

Platt Bridge Community Green Visioning Report

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1. Context

Abram Communities Together¹ (ACT) Neighbourhood Forum and Abram Ward Community Cooperative² (AWCC) came together to commission the Platt Bridge Community Green Visioning Project and this accompanying report. Sarah Spanton, director of Waymarking³, led the project, working closely with members of the ACT Forum, AWCC trustees and other community partners to develop a co-produced approach to its delivery. This project was one element of the larger 'Picture This' project (October – June 2019) – which also included a community engagement project and the Platt Bridge Business Premises Audit. This project was funded by the Empowering Places Programme (from Power to Change⁴) and the project took place between February and May 2019.

This project took place within the wider context of ACT Forum's need for economic-focused evidence for the Neighbourhood Plan. It linked to a community-led programme aiming to regenerate Abram Ward, including Platt Bridge town centre, particularly focusing on supporting community businesses and community-led economic development.

The project aimed to:

- Understand the current character and issues arising on the Community Green (see Figures 1 – 7)
- Design a new social and community-led vision for Platt Bridge's Community Green
- Test that vision with community groups in Abram Ward
- Provide the evidence to contribute to policy development relating to the Community Green in the ACT Neighbourhood Plan
- Recommend initial next steps towards achieving a redesigned Community Green

This accompanying report outlines how research took place (Section 2), what the findings were (Section 3), details the draft vision for the Community Green (Section 4), identifies key community responses to the vision (Section 5), and makes initial recommendations towards next steps (Section 6).

Figures 2 – 7 Platt Bridge Community Green



¹ <https://abramwardplan.co.uk/>

² <https://www.madeinwigan.org/>

³ <https://www.waymarking.org.uk>

⁴ <https://www.powertochange.org.uk/get-support/programmes/empowering-places/>

Figure 8 Platt Bridge Centre and Community Green



Platt Bridge Community Green is positioned in the centre of Platt Bridge’s shopping area (Figure 8), surrounded to the East and South by residential housing, and to the North and West by business premises (Figure 9). The Community Green was created following the regeneration of Platt Bridge Centre in 2011. The entire area of the site is around 1875 m²

Figure 9 Platt Bridge Community Green



2. Project methodology

2.1 Project methodology in brief

- Waymarking developed a community design framework for analysing the Community Green as it currently exists.
- This framework was used as the foundation for an Activity Day for team members and local people.
- Waymarking analysed the evidence and visioning ideas gathered on the Activity Day, and designed a vision for the Community Green.
- The vision was tested by Picture This team members with local people from a range of community groups.

2.2 Analysis using the framework

The community design framework was used throughout the Activity Day, beginning by focusing on issues relating to 'Understanding Public Space', accompanied by six other overlapping theme areas (Figure 10).

Figure 10 Community design framework themes

1. Understanding public space
2. Access and connections
3. Health and wellbeing
4. Green Infrastructure
5. Experiencing the space
6. Play
7. Sociability and uses



In particular, participants to the Activity Day were introduced to some concepts and ideas from the planning and urban design worlds, including some techniques professional urban designers and planners use to think about what makes a good-quality public space. Each theme was presented on an A3 board and discussed by participants during a series of facilitated exercises (Figures 11 and 12).

Government guidance considers design to be important in terms of making good-quality public space.

'Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work...'

Paragraph 124, National Planning Policy Framework

Key to exploring the Community Green was an understanding of what the public realm or public space is. For the purposes of this project, it was defined thus:

The public realm or public space are the areas of a settlement for the general use of the public, such as streets, squares, village greens or parks. These are most frequently in the ownership and control of a public body. They are the outdoor, everyday spaces that we move through and linger within.

Participants explored how urban design is both a profession and a process – participants were asked to undertake the role of a community urban designer, learning about processes and concepts in order to assess the Community Green in its current state.


Urban design as a process was defined as:

Designing how our cities, towns and villages are experienced and moved through in our daily lives. It is not about designing individual buildings, but about the process or art of making a place. It covers the connections between people and places, movement and spaces in and around buildings, green and open spaces and the processes for ensuring successful places are delivered and maintained. Ideally good urban design takes place when a wide range of people with a stake in the area, many different kinds of professionals and politicians work effectively together.

See Appendix 1 for a list of all the community design framework sources.

Figures 11 and 12 Two of the community design framework theme boards

Understanding Public Space



The public realm or public space are the areas of a settlement for the general use of the public, such as streets, squares, village greens or parks. These are most frequently in the ownership and control of a public body. They are the outdoor, everyday spaces that we move through and linger within.

What is Urban Design and why is it important?
Government guidance considers good design of our public spaces important. "Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work."
Source: 124 Urban Planning Network

Urban Design is a profession and also a process. Urban Designers work in the planning, development and regeneration sectors.

Urban design as a process means:
Designing how our cities, towns and villages are experienced and moved through in our daily lives. It is not about designing individual buildings, but about the process or art of making a place. It covers the connections between people and places, movement and spaces in and around buildings, green and open spaces and the processes for ensuring successful places are delivered and maintained. Ideally good urban design takes place when a wide range of people with a stake in the area, many different kinds of professionals and politicians work effectively together.

What are the benefits of a great place?

- Promotes a sense of comfort
- Creates improved accessibility
- Builds and supports the local economy
- Social interaction
- Promotes health
- Nurtures and defines a sense of community

What makes a great place?

- Sociability
- Uses and activities
- Comfort and image
- Access and linkages

Key Questions

- How important is it to local people?
- Does it cater for different people's needs?
- Is it good for local shops and other amenities?

Clear, legible public space
A legible public space has a clear image and is easy to understand. It is a place where people can understand what opportunities are available there. It has recognisable routes, intersection and landmarks to help people find their way around.

- How easy is it to understand this place?

Distinct public and private spaces
A quality public space clearly distinguishes between public and private space.


- Is it clear which areas of this public space are public and which are private?

Surveillance and public space
A public space that feels safe has good surveillance. This is when people can see out of windows onto the public space, and there are plenty of passers by.

- Can people see out of windows onto this public space?
- Are there plenty of people using this space?

Source: 1. The Good Place Code for Urban Design (2012), Urban Design Council
2. U.S. Professor Robert S. Lyson
3. Alan S. Berman, University of California, Berkeley
4. Design Council, The Planning Process and the Urban Design and Site Planning Team, City of San Francisco, CA
5. American Planning Association

Health & Wellbeing



About the principles and benefits of healthy public spaces

Five Principles of Healthy Places¹

- Healthy places improve air, water and soil quality, incorporating measures that help us adapt to, and where possible mitigate, climate change.
- Healthy places help us overcome health inequalities and can promote healthy lifestyles.
- Healthy places make people feel comfortable and at ease, increasing social interaction and reducing antisocial behaviour, isolation and stress.
- Healthy places optimise opportunities for working, learning and development.
- Healthy places are restorative, uplifting and healing for both physical and mental health conditions.

A healthy place/space has multiple roles/benefits² which include:

- Physical and mental wellbeing (increases in physical activity/reduces health inequality/promotes good mental health)
- Reduces air pollution
- Improves safety and security
- Strengthens community cohesion and intergenerational health
- Addresses the aging population
- Reduces healthcare and demand
- Improves the quality of the environment
- Gives access to diverse food outlets selling healthy food options
- Provides opportunities to grow your own food in public and private spaces
- Provides opportunities for food markets, temporary market stalls

Key Questions

- Does this public space encourage physical activity?
- Is this public space comfortable and stress-free?
- Does this place enhance social inclusion?
- Does it provide access to fresh food?
- Does it offer security to its users?

Source: 1. The Principles of Healthy Places, Landscape Institute
2. Creating Healthy Planning Environments, Town and Country Planning Association

Figures 13 and 14 Participants discussing themes (Figure 14 Image credit Cath Long)



2.3 Activity day overview

The Activity Day was held on 15 February 2019 at Platt Bridge Community Zone (PBCZ) and on site at Platt Bridge Community Green (Figures 8 and 9). The day was split into three parts: I, II, and III (Table 1).

