

Future Lymington High Street...

spud ™
YOUTH

HiWCF
LOCAL GIVING FOR LOCAL NEEDS

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INTRODUCTION

During the summer of 2021 fourteen young people took part in a week-long workshop exploring what the future of Lymington High Street could look like following on from the global COVID 19 pandemic.

The young people ranged from 10 to 21 years of age and were all from the local area and, therefore knowledgeable about and interested in the future of Lymington. The young people had self-selected to take part in the workshops having seen adverts on social media and from information sent out to schools.

Workshops were funded through the kind support of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Community Foundation (HIWCF).

The initial plan was to run the workshops from a retail premises on Lymington High Street, but despite numerous attempts to find support from landlords and agents this proved unsuccessful. In the end the workshops took place at the spudWORKS gallery in Sway, which actually provided a great space for the young people to create a scale model of the High Street along with an accompanying exhibition and film.



BACKGROUND

The aim of the project was to explore and examine the current Lymington High Street, and develop a range of ideas and solutions for the future, in order to create a more functional, vibrant and sustainable local environment.

Lymington is a bustling, colourful town with lots to see and do. Its Georgian High Street is the venue for a well-known street-market every Saturday morning. This is the busiest time of the week for the town and this popular market boasts a range of stalls selling everything from local fine foods to craft-work and antiques.

Lymington has fared better than many towns during the pandemic, but it still has numerous closed retail shops and struggles with similar problems. It has been fortunate that it has the combination of the tourism from both its New Forest and coastal location, making it a destination for many people.

The town's many features include a unique series of cobbled streets leading down to the pretty main quay area, popular with visitors who wish to sit, relax and watch the world sail by. Boat trips around the Solent can be taken from the quayside and private sailing, motor-boating and fishing trips. Yarmouth on the Isle of Wight is reached by ferry in only 35 minutes, and caters for both foot passengers and cars.



INITIAL IDEAS

In the beginning, a range of collaborative activities enabled the young people to engage and think about the societal, economical and sustainable problems that Lymington High Street faces. They undertook a simple 'traffic light' activity using coloured cards to express how they felt about the High street now - 'love it', 'hate it' and 'could be better'. This allowed for a quick and instinctive reaction, without their views being influenced. The young people then engaged in longer conversations as their initial thoughts were unpacked as a group.

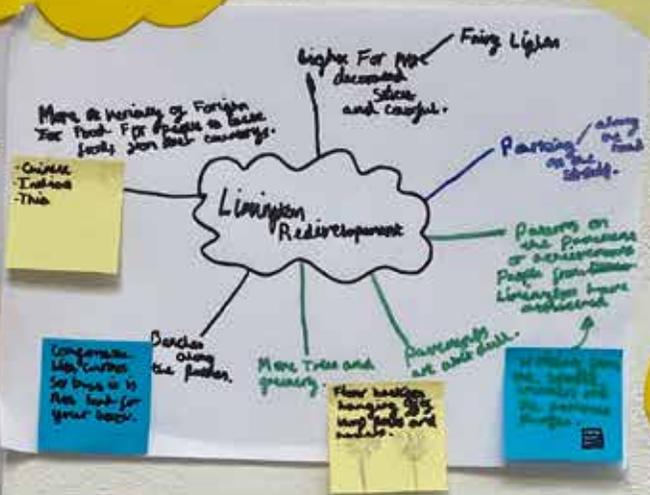
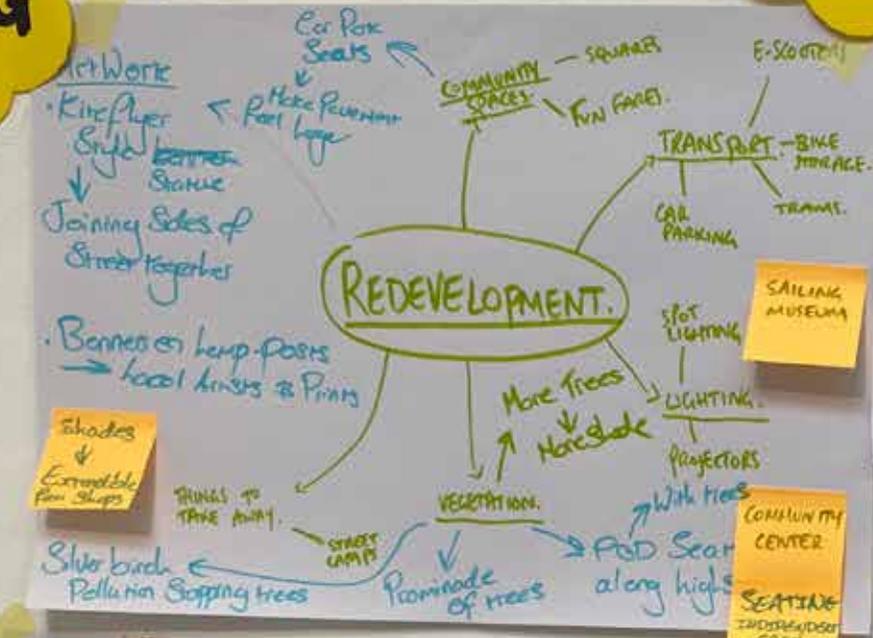
This helped create a solid foundation for the project, where they then went on to create mind maps, sketches and models in small teams. At each stage their ideas were put onto the gallery wall so we could continually reference back to and build upon them.

A large scale model of the high street allowed the children to think about how their improvements and ideas would physically be part of the real-life High Street.

