



CODES AND COMMUNITIES: GUIDANCE FOR PROFESSIONALS

PART B: METHODS AND PROGRAMME



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place

INTRODUCTION

Community Engagement: When and on What?

The NMDC makes several mentions of **when and on what** engagement is needed:

- The Baseline stage is about **characterisation**.
- The Scoping stage requires a **consultation strategy**.
- The **Vision** “needs to be developed with the local community”.
- A **Coding Plan** introduces **Area Types** (but note cautions in Part A).
- **Masterplanning** should be done with community engagement.

The NMDC also offers some suggestions for **how** some of this might best be done:

The Scoping stage might include “**briefing and training**” and opportunities to “**discuss with the groups ... what the code should cover**”.

Visioning work might include “a series of **workshops across the local area**” as well as “**wider surveys**” and “**walking workshops; photographic surveys and visual preference surveys**”.

METHODS

All of the methods described in what follows can – we would say **should** – be done with or by local communities and we provide very basic descriptions of how to manage them. Most can be adapted then used from what is written but **further information and specific briefs can be available from Place Studio** as part of our ad hoc support work (see Part A). Tuning every aspect of any method to its specific context is always essential. Not all methods below have or need examples.

The methods described are mainly for specific stages of coding work as in the NMDC. The majority are about the all-important early stage of **characterisation** (baseline) including online methods, but we also outline some methods for engaging people on aspects of **scoping, vision, coding plan** and **code drafting**.

It is also our view that, although this is not easy, communities should have an opportunity to be engaged in **code drafting**.

We address all these stages below, starting with a long section that introduces a whole medley of possible **methods**. Methods might be thought of as ‘ingredients’ and you can’t really make a decent meal from random ingredients. What you need is a ‘recipe’, in other words a coherent **strategy** or **programme** for what engagement you do. That should be tuned very carefully to **topic** (authority-wide or site-specific), to **place** (city, town, village, area, site), to **people** (might you need to talk to those who work there, as suggested in Part A?) and also to **resources and skills**. A carefully prepared and targeted programme with just a few elements will almost always be better than a scatter-gun of all sorts of unrelated activities.

CHARACTERISATION

The first and longest list of methods covers those used mainly for what the NMDC calls "Analysis of the area covered" (part of "Baseline"), i.e. the work that provides the characterisation bedrock from which codes can develop.

Doing such work with local people helps to get them up to speed about design as a whole, helps you to get onto their wavelength and, if done by those local people themselves, begins to bind them in to the next and more challenging stages.

The list is quite long because each method addresses a different aspect of character or, which can be good, introduces varied ways

of working. There are also almost endless variations on those that follow so adapt as necessary. And be aware that different people enjoy and can contribute best through different methods. It must not be one method only because 'one size does not fit all'.

One important caution. As suggested earlier, characterisation works best at a relatively local level. Characterisation of a potentially large and complex overall authority area can only deal in very general terms unless you or your team know the whole area in real detail or unless you can engage local people in much of the footslog work for (almost) free.

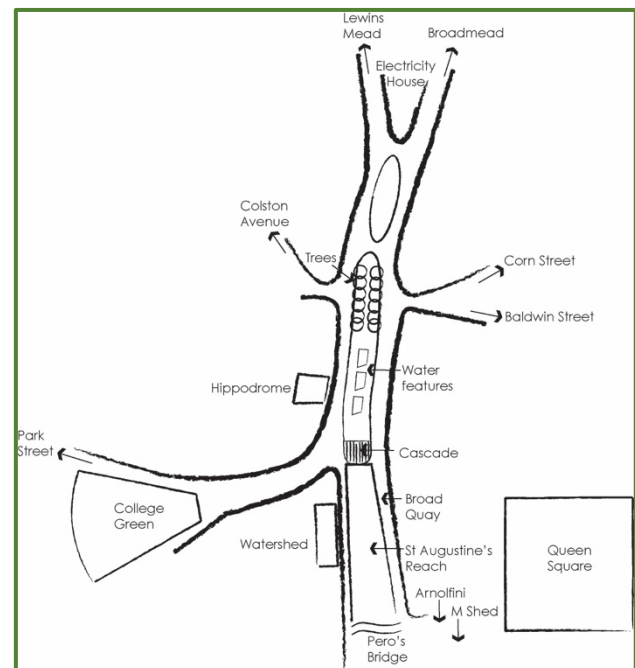
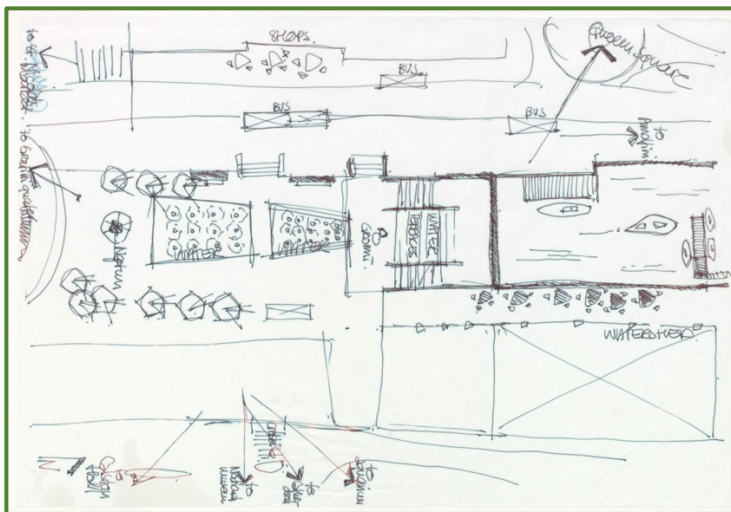
Mental Maps - probably one of the most familiar methods.

