

Retrofitting for walking – Talk the Walk Tues June, 2010 at CAFE, preceded by a walking tour of streets in south Islington.

Post-It notes were distributed at the end of the walking tour and at the end of the Talk the Walk. Participants were asked to write down any unanswered questions, to consider cheap versus value and to provide any comments – here is what there is, some answers to questions (provided by Liz Kessler) and a thought or two about where next.

Walking tour

Was there any join up and integration with the play strategy in Islington – safe routes to play etc.?

Yes - EC1 prepared a Play Strategy which was agreed a year ahead of LBI's Strategy although it was then added as an appendix to LBI's Play Strategy. The EC1 Play Strategy emphasised the need to improve parks and the wider public realm as a priority:

'Improve play areas for toddlers and primary school-aged children in the parks and larger open spaces on estates – parents with younger children said they prefer to go where they can meet other people in busy and attractive spaces.

Develop estate plans to design a better balance between children's play, car parking, environmental planting, sitting out areas and security measures – it was felt that this would improve safety and build a sense of community through more use of outdoor space by residents of all ages.

Improve the wider public realm such as green spaces, safer streets and connecting routes, leisure and shopping areas – this is just as important as improving designated play areas'. EC1 NDC Play Policy 2006

These are just some of the recommendations of the EC1 Play Policy that influenced all work and was embedded in briefs.

Has any funding been set aside for the management / maintenance of the projects?

Not specifically although all projects have been developed to be maintained within existing budgets, officers responsible for maintenance were involved in design development.

Has any evaluation been done of the completed projects in terms of:

- a) increased walking
- b) regeneration of the area
- c) improving social / economic deprivation?

Yes - there has been an evaluation report which looks at projects but it has not looked specifically at increased walking; it links the projects with the wider regeneration of the area referring to improving the social feel of the area and safety. There is visual evidence of greatly increased usage and more activity and the report notes that 'there is increased appreciation of the increased ease and safety for pedestrians'.

What has been the governance structure of the NDC?

The NDC has been managed by a partnership Board with a majority of residents, a resident chair and representatives from the council, the PCT, the Police and Education Authority. All the work to the streets was developed in partnership with Islington Council and implemented by the Council.

How have you (the partnership) brought private open spaces into the public realm? Was it necessary to or needed to do so?

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The work in the NDC aimed to cover all aspects of the public realm: the parks, streets and communal areas on estates and the links between them, with work being carried out holistically to identified places, aiming over time to include as much of the area as possible.

Trading strips – any conflict with existing trading in adjacent premises?

Adjacent premises have frequently taken space on the trading strip to enhance their frontage, provide more space to display their goods or, in the case of cafes etc, to provide tables and chairs, increasing their covers and providing a more attractive venue. The street was historically a street market so there was the expectation of it being used in that way.

Talk the Walk

Fantastic session. Great range of speakers. Needs a tighter focus on how we get retrofitting done; we all know the benefits and why its important. Tim Long was a great example: using creative designs to reduce clutter.

Thanks for organising the event last night which I both enjoyed and found useful

It was very interesting and useful

Format suggestion: it might be better if the event started with a main talk on the topic, followed by a few short related presentations and much more time for discussion...

Very well managed event. Liked the integration of the walking tour. Good mix of people involved and policy and projects – format made the numbers manageable.

4 minute presentations are great! Pictures only on slides even better.

Pedestrians are cheap, walkers are good value

Got a bit rushed towards the end but very good content and informative event. In answer to the question about quality and cost – it is possible to achieve uncluttered quality space at low cost – but real cost is in the design and development stage.

Talk the Walk is a great way to explore expertise. The networking approach is very valuable.

Talk the Walk process is great! Can it be replicated with the Local Government Association to do some events with local councillors, elected mayors etc.?

Where to from here?

Do we invite the same group back to discuss Retrofitting in more detail or set up a series of events in which examples of retrofitted streets are considered and then discussed how similar streets can be delivered?

We are happy to support either of these suggestions, and if you want to assist us in achieving this, please get in touch. Our plan would be to revisit the topic in 12 months, but if anyone can offer a venue before then, then we can help you develop an event to go forward.

Rethinking Cities also offer an opportunity for issues to be discussed in more depth through a series of Conversations – these are limited to 10 people.

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If you would like to introduce a topic at one of these Conversations (you have to provide a one page briefing paper and speak for up to 15 minutes) then please re-register on our on-line Talkshops form completing the appropriate boxes:

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