

# Legacy Now: Schools Consultation



Report

**Fundamental**

Architectural Inclusion

**Dec 08**

Fundamental Architectural Inclusion is an architecture centre that seeks new ways for communities to participate in the transformation of their neighbourhoods. All projects are dynamic, creative and designed to embrace diversity, engaging groups that might otherwise find themselves excluded. Fundamental is an effective conduit, which creates a unique dialogue between the grass roots and the decision makers.

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Giant Legacy floor map

## Summary of Findings

These are the key findings from the Fundamental Schools Consultation about the Olympic Development sites. Research for this report feeds into the second, more in depth, phase of the Legacy Now consultation with residents of the Olympic Boroughs about the future of the areas.

In all, 174 children, boys and girls, from primaries and secondary schools in four Olympic host boroughs took part in day-long workshops, making 3d models of the Olympic sites and discussing their ideas and concerns for the future.

### Public Space for Families -

to meet children's and families needs, participants suggested:

- Unique, colourful and novel landmark buildings, clear maps and distinct signage.
- Safe, parent free areas: children only chill out zones.
- Busy and surveyed public spaces, lost child points and health and safety measures.
- Close and conveniently linked residential, commercial and entertainment possibilities.
- Extensive, well maintained benches and grassland for family rest stops.
- Cost free and low cost public facilities, entertainment, attractions and food outlets.

### Communities -

children put forward a range of ideas to relating to community, including:

- Intimate public spaces alongside Olympic-structures and village like residential areas.
- Spaces to congregate and celebrate on mass: a multi-faith garden and live stages.
- Public services with cultural sensitivity such as single-sex swimming or shopping.
- World food outlets, meeting the needs of the diverse population.
- International quality facilities, such as universities, affordable to local residents.

### Olympic Inspiration -

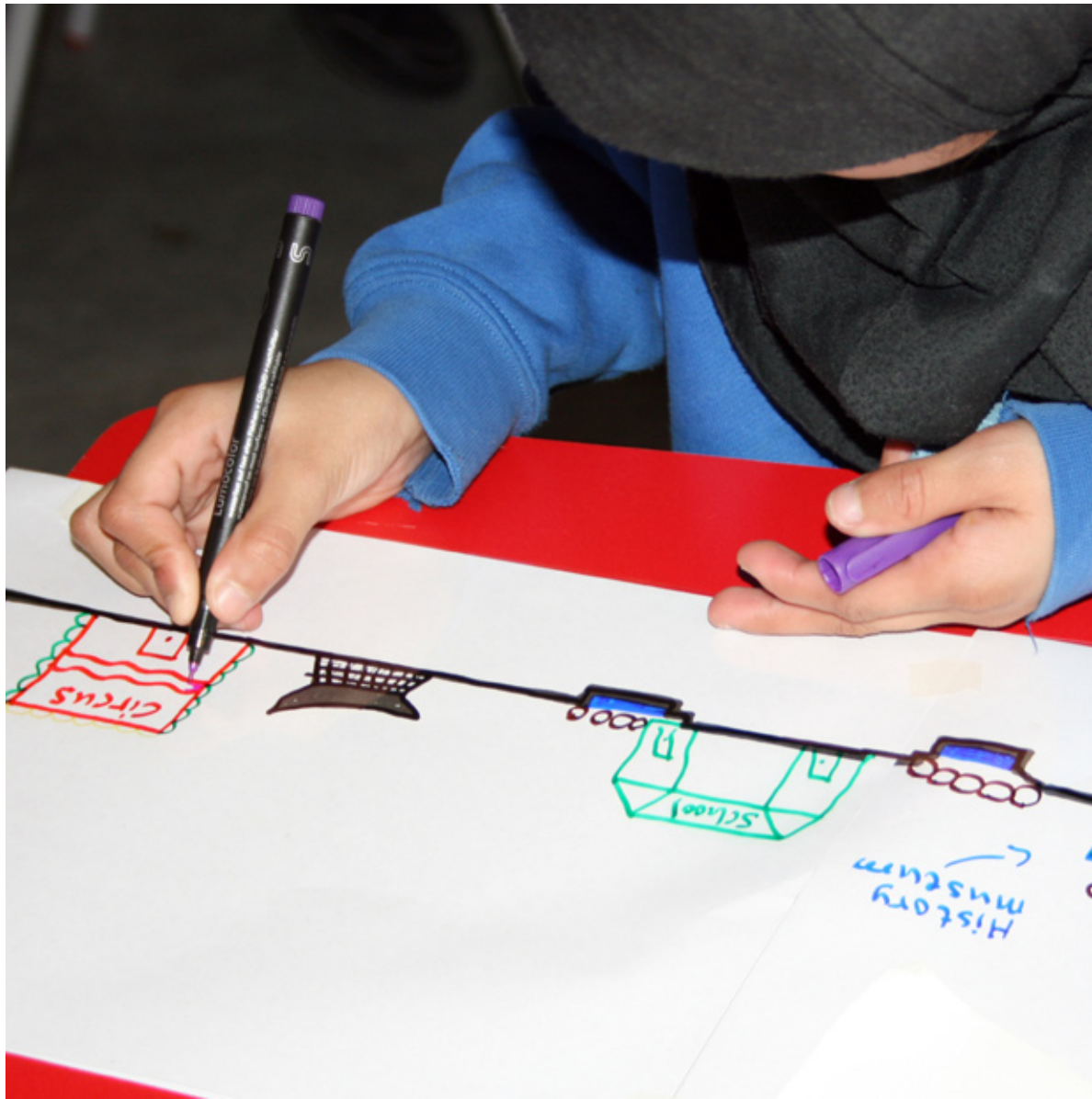
participants showed a wish to harness the Olympic spirit, for example:

- Public symbols and pledges to the legacy, such as a live burning torch.
- Popular sports facilities, including cycling, fishing and child sized athletics tracks.
- Olympic art galleries, museums, book shops and statues.
- Centres of sporting excellence and professional quality equipment for public use.
- Links between stadiums and schools through trips and sports days.

### Innovation and Fun -

children found ways to bring novelty and fun to the development plans:

- Playful architecture: bold, bright, beautiful and modern buildings, with exciting shapes.
- Innovative transitions, entrances and exits such as tunnels and waterslides.
- Extreme sports-parks and theme park rides, roller coasters and a blazing cycle jump.
- A wide range of creative viewing platforms to enjoy the city from every angle.
- International inspiration within architecture.



Exploring ideas in section

### Open Space -

with clear ideas about needing space in the city, children recommended:

- Open spaces with greenery or low level buildings surrounding larger structures.
- Linked parkways crossing the city with picnic stops to enable walking between areas.
- Sculptural art in spare spaces such as rooftop gardens.
- Structures allowing people to look in or out: with see-through walls and ceilings.

### Environment -

thoughts on environmental sustainability included:

- Links between new architecture with existing features of the local environment.
- Sustainable energy sources such as wind turbine and solar panelling.
- Holiday destinations within the vicinity, with beaches, wave machines and palm trees.
- Large trees and extensive flower beds within landscaped park land.

### Housing -

participants wanted the development to meet housing needs for families with:

- Efficient, plentiful housing supply to combat homelessness and overcrowding.
- Good quality, affordable and key worker housing within mixed income communities.
- Family friendly housing, secure with adequate internal and external space for children.

### Physical Linkages -

participants saw child friendly transport as:

- Fast and fun public transport with good views of the city and designated child spaces.
- Walkways and bridges networking the different attractions





3D modelling ideas

## Specific Ideas for the New City

Children put forward a wide range of ideas for the new city, a selection of these are listed:

### Children's zones

- A children's forest with storytelling activities
- An over 10s chill out zone for making new relationships
- A children's only café
- Art studios for children's collaboration
- A children's church

### Olympic Attractions

- The 'footway to the finish line,' tunnels to the stadiums
- An ever-burning Olympic torch in weather-proof case
- An Olympic zoo for racing animals
- A child sized Olympic stadium

### Learning and sharing

- History museums including the story of the Olympics and sport
- An International food centre, with country information
- Areas for multi-faith worship, including a peace garden
- A world class university accessible to local people

### Entertainment

- An ice-park – with snowball fights and dancing on ice
- An extreme sports theme park, with bungee jumping and cart racing
- A permanent circus tent
- Man made beaches, with sandcastle building
- A space centre

### Water Features

- A children's splash pool next to the aquatic centre
- A water themed area, with aquarium walled sea-food restaurant
- Aquarium walls running along the river front
- Wave simulators for surfing
- A giant wishing well
- A lightning fountain