Purpose: To reach generally agreed definitions of the overall nature of a place and its key features, landmarks etc.

Method: Individuals each draw on paper in some way what they think of as their area, neighbourhood, town etc. (It is best to avoid the word 'map' at this stage.) Once there are a number of drawings, analysis can highlight the key and common roads, parks, landmarks, quirky features and so forth simply by noting how many times each is shown. A summary map of those more common features can then be produced.

Example:

Below left is one map of Bristol city centre from those done by some 20 or so architects. (We also got maps by a group of 30 or so 6th formers.) Below right is the analysis, which, importantly, quickly moves ideas beyond just buildings into townscape/urban design issues.

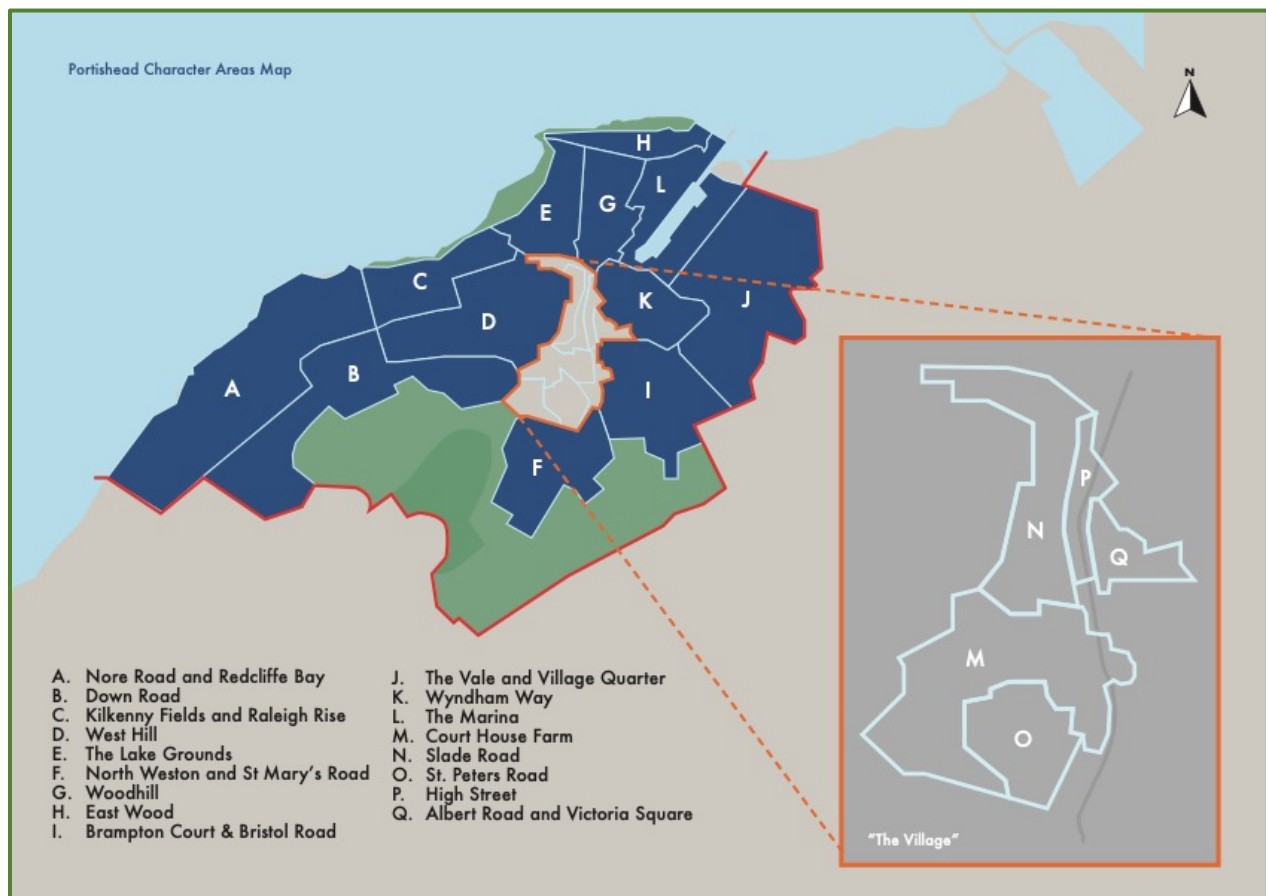


Character Area identification – again probably a familiar method.