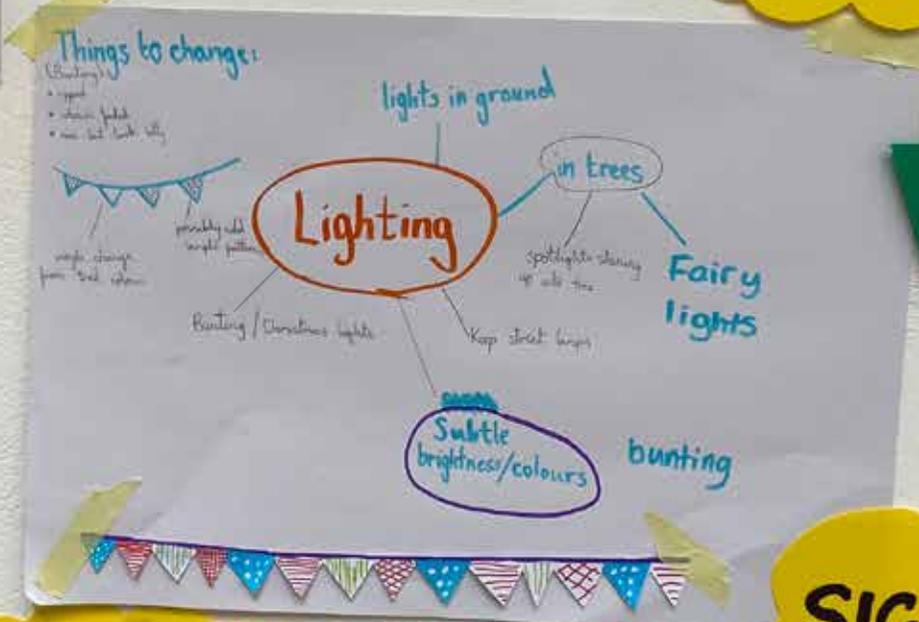


LIGHTING

GREEN SPACE



ARCHITECTURE



COMMUNITY

PARKING

SIGNAGE



Handwritten notes on a pink sticky note, partially obscured and difficult to read.

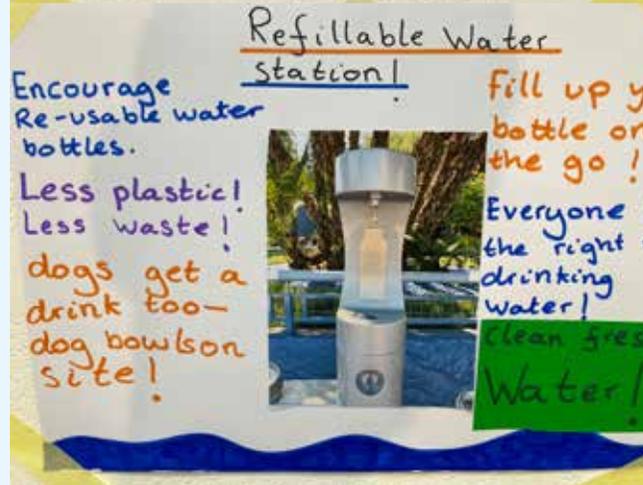
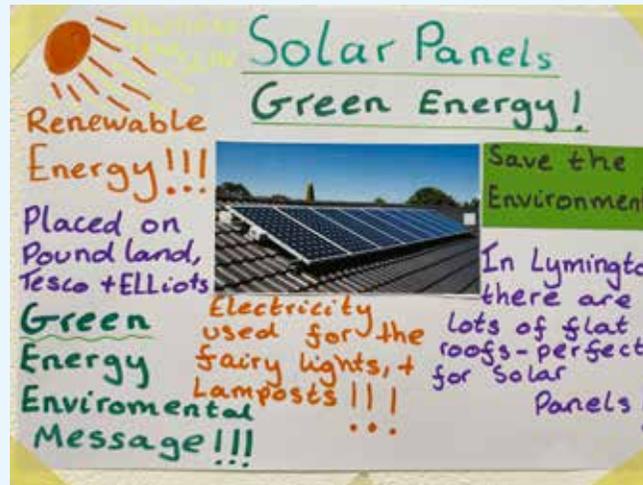
KEY THEMES:

GREEN & SUSTAINABLE HIGH STREET

Following on from the young people's initial ideas, they identified a series of key themes that they wanted to explore in more detail. These included:

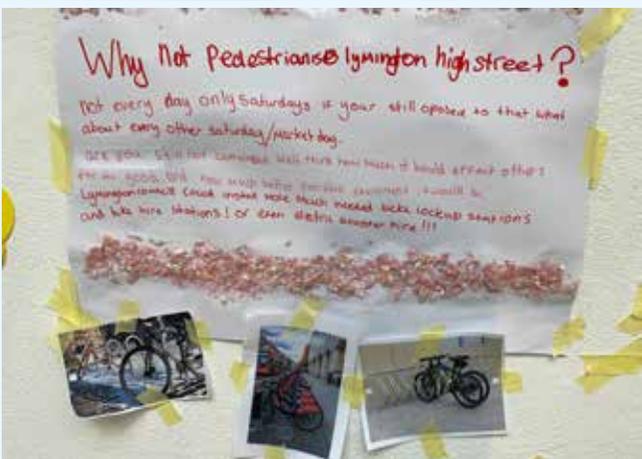
- Green and Sustainable High Street
- Public Art
- Grove Gardens
- Courtyards and Alleyways
- Architecture

Sustainability and environmental responsibility is a key theme through out any project in the 21st century, with the battle against climate change. This has been one of the key factors that the young people have looked into and researched. Looking at a variety of precedents which show ways in which eco solutions have been introduced in previous high street regeneration projects.





