



Courtesy: Camilla Siggaard Andersen, Hassell Studio

## Understanding Neighbourhood Character & Opportunities

30/06/2021

- **Neighbourhoods are about walkable places where you can get to the services you need on a daily basis.** Looking at the boundaries, dominant features, centre, edges, uses, distinctiveness and identification help build understanding of the neighbourhood. The starting point is to look at how it has developed and ask what makes it special – what are the features which have stood the test of time?
- **Understanding neighbourhoods is iterative rather than a linear path – it can be messy!** Check existing understanding with a range of stakeholders which will identify further analysis needed. Be careful how you draw the boundary of a neighbourhood – it will be affected by barriers such as major roads, rivers and rail lines. Encourage people to provide a mental map of what the neighbourhood means to them, to check and refine your understanding.
- **Using data unlocks new angles on a neighbourhood, not only as it is, but as it could be.** A digital twin, for example allows you test and analyse options before taking action. Many tools are open source and there is a wealth of help on hand to choose the right tools for the analysis you need. Exciting ways of collecting data continuously are emerging which will identify change as it happens and ensure you plan for future trends.
- **We tend to care about what we measure so to avoid this trap, look for the things people value and find a way to measure them.** Connect with communities through user conversations, user participation and user experience to capture people's needs and wishes. Inject fun into engagement and capture people's imagination so that you can partner in a vision for change.
- **Looking at neighbourhoods isn't just about analysing information; the process is also vital.** And neighbourhoods each have links to those adjacent and beyond - these links need to be understood within policy, as a 'nested' approach.
- **The physical properties of space affect how you use it - we can make new things possible from the physical conditions we provide.** When we move from 'what is' to 'what if' we need to understand how changes can improve or erode all aspects of a place – social, physical and economic.
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## **Speakers**

**Rob Cowan** - Director, Urban Design Skills

**Matthew Rust** - Architect, LB Croydon

**Alicia Booth** - Project Officer Placemaking, LB Croydon

**Jane Manning** - Director, Allies and Morrison

**Lizzie Lancaster** - Consultant Planner, Allies and Morrison

**Oscar McDonald** - Associate, Space Syntax

**Camilla Siggaard Andersen** - Senior Researcher, Hassell Studio

**Jason Hawthorne** - Director, VU.CITY

**Stephanie Edwards** - Co-founder, Urban Symbiotics

**Attendees: 108**