Table 1 Overview of Activity Day

	Key goal	Aimed at	Schedule
Part I	Collectively exploring what makes a good public space	Picture This team members	10.30 – 12.30
Part II	Gathering evidence on site about the Community Green in its current state	Picture This team members & local community members	12.30 – 1.30
Part III	Exploring the evidence gathered on site and imagining how the Green could be redesigned for the future	Picture This team members & local community members	1.30 – 4.00

Waymarking had two members of staff present on the day, Sarah Spanton and Cath Long, and seven MSc Planning and Regeneration students from the University of Manchester volunteered on the day. Seven local people including Picture This core team members took part.

The Activity Day activities were designed to be creative and engaging.

Following the introduction of the Understanding Public Space theme, the group explored Project for Public Space's⁵ (PPS) identification of six benefits of a great place:

- Promotes a sense of comfort
- Creates improved accessibility
- Builds and supports the local economy
- Social interaction
- Promotes health
- Nurtures and defines a sense of community

The group also considered PPS's Power of 10 concept, which states that that places thrive when there are at least ten reasons to be there⁶.

In Part II, participants walked down to the Community Green and took part in a sound-walk led by Sarah Spanton, to experience the Green through all the senses including sound and smell (Figures 15 - 16), followed by completing booklets of questions based on each of the seven community design framework themes to gather evidence about the current conditions at the Community Green (Figures 17 – 22).

Example questions were:

Access and Connection Theme:

- Would you describe this area as a 'walkable' place?
- Does this public space have a clearly signposted street network for destinations?
- Are local transport services well integrated with each other?

Play Theme:

- What sorts of play can take place here now? Please describe and mark on the map
- In what ways does this place encourage creativity and imagination?
- In what ways does this place offer challenging and fun play opportunities?

⁵ <https://www.pps.org/>

⁶ <https://www.pps.org/article/the-power-of-10>

Figures 15 – 18 Part II of Activity Day: sound-walk and completing booklets



Figure 19 Example of unfolded Green Infrastructure booklet

7

How easily can people connect to other green and blue spaces (the canal for example) from this space?

8

A page for any other thoughts!

9

Is there shelter here from the weather? Please describe and mark on the map

10

Does the Community Green have any wet weather? Please describe and mark on the map

11

Does the Community Green have any problems with flooding or getting boggy in wet weather? Please describe and mark on the map

12

Is this public space well-maintained? Please give detail

13

What types of plants and trees are here now? Please describe and mark on the map

14

In what ways is this public space ideal for birds, insects, wild animals?

15

Describe the overall condition of grass and planted areas—and mark on the map

16

What path does the sun take around the Community Green? Map on the map


17


How does the Community Green make you feel? Write down 3 descriptive words (or more) to express how you feel?

18

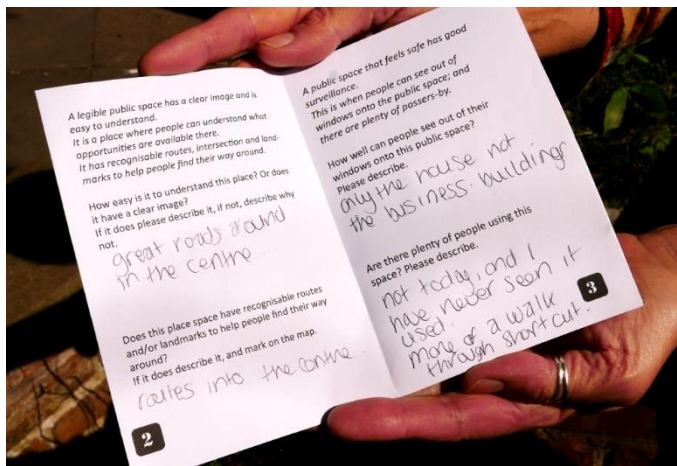
Do you enjoy being here on the Community Green? If you do—why? If you don't—why not?

19





Figures 20 – 22 Completed theme booklets from Part II



Part III of the workshop saw participants return to PBCZ and undertake a group workshop answering the key question:

- *How would you like to redesign the Community Green to be a better public space?*

Each of the seven themes had a set of questions that could be responded to by participants, and ideas and drawings were captured on large sheets of paper. Towards the end of the workshop participants identified which ideas they thought were good and which needed to be thought about more (Figures 23 and 24).

Figures 23 – 24 Participants answering key question in Part III



3. Analysis of the findings

3.1 Selected findings: Part I

The discussion around what makes a good public space identified a number of public spaces locally and regionally that the group considered were good-quality public spaces (Table 2; see Appendix 2 for a complete set of responses).

Table 2 Examples of good-quality public spaces

Public spaces	Reasons why places were identified as good public spaces
Haigh Hall	Has concerts, range of activities, facilities...
Walton Hall Gardens	Has family facilities, canal path, people can cycle there
Jubilee Park Flower Garden	Health and wellbeing focus is good, has tennis facilities, it's secure, has quiet spaces
Longford Park	Community facilities, community garden – volunteer led, there is local pride in the place
Market Square Lancaster	It is well signposted to other blue and green spaces in the area

3.2 Selected findings: Part II

Participants completed at least two sets of themed booklets each (Table 3).

Table 3 Number of themed booklets completed by participants

Themed booklets	Number completed
Understanding Public Space	4
Health and Wellbeing	3
Sociability and Uses	3
Play	2
Access and Connections	2
Experiencing the Space	2
Green Infrastructure	2

Some examples of responses to the themed sets of questions were:

Experiencing the Space

How does the community Green make you feel?

Calm, relaxed, in the community

Do you enjoy being here on the Community Green? If you do – why?

Space to sit and chat

Health and Wellbeing

Does this place have a problem with air pollution? If yes – why?

Yes, as is close to traffic and main car park area

What's the overall level of cleanliness on the Community Green?

Tiny amount of litter, but generally clean

Each of the seven sets of themed booklets used on site included two emotional/experience-based questions on the front page. Tables 4 and 5 present full responses to these questions.

Table 4 How does the Community Green make you feel?

How does the Community Green make you feel?		
Positive	Midway	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calm • Relaxed • In the community • Quiet • Comfortable • Serene • Nice • Positive • Good place to enjoy the sun • Green • Clean 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More relaxed than on the road • Trees add calm • The promise of the trees in summer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential distractions • Under pressure from traffic • Un-relaxed • Too much noise • A good space – not cared for • Not peaceful

Table 5 Do you enjoy being here on the Community Green?

Do you enjoy being here on the Community Green?		
Positive	Midway	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nice and quiet • Space to sit and chat • Quiet even though it's close to the road • Place to sit and relax 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set back from traffic • A refuge from busy traffic • Very good weather today • Open space away from the noise of the cars • Gives me a peaceful feeling away from the traffic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not visible • Under-used • Isolated • Nobody else is here

3.3 SWOT of current Platt Bridge Community Green

In order to identify the key issues pertaining to the Community Green in its current state, analysis of all the responses to the seven set of themed questions has been collated into this SWOT table (Table 6).

