

PICTURING PLACES: VISUAL ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

Transforming
St Pancras
Hospital

ST PANCRAS HOSPITAL PLANS

King's Cross Central Limited Partnership (KCCLP) is renowned for its development at King's Cross and is now working with the Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust (C&I) to redevelop the St Pancras Hospital site. They are developing a new masterplan which will deliver a world-leading institute for mental health alongside new purpose-built community healthcare facilities, high quality public spaces, new homes (including affordable homes), and a variety of employment and training opportunities within new and refurbished office buildings.

KCCLP and C&I are very keen that people from existing local communities feel welcome in the completed development. They wanted to engage people on this issue in an interesting and meaningful way, particularly young people and women, from the outset, prior to the formal launch of the public consultation.

This document sets out one way in which the project team achieved this, using an innovative engagement project called "Picturing Places".



WHAT IS PICTURING PLACES?

Picturing Places was launched in October 2022, using an approach called 'participant-led photography'. This is a method that is often used to raise the voices of groups which are often overlooked. It allows communities to share their lived experiences in a way that doesn't rely on words alone.

In this period of engagement, we asked members of the local community to take up to three photographs that captured how they felt about public places they use, or have experienced, and write a sentence or two explaining the significance of the photo(s).

The prompts given for entries were:

- What public places are important to you and why?
- How do these places make you feel welcome (or not)?

In total, we received over 100 photos via our dedicated website. Some of these photos are included within this report.



WHAT DID THE PHOTOS SHOW?

We worked with a specialist consultancy, BiBO, who analyzed the photos for us and grouped them into themes which can then be used to inform the eventual design of our spaces.

Six main themes emerged:

The **aesthetics** of a place are important. People appreciate the beauty of a place for its own sake and are impressed by well thought out design, as well as the finer details.

Many participants took photographs of views, buildings, and nature, that said something to them about the beauty of a place. This included pictures of trees, flowers, planting and water features. Participants talked about wanting to see "a beautiful landscape to admire" and "being able to see a range of colours like in the flower display in Regents Park".

Inclusivity and diversity were fundamentally important to participants. This could be represented through cultural events, food that brings communities together, and artefacts that share the experiences of forgotten historical figures or groups. Another priority was for access routes to be safe and accessible for everyone, through using open, light and level routes and pathways.



Some participants took pictures of artefacts, events, buildings and sculptures, and talked about cultural experiences that brought communities together in one place. For example, one woman shared a picture of a Thai culture day that she had attended with her family. She said "cultural events highlight minority groups and small businesses with food, dance and music".

Places for communities and people to connect are vital. Art and objects, such as sculptures or installations, in public spaces enable people to pause and engage with each other.

Many of the submissions we received talked about a sense of community and how this is felt and experienced through place. Participants took pictures of benches, bars, events, independent shops, gardens, walkways, and artwork.

Family friendly places need a balance of safety, as well as feeling "carefree". People felt sensory elements should be included in design so children can interact and play in their environment with ease. Affordable food and drink should be in close proximity to these places.

Talking to this theme, participants described places that are associated with spending time with family, especially children. Entries included photographs of children interacting with objects, play spaces, sculptures, water, nature walks, activities, and sensory rooms. Many of the descriptions talked about public places being "peaceful and enjoyable for all the family" whilst also reminding participants of their own childhood memories, or where they are creating new memories with their own families.

People connect nature and greenery with a sense of **peace and tranquillity**. This helps people feel calm and slows the fast pace of London living. Privacy and being hidden in nature also evoke feelings of peace, calm, freedom, and solitude. This was echoed in feedback from young people.



Throughout the entries we saw a high number of images of green spaces (both unmanaged and landscaped), trees, wide open spaces, "secret" gardens, water, shadows, pathways, brick walls, dappled light, and sunshine. Therefore we understood that the natural world is strongly associated with a sense of seeking and enjoying peace and tranquillity in public places.

Finally, **feeling welcome** in a place came through as a theme, often associated with homeliness, coziness, and the juxtaposition of nature with the built environment. Feeling welcome is not just experienced when people enter a place or use it, people feel welcome as they journey through a space and as they leave it. The sound of people talking and laughing makes people feel welcome, as does ambient lighting.

These themes have given us lots of information about what makes different people feel welcome in public spaces, which we can use to inform how we design and manage the final scheme.

WORKSHOP SESSIONS

We also carried out two workshops to discuss the entries we received and gain further insight from specific groups. The first workshop took place with women, and another workshop with young people aged 14-21. At the first workshop, ten young people looked at hundreds of postcards, choosing images that were meaningful to them and wrote key words or descriptions to explain what the image meant to them. As part of this workshop, the facilitators talked to each participant to understand more about the images they had chosen and why.

In our second workshop, we invited the women who had taken part in the online submissions to come and tell us more about the core themes that had started to emerge. These women joined the facilitators for an in-depth conversation about three themes: community; feeling welcome; and family.



NEXT STEPS

The team at BiBO has produced a report which explains how this feedback from the community could be applied to the emerging masterplan and design of the public spaces. KCCLP and C&I are committed to implementing as many of these suggestions as possible in the emerging masterplan.

We hope that this will mean the community feels welcome on site, and a real sense of ownership of the proposals.

Additionally, there are plans for a follow-up workshop with the young people we met previously, to go into more detail about how we undertook the photographic analysis and how it can be applied to design in real life.

We will publish the findings of these activities, where relevant, in future documents.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

If you want to find out more about the proposals to redevelop the St Pancras Hospital site, please visit our website at www.stpancrashospital.com or contact us on SPHConsultation@londoncommunications.co.uk or 0800 096 7279.

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