Purpose: To identify specific and different character areas within an area. N.B. Working across any area from neighbourhood scale up to whole authority area, some character areas may end up being very similar – see next method.

Method: This can be done by individuals but is best done with small groups. Everybody is given a large map of the area, a sheet of tracing paper and a pen. They then draw round their idea of the different character areas of that place. This can be very general, sometimes extremely detailed. Place all the tracing sheets on top of each other and some commonly shown areas should emerge, though some discussion is often needed. People are asked what creates the different area characters, where and why there are differences and finally to name each area. Notes should be taken. A summary map is then produced and shared/checked with those involved.

Example: This is the summary map produced by local people for the large town of Portishead in North Somerset as part of their Neighbourhood Plan work:



Character Area Analysis - probably also familiar and it follows straight on from defining character areas.

Purpose: To highlight the key aspects of character that define each different small or large character area. This can be used, if necessary, to help to suggest Area Types.

Method: This can be done by individuals but is best done by small groups. Each group should contain people not just from the area being assessed, which introduces variety and challenge. Participants simply walk around a Character Area with clipboard, paper, pen and camera plus a survey form. It is almost always essential to adapt questions to a particular place, e.g. to address topography or mix of uses. The result for each area will be a completed form and some photographs. In Ross-on-Wye three areas were done by 6th formers. In Jeff's own city community, one area was done by primary school children.

Example: This is just part of a completed form about Portishead town centre – deliberately chosen to make the point that work should not just cover residential areas.

The older buildings, to the right-hand side of the road, have Victorian characteristics at 2nd. storey height. 'Portishead Blue' paintwork retained for street furniture. The 1970's precinct building on the left side, is stark, bland and because of concrete staining it is not ageing well.

6. What is the condition and quality of shopfronts?

The shopfronts are well maintained and retain the character of this area of the high street. The Precinct has had a recent make-over with seating and pavements to improve facilities. It is a well used area.

7. Can you guess how well used are the spaces/rooms above shops etc.? And what for (office, flats, empty etc.)?

The rooms above the shops appear to be a mixture of storage areas, dentist, offices and some accommodation. One double fronted shop has been vacant for over two years and is looking neglected.

8. What pedestrian signage is there in and around? (Too much, too little, clear?)

There is little pedestrian signage here. There are no visible public facility signs around.

9. What road signage is there in and around? (Too much, too little, clear?)

Road signage is in the main discreet with the usual lamp post mounted parking signage and one roundabout sign. A 'new road layout' sign has been there for at least 9 years!

10. What on-street parking is there and what's its visual impact?

There is on road parking for 2 cars on one side of the High Street. At present toll free but with restricted park time. There is a layby adjacent the precinct for busses and taxis. This an extremely busy road with traffic coming to the High Street shops as well as through traffic to the supermarkets etc, beyond. This is a main feeder road from the motorway to housing estate behind.

11. Is there any cycle parking? Well maintained?

There is one bike railing outside the supermarket, otherwise no provision for cycles.

Serial Vision – this method is about what makes the overall character of a place as experienced by people who live and move around there, or even pass through.

Purpose: To highlight the main characteristics of an area as seen from main routes through – front gardens, open spaces, views, landmarks, public buildings, heights and enclosure etc.

Method: This needs small groups each with car, map, paper, pen and camera. Each group drives out of their area along a road until they cannot see their place (each group taking a different route). They stop, turn around, mark their location on the map, take a photo looking ahead, then drive slowly to the furthest point they can see in that photo. As they travel, someone (not the driver!) make notes on the map of what they see either side – front gardens or not, open spaces, roads, paths, views through, landmarks etc. When they get to the next distant point they make notes, mark the location, take another photo and set off again, repeating this until they come out the other side of the area.

Example: Here again is just part of one set of results:



Location 20

Goes from rural open countryside to village centre fairly quickly. Approaching the junction, there are now road markings. In front is the impressive, Grade 1 listed St Nicholas Church, with the steeple rising up high. This is the best view of the Church. The War memorial is prominent and the ancient yew trees, all add to the 'olde world feel' giving an age and of history to the village. See hundreds of years of occupation in [this](#) from here with all the building from different centuries.



Location 13

Beating the Bounds – this is a method more for towns and villages.

Purpose: This is about analysing how a town or village fits into and relates to its landscape. That is crucial because, in such places, most new development happens on the edges with an inevitable, if not always negative, landscape impact.

Method: This is another method very much for small groups with car, maps, cameras etc. The task is to go out along roads and footpaths well beyond the town or village, look back, locate on the map points where you begin to see the settlement, take photos and make notes of how that settlement fits into its landscape.

Example: Once again, here's an example.



Location 4

On reaching the start of Churchhill, Huntsmead is clearly visible as the road ascends



Location 5

This route into the village is characterised by open countryside of grazing fields and hedges dotted with mature trees. There are a few houses, farms and small workshop/storage area along the 2.16km approach on an unclassified road.

Route B

Starting at a high point, 128m, junction of the A...., there is no view of the settlement.