A number of **transport ideas** were developed that included **solar and hydrogen-cell powered public transport; the inclusion of more cycle racks and cycle lanes**; a reduction in the number of cars on the High Street. Youngsters also discussed the idea of a looping public transport system that ran constantly around the town, connecting up key points such as the hospital, marina, train station and High Street. This could even be free and funded through out of town parking charges.



The young people didn't just think about eco solutions, but literally **wanted to see a greener High Street**. All the participants felt that the High Street was grey, drab and lacking in any greenery. They wanted to see the High Street lined with trees, planting baskets and vertical planting on the front of buildings.

They went as far as wanting **flat rooftops to be opened up as gardens and café's** to make the most of the views and to improve the overall atmosphere and attractiveness of Lymington. They also felt that this was a great solution to issues of not being able to put cafe furniture out on steeper parts of the street.

The provision of water fountains, greenery, seating, colourful signage, flags and bunting all added to **make the High Street a more pleasant place to linger, spend money and visit again!**



There are a number of examples of where planting has been grown successfully across the fronts of buildings in Lymington. This is a growing trend internationally and in some cases the buildings have actually become **vertical farms growing edible crops** and flowers to harvest.

KEY THEMES:

PUBLIC ART



When the young people were asked to identify examples of public art in Lymington they all struggled to suggest anything other than the brass floor plaques created several years ago by artist Trudi Lloyd-Williams or the Guardian figures at Buckland Rings.

They felt there was a real lack of any public art that marked the town out as special or unique, or that celebrated anything of interest or historical value.

A number of ideas were suggested, such as fish sculptures or sculptural figures of salt marsh workers in the style of Henry Moore.

Some of the youngsters also made reference to the Dazzle Art that was exhibited at St Barbe Museum a few years ago and how this could be

incorporated into street and wall designs to make areas look more interesting and inviting.

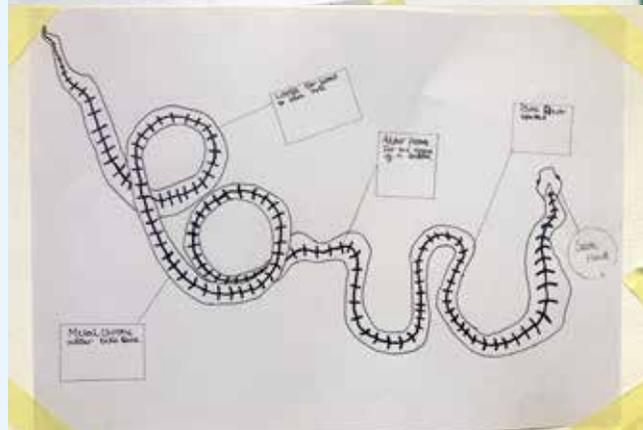
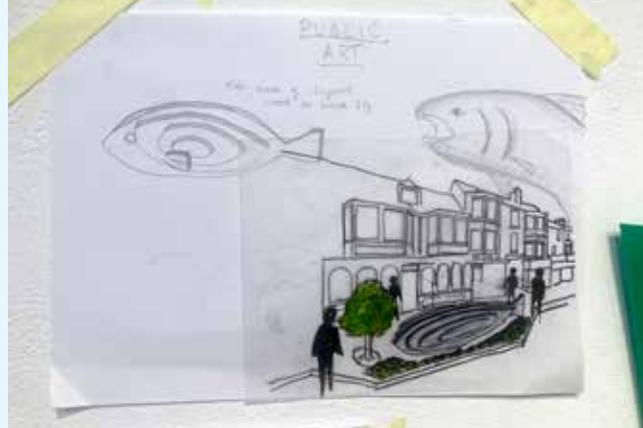
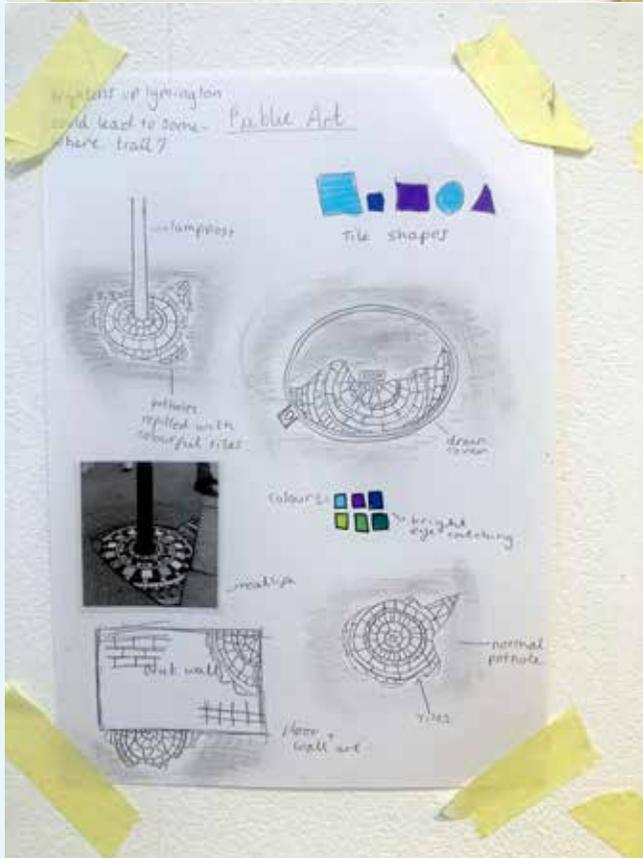
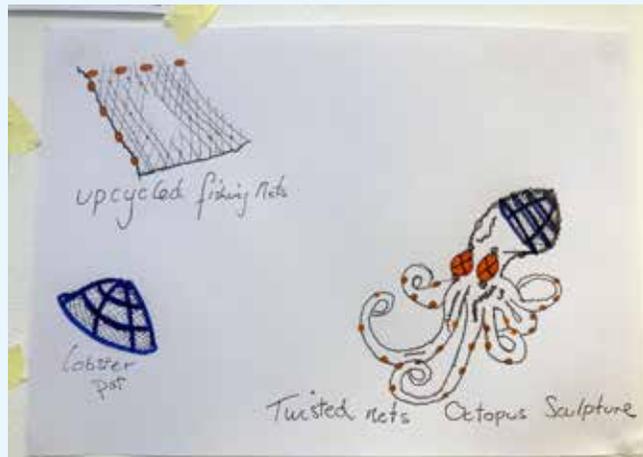
Historical references were made a number of times including a scaled down obelisk to connect with the Burrard Neale Monument at Walhampton. This was an interesting proposal as it created a resting space, slowed traffic, acted as a viewfinder and connected to a historically significant figure from Lymington.