### Sculptural Architecture

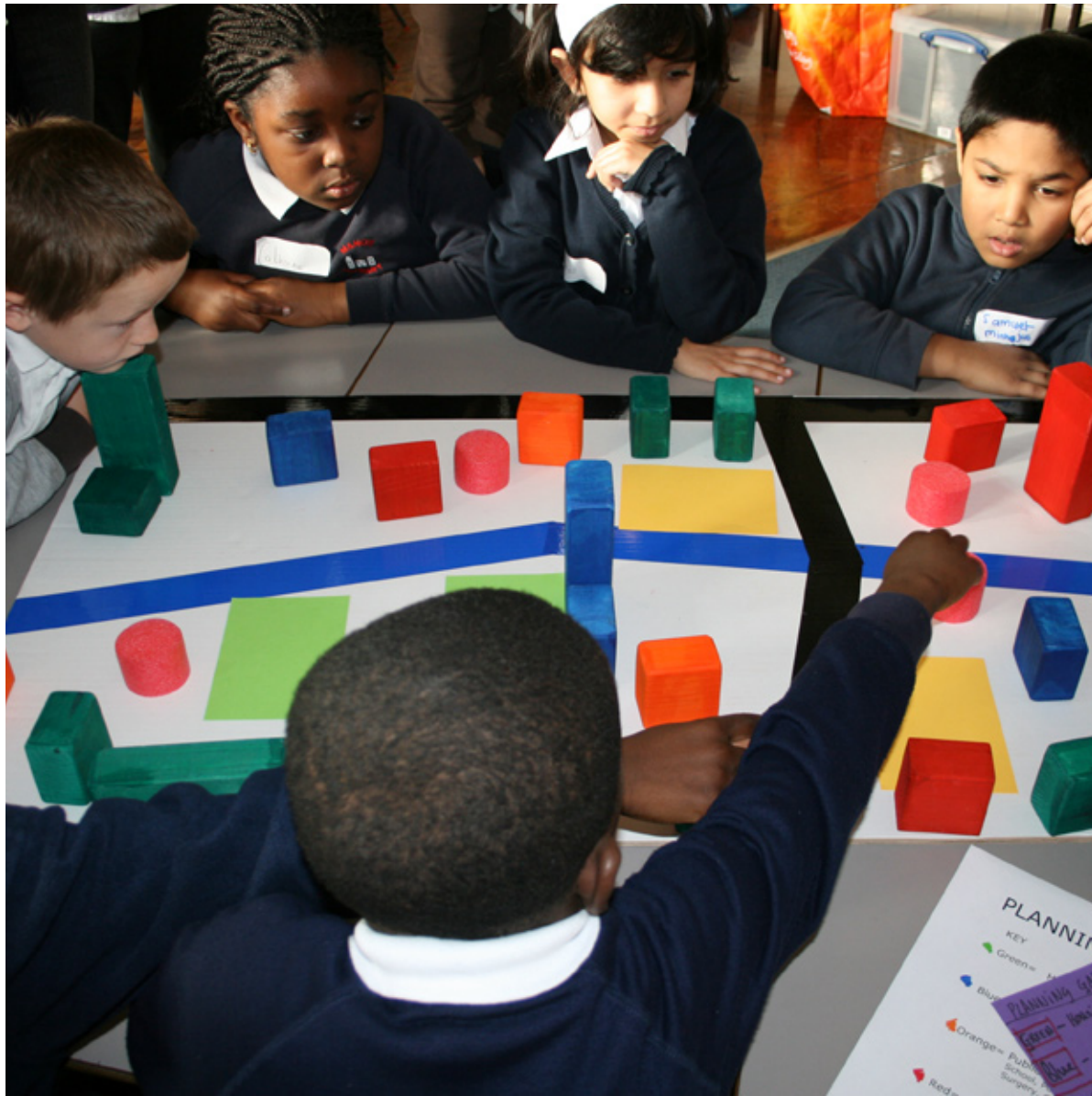
- Buildings and signs shaped as letters, animals, fishes
- Structures shaped as Olympic symbols
- Nature-inspired buildings, shaped as volcanoes, stars, planets

### Viewing Platforms

- Hotel-top viewing pod
- A raised glass viewing tunnel
- Viewing elevators

### Transport

- Roller coaster trains including the 'urban string' – 'beware you might get wet!'
- Ariel-train systems, a city ski-lift and helicopter pads
- Barges, yachts, canoes and diving tunnels.



The planning game

## Consultation Method

The consultation involved children from eight schools, one primary and one secondary from each of the four host boroughs: Newham, Hackney, Waltham Forrest and Tower Hamlets. Children came from a range of social and ethnic backgrounds; included a balance of boys and girls and ages ranged between 7 and 13 years.