Location 6

'Escape to the Country' - a tongue-in-cheek title for a method mainly for settlements with a landscape setting and it complements *Beating the Bounds* above.

Purpose: The method is about finding the important views **out** of a place to see how that place sits in its landscape or surroundings.

Method: This can be done by individuals or small groups. The task is to go around the area to find where it is possible to see out into the surrounding landscape or surroundings, take a photo and note on a map – precisely - the photo's location. The method is about views from the inside out so it could be done in an urban neighbourhood.

Example: This was chosen as part of the assessment of – deliberately - an **urban** neighbourhood; one without a very clear boundary.

VIEWS OUT

There are three key views out of our neighbourhood although two of them don't clearly show where our area starts and ends.



This is looking east. The house to the right with a large roof facing us is where our neighbourhood ends. The greenery beyond is in the next neighbourhood.

Not a very clear boundary.

This is looking south. Our neighbourhood ends at the bottom of the hill. There are great views out across the rest of the city and well beyond as you go down the hill.

Once again, not a very clear boundary.



This is the boundary to the west. This boundary is very clear, made by the trees which also go left and right at the end of this road. That's because what is beyond is our main local open space.

(There is a very uncertain boundary to the north.)

Changing Places - a really enjoyable exercise for people to do on their own on a rainy day, and very important in terms of heritage.

Purpose: To try to track how a place has developed over time – which earlier fields were developed, and when, to produce the area as it is now. That is of key relevance to heritage issues because it is so central to shaping the long term history of the area for which a code is being produced.

Method: This can be done by a small group but probably works best if one person gets it started. It needs access to old and current maps of an area; a 19th century Tithe map is a great place to start. Tracing paper and a pen can be useful. Looking from an old map to today's, it is nearly always possible to work out the sequence of development which will then, almost always, relate to the types and styles of buildings from different periods. A summary diagram is really great but some notes can also be the way to record the results.

Example: The example below is a screen shot taken from a website called 'Know Your Place' which covers Bristol and all surrounding authorities (google it and see). The example shows the tithe map to the left and today's map to the right. This wonderful website enables you to jiggle left and right, go in and out and plot what fields were sold to builders and in what order. Sadly, Know Your Place is not national (yet) so most people would have to rely on getting copies of old and current maps.



There are two related options here

Walkabouts – taking local people on a walk can generate all sorts of interesting and valuable points – for them as well as you.

Purpose: To get local people perhaps seeing things they have never noticed or thought about before, but also giving you an insight into what and why people notice certain things and not others – especially things **you** don't notice!

Method: You can devise the route of a walk on your own, though it can be good to involve local people in finalising it. Even better is for you to devise a route that highlights the things you wish to highlight and then get local people to devise their own to show you what they think is important! Think carefully about the length and safety of any walk, allowing for stops, time for them to make notes etc. and be sure to test it out first. A carefully devised route could pick up on all 10 themes of the National Design Guide. Be sure to have forms, clipboards and pens for people to add comments (though also take your own notes). It is also good to take photos.

Coach Tours – taking local people to examples of places, new buildings etc. that you think do (and perhaps don't) meet the criteria for good design.

Purpose: Visiting other places can help to widen people's experiences of what is possible, what might be meant by good design etc. But be aware that (as mentioned in Part A) they may not agree with you!

Method: Select some places or recently completed projects to visit and provide basic plans and drawings for all participants (perhaps also clipboards and pens). Be careful with total tour time, travel distances, time spent on each site etc. Have some sort of evaluation form for people to complete at each site. If at all possible, it can add real value to arrange for a group to talk to residents of any project. Some new designs may not seem that good but chatting to people who live there can often make people think harder and differently - certainly better than you telling them what is good! Forms can be analysed after.

Example: As part of a District Council's work on updating its Residential Design Guide, two coach tours were arranged for District, Town and Parish councillors. Each half day tour visited four recent housing developments (one development being common to both tours). When on site, all participants completed an evaluation form using a list of criteria adapted from several used nationally. At the end of each tour, and over lunch, quick summary evaluations were produced for each development. These were then discussed before a broader discussion to generate community ideas about the possible nature and content of the revised Guide.

Problem-solving Trails - a great way to get all sorts of people actively engaged, and almost always not the 'usual suspects'.

Purpose: To get people walking about an area, solving clues along the way (probably noticing things they've not noticed before) and getting some comments back on key features of local character

Method: A trail needs to be devised. Your job is to set a basic route that will pick up on key points, but it can be good to involve a local history or photography group. Photos are needed of small or large features that help people to find the route but no map – they have to solve the visual clues to find the route! At each photo point, you need to agree questions to ask (what can you see from here, are the buildings all the same etc.), add an introduction and closing details (e.g. where to hand back a completed trail) and, very important, test it out. You then need to find local shops who will take and hand out copies and ideally some small prizes – shop tokens etc. Anybody can then pick up and attempt to solve the trail and add comments.

Example: Below is an extract from a trail produced for the town centre of Ross-on-Wye. People picked up the trail leaflet from local shops and handed their completed forms in at the library – the final stop. There was not a great number of responses – around 40 – but they were mainly from people who would otherwise probably never get involved.

