

Home Zone Conference

'Engaging with the Community'

Workshop A: Disability Workshop

Facilitated by Janet Seymour Kirk

The problems – general:

- Other features such as planters, seating and statues may create obstacles for movement.
- Seating without backs could be very uncomfortable for people with disabilities.
- Young people hanging around could be especially intimidating to disabled people.
- Some Home Zone designs made parking difficult near to people's homes – even for those with blue badges.

For wheelchair users the problems were:

- Cobbled and other uneven surfaces may look attractive but are difficult for wheelchair users.
- The merging of road and pavement areas could be intimidating – pedestrians can get out of the way faster than a person negotiating a wheelchair.

For visually impaired or blind the problems were:

- Guide dogs have been trained to recognise traditional street layouts and do not recognise the unique design of Home Zones. Therefore the guide dogs can be confused and indicate danger even in low speed areas.
- Signing was often insufficient to alert people that they were entering a low speed area. This was especially difficult for people with visual disabilities who would not be able to see the Home Zone sign.

Solutions:

- Use of colour contrasts and surface material contrasts to indicate directions.
- Removal of sharp corners on street furniture.
- Retraining guide dogs in the context of local areas with Home Zones.
- Use of sound directions and warnings.
- Signage should be designed to maximise mobility including tactile signing.

Other Points

Some of the solutions would be very expensive to implement. Some member of the workshop had tried to meet the needs of disabled people but had their plans turned down.

CONCLUSION

There was a need for more research on this subject. Disabled people themselves were an essential source of information but designers and planners also needed to think about this issue in more detail. DPTAC are frequently being asked about Home Zone design these days but even they do not have all the answers.

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Workshop B: *Financing Home Zone initiatives*

Facilitated by Francis Terry (Social Research associates) and Kim Hills (Kent County Council).

Introduction

The workshop used as a basis for discussion a paper produced by Social Research associates on sources of funds relevant to Home Zone initiatives. This paper and points arising are summarised below.

What funds are there?

A potentially wide range of funding sources is available for undertaking Home Zone initiatives. The principal sources can be categorised as follows:

- Government funds
- Local authority schemes
- Charitable funds (e.g. Gulbenkian Foundation)
- European Union (EU) sources (e.g. Regional Development Fund)
- Private sector sources (e.g. developer contributions)

Browsing web-sites, especially those for the relevant departments of central government, such as the Home Office, Cabinet Office, and ODPM can be a useful way of gathering more information on funding.

Ways of accessing funds

It is a mistake to think that securing funding is mainly a matter of submitting an application for 'a grant'. Different, imaginative approaches were looked at, with contributions from delegates.

Other points

In discussion of funding ideas, it was pointed out that while there were many sources of help for capital spending, a successful Home Zone depended on revenue support as well, quite possibly over a longish period of time. There were also revenue implications if local authority officers were obliged to give large amounts of time to working with residents in developing and implementing a Home Zone scheme.

More information

As a result of the interest in this topic more work is being undertaken by Social Research associates to develop a fact sheet looking at Home Zone funding in greater depth. Please contact Social Research associates directly for more information.

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Workshop C: Involving Surrounding Areas

Facilitated by John Barrell and Julie Whitehouse

The workshop considered a hypothetical Home Zones that demonstrated some of the more common issues that have been identified through the emerging Challenge schemes. The overall area was one that was self-contained with a mix of residential development. Some was older terraced housing, whilst some was newer build redevelopment. Again with a mix of private and local authority housing.

Traffic calming measures had been implemented previously, but there were still calls for reduced traffic speed and intrusion. Existing community facilities had changed over the years and were not linked to the whole of the community. Existing pedestrian and vehicle routes had changed due to the change in the environment.

Proposals had identified a core area for improvement around a cleared area that had potential for redevelopment as recreational space. No interest had been shown by any organisation to redevelop this area for housing or other uses. No outdoor facilities existed for children and community facilities were only available intermittently.

No particular linkages had been formed with the existing facilities and existing community agencies had not been involved in developing proposals to date.

The main points that emerged from this Workshop were as follows :

- It is important to treat the community as a whole, identifying the needs of the area and addressing them in the most appropriate way.
- Once consultation on the Home Zone begins, do not exclude the surrounding community if they are interested.
- Play up the benefits of living adjacent to a Home Zone in terms of speed reduction.
- If possible reflect some Home Zone features in the surrounding area such as street furniture.
- Contact other Departments within your Council and get them on board. They may have access to funds that you don't, such as street lighting and environmental improvements, that you may be able to roll out in the surrounding area.
- Try to manage residents' expectations from the beginning.
- Make minor improvements to aspects of the surrounding area that need addressing such as parking layouts, play facilities and links to community facilities.

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Workshop D: *Overcoming public apathy*

Facilitated by Kristine Beuret and Kim Lampitt

Problems

Participants discussed some of the problems and issues which they had encountered in the area of public involvement for Home Zone programmes. The main points were as follows.

- The domination of a small group of residents who did not necessarily represent the majority view – this could deter people especially those not accustomed to community participation.
- Some also felt that many people did not really want to participate and this led to a broader discussion about whether the concept 'community' was a realistic concept to reflect life in the 21st Century.
- Consultation fatigue could be an issue – there were too many different calls on local people to participate.
- Many participants had found it difficult to engage with young people especially those outside school age.
- In areas of multi-occupancy it was hard to contact residents and even when this was achieved many residents felt themselves to be transitory and were apathetic about the design of the neighbourhood.
- Others spoke about the difficulties they had encountered in attempting to involve minority ethnic groups and others such as the housebound or people with disabilities.

The workshop then split into groups to discuss a typical case study about involving the public in a home zone project. As an aide to discussion each group were issued with a pack of cards showing 30+ possible techniques of public involvement based on the guidance pack developed for the Highways Agency by Social Research associates.

Report Back (amalgamated from all groups)

- An audit of prior consultation was felt to be a good start – this would give people confidence that their views had been taken on board and that things were moving on in the light of previous comments.
- Taking the consultation to the neighbourhood was considered very helpful.
- Verbal means of communication were useful – not everyone could read.

- General consultation about the neighbourhood was better than a narrow focus on the Home Zone concept.
- Piggybacking on the activities and structures of existing community organisations (especially schools) was also recommended.
- There was also a case for 'quick fixes' and a programme of continual 'happenings' – otherwise people got fed up waiting for things to happen and 'drifted away'.
- Young people and people with disabilities also needed to be involved and some of the specific techniques outlined in the guidance pack were felt to be particularly useful for these groups.
- Finally, interest was expressed in trips out to other home zones or suppliers of materials and this will be the theme of the next Home Zone conference on November 12th.

The workshop concluded that it would be helpful for different Home Zone Projects to share their most successful experiences of public involvement on the web page.