HOUSE OF LORDS

Built Environment Committee

Corrected oral evidence: Young people and the built environment

Tuesday 9 June 2026

10.30 am

Watch the meeting

Members present: Lord Gascoigne (The Chair); Baroness Andrews; Lord Bailey of Paddington; Lord Bassam of Brighton; Lord Cameron of Dillington; Baroness Griffin of Princethorpe; Baroness Janke; Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon; Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer; Lord Porter of Spalding

Evidence Session No. 4 Heard in Public Questions 33 - 44

Witnesses

I: Stephanie Peacock MP, Minister for Sport, Tourism, Civil Society and Youth, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Culture, Media and Sport; Kayleigh Wainwright, Head, Be Seen & Heard and Strategic Projects, Department for Culture, Media and Sport; Joanna Averley, Chief Planner, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

1. This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Examination of witnesses

Stephanie Peacock, Kayleigh Wainwright and Joanna Averley.

Q33 **The Chair:** Good morning and welcome to the Built Environment Select Committee here in the House of Lords. Over the last few weeks, we have been looking into the role of younger people in the built environment, their interaction with it, their engagement with it, how we inspire people from education through to training, but also how we garner that interest and allow them the ability to engage and influence what type of communities they live in.

This is the final session of a short inquiry, but we are absolutely delighted to have three very important and influential guests before us, in the form of Minister Peacock, who is Minister for Youth, from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport; Kayleigh Wainwright, who leads the Be Seen and Heard strategy in DCMS; and Joanna Averley, the chief planner from MHCLG—so we have got two departments for the price of one today. We are absolutely delighted to have you.

I think, Minister, you have been watching some of the things we have been talking about over the last few weeks. As we explained, there will be a series of questions we will ask which may fall across all three of you. Each committee member has got various areas to talk about. Obviously, the pressure is of time this morning, so as much as we can keep questions and answers short it would be appreciated from everyone. First up, I am delighted to bring in Lord Bailey.

Lord Bailey of Paddington: Morning, all. I am going to start by directing a question to Joanna. How can the Government and the built environment sector best ensure that current planning policy adequately meets the broader needs of children and young people? You could argue that, as a parent, all of my actions are for my children—so if you are answering my question, you are answering my children's questions. Is that correct, or is there more that can be done?

Joanna Averley: Thank you very much for the question—a very pertinent one. As you all know, the Government have updated and have out in draft the National Planning Policy Framework. The consultation period for that is closed and we are just evaluating the responses, but I hope members of the committee will have seen in the draft that was put out before Christmas many more mentions and actually meaningful hooks for how children and young people's interests are delivered through the planning system, both through plan making and development management. I can just highlight a few of them, but obviously could follow up with a more detailed note if that is helpful.

For example, the policies have all been restructured quite significantly in the new document. What they basically highlight is that, when you are making a plan, it is really important—as laid out in the NPPF, but also in the PPG around community consultation—that there is a proper strategy for how you engage communities; and that that strategy is kept up to

date by local authorities over time to reflect community needs and, increasingly, digital technologies and new ways of reaching out to communities. I am sure that is a question we will come on to, and again I can give you examples of some of the work we are doing in that space.

The NPPF itself is changing in nature in a way, because it is saying, "These are the policies for plan making"—what a local authority should put in their plan—but also, "Here are the national policies for when you are determining a planning application, when you have a decision in front of you as a local planning authority". What the new policies are trying to do is say, "You do not need to repeat and tweak those policies that are set out nationally at a local level, except in certain circumstances". It is embedding some really important principles which have definitely strengthened from the previous NPPF.

I shall give some examples. The commitment in policy DP3 that development should include public spaces "that are safe, inclusive, accessible to all ages and abilities and which … encourage social interaction, play and healthy lifestyles" has a very direct mention of play; again, a new mention. In the policy on streets and transport, TR4 talks about street layouts. Obviously, our children are not static; they move around our cities and they need to do that safely for whatever journeys they are making. That policy, which obviously is in draft at the minute—we are evaluating the consultation—talks about street layouts being "safe, inclusive and attractive for all users … including … to meet the needs of … children in relation to all modes of transport". Again, that is embedding principles of safe streets, active travel and independent mobility into how we design our places.

Then there is policy HC4: "substantial weight should be given to … new or improved public … infrastructure or community facilities". Often when communities are reacting to new development, they say, "Okay, we have seen the homes, but where are the community facilities that go with it?" Within the NPPF draft text, we are very clear that, where facilities are being improved, including those for children and families, that process of improvement on those individual projects should engage communities.

What you are seeing in the NPPF is the set-out of a much more forward-leaning set of mentions, and therefore activities for local authorities to pick up in how they prepare their plans, engage their communities, and then consider planning applications that are in front of them. I can elaborate on that.

