

# Designing with Children

## 2Up 2Down

2Up2down is a project which arose out of the physical and social history of its location: Anfield, Liverpool, a poor area which has seen previous redevelopment plans fail. The site of the 2UP2down project is a prominent street corner with a disused bakery and three nearby empty terraced houses – all of which have been designated in this project for redevelopment with a sustainability focus. End users with housing needs were identified as future occupants and have acted as clients involved in the design process alongside URBED's architects and the young people involved. They were joined by an artist, a sustainability specialist and a wide community network, in particular 'Home Baked' the Community Land Trust which formed around redevelopment project.

### Motivation

Most of the involvement of young people in this project – 6 boys and 3 girls aged 15 and 16 – took place over a 6 month period while some workshops, expressing ideas about the future of their neighbourhood, started pre site-selection. During this time, they were inspired by artist Jeanne Van Heeswijk and then undertook creative design work with architects from URBED, led by Marianne Heaslip. A significant drive for the involvement of young people has been a desire to recognise them as community residents and to embolden them to create change: *'From the outset the young people have been encouraged to think about their future and their neighbourhood in tandem, while learning that if they work together as a community they can improve their surroundings and, with it, their life chances'* (URBED website; 2Up2Down project).

### Children's involvement

Young people's ideas were generated initially through thinking around the broad question of what it means to 'live well'. The teenagers and architects aired their likes and dislikes about buildings they had visited and they looked at

#### What

Design plans for Bakery and Residential Homes

#### Where

Liverpool, United Kingdom

#### Age

15-16

#### Group Size

9

#### Project Stage

Brief, Concept, Design Development

#### Children's Roles

Clients, Creative Inspirers, Expert Consultants

#### Timescale

September 2011 - May 2012

#### Partners

Marianne Heaslip, URBED (Architect)  
Jeanne Van Heeswijk (Artist)  
Liverpool Biennial (Funder)  
Liverpool City Council (Funder)  
The Design Council (Funder)  
The Granada Foundation (Funder)  
Santander Foundation (Funder)  
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation (Funder)  
Mondrian Foundation (Funder)  
'Home Baked' Community Land Trust (Participants)  
Young people from local schools and community groups (Participants)

precedent building projects in photographs. When they thought more specifically about the design and re-fit of the existing terraced housing locally, the participants used existing plans and drawings of similar terraced houses in the locality to think about designs that would fit the clients' needs. The identified future occupants, in client roles, were interviewed by the young people so that a clear understanding of their real needs could be understood. Environmental and sustainability themes were incorporated into the whole design thinking process as young people were asked what materials could be used and how building constituents could be re-used. Collaging and visual overlay activities were offered so the young people could see what it would look like if certain building materials were used. A sustainability specialist (Alex Moody) came along to talk to everyone to help generate useable ideas. The young people engaged in a broad and practical research experience including attendance of the Retrofit conference 2012 and construction taster sessions. Built into overall plans for funding and construction are intentions for apprenticeships in construction to be offered to the young people so that they may engage in final construction stages if they wish. A couple of the boys from the project have been keen to follow this up.

After the research and brief building stage, participants experimented with designs through a wide range of processes and activities, for example construction of 1:20 scale models of houses from cardboard; 1:200 plasticine modelling; full scale construction with cardboard within a large hired community hall. This large-scale process helped the young people to physically work through and test their designs in terms of what might be practicable and comfortable with layout of rooms, furniture, window, lights and so forth. Some of these activities have been filmed and act as a useful archive and resource (titled 'Full Scale Modelling': <http://www.urbed.com/projects/2up-2down-homebaked>). As much model-making was carried out in the Bakery building itself, it gave opportunity for the young people to measure up 'real' space and apply actual measurements to plans and designs. There was also use of a magnetic whiteboard on to which could be placed magnetised print outs of furniture and the teenagers' own drawings with white board markers.

Drawings and 3D visualisations were made by the young people; URBED were keen to always offer opportunity to change design method or activity, being responsive and flexible to modes of design that the young people felt comfortable with and as Marianne Heaslip states of the process: there was '*...discussion....always talking...*'

## Outputs and outcomes

In this project, the young people's active contribution to design was carried out across multiple phases. There were only a few areas of the design process in which the young people were not wholly involved, such as the technical design phase, carried out in URBED's offices. Even during this phase, however, URBED took the developing designs to the teenagers for feedback and incorporated key elements from their proposals, including retaining the buildings' existing front facia, use of solar panels and incorporating a winter garden/roof garden as a growing area. Although the build hadn't started at the time of writing, there were plans for the teenagers to be involved in the final construction for those who wished to take construction apprenticeships.

Another notable feature of this project is the fact that the young people were not involved in this project in isolation but were part of a context of wider adult community engagement. At times the design activities were completely intergenerational, in particular when the teenagers: talked to the future residents; joined in public meetings; joined the Home Baked Community Trust meetings and workshops; and carried out full-scale modelling in the bakery

together with adults.

Until the building phase (planned to begin autumn 2013), the existing bakery continued to act as a 'shop front' for the design programme, as a community hub and meeting place for all ages interested in the project. Although retaining communication with school leavers can be difficult, on-going contact with the young people has been made through design-updates, via a thank-you party and opportunities for both construction and bakery apprenticeship.

## Resources

2Up2Down Progress Report April 2012.

2up2Down Design Camp Report 7<sup>th</sup> May 2012.

2Up2Down. 'A Community Land Trust and Cooperative Bakery for North Liverpool'  
<http://www.2up2down.org.uk/> (accessed 2 May 2013).

Moore, R. (2013) Liverpool Biennial – review *theguardian.com*, September 23 2012. Online.  
Available: <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2012/sep/23/liverpool-biennial-review-hmr-anfield?INTCMP=SRCH> (accessed 27 November 2013).

Personal communication with Marianne Heaslip (19 April 2013).

URBED '2up2down/Homebaked' <http://www.urbed.com/projects/2up-2down-homebaked>  
(accessed 2 May 2013).



Choosing an option for treatment of rear and side elevation.  
Courtesy: URBED



Planning for living space 193-199 Oakfield Road. Courtesy: URBED