The one day workshop was devised to introduce children to the unfamiliar discipline of urban planning, and then, through a series of exercises, gradually explore for themselves the complex task of master-planning a segment of the post Olympic city. The activities were designed to achieve a balance between giving the children enough information about the development and allowing them creative freedom, to allow meaningful and constructive consultation.

The day comprised an intensive session in understanding master planning; a facilitated group brainstorm leading to children making drawings of a slice of the new development on acetate overlying the existing structures; and in small groups, 3D modelling of an area of the new city. Finally the models were brought together into one large 3D floor map of a possible future Olympic development site. During the 3D modelling session researchers discussed ideas with the children.

### Interactive Activities

**Understanding Planning:** The planning task was designed to give children a crash course in understanding the scale of the task of master-planning a section of new city after the Olympics. The session started with initial discussions relating their own daily routines to the more complex task of planning a neighbourhood. The children moved on to a hands-on exercise where in teams they planned a generic small community through debating and rationalising the placing of a range of coloured blocks representing different building types for example, housing, school, surgery, office, warehouses and retail shops.

**Acetate Drawings:** Discussion of the Olympic legacy helped the children to brainstorm their ideas for the types of buildings that they think are important for new areas. They then individually explored these ideas in more detail through drawing acetate cross sections through the Olympic Park, sketching their ideas in relation to the Stadium, Aquatics Centre and waterways.

**3D Modelling:** In the afternoon working in small teams the children modelled their ideas in 3D making architectural models directly onto the various development platforms. Using 3d modelling in consultation allowed children a kinaesthetic expression, where they may have found harder to say, they made and showed their ideas. The day culminated with the assembly of a giant 3 m by 2 m floor map concept model, allowing the children to celebrate their collective achievement and visualise the whole area.

### Interviewing and Observation

The children were interviewed by two experienced researchers whilst modelling their ideas. The children were prompted to talk about their models, about the type of residential, commercial and public structures and services they would like within the area, about safety and linkages. Within that structure, researchers used open questioning allowing children to set their own agenda in discussion. The recurrence of certain qualitative themes by the eighth workshop suggests that the research had reached a saturation point, that is, that the core concerns and ideas of children of this age around the development have been captured.

