

SDS Engagement Reports

SUMMARY



**LIVERPOOL
CITY REGION**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

METROMAYOR
LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

**EVIDENCE
RESEARCH &
INTELLIGENCE**

Background

This slide deck summarises the key takeaways and recurring themes identified from a series of engagement activities held to support the development of Liverpool City Region's Spatial Development Strategy (SDS).

The programme of engagement ran from October 2020 to February 2021 and comprised a mixture of surveys and focus groups with Liverpool City Region (LCR) residents. Given the restrictions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic much of this engagement was conducted online.

These engagement activities comprised:

- PLACED Digital Academy: interactive sessions with 32 young people aged 14-18.
- Wirral Older People's Parliament: focus group with 6 people with disabilities living in Wirral.
- A Focus Group for People Living with Disabilities in Sefton: focus group with 10 people with disabilities, living in the Metropolitan Borough of Sefton.
- Women's Health Information & Support Centre (WHISC): survey of 100 service users from Liverpool.
- Sefton Young Advisors: survey and focus groups, gathering views from 80 young people across LCR.
- Everton in the Community: survey of 34 young people
- LCRCOA Older Adults Focus Groups: 7 online focus groups attended by 43 older adults from across LCR.
- Department of Geography and Planning, University of Liverpool: workshops with 42 Year 2 students.

Developing and enhancing local communities

People are looking for a whole ecosystem of homes, amenities, travel, green spaces, shops, libraries, and other crucial social infrastructure that will help to establish or strengthen a sense of local community. For some this is why brownfield sites could be the solution for development as many of these locations have communities and amenities around them already. This desire for stronger communities may also support the case for a “15 minute city” type approach to development, where residents have access to the right mix of services, amenities, and experiences all within a short walk of their home.

- To improve the conditions in which people and future generations are born, live, work and age, there needs to be much greater integrated planning in place for support services for new large scale housing developments e.g. GP’s, schools/public transport etc, was one of the findings from the Older Adult focus groups. Creating more accommodation in town centres was also seen as one way to re-energise these parts of the city region. Participants also wanted to see more local assets transferred for community use.
- The PLACED Digital Academy sessions found that young people wanted to see greater detail on how the SDS will help to support local independent businesses.
- The People Living with Disabilities in Sefton focus group noted that the closure of community assets such as banks, shops and libraries can make things harder for disabled people.
- Young people in the Sefton Young Advisors focus group said lots of shops and services have closed recently which has led to the deterioration of town centres. We would like to see more investment in town centres, especially after the impact of COVID-19 on local businesses.
- Participants in the University of Liverpool workshops felt that public spaces where people can meet up should be considered as important elements of our social infrastructure.

“housing that face each other so people can see their neighbours front doors to help build relationships, local shops, GPs, NHS Dentist, youth clubs, child care services, care homes all these amenities help build and keep a community together”

Women’s Health Information & Support Centre
consultation

Tackling the Climate Emergency

Climate and the environment appears to be an important topic for people. There is a desire for the designing and building of greener, environmentally friendly urban environments, for example, through energy storage, heat pumps, electric charging points, photovoltaic panels, carbon absorbing plants, designing for people not cars, and encouraging active travel. Such measures could help people live more sustainably.

- In the 'Living with Disabilities in Sefton' focus group it was suggested that more environmentally friendly amenities should be planned in when new housing estates are developed. Bus routes were particularly needed where there is specialist housing provision for people with disabilities or older people. Ideally this should be integrated into planning procedures for housing developments, otherwise "people are prisoners in their own homes".
- Participants in the PLACED Digital Academy sessions agreed that tackling climate change and creating a greener city region should be an objective of the SDS but felt that the 2040 'net zero' target is too late and that more urgent action to remedy the climate crisis in LCR is required, particularly in relation to sustainable transport. It was also suggested that homes should be made more sustainable through increased energy efficiency and the recycling of building materials.
- Air pollution, particularly in Bootle, was identified as a critical issue in the Older Adults Focus Groups.
- Participants in the University of Liverpool workshops argued that reducing carbon emissions should be a central factor in all planning decisions and proposals.