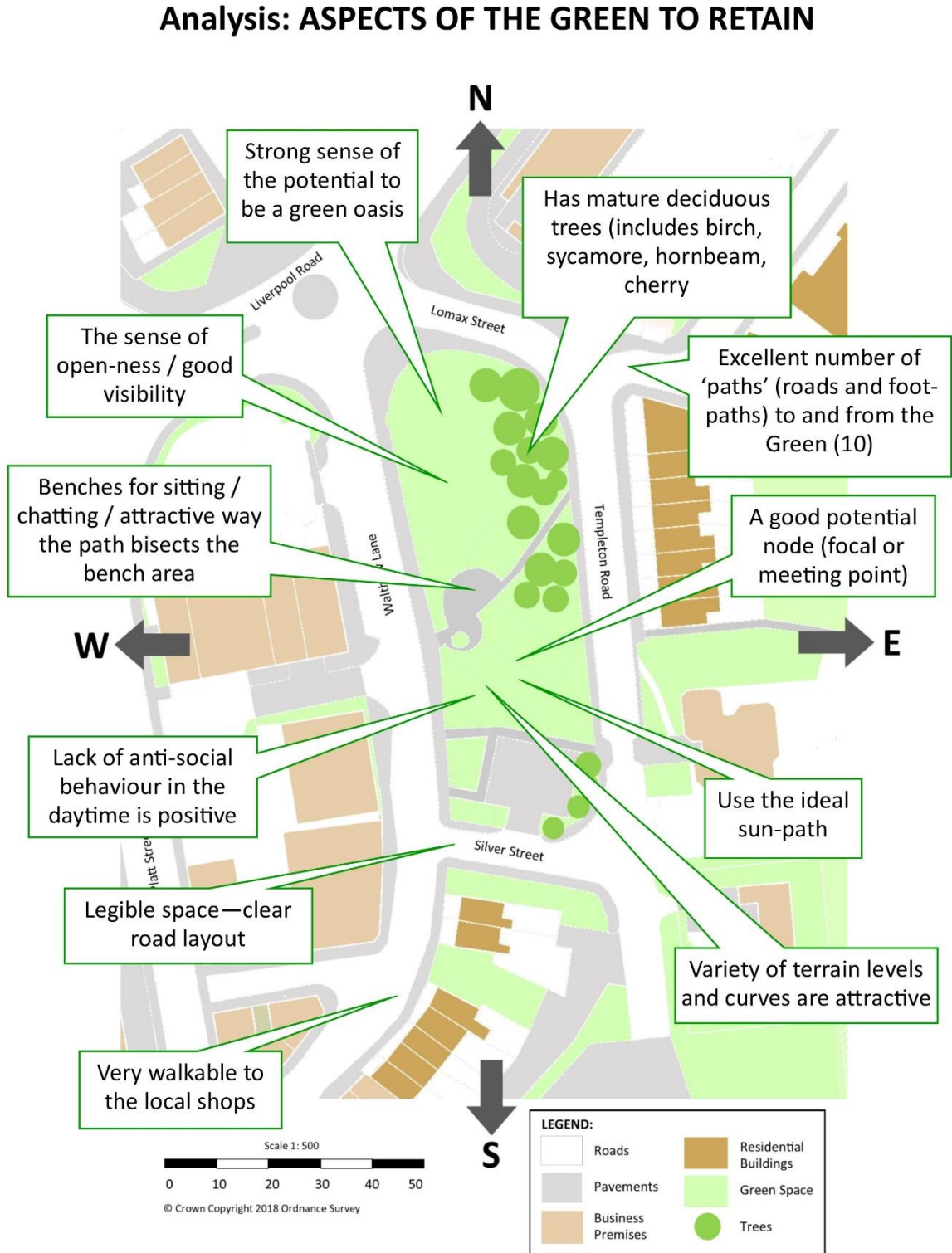
Table 6 SWOT of key issues pertaining to Platt Bridge Community Green in its current state

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Quiet (ish) green space It is open – not closed off Benches for sitting and chatting Very near shopping centre Mature trees – native species Clear enclosure – public-private space Has 10 ‘paths’ in and out of it Is a node but not used as such Is very legible – clear how it is laid out Accessible parking bay Doesn’t have daytime anti-social behaviour Fairly clean and well maintained Bin emptied regularly Large noticeboard Local dog walkers use it Geocache on site Walkable to and from Platt Bridge centre Some safe/walkable ‘paths’ Decent parking nearby Deciduous trees – help with winter sunlight Current planting is in OK condition Sun-path is ideal Hillocks/mounds provide variety Curves of pathways are attractive Path and central bench area is attractive Some desire lines have potential Trees provide shade</p>	<p>Very little used by anyone It feels isolated and invisible It’s walked through, not stayed in and used Shops to the North are all empty Poor surveillance N/E/S (buildings have their back to it) Not used by families, older people, disabled people Not very adaptable for different uses Not currently offering a variety of uses Lacks identity/uniqueness Locals are not proud of it/it’s not important to local people/not aware it exists Lacks defined purpose Only landmark is McDonald’s sign Poor integrated public transport Car only travel/no cycle facilities or networks No direct line of site to Green from shops No play facilities Not welcoming as it can’t be seen Not used/useable at night Not active/lively Doesn’t encourage community activity Lack of info about wider area/history of area Not very easy to walk on for some disabled people Some unsafe/unwalkable paths and crossing Not signposted locally or ward-wide Too open for children to play safely Lack of crossing to North Not signposted to other blue or green spaces</p>
Opportunities	Constraints/Threats
<p>Under-used asset – much more value to be squeezed from it New landmarks could be put there Could be a place people come to, not through Has untapped potential Potential to be a celebratory space – not used much as such to date (since 2011) Ideal site for community events – permanent/temporary – ie a market Encouraging healthy exercise Potential to shut Walthew Lane off for events Sun-path on benches/planting Handysman’s street could create a new vista Community businesses could be linked to the Green – garden maintenance/market etc</p>	<p>Air pollution ongoing Car noise ongoing Residential privacy issues Concern re anti-social behaviour How to positively engage community including businesses, in changing the Green Engaging the Local Authority in changing the Green Engaging the traffic team in changing the roads Difficult to cater for both young people and children of different ages Fairly small size of land (max 1875 m²) Potential loss of parking in area (via development) Providing safety for families yet keeping the space open Possibly boggy/flood risk</p>

3.4 Detailed analysis of findings

The Activity Day findings revealed that there are a number of key positive aspects of the Community Green. Waymarking’s analysis has identified that these positive aspects should be retained in any redesign. They are highlighted in Figure 25.

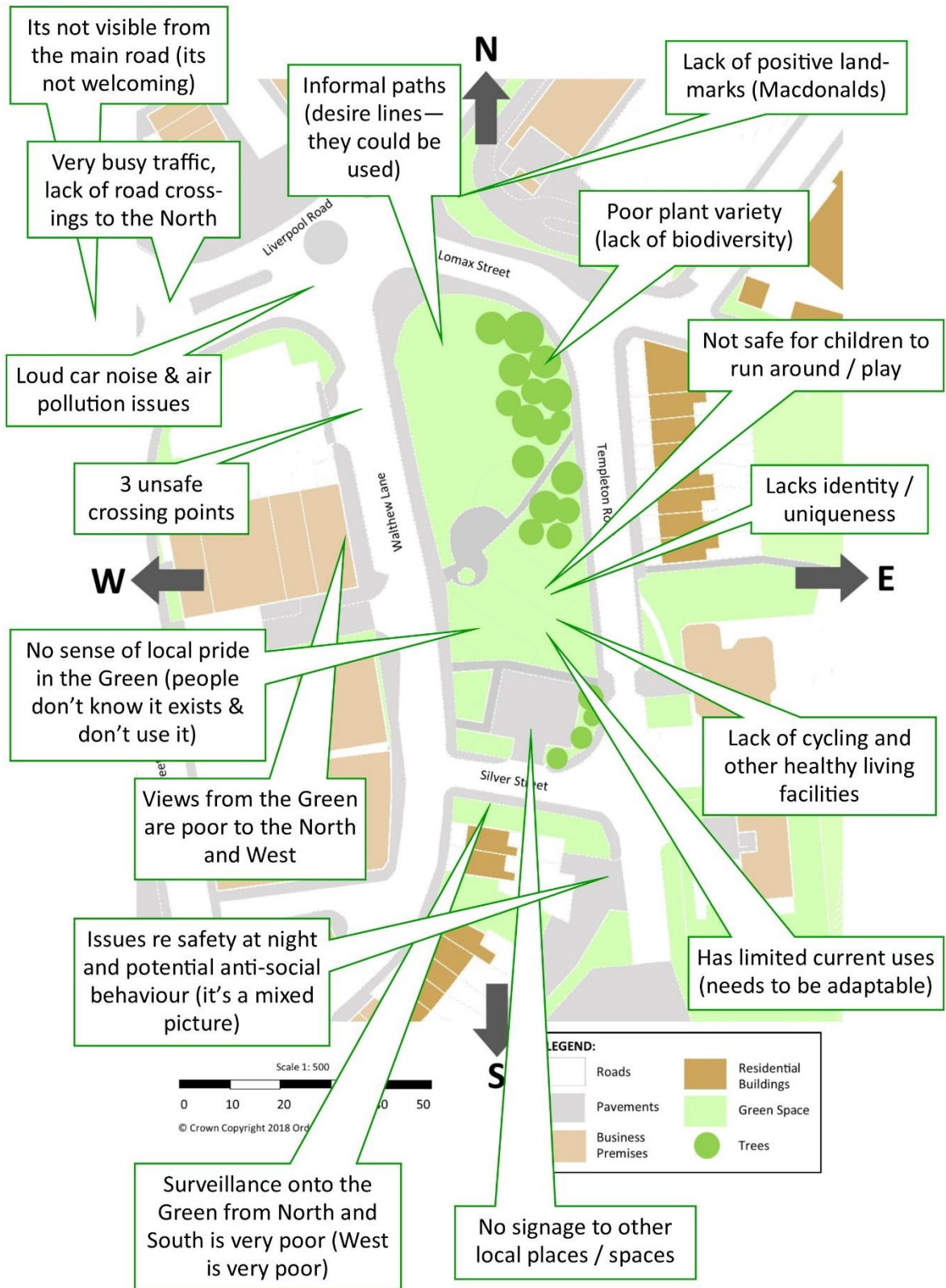
Figure 25 Key aspects of the Community Green to be retained



