

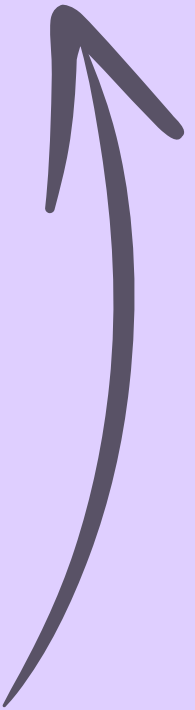


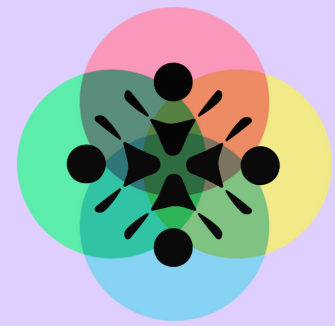
# Introduction

The purpose of this manifesto is to serve as a statement of the interests and involvement of young people in the decisions and planning of places, with a particular focus on preserving heritage and creating places that empower communities including young people to engage in their local area. We have created manifesto points around the areas that we feel are important and should be championed in placemaking.

The document should be treated as a source of ideas and inspiration for planners, local authorities and decision makers to ensure the involvement and empowerment of communities, including young people.

There are four overarching themes which encompass this manifesto; People & Community, Sustainability, Valuing Uniqueness & Diversity, and Embrace Evolution. These themes are overlapping and often interconnected, but have been presented here to be read as a narrative, with the intention that they be considered in the order they are written. The order they are in aims to place them into the hierarchy of needs.





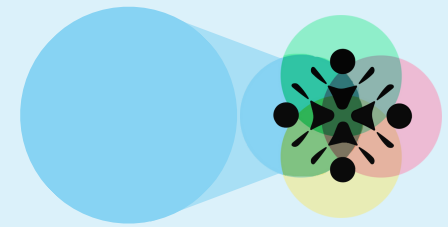
## What is placemaking?

Placemaking is the process we use to shape our public spaces and buildings. Rooted in community-based participation, placemaking involves planning, design, and management. It brings together diverse people (including professionals, elected officials, local groups, residents, and businesses) to improve a community's cultural, economic, social and environmental situation. Like the UN Sustainable Development Goals, we recognise that there are lots of elements to placemaking, sustainability and conservation, not just the fabric of the built environment.

Good placemaking is often best achieved through a clear understanding of the historical significance of the existing place. A variety of methods can be used to understand places, such as characterisation studies, conservation area appraisals, and through techniques developed by organisations such as Historic England and Placecheck.

Places across the UK vary widely in their communities and characters so placemaking requires an understanding of locality, community and context. We suggest these areas are at the heart of placemaking activity.

# People & Community



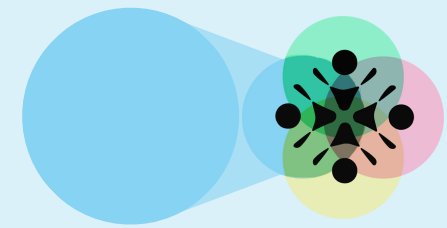
Placemaking decisions need engagement from the community and to centre experiences and practical needs of people in public spaces.

## People

We have to ensure that a person first approach is adopted, and that places are provided to fit the needs and expectations of local people and communities. This includes ensuring that there are places for people to be able to meet and socialise freely without feeling that they are out of place, and ensuring that these areas are free and do not have barriers to access (physical barriers or economic ones e.g. walkable, open to the public, free to enter, comfortable). This also translates to pedestrianisation which values traffic of people over cars and allows more space for benches, green spaces and meeting spots etc.

## Community

We would like to ensure meaningful community engagement takes place, however trust between residents and decision makers is essential. Decision makers should know that their prior knowledge of the area they're working in is secondary to the acquired knowledge of the residents; they must listen to the residents' concerns and address their needs through design and provision of services.



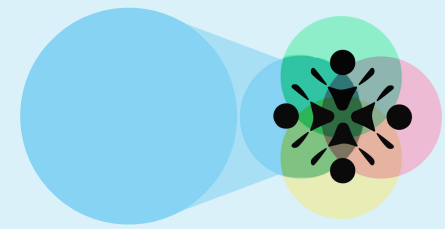
Large-scale engagement should happen in accessible, welcoming, public places which may not include local authority buildings and should be scheduled for a variety of times to ensure maximum accessibility for the all local community. Removing any potential barriers to participating in community engagement is crucial.

