

Active Design



CREATING ACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS
THROUGH PLANNING AND DESIGN

Foundational principle – Activity for all

Supported by

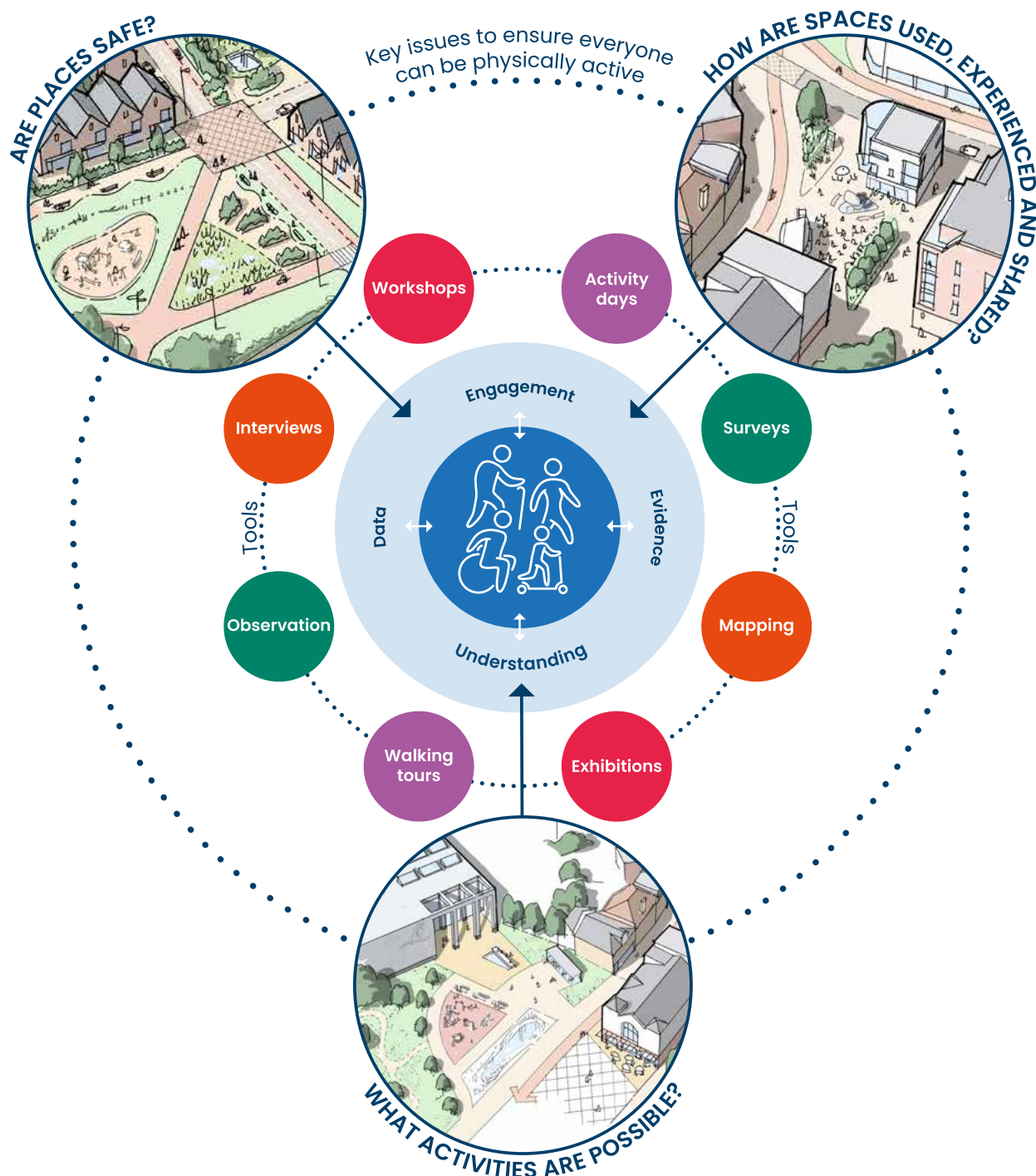




FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLE

Activity for all

All environments should support physical activity equitably across all ages, ethnicities, genders, and abilities, enabling everyone to be active and build long-term active habits and behaviours. This is essential for the delivery of all the principles of Active Design and is its foundational principle. To achieve this, it is important that an exercise of learning and listening is undertaken, to properly understand the needs you are seeking to address. Then, you can appropriately consider the issues, and design to meet these needs.