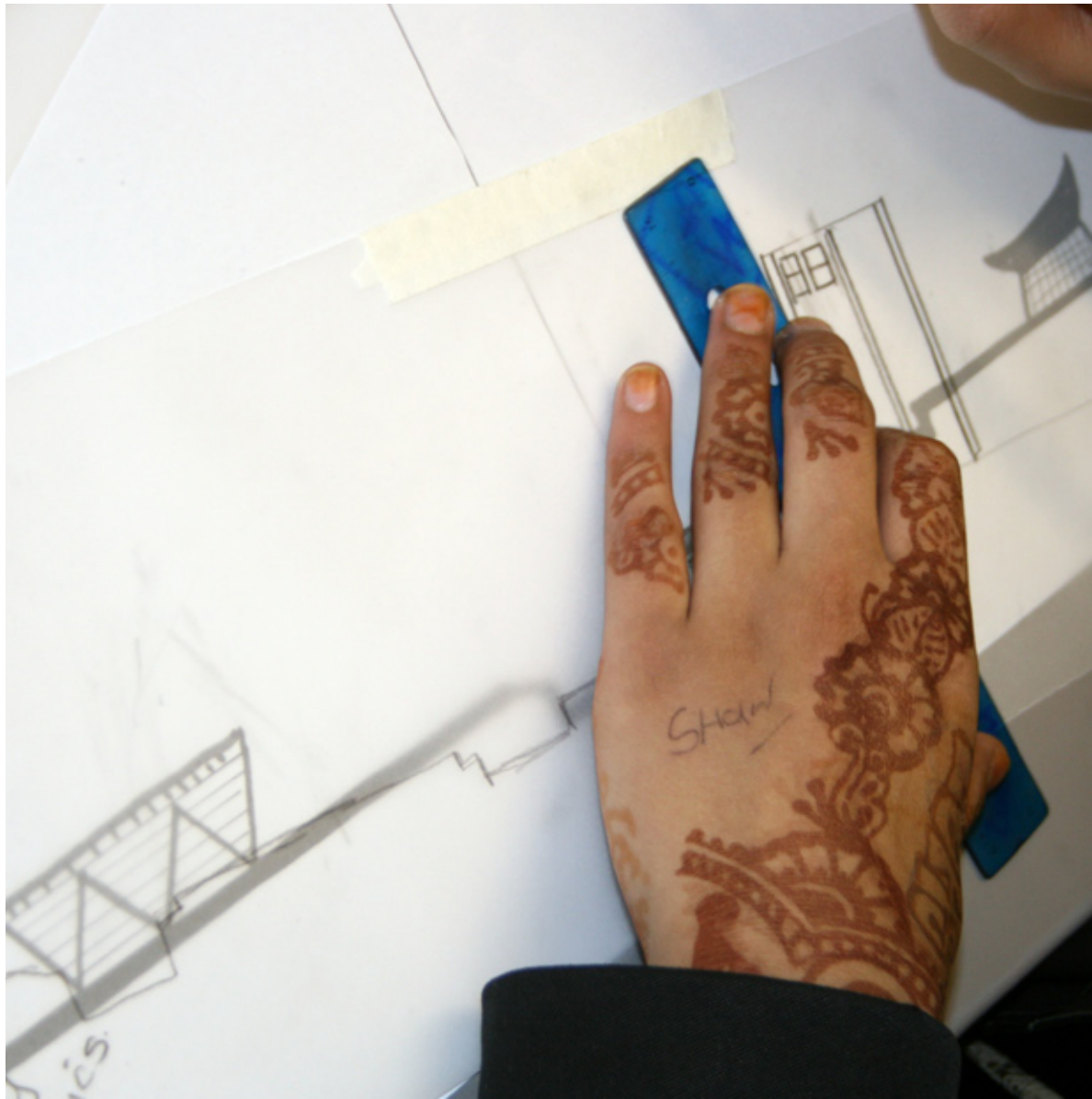




Giant concept model

## Introduction

Research for this report feeds into the second, more in depth, phase of the Legacy Now consultation with residents of the Olympic Boroughs about the future development of the area. The overall consultation was managed by Beyond Green, for the London Development Authority, and resulted in a report entitled Output C. This report summarises the views of the 174 children interviewed while engaging in creative interactive activities. The consultation activities were based on those piloted within the Fundamental 'Bridging the Gap' programme.



Exploring ideas in section

## Findings

### 1. Public Space for Families

1.1 A key outcome of the consultation was a reminder that public spaces can look different to children. Children suggested that distances travelled may seem further and places may seem more confusing than they do to adults. To this end, they wanted distinctive, brightly coloured land mark buildings; frequently positioned maps and signage systems to locate themselves.

*'I like buildings with patterns; they make the space bright so if people can't find them, they can see them easily.'*

1.2 Older children wanted spaces where they could be safe but parent free. They put forward ideas such as children's chill out zones, children's-forests, children's play areas; a children's café and a child-only church. All of these were places where children could socialise facilitated by adults such as project staff, storytellers, teachers or guides, away from parents. Children wanted all-weather activities, indoor and outdoor spaces. They also felt that separating facilities by age group was crucial. Younger children needed their own space for safety; older children preferred separation for mingling, and generally children felt safer if teenagers were elsewhere. Older children wanted youth centres with high quality, well structured activities: 'where you can act, do cooking, economics, traditional dancing, courses for kids who can't afford to go to University.'

*'All different children go through a phase and they need space to mingle, talk, play play-station, feel the breeze and drink hot chocolate. They start to have relationships.'*

*'Kids can wander off and adults do their thing, its safe'*

1.3 Primary children tended to go to public spaces with adults and were concerned about getting lost. They wanted information points, child friendly hotel style receptions and staff on hand within the space to guide and protect lost children. Younger children also showed a concern for health and safety. They made barriers at railway lines, bridges and water-sides to protect small children. They talked about the use of soft flooring to avoid bangs in playgrounds, and suggested first aid facilities near to play areas. They were also keen on pedestrianised areas.

1.4 Children also wanted more public venues designed to help people to interact and bond. They spoke of the need for whole family activities.

1.5 Children were very conscious of the different types of family need: residential, commercial and entertainment, within city spaces. They were also aware of the need for proximity and convenient linkages between the places servicing these different needs. They spoke of the importance of childcare near to work; play facilities near to shopping centres and local parks and shops within walking distance of homes.

*'I want a park near to houses. School should be near to mum and dad's work, so they can look out of the window and see me at school, and then after they can take me to the park.'*

1.6 Places to rest were high on children's agendas for families. They recognised the experience of being out with tired feet, a parent or an elderly person needing to rest on a clean and non-occupied bench. They wanted the city to have spaces for taking time out to sit back and watch the views. Children also recognised the need for their parents to take time out from young children. They wanted places where children could be dropped off so that parents could get on with shopping, or relax when they could no longer cope with fractious little ones.





