



**PLACE**  
CHALLENGE  
2015

# Town centre living

## Place Challenge 2015 Summary Report

28-29 October 2015, Arbroath

**Architecture &  
Design Scotland**

Ailtearachd is Dealbhadh na h-Alba

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*With thanks to project partners and supporters...*

**Architecture &  
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## **Introduction:**

*Two days of collaboration, inspiration and ideas about how to make living town centres*

Difficult economic conditions, increased competition and changing patterns of service provision are challenging the role of town centres. Rethinking town centres as places to live is one possible future.

At the end of October 2015 A&DS - with a range of partners - brought participants from across Scotland together for a two-day conference in Arbroath, Angus, to consider how to create town centres as living places that re-use existing spaces to deliver housing, employment and services.

The Place Challenge 2015 was based at Hospitalfield Arts in Arbroath and used the town as place to test ideas. The lessons learned about shared issues, design thinking and collaborative working are applicable to towns throughout Scotland.

Over 100 participants travelled from across Scotland to tackle the issues collaboratively and to explore the "how" of making town centre living a reality.

Participants worked in themed groups to explore ideas and imagine possible futures for town centre living at Strategic, High Street, Area and Building scales.

This section of the report presents the summarised learning from the event. A ten step summary of the process is included as well as visual summaries of key moves suggested by participant groupwork.

Associated resources will follow on the learning from contributing keynote speakers and inspirational projects, on the individual groupwork outputs and on the methods and tools. Videos of keynote presentations and interviews are available on [vimeo.com/channels/placechallenge2015](https://vimeo.com/channels/placechallenge2015).

Place Challenge 2015 was organised by Architecture and Design Scotland in partnership with the Scottish Government, Angus Council, Historic Environment Scotland, Construction Scotland Innovation Centre, The Development Trust Association Scotland, Scotland's Towns' Partnership and Improvement Service. The event is supported by BIDS (Business Improvement Districts Scotland), SURF (Scotland's Urban Regeneration Forum) and PAS (Planning Aid Scotland).



## ***Postcard from Arbroath:***

*Reflections on Place Challenge 2015*

*Martin Crookston  
Board Member, A&DS*

Place Challenge 2015 took place in Arbroath – a town of some 25,000 people on the coastal route from Dundee to Aberdeen.

It has a lot going for it: a compact centre around a characterful High Street curving sinuously from the (working) harbour right up to the 12<sup>th</sup> century Abbey, which sits right in the town not isolated outside it; pleasant housing areas conveniently close by; good rail and road links: a distinctive place set between the sea and the Angus countryside.

It is, though, surprisingly little known. It has name recognition all right – Arbroath Smokies, with their EU designation, and the Declaration of Arbroath (*“it is in truth not for glory, nor riches, nor honours that we are fighting, but for freedom”*), 1320s ringing affirmation of Scottish independence. But as a place, few even among the many Scots at the event seemed to know it.

And of course it has, like most places, its own legacy of poor planning decisions that undermine its appeal and its potential strength: a dualled A92 which batters its way between the centre and the West Port/Station area, odd and overbearing flats with the telling nickname of ‘the skinny blocks’ and out-of-town retail sucking spending from the heart of the town. Yet the High Street – which has its share of vacancy, right enough – is in better shape than many of our towns

centres. It was one of the focus points for our town centre living event.

Most of the two days were spent at another of Arbroath’s little-known gems: the wonderful Arts and Crafts cum Scottish Baronial house at Hospitalfield. Between 1843 and 1890, the artist Patrick Allan Fraser and his wife Elizabeth used a mediaeval monastery site to create an estate which they then left in trust as a place of learning for artists – and, for a while, the Place Challenge 2015 delegates.

The challenge for delegates was to understand what town centre living could mean, using Arbroath as a tool to bring learning back home.

Inspiring examples of practice from all over Scotland came from twelve visiting projects – including a scheme from nearby Kirriemuir, the imaginative and people-focussed social housing at Glengate Hall. We benefitted too from really positive and generous support from the team at Angus Council, with local background, site visits and exemplar projects.

One of the Place Challenge teams came up with the idea of a ‘Food Town’ approach. However, perhaps some work is needed; the restaurant your correspondent went to had run out of the famous smokies ...

# The Place Challenge process

Steps one to five - participants hear and share learning about town centre living issues before defining an initial brief for action...



## 1

**Establish context**  
A fantastic line up of speakers outline key issues around town centre living; Ian Gilzean, Scottish Government on the Policy Context; Alan McKeown, Angus Council on the Angus context; Kristen Hubert, Shelter on Empty homes; David Rudlin, URBED on Design possibilities; Diarmaid Lawlor, A&DS on The Place Challenge.

## 2

**Brainstorm** In small groups, participants share their knowledge and experience through a brainstorming session asking: what are the benefits (and barriers) to town centre living? Common opportunities and issues are grouped and priority action areas voted on.



