

# The Council of Meanwhile, Metronomes, Edenham and Trellick (CoMMET)

## Community Co-Design Definition Paper

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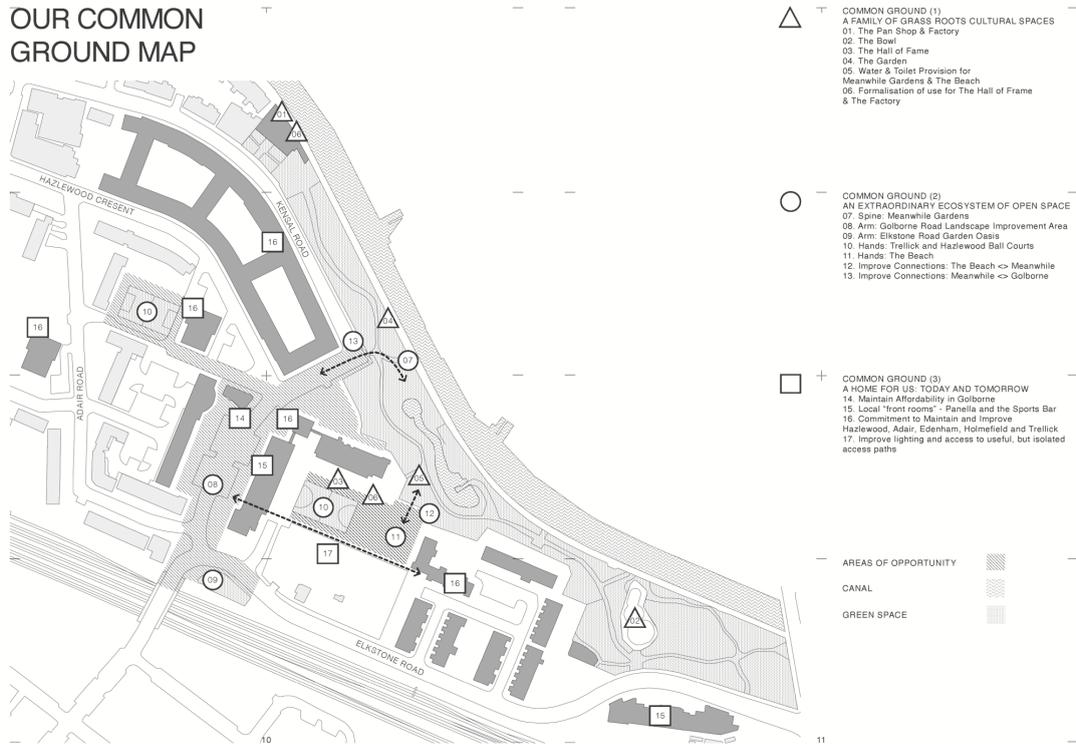
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# Community Co Design

CoMMET believes that the Edenham Way housing scheme will be improved through a meaningful process of community co-design and that it is not too late to start this process.

The CoMMET community comprises people who live, work, create and play in the area that it calls the Trelick Triangle. The Cheltenham Estate redevelopment sits at the heart of this area and its development will affect all CoMMET members directly.



## What is Community Co-Design?

Co-design is a process. A process that puts community interest and voices at the heart of a gradual, phased and considered design approach. Co-design cultivates a space where time is taken to listen to the community and really understand who, and what, they are. Listening engenders trust and listening in return.

It's about constructing scenarios where all stakeholders understand where the other is coming from and that, ultimately, all development is a synthesis of myriad requirements and views.

Critically, it is also about developers (be they private or public) taking the time to build sentiment within communities for the huge changes they propose to bring. Generating this sentiment through bringing the community into the design process is about setting development projects up for success and positive support. Ultimately (if done well) this should smooth the way for the planning process, rather than the reverse.



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## What isn't Community Co-Design?

The community does not presume, nor wish, to replace the expertise of those professional services employed by the local authority; there is a reason professional skill takes so long to acquire. Quite the opposite, community co-design should be an enabling workflow within an established professional design process, where community knowledge is perceived as complementary and empowering to professional knowledge. Fundamentally both groups bring different *experience* to bear on a project.

Co-design is not combative. Co-design is not about being presented with finalised schemes that sink or swim on the basis of passive consultation measures (feedback forms, didactic presentations and so on). Within the community co-design framework, the community is *on the same side of the table* as the design team and are working towards a common collective goal. The goal being the best form of development and place making for a particular site.

## How does it work?

There are no established parameters for community co-design, as the approach has to fit a particular community and development need. However there are some critical milestones that help the process of co-design be successful.

1. Define and agree the issues
2. Evolve the design by increment
3. Empower the community through responsibility

### 1. Define and agree the issues and collective aim

- 1.1. Early on in the process - the positions of all parties are discussed and understood. From this position a mutually agreeable set of goals or terms of reference are defined. These goals are written down and used in the design development process as a means of establishing the success of the design as it develops.
- 1.2. How are these goals defined? CoMMET would argue that many of the community's goals have been established through the initial consultation it has conducted and the documents that it has produced. The council has their ambitions too. These goals need to be discussed with the local authority and baked into the brief for the site, rather than perceived as subordinate to abstract approaches such as *site optimisation, numerical targets* and so on.

### 2. Involve and evolve by increment not by huge steps

- 2.1. Involve the community in the development process and progress this incrementally. For example, the community has been shown an optioneering process in the RBKC presentations and have been told that this process has now concluded. Merely telling the community that options have been explored does not validate the process of option analysis in community eyes, for the community has not been a participant in any critical decision making.