After engagement sessions it is vital to honour, maintain and build upon the partnership of trust between residents, designers and decision makers by being transparent and honest. In a similar way to MP surgeries where constituents can ask about any problems, decision makers could work in a café in the area to answer any questions or receive feedback about the project. (This could also be an online zoom call, Instagram/TikTok live etc).

Keeping residents informed and involved throughout gives a sense of ownership for the community as they have agency in their spaces. As such, a place's design should never be presented as wholly finished (fait accompli). The design itself should always be open for changes and improvements.

Anyone working in placemaking must be sensitive and nuanced in their approach, considering all stakeholders' experiences as individuals and the needs of local communities altogether.



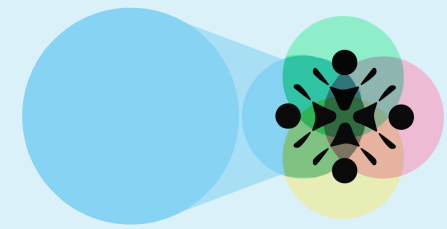


## **Tourism: Welcoming communities from afar**

It is also worth looking at communities who use our spaces who are not local. Often the needs of local communities also benefit the tourist economy by making spaces easier to use and more accessible for everyone. However, some tourism-based developments can make a place more hostile for the needs of the local community. For example, over development of residential spaces as short-term lets can disadvantage local people who need places to live. Sufficient provision of long-term lets and local housing ensure that the local economy is supported and that local communities can thrive.

Examples of places where the tourist economy has made it almost impossible for local people to remain in their local communities are Dublin, Barcelona, Edinburgh, Cornwall and more. This disproportionately affects lower socio-economic backgrounds and is similar to gentrification in the effects it has on local culture and community. Places which are vulnerable to this kind of negative development are typically recognised as picturesque places with a deep history and embedded culture - often the same places where the historic built as well as natural environment is particularly valued and where historic communities remain. (1).

Tourism is an important component of placemaking which should be considered but not at the cost of the local community and their needs from a local area. After all, tourism functions better when the local community and off season economy is supported to be sustainable.

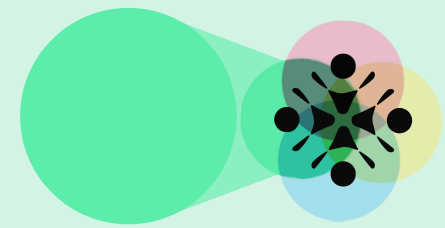


### Things we want to see:

- Independent community audits to find out what local residents need for their local areas.
- Diverse and representative boards/governance for the areas in which they are based, acknowledging the importance of lived experiences as valuable.
- Local people feel included and have a sense of ownership and pride about their area.
- A healthy balance between the needs of local people and the tourist economy.

### Questions:

- Are the needs of your local communities at the heart of your work?
- Are you approachable to the communities you work for?
- How do the decisions you make and actions you take benefit local people?
- Are you exploring how to leverage the tourist economy to make your area better for local people? (E.g. tourist tax)



# Sustainability

Placemaking considers the cultural, economic, social and environmental situation of a community in a place and in all of these should seek to be sustainable.

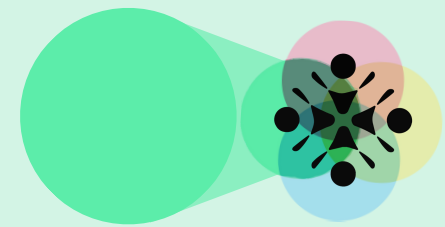
The effects and mitigation of climate change are an integral consideration of placemaking to ensure the wellbeing of communities, infrastructure and the natural environment.

## **Infrastructure and the built environment:**

Retrofit of the historic built environment is an essential component in the UK reaching its goal for Net Zero by 2050. Approximately 20% of residential buildings in the UK are pre-1919 and need to be maintained and retrofit using traditional building techniques that understand how these buildings function. If a building cannot be fully renovated then its materials should be re-used where possible, as all materials have an embodied carbon cost. All designers and developers need to incorporate the needs of legislation which protects our built and natural environment. (2).

Educating the next generation in heritage skills, and their local architecture vernacular will ensure there's a workforce to maintain the buildings, a requirement for sourcing materials locally and supporting the local economy.