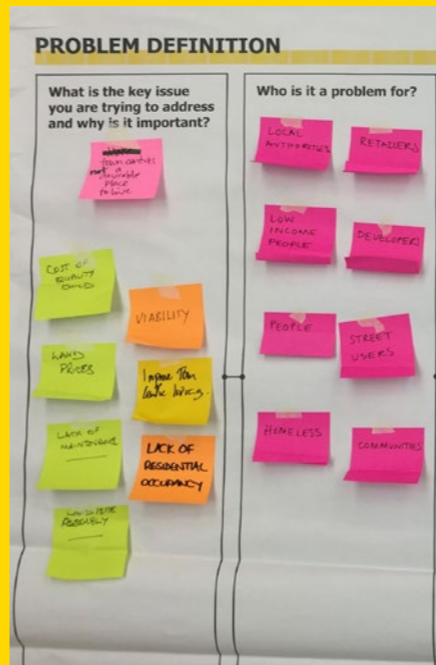
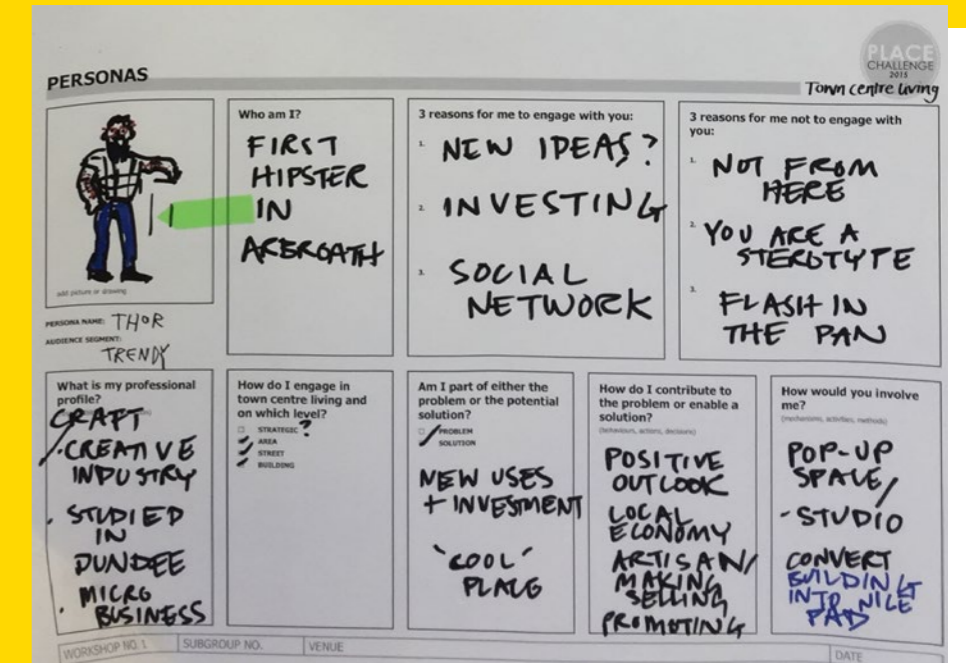
## 3

**Who's involved?**  
Where public, private or community groups work together better impacts can be achieved from any actions or investments. Groups complete a stakeholder map to consider those with a role in supporting or blocking change. This helps groups to identify potential collaborators around their priority issue.



## 4

**Other perspectives?** In developing a robust brief for action it is important to understand: Who is this a problem for? A persona exercise helps groups explore other perspectives. Aspirations and motivations of a whole range of people are brought to life, giving a richness and depth to the groups' exploration of priority issues.



## 5

**Define the problem** A clearly defined problem is critical to developing a robust brief for action. Groups use a problem definition template to set out ideas emerging from the first day. This establishes an initial brief for action for each group.

## ***The Place Challenge process***

*Steps six to ten - participants generate, develop and test ideas to solve their brief...*

# 6

**Get out and about**  
*Local knowledge is invaluable! A session on market perspectives is followed by a visit to Arbroath town centre. Armed with initial briefs, groups gain a wealth of information from guided visits to key sites including: strategic transport and landscape, housing investment area, high street and a vacant court building.*



# 7

**Provoke possibilities**  
*Get inspired! A Project Exchange workshop opens day two. Participants meet people involved in the delivery of 13 inspirational 'live' town centre projects. Examples touch on animation, services, infrastructure and housing. The format of small, informal, rotating discussion groups aids rapid exchange of ideas.*



# 9

**Prototype** *Explore ideas by making them real! Groups develop possible solutions to their refined briefs using a range of prototyping techniques including: physical models, hand-drawn plans, illustrations and user journey templates. All groups produce a business model canvas exploring and explaining their key idea and a drawing or model.*



# 8

**Reflect and refine**  
*Make space to digest! Here, the programme is adjusted to allow pause for thought. We learned how important it is to build in time to digest and reflect on experiences. With a renewed focus, groups are soon on track with refined briefs. Directions are selected to explore solutions.*



# 10

**Seek feedback** *In a live situation, testing ideas with partners and end users can lead to stronger solutions. Here, groups get input from each other. Expert consultants draw out learning and feedback to the whole group at a plenary session. Finally, an exhibition shares all 13 groups' proposals.*



# Visual Summary

Conditions: Key physical moves suggested by groupwork

The full range of ideas and proposals generated by participants are presented in a separate report. Following the event, A&DS reviewed all the material and drew out a series of themes which are captured in the following diagrams. Broadly, these can be expressed in terms of:

**Conditions:** Groups prioritised areas of change, where investment and collective energy could maximise impacts. For each of these areas, a series of conditions were identified. The key physical structural conditions are summarised in diagrams [A-G] below.

**Components:** A range of housing types and service models were identified through groupwork. These models are summarised in the

following pages describing the key characteristics and how they work.

**Possibilities:** Place Challenge 2015 brought together the diverse insights of people working on town centre issues across Scotland. They used Arbroath as a place to test issues and possibilities. In putting forward suggestions, the intent was to see how learning could be developed for towns across Scotland, learning from the particular experience in Arbroath. This 'possibility mapping' tended to focus in on service and housing integration, regeneration areas and re-modelling existing buildings. In the following pages we show perspective sketches to summarise some possibilities identified to inspire thinking and action in other places.

