

Sustainable Transport & Active Travel Summit-20231117_131548-Meeting Recording

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Transcript from lunchtime session with Julia Yarrow, from Human Nature

Human Nature are a campaigning development company. We design, build and run places that make sustainable living easy & attractive.

Working with businesses that have put sustainability at the heart of their business model, people who have a more applied experience: architects, engineers, travel and transport planners, Horticulturalists and so on.

And we're all really bringing together our experience and skills to design, build and run places.

By which we mean any scale really from small clusters of homes to large, quite, quite large sort of more than 1000 home neighbourhoods that do their best to inspire and enable a more sustainable way of life.

And I guess our brief is quite unusual.

The brief that we give ourselves as developers because our goal is around impacts. It's using the power of a neighbourhood to accelerate change towards a more sustainable way of life.

And so we use, we use lots of different tools and methodologies and thinking.

But and this is probably too small for you to see, but we can share afterwards.

So we look at the built form, but we also look, so we look at literally materials, we look at the design of buildings, we look at the design of streets.

We look at the infrastructure of the place, we look at the services, we look at the partnerships all around inspiring and it's and enabling a more sustainable way of life.

So this is our first project which is just down the road in Lewes.

It's the Phoenix project.

Anyone here from Lewes?

Yes, great.

Lovely to see you, umm.

And so you'll know.

You'll know a lot about Lewes and densities and it's idiosyncrasies.

It has a river running through it, the River Ouse, and this particular site is just under 8

hectares.

I don't have a pointer.

I don't think, but it's just to the left of the river that you can see there and it is currently I would say a mixture of semi derelict buildings.

It's been light industrial one way or another for several 100 years.

It's an old ironworks there and it's been being pretty neglected for the last few decades, so it's very underutilized. brownfield site in the centre of a a busy town that has a really urgent housing need and the proposal that we have put together that's in planning at the moment Planning Committee meeting on the 15th of February is for around 685 homes, but it's mixed use.

So it's mixed tenures of homes.

Mostly quite small, because that's what the Lewis market needs, but it's also workspaces, community facilities, and it's very particularly designed around the culture of sharing.

So shared spaces, shared services.

Shared facilities and also active mobility because that is, as we've been hearing all morning, has so many benefits when it comes to social, environmental as well as economic sustainability.

And you know, we're preaching to the choir here.

Even if you started the morning not being sure what the benefits of a shift modal shift to active travel or they're well rehearsed by lunchtime, but I think it's quite interesting.

You know, we're the only developer in the room and I've not been a developer for very long.

I've worked in sustainability my whole career, but from a commercial perspective, a shift to prioritizing active travel and deprioritising ownership and everyday use of the private car has really high commercial benefits as well as health and environmental and social benefits.

If we can design and build successful places that really inspire and enable this modal shift, it has great commercial benefits as well.

It means that we can unlock new sites, be they pocket developments or be they new locations because we minimize the pressure on local highways.

And that that makes a lot of sites that are currently not commercially viable, commercially viable.

And so I think that's really often overlooked in this discourse.

And then of course, we've got the other economic benefits to our collective perse, which have been discussed a little bit more today about the reduced need for public spending when it comes to the improvements in our physical and mental health, the reductions in congestion and the economic costs of that, the reductions in the, the cost to all of us of dealing with crashes and and other Rd traffic accidents.

So I think I'd just like you know that I think that's something that I'd like us to acknowledge.

Umm today that this has, you know, hard cash commercial benefits when it comes to thinking about new sites for development and redevelopment.

So this will be very familiar to you, but this is what we don't do in our approach to thinking about designing the travel aspects of where we live.

So the old model of predicts or the current.

I would say prevailing model of predicts and provide where we assume that for some reason as humans, we're going to continue to get around in the way that we have done for the last 50 years, which is basically more and more single use car, single people in many more private car, umm journeys and that we will continue to have our uh travel policies and our planning policies and so on just continuing to prioritize more and more car travel and that we will therefore provide design and provide infrastructure to meet that need and therefore we will end up with beautiful architectural triumphs like the one on the right.

So we don't do that.

We work with WSP and other experts to on a different approach of decide and provide.

So we we come from the other end, we say what is the way of life that we think is going to enhance human health, physical and psychological, that's going to enhance ecological well being.

That's going to enhance social wellbeing and what type of travel, modal split and everyday travel does that mean we decide that and then we provide the infrastructure and as well as the services that support that.

And I mean this is only one example, but in practice and design terms you get quite different priorities.

So how do we do it?

Well, I think we talk about the power of place as I mean I think basically it's pretty obvious that the way that, that the places that most of us live in, we might have really great intentions about wanting to move around differently.

But if our places aren't designed and running that way, they can actually disable us and following through on that on that desire.

So if we want to inspire and enable, we have to do that differently.

And if we've got a neighbourhood and we're designing pretty much from scratch, that's great because we can decide and provide, but that neighbourhood will always be in a wider place.

So the Phoenix project in Lewis is, as I said, quite central to the rest of the town.

So we we're one of the things we start with is by looking at how you get to, from and through the site from the rest of the town.

If you already live here, or if you already will work here, umm, where are those desire lines?

What works well and how?

Through what we do in the site, at the heart of that, can we enhance that so that everyone across the town can start to move around in a more active way and then we look at the path on the streets that we met in at the heart of that.

With that in mind, so prioritizing the the pedestrian, prioritizing the cyclist, and how we design that while and we we call it wit and mess.

I mean, I think I I think a lot of the discussion that we have about walking and cycling frankly is a little bit Poe faced, umm, you know, hands up, I don't have a driving licence.

I've never learned to drive.

I've never had a car.