Learning and listening

Understanding different experiences

We live in a diverse society, and every group has different life experiences and priorities. Some groups have historically been poorly served by the built environment, with a lack of consideration for what prevents them from taking part in physical activity. This may include different experiences of safety, a lack of consideration for the activities they enjoy (or are able to take part in), affordability, environments designed with unconscious bias or lack of thought, or a lack of infrastructure or equipment to support mobility.

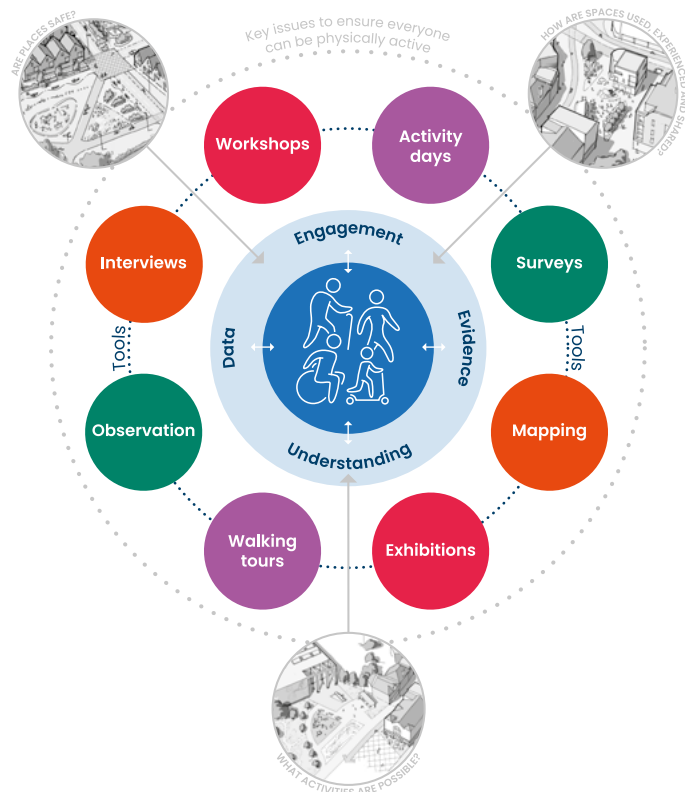
Active Design advocates for a change in approach, to support equity of access to being physically active in the built environment. Early engagement and understanding, ongoing monitoring and flexibility, and targeted action to address imbalances, is essential to ensuring everyone can feel comfortable and able to be physically active in their daily lives.

Engaging and listening effectively

Use of effective and creative engagement techniques, discussion, co-design and evidence gathering is essential to ensure inclusive and equitable spaces and facilities can be designed and delivered, or improved. A range of tools are available for use at different stages of design, to help design teams answer questions and learn about things they were not anticipating.

Effective engagement should continue throughout the design process, to test ideas and refine concepts through to detailed design and delivery.

Even the most well-informed design team or project owner will have 'blind spots' in knowledge and experience. It is important to listen to a wide range of groups, especially those who are often left out of the planning process, as part of setting the brief for a project.



Using local data and evidence

You can use local Active Partnerships, Sport England's Active Lives data, local authority Public Health teams, the Public Health Outcomes Framework and Joint Strategic Needs Assessments to help better understand the inequalities in people's physical activity in your area.

An early design audit should aim to understand opportunities to enhance, and barriers to taking part in, physical activity. This is a valuable tool that can guide proposals throughout their development.

Design audits should include consideration of opportunities and barriers for different genders, ages, socio-economic groups, ethnicities, physical, sensory and mental abilities, as well as considerations for people who experience neurological processing differences (neurodiversity). Where appropriate, this should be conducted by a qualified specialist auditor, and make reference to any requirements and assessments set out under the Public Sector Equality Duty. Proposals should have a positive impact upon the safety and experience of groups addressed by the Duty unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Considering issues that affect physical activity participation

ARE PLACES SAFE?



Create safe places

How safe our places and spaces are is fundamental to enabling different groups of people to use them. This is important for several groups including women and girls, whose experience of the built and natural environment is often very different to that of men and boys.

Safety of spaces and routes can be ensured through natural surveillance from surrounding buildings, adequate and appropriate lighting, clear visibility and design to avoid conflicts between groups. Maintenance and management of the public realm (including landscaping, planting, boundary treatments and lighting) ensures spaces and routes remain safe over time.