This image shows the proposed scaled down obelisk to tie in with the Harry Burrard Neale Monument. From this position you would be able to look down the length of the High Street and see the original monument across the water. This, in turn, would **attract visitors to explore further** and learn more about Lymington's history.



This idea combines both public art and practical use, by creating a serpent style bike rack. The influence for this was inspired by the New Forest's own adders. This would **provide a really imaginative focal point** on the High Street.



Participants in the workshops felt there were plenty of **quick and relatively low cost options to brighten up the High Street** and incorporate public art. These included:

- painted street art - using patterns and decorations on walls and pavements
- decorative planters
- mosaic style decorations around the bases of lampposts and trees or on walls
- colourful bunting, instead of the obvious red, white and blue - the young people asked why local communities and artists couldn't be commissioned to design new bunting
- colourful flags and banners on lampposts - perhaps to celebrate events and festivals, or run as part of art competitions

These suggestions could lead to a constantly changing and evolving public art scene across the town, making Lymington a place people want to visit again.



This view of the scale model up the High Street clearly shows the **transformation possible by the inclusion of new trees, banners and lighting festoons**. The street feels a more colourful and welcoming place to spend time.

KEY THEMES:

GROVE GARDENS

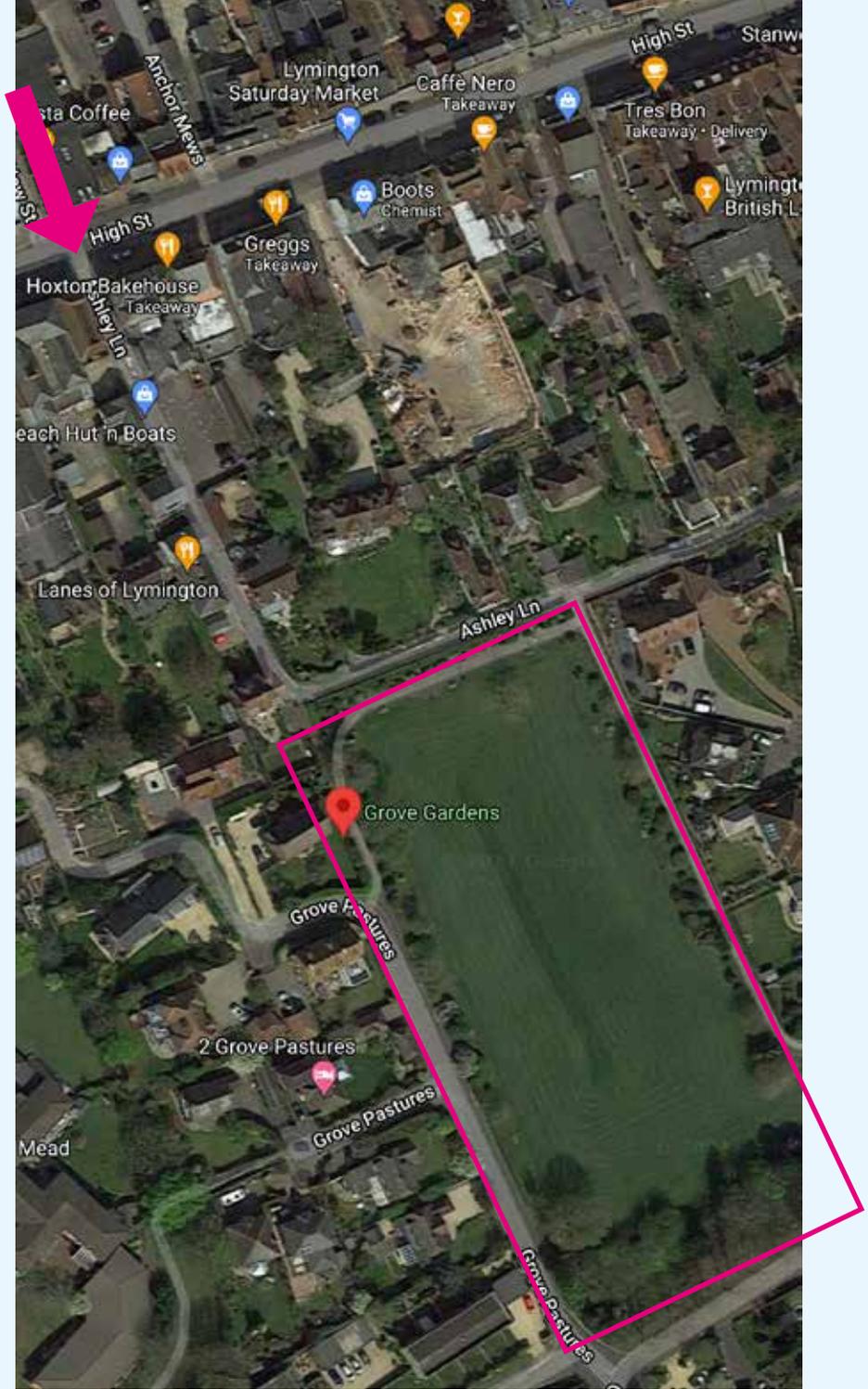


Grove Gardens was identified as a **key green space in the town that felt under used and largely unknown**, especially by visitors to the town. There are few green spaces on the High Street other than the St Thomas Churchyard.

Young people felt that it primarily needed signage and street art to attract people towards it. A thematic approach of bespoke arches over the entrance from the High Street could be used at Grove Gardens and on other alleyways across the Town.

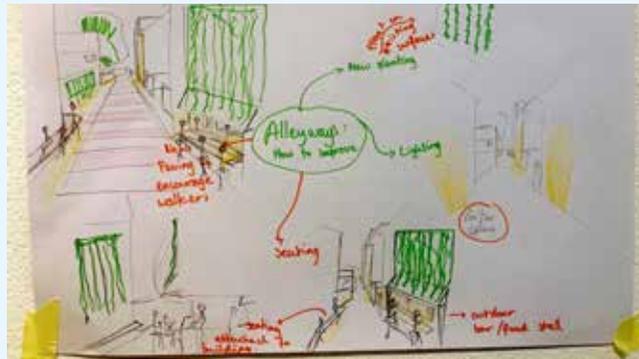
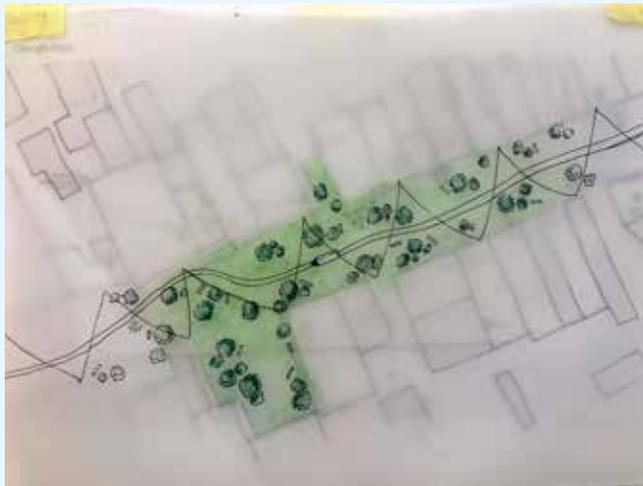
Participants felt that Grove Gardens was a lovely green space, but that there was very little to do there and wondered if providing some additional facilities would be helpful, such as play equipment, a basketball hoop or simply **more communal and interesting seating**. They also wanted to see more nature, through **a meadow area and more natural planting to keep in with the idea of a 'green town'** - especially if it was beneficial to bees and other pollinators.

The conversation around green spaces shifted to the old post office site. As this provided quite a large space, set back from the High Street the youngsters felt that it could be a great place for seating, a water fountain and more trees and planting - **creating the feel of a European style square**. This was particularly interesting as no one felt that Lymington had a real centre or focus because of the length of the High Street.



KEY THEMES:

COURTYARDS & ALLEYWAYS



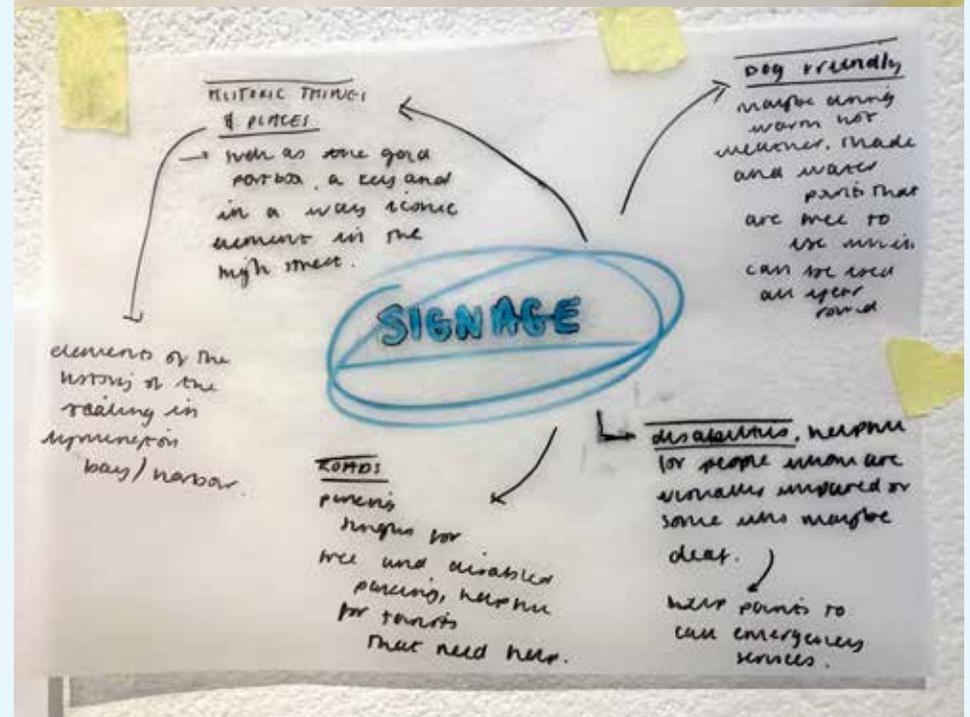
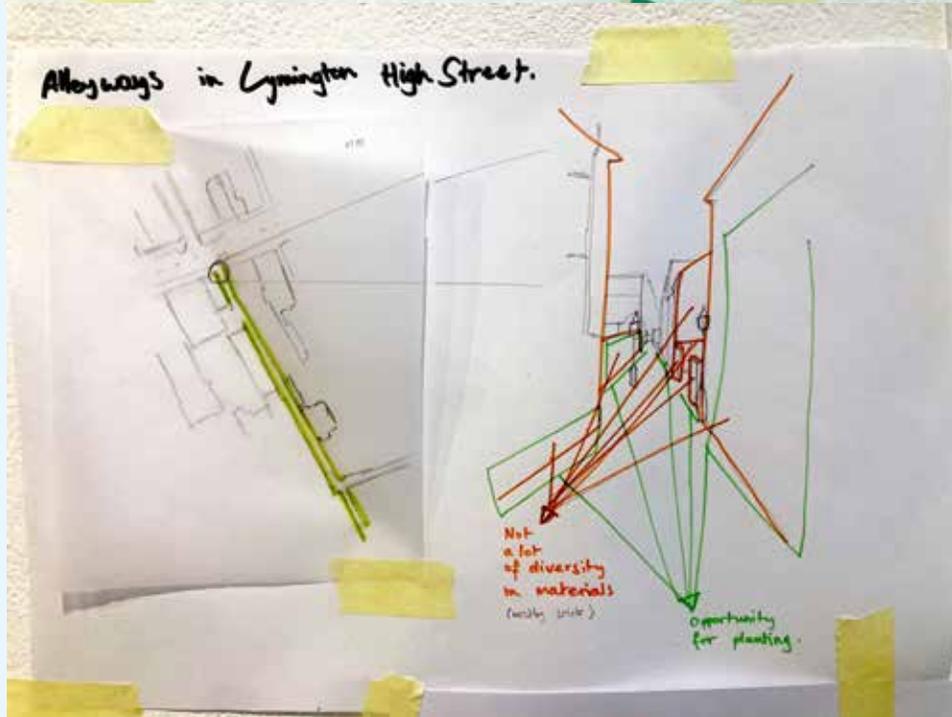
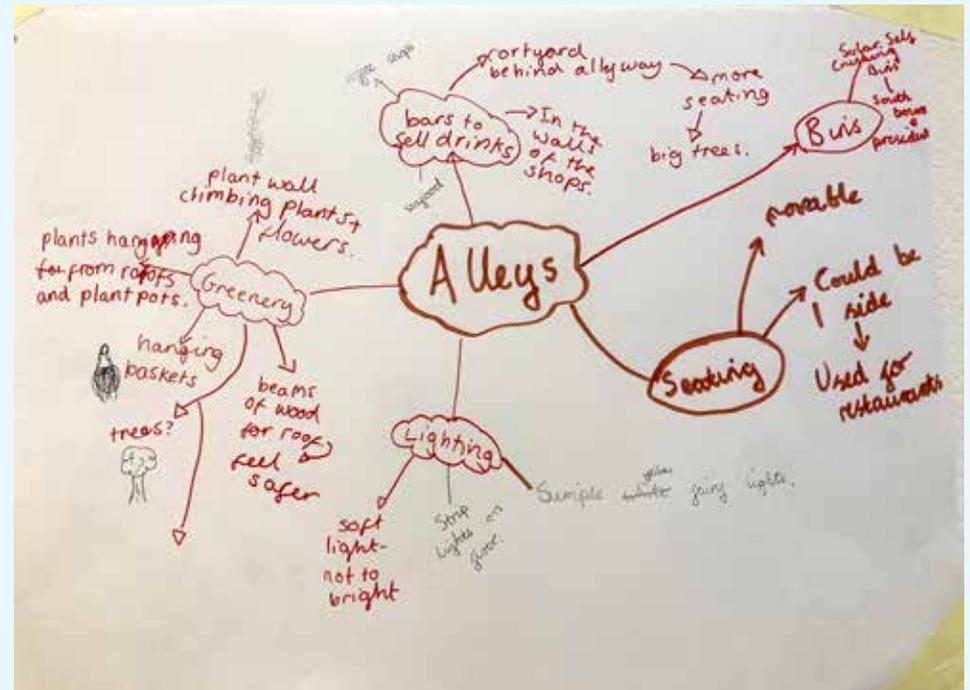
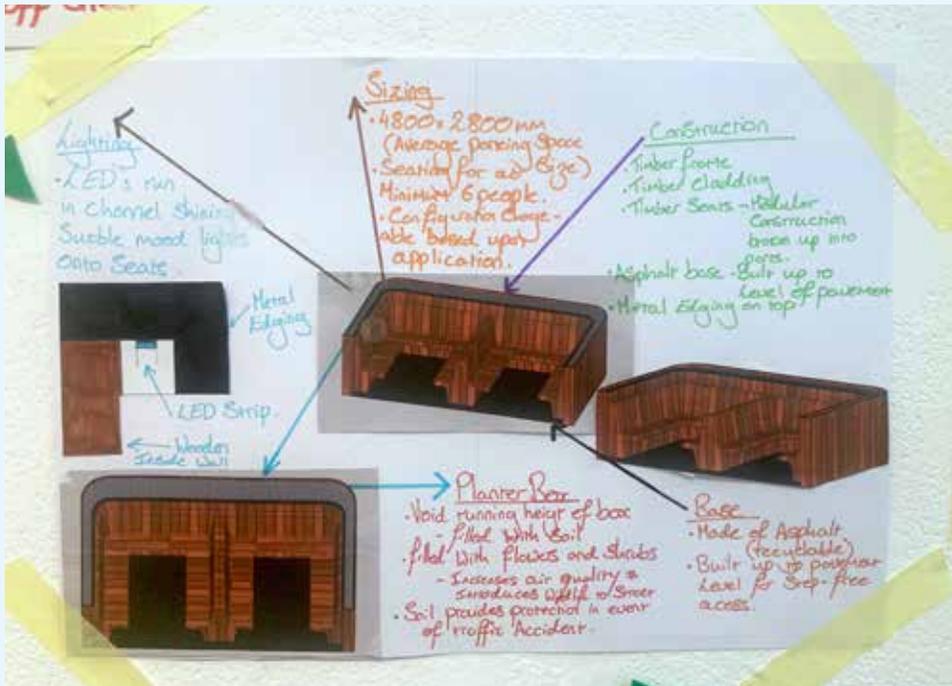
The young participants felt that there were many interesting courtyards and alleyways up and down the High Street, including secret walkways and walls running behind shops. They felt that these were not celebrated or high-lighted, therefore, much more could be made of them. Signage, artwork and themes could be used to identify these different spaces.