I nearly 50, so I realized I'm a little bit alien and I also lived and worked in Sweden for quite a lot of quite a lot a long time.

But I think that, umm, I think that there's a risk that when we talk about this, you know, brave new future where walking and cycling and public transport are far more prevalent in our everyday lives.

People.

People's mental picture of that might be quite dry.

Might be quite unpleasant, might be quite alien.

So so finding ways to show early on a that this isn't weird, there are whole neighbourhoods, towns, even countries that are thriving pretty well in this way and bringing that right into the discussion of how place might look and work differently is very important.

This is I mean at the state at the moment we can only draw in many cases.

So this is a drawing of the sort of center of, I suppose the the new way of traveling in and around the Phoenix.

So this is just for those of you who know Lewis.

We've got Waitrose on our left, just off, off screen.

Ohh, I'd love our high tech walking stick pointer.

Thank you, Hugo.

And then we've got Phoenix schools way just off left.

Got the bus links coming in there and on the right we've got what we call a combability hub combo hub and this is a place on the edge of the site, but it's close so it's very accessible if you live and work and then you neighbourhood.

There's also very accessible if you're coming in from other parts of Lewis, which is a hardware you can see we've got ebike cargo bikes, escooter here.

We've got electric vehicle, car club and car house schemes close to the improved public transport and shuttle, so shuttle service coming in from the station, which is about what I walk it in eight minutes or there might walk it in maybe 10 or more, but it's not very far through to the health hub and so on.

So linking up with the rest of the town we got last mile logistics.

So the idea is that we plan in somewhere so that all the deliveries coming in and out of Lewis can be dropped off and moved on to ebikes and East scooters and so on, so that both serves the new neighbourhood.

But it also helps to minimize congestion and air pollution.

And so on across the rest of the town.

Anything to add on that picture, you guys?

And no.

Yeah, go and get you say that again into the thing.

Because no one will hear.

Hi I'm just now.

I was just saying that we're also improving the uh, the local junctions within the vicinity of the site so as to provide pedestrian, cyclist and Wheeler priority as opposed to the current.

The current form of the junctions, which is very much car dominated and unsafe and certainly doesn't facilitate cyclists or pedestrian trips.

Thank you.

And so I think one, one of the challenges here also that we're finding is a a challenge of imagination and a couple of people have talked about that this morning.

I think that you know it's it's great that we're, you know, we're very fortunate that we're working with a lot of experts from who who worked on really enabling active travel in many different places who are all bringing their expertise now to this site in Sussex.

But because it is so different from a new build and the new build norm in the area, there's a source of disbelief.

There's a what do you mean there's not going to be 2 cars in front of every home?

There isn't.

There's not gonna be 2 cars in front of every home.

There'll be no dedicated on street parking space in front of your home unless you're blue badge holder or you need a van or similar for work.

You can drop.

You know you can drop off, you can have if you want to own your own car, you can.

You can keep the car in the Combability hub and that might be 150 meters.

Walk to your home and so this won't be for everyone.

You know, for people who who need a wants to cars, 2.2 cars in front of their house, then there's this won't be an attractive place to live, which is OK.

Many of 685 homes anyway, but I think what we also you know we we tend to not see because it's not in our minds eye is is the the many, many upsides of how this will feel.

So that we we have so much more shared space, we have direct access to the shared facilities and this becomes a place for people across the town as well as the the people who live here.

So just lastly and then if if people I'd like to ask questions, we'd love to have a chat.

As well as UM, this UM design and provide approach where we bring together uh examples from around the world where we bring together.

We're working with amazing partners umm across sectors, bringing their expertise together.

To Lewis, we actually we really put the human at the heart of it and a lot of people that that gets said so much and I don't think it's really meant so for the last we've been working on this project now for three years.

Umm we have.

We live in Lewis.

We work in Lewis, we've been running.

Design I would say things like design, festivals, workshops as well as much smaller

one to one meetings with existing interest groups or interest groups who formed we've we've sort of formally had sessions with over 5000 people where we come together as neighbors, as people who've lived here for a long time or people who like to live or work here, people who have experienced better elsewhere, who would like that upside here as well as people who frankly think this is batshit crazy and we're lying.

***** because we're developers and want to have a shout at us and we get together regularly and we design and Co create.

So where we've got to now is is very much an aggregation of that and and because I say we have this kind of.

Poverty of imagination, because this is, you know, it feels, can feel alien and different and unbelievable.

It's also how can we even though at the moment this is a semi derelict industrial site start to bring alive ways of feeling what it might be like to live a bit differently and these are just a few fun examples from a few of our events.

Umm.

And then lastly, so we write slide order, we're looking, you know quite scientifically, if you like at the demographic of people who live and work or want to live and work in the Lewis area now.

But also, you know people, perhaps my daughters 10, you know, she's going to be our future customer.

My stepped.

My step kids are in their 20s.

You know, how can they and their colleagues live and thrive here in, in, in 10 years to come, and then we start designing with them in mind.

And so if you're able to join us for our workshop this afternoon, that's the conversation that we would like to have with you.

We would like to get your reflections on our approach and this this particular project and also then we would like to ask you to put yourself in the shoes of some of the future residents or neighbors of the Phoenix and places like the Phoenix so that we can start to pool our brain.

How to think?

Forward to think about how we can design, build and run places that really do inspire and enable this radical shift to active travel.

Thank you.

31 should we do any question?

I think people are coming back in, but I'm gonna.

Yeah, I think we got the room.

We may as well, yeah.

If anybody got any questions, you'd start.

Yeah, yeah, he's about time.

OK.

Thank you very much.

Questions in the workshop.

Thanks for your time.

You're going through workshops.