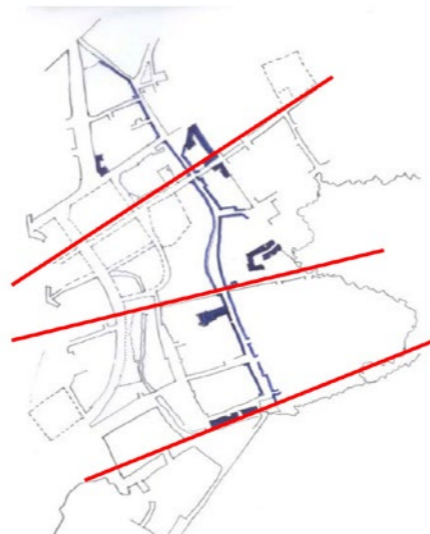
B: Integrate Burnside Road: Tree Lined Avenue



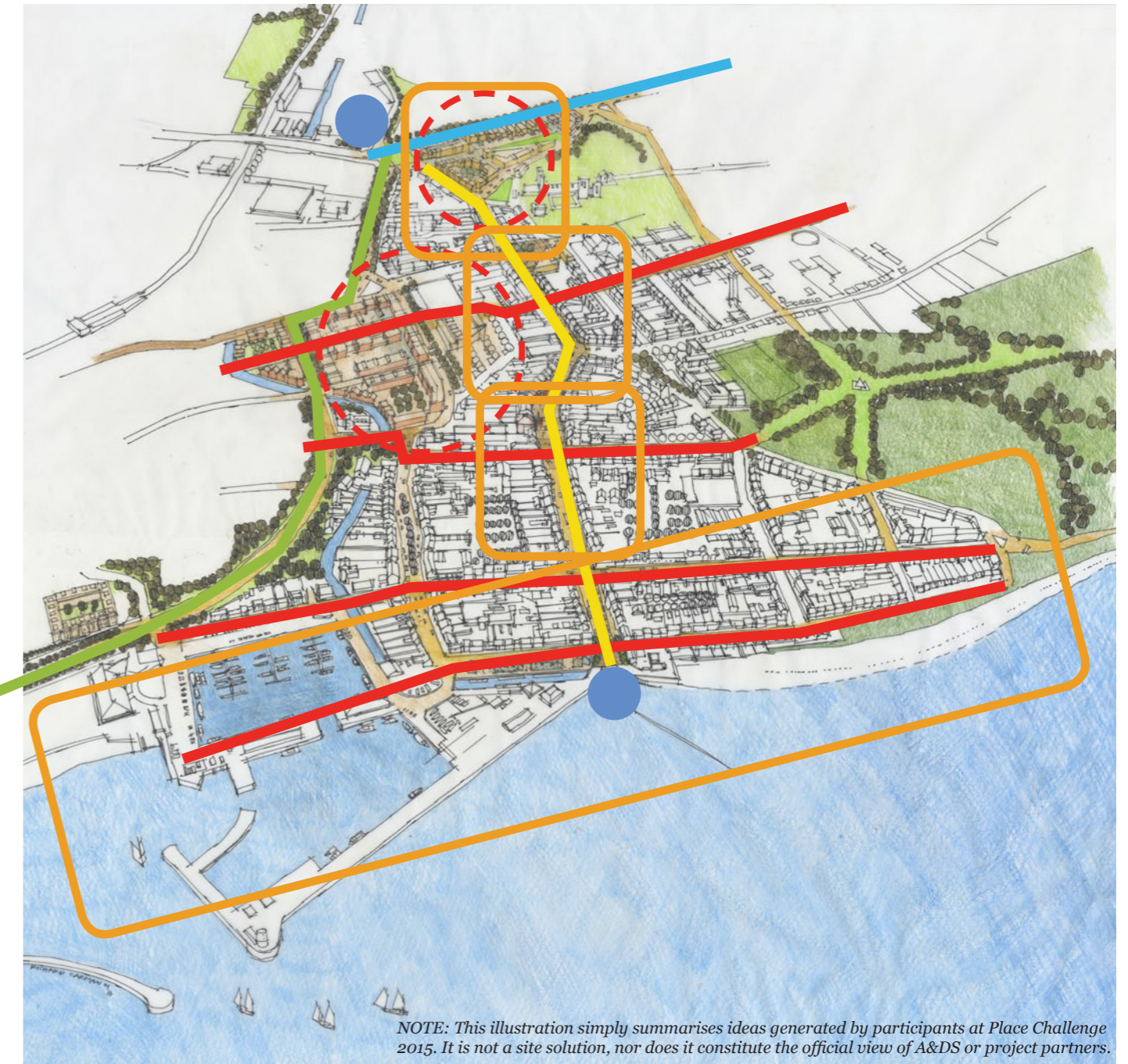
C. Reconnect Abbey to the sea via High Street



A: Strengthen East-West Links



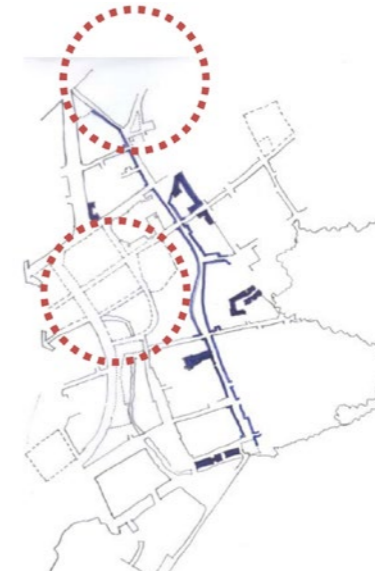
D. Reclaim A92 as a gateway/boulevard



E. Connect strategic landscape to town/waterfront



F. Remake the urban grid, connect the town



G. Manage centre as linked character areas



# Visual Summary

## Strategic and High Street groupwork

At the strategic scale, participants considered the following:

**Collaboration:** The Angus towns sit between two strategic development plan areas. The 'natural region' is defined by the landscape and the history of its places. This is a spatial framework that people understand, within which cross sectoral collaboration seems possible. This suggests a culture change, supported by a shared view and approach from service providers: protocol over policy.

**Connectivity:** Places in the region have different advantages and service offers. Connecting up places as local clusters can extend choices, and avoid a 'one size fits all' development strategy. This can support a business case for improved connectivity between places, build resilience enabled by incremental and responsive change. This is about planning based on settlement purpose beyond traditional retail hierarchies.

**Market making:** The landscape setting, the growth of local industries and strong partnerships provide a framework for economic growth. The resulting housing demand is accommodated through careful thinking of different models of town centre living across the region.