Q34 **Lord Bailey of Paddington:** Thank you. Stephanie, as the Minister for Sport, Tourism, Civil Society and Youth—that is quite a lot, and there is culture and media as well; I missed that bit—how do you see the planning system representing children, making sure that they come through? This is a bit I am adding: I think children are simpler to cater for than teenagers as they transition up. How would you like to see those things work themselves out?

Stephanie Peacock: Thank you very much for the question, and thank you for holding the inquiry and having us here this morning. Joanna has given a really thoughtful explanation about what the Government is trying to do with the reform of the planning system. I was quite struck by the evidence that you heard in one of your previous sessions about how young people see the built environment in a much more honest way. I think the words from one of the witnesses were "speak truth to power". They do not necessarily look at it as pounds and pence and property; they look at the space that they engage with.

In terms of getting young people's voices heard, I can very much speak to the work of my department through the national youth strategy, and I am sure we will come on to talk about Youth Voice and how we constructed that strategy. Lisa Nandy, the Secretary of State, was very clear that there had not been, for decades, a cross-government strategy. That is why, in formulating that, we had the biggest conversation that any Government has had. We heard lots of different things about lots of different subjects, including about how young people do want to have a say in their area, they do have thoughts and they do want to engage. I can speak also as a constituency MP on how people feel they have a say and how they do not always feel that say is reflected. That is why the points that Jo made are really relevant.

Lord Bailey of Paddington: I have been a community worker for getting on for 40 years now, and one of the painful things about that is going back to a community and saying, "They are not going to do what you want. What you want is not going to be accepted", or "There's a competing set of interests that are equally as valid as yours". Do you feel like that is dealt with? As an MP, how would you deal with that?

Stephanie Peacock: That is the inherent challenge of planning, which I am sure Joanna can speak to. That is why the planning system is there: to make decisions about where we build, what we build, and what we need. I can speak, as I say, from my own constituency experience: inevitably, sometimes people do not want to see a development in their local area. But there are other times, and I was struck by this in in my own area. Someone came to my surgery and I thought they were going to say, "We really do not want these 400 or 500 houses". But it was not that; it was that point around infrastructure and around support. Joanna can probably add a little bit more about that tension in the planning system, but when you are talking about this to children and young people—with any people, to be honest—it is really important to be very straight and not to give false hope. Again, one of the pieces of evidence you have heard was: if you are talking to young people about their area and it is a new town that is going to be five or 10 years down the road, be really clear about the parameters of that conversation. But I wonder if Joanna wants to expand on that.

Joanna Averley: Thank you, Minister. As we all know, planning inherently is about creating the environments for the future that our communities need. It inevitably is all about a process of constant change

and evolution as well. What is really powerful in the inquiry that you are doing is that you are saying, "What is the role of young voices?"—to some extent, they are saying, "Is this place meeting my needs and my requirements?"—rather than voices that are established, have what they need and can reflect on, "I have my home; I have my established community; I have my job; it's all settled; please do not change anything".

There is a role for young voices in looking to the future and saying, "This is where"—for example—"more affordable housing is important to a community. I want to be able to continue to live in the community where I grew up", hence the Government's emphasis on building affordable homes in the communities where they are needed. A young voice will, as the Minister was saying, have a different perspective on the future, and that is really powerful.

What is really interesting in the planning system and the point of inflection that we are in at the minute is that we have had very low local plan coverage. On the strategy for your place, in which you can engage your community in that process of change for the next five or 10 years on the homes, infrastructure, public space, improvements to our environment, and the play spaces that we need, we have had very low levels of up-to-date local plan coverage. As of today, we have obviously got some plans going through the old-style local plan system, and increasingly we have 100-plus plans starting to come through to the new plan-led system.

The objective of the Government is to have universal local plan coverage, so that you can both have that conversation with your community about the future and have some of that debate about trade-offs, because planning is often about trade-offs, benefits and disbenefits, and harms and improvements. That conversation can happen up front between local politicians, local officials and communities. As we move into a more plan-led system, there is space to have those conversations. In the new system, we are very much saying, "Be smart in your local plan; be digital in how you engage, where that is right; use traditional methods when that is right; have a conversation with your community and lay out the options for the future". We are moving into a space that has this opportunity to be much more engaging and smarter in how it engages—again, I can give you examples of some things we are doing—and, to some extent, where local authorities have a proper strategy conversation with their places.

I will quickly mention the reintroduction of strategic planning, which you may want to come back to. Mayoral combined authorities—and, for the time being, combined strategic planning groups outside of mayoral combined authorities—will also be preparing strategic plans. That is an even bigger conversation about how a city might evolve; obviously, we have been doing it for a long time in London. Again, with these plans, people can look at not just their neighbourhood level and their immediate community but the wider functioning of a place to work, a travel-to-work

area, a broader environment and a broader community. Those two layers of conversation will probably have to ask slightly different questions of detail, but again there is lots of opportunity to do that in quite a new way, engaging particularly young people in their future.