	<p>(NO MORE CLUES TO THE CLUES KEEP WALKING ON!) There are lots of old buildings up this street (and all around the town). Is enough done to look after these? If not, what more could be done?</p>
	<p>Going up from here and straight ahead, you come to the Bowls Club. There seem to be a lot of such clubs (for tennis, football, hockey etc.) around the town. But are there any indoor or outdoor sports currently not catered for?</p> <p><i>(PS. Go left before the Bowls Club)</i></p>
	<p>Before you turned to solve this clue, you passed the Police Station. The land they are on is now suggested for housing. What sort of housing might be good here? Who for? Key design points?</p>
	<p>LOOK AROUND TO FIND THIS, THEN STAND IN FRONT The area around here has been improved with paving, kerbs etc. Does this work well? Should this or some other areas/streets be fully pedestrianised?</p> <p><i>(Now carry on down the hill)</i></p>
	<p>Halfway along this street (behind the old jail) is a car park. Is this needed? Could the site be redeveloped to make a better setting for the jail? If so, what type and style of development?</p>

Arts-based Activities – a medley of approaches which are an important complement to the more formal ones above and which can often attract very different people.

Purpose: To use creative ways of drawing ideas from people about what they think of as key features of their area, neighbourhood, town or village – ways where they may not even know they are thinking about 'local character'.

Methods: There are many methods and the best way to proceed is to ask those who know better than you (or us!) – local arts groups, school art teachers etc. Methods we know of include:

- Asking people to write directions from point A to point B for a visitor who does not speak English (so cannot read road signs!). That way people use visual clues – an oddly painted building, a tree, a bench or a garden gnome (or two). The results can be generally useful but always pick up key landmarks which, for local people, can be very small.
- Sending people out with cameras to take photos of buildings or features that they see as typical of their area, or are views out, or are landmarks, or which do not really fit, or which are boring, or are interesting for some reason etc.
- Adults, but especially children, can be encouraged to do drawings or paint pictures of key buildings, features etc. and make notes on why they chose those features.

One highly enjoyable and perhaps surprisingly effective method is sometimes called 'projective technique' but, in this context, can simply be called **Design**.

When working on the regeneration framework for a large town, we ran a whole day workshop for 60 or so 14/15 year olds from local schools. One task for several small groups was to design a housing estate for a local site. To enable them to do this, we provided each group with site plans at 1:200 scale and a medley of small paper models of different house types. The key criteria they were asked to use had been developed by them and others – with professional help – at the start of the day. The photo below left shows work underway, the photo right shows a completed design. Once all designs were complete, we returned to a discussion of key design criteria.



Place Studio can provide further details on 3D design exercises, all of which can be done with adults and can cover a range of different building types, not just housing.

'Non-designated Heritage Assets' – a very different but important task with links not just to heritage but also to distinctive area character as a whole.

Purpose: To identify, and in the process provide some protection for, specific features, objects, buildings, signs etc. etc. that have significant value for local people as part of their area's distinctive character. 'Non-designated Heritage Assets' can be added to what is called a Local List run by a local authority thus giving them some legal protection against removal, change or damage. The process helps to get people looking really carefully at their place.

Method: This must be done very carefully, using the criteria laid down by Historic England. See their guidance at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/local-heritage-listing-advice-note-7/heag301-local-heritage-listing/> . Suggestions for 'assets' can be made by individuals or groups but they will need mediating (gently) to highlight those which might genuinely be listable. People submit a completed form plus photo(s) to their local planning authority and it is then a matter for them to list or not. Some potential assets can be quite large, others very small and Non-designated Heritage Assets do not have to only be old things; the key is that they must be in the public domain and have some real meaning and value to local people.

Example: The completed form below just notes the criteria relevant to these features.

6. Street Furniture: Street Benches | Location: Various locations (Lake Grounds, Battery Point)

Description: Street benches are installed around the Lake grounds and at Battery point. The benches are provided in memory of local people mainly by their families. The benches are constructed with strong wooden slats and ornate cast iron legs for support. They are in the Victorian style as required by North Somerset Council.



Criterion	Brief Explanation
Age	Modern reproductions
Visual / aesthetic interest	Although some benches are relatively recent additions they are in the Victorian style which complements the style of other street furnishings and buildings.
Group value	The collections of benches create interesting groupings which add to the character of the street scene.
Social and Communal Value	Many of the benches are memorial benches to local people who are remembered by the local community. Therefore they have value beyond their primary functions as benches.

Workshops: There are two related options here

Stakeholder Workshops – a very different sort of 'method' but particularly relevant for whole authority or very large area coding work.

Purpose: You cannot – maybe should not – always and only think of methods to get people out and about. That is great but sometimes not possible, and bringing a group together is also particularly important when it comes to the later stages of drawing conclusions from all the characterisation work (see next method). If, as suggested, all sorts of different views and opinions emerge, you need to find a way to cut through that not just you doing it for them. Well managed workshops are particularly effective for this.