**Service planning:** Towns anchor services. The town is a 'one-stop shop', with a critical mass of services to support local and strategic needs. Flexibility requires services to be clustered at different scales, to meet a variety of needs. So that, for example, a family can access services for the parent and amenities for the

child in a short walk, in a pleasant setting. It is not necessarily about putting everything in one place: but about having the right mix, perhaps in different buildings, well connected, and designed around user need.

At the High Street scale, participants considered the following issues:

**Purpose:** Reclaim the high street as a 'central place'. Consolidate retail uses, co-locate services and break the high street down into a series of contrasting and complimentary experiences, relating to user need. It is about re-purposing public space, and connecting the Abbey to the sea.

**Identity:** The high street is considered in relation to the system of the whole town. The high street is reconnected to a series of safe streets to the west, re-making the historic urban grid, and capitalising on the unique food, landscape and learning identities of the town as a way of marketing the place. New institutional spaces, 'zero agenda' hub spaces acting as incubators of ideas, civic action and celebration are distributed across the centre, supporting different identities and needs of the town's communities, visitors and the surrounding rural areas.

**Affordability:** An ambition to support a range of needs should allow for different models of community making; from designated zones for living over the shop, custom-build and housing regeneration, to collaborative finance models to enable affordable rents for entrepreneurs and householders to participate in the life of the town centre.



NOTE: This illustration simply summarises ideas generated by participants at Place Challenge 2015. It is not a site solution, nor does it constitute the official view of A&DS or project partners.

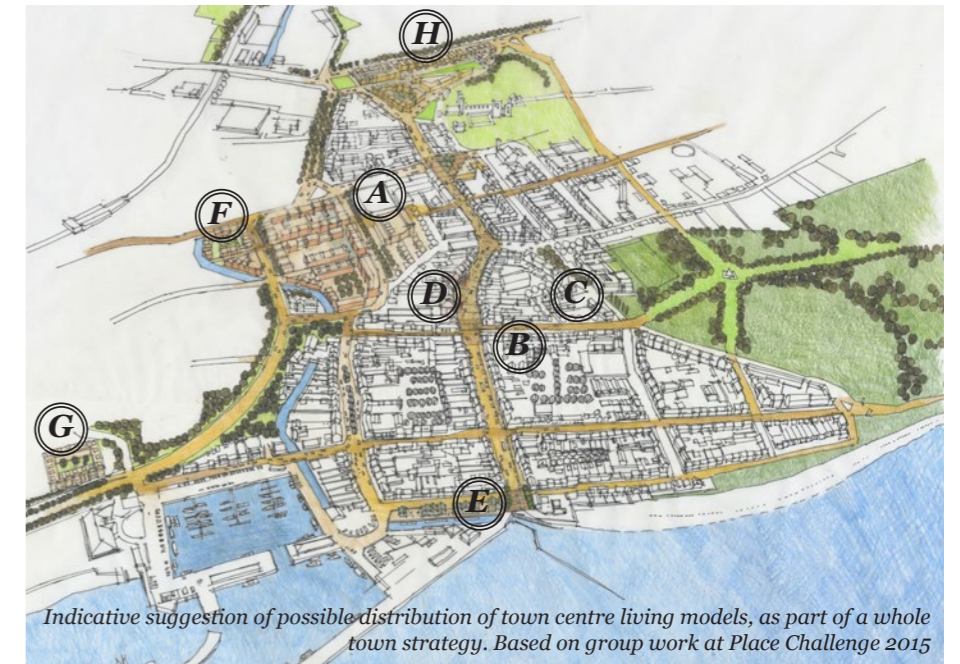
### Key:

1. Re-claim civic gateway
2. Regenerate Fishacre as mixed use gateway into the town
3. Re-claim A92 as a tree lined pedestrian friendly boulevard
4. Burnside Drive reclaimed as tree lined avenue
5. Re development area to connect rail station, river and town with pedestrian friendly streets / blocks
6. High value medium density residential, re-imagining the Arbroath townhouse
7. Enhance linear open space
8. Infill and new public space to better link with Abbey and mark end of the 'central place' public realm
9. Public realm, public art and activity programme to reclaim this part of the High Street as civic public space
10. Custom build/self build infill development
11. Strengthen East-West links through public realm enhancement, living over the shop and infill
12. Landscape enhancement to better connect park into the town's street grid
13. Pavillion/civic space to connect communities
14. Support walkable networks connecting grids of streets with public realm, seating and service clusters
15. New public space terminating the High Street
16. Court re-developed as a civic and community enterprise space
17. Waterfront development connecting Victoria Park, coastal landscape and the marina
18. Enhance links to surrounding strategic landscape setting



# Visual Summary

Components: Key town centre living models suggested by groupwork.



## A: Living over the shop



**Scale:** Plot  
**Characteristics:** Empty floorspace above ground floor level in existing buildings  
**Households:** Typically flatted or workspace  
**Design Issues:** Accessibility to upper floors; Retrofit of existing space; Meeting modern standards; May have limited amenity/garden; Parking constraints  
**Delivery issues/partners:** Policy designation to support adaptation; Finding owners/supporting owners; SME's/local builder/entrepreneur; Possible alignment with Empty Homes initiatives

## B: Empty homes



**Scale:** Plot  
**Characteristics:** Vacant whole buildings or building clusters  
**Households:** Mixed  
**Design Issues:** Assessment of building lifecycle: adapt or replace; Possible adaptation to suit varying needs; Meeting modern standards: energy etc; Parking options  
**Delivery issues/partners:** Partnership working with owners/policy leads/Empty Homes initiative; SME's/local builder/entrepreneur; Consider tenure models

## C: Self build/custom build



**Scale:** Plot/Block  
**Characteristics:** Individual or community building on small sites to bespoke design  
**Households:** Mixed  
**Design Issues:** Consensus on shared utilities and infrastructure; Design code on key parameters with high levels of personalisation; Adaptation over time; Opportunity for innovative construction methods; Sustainable transport and parking options  
**Delivery issues/partners:** Policy designation to support risk management; Proportionate, transparent policy requirements; Incremental development, continuous change as financing allows