Lord Bailey of Paddington: There is a lot of opportunity in the strategic planning. Planning a place as an island is always a mistake. The wider you make that plan, the more effective it normally is.

Q35 **Baroness Griffin of Princethorpe:** I am Theresa. It is wonderful to have you all here; thank you very much. I know that Kay will come on to this in more detail in a moment but, Joanna, we also have examples of good practice across the north, as well as being London-centric. I particularly welcome the national youth strategy. We have got a lot of scope within that, but how will the Government ensure that children and young people's views are properly embedded in local planning and wider place-based decision-making? We have heard the evidence that involving young people early improves design, reduces risks and creates a sense of ownership. There are very good examples of, for instance, intergenerational living and working. But, if I may, I am currently dealing with a piece of casework—apologies to fellow committee members who have heard this before—where there is no safe pedestrian crossing to a primary school. Specifically to Joanna, how do we look back on scenarios where planning has been granted but the community facilities have not been fulfilled? There are plenty of examples of that.

Joanna Averley: Thank you for the question—there was a quite a lot in there. I will mention a few things about learning from mistakes and setting out both national policy and guidance, about what a good result looks like and how we give local authority decision-makers and communities, who are discussing projects that are in front of them, the tools to analyse and ask for the right outcomes for them. The *Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance* has also been issued in draft, and we are analysing the consultation responses on that. That will follow the publication of the NPPF in its final form. Importantly, it brings together documents that are already out there, including the *National Design Guide*, the *National Model Design Code*, and the PPG for design. It gives you a menu of the issues to think about when designing a new bit of neighbourhood or a new development. It very firmly talks about how to engage people in that process: how you lay out a new development, how you deal with nature, and how you deal with how people move around the place. It is a very people-centred approach to how we design.

What is really powerful about it is that it draws on many lessons over the last decades as to where we have done things well and where we have not done them that well. I mean lessons on the shape of development, but also on the principles of how you engage communities in an increasingly smart way, and how you use things like master plans and design codes to help secure the quality of the outcome.

To your point about developments coming forward that then do not deliver on the social infrastructure, the department is very conscious

that, when it comes to housing schemes, there is often a dependency, particularly when you are developing at scale. For example, regarding education provision, a primary school might be part of a development, as might a GP surgery. To some extent, the contract between the community and the developer is that the impacts of the development involve a wider social, environmental and sometimes transport infrastructure being delivered. Sometimes the delivery of that social infrastructure is more complex, because it is reliant on a GP or the funding for a school, or whatever it might be.

We are doing a lot of work, particularly in a programme called the New Homes Accelerator, on looking to unlock where things get sticky, which means that a development does not happen and is held up, or those facilities do not result. We are very conscious of that contract between communities, the planning system and the developer, where it is not just the homes but the infrastructure that that community needs, and which the existing community will benefit from. One of the most powerful areas that is showing really amazing signs is how people are now laying out the spaces between homes—for example, dealing with biodiversity net progain, sustainable urban drainage systems, and the provision of play, both formal and informal, within housing developments. Those things are coming together very strongly in how housing developments are laid out, and you see a continuing improvement and sophistication as to how they are delivered.

Stephanie Peacock: In terms of how we make sure that young people are involved in the planning system and the existing challenges for local communities, there are a couple of examples I would share. You might well be familiar with the work of Greater Manchester involving young people in planning. An example from Ipswich also comes to mind. Last Tuesday, I signed the Power of Youth Charter with the #iWill movement. We had young people in the department to mark that signing, including a number from Ipswich. If you look at the work that Ipswich has done, it has really worked to design the new town plans with young people. There are some good geographic examples of where young people are involved in planning. Of course, the challenge is to make sure that that is happening across the board. That is why things like the Power of Youth Charter are helpful and important. While I have signed up on behalf of the DCMS, I have written to all departments to encourage them to do the same. At its heart, it is a set of principles that puts meaningful youth engagement at the heart of decision-making. I am sure we will come on to talk a little bit about the youth strategy and how we formulated it, but I can give a number of examples of how we have done that as a department and as a Government forming the youth strategy.

I can also give an example from my own area of Barnsley. We have had a complete transformation of the town centre in recent years: a £10 million youth zone investment and a skate park. Both the youth zone and the skate park were co-designed with young people. The youth zone is called Base71, and the design and branding were done with young people in Barnsley. When I went to visit in November, ahead of its launch in

January, the Young Mayor of Barnsley showed me around. She not only showed me the facilities, which are phenomenal, but also talked to me about how young people in Barnsley had been engaged. While it is a fabulous facility, I am mindful that the area that I represent is a collection of towns and villages to the south of Barnsley. There is the question of how we get young people from, for example, Goldthorpe—which is the furthest area that I represent—to access those facilities. This is something that the Secretary of State often talks about. Yes, we want to invest in places for young people to go, and we have seen a significant reduction in the last 15 years, but sometimes it is about that connectivity. The previous Labour council provided free travel for under-18s to try and do that.