It was commented that **these spaces often felt private or like service yards and were unwelcoming to people**, as they were unsure if they were allowed to venture into them.

Lots of ideas suggested using more planting to lead people into these spaces - making them feel special and somewhere you wanted to explore further. **Businesses should also be encouraged to spill out into these spaces** and make much more of them.

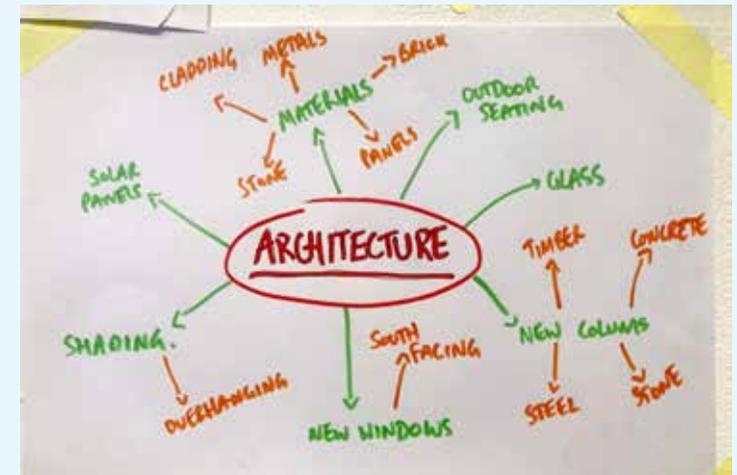
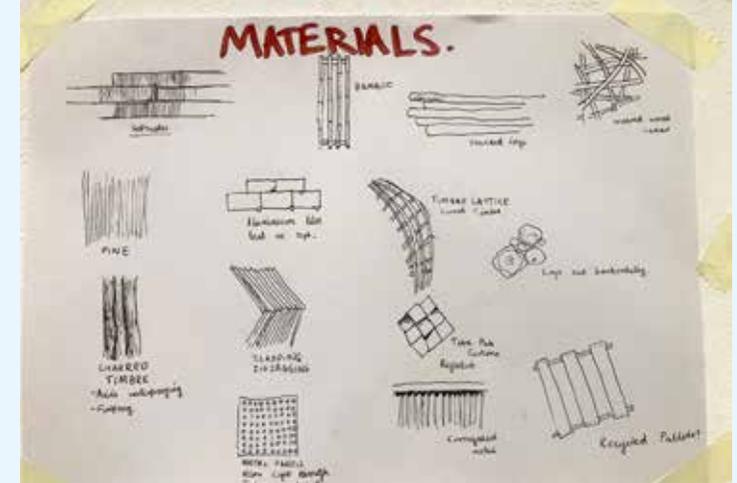
Young people felt that Angel Courtyard was one of the best examples of this with a wide variety of activities taking place and both retailers and cafés occupying the outside spaces.