"2040 is too late"

PLACED Digital Academy sessions

"Church road has so many lorries that go to the docks all day and it is a highly polluted area. They want to build a road through a big green space and this will just result in pollution levels higher."

Everton in the Community survey

Protecting and enhancing natural spaces

Linked to the previous slide, participants shared a concern for the city region's green and blue spaces and how these may be threatened by both development and pollution/litter. The vital importance of natural spaces for individuals' health and wellbeing, as well as the sustainability and civic pride of communities, was recognised and emphasised.

- Some participants in the PLACED Digital Academy sessions emphasised that development should focus on built up areas and brownfield land, rather than using up green space or agricultural land.
- One participant in the People Living with Disabilities in Sefton focus group felt strongly that parks provide excellent opportunities for people to improve their health and wellbeing and feel involved with their local community. However, there is not equal access to green spaces across the whole of Sefton and one participant felt that there was very little green space in her part of south Sefton.
- The Sefton Young Advisors focus groups emphasised the problems of litter and pollution, with young people feeling in particular that pollution in the River Mersey is unacceptable.
- Urban green space was seen a valuable asset in the Older Adults focus groups. It is well used and should be enhanced with maintenance and support staff.
- Participants in the University of Liverpool workshops suggested that biodiversity can be supported through all new developments – e.g. green roofs and walls to attract wildlife. However, they also questioned how we can ensure that green space is accessible and of high quality.

“We are lucky to have a lovely outdoor environment in Sefton. We need to encourage people to get out and about in green spaces.”

People Living with Disabilities in Sefton Focus Group

“The park is a community centre without a roof”

Older Adults Focus Groups

“Stop building on green spaces and making roads because it adds to pollution in the area”

Everton in the Community survey

Transforming travel

Our transport infrastructure is a crucial community asset and is critical to establishing a healthier, more sustainable city region. Participants welcome the development of green transport and active travel in LCR, but urge for greater consideration around issues of accessibility and inclusivity.

- Transport was highlighted as an important issue across the PLACED Digital Academy sessions, with participants calling for more green transport options (e.g. electric buses, walking and cycling infrastructure).
- Accessibility issues around public transport infrastructure (e.g. drivers not waiting for people to sit down or get up quickly) were identified during the Wirral Older Persons' Parliament focus group as a barrier to people with disabilities using public transport to access health facilities, or outside spaces. It was also highlighted that walking and cycling infrastructure should be designed with disabilities in mind (e.g. Hardstanding paths being included on walkways so that walking frames and walking sticks can be used; cycle routes not blocking lowered curbs).
- Whilst participants in the People Living with Disabilities in Sefton focus group wished to encourage active travel, they were concerned about cycle ways that came close to footpaths and about shared space initiatives. Clear signage, textured paths, and measures to slow cyclists were suggested as solutions. Participants would also like to see a joined-up public transport infrastructure that would put an end to the problems people experience in getting to hospital appointments or travelling to other parts of the borough. Bus routes were particularly needed where there is specialist housing provision for people with disabilities or older people.
- The Sefton Young Advisors focus groups with young people found support for more electric vehicle charging infrastructure in the city region to help reduce carbon emissions.
- The Older Adults Focus Group participants supported active travel but thought cycle routes should be made safer, while more information and training should be provided to encourage more cycling.
- Participants in the University of Liverpool workshops felt that design is the most important consideration when thinking about active travel, with good lighting and segregation from cars being important. Is the City Region safe and easy to navigate for cyclists and pedestrians?

“More safe and accessible walking areas”

PLACED Digital Academy sessions

“For people with a visual impairment, you can't always see cyclists coming.”

People Living with Disabilities in Sefton Focus Group

Delivering the homes people need

Participants emphasised the need to provide communities with the right mix of housing choice; developing high quality homes (and, by extension, neighbourhoods) that are affordable, accessible, and inclusive for people of all ages, incomes, and backgrounds.