Presenting the future city

1.7 The needs of low income families were recognised in requests for free facilities such as public toilets. Cost free activities in public spaces such as mazes and fountain-splash pools were also popular. Children requested that tourist attractions such as theme park rides or museums are low cost to enable local people to make use of them. In addition, they identified the need for cheaper places to eat near to children's attractions.

## 2. Communities

2.1 Children seemed to want a balance between larger building and world class tourist attractions and building and services aimed at the local community. They also were keen that the local community would be encouraged to access the high class attractions. For example, they included 'five star tourist attractions' and exclusive riverside restaurants, an 'urban string' roller coaster, saying that local people needed more facilities like these. One group suggested that having facilities for groups from schools would encourage local people to use the area.

'There should be lots of buildings for the people who live there.'

'It should be the same price for everyone to be fair but don't put the price too high'

2.3 Within the grand scale of the Olympics children wanted to find intimate, friendly spaces. Some were looking for a village feel. When children spoke about preferring flats to houses this was often because they felt that it was easier to meet people in blocks of flats. Other children spoke about the need to design developments with a mind to encouraging social interaction. Children built spaces for live performance next to the media centre. They spoke about the need for people to congregate and celebrate together.

'Children considered the needs of all ages from babies to the elderly in the wide range of facilities created.'

2.5 Community safety was important to older and younger children. They liked shops they could walk to, and talked about the need for cafes and parks where they could meet friends. They wanted police and CCTV, bright colours and lighting, the presence of adults and absence of teenagers. They preferred main roads to alleys and preferred less crowded areas where they were less likely to get lost.

2.6 Children were aware of the needs of older people in the community.

'There will be two sides of the Olympics, not just the busy one. It's normally a busy place. The Olympics has loads of people, but older people might want to come and sit down and enjoy.'

2.7 Children highlighted the importance of accessibility in public spaces for disabled people, in particular on transport systems. One child also suggested having specific centres meeting the needs of disabled people.

2.8 Opportunities to spend time with animals were of particular importance to children. Models included zoos, an aquarium, pet shops; a farm. One child described the importance of animals to lonely people, and in particular children without siblings.

2.9 Community learning through experiences and establishments within the city was important. Children showed enthusiasm for sports academies for aspiring athletes. They were also keen on Historical museums and other centres of learning which would encourage school trips. Secondary children modelled a university, a historic site, 'like Oxford University...but unique', a facility for local and international students, modern and traditional, a place for innovation: 'as if something new could come from there.'

'People who live in the whole of this area need better facilities to help them. We need to develop a famous university from the history of the Olympics.'





Testing ideas!

### 3. Olympic Inspiration

3.1 Children wanted to harness the Olympic spirit through public design. Models included a sign saying 'Olympic legacy lives forever', a burning Olympic torch in a weatherproof case, and a landmark of the Olympic rings.

'This (a statue of the Olympic Rings) is a symbol that we are all together, using the community to put the Olympics together.'

3.2 There was a sense of the whole area being part of an Olympic village with large maps and signs to help visitors. Olympics inspired facilities included an ice-park and a leisure centre. Children featured an Olympics art gallery, a sports book shop.

3.3 Linking stadiums with schools; trips and sports days was important. One group suggested child-sized Olympics stadiums, small tracks, so children can pretend to be in the Olympics.

3.4 Children were interested in the idea of excellence embodied in the Olympic competitions, they suggested erecting statues of famous Olympians and displays of medals to inspire others to excel.

'When they die (Olympic athletes), other people will be born, and other people who had not heard of them would remember who they are.'

3.5 Participants also saw an Olympics sports academy, or centre of excellence, for up and coming athletes and felt that the Olympics was a opportunity to bring in professional coaches, 'real', life-sized pitches and high quality equipment for public use.

3.6 Children wanted the Olympics legacy to include international quality attractions.

'It can attract people from around the world. When it is huge like Disney, you can advertise it on TV. For once we want it to be in this country.'

3.7 Children wanted to make sure that the Olympic experience could be shared with those who missed it. They suggested reconstructing the games within living-museums, reconstructing Olympic races, and writing about it for specialist Olympic libraries.

'There should be a bike centre, so families can feel how it felt to be in the Olympics.'  
'I would like seeing what it felt like to be there, remembering the feeling of the Olympics.'

3.8 Children were aware of the importance of the Olympics as a historic event with a proud past and future. They wanted to make sure that future visitors from this country and others remembered that this is a historic place, through museums and monuments, in particular through photographs and moving image. They also saw the opportunity to continue the memory of the Olympics with ongoing activities such as 'footway to the finish line' a tunnel to the Olympics site.