Furthermore, there were a number of issues arising out of the evidence gathered on site that also need to be addressed in any redesign, these are identified in Figure 26.

Figure 26 Key issues on the Community Green that need to be addressed

Analysis: ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED



3.5 Ideas for imagining a better public space

Part III of the Activity Day generated many ideas aimed at addressing the issues arising with the Community Green in its current state, and imagined a future Community Green that has been redesigned as a better public space (Figures 27 and 28).

Figures 27 and 28 Part III imagining the future Community Green



Waymarking's analysis has taken forward in particular those ideas that were identified in the session as positive good ideas (see Appendix 3 for a complete set of responses). Additionally, a number of key issues and queries were raised by the group about some of the ideas put forward; these have also taken into consideration when designing the draft Vision for the Community Green (see Section 4). Where possible, when drafting the vision a number of other ideas from participants were also taken into account (see column 3 in each Tables 7 – 13).

Table 7 Understanding Public Space Theme

Good ideas identified by the group	Issues and queries raised by the group	Other key ideas taken into account in redesign
Improved signage and information boards	Need more consultation with local people	Community ownership
		Digital – Pokemon Go type app for Abram Ward
		Link to Wigan In Bloom

Table 8 Access & Connections Theme

Good ideas identified by the group	Issues and queries raised by the group	Other key ideas taken into account in redesign
Needs signposting to the Green and to bus stops etc – also to other spaces and the canal	No pedestrian crossing in some places	Improved access for disabled people – all curbs were uneven and not many ramps to paths
Add pedestrian crossing to the North	No easy access because of vehicles passing by	Better public transport
May need to increase pedestrian friendliness	Potentially level out hillocks/mounds for sports/access/events – but mounds are quite nice/visually attractive/add variety	Bike locking facilities
		Flower beds at boundaries to protect kids playing/football etc
		A cycle route past the Green?

Table 9 Health and Wellbeing Theme

Good ideas identified by the group	Issues and queries raised by the group	Other key ideas taken into account in redesign
	CCTV for security – but it can create a lack of trust	Dog bin needed – to the east of the site, especially for dog poo disposal
	More lighting for security – is it really needed? Also eco-friendly issues	Visual attractiveness to the west – plain brick walls of warehouse – what about a vertical garden or mural?
	Introduce activities in the evening (to help with security) – what activities, who's the audience?	How can air pollution from cars be reduced?
		Open up more windows or entrances towards the space – to help with security/surveillance day and night

Table 10 Green Infrastructure Theme

Good ideas identified by the group	Issues and queries raised by the group	Other key ideas taken into account in redesign
Wildflower meadow on the hillock/mound nearest the car park – with a path mown through	Evergreen trees would improve the aesthetic in winter – is it in keeping with the local area? Could create different look at different times of year	All season flowers and plants – varied/flower beds
Shrub planting around the tree edge to delineate and provide a natural barrier and more wildlife habitat	Careful not to have hedges grow too high – concerns over anti-social behaviour in hidden areas	Benches facing morning and afternoon sun
		Small children play areas – could have natural planting/low fence as a safety measure

Table 11 Experiencing the Space Theme

Good ideas identified by the group	Issues and queries raised by the group	Other key ideas taken into account in redesign
Bird boxes to attract the birds/wildlife	Redistribution of trees on the west side - to prevent the noise of traffic or engine sound (issues re blocking view from road)	Old style lamp-posts for additional lighting
Bat boxes	What activities will take place?	Open space puts off anti-social younger people/teens
Frequent activities to attract people	Are more footpaths needed?	Greater sense of purpose when using the space
Colour		McDonald's M is the only landmark currently
Sculptures of animals/woodland animal sculptures		

Sculpture connected with local history		
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Table 12 Play Theme

Good ideas identified by the group	Issues and queries raised by the group	Other key ideas taken into account in redesign
Playground/playspace for children – slides, sandpit etc	Issue of needing to fence off, protect play area	
	Concerns regarding young people using the space if there is somewhere to hide behind (like high fences/bushes – also concern to keep space open and welcoming (ie not fenced)	

Table 13 Sociability & Uses Theme

Good ideas identified by the group	Issues and queries raised by the group	Other key ideas taken into account in redesign
Market – local food, local produce, entertainment – all in one place	Fear of vandalism for a community garden area	Sensory planting bed
Negotiate with the council to close down Walthew Lane for one-off events. For just a day or two, but it would open up the Green and be a space for stall	More benches – also in shaded area	Flower beds/garden area
Turn the King Billy into a community resource – it looks out onto the Green	Dealing with the previous reputation of the King Billy	Temporary and permanent uses are possible
Get a circus to come and set up a slack rope between the trees		Add a stage – to attract musicians to play or perform, hold a carnival, festival
Green gym/exercise equipment for adults to exercise (and children)		Sculpture – re history of Abram Ward

3.6 Overarching objectives for the Vision

Three overarching objectives for the redesign were identified in Part III of the Activity Day, these were:

- Tapping into the Community Green’s potential
- Making it a place to be, not just for passing through
- Creating a multi-use, flexible, social, healthy green space in the heart of Abram Ward

4. Draft Vision for the Community Green

4.1 Fifteen elements in three stages

The draft vision for the Community Green comprises fifteen elements. A schedule for delivering the changes to the Community Green is suggested, by identifying three stages for making the changes (Table 14).

Table 14 Fifteen elements in three stages

Stage 1					
1. Events area	2. Landmark sculpture(s)	3. New Christmas tree	4. Dog poo bin	5. Bird boxes	
Stage 2					
6. Art mural	7. Sensory garden	8. Low flowering hedges		9. Programme of events and activities	
Stage 3					
10. Young children's play area	11. Meadow planting & swale	12. Green gym	13. More benches	14. Crossing points	15. Cycle network links

The overall draft vision seeks to ensure that the positive aspects of the Community Green can be retained (see Section 3.4). Each individual element of the draft vision was imagined in some form during Part III of the Activity Day. The 15 elements offer a range of positive solutions to those issues that needed overcoming (see Section 3.4), in order to make Platt Bridge Community Green a better public space (Tables 15 - 17).