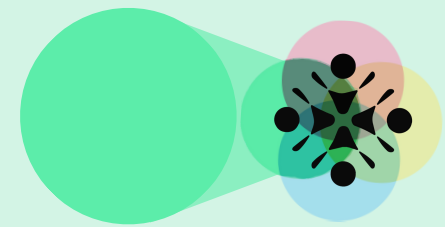


The infrastructure of public transport such as bus stops, cycle lanes, and pedestrian areas should be creatively utilised to develop additional green spaces/greenery in places where the current infrastructure within a place leaves little room or finance for extensive greenery.

### **Sustainable business:**

The people making use of our historic building stock should also be supported to make sustainable changes to their everyday practices supporting our local communities. A huge issue in our town centres is vacancy and efficient use of space. These are some initiatives for meanwhile uses of shops that encourage a circular economy and eco-friendly business practices:

- Encourage entrepreneurs and communities to set up shops or events that help our society transition to a circular economy.
- Better support for establishing refill shops, second hand clothes shops and lending libraries (for household items you may only need to borrow). Examples such as specific tax breaks, subsidies or reduced business rates will demonstrate strong support for a circular economy.
- Events such as a clothing/book swap or repair café concept held regularly in spaces open to the community will foster a sense of belonging among its people.
- Pioneering projects like Makey Wakey in Wakefield are supporting community groups and shopping centres to get commercial spaces occupied.

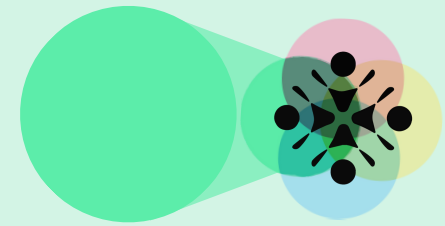


## Sustainable Travel

Place-based regeneration should incorporate improved access to public transport, active travel and safer pedestrian travel as core rights from first principle. Make the journey to civic areas like town centres easier and more appealing by offering more opportunities to combine walking, cycling, micro-mobility and public transport.

These interventions do not have to follow the typical pathways of large-scale infrastructure and capitalworks projects, although these have their places. Large impact, low intervention options can be improving signage, lowering speed limits in and pedestrianising town centres, installing safe crossing points on busy roads, improving awareness of cycling safety for both cyclists and other road users.

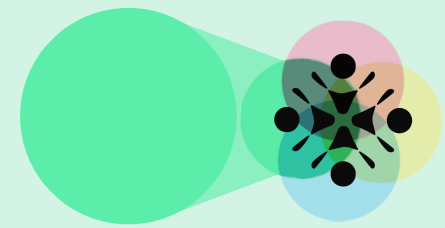
This should also include long-term thinking to ensure that the infrastructure in place is made sustainably and is resilient to the impacts of climate change themselves such as flooding and other extreme weather. These interventions make them appealing for members of the public, such as young people, to use them as they are cheaper, safer and more accessible than other less carbon-friendly options.



## **Sustainable community and the health and wellbeing of our neighbours**

A community is more sustainable when their physical, mental health and emotional wellbeing are prioritised and championed. In placemaking this can be achieved on a base level through ensuring that communities have the education facilities and healthcare facilities that they require, such as schools, doctors, dentists, clinics & pharmacies.

To take this further and truly think about the wellbeing of a community, this should be approached in a more holistic way, considering the day to day lives of the people living there and how place might impact them. Following the ideas of 15 minute cities, social prescribing, third spaces, greening spaces, introducing public art and features and removing hostile architecture are all ways that this can be achieved.



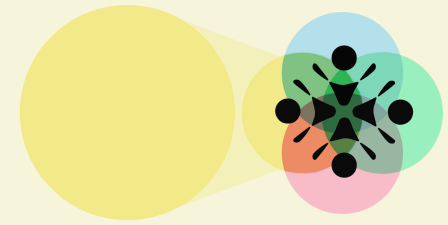
### Things we want to see:

- Initiatives to encourage sustainable businesses such as refill shops, second hand clothes shops.
- An education programme that focuses on heritage skills specific to their local architectural vernacular.
- Trial incentive schemes to increase public transport uptake, including Park & Ride
- Increased green areas and support for biodiversity.
- 15 minute city principles are examined and adapted differently for rural/urban areas.
- Pedestrianisation and low emission zones that meet the needs of their communities.