3.9 One child spoke of a new, distinctive style of residence especially for the Olympics.

'Olympics style houses'.





Class presentation

#### 4. Innovation and Fun

4.1 Children wanted city spaces to be fun, fun to look at, fun to be in and fun to travel around. They incorporated play into their architecture, their public facilities and their transport systems. Children were keen to introduce new facilities into an area. They did not want to replicate existing services, such as local libraries and old-style community centres but to take the opportunity to introduce innovative, novel ideas, or to bring to the area things which were, for them, currently hard to access, such as a beach, or a theme park.

*'You don't want to see the same things again and again and again.'*

*'We are saying that we are entering a new era, setting a fashion trend.'*

4.2 Participants preferred bold, bright, beautiful and modern buildings, with exciting shapes and original looks. They felt that aesthetic architecture and decorative detailing made people feel more creative, free, excited and happy and 'alive'. Entrance and exit routes into buildings included glass tunnels, slides and water shoots. Ceilings and exteriors were often in modern materials, glass and metals and in inventive shapes.

*'People might think that because the play centre is a funny shape, it is a nice place to come to, because inside there might be fun things.'*

*'If there are interesting shapes, children like the atmosphere it will be new to them. If there is a triangle or a pyramid it will be exciting.'*

*'I made my building wiggly, if you walk around it, you will feel free.'*

4.3 Places for legitimate thrill factor were constructed in these projected cities. These included an extreme sports park; roller coasters and blazing cycle jumps. These were seen as particularly important for teenagers, and were intended to be world standard attractions that local people could use. Transport systems with an extra kick included roller coaster rides around the city.

4.4 There was a strong sense that the areas would be shared by visitors to the area and local people and an appreciation of the different needs of these groups. One group created a water-sports park to 'attract people from around the world!' Another group invented an ice-park – featuring snowball fights and dancing on ice. Children often talked about the activities within an attraction, storytelling, workshops; things to engage with and experience as well as to see.

*'There will be lots of things to look at and lots to try out.'*

4.5 Children wanted to make sure that activities within the buildings were up to the minute, to engage young people and children. They identified the potential for linkages between Olympic facilities such as the media centre, and public facilities such as museums, which could be equipped with the latest in audio visual technology.

4.6 There was a notable enthusiasm for public art with innovative viewing spaces. Children saw value in impressive sculptures that would in themselves be of a quality to attract tourism and also improve the lives of local people. Some groups mixed sporting venues and activities with art, for example an art gallery by the main stadium and a sports-fountain.

4.7 Participating children, coming from a range of backgrounds, were introducing ideas from their experience of architecture in other countries, this led to a range of innovative ideas such as the raised trains system.

*'I want all different country food, interesting, different and brand new food.'*





A future urban designer?

## 5. Open Spaces

5.1 The need for breaks from buildings and greenery were apparent in plans. The beauty of green areas was enhanced by links to the natural environment, for example a park near the water surrounding the media centre with a covered walkway with benches to allow shelter from the elements.

*'If there were buildings outside the stadiums, it wouldn't look right.'*

5.2 Children were very aware of the need for space to avoid a feeling of crowding in. They surrounded stadiums with open spaces, often greenery, and linked parks across the city to enable walking between areas. They saw the need to interrupt high rise 'wow' buildings with lower level structures so that the taller attractions could be fully appreciated.

5.3 Participants were inspired by the potential for building awe inspiring structures and wanted to maximise potential for enjoying these new beautiful cityscapes. They built a wide range of viewing platforms to this end, such as hotel-top pods; glass-walk through tubes; a viewing elevator and London-eye type wheels.

5.4 Children were also keen to maximise the use of the space available. They talked about roof-top sculptures and gardens. They also liked thematic and sculptural buildings and signage, in the shapes of letters, food, animals, giant eyes, which in themselves became public art.

5.5 There was a fascination with the potential for seeing into buildings from the outside. For example, they wanted to see into the stadiums from vantage towers and high hotels. They were also enthusiastic about glass walls allowing public attractions such as aquariums to be seen from the outside; and allowing nature, greenery and the stars to be seen from weather proof transit tunnels.

*'You could go to see all things at once. Seeing it outside isn't enough, you get an overall view, you feel excited.'*

## 6. Environment

6.1 Several groups drew on features of the local natural environment to inspire the character of their area. Children also linked architecture and usage with features of the local environment. Within models, rivers were used for boating, fishing and diving, they were used to service fountains and diverted to make ponds. Buildings had glass roofs to allow people to see the nature around them and the space above them.