Table 15 Stage 1

Events area – new durable surface	Landmark sculpture(s) – large sculpture, including dragonfly element – plus signposting to other parts of the ward; 5 villages and other key green space assets – including map of Abram Ward embedded into the pavement surface – digital history of the area, embedded in sculpture
Overcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of events taking place 	Overcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of awareness that this space exists Lack of identity in space
Offers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible and adaptable space Allows temporary outdoor events like a community market, outdoor theatre, community events to take place Durable surface, mow-able Retains green space/soaks up water 	Offers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures people can see the Community Green from the main road and shopping area to the south Allows for more connectivity to and from other villages, areas in the ward Makes use of current 10 paths to and from the space Starts to make the space into a node, a place people come to, rather than just through Give the space identity Provides history of the area Highlights the wards various protected/endangered species Makes space more visually attractive Provides vistas towards Green from South and North

New Christmas Tree	Dog poo bin	Bird boxes
Overcomes Current tree is damaged	Overcomes Lack of dog poo bin	Overcomes Lack of birds nesting in trees
Offers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrades the quality of the current trees Focal point for Christmas celebrations Makes space more visually attractive 	Offers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bin for the many people who walk their dogs on the green 	Offers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhances biodiversity Relaxing space for health and wellbeing

Table 16 Stage 2

Art mural – featuring unique aspects of area; protected species – dragonflies, water vole, bittern, willow tit	Sensory garden – and path leading from bench area
Overcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of interesting view to the east of the green 	Overcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of variety in planting
Offers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give the space identity Provides interesting view to the east 	Offers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relaxing space for health and wellbeing Enhances biodiversity Shelter from noise of road traffic Provision for disabled and older people to walk through Makes space more visually attractive Uses previous desire line
Low flowering hedges	Programme of events and activities – regular events, managed programme
Overcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of variety in planting Safety concerns for children playing 	Overcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of reasons to use space Lack of awareness that this space exists
Offers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relaxing space for health and wellbeing Makes space more visually attractive Enhances biodiversity Security for children playing 	Offers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local economy built up, creates footfall to area Promoting community businesses Enhances community cohesion Celebrating as a community

Table 17 Stage 3

Young children's play area	Meadow planting – & swale*	Green gym
Overcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of people and children using space 	Overcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of variety in planting Flood risks 	Overcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of people using space
Offers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages families and young people to use the space 	Offers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relaxing space for health and wellbeing Enhances biodiversity Community business opportunity Makes space more visually attractive 	Offers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical activity for health and wellbeing Local running activities, warm up using green gym Surveillance provided by Pooles

More benches	Crossing points	Cycle network links
<p>Overcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of people using space 	<p>Overcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking access from the North of the site is difficult Safety issues reaching the Green 	<p>Overcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access by bike is difficult
<p>Offers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relaxation for health and wellbeing Meeting point, chatting and socialising Provision for disabled and older people to walk through Makes best use of sun-path 	<p>Offers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows for more connectivity to and from other villages, areas in the ward 	<p>Offers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows for more connectivity to and from other villages, areas in the ward Encourages physical activity for health and wellbeing

4.2 Ten reasons to use the Community Green

The draft vision was initially assessed against the PPS concept that places thrive when there are at least ten reasons to be there⁷ (Section 2.3). The adding of 15 new elements to the Community Green would mean that there would be at least ten reasons to use the Community Green.

The ten reasons to use the Community Green would be:

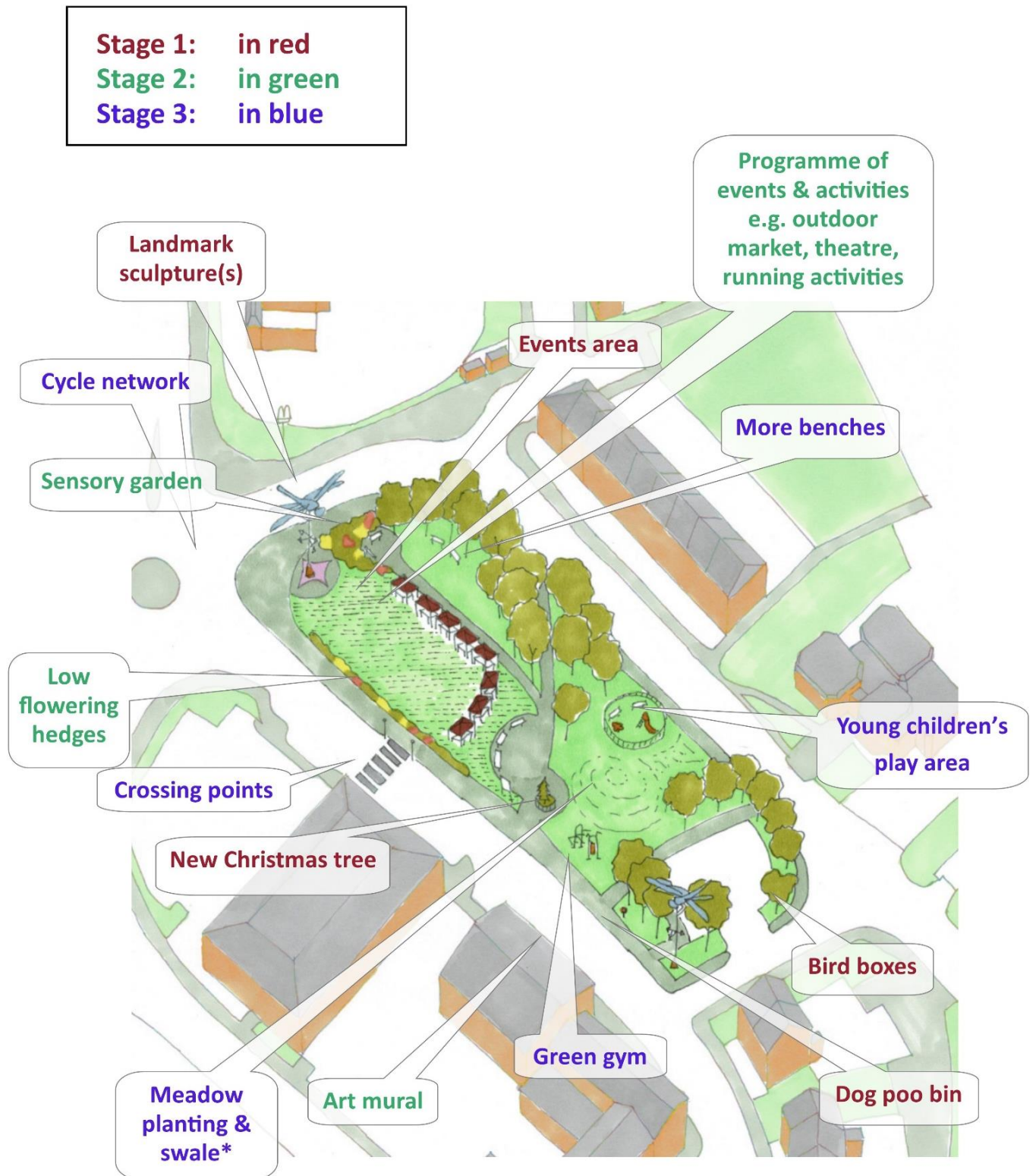
1. **Landmark sculptures** – providing information about what other opportunities are nearby and digitally highlighting local history information
2. **Programme of community events** – which could include a community market, arts, music events, community festivals and health and wellbeing events – to provide food to eat, music to hear and healthy activities to take part in
3. **A meeting place** (at events and on a daily basis)
4. **Celebrations** around a new Christmas Tree
5. Facilities for **dog walkers**
6. More varied planting including **meadow planting and a sensory garden** – providing flood prevention, plants to see and smell, as well encouraging birds, bees and butterflies
7. An **art mural** to see
8. A **playground for young children** to play in and families to meet
9. **Green gym** facilities – for healthy activity
10. **More benches** to sit and relax on