## D: Remodelling existing/historic building



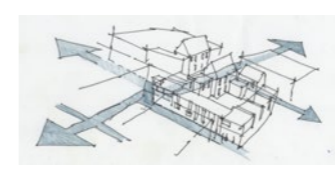
**Scale:** Plot  
**Characteristics:** Refurbishment or re-modelling of large existing building  
**Households:** Typically flatted or workspace  
**Design Issues:** Investment review: right building, right place, right value?; Understand abnormal [existing structure] and necessary skills for re-development; Work with historic fabric, embrace change respectfully; Innovative amenity, parking constraints  
**Delivery issues/partners:** Policy designation to support risk management; Proportionate and transparent policy requirements; Possible grant support; Specific skills and capacities in refurbishment/building adaptation

## E: Infill / street mending



**Scale:** Street/Block  
**Characteristics:** Linked gap sites within a street  
**Households:** Mixed: terraces/ townhouses/flats  
**Design Issues:** Shared ownership issues; Continuity of streetscape, variation in architecture; Meeting modern standards; Innovative amenity and parking  
**Delivery issues/partners:** May form part of local regeneration initiative and investment; SME and skill in managing tight sites; Business model possibilities: develop/rent

## F: Creating streets / strategic infill



**Scale:** Block/area.  
**Characteristics:** Good location, large format buildings  
**Households:** Townhouses/ villas  
**Design Issues:** Bespoke design; High amenity provision; Parking options  
**Delivery issues/partners:** Bespoke developer and market; Location critical; Mixed models of finance

## G High value, low to medium density



**Scale:** Block  
**Characteristics:** Re-development of a large area subdivided into streets and blocks  
**Households:** Mixed: terraces/ townhouses/flats  
**Design Issues:** Typically design brief led; High design/sustainability criteria; Market making; Managed parking  
**Delivery issues/partners:** Strategic policy priority; Mixed finance; Single developer; Mixed tenure, mixed use

## H: High density regeneration



**Scale:** Area  
**Characteristics:** Mixed: terraces/ townhouses/ flats  
**Design Issues:** Typically masterplan led; Adaptable block and streets, subdivided; High design/sustainability criteria; Market making; Parking options  
**Delivery issues/partners:** Strategic policy priority; Mixed finance; Lead developer and block developers: multi participation; Mixed tenure, mixed use

# Visual Summary

Components: Key Service models suggested by groupwork

A key idea to emerge in The Place Challenge is the 'town centre as one stop shop'. This is about linking living with services and accessibility.

## What and for who?

(a) Very local services, which might include early years provision within pushchair walking distance of someones house, or a place to meet and have a chat for an older person, or a place to sit and play for a mother and child. Service providers range from individuals, to families, community groups or drop in public services. Typically, services are single provision in a single space. Comfort and familiarity are important.

(b) Neighbourhood services provide for a higher order of needs, and begin to cluster things in a building or series of buildings. These may include formal public services like school, or health provision, or community centres, enterprise centres and neighbourhood retail. Co-ordination is key: bringing services that work together together, and organising different clusters in different parts of the town centre to maximise neighbourhood advantages.

(c) Strategic services, which provide special services at scale. This might be of regional significance, like a college, or a business head quarters, or a regional base like a hospital. Regional and strategic accessibility are key, and the service works to the region over the place.

## User need

Participants at The Place Challenge used a 'persona' tool to map the needs of a range of users sharing the same spaces; For example, Edna, a 73 year old lifelong resident - looking for the right kind of support as she ages; Jane a busy mum to young children - looking for spaces and services that support her family; and Alex a local young creative - considering whether to set up his first home in the town. User need is key to mapping what works where (*distribution*), what services come together (*organisation*) and the experience of accessing these services (*setting*). Such user needs map closely to profiles identified by the Association of Town Centre Managers and Experian in their report 'Town Centre Futures 2020'.

A number of shared needs were identified across the personas:

- A desire for socialisation, ways to get to know people and get introduced, to be part of something
- A need to be heard, to have a voice in the town
- Multiple needs: a parent may need to sort something out in town, but at the same time and in the same place may need things to keep the children entertained, and be able to safely and easily move to the next place.

## Opportunities

In many town centres, the inherited landscape of available services and their location is a product of many individual decisions over time (1) There may be a good level of provision, but things are not necessarily in the right places, to meet citizen need. This raises the question of whether existing services in existing buildings and spaces might be re-organised (2), to achieve the best mix for people in that place, to make best use of available spaces.

Planned investment (3) in the town centre, as part of regeneration or service change may be an opportunity to re-think this jigsaw.

By taking a whole place view of opportunities, what can move, what can cluster, and what must stay, there may be opportunities to achieve more impact for citizens by enabling creative and practical co-locations. This may achieve efficiencies and release space for new uses including residential (4).