Baroness Griffin of Princethorpe: I find that really encouraging. Kayleigh, do you want to add anything?

Kayleigh Wainwright: There are some really good examples around the country of young people being involved in planning. One of the issues is that it is not consistent. One of the things we are doing as a department is looking at what guidance and frameworks we can provide to local authorities or other partners to enable young people to be involved. Part of that is around how we can raise the profile of Youth Voice and participation through things such as the Power of Youth Charter and our work with local authorities and partners at a local level.

Baroness Griffin of Princethorpe: We need to champion the youth charter in this House as well.

The Chair: I wonder whether there are any examples you are aware of where youth councils have been involved in the process as well? Has that come up?

Joanna Averley: The investment that DCMS is doing, the co-ordination across the youth strategy and the support for youth councils is a clear opportunity. As I said, as local planners get back into plan making and keeping the plans up to date, they are turning to their youth councils as young people who have started to engage, who have a view and who will willingly be an important voice in local plan making. The opportunity to do that at a strategic level is also really powerful. To some extent, we have a ready-made opportunity for local authorities to turn to those youth councils and say, "You're part of this conversation".

We have examples in the digital space. For example, through the PropTech fund we have done an awful lot of investment in how you use digital engagement to engage in all sorts of different aspects, and innovate to speed up the planning system and improve the inputs to it and outcomes from it. A couple of those examples involve designing how you reach out to young people, with young people in the design so that they are directly saying, "This is what will work for me and my cohort". Everybody is different, people will engage in lots of different ways, but engaging them in how you design a system, not just in how you reach out to talk to people, seems really important.

Q36 **Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer:** Obviously, the Government are very determined to move this agenda forward, and what you have said so far is encouraging. Going back to what Kayleigh said, there are obviously quite a lot of places that have not really engaged yet and you will need other levers to encourage them to engage. Besides your strategies, I want to concentrate on those other levers.

One of the most striking pieces of evidence we have had was from Fiona MacDonald about the social value framework, who said that if you engaged for two hours with 34 children, it was worth £33.86, and if you spent the same time with a group of adults it was £7,000. What capacity do the Government have? Do they have the intention to change that social value framework proportion so that children and youth are valued more?

Stephanie Peacock: I was really struck by those figures that you heard in your previous evidence session. Of course, the social value model dates back to 2012 and currently sits under the Procurement Act 2023. Having listened to the evidence, I spoke to Minister Ward, the relevant Minister in the Cabinet Office, about this. I will give two examples: one is broad, on behalf of the Government, and one is from my department. It is Minister Ward's responsibility and I told him I was coming to have a conversation with you today.

In effect, the message he gave me was that social value is incredibly important and that the Government are reviewing the definition through consultation with voluntary groups and trade unions. I am sure he will be very interested to hear specific examples from the committee. Perhaps I can write to him with that particular question and figure. I was struck by the disparity and there is certainly scope there through the review of the definition to potentially address that. Obviously, while that is a Cabinet Office lead and it owns those pieces of legislation, it of course falls to all departments to think about the social value.

A good example from my department is the investment in the Universal theme park in Bedford. I was pleased to visit it with the Chancellor last week. We will see 28,000 jobs. It is a £6 billion investment. The Government are putting £1.3 million into rail and road. But as part of that huge investment, Universal has made a specific commitment to work with local colleges on internships and apprenticeships. Something like 80% of the workforce is likely to be from Milton Keynes, Luton and Bedford. Speaking on behalf of the DCMS, we know that such an investment will have a huge impact for our creative industries and tourism sector.

Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer: The work you are going to do in the social framework is very encouraging. All power to your elbow on the that. I wish you success. The other lever you have in changing the culture is to spend more time training people and making sure local authorities have got the message about procurement and writing those procurement frameworks correctly. Who will be occupied with that. Is that something you have given much thought to?

Joanna Averley: Lord Porter will be aware of one of the things we do very proactively, as he has worked closely with the Local Government Association as we roll out change in the planning system. We fund the Planning Advisory Service that sits within the LGA and has a productive and constructive relationship with local authorities across the country, doing things such as peer reviews of their services. Through that, when we are seeking to change quite a lot within a system that ultimately is very much delivered at local authority level, or strategic authority level, we fund a change programme and the Planning Advisory Service helps us to reach out directly to local authorities. Often, what they are finding is that learning from each other is as powerful as anybody telling them what to do. For example, when we have done things such as rolling out biodiversity net gain—quite a new technical system within the planning process—a cohort of local authorities get together and exchange how they are doing different things. For example, how social value might be judged in procurement is the sort of thing we can work with the LGA on and talk about how you reach out to local authorities and support them in that process. We fund those sorts of programmes.

Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer: Lastly, are there any other levers you can think of that I have missed out, besides the bottom line, which is something that is often pulling in the opposite direction?

Joanna Averley: I have just a thought; I will want to go away and check this. When we are doing digital investments and testing how far you can use digital, we are monitoring the impact of that very carefully—for example, how many people you reach out to in consultations and how many respond. One of the ways of judging whether something is impactful, if you want to reach more young people through digital engagement, is: does it genuinely work? When you are going through any change, doing a proper monitoring evaluation process to check impact and outcome seems to be an important aspect of rolling out anything new.

Kayleigh Wainwright: One of the things we know is that youth work has a big direct economic value. In the long term it can impact the economy and, obviously, a person's life. Through the strategy we are investing £500 million in impacts in those youth services. Youth services play a critical role in helping young people to have their voice heard and facilitating those conversations. There is a lever there in raising the profile of youth services through the work that the department is doing and helping local authorities to build back that capacity.

Lord Porter of Spalding: On PAS, it is not a massive sum of money for the Government to spend, in the greater scheme of things, but it is one of those brilliant example—if other departments could see what it delivers—of the right amount of money with the right people through the right place. It is a universally well-received service across the sector. You will not find anybody in local government who has a bad word to say about the PAS team. That is very unusual in that sector, because they have a lot of bad things to say about a lot of people. That is the nature of

the beast. It is an unsung hero of where the Government actually get it right, and something that other departments should be trained in so that they can all pinpoint chunks of money for neat fixes to problems.

Joanna Averley: It is about £3.5 million a year.

Q37 **Baroness Andrews:** I just want to follow up on something that both Stephanie and Joanna have been saying about social value framing, as it is very impressive. Stephanie, you have been chasing other Ministers. That is co-ordination in practice. Within the notion of social value, we are wrestling with the problem of how you engage young people, not simply making sure that their interests are represented and their own particular concerns are addressed for their own space, their own activities, and so on, but with shape and place making as a whole. Is it possible in the development of the social value framework to distinguish between the social value that comes when children and young people have different interests and different needs, whether they are fully engaged in making their own places, and their voice as future citizens—indeed ageing in place, hopefully? How do we capture that in relation to the social value framework as a whole? There is a sort of interior element and then there is the holistic element as well. Is it possible to do that?

Stephanie Peacock: I will come in first and then will hand over to Joanna. Specifically on the social value framework, it already has core provision for young people to break down barriers to opportunity and to facilitate access to pre-work training and apprenticeships. Whether that is working in practice is another matter, but I am keen and interested to see the work that the Cabinet Office is doing, which I referred to earlier, because there is scope to very much feed in all the conversations you have had. I think you make a broader point that is much wider than the social value framework, which is about young people having a say on their ideas, issues and challenges. While a lot of the issues they face will be unique to growing up, they are actually concerned about a lot of the issues that adults are concerned about: feeling safe in the community, access to healthcare, and whether they can get a job.

One thing that we found in the conversation around the youth strategy and the research that went into it was this idea of feeling safer in one's community, but also the impact of the cost of living. If you cannot get the basics in life, it is really hard to think about the future. The other point they made was that they all interlink—so if you have mental health challenges, you have money worries, and you do not have anywhere to go, and all that interlinks. That came out very clearly in our conversations with young people.

Kayleigh, I do not know whether you want to add any more detail to that, and then perhaps on the social value framework.

Kayleigh Wainwright: What we found in the research is that young people really want to have a say; they want to feel part of their community. As the Minister said, lots of those things are what adults face as well, and there is something about how we support those

intergenerational conversations in that community. What is the role of partners in that community to enable those spaces to happen? When we launched the strategy, we supported the youth sector and others to have those conversations with young people to think about how we are feeding that back, what that means for their local area and how can they take that forward.

Baroness Andrews: Excellent.

Stephanie Peacock: I wanted to add that during the construction of the of the strategy, one in three young people told us that they just do not know how to influence local decision-making, and I am sure you have heard similar evidence in different ways. We were really struck by that. I can perhaps touch on how we put together the strategy and how we had those conversations.

Joanna Averley: Just to come to the specific point about how the voice might have impacted on the place itself—the place-making point—I think you are asking a question about what is referred to as post-occupancy evaluation: who goes back and checks, looks at a new place and says, "Okay, is it working for the people that live there, and what impact has it had?" Our record of doing post-occupancy evaluation on housing is a little bit mixed. We are currently just undertaking a housing audit. They have happened sporadically over the last 20-odd years, and we in the department are currently doing a housing audit right now, which will be familiar to you—we did the first one in the noughties. That will be quite an interesting set of responses, and it is a really deep dive into how the place is succeeding in terms of wider place making.