⁷ <https://www.pps.org/article/the-power-of-10>

4.3 The Vision for the Community Green

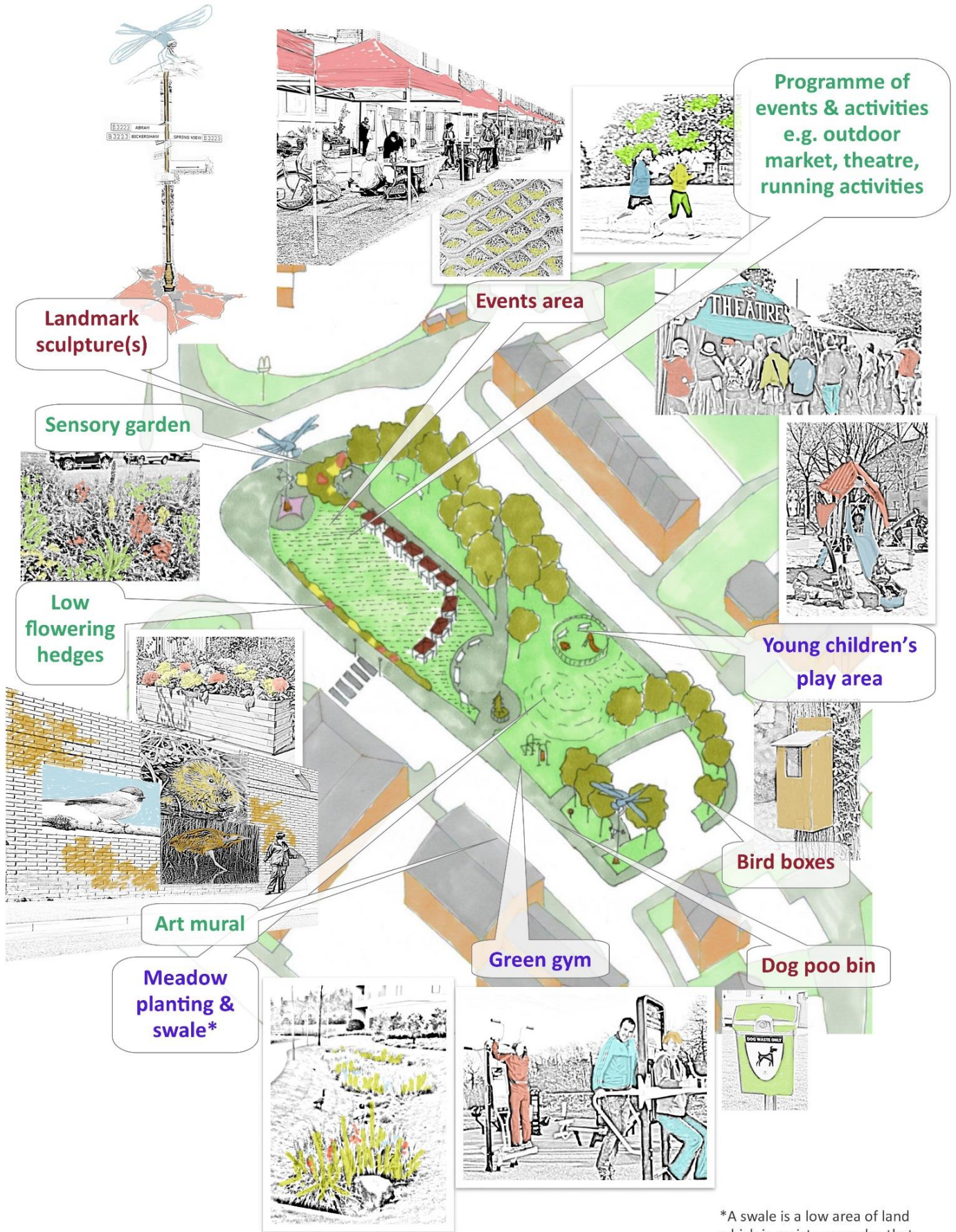
Figure 29 shows the final visualisation of the draft vision for the Community Green, identifying where the 15 elements might be positioned, and identifying the three stages for implement the changes. Figure 30 presents images as well as text labelling, to give visual examples of each of the 15 elements.

Figure 29 Vision of the Community Green – labels only



*A swale is a low area of land which is moist or marshy, that allows water to run off a site

Figure 30 Vision of the Community Green – labels and images



*A swale is a low area of land which is moist or marshy, that allows water to run off a site

5. Responses to the Vision of the Community Green

Team members took A3 colour print outs of the vision to a range of community groups and tested how local people felt about the ideas within it. They attended 10 events/meetings and spoke to members of 9 different groups/activities, comprising 65 individuals about the project. Local people were asked to comment on which elements of the vision they liked and to raise issues and questions about any of the elements.

Three of elements were most positively commented on:

- Programme of events (9)
- Events area (8)
- Green Gyms (8)

The Children's Play Area and more benches received 4 and 3 positive comments respectively. See Appendix 4 for full details of the responses.

Examples of positive responses were:

- *Love the idea of a sensory garden*
- *Love bringing green spaces into use – particularly outdoor gym*
- *The market! Love it*
- *Would use play area for activities*
- *The event area sounds great. I feel this would bring the community closer together*
- *Bird Boxes – like the introduction of wildlife habitats*

Issues and questions raised about the vision came in four forms:

1. Additional ideas to add to the current vision
 - *Could the dragonfly sculpture be a solar panel?*
 - *Drinking water fountain?*
2. More design issues to be considered
 - *Will the area be big enough for community events?*
 - *Who is the target audience?*
3. Practical questions about how the changes to the Green would be undertaken
 - *Need to consult with houses nearby re noise levels*
 - *Funding options for the Community Green?*
4. Practical questions that need to be taken forward into planning how to manage the future Green
 - *Schools could sponsor an area to maintain?*
 - *How are the areas going to be monitored against becoming dumping grounds and be safe places?*

The vision as it stands has been generally positively received by local people in the area so far. Therefore, no amendments to the vision will be made to the first draft of the vision.

The issues and questions raised make an excellent starting point for further refining of the vision when a partnership has been formed to take forward the redesign the Community Green.

6. Conclusions and initial recommendations towards next steps

6.1 Conclusions

The Platt Bridge Community Green Visioning Project has been successful in achieving the aims set out in Section 1.

The project set out to understand the current character and issues arising on the Community Green and has identified a number of positive aspects of the Community Green that should be retained in any redesign, including:

- It is a legible space – with a clear road layout
- Excellent number of ‘paths’ to and from the Green
- It’s very walkable to the local shops
- It has a sense of open-ness / good visibility (section 3.4 for full details)

The project has also identified a number of issues that ought to be addressed in any redesign including:

- The Green is not visible from the main road and is not welcoming
- Loud car noise and air pollution
- It lacks identity / uniqueness
- It has limited current uses (section 3.4 for full details)

A draft social and community-led vision for Platt Bridge Community Green has been designed (Section 4.3), it has three overarching objectives:

- Tapping into the Community Green’s potential
- Making it a place to be, not just for passing through
- Creating a multi-use, flexible, social, healthy green space in the heart of Abram Ward

This design aims to enhance the current layout of the Green, adding 15 new elements to be delivered over three stages (or time periods). The new elements include both small-scale features such as dog bins and bird boxes, and larger projects, such as a new events surface and young children’s play area. These new elements will ensure that the Community Green will have at least ten reasons for people to use it, such as the new programme of community events and activities, making it a busy community space for everyone in the area to enjoy and benefit from.

The Vision for the Community Green was tested by taking it out to community groups around the ward. The testing activities showed that local people who participated were largely behind the idea of redesigning the Community Green. The new elements of the design that were most valued were the programme of events, the events area itself and the green gyms (Section 5).