- The Placed Digital Academy sessions identified the importance of delivering affordable and mixed-income housing for Liverpool City Region. This was seen as critical to creating a more inclusive economy overall. It was emphasised that affordable housing should also be attractive, accessible, and safe.
- Participants in the Wirral Older Persons' Parliament focus group felt that housing is currently a major barrier to all disabled people.
- Concerns that separate housing for older people and people with disabilities risk creating "ghettos" were raised in both the Wirral Older Person's Parliament focus group and Older Adult focus groups.
- 50% of young people surveyed by Sefton Young Advisors said 'Making sure we have the right homes, in the right places for the right people' is the most important policy under the Place-making and Communities theme. This is a policy that is clearly important to young people. The 'One Pound House Scheme' was brought up in one focus group. Many considered this a great project and would like to see similar projects in the future, as it made the community look better and provided affordable housing for all. Greater support for homeless people was also identified as a priority in these focus groups.
- Participants in the Older Adults Focus Groups felt there was a lack of housing choice for older people. Participants also felt that new housing should be made adaptable, attractive, and affordable for people of all ages.

"Build the buildings we want to live in from beginning to end"

Older Adults Focus Group

"affordable housing so everyone has a step in life"

PLACED Digital Academy Sessions

"previous policy was experimenting with inclusive housing; we seem to have lost that now".

Wirral Older Persons Parliament Focus Group

Redressing inequalities and exclusion

Participants identified significant barriers to equality and inclusion in LCR, with concern around the marginalisation of certain groups through the design of services and infrastructure.

- Some participants in the PLACED Digital Academy sessions thought there should be more emphasis on class and wealth inequalities and how these will be addressed in the SDS.
- As highlighted in the previous slide, participants in the Wirral Older Person's Parliament focus group were concerned about "ghettos" being created with buildings for people with disabilities. It was emphasised that expecting people with disabilities to live separately from others is not conducive to integration and reducing isolation.
- The Older Adult Focus Groups also noted the demand for small scale developments within existing communities that are suitable for older people, with one participant stating "I don't want to live in a ghetto. I want to live as part of a community".
- In addition, the Older Adult Focus Groups wanted to challenge 'ageist' narratives and highlighted the issue of digital inclusion as being critical to creating Age Friendly Neighbourhoods. More education was suggested as one solution to help break down this barrier.
- Many of the women consulted by the Women's Health Information & Support Centre felt as though discrimination played an important factor in why we are yet to reach health equality in LCR. Many of the women felt as though equal access to healthcare was compounded by their gender, and many also believed systematic racism to play a part in this.

"I don't want to live in a ghetto. I want to live as part of a community"

Older Adults Focus Groups

"needs more emphasis on wealth/class inequalities"

PLACED Digital Academy session

"Culture and ethnicity should be considered throughout all policies".

University of Liverpool workshops

Ensuring accessibility

Linked to the previous slide, there were also specific concerns about the importance of accessibility in the design of the urban environment and of public services. A number of existing accessibility issues were highlighted as barriers that prevent older people and those living with disabilities from enjoying the city region equally with others.

- Participants of the 'Living with Disabilities in Sefton' focus group highlighted that the current built environment can be a barrier to people with disabilities accessing local facilities. They suggested this could be addressed by maintaining wide flat paths suitable for mobility scooters and wheelchairs; having accessible coastal paths or canal ways; provision for accessible toilets for wheelchair users in parks and along the coastal paths; benches placed at intervals along footpaths helped people with limited walking ability.
- Participants of the Wirral Older Persons' Parliament focus group identified access to exercise facilities as being critical for people with disabilities. Dirty and broken facilities, as well as cost, currently act as significant barriers to exercise for people with disabilities.

"buildings within the city also need to become more accessible for those with physical disabilities".

Women's Health Information & Support Centre
Consultation

"We need clear signage, textured path to differentiate use for people with visual impairments and cycle lanes need to be properly joined up."

People Living with Disabilities in Sefton Focus
Group

Promoting good health and wellbeing

Supporting good mental and physical health was viewed as an important objective among participants, and a number of community assets were seen as playing a crucial role in this – particularly local gyms and leisure centres. However, takeaway restaurants were also considered an important community asset by young people, despite being associated with poorer health outcomes.