The other thing I would reflect on is how we exchange the best out there and learn from the best. I have the extreme pleasure of chairing the jury for the Housing Design Awards. This is the power of post-occupancy evaluation and going back and looking at things. Often, when we go around and visit the shortlisted schemes, the planning officer will be with us, and the architects, and we have the privilege of going into a few homes that are occupied. The planner will never have had that chance before, and neither will the architect. I have two examples to give you, which are interesting for different reasons.

The first is a scheme in Middlesbrough which was originally some housing clearance from housing market renewal, and a housing association over the years has incredibly carefully kept its mettle and stayed on what it wanted in terms of a place-making outcome, in an area which had social problems, and it could have transferred to the new housing layout. What you have is family housing and some older people's housing, with really successful communal gardens. There is just that care and attention; obviously it is within a housing association environment, where it will then be there to manage and maintain and look after it, but it is an incredible success from my point of view.

Then there is another scheme in Lewisham, which is interesting from another point of view. It is a very high-quality scheme of housing for

older people—which always shocks me to the core, because you only have to be 55. What is really interesting about that is that they have a very interesting approach where two of the apartments are let to local university students, and those university students have to do an hour a month, which can be anything in a really lovely communal space. Some of them DJ and some of them might cook, so that intergenerational point is brought out very directly and intentionally by how that housing is managed.

There are some really innovative things and the power of exchange of practice. I commend the Housing Design Awards for you to look at. It is just a very rich source of information and inspiration of how the most careful developers are doing schemes incredibly well and seeing those benefits and that post-occupancy evaluation—a very dry term, but the reality is about changing the lives of the people who live there.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I suggest we move on to education with Lord Cameron.

Q38 **Lord Cameron of Dillington:** Welcome everybody and thank you for coming. This committee did a school survey on the built environment and 900 pupils responded, which is the highest response rate that the Lords engagement team has ever had, so this is a subject that clearly matters to youngsters and attracts their attention. Bearing in mind that if you are thinking about what you want your built environment to look like, you are probably thinking and learning about what your community and your society should look like at the same time. We as a committee—if you have not already guessed—think this is an important subject.

I was wondering how we are going to ensure that access to this learning about the built environment is more universally available and not dependent upon a small number of exceptional schools or slivers of the curriculum in various subjects. I do not know who wants to answer it—perhaps the Minister for Youth might want to have a go first. How are we going to ensure that access?

Stephanie Peacock: I will start and then I think Joanna will have some quite good, specific examples to share with you.

I was struck by your first evidence session. There were some good examples of the industry reaching out to schools and going in to do a particular kind of inspirational session for young people, but clearly the challenge is that that does not happen in every school. I see that across the board as a constituency MP; I see certain schools have certain interests and are good at reaching out, while others, for whatever reason, do not have that. Obviously I meet with the Department for Education very regularly, and we have had the curriculum review as a Government.

It is a challenge to make sure that things are universally applied or that schools get equal opportunities for things. Clearly there is huge opportunity across the built environment for careers that can be very creative and very practical and hands-on. I think about the schools that I

visit in my own constituency and about how a lot of the examples you heard would be really inspirational for young people.

That specific point about how we make sure it is scaled and joined up I will very much take back to the Department for Education, but I think you might have some good examples, Joanna.

Joanna Averley: Thank you—that is a great question. We in the department and the Government are very conscious of supporting local authorities in how we have enough people who have built environment professions to basically service the smart planning system that we are rolling out. There are huge job opportunities in local government and we are doing lots of very direct investment. I will talk about that in a minute, because it is relevant—about entire career paths and how young people can see that there is a career that is attractive to them in the public sector as well as in the private sector. But obviously our emphasis is on having well-resourced and empowered local authorities, particularly taking their planning responsibilities very seriously.

To speak to schools directly—I can come on to the broader professional work that we are doing, if that is helpful—from a personal level, I have two sons who are very keen geographers through their school careers, and it is always striking when they come home and they are basically studying projects you worked on; I am showing my age. It is in the human geography regeneration category. Schools, rightly, flex in how they teach the curriculum, but the connection between what children are learning and career paths is not always very obvious. As you indicate, it would be very reliant on teachers who would know about the career path that would be relevant to what they are learning about. We can talk about the organisations nationally that work directly with schools—there are some great things going on across the country and in the work that we are doing with them—but there is probably work to do on the connection between what you are learning and your life choices in terms of careers. We are doing particular work, and we will continue to have conversations, with the professional bodies—each of which, whether it is the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, the Royal Town Planning Institute, the Royal Institute of British Architects or the Landscape Institute, have school programmes—but how we cross-sell getting into the built environment as a career choice is an opportunity that we could be better at.