Finally, the context of the Platt Bridge Community Green Visioning Project was to gather economic-focused evidence for the Neighbourhood Plan. The project has identified that the community are keen to see the Community Green redesigned as a flexible space able to provide a centrally located outdoor space for an occasional or regular community market, which would bring people into the ward to shop at the market, socialise together and boost footfall at the businesses in Platt Bridge Centre.

6.2 Initial recommendations towards next steps

This Platt Bridge Community Green Visioning Report is the first step towards creating a strategy to redesign and develop Platt Bridge Community Green. Waymarking recommends an initial set of next steps to move the project towards the point of implementing a newly redesigned Community Green.

1. The findings and draft vision from this Community Green visioning report will provide evidence to support the development of policy relating to community, green space and economic issues in Abram Ward for the Abram Communities Together Neighbourhood Plan.

2. The issues and questions raised during the testing of the draft vision with community groups, (see Appendix 3) should be seen as the next set of issues to consider when taking forward the redesign process.

Design issues raised that need to be further considered:

- *How to prevent vandalism, to for example the Green Gyms?*
- *Finding ways to limit the potential for anti-social behaviour during the day and at night.*
- *Will the area be big enough for community events?*
- *Who is the target audience?*
- *Given the size of the space, how will a range of activities and uses work together, will there be enough room?*

Practical questions about how the changes to the Green would be undertaken:

- *Need to consult with houses nearby re noise levels*
- *Funding options for the Community Green?*

Practical issues that need to be taken forward into planning how to manage the future Green:

- *How are the areas going to be monitored against becoming dumping grounds and be safe places?*
- *Schools could sponsor an area to maintain?*
- *How will elements such as the sensory garden be properly maintained?*
- *Could a volunteer base be set up to maintain the Green?*
- *How will the space be promoted?*
- *Will there be a cost for local community groups to use the space?*
- *What would be the operating hours of the Green?*

3. Partners should be sought to work together on taking the redesign and implementation of the Community Green forward. These could include ACT Forum, AWCC, other local community groups, local businesses, Wigan Council departments such as Local Planning Authority, Wigan Council Economic and Regeneration Team, Corporate Land Management Team (managing the Greenheart), Wigan Council Highways Department, Waymarking and other Wigan-based organisations such as Groundwork and Lancashire Wildlife Trust (working on the Carbon Landscape Project). A strong partnership would ensure that the redesign of the Community Green is integrated into other plans in relation to for example traffic reduction and enhanced cycling or public transport provision.

4. Once a partnership is formed the community design-based Activity Day should be run again with more local groups of all ages and backgrounds, across the ward. Involving more local people is crucial, in order to collectively rework and deepen the vision for the Green. This will ensure the gathering of more detailed evidence about the Green's current character and usage, to have more imaginative ideas to consider as part of the redesign, and to ensure support for the redesign process and the final outcome of a newly designed Green.

5. A number of additional design ideas were suggested by those local people who tested the Vision for the Community Green. These should be considered as part of the reworking of the Vision. They were:

- *Could the dragonfly sculpture be a solar panel?*
- *A drinking water fountain?*
- *Gum bins as well as dog poo bins*

- *Could the Community Green be linked to other local green spaces like allotments?*
- *Benches could commemorate WW1*
- *Sculpture could be designed to advertise local events*
- *There could be a space for temporary artworks for local artists to use*

6. The community design-based Activity Day approach could be undertaken by community groups or partnerships on other public spaces in Abram Ward in the future.

7. Following this additional redesign work with local people, bringing members of the partnership together to undertake a collective community and professional's workshop could be undertaken. This would ensure that any professionals working with the community to implement the redesign of the Community Green understand that the community are leading on the redevelopment, and will integrate any structural and technical issues into the community vision to date. A design charrette⁸ could be a good approach to use, this is a hands-on workshop which brings professionals from different disciplines together with community members to explore design options for a particular area.

⁸ <https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/methods/design-charrettes>

Appendices

Appendix 1 Sources for devising the Community Design Framework

- 'By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System', CABE, 2000;
- 'Character Area Appraisal's', Eastleigh Borough Council, 2007
- 'Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces', Play England, 2008
- 'Guide 8: Creating Health Promoting Environments', Town and Country Planning Association, 2017
- 'OMG-I', Peter Neal, Town & Country Planning Association Journal, 2017
- 'Power of 10', Project for Public Spaces, <https://www.pps.org/article/the-power-of-10>
- 'Public Health and Landscape: Creating healthy places', Landscape Institute, 2013
- 'Responsive Environments', Ian Bentley et al, 2008
- 'The Councillors Guide to Urban Design', CABE, 2003
- 'The Image of the City', Keith Lynch, 1960
- Tom Armour Director of Global Landscape Architecture Arup at TCPA 'Small-scale, big impact – retrofitting and enhancing Green Infrastructure' Conference, 2017
- 'Urban Design Compendium' English Partnerships, 2000
- 'What makes a great place?', Project for Public Spaces, <https://www.pps.org/article/grplacefeat>
- <https://www.eastleigh.gov.uk/media/2476/character-area-appraisal-for-eastleigh.pdf>

Appendix 2 Complete response to what makes a good public space

The discussion around what makes a good public space identified a number of public spaces locally and regionally that the group considered were good-quality public spaces (Table 18).

Table 18 Examples of good-quality public spaces

	Reasons why places were identified as good public spaces
Haigh Hall	Has concerts, range of activities, facilities...
Walton Hall Gardens	Has family facilities, canal path, people can cycle there
Three Sisters	Is good for young people, some sports, physical activity – could do more for all ages, make more of it, it's not 100% well maintained
Jubilee Park Flower Garden	Health and wellbeing focus is good, has tennis facilities, it's secure, has quiet spaces
Longford Park	Community facilities, community garden – volunteer led, there is local pride in the place
Market Square Lancaster	It's well signposted to other blue and green spaces in the area
Piccadilly Gardens, Manchester	Hold speeches there, street foods, artists, activities, used in the evening, issues of security if not used
Albert Square, Manchester	Activities, festivals, markets take place there

Appendix 3 All responses to Part III of the Activity Day

Responses to the question:

How would you like to redesign the Community Green to be a better public space?

Bold text = this is a good idea (green dots were added)

Italics = a query/issue is raised (yellow dots were added)

Experiencing the Space Theme

Redistribution of trees on the west side – to prevent the noise of traffic or engine sound (issues re blocking view from road)

Old-style lamp-posts for additional lighting

Inward facing lighting – towards the Green

Update the notice board

Keep the views of the green spaces to the east

Bird boxes to attract the birds/wildlife

Bat boxes

Wind chimes

Frequent activities to attract people – what activities?

Colour

Sociability & Uses Theme

Community garden – small part of it – *fear of vandalism*

Sensory planting bed

Flower beds/garden area

Market – local food, local produce, entertainment – all in one place – a lot of planning needed

Market could have themes like 'Mother's Day market' at Bryn, night market

Negotiate with the council to close down Walthew Lane for one-off events. For just a day or two, but it would open up the Green and be a space for stall

Temporary and permanent uses are possible

Expand the footpaths – *are more needed?*
Measures to reduce noise from traffic for a calmer experience

Wood carvings from maybe some of the trees on the green

Sculptures of animals/woodland animal sculptures

Sculpture connected with local history

What are people proud of – difficult question to answer

It's very clean – keep it clean project

Open space puts of anti-social younger people/teens

Greater sense of purpose when using the space

McDonald's M is the only landmark currently

More benches – also in shaded area

Turn the King Billy into a community resource – it looks out onto the Green – dealing with the previous reputation

Get a circus to come and set up a slack rope between the trees

Occasional theatre and arts activities, like juggling

Add a stage – to attract musicians to play or perform, hold a carnival, festival
More community events and activities

Green gym/exercise equipment for adults to exercise (and children)

Sculpture – re history of Abram Ward

Play Theme

Facilities for children and young people to engage with the space

Playground/playspace for children – slides, sandpit etc

Issue of needing to fence off, protect play area

Play facilities built into landscape

Concerns regarding young people using the space if there is somewhere to hide behind (like high fences/bushes – also concern to keep space open and welcoming (ie not fenced)

Need to ensure play area is continually maintained – we have several areas – which are not maintained by the local authority

Access & Connections

Better public transport

Needs signposting to the Green and to bus stops etc – also to other spaces and the canal

Bike locking facilities

Add pedestrian crossing to the North

Improve safety – increase traffic lights, boundaries

More paths through the park – *do you need paths? Is there a demand?*

Look at the Desire Lines

No easy access because of vehicles passing by

No pedestrian crossing in some places

May need to increase pedestrian friendliness

Boundary fence to increase security

Uneven terrain – issue for disabled/elderly people

Improved access for disabled people – all curbs were uneven and not many ramps to paths

Potentially level out hillocks/mounds for sports/access/events – *but mounds are quite nice/visually attractive/add variety*

Flower beds at boundaries to protect kids playing/football etc

A cycle route past the Green?