[PTO]



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- 2.2. Rather than "16 storeys, what do you think?", the question asked by the local authority and its agents in a co-design process should be - "you've lived here a long time. What do you know?... We have a few options, let's discuss the merits of each together." You have the expertise, but the community has the experience. If we work together in the early stages, the outcome will be richer, more nuanced and less of an imposition on the area once it is built.
- 2.3. The community voice should be embedded within that optioneering process - this would:
  - 2.3.1. Enable community members to communicate design development within their networks - helping the design development progress through awareness raising and discussion.
  - 2.3.2. Provide valuable insight from years of experience of living in the place, experience which time-pressured local authorities or commercially oriented architectural teams, frankly, cannot gather so effectively (for understandable reasons).
  - 2.3.3. Ensure that any mutually agreed option is set up for broader success in the formal planning phases.
- 2.4. Instead of relying on "sink or swim" methodologies where ideas are conveyed as "proposals", involve the community in a more phased approach to design development. This would involve:
  - 2.4.1. Options explorations with the community (see 2.1).
  - 2.4.2. Contact with an elected co-design board on a regular basis to allow them to feed back their views (against the commonly agreed goals - (see 1.1 - 1.2).
- 2.5. Where community feedback does not adhere to the collectively agreed goals (1.1 - 1.2) there is grounds to disregard it. Where the collectively agreed goals are clearly being subordinated to a particular value system or approach (e.g. the loudest community voice with a single view is taking over or a parameter such as 'maximising density' is taking the fore), the system will highlight this and positively influence the next stage of design development - saving all parties design time (and fees) in the process.

### 3. Give the Community an *active* role in the design team

- 3.1. Give the community responsibility and reap the rewards.
  - 3.1.1. Let the community sit on the same side of the table - empower a selected group/board to be part of the design team
  - 3.1.2. The community has experience and a network, and the consultants have the design-eye and the professional skills. This is a powerful combination
- 3.2. If you give key community actors roles in the design team, all parties have a mutual interest in the outcome working. The community can help through:
  - 3.2.1. Structured review of options
  - 3.2.2. Ensuring good communication to their networks
  - 3.2.3. Continuous information gathering on the ground.

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## 4. Co-Design & The Edenham Estate Redevelopment

### 4.1. So how might this influence the current process?

- 4.1.1. The Cheltenham Estate Community Steering Group (CECSG) is having productive conversations with the council and Haworth Tompkins about the scheme which have been described as ‘information-sharing’ about the current proposals - it is clear that the group was conceived of as a forum for explaining the rationale behind the *proposed* scheme that is on the table, rather than a co-design process with mutually agreed terms of reference (see point 1.1-1.2). CoMMET appreciates the time and effort that has gone into this work on the part of the architectural team - but the, at times, adversarial approach of those meetings comes from a sense that the Steering Group is not actually able to steer any conversation.
- 4.1.2. Clearly, if there is no significant change to the scheme after the steering group meetings are concluded, then the purpose of the process will be called into serious question.
- 4.1.3. The meetings in the current format conclude on the 12th of April, and the council will make a decision whether to instruct Haworth Tompkins to redesign the scheme in the week before the final CECSG meeting.
- 4.1.4. If the council decides the design of the scheme should be revised following the current CECSG process, this will present an opportunity to implement co-design as described in sections 1-3 above.
- 4.1.5. CoMMET suggests that co-design is therefore discussed in detail, with clear Terms of Reference signed off by both parties at the *conclusion of the present process with mutually agreed position and terms agreed*, to allow a smooth transition from the current CECSG process to co-design (should the council decide to revise the scheme).

### 4.2. How might this influence the next phase of consultation?

- 4.2.1. Phase 3 of consultation, if the council decides to redesign the scheme, could be structured as community co-design;
    - 4.2.1.1. The Terms of Reference are re-stated. The positions of RBKC and CoMMET, are re-stated and recorded, ‘red lines’ and achievables understood and accepted. A list of shared goals for both parties to be agreed. These should form the basis of an updated design brief, which should reflect the shared vision of RBKC and CoMMET.
    - 4.2.1.2. Options appraisal should be revisited and guided by the revised brief and shared goals. Options analysis should be undertaken with community representatives, and a preferred option chosen collectively.
    - 4.2.1.3. The community co-design board will facilitate communication with the wider community through the established platforms in addition to consultations conducted by RBKC. This will be done throughout the process to ensure the wider community is actively included in the process and their feedback received, recorded, and considered. Here the community can be of real use - in spreading the word and gathering information.
    - 4.2.1.4. Specific roles within the co-design board will be agreed as part of the Terms of Reference. The role of IDK/CounterCulture in the process will be clearly defined as part of Terms of Reference (including timelines).
    - 4.2.1.5. The revised design will be consulted on with the wider community in the final stage of consultation.
- [PTO]



4.3. Draft Timeline:

Date	Task
April 2020	Conclude Current Steering Group Discussions
April 2020	Reinstruct Briefing for Architectural Team & Agree terms of reference and mutually agreed goals
May-July 2020	Options appraisal process to include - incremental development of options with CESG with review and feedback from community members through CESG sub group meetings / reviews (all recorded and shared)
August 2020	Agree single option to develop further to broad consultation and eventually planning by RBKC supported by CoMMET / CESG

END



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