Then, really importantly, there are construction jobs and that career path. There have been some really powerful recent announcements from the Department for Education on the £96 million for regional funding to support tens of thousands of new construction placements from this September. That connection to all those different pathways into careers in the built environment seems really important to me and to this Government.

We are in two spaces where, as you recognise as a committee, there are some brilliant organisations across the country doing work to engage young people in the built environment, including in both an education and

a non-education environment. There are things within the curriculum that could probably better connect into career paths, as in describing some of the career choices available to you if you are interested. Then we are doing huge amounts of work in the graduate space on getting people into local government. Do you want me to mention that now?

The Chair: Sure.

Joanna Averley: This Government are committing a lot of money to supporting getting more planners into local government. Some of the basics involve giving an underpinning to fee income and the significant change in how local authorities charge for their planning services. That now includes local fee-setting, so that local authorities can get to a full-cost recovery model for development management services. In a sense, they have been running at a deficit in terms of those services, and they have had had to cross-subsidise that from other areas of the public purse, which is difficult, because there are always competing demands on local authorities. But we are also putting in quite significant funding. It is about £30 million a year, and that will continue in that vein, both in the year gone and in the years ahead, to support graduate recruitment into local authorities.

One of the programmes is called Pathways to Planning. Again, we partner with the Local Government Association to deliver that. It is very similar to the Fast Stream programme for recruiting young people into local authorities generally. It is an incredibly successful programme. We are now targeting 1,400 new graduates. These are people who have not necessarily studied planning directly, or even the built environment, but they recognise it is a good career path. The very strong and effective part of that programme is that people will be in work in local authorities while training for two years. We cover the full costs of the master's and, in some instances, we are also covering some salary bursaries, and that is proving to be incredibly popular. The cohorts of applicants are somewhere between 2,000 and 4,000 young people per cohort. That programme is really successful.

We are also doing quite a lot at mid-career. That is relevant to this conversation, because there is a concern about mid-career capacity within local government. Being a planner in local government can be hard. You can sometimes be at the crosshairs of community tension, and it can sometimes be technically and legally complex, but it is also a really exciting, engaging and rewarding career. We also fund a programme called Public Practice, which is a way to attract people into local government from across built environment professions in the private sector. It does that in a very safe environment, in so far as you go in for a year. Very many people stay, but we have also got £5 million per year, which we are just designing at the minute, to support a broader mid-career programme where we can be reaching out to others who might have had a completely different career experience and would like to come into local government and work in the built environment and in planning regeneration more generally.

Q39 **Baroness Andrews:** Just to follow up, one aspect of that which is part of the problem—I have got some other questions which dive a bit deeper into notions of universality and so on—is an overcrowded curriculum. The term "built environment" is very clumsy, and it does not really mean much to young children in particular, but what we discovered from these witnesses was that, while children were being taught aspects of the built environment in different disciplines, there was not a single narrative which enabled them to understand that this was all about the places they lived together. I do not know whether there is any scope within the curriculum, or the PSHE curriculum, to say "This is about building citizenship as well". We all know the pressures that teachers are under, inside and outside the school day. Is there anything that could be done to provide a little more clarity about the connectivity in a pedagogical sense?

I turn to my other questions. First, it is marvellous to hear these examples, and it is fantastic to hear what is being done about the planning profession generally. The Minister mentioned Ipswich, and we have heard about Hartlepool—really complicated communities where marvellous things are happening. But it is all fragmented. It is a condition of policy-making, is it not? We have these wonderful examples that are so difficult to scale up. This came up time and again in the evidence, along with a sense that London has natural advantages built in because of access to resources. This is where the RIBA and the TCPA are, and they can send people into London schools and so on, but other schools do not have this access and these advantages. We know that engagement is important; we know that children have a lot to say, and that they think a lot about these things and are affected by them. How do we make this a more equal opportunity?

The second question is: how do we make it meaningful? It is a question that goes right to the heart of consultation. What is "meaningful consultation"? How would you define "meaningful engagement" in terms of children and young people? What does success look like? Sorry, it is a very packed question.

Stephanie Peacock: I think there were three or four questions there: the curriculum, the fragmented nature, and what meaningful engagement looks like. If it is okay, I will answer the first one and then hand over to Joanna; then I will come back on the broader point around engagement. Obviously, the curriculum is about balancing academic achievement with making sure young people are inclusive and life-ready. I was a secondary school teacher myself many years ago now, so I know what it is like to operate within a national curriculum. Of course, the Government do not prescribe how teachers teach, but clearly, from the evidence you have heard, there is huge opportunity.