## Delivering benefits

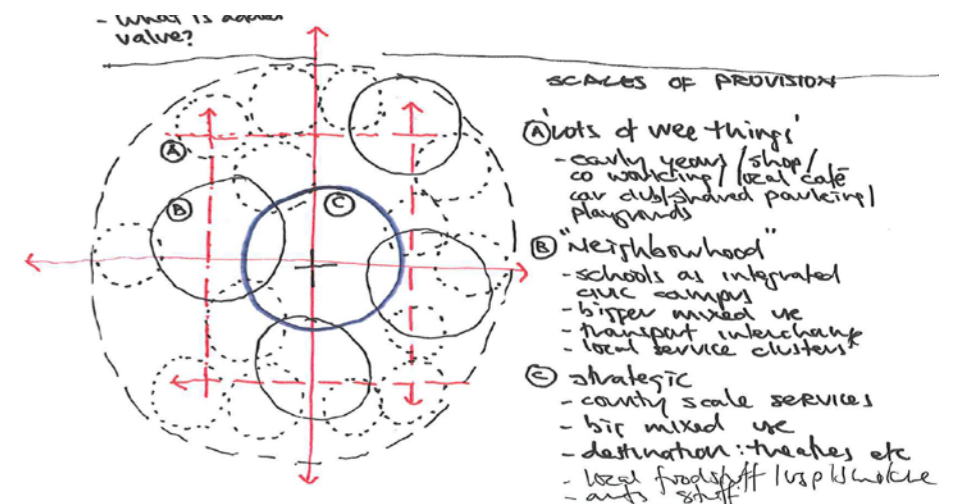
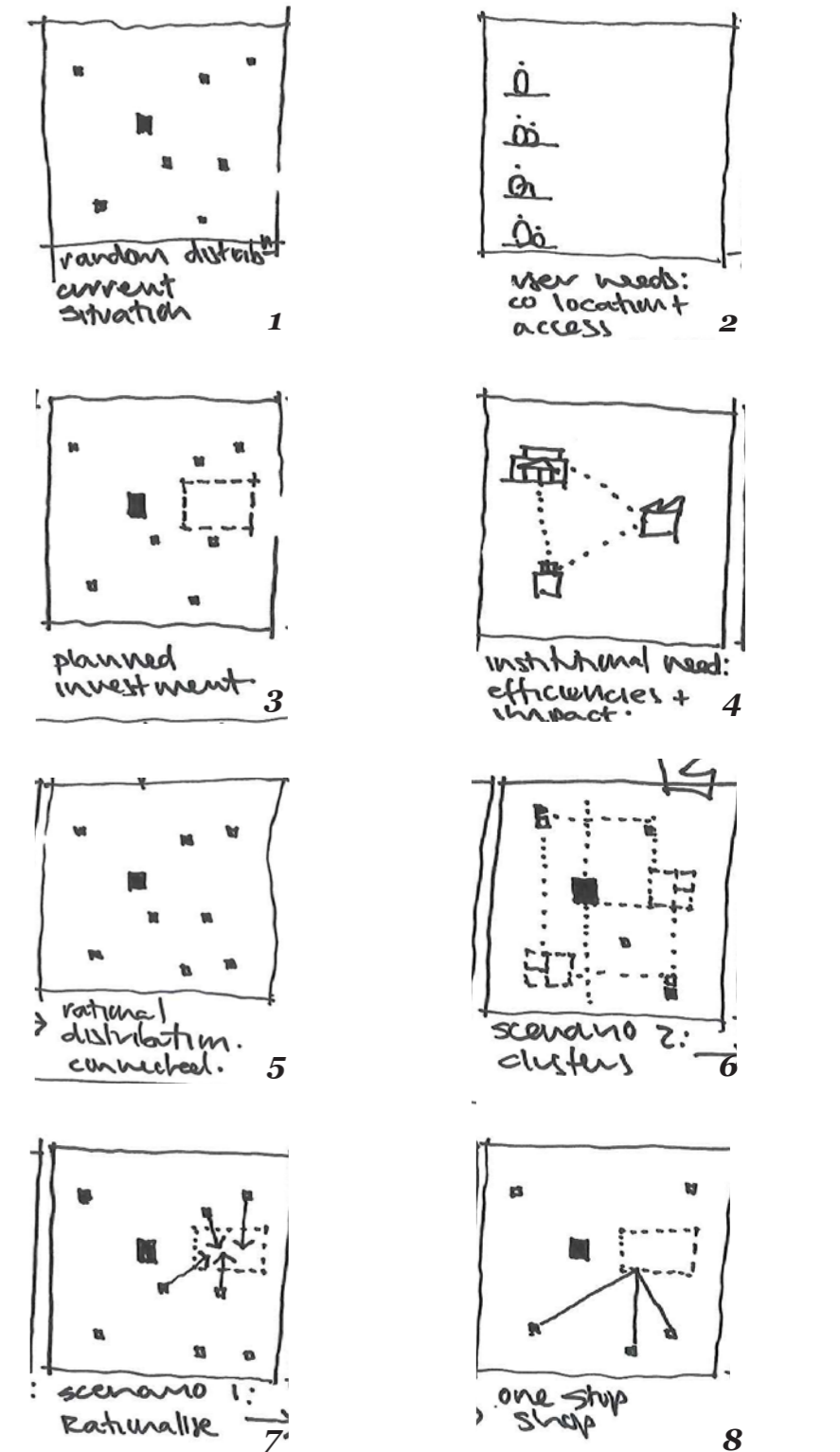
Creative service clustering is about moving beyond a handful of services sharing the same space; it is about services working together adding benefits for citizens. The strategic task is to identify a statement of benefits, linking user need and stakeholder decision making, then identify the best clusters in the place to deliver these benefits. Participants at The Place Challenge suggested two ways to achieve this:

**Clustering** This means thinking about: what should stay where it is (5) because it meets specific user need?; What can be clustered (and at what scale)?; and what is specialised? (6) These scales are connected together with networks of walkable streets and public transport, offering a range of accessible experiences across the town centre, which work with the place. It can be complex to design and implement.

**Centralising** This is about bringing together a range of very local and neighbourhood services into one location (7). People can access a range of things they need in one place, with the potential for efficiencies (8). However, this also drives a need for large buildings in central locations, centralised accessibility, and a strategy to deal with empty buildings.

## Town centre as service

Three key issues emerged across participants work: (A) the need to think deeply about quality of service experience from the users perspective; (B) the need for accessibility and quality of place to be linked; (C) the need to have choices, with the right things in the right place. Town centre services will be a mix of the different levels of provision. As they cluster, new service and enterprise opportunities emerge. A system of connected experiences can be created for town centre communities: linking locations and activities through the specific local cultural, environmental and community aspects of the place.