Method: There are many ways of running workshops. The key things to think about are (a) what exactly you want to focus on and achieve, (b) who to therefore invite (see Part A), (c) venue, timing, invitations, briefings, information to use and (d) active, engaging and productive methods to use during any event. We also strongly recommend that you engage a facilitator to run any workshop. They will be independent and experienced at handling large groups and potentially challenging or conflicting views.

DIY Workshops – a truly innovative approach to widening beyond any stakeholder group. Any main stakeholder group will most likely include just one representative of various sorts of local group – older people, cyclists, amenity societies, community associations etc. This method widens that dramatically.

Purpose: To provide opportunities for more in-depth engagement on key issues by many more people than is possible through any inevitably small stakeholder group(s).

Method: This involves producing what we term an '**Action Pack**'; a set of instructions and materials to enable people to run an in-depth workshop on their own – DIY! That is most successful when used by those in your Steering Group or Stakeholder group (but it could be used by any local group). The representative of, for example, a Civic Society or Community Association gets the Action Pack and can then run a workshop with all or some of their members and send in the results. In one case, 20 groups ran workshops with an average of 25 people, i.e. a total of 500 people engaged in depth! Any Action Pack would have to be prepared for its very specific purpose, and how to draft instructions and agree materials is something on which Place Studio's advice would be essential.

As with design activities, Place Studio can provide more guidance and support on Action Packs.

Summarising – a really key stage of distilling into clear and agreed outcomes.

Purpose: Even if you only use one or two of the above methods, you will have a large amount of information to assemble, and it will need some form of summary.

Method: This is best done as a group activity with a mix of local people. But few if any will have experience of how to summarise or what a summary might look like. You will probably already have or could easily find (ideally from within your own authority area) some summary characterisations that you can copy and share with people. Sharing those will all give people a good sense of what to cover, how long a summary might be, how to use photos etc. The workshop would focus on this one main task with small groups looking at different aspects, e.g. each taking one or two of the 10 Themes. Once people have read examples they will almost always be able, with a little help, to draft really useful summaries – and they will be their summaries, not just yours!

ONLINE METHODS

There are many of these but three warrant description here.

Surveys

These have the ability to get through to very large numbers and/or they can be targeted to specific groups or geographical areas. They can be used very effectively for initial characterisation work, fairly effectively for developing a vision but they are probably not appropriate for scoping, visioning and drafting work. At the same time, surveys can, in fact should, be used to share back and seek comments on the results of all stages – classic consultation. Surveys may seem relatively easy but they always require input from specialist survey designers, managers and summarisers.

Mapping

There are several packages available (at a cost) for using the web to seek responses from anybody or everybody based on maps, e.g. to locate features that people like or issues that they wish to raise. Those methods include (interalia) Placecheck, Commonplace and Maptionnaire. They are very simple to use; respondents simply stick a pin in a place on a map on which they wish to comment and a box comes up into which they can write that comment. The technology stores all comments and these can then be analysed and summarised. Only very rarely, however, have we seen the results then shared back with the respondents; that is essential. This method should only be used alongside other methods to avoid (as we have seen) long essays being placed into boxes because there is no other way to comment.

Dialogue at Distance!

Both of the above are one-off methods; they do not (usually) work cumulatively. That can, however be done, and very effectively, drawing on an approach developed some 20 years ago but given a huge boost during the Covid lockdown. The process is in effect close to being a sequential stakeholder workshop!

Any number of people can take part, although some form of stakeholder format works best with one person per group providing the input, though always agreeing that input with group colleagues before responding. As an example, the method can be used for characterisation work. An initial online session might outline the purpose of the process, illustrate the 10 Themes as in the NMDC and then seek comments following the session. The process managers can then analyse the results, share them back in session 2 and seek any further elaboration of possible issues, themes or criteria to which people respond. Once again, the process managers can analyse the results and, in session 3, seek examples from participants using maps, photos and comments. The next analysis could generate common coding principles, shared back and discussed with people in a final session.

VISION, SCOPING AND CODING PLAN METHODS

The second set of methods is very different. It is about engaging people in the Vision and Scoping stages and mainly at authority or very large area scale. It is almost impossible to develop the Scoping and Vision through work in breadth, i.e. survey, website etc. available to all. At the same time, it can be good to find a way to share the draft results on both aspects and seek comments from 'everybody' (this is consultation!). The prime way to advance these key stages is therefore through a wide-ranging **Steering Group** who would, ideally, then stay with the process all the way through to adopting any final code.

A Steering Group would in effect operate as a form of continuing Stakeholder Workshop and the same basic principles would apply as noted above. As suggested earlier, and in contradiction to the NMDC, we think it is far better to do the Baseline characterisation work before the Scoping and Vision because the characterisation will inform the scoping.

This comes, however, with a key proviso. It should be obvious from everything so far that there are serious questions about whether any authority-wide code including Area Types can ever be developed with genuine community support. This is why some authorities are stepping back from the detail and rigidity of a code for their area as a whole and reverting back to something more akin to a Design Guide. Such Guides should include encouragement and guidance to communities about producing codes at neighbourhood, masterplan area or even site level – where that can be done with something closer to genuine community support.