6.2 Sustainable energy sources such as wind turbine and solar panelling were apparent in models at different schools. Children were keen to make sure that the environmental damage of the new development was low, and to make sure that opportunities for sustainable development were not missed.

*'When you are making a city, you need electricity. Therefore you need windmills to make it.'*

6.3 Children were keen on facilities encouraging exercise in a natural environment such as zoos and greenways. They commented on enjoying the wind, freshness, animals, birds and greenery. They also wanted to bring holiday places closer to home, and models featured beaches, wave machines and palm trees.

6.4 Participants spoke about the need to landscape parks and avoid 'just making an open space'. Design features included pathways, covered walkways, fountains, flower beds and 'shapes to make things interesting'. Traditional swings, slides and climbing frames were also important. Children suggested that parks could be 'no smoking' areas and dogs could be restricted. One group suggested making play equipment out of tough materials; children gated off play areas and suggested making sure that parks were overlooked by houses.





A heated debate!

## 7. Housing

7.1 Children were keen to see efficient, plentiful housing supply to combat homelessness and overcrowding.

'Housing should be for everyone, it should be free for people who can't afford it, and if you want to buy a house you can get one.'

'Mainly young families (should live in the area), because people with young families may have to stay with their parents and they need somewhere exciting to live.'...

'They should be in the middle range of prices, because young people do not have as much money to afford houses.'

7.2 Another request made by children was for good quality, affordable and key worker housing within mixed income communities. They felt that some expensive, luxury housing would be necessary to improve the look of the area and also to draw in people with money.

'Areas should be mixed, so that people don't get bullied.'

7.3 There was no clear consensus about whether flats or houses were preferable for the area or for families. In general, children preferred secure housing with adequate internal and external space for children and arranged in such a way as to promote sociability amongst residents.

7.4 Some children felt that residential property should be kept separate from other sectors. In particular they felt that older people and families may prefer quieter areas.

'After sports events people are fighting, I wouldn't want to live next to a stadium.'

7.5 Some children felt that mainly families should live in the newly developed areas because children would appreciate and use the facilities.

'Only people who feel excited about learning and having fun should live there.'

7.6 In general children showed a preference for imaginative buildings in residencies as well as public and commercial buildings. One child felt that there should be more freedom in planning and people should be able to personalise their own homes freely.

'I think if you own your own home, it should have something to do with you, if you like weird shapes, you should have them.'

## 8. Physical Linkages

8.1 Children's ideas showed a tendency towards wanting the whole experience of travel to be more fun, rather than just functional, getting from A to B. One child built a roller coaster to get across the river instead of a bridge, 'because it would attract more people than a bridge.'

'It is a funfair ride but you can see everything so when you get off you know where to go and have a... plan of what to do.'

8.2 Children spoke of the importance of avoiding congestion on roads whether for cars or buses, and advocated more use of rail and tube to achieve this. They felt trains could be designed to better mitigate overcrowding. Children also featured tube lines and euro tunnels to make the most of the space.

'They (Trains) should be long, so lots of people fit, with guards to stop people getting squashed.'





Covered walkway from the Greenway

## Conclusion

A wide range of needs can be identified by looking at through the Olympics development area through the eyes of children. We can begin to understand not only what today's children may want in their future cities but also what can be done to make tomorrow's cities safe and enjoyable for children and families.

For their own future, children were hopeful for a better housing supply, and residential areas designed for safety and sociability. In public architecture, they looked for a sense of awe and of space. They wanted ease of travel to the Olympic areas and between carefully balanced services and facilities for family life. They also hoped for a vibrant community life, with places to meet, congregate and celebrate in internationally inspired settings.

There was an emphasis on making future cities child and family friendly; easy to navigate and rich with places to rest and play. Children's creations suggested the importance of a focus on playfulness with innovative structures, fun themes, and bright colours. They often spoke of boredom in public places not currently designed with children in mind. They also felt that a sense of better safety could be achieved for children through thoughtful layout of buildings and streets, minimising dangers such as traffic and maximising surveillance and activity in public.

Children had a fantastic capacity to have creative ideas and may be seen as an under-tapped resource in urban planning. The overall potential for enjoyment of a vibrant, bold cityscape was tangible, and an important to preserve as a recommendation from children to the planners. As one participating child said: 'Make sure [the Olympic Park] is not wasted: it's a valuable place we could use'



## Acknowledgements

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**Fundamental**

Architectural Inclusion

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