- Affordable access to good quality leisure facilities, particularly swimming pools, was highlighted as being crucial for people with disabilities during the Wirral Older Person's Parliament focus group. Such facilities can mean less treatment, painkillers, more independence for people with disabilities.
- Young people in the Sefton Young Advisors focus group also emphasised the importance of gyms and leisure centres for both their physical and mental health; but some felt that there were no gyms and leisure centres close enough for them.
- The People Living with Disabilities in Sefton focus group expressed concern over access to health care and the shortage of GP appointments. They worried about more pressure being put on the health system by new housing developments.
- 57% of young people surveyed by Sefton Young Advisors (n=59) said that 'reduce the number of fast-food places near young people in areas of high obesity' was the least important Health & Wellbeing policy to them. Fast food outlets are seen as valuable places to socialise with friends.
- Addressing health inequalities and creating a healthier city region was identified as the most important consideration among those surveyed by the Women's Health Information & Support Centre. However, 45% of those surveyed (n=100) felt that a policy to restrict hot food takeaways would be Very Unhelpful.
- Participants in the PLACED Digital Academy sessions emphasised the importance of supporting good mental, as well as physical health through the SDS.
- Participants in the University of Liverpool workshops highlighted the potential synergies between a concern for both health and climate change, especially from an air quality and active travel point of view.

"Mental health needs own category and to be more important".

PLACED Digital Academy Session

"Health is the most important thing; it sets us up for our future"

Women's Health Information & Support Centre consultation

Capitalising on LCR's culture and heritage

The industrial and cultural heritage of Liverpool City Region is viewed as something to be protected and celebrated. Many participants across the engagement wanted to see more of our historic buildings restored and repurposed as homes and workspaces so that communities can continue to make the most of these assets in the present whilst also retaining the physical memories of that place's past.

- Young People participating in the PLACED Digital Academy sessions suggested they would like to see more renovation and development of abandoned buildings.
- The People Living with Disabilities in Sefton focus group felt that there are many historic and community buildings in Sefton which have recently fallen into disuse. They would like to see these buildings being given to the community for new purposes. However, it was felt that the constraints put on conservation areas and listed buildings can make things difficult for people with disabilities, as it can be difficult to find access solutions.
- Young people in the Sefton Young Advisors focus groups said they would like to see more derelict buildings and old warehouses being transformed and renovated into homes/flats/workspaces.
- Participants in the Older Adults Focus Groups felt that older buildings should be repurposed rather than demolished. Southport Town Hall was highlighted as a great example of a repurposed building that has retained its character. Participants also felt we should be making more of our city region's cultural and industrial heritage to unlock tourism.

"We have a great story to tell"

Older Adults Focus Group

"I like how our city tells a story of the history"

Women's Health Information & Support Centre consultation

Giving a voice to local people

Whether it be through consultation or something more, people, organisations, and businesses would like to have a greater say of the decisions affecting their local community. This may be able to help create greater impact, more inclusivity, or the generation of more innovative ideas.

- The Living with Disabilities in Sefton focus group participants felt that local community groups have a strong role to play. Projects such as 'Its Your Neighbourhood' and social prescribing projects are important in encouraging people of all abilities to get involved with their communities and improve their health and wellbeing.
- The Women's Health Information & Support Centre (WHISC) engagement found local residents would like more say into what is needed in their areas, one example suggested was housing developments that face each other so people can see their neighbours front doors to help build relationships.
- In the Older Adult focus groups, it was felt the best way to enable 'Age Friendly Neighbourhoods' was to build on the great community spirit within the region and this can be done by giving people the correct information, access and voice, so that they can help themselves and each other.
- The PLACED Digital Academy session participants felt that communities needed to be involved more in local planning and development and that those making the decisions also need to be held accountable by the public.
- Participants in the Wirral Older Person's Parliament focus group felt that all decision panels and steering groups must have mandatory disabled members to ensure understanding of the issues they face.

"People and the community should be included in planning and development"

PLACED Digital Academy Sessions

"It makes a massive difference to feel listened to".

People Living with Disabilities in Sefton Focus Group