# Visual Summary

## Housing Investment Area groupwork

Re development of whole areas of a town centre provide opportunities to extend, enhance services and experiences, and empower citizens if the briefing for change is developed collaboratively. Participants identified three conditions for success to underpin this process:

**Clustering:** positive benefits can emerge from clustering services and uses to meet a variety of needs. For example, co-locating play space, community space and social space can foster intergenerational living and care, providing for people from 0-70. Achieving these benefits is about expecting collaboration from the outset in changing any part of the town, clearly articulating benefits and outcomes, then defining what the basis of the cluster might be: *thematic* (eg intergenerational), *investment* (eg housing investment zone to strategically manage risk), *scale* (eg local service cluster or strategic needs cluster). The spatial design to support clustering is about building in variety, at the heart of which are places people want to be in'. The management design for a cluster is about embedding opportunities for socialisation in all parts of the development, sharing knowledge and resources.

**Adaptability:** this is about urban design principles of streets, blocks and plots that are designed to be flexible. It may be about higher ground to ceiling at ground floor level of buildings, or street layouts that can be adapted to changing building and movement patterns. Subdivision of buildings, blocks and spaces is important so that there are many spaces to work with to accommodate change rather than a large footprint building for a single use which brings challenges for future retrofit.

**Learning:** regeneration is a learning process. The people involved in making the decisions may or may not have had the experience of this kind of project before. The community may or may not have had that experience. There may not have been successful stakeholder engagement where people build trust and awareness to drive collaboration. As these outcomes emerge, it is important to capture the learning, as a reminder to participants of the journey of change and the 'how', and to provide a resource for future generations.



### Key:

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| 1. Road re-imagined as tree lined boulevard to enhance sense of arrival                  | 5. Re-claim gateway to the town centre as a shared space zone/civic plaza   | 10. Mixed tenure, mixed density residential development  |
| 2. Maximise pedestrian amenity and crossing opportunities                                | 6. Mixed use/commercial/leisure   | 11. New town park; 'walled garden' feel enclosed by new development, with opportunities for family use |
| 3. Urban feel to development facing the street, to provide enclosure, amenity and safety | 7. Mews with affordable workspace/residential                               | 12. Early years/café/community use at ground floor opening onto the park                               |
| 4. Landmark element marking approach to the town centre                                  | 8. Residential edge, mixed density and tenure                               |  |
|  | 9. Landscaped public square with parking provision for adjacent development |  |



NOTE: This illustration simply summarises ideas generated by participants at Place Challenge 2015. It is not a site solution, nor does it constitute the official view of A&DS or project partners.

# Visual Summary

## Building

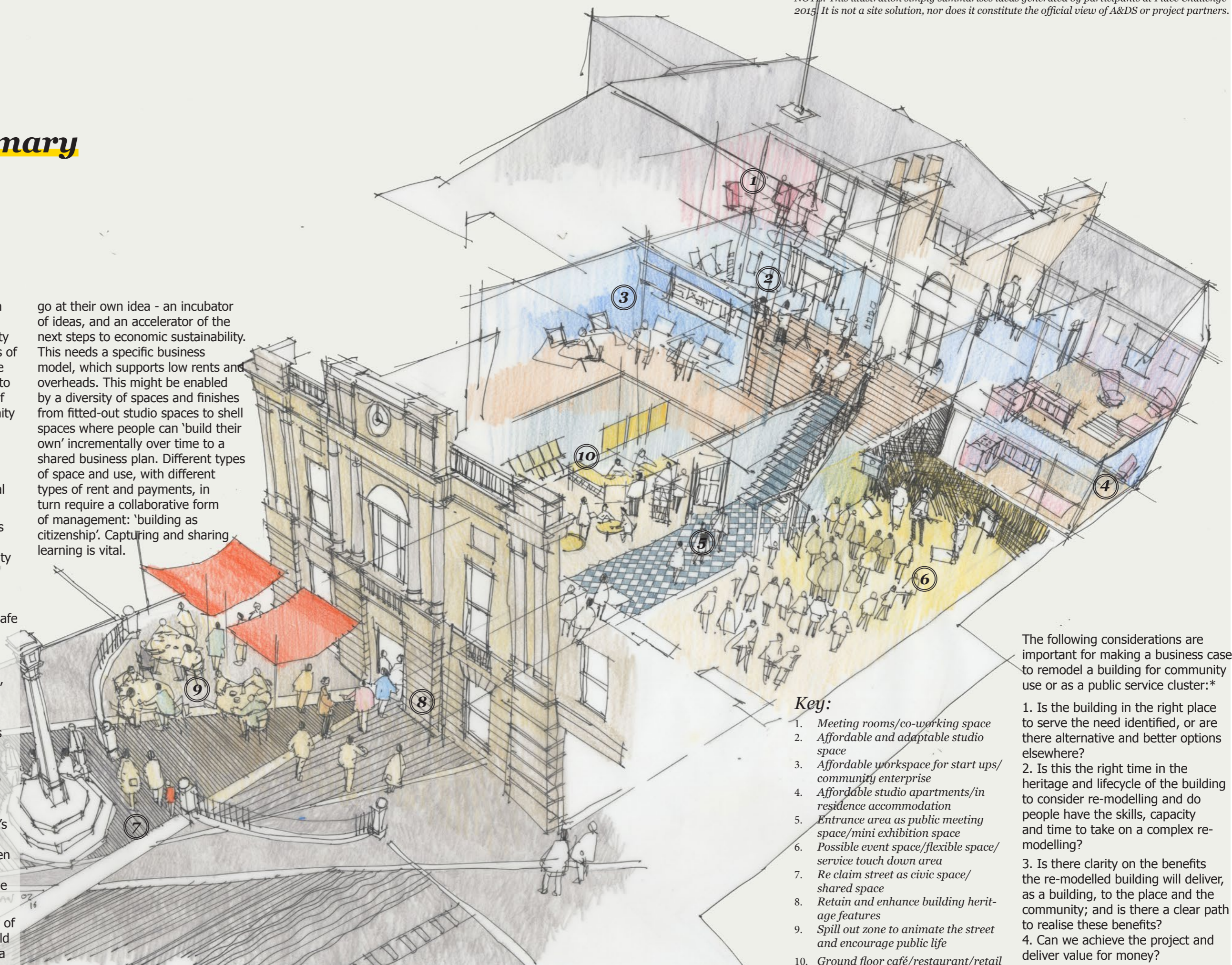
The Courthouse in Arbroath sits in an important position on the High Street, and provides an opportunity to re-imagine the civic possibilities of this part of the town. The heritage value of the building is important to the community, and the process of redevelopment offers an opportunity for community strengthening. The Development Trust in the town is exploring possibilities for the Courthouse. Place Challenge participants looked at the potential of this kind of project in terms of:

**Policy:** Re-modelling old buildings is complex. Re-using old buildings to support new forms of community enterprise and action takes time, requires partnership working and integration. Integrated local area policy initiatives could provide a 'safe space' for these processes to initiate and develop, managing competing demands and supporting success in the building, incrementally.