### Questions:

- Have you considered how much greenery you can add to your project or local area & in places like bus stops, cycle lanes etc.?
- Do you know your organisation/project's carbon footprint?
- Are there untapped opportunities to combine sustainability initiatives along with engaging with the communities based in your area?
- Have you investigated the sustainability of your partners and supply chain?

# Valuing Uniqueness & Diversity

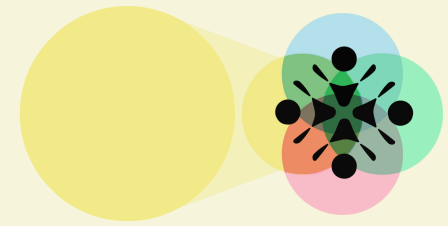


Placemaking should reflect the unique character of a local area and its communities.

Good placemaking prioritises the distinctiveness that a place brings for locals and visitors, making the values of the community and the place's significance stand out for all. Placemaking should be functional and fulfil the needs of the community first and marketing or branding only after those needs have been met.

Often, the things that make a place different and unique are the things that local communities value and draw people to visit an area. These differences create a sense of community and identity. The tourist economy often builds a local unique selling point based on these distinctive characteristics and supports the local economy.

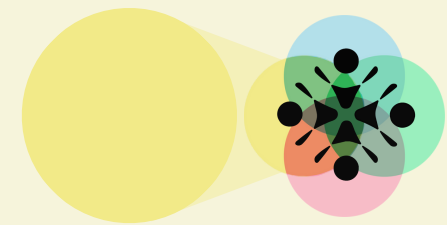
Placemakers and designers should endeavour to cultivate and create unique and beautiful areas which serve the people that use them and reflect the valued characteristics of the local area. This might be in green spaces, public art, interesting architecture, themed events and more.



Public spaces should be supported to enable people to feel safe and welcome, thrive, socialise, meet, and visit. Features such as hostile architecture which victimise the most vulnerable members of our communities should not be used in friendly public spaces. We should ensure that people can function and live comfortably using these spaces.

Custodians of local public spaces should encourage civic pride and participation through entertainment, events, markets and festivals which highlight local heritage, arts and culture, and things which are important to the community. Preserving local heritage and supporting communities is a process that should involve flexibility and adaptability. Places will stagnate if local communities do not have a sense of ownership and representation over them.





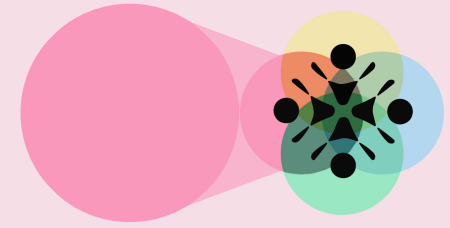
### Things we want to see:

- Vibrant local areas where all people are included in cultural activities
- Public programming that highlights the uniqueness of places and encourages a sense of local ownership
- Public spaces which are friendly and accessible for users of all abilities and backgrounds

### Questions:

- What are you valuing in your local area through public art, architecture and other public spaces?
- Are your diverse local communities represented and valued in the infrastructure, architecture, art and events taking place in public spaces?
- Are you valuing aesthetics and appearances over the needs of the community?
- Do the most vulnerable people in your local communities feel welcome and included in public spaces and events?

# Embrace Evolution



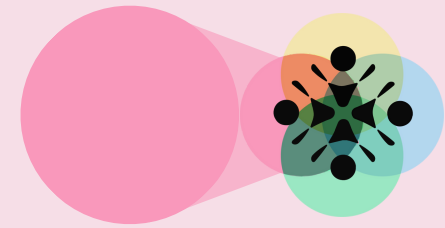
Placemaking as a concept champions the evolution and reimagining of a place for a community whose needs are ever-changing.

In many ways, change is perceived as antithetical to heritage, however when you understand heritage as the way we preserve and pass down things which are important for future generations to use, the two do not seem so opposed. Heritage is constantly changing as society changes and we strive to improve the lives of our communities. Change is and should be inherent to heritage and placemaking.

## **Change to buildings and their uses**

Allowing for spaces to be varied and multiple use and planning for that to be designed into any new areas will allow repeat and changing use to be a key part of a place. A building being used is often more important and beneficial to the local community than its original purpose.

This can also be applied to using existing building stock - make sure that you are open to buildings changing, and prioritise reuse of buildings, even if slightly unconventional, over purpose building something new when there are buildings that can be adapted and reused.



