



Abingdon-on-Thames
Neighbourhood Plan

PLACE Analysis

for a neighbourhood plan

The purpose of this download is to help you create a map of elements that, when used together, show the character of your place. For this analysis, we are defining PLACE as Planning, Landscape, Architecture, Culture & Engineering.

Through this activity, you can start to establish what makes your place special, the qualities you want to build on and keep and what doesn't work — the things you would like to change. This activity will provide an insight into the way the design of the built environment needs to be considered as part of the neighbourhood plan process. Crucially, your research will inform future choices the steering group make about the focus of the neighbourhood plan.

Your neighbourhood plan potentially represents a once in a generation opportunity to shape the future of the neighbourhood and its surroundings. A question we need to ask ourselves is this: If sites were to come forward for new development, or sites for redevelopment and improvement were to be identified, what would be the right design response? What will your community consider good planning and good design? Only once we can answer this question, can we start to prepare the policies to be included in your plan.

Working in teams of five, each team member will be responsible for either Planning, Landscape, Architecture, Culture or Engineering. Each team of five will undertake a critical analysis of a specific area and its immediate surroundings. As you walk try to remain open-minded. Read through the prompts before you start and think about how to annotate the map. It important to undertake this task without any specific design proposals in mind.

ARCHITECTURE

This download is for considering architecture issues only. We ask that when you are out on site, you focus your observations around the prompts provided for this aspect only. You can make notes directly onto a map and in the spaces provided in this download.

Once the audit for your area is completed, it can be used to produce a complete map that registers the full complexity of the area, allowing, for example, architectural elements to be in conversation with engineering and landscape or culture. This whole picture will inform the neighbourhood plan and enable you to begin a full analysis of the specific issues you want to focus on.

Please record your field notes. There follows some prompts and ideas for you to consider. These prompts are by no means exhaustive. You will no doubt have your own ideas too.

A1. Start by looking at the map. Consider how street patterns, blocks and plots relate to one another? How do they help enclose public spaces? Are there any areas that could become public spaces or meeting points?

Mark your thoughts on the map.

A2. Look at public space and the routes between key elements in the town, is the logic of the town clear, for example the walk from the high street to the park or to the main public transport hubs. Can you spot anywhere to link key elements of the town creating new footpaths or cycle routes?

Mark your ideas on the map.

A3. As you walk, think about the built landscape and the overall appearance of the place. How would you characterise the built environment? (e.g. Historic? Modern? Or a mixture of new developments and historic buildings?) Sketch any buildings of note here or write down where they are. You could take a photo or screenshot to jog your memory.

A4. How do buildings contribute to the character of this area?
Mark on your map any striking buildings.

A5. As you walk, mark on your map buildings that offer specific viewpoints e.g. a view through an arch, an alleyway or a vista.

A6. What variety of building types can be found in the central and wider areas? Are these representatives of the local context? Note down or photograph/ screen shot a range of buildings. Consider the combinations of building that work together, those that jar when in proximity with on another.

A7. Think about building scales, heights, massing and densities. Is the current situation appropriate to the context? Or could redevelopment improve the situation? (for example, is it preferable to develop housing and create greater density in an exiting urban area, or better to build on the outskirts of town?)
Note your thoughts here.

A8. What are the predominant building materials? Think about texture, colour, pattern. This should include any local stone or brick used on footpaths, hard-standing areas and in walls.

Mark on map and annotate below.

A9. Is there any evidence of craft traditions in the local architecture?

Note your observations on the map. If you have any local knowledge please note below.

A10. Are there any special buildings, including architectural styles that are well-liked, historic, iconic or disliked, in the immediate area?

Note these buildings on the map:

A11. Assess building fronts and façades, including shop fronts and window displays: How many have windows and doors overlooking streets or spaces, or blank frontages? Do any have steel roller shutters and security grills at night?

A12. Is there a predominant roof shape here? What is this?

Draw here any specific roof shape and or chimney.

A13. Examine boundary treatments. Walls, hedges, fences and railings. Which of these works best in this context? Which could be considered most appropriate for future redevelopment? Consider what could be done better in future?

Note on the map.

A14. Observe street furniture and paving, including lampposts, benches and litter bins. Consider public art and monuments. Where are they? How do they contribute to the character of the area?

A15. Look at plot sizes or shapes. What is the plot ratio i.e. amount of built footprint relative to the unbuilt space on a plot? How does this affect garden sizes? Are there deep front gardens with room for trees? Or are buildings on the back of footways?

A16. Lighting. Is there too little or too much? Is it sensitive, obtrusive or intrusive?