**'Arbroker':** a key condition for success in developing new models of community and enterprise is connecting people. Brokering relationships between people who don't know each other but who may have shared interests, space, resources and ideas for a building's development and management. A key role of development might then be to grow networks, to catalyse ideas and support people of all age groups in the community.

**Empowerment:** a key possibility of this form of development is to build the conditions for people to have a

go at their own idea - an incubator of ideas, and an accelerator of the next steps to economic sustainability. This needs a specific business model, which supports low rents and overheads. This might be enabled by a diversity of spaces and finishes from fitted-out studio spaces to shell spaces where people can 'build their own' incrementally over time to a shared business plan. Different types of space and use, with different types of rent and payments, in turn require a collaborative form of management: 'building as citizenship'. Capturing and sharing learning is vital.



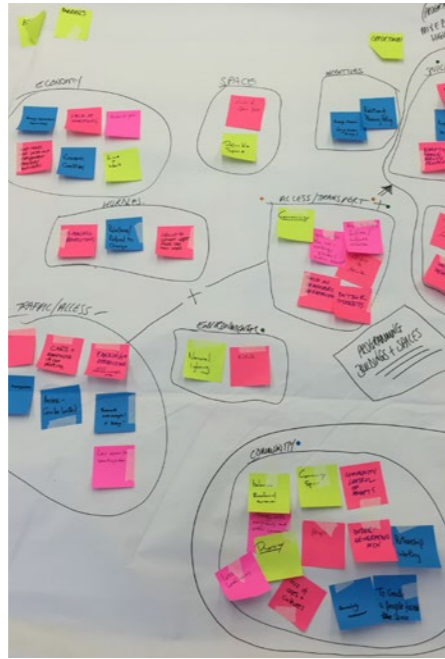
### Key:

1. Meeting rooms/co-working space
2. Affordable and adaptable studio space
3. Affordable workspace for start ups/community enterprise
4. Affordable studio apartments/in residence accommodation
5. Entrance area as public meeting space/mini exhibition space
6. Possible event space/flexible space/service touch down area
7. Re claim street as civic space/shared space
8. Retain and enhance building heritage features
9. Spill out zone to animate the street and encourage public life
10. Ground floor café/restaurant/retail

The following considerations are important for making a business case to remodel a building for community use or as a public service cluster:\*

1. Is the building in the right place to serve the need identified, or are there alternative and better options elsewhere?
2. Is this the right time in the heritage and lifecycle of the building to consider re-modelling and do people have the skills, capacity and time to take on a complex re-modelling?
3. Is there clarity on the benefits the re-modelled building will deliver, as a building, to the place and the community; and is there a clear path to realise these benefits?
4. Can we achieve the project and deliver value for money?

\*Source ReMade Learning Spaces, A&DS



## Summary

*So, what is Town Centre Living? Is there user demand? What do we need to support more?*

*Diarmaid Lawlor,  
Head of Urbanism, A&DS*

### So, what is town centre living?

Town centre living is a choice for households who want to balance the benefits of accessibility, community and services against amenity and space. It is about:

(a) Understanding different models of service provision coming together. Think town centre as 'one stop shop', connecting communities, supporting socialisation.

(b) Town centres are strategic spaces in thinking about how a region works to deliver services, consolidate economic benefits. To achieve that, need appropriate policy backing, and specific management.

(c) Opportunities for the whole family. How streets are organised to be walkable, connected and comfortable, with enough services clustered at key points, supporting different age groups to connect is key.

(d) Creating town centres as places to test things. They can provide affordable and well connected housing choices, with options to start a business, join a community group, start a civic venture. And, share learning about what works.

### Start with user need

The town centre as a choice for people to live is about understanding user need, and linking this to specific qualities of space, housing and service provision across the town. Understanding user need is about an ongoing conversation with users, a continuous collaboration.

### What do we need to support more?

Scotland's Towns Partnership facilitated a discussion between Scottish Property Federation and Royal Bank of Scotland on town centre development. Town centre living is a recognised investment opportunity for the private sector. Four investment conditions were identified:

**Partnerships:** managing the complexity and risk of town centre sites invites cross sector partnership approaches

**Entrepreneur:** this about industry structure. The size of town centre sites might be an opportunity for local entrepreneurs and SME's; entry level projects for new entrepreneurs

**Viability:** RBS suggested that banks will and are considering town centre sites on the basis of viability, which may include for example private rented sector [PSR], mid market or specialist [eg older people]. This is about deep understanding of user need and demand.

**Capability:** working with existing buildings, and managing construction issues in confined settings all require specific awareness and skill. The competitive advantage of SME's operating in town centres may be around this capability, which can affect viability. Partnership working around skill and workforce development is important.

# Architecture & Design Scotland

Ailtearachd is Dealbhadh na h-Alba

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Architecture and Design Scotland  
9 Bakehouse Close, 146 Canongate, Edinburgh, EH8 8DD  
The Lighthouse, 11 Mitchell Lane, Glasgow, G1 3NU

T: 0131 556 6699  
E: [info@ads.org.uk](mailto:info@ads.org.uk)  
W: [ads.org.uk](http://ads.org.uk)