Suitable levels of parking for events needed

Understanding Public Space

Link to Wigan In Bloom

Fenced off space for public space

Improved signage and information boards

Need more consultation with local people

Community ownership

Signs – link to Walk and Talk project

Landmarks/sculptures – recognisable images throughout the borough – connect to a trail throughout area (ie visible from no 10 bus)

Digital – Pokemon Go type app for Abram Ward

Green Infrastructure

Wildflower meadow on the hillock/mound nearest the car park – with a path mown through

All season flowers and plants – varied/flower beds

Benches facing morning and afternoon sun

The existing trees are lovely – keep them and make the most of them – BUT replace the Xmas tree

Evergreen trees would improve the aesthetic in winter – *is it in keeping with the local area? Could create different look at different times of year*

Shrub planting around the tree edge to delineate and provide a natural barrier and more wildlife habitat

Careful not have hedges grow too high – concerns over anti-social behaviour in hidden areas

Small children play areas – could have natural planting/low fence as a safety measure

Health and Wellbeing Theme

Dog bin needed – to the east of the site, especially for dog poo disposal

Open up more windows or entrances towards the space – to help with security/surveillance day and night

Block sound and pollution from main space

Introduce activities in the evening (to help with security) – *what activities, who's the audience?*

How can air pollution from cars be reduced?

CCTV for security – *but it can create a lack of trust*

More lighting for security – *is it really needed?*

Also eco-friendly issues

Visual attractiveness to the West – plain brick walls of warehouse – what about a vertical garden or mural?

Appendix 4 Complete responses from community groups commenting on the draft Platt Bridge Community Green Vision

Table 19 Community Group responses to Platt Bridge Community Green Vision

What group and date	Number of participants	Tell us what you like about the ideas and why (numbered)	Tell us what issues or questions you have about an idea (numbered)
Bicky Buddies (27.3.19)	5	<p>Like (Green Gyms) promotes healthy lifestyles (12)</p> <p>Central meeting point for events around the villages e.g. cycling 5k events/walking (1)</p> <p>Will use children's play area (10)</p> <p>Farmers Market – Made In Wigan events, local musicians (1 & 9)</p> <p>Really like (young children's play area (10)</p> <p>I like it</p>	<p>This could be a WW1 commemorative bench (13)</p> <p>Use sculpture to advertise events being held at Community Green (1 & 2)</p> <p>What is the cycle network? (15)</p> <p>Local artists – temporary artwork – eg chalk/blank canvas</p> <p>Heather – sensory garden Needs to be maintained Schools could sponsor an area to maintain (7)</p> <p>What are the expected operating or open hours?</p> <p>Drinking water fountain?</p> <p>Will there be (more) litter bins? (4)</p>
Bickershaw Community Club (31.3.19)	6		<p>How is the Community Green maintained?</p> <p>The playground for young children – what is the target age range? (10)</p>
Bickershaw Community Club Committee (1.4.19)	7	Will use the Green Gym (12)	How will you prevent vandalism (Green Gym) (12)
Bettys Café (3.4.19)	15	It is a good idea	<p>How is it designed to accommodate all weather conditions? (1 & 9)</p> <p>Not too many bushes too avoid secluded areas (7)</p>

			<p>Hidden vandal proof blue-tooth speakers</p> <p>Who is the target audience?</p> <p>What input was sought for the initial strategy and layout?</p>
Bettys Café (4.4.19)	2	<p>Bins to put litter and encourage recycling (4)</p> <p>Art mural – outdoor blackboard, for chalk and local artists (6)</p> <p>Baby changing facilities, where these be to support events (1)</p> <p>Provide covered area for rain cover and/or shade from sun/hot weather (1)</p>	<p>Consider traffic calming measures beyond crossing point. Overcomes: speeding cars using the road as a turning point and delivery vehicles obstructing access (14)</p> <p>Picnic benches to accommodate dining outdoors from local businesses (13)</p>
We Count You in Gathering (5.4.19)	<p>13 responses</p> <p>35 at event (who saw plans)</p>	<p>Green Gyms – fantastic (12)</p> <p>Love the idea of a sensory garden (7)</p> <p>I'd like to see local art – art done by school children (9)</p> <p>Love bringing green spaces into use – particularly outdoor gym (12)</p> <p>The market! Love it (1 & 9)</p> <p>Working to bring together a community and communal spaces that have been lost over the years</p> <p>Things for kids is a good thought (9 & 10)</p> <p>Cooking lessons for kids – Tastebuds/Bettys Café (9)</p>	<p>How are the areas going to be monitored against becoming dumping grounds and be safe places</p> <p>CCTV on the Green</p> <p>Funding options for the Community Green?</p> <p>Could a volunteer base be set up to maintain the area?</p> <p>The green space is not so large. Is it feasible to accommodate all this stuff? (1 & 9)</p> <p>How should we distribute the weight of different uses?</p>
Platt Bridge Start Well (8.4.19)	3	<p>Would use play area for activities (10)</p> <p>Weekly activities one day a week – that capture the imagination (1 & 9)</p>	<p>Traffic concerns – need traffic calming measures</p> <p>Lighting needed – issues with no lighting/broken glass</p> <p>Need to consult with houses nearby re noise levels</p>
ACT Neighbourhood Forum (8.4.19)	7	<p>Seasonal markets – great space</p> <p>Green Gyms – great idea (all people able to use)</p> <p>Like the markets and Green Gym (9)</p>	<p>Flood light it for evening use</p> <p>Could the dragonfly sculpture be a solar panel? (2)</p>

		& 12) Benches and WWII remembrance (13)	Gum bin next to dog poo bin (4)
Staff at Embrace (26.4.19)	3	The event area sounds great. I feel this would bring the community closer together (1 & 9) The addition of a Xmas Tree I feel is a great idea as it is in walking distance for Christmas cheer (3)	Where is use of this space promoted? (1 & 9) Can it be used by local groups? Is there a cost? (1 & 9) Will the area be big enough for community events? (1 & 9) Will the Xmas tree be protected ie by a fence x 2 (3)
Shops in Platt Bridge (2.5.19)	4	Would like a programme of activity for all ages – Community Green needs to be utilized (9) Like the idea of the Gym Bird Boxes – like the introduction of wildlife habitats (5)	Ensure the green gym is properly maintained (9) Sculptures – do not appeal to me Art Mural – not something that will attract people Community Green situated in a very busy junction Huge road pollution, traffic and noise Not an ideal place for a community space Add noise dampening structures to road side area
	65 individuals		

Facebook Feedback			
Facebook Feedback (16.4.19)	3	I had the chance to view the plans at Platt Bridge Community Zone, a couple of weeks back – the plan will transform the green	I wish we had a community garden, trees and shrubs – allotment type space... but a garden with edible fruits and herbs, kids and old alike can get involved Amazing idea – I've been contemplating an allotment Need to link in more to allotments as you say