KEY THEMES:

ARCHITECTURE

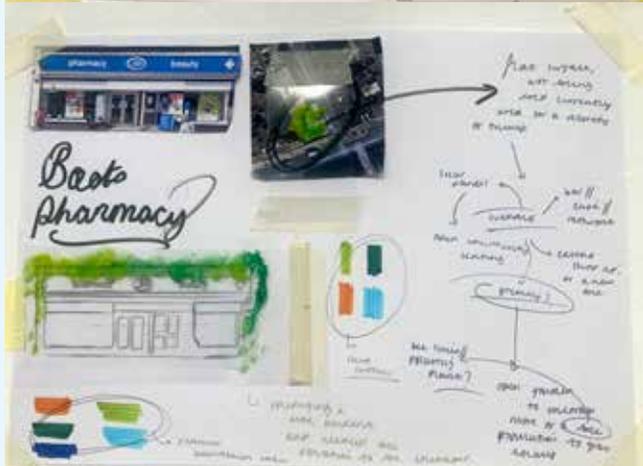
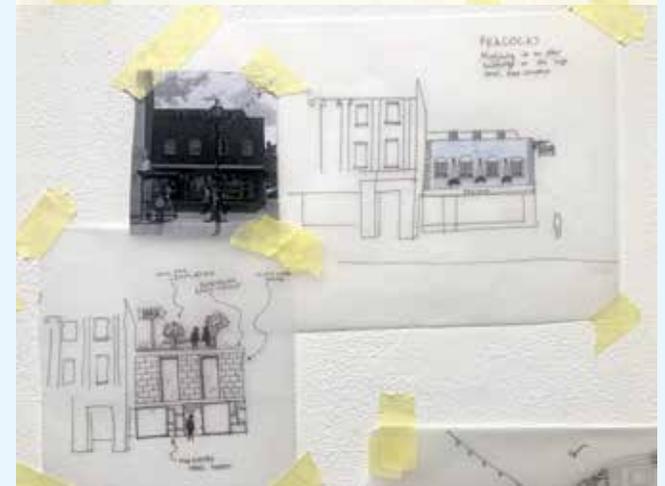
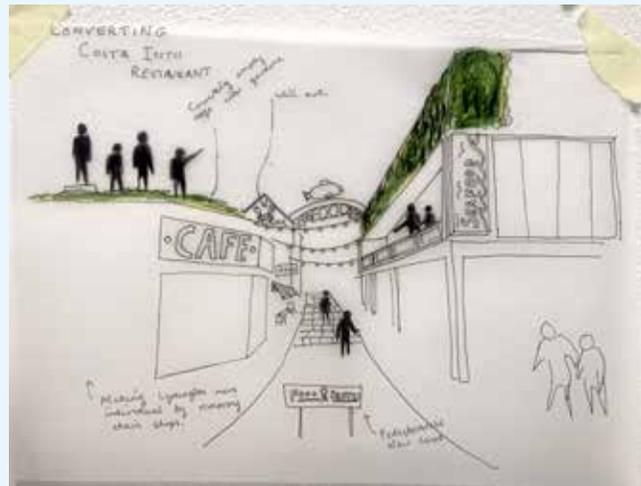


Participants understood that much of the architecture on the High Street was of historic and conservation significance and that it added to the charm and aesthetic of the town. They did, however, **identify several properties that would benefit from a substantial makeover.** Their ideas are showcased over the next few pages. Interestingly their ideas combine many of the elements already identified through other key themes. Their images really do give a feel of a **thriving and cosmopolitan town centre.**



FOLD BOLLARDS.

PEDESTRIAN



Clean air some where quiet to go.

ROOF.
The cover is decorative + keep out the rain. also is a source of shade.

The roof will have a nice view down the high street.

POUNDLAND



The roof and the top part of the shop will be used as a cafe!
Toilet will be added in on the top part of shop.
Also mabeey a lift for people with disabilities or in wheel chairs.

cafe.
Sells hot and cold drinks. hot food and...
vegetarian meals!
☺ (yey)

kind of overgrown feeling.
-wooden style.



big signs to show where it is.

Staff parking can be around the back.

more accesable to the public

IN SUMMARY



There were some very clear themes that emerged from the week long workshop. Foremost of these was 'greening' the High Street, both in terms of planting and environmentally. Every participant identified this as their number one priority.

Young people also felt there was a real lack of public art and they couldn't understand why a town like Lymington didn't have more evidence of this, with so many things to celebrate. They also felt that the use of public art was a perfect way to highlight the many alleyways and courtyards around the town and make them more attractive to visitors.

Grove Gardens was identified particularly as an under-used space that could be improved and more importantly made easier to find. It was seen as a little green oasis and respite from the busy High Street, but only if you knew it was there!

The one disappointing aspect of the weeks workshop was the lack of attendance from key decision makers at both Town and District Council level. Despite promoting the workshops extensively we had really hoped that this was a great opportunity for these key individuals to spend a little time discussing the future of the High Street with the young people taking part.

A number of Town Councillors and officers did attend the following week to see the exhibition and were very impressed by the range and thoughtfulness of the young peoples ideas. This was very much welcomed and they were encouraging that the exhibition should be shown in Lymington if possible.

CALL TO ACTION...



St Barbe Museum and Gallery will be showcasing the young peoples work as part of the Lymington High Street exhibition in January 2021.

spudYOUTH is starting in other regions, including Cornwall and London soon and this workshop will act as a blueprint for these and future workshops. Anyone interested in setting up a spudYOUTH group in their region should contact SPUD using the details below.

This report will be shared widely and made available to download at: www.spud.org.uk/spudyouth along with a film of the workshops created by film-maker Kieran Short..

It is hoped that local authorities will take interest and if possible act upon some of the key themes raised through the workshops. Young people are the future inhabitants and guardians of our towns and high streets and their voices need to be heard as part of any consultation and decision making processes.

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