Vision

As well as running a series of events for your Steering Group (effectively workshops), and as a lead-in to developing a Vision, there is also considerable value in taking the group on coach tours or walkabouts as described above. The most effective and highly practical way to develop a Vision with a Steering or Stakeholder Group is to use a method we have used for many years in many settings, entitled '**A Day in the Life**'. What follows can only provide a basic introduction to this method because it needs a lot of preparation, very careful running and needs to be tuned carefully to people and place.

- Steering Group members are arranged in small groups.
- Each group imagines a day in the life, from getting up to going to bed, for a specific household in 2030 (or whenever) when the quality of design has clearly got better.
- Households might typically be a single person (student?), young couple, a family with young children, a family with teenage children, empty nesters, older people (disability issues?) etc.
- The day each group describes should touch on their experience of all of the 10 Themes from the National Design Guide, so they need a written brief about this.
- Groups write their 'days' on flip chart paper with large pens (for others to read them easily) but do not put on their household name.
- When complete, participants circulate from group table to group table noting (a) where their own notes chime well with those done by others, (b) where there might be conflicting ideas about the future and (c) guess the other groups' households (this is really just for fun).
- All convene and manage a discussion that starts with the game of checking what groups were working on which households (always enjoyable, never accurate), goes on more importantly to highlight points of agreement between all of most groups and, finally, areas of possible difference (discussed and hopefully resolved).

All of this will provide a really good basis for a wide-ranging and generally agreed Vision (to be checked up and consulted on more widely, as above).

Scoping

There is very little to say on this. The NMDC does not suggest any engagement of communities in this stage but we consider this to be essential as part of securing wider community support later when any codes start to emerge. This is also the stage when the overall consultation strategy should be developed. So, in addition and as above, it is the results of the baseline characterisation work that will provide the local context from which the scope of any codes can be determined. This stage would therefore be undertaken jointly with the Steering Group, perhaps also seeking comments on the draft scope from other key stakeholders in a larger workshop.

Coding Plan

The Coding Plan will bring together the results from the baseline and visioning work. As with the Scoping stage, no major community engagement is necessary; the lead would be taken primarily with the involvement of the Steering Group. The NMDC suggests that the coding plan should be mainly a map which *“shows the areas of the authority to which the code will apply along with the distribution of the area types. The plan also shows major development sites based on local plan allocations that will be subject to the masterplanning exercise*”. This is the point to address the key cautions raised several times earlier about the value of Area Types as currently outlined in the NMDC, notably that they are too broad brush to be of operational value, inevitably missing the level of local distinctiveness. Unfortunately, there is currently no immediate answer to this challenge.

CODE DRAFTING METHODS

This methods is about engaging people in Code drafting. This is largely, but should not be solely, a professional task. Working alongside local people, if only minimally, has several benefits. First of all, people can start to see and understand why certain aspects of any code are needed, not least because that requires weighting different aspects. Secondly, the style and language of what then emerges will be more likely to be understood and hence used by local people. Thirdly, the more people are involved at this stage, the more likely they are to feel a sense of 'ownership' of what emerges and hence more likely to promote it and its use to others.

Drafting work cannot be done in-breadth, engaging everybody but it is best done with a stakeholder group, carefully chosen and ideally involving at least a core group of the same people as at earlier stages, even if some leave and some new ones join.

Co-drafting

As with communities trying to draft policies for NDPs, the challenge is very much about language and style, terms to use and not use, phrases and even diagrams that are unambiguous etc. – we call it 'planner speak' and it can boggle local people!

The way to proceed is through a workshop where:

- People sit in small groups (4/5 people) plus a professional.
- Each group member has handout copies of examples from elsewhere of aspects of codes (e.g. on identity or movement).
- Each group takes one aspect in 'round one' and are asked to select (a) any examples that they think are really appropriate and (b) some that would be appropriate with a few changes.
- If they want to copy or adapt an example or two they just note that.
- If they do not think any are really appropriate, they have a large sheet of flip chart paper and a pen and can draft their own text and/or suggest their own diagrams or photos.
- In 'round two' they all share their ideas and, if necessary, make final amendments.

What is really surprising is that looking through and learning from other examples, even if they do not like any they are given, quickly enables people to understand and use 'planner-speak' (though some final professional 'polishing' is still always needed).