People should always be prioritised over, and protected from, vehicle traffic, especially children, older people and those with reduced physical mobility. This can be accomplished by reducing vehicle speeds and dominance in the public realm, as well as appropriate physical separation where necessary.

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE POSSIBLE?



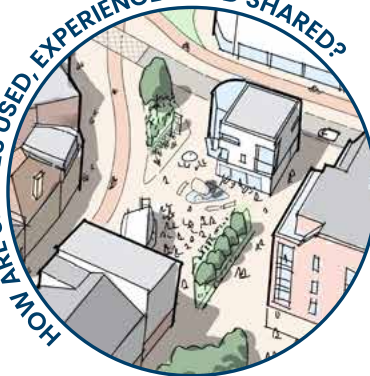
Consider a wide range of activities

Different groups have different interests and abilities when it comes to taking part in physical activity. Recognising and designing for these differences is particularly important for different age groups and those with physical, sensory and neurodiversity impairments.

Active Design advocates for a wide range of physical activity to be considered and included in the built and natural environment. This goes beyond traditional sports pitches and facilities. This includes children's play and playable environments, gathering and social spaces, recreational walking, cycling and wheeling, active travel, food production (e.g. allotments), space for organised classes, dog walking and even augmented reality gaming.

Ancillary infrastructure and activities (e.g. cafés, resting places and public toilets) can support active use of spaces by different groups of different ages, attracting people to use spaces and facilities.

HOW ARE SPACES USED, EXPERIENCED AND SHARED?



Consider different experiences of using spaces

It is important that active spaces are inclusive and do not get dominated by a single group, alienating others.

Spaces should be designed so that different groups can co-exist. This may involve subdividing spaces through design to avoid conflict, or through active management of spaces to ensure all groups have rights to take part in physical activity.

The sensory experience of a space can also affect people differently. People who experience neurodiversity may find certain spaces difficult to navigate and distressing⁷.

Voice Opportunity Power (VOP)



www.voiceopportunitypower.com

VOP is a free resource which provides practical guidance on how to involve young people between the ages of 11–18 in the way that places get built and managed. VOP is designed to support professionals (developers, architects, urban designers, planners and sports providers) in engaging with young people to improve participation in and the quality of new development and regeneration.

VOP has been successfully used in many contexts, including establishing a youth forum in Mayfair, discussing proposals for regeneration in the Nottingham Trent Basin and child friendly neighbourhoods in Aberfeldy New Village⁸.

Her Barking, Street Space

Her Barking is a women-led movement, experimenting to collaboratively design and test low cost interventions to make streets and spaces feel safe. As part of this movement, research showed that in Barking, 51% of residents do not feel safe after dark, compared to a national average of 21%. The majority of the residents feeling unsafe in Barking are women, older people and disabled people.



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In 2018 Street Space, a social enterprise company, launched Her Barking, engaging residents to identify spaces where people don't feel safe and collaboratively design and test a number of installations across Barking Town Centre as part of London Festival of Architecture 2019.

With funding from The National Lottery, the initiative was able to fund the collaborative design and delivery of a semi-permanent intervention in St Awdry's Walk, a key footpath connection in the local community.

A hanging canopy of shapes and crowdsourced messages, designed by the Hanna Benihoud design studio, was installed in February 2020, and has been successful in improving the perception of the route, leading to increased feeling of safety. This has led to two further Street Space pilot projects on perceptions of safety outside Barking Station.

Useful resources

Sport England provides guidance in the delivery of accessible sports facilities⁹ including a useful **Audit Checklist** which can be used to analyse barriers and ensure inclusive design outcomes.

Uniting the Movement¹⁰ sets out Sport England's 10-year vision and strategy, and highlights the importance of facilitating Activity for All in tackling the inequalities in sport and physical activity.

Creating and protecting Active Environments, the spaces and places that make it easier for people to be active, is one of the five big issues identified.

The **Local Government Association** holds best practice guidance¹¹ on public engagement, evaluation and monitoring, which can be useful in considering the best way to consult local people on their views.

Sport England's **Local Delivery Pilots** which seek to understand how local identities and structures can be used to increase activity levels¹².

The National Register of Access Consultants (NRAC)¹³ is an independent UK wide accreditation service for individuals who provide access consultancy and access auditor services.