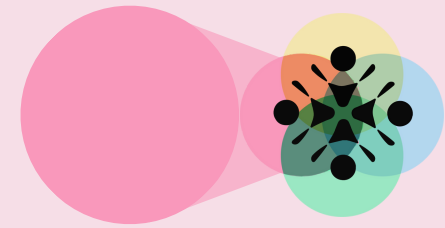
Meanwhile-use is a great step in the direction of change. Take inspiration from pop-ups and the many organisations across the country who are reusing heritage buildings, but also from those who are setting up shop, so to speak, in old shopping centres and in vacant places on high streets (Heritage Action Zone initiatives, High Street regeneration, etc.).<sup>8</sup>

Ideas for meanwhile uses could be advertised on the facade of the building, with calls for suggestions for what other people might like to see and ongoing consultation. A place with buildings in use will draw more people to it and pave the way for further reuse and change.

Change is not a new concept for heritage buildings, as many cannot be used for what their original purposes were, for example, corn exchanges across the country can no longer be used in their original role but are being repurposed in many creative ways. Change in use is required; just as society has changed and developed new needs, so too should the built environment adapt to meet those needs.

### **Change in approach**

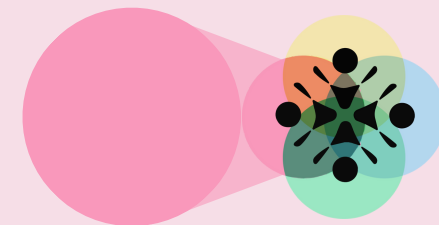
To ensure that heritage and the built environment is used for years to come, and remains a sustainable resource for future generations, we need to ensure that the way we view them allows for evolution and movement.



We need to ensure that we are not preventing buildings from being made useful to their communities and instead sitting empty because the restrictions on preserving them are too staunch. This clearly is an issue that should be treated with care, considering a building's context and history.

What is an empty building worth to people who cannot see or use it?

As stated in the beginning of this document, approaches to placemaking should be people first, and should make sure that the built environment meets the needs of those people. Having interesting, varied, and changeable approaches to placemaking will not only make places more appealing, but are more likely to attract local residents, business and tourism, making the area more successful and sustainable.



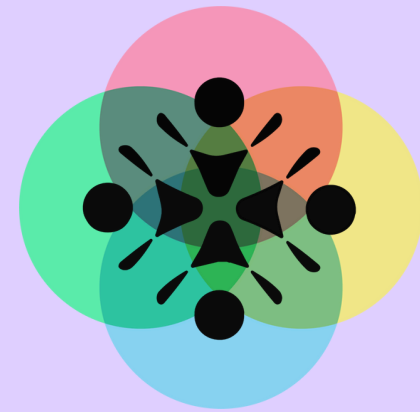
## Things we want to see:

- People and communities feel ownership over their places and can suggest and ask for change.
- Clear options for individuals, organisations and businesses to repurpose buildings to serve their communities.
- New additions are made to the built environment with change and sustainability at their core.

## Questions:

- How many different uses have you considered for the spaces and buildings you work on?
- Are you avoiding good ideas because they involve lots of change?
- How can we ensure that change is embedded in how we view our places?
- If a place is not working for the people in it, why should it be preserved as it is?

# Resources



- [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#)
- [Green Space Scotland Young Placechangers Toolkit](#)
- [Ethan Kent - Placemaking for Regenerative Tourism](#)
- [Iain Nicholson - Manifesto for High Streets](#)
- [Chris Wade - Places for people a Manifesto for towns](#)
- [Europarc Youth Manifesto](#)
- [Kids in Museums Manifesto](#)
- [Museum of English Rural Life Youth Manifesto \(video\)](#)
- [Local Government Association Repurposing Shopping Centres Guide](#)



# The Heritage Trust Network Youth Forum

Set up in 2022 the Heritage Trust Network Youth Forum is a group of young people aged 18-30 including students and early career professionals who are passionate about heritage and want to make their voices heard in the sector. Co-production is at the heart of the activity the Forum undertakes.

This placemaking manifesto has been created by members of the Youth Forum's Placemaking group: Finn Brown, George Eglese, Grace McAdam, Izabella Maar, Jessica van der Drift, Kate Breeze, Laura Dunham, Megan Keates & Ruarhiadh Campbell.

<https://heritagetrustnetwork.org.uk/heritage-trust-network-youth-forum/>