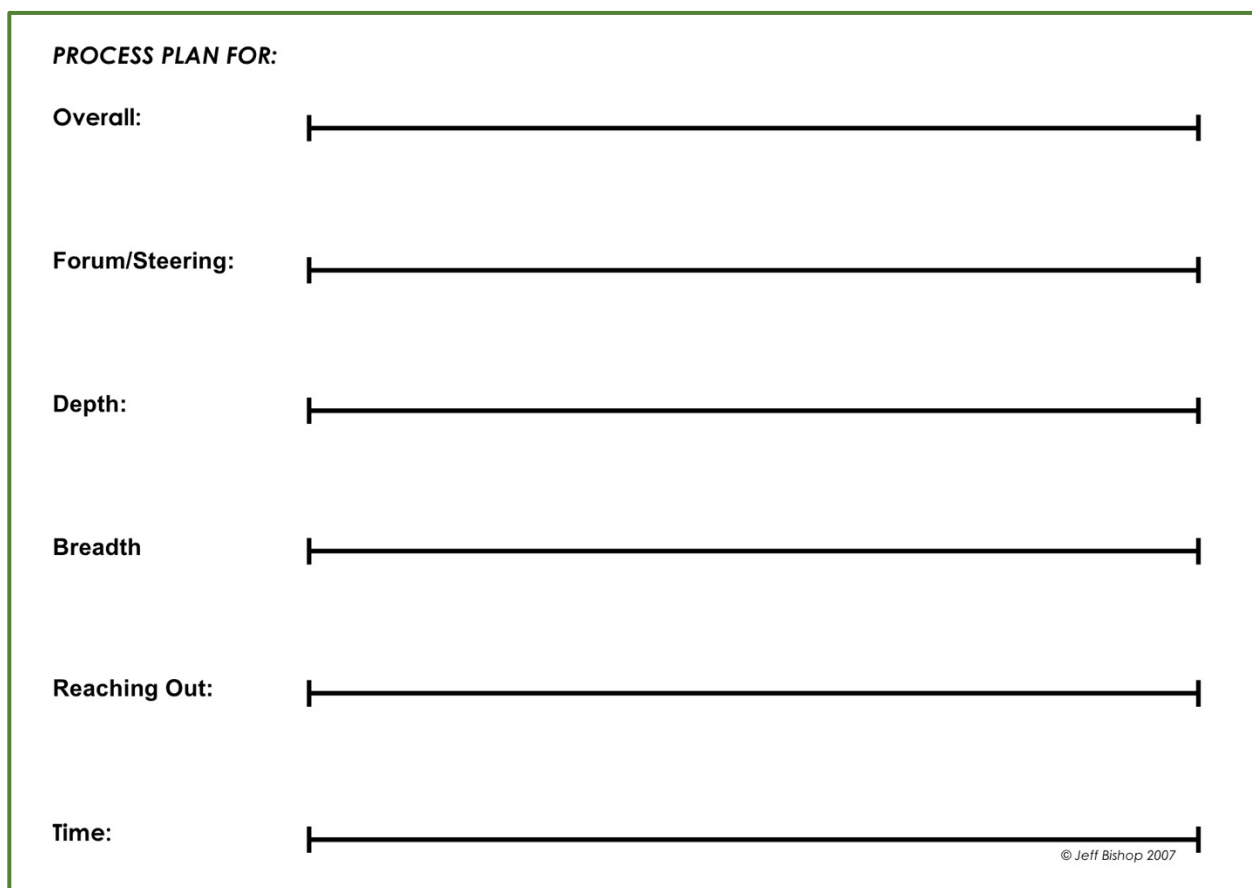
FINAL COMMENT ON METHODS

All of the above are about genuine engagement by mixing what we term work in-depth with work in-breadth. But it is also possible to work the other way round, i.e. **you** do a lot of the analysis then **present it** to people for their comments. However, this is really consultation rather than engagement. This may be necessary and can be effective but, in general, it is nowhere near as good as actually getting people actively engaged at all stages. But, to be successful with this present/consult approach, you must be confident that you are working on the community's wavelength and you must be prepared to adjust and show exactly where and how you have listened and adjusted (or not and why not), if that proves necessary.

DEVELOPING A STRATEGY OR PROGRAMME

The NMDC suggests that a “*consultation strategy*” should be developed in the Scoping stage after the baseline (characterisation) and visioning work. This may seem to be a strictly professional task but it can – in our view **should** - be done collaboratively with the Steering Group or perhaps even a wider Stakeholder Group. The method is basically very simple and very practical but it requires good facilitation.

Preparation involves producing a hard copy diagram at A1 or A0 size as below to be placed on a wall. The actual lines can vary according to context but those shown are probably standard. ‘Overall’ is the overall project process so key stages can be added. ‘Steering Group’ should be obvious. ‘Work in-depth’ (e.g. workshops) and ‘Work in breadth’ (e.g. surveys) are as explained earlier. ‘Reaching out’ is all the other awareness raising, publicity and information sharing activities (traditional ‘Comms’). The timeline can be added at bottom or top or not used.



The facilitator needs to be ready with a series of post-its, either blank or ready with titles such as Steering Group workshop, survey, drop-in exhibition, media articles etc. Discussion starts with adding some post-it ‘fixes’ – key dates on the Overall line or a key stage for publicity. Post-its can then be added, by group agreement, for workshops, surveys etc. and this is where the post-it method comes into its own. There will almost certainly not be time to do all the activities suggested and they are unlikely to be in the best order first time – so the post-its can be moved and moved again (added or removed) to produce an agreed strategy/programme. Overleaf is a completed (if slightly different) typed-up diagram, and note the arrows that show how one activity leads into the other.

WATERTON PROCESS PLAN:

