

Engagement



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01 Why engagement matters

Over and above its central role within the planning process, we see engagement as integral to the design and delivery of the projects we take on, a foundation upon which we implement our vision. Collaboration is central to the creation of good architecture and PTE has built a strong reputation for working with communities as well as fellow designers and consultants to achieve the best results. We have long been at the forefront of co-production, when citizens and decision-makers work together to arrive at solutions that work for everyone.

Transparent working with communities from the start – no matter the scale or scope of a project – is fundamental to how we work. We listen, understand and engage, building trust with project stakeholders and communities, maintaining this through to our post occupancy evaluations.

Engagement that works best is one that gives everyone a voice regardless and PTE provides a bespoke process for each project, combining the hands-on and face to face with the interactive digital.

Challenges include:

- building trust, maintaining a dialogue and avoiding stakeholder ‘engagement fatigue’
- alerting the public to developments, including seldom heard groups and those without internet access
- sharing complex information about specific project challenges
- formatting information for specific audiences
- encouraging and recording feedback and demonstrating that engagement improves outcomes
- understanding any history of consultation, and potential conflicts of interest, an advocacy role for the quieter voices and mediator role for conflicting voices.

02 Designing a strategy

An engagement strategy should be collaboratively designed and often depends on the brief (including the size and type of project), the nature of the client and the history and prominence of the site. PTE is more often involved in designing strategies for local authority projects and small sites where we are sole consultant working on engagement. Where larger developers have PR & planning consultants on hand to design strategies, PTE focuses on providing content. The strategy should be set out in the fee proposal/bid and cover, for example, what is (and is not) included and what else can be provided for additional cost. In all cases the following principles should inform the strategy:

- Listening to gather information
- The sharing ideas and procuring feedback
- Further developing and sharing of ideas

Bespoke processes

For all but the smallest projects this process is captured in a statement of community involvement (SCI). For a small project, the SCI would be covered within the design and access statement while for a larger project this would part of a specialist consultant's service: again, this should be identified from the outset. A bespoke process should:

- identify the stakeholders
- consider the appropriate types of engagement - face to face, workshops, digital or hybrid for instance
- be programmed to dovetail engagement within overall design programme to feedback and influence outcomes.

03 PTE engagement timeline



New Kingshold Estate
Hackney, 1994



Whitechapel Sports Centre
Tower Hamlets, 1995



Meir Masterplan
Stoke-on-Trent, 2004



One Woolwich
Greenwich, 2015



Finsbury Lesiure Centre
Islington, 2017



South Kilburn NWCC Phase 4
Brent, 2018



My Kind of City
Brent, 2020



Wallis Road
Hackney Wick, 2020

— 1974 ————— 1994 ————— 2004 ————— 2014 ————— 2015 ————— 2016 ————— 2017 ————— 2018 ————— 2019 ————— 2020 ————— 2021 —→



Republic of Frestonia
Notting Hill, 1978



Lefevre Walk
Tower Hamlets, 1996



Tidemill Academy, Deptford Lounge
Lewisham, 2006



New Ground Cohousing
Barnet, 2010



South Lambeth Estate
Lambeth, 2015



High Lane Estate
Ealing, 2017



Seven Kings
Redbridge, 2019



South Kilburn Phases 5&6
Brent, 2021



Old Royal Free Square
Islington, 1984



Grahame Park Regeneration
Ealing, 2003



Havelock Estate Regeneration
Ealing, 2003



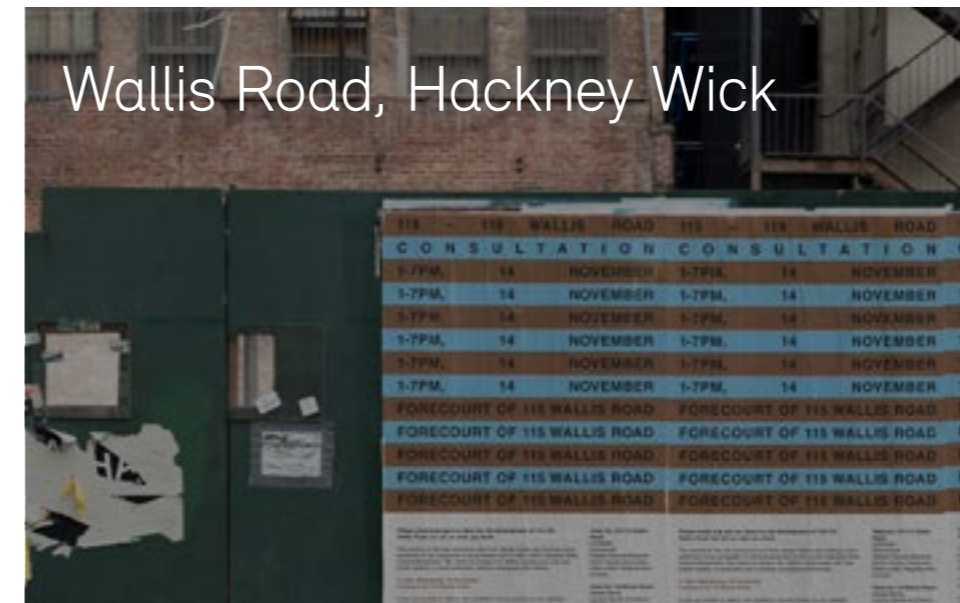
Tonic Housing
Diespeker Wharf, 2017



Barnsbury Estate
Islington, 2021

04 Case studies

The case studies on the following pages showcase a range of engagement projects we have undertaken in recent years. They cover diverse approaches, from working with communities on the fringes of one of our housing projects, to an exemplar co-design co-living scheme that continues to draw international attention. Others cover youth engagement during long-term regeneration project, online engagement during lockdown and a super-bespoke public exhibition designed to feel like a cultural event.



Mosaics, Oxford

“It’s near to exemplary and I am very pleased that there will be no distinction between the social and market housing.”



Neighbours don't always live next door

Sometimes the community you must engage with as you develop your designs may not necessarily be on the doorstep of your project. At Barton Park for example, where we delivered Phase 1 alongside Alison Brooks Architects –the first 240 homes of a larger masterplan for Oxford City Council and Grosvenor, the neighbours were some distance away – the Oxford suburb of Barton lay at eastern edge of the site and Northway, although opposite the site, was on the other side of the very busy A40 road.

We held two public exhibitions, that outlined the background to the project and the masterplan which will deliver 900 homes, a new school, community facilities, public art and open space. The exhibitions explored the ambition for the new homes, sustainability and landscape, with preliminary drawings illustrating the mix of homes, tenure locations, character areas, floor plans and street views. Sometimes engagement means simply keeping people abreast of new developments.

Local people were generally very supportive of the need for new homes in Oxford and the Barton Park proposals. There was support for the mix of house types and the proportion set as affordable. The landscape proposals were described as “inviting” and “idyllic” and locals praised our flood risk study. Dwellings were considered “well-designed”, “modern”, “spacious”, “well thought-out” and “practical”.

The chair of the planning committee commended the openness of the engagement process, saying it had **“set a very high standard for the rest of the project”**. The egalitarian design vision was also well-received with one councillor noting: **“It’s near to exemplary and I am very pleased that there will be no distinction between the social and market housing”**.



Mosaics, Oxford
Key moments

Going public: Two public exhibitions outline the project for residents in the nearby suburbs of Barton (at eastern edge of the site) and Northway, on the other side of the A40.



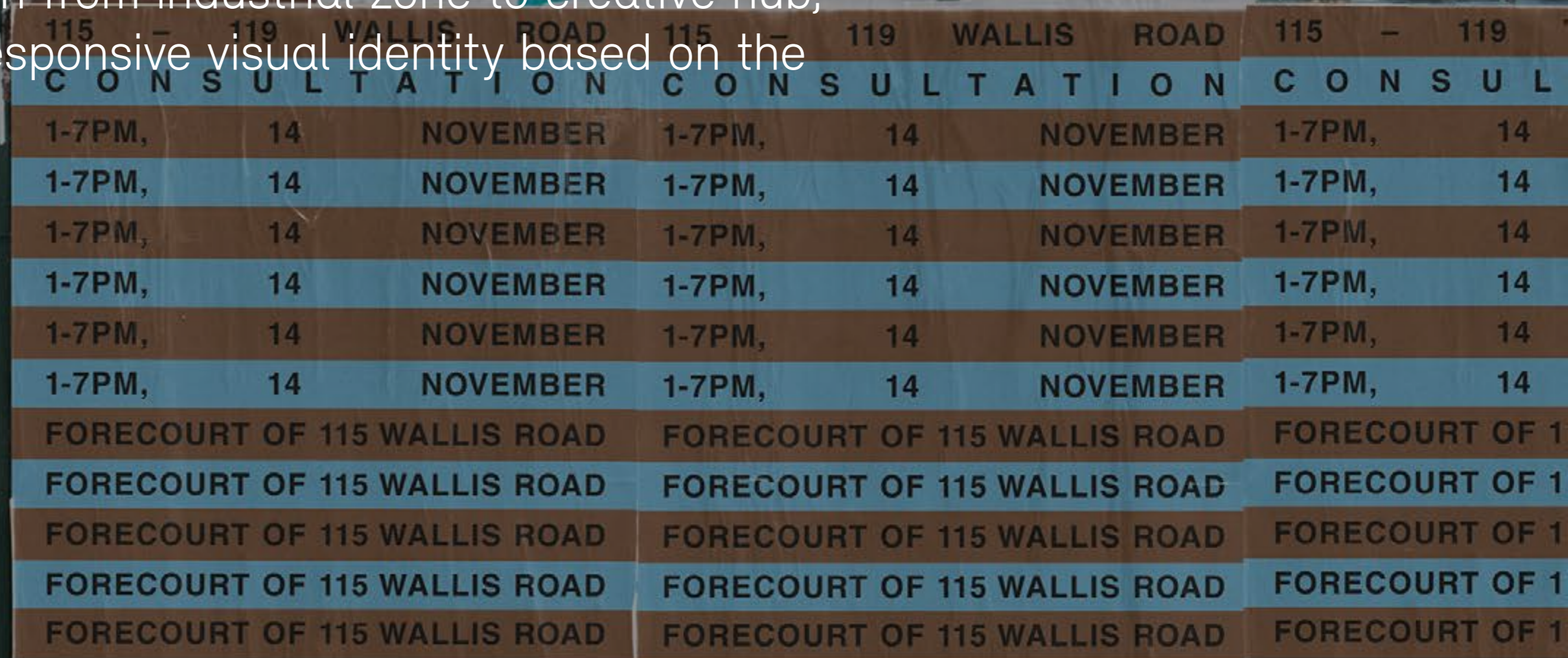
Setting high standards: The planning committee chair commends the 'exemplary' engagement process.

Onside neighbours: Locals voice their support for 'inviting' and 'idyllic' landscape proposals.



Wallis Road, Hackney Wick

“Inspired by the area’s transition from industrial zone to creative hub, we developed a flexible and responsive visual identity based on the bold colours and typography.”



Please come and see our ideas for the development of 115-119 Wallis Road and tell us what you think.

The owners of the two properties and their design teams are holding a joint exhibition of our proposals to bring forward part of the LLDC's Hackney Wick Central Masterplan. We intend to replace the 1960's warehouses with new public streets, a canal-side yard, creative workspace and homes.

1-7pm, Wednesday 14 November
Forecourt of 115 Wallis Road

If you are unable to attend, the exhibition will be posted on our website:
www.wallisroadregeneration.com

Team for 115-117 Wallis Road:
Lichfields
Grovesworld
Pollard Thomas Edwards,
Farrer Huxley Associates
East London Regeneration Limited.

Team for 119 Wallis Road:
Howes family,
Lyndon Goode Architects,
CMA Planning

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Public consultation as a cultural event

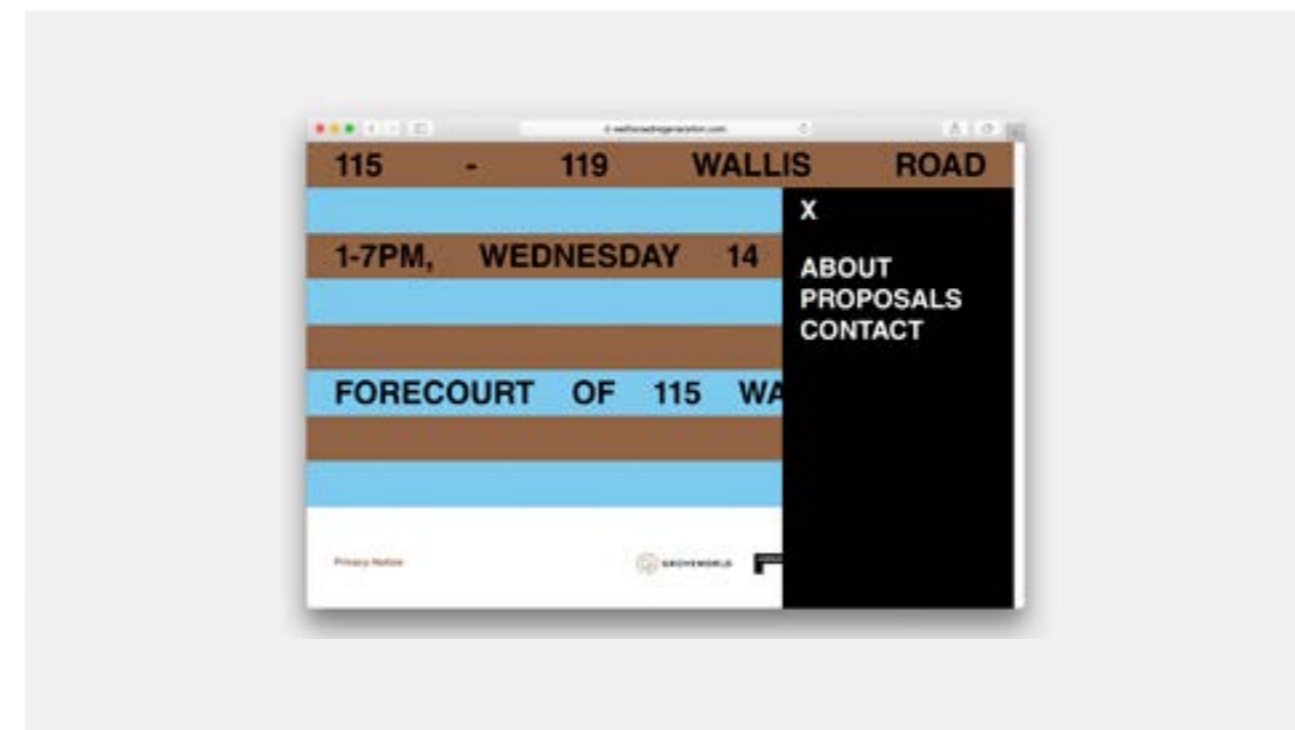
Hackney Wick – home to the densest concentration of artists’ studios in Europe – is central to London’s success as a world leader in the creative industries. Our client, East London Regeneration Ltd. is proposing to develop new workspaces, retail and apartments on a site within the local regeneration masterplan. They called on us to design and promote a public consultation exhibition.

Guaranteeing attendance at public meetings of this kind however – beyond local interest groups at least – can be hard. So, we tried something different: branding that rejected the conventional bureaucratic language of planning consultations and positioned the exhibition as a cultural event instead.

Inspired by the area’s transition from industrial zone to creative hub, we developed a flexible and responsive visual identity based

on the bold colours and typography of music posters that plaster site hoardings across East London. The look we created, with its striking colours and font, was designed to grab the attention of passers-by and pique their curiosity. And while nodding to Hackney Wick’s music poster subculture, it also complements the architecture planned for the site: the rhythmic order of robust brick facades with deep reveals. The visual identity was simple enough to unify all consultation materials, from the campaign’s posters and website to the exhibition graphics and materials.

One other facet amplified the engagement process: we expanded it to encompass an architectural experience, curating the consultation in a mobile trailer enhancing the notion of the consultation as a pop-up. This holistic approach paid off with more than 100 people attending the one-off, afternoon-only event.



Wallis Road, Hackney Wick
Key moments

Bringing clarity: Fears over the loss of workspace are dispelled by the exhibition which shows redevelopment will increase its amount, while replacing existing, poor quality sheds with new bespoke studios.



Communicating clearly: Locals love the large model of the neighbourhood that aids their understanding of the proposals by showing them in a wider context.



Working together: The exhibition showcases neighbouring developments alongside Wallis Road, showing a carefully coordinated approach by independent developers and architects working harmoniously together.



South Kilburn NWCC Phase 4, Brent

“This has been an excellent and worthwhile project, that has really engaged children. It’s got them thinking about the importance of city design, what makes cities places people want to live in, green and happy spaces.”

MASS



Too often, the views and ideas of children and teenagers are ignored during major housebuilding projects. It's why, for South Kilburn phase 4 – an estate regeneration project providing 218 new homes – we used video, music and online design challenges to engage young people affected by the changes to their neighbourhood.

It meant working with music and film specialists to produce a high-quality music video (of a brilliantly penned song performed by local young residents) and a compelling short film, which saw young people explore our design proposals and interview their peers about their surroundings.

Making this happen took time. Finding young people who were prepared to get involved with the project, building trust and then providing the guidance and tools to help them realise their creative

visions required patience and determination. The results however – the film and song are both emotive and convincing social artefacts – speak for themselves.

In another project, again focused on South Kilburn, we reconnected with young people in the area with an online design competition – 'My Kind of City' – in which primary school pupils masterplanned their own ideal city or neighbourhood. This lockdown-inspired project, delivered remotely using a pre-filmed tutorial and downloadable pdfs, asked pupils to create architectural drawings and models that encouraged outdoor learning, healthy lifestyles and a zero-carbon environment. Again, we garnered a positive response with the local primary school, St Augustine's CE, very happy to participate. The pupils of course, excelled – and produced some amazing and provocative designs.



South Kilburn NWCC Phase 4, Brent
Key moments

Video: A resident-made pop video reveals a deep level of engagement with the societal context of regeneration as musicians juxtapose the construction of new homes with the gradual erosion of community facilities in previous years: 'They're knocking down our buildings...to build our buildings'.



Studio visit: Musicians and film makers visit Pollard Thomas Edwards studios to present and discuss their work with 150 architects and learn about how 3D software is used to design the project.



Urban design in the classroom: The 'My Kind of City' design challenge gives South Kilburn students an in-class activity centres on shaping the detail of their own neighbourhoods.

Barnsbury Estate, Islington

“The yes vote marks the start of a new chapter for the Barnsbury Estate community.”



Barnsbury Estate, Islington

Residents' ballot

2021

Barnsbury Estate is a masterplan for transforming an entire housing estate in Kings Cross. The proposals for more than 1000 homes include repairing and enhancing the existing, '30s-built homes of Old Barnsbury, and the redevelopment of post-war buildings at New Barnsbury. The masterplan also provides commercial space, a new community centre and new green spaces for the estate with play spaces, outdoor gym equipment and growing areas.

275 homes will be fully refurbished and 351 post-war homes redeveloped for existing residents, with a further 550-600 new homes provided across the masterplan. The project aims to achieve 50% affordable housing including social rent and intermediate housing, with a mix of home types and sizes to suit the needs of residents.

The designs include several home types including mews houses, mansion blocks and terraces, with all new homes drawing upon the existing architecture and details. New streets and squares – some reinstating old routes that once crossed this part of London – are woven confidently into the estate to exude the feeling of having always belonged.

The masterplan is the result of a comprehensive consultation programme with existing residents of the estate. PTE's design was approved by residents in March 2021, in a ballot that returned a 73 per cent yes vote.



Barnsbury Estate, Islington
Key moments

Home visits: architects meet residents 1-to-1 to learn and document what matters day-to-day: overcrowding, lack of storage, mould and condensation.



Ongoing site walkabouts: Walking the estate with residents (and landscape architects) during the day and at night captures what works and what doesn't in outdoor spaces.



The ballot: more people vote than for local elections with locals hugely in favour of the plans.

Seven Kings, Redbridge

“The co-design sessions have been really fun. It’s the best thing I’ve ever done.”



Seven Kings, Redbridge

Fostering a culture of ownership using online engagement

At Seven Kings in the London borough of Redbridge we were tasked with provide a large mixed-used development including up to 290 homes of varying tenures and sizes, a new community and health facility and a business enterprise hub. To foster a sense of ownership on this project we worked with a diverse cohort of local people to co-design the community facilities. There was one snag: the project had to delivered during the second lockdown of 2020.

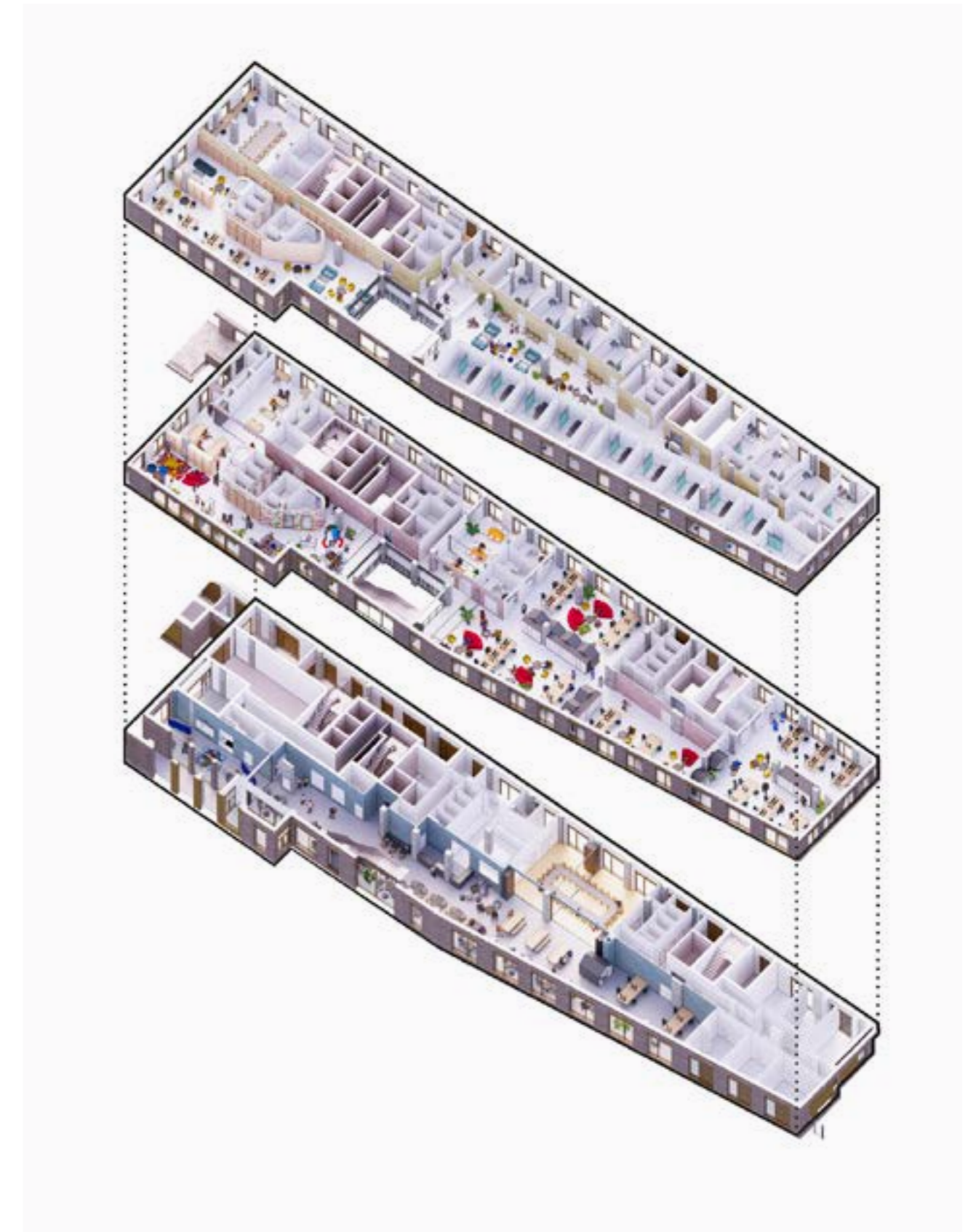
It meant collaborating with engagement expert Consarc to develop a programme that would reach out to locally, bringing together people of varying ages, gender and ethnic background. This involved holding five workshops, with 70 people attending each one, including 40 future residents.

Because of lockdown constraints the workshops were devised to be held entirely online. A variety of tools were used, from Miro boards – which allow participants to post ‘stickies’ with ideas on to a shared virtual wall - to previews of 3D models (made with Revit) that presented a variety of interior fit-outs based on ideas suggested by workshop attendees. We also used vox pops to capture people’s feelings about the proposed designs.

The result was demonstrable engagement – the workshops were well attended and the vox pops were a hit – leading to genuine co-design with spaces in the community facilities developed according to feedback. Despite the pandemic restrictions, the co-design project was a collective endeavour, with a real sense of momentum as the conversation between client, end-user and architect evolved.



November 2020 during lockdown

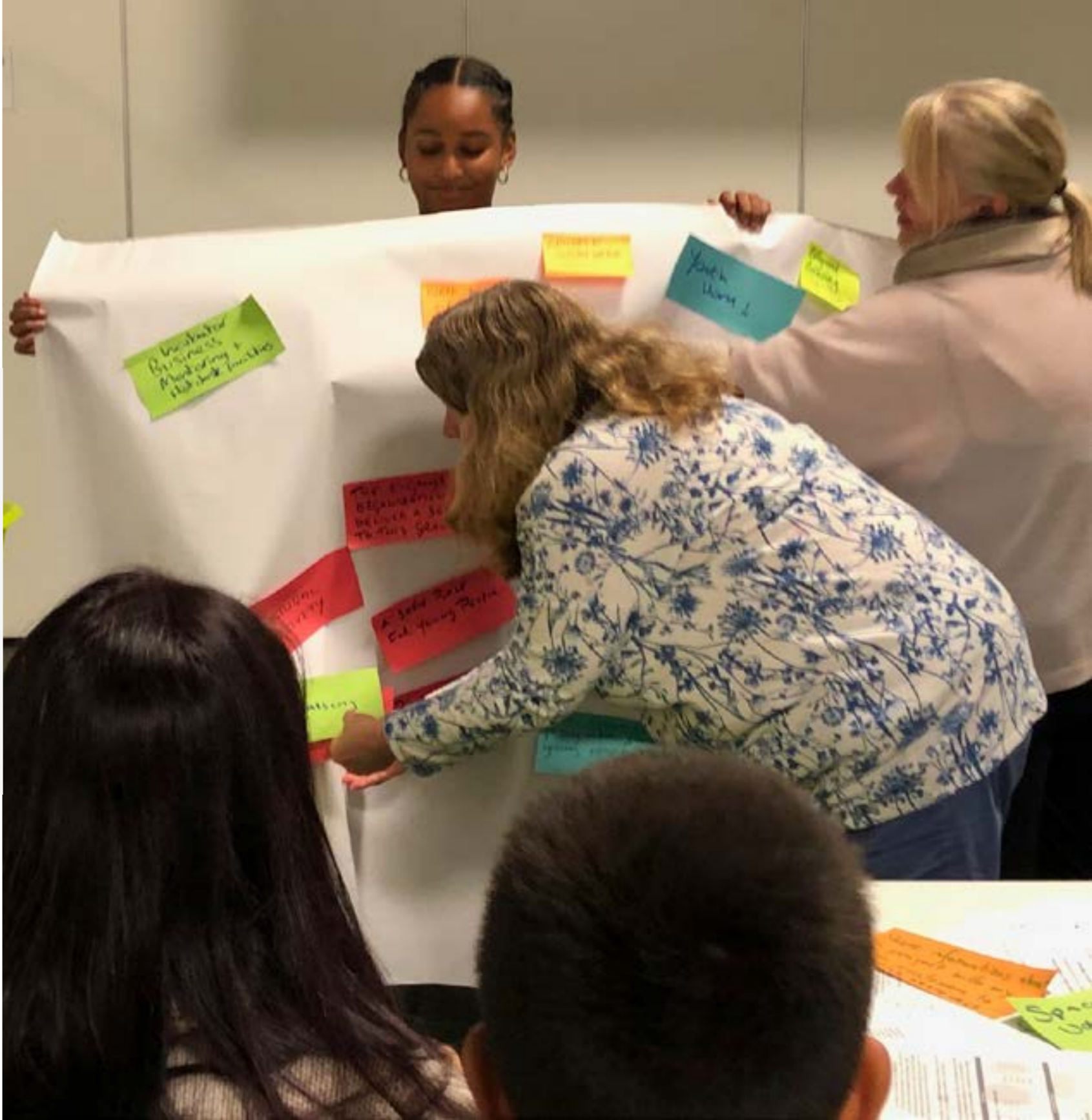


Seven Kings, Redbridge
Key moments

Finding the right people: A decision to pay co-design participants enables committed people of all ages and backgrounds to be heard.



Small discussion groups online: Covid moved the process online and enabled us to form small discussion groups that fostered instant feedback.



Homework: Aiding participants to develop their ideas outside of the group work sessions as well brought fresh perspectives to the collective design process.



New Ground Cohousing, High Barnet

“We’ll hold the pencil – but we’ll keep on going until you’re happy with the outcomes.”



New Ground Cohousing, High Barnet **A true exemplar of co-design**

2010-2016

This pioneering cohousing scheme in the London borough of Barnet, provides 25 customised homes and a shared 'co-house' clustered around a walled garden. What makes it an engagement exemplar, however, is the interactive design process we developed, that provided our client with an intensive co-design service from concept to completion.

All the residents – around 30 women, aged between 50 and 85, with a range of ethnic and wealth backgrounds – participated fully in its design. Beauty and character, ease of use, spaciousness, good storage and levels of daylight, good visual connections and access to the seasons of the natural world were among the attributes residents had a major role in shaping. This process was centred on regular workshops that place over six months. There were six in total, a month apart, which allowed participants to absorb and review the progress made at each one.

The client group selected us because of our commitment to set up a genuine collaborative design process. They liked our approach of giving them the tools they needed to fully participate while accepting our suggestion that “we’ll hold the pencil – but we’ll keep on going until you’re happy with the outcomes.”

Co-designing also meant site visits with the residents-to-be, which helped them connect the abstract nature of drawings with the reality of building and space planning. Indeed, it was on one such visit that we decided upon the housing and garden layout together.

New Ground has been overwhelmingly successful – the client received around 4000 emails after a 30-second slot on BBC news, mostly from people wanting to move in. It offers the co-housing sector proof of concept. It also keys into the government’s desire to democratise the planning process with New Ground’s innovative workshops and trust-based culture showing how it can be done.

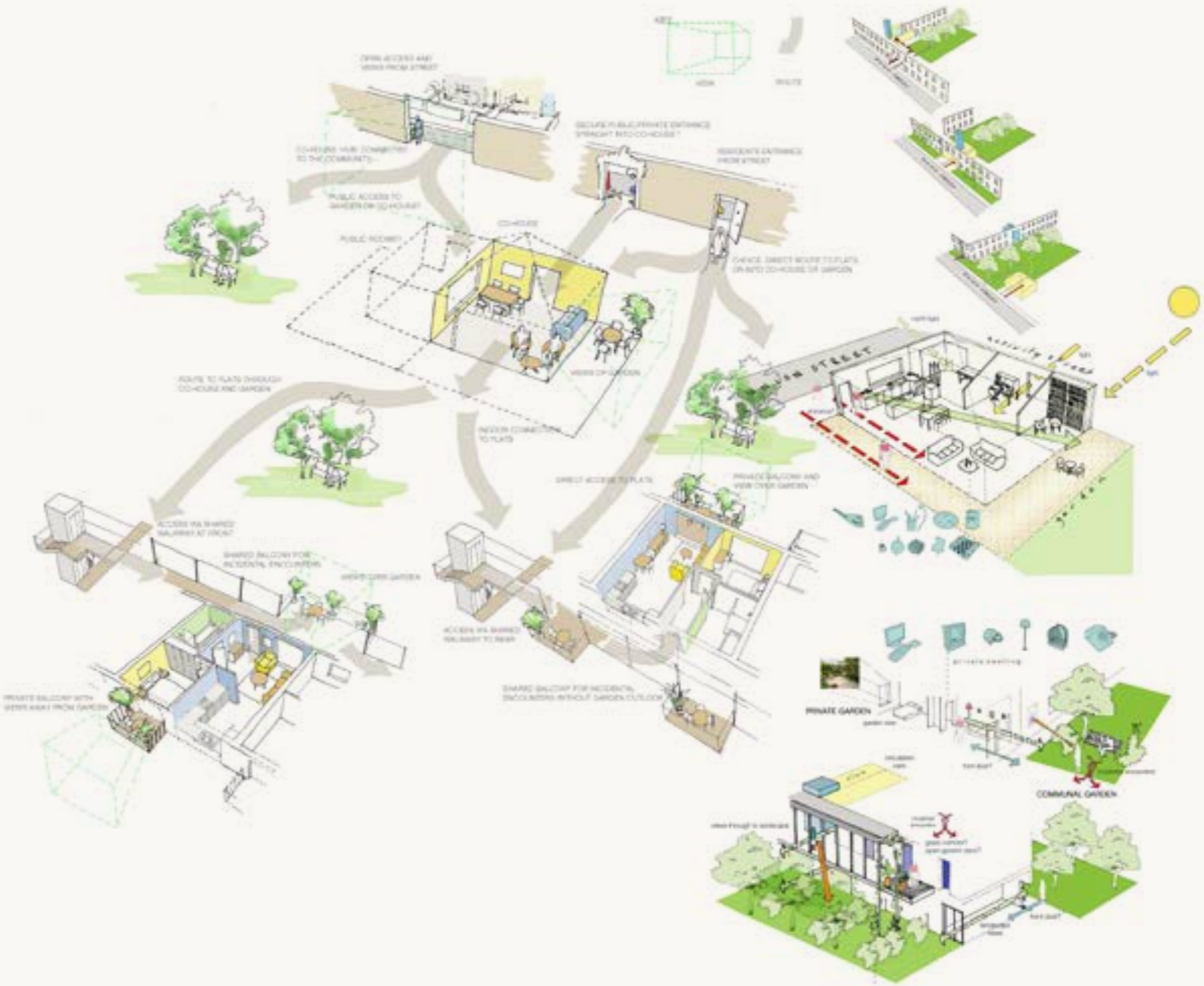


New Ground Cohousing, High Barnet
Key moments

Site visit, prompted reactions: The project's future residents, with cameras in hand, join discussions on site about what to look out for, including entrances, windows, boundaries. A pin board with their observations catalyses the design process.



Abstract site workshop: In contrast with the site visit, the residents explore abstract ideas about the shape a cohousing community could be.



Developing drawings: As the residents' abstract ideas are developed into semi-realistic three-dimensional ideas, the final design begins to emerge.

Get in touch...

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Partner - Engagement



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Sarah brings more than 30 years' experience in residential and mixed-use - and specialist expertise in the design of Third Age housing and extra care - to her role leading PTE's culture of engagement.

Sarah connects with clients, end-users and local residents from the start, listening to, and inspiring the people she works with. She also leads on consultation, promoting and improving practice-wide understanding and implementation of effective community relations.

Sarah's focus on the briefing, concept design and planning stages of specialist housing projects is crucial to PTE's success in creating popular new homes and neighbourhoods.

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