Having taught history, I know how you can teach a subject through a local area and the events that took place in that local area, and how that often brings it to life a lot better than other ways of doing it. The curriculum review was very much about that. Of course, it was led by the Department for Education, but I think the Department for Education will

be really interested to hear the points you have heard about the built environment and the fact that it is not always relatable. I could probably echo that as a constituency MP. If I go into schools, I will see them doing some of the things you are talking about and teaching the built environment in different ways, but it will not necessarily be brought together in one cohesive way. There is a challenge there.

Joanna gave some very good examples of the ongoing training that is taking place. I am struck that the sector needs 48,000 new entries in the coming years. Clearly, there is a lot of work going on to try and meet that demand. It is about education and lifelong learning and retraining, but there are some other things that we are doing. We are the lead department for out-of-school youth provision, so there are some things that we are doing there. You can look to the voluntary sector, which has got some really good schemes. Last week was Volunteering Week. I met with Volunteer Yourself, an organisation that works with young people out of education and training to identify areas in their community and effectively use construction skills to rebuild and refurbish them. As part of our national youth strategy, young people told us three things: they wanted someone who cares, something to do, and somewhere to go. As part of having something to do, we have put £22 million into expanding enrichment and a new enrichment framework. So there are a number of activities going on there, some of which will touch on the points that you make. Perhaps I will pause there, because Joanna will have some good examples to add to that, but I will come back on the fragmented question and also on what meaningful engagement is.

Joanna Averley: I completely recognise that we have some bright spots of fantastic innovation in engaging young people in the built environment and what have, over the years, been referred to as architecture centres, or built environment and architecture centres. That cohort of organisations has come together and has a single front door when it comes to an online presence. We are currently working with them, particularly through our design and place-making programme, and getting everybody together—those organisations and the professional institutes—to start to say, "What is the sum of the parts of all this work and how does it interface with the evolution and modernisation of the planning system that we're doing?"

Bristol is quite a good example. Design West, the architecture centre in Bristol, has a talent accelerator programme that specifically targets 15 to 18 year-olds. What you find in these organisations is that sometimes they will have a programme that is outreaching to the whole community but focused on young people. It might be families coming in at half-term—children-focused—then at other times it will be young people-focused. For example, Open City runs a specific set of programmes of taster weeks or fortnights for school-age young people about built environment careers.

There are a set of different options out there. By getting everyone together, we are trying to make sure that they are learning from each other and that the energy amplifies. We are not spending huge amounts

of money. We have spending about £150,000 as earmarked, to help some of those programmes develop and have a longer reach. I am conscious that that exchange can generate more and more interest. Often, you will then find that, with a local developer or, for example, where we are doing new towns, there is an opportunity to say, "Let's mobilise this expertise and approach much more broadly".

Baroness Andrews: Can it be badged up in some way? Can it be amplified? Is that a job for MHCLG or cross-government?

Joanna Averley: From a planning point of view, we are already gathering people around this topic. I will take it away. There is a question as to how much we can amplify that even more through organisations such as the Planning Advisory Service. When local authorities are thinking, "Okay, I'm starting a new local plan or a strategic plan. Who are my obvious local partners?"—for example, the Farrell Centre in Newcastle is fairly new and doing really great work on everything from exhibitions to engagement—we basically say, "Here are prospective local partners", and you will probably then get a natural growth in those programmes through those associations, whether it is a developer or local authority.

Baroness Andrews: They are very willing. We picked up a degree of frustration around the table, because people are desperate to do more, because the feedback they get is so positive and they can see an expanding imagination and interest in a career and so on. There is a real audience out there.

Joanna Averley: I was at CABE for a very long time and back in the day—old style—we produced a newspaper-type magazine called *360°*, which used to go into every school, particularly targeted towards primary schools, which was basically learning tools for teachers using different aspects of the built environment. That is the old way to do it. We literally had to send out something—hard copy—to every school. Now, obviously, you can create online platforms cost-effectively and have so much information at people's fingertips. Then your challenge is making sure people have time and the knowledge to go to find it.

You are raising some interesting issues that I can take back to the group we have with all those organisations.

Stephanie Peacock: I will answer your question on fragmentation and what meaningful engagement looks like. When I was appointed Minister for Youth, I was really struck by the fragmented nature of youth funding and youth provision, not just across Government but across the country. For decades, the Government have not had a plan for young people, which is why we set out to publish the national youth strategy. Since the last youth strategy was published, the experience of being a young person has been completely transformed.

This is the first generation to grow up in an entirely digital world—you have heard different examples, and I am sure we will touch upon that—but whether it is that or significant events such as the pandemic or

austerity or the economic crash, the challenges are, as I referenced earlier, interlinked. Whether it is mental health concerns, online and offline bullying or the feeling of not being safe, they are all linked. The challenge is incredibly complex and the levers lie across Government and, indeed, across society. But when we set out to create the national youth strategy, we were really keen, and the Secretary of State was very clear in her intention, that this was to be a youth strategy for young people by young people.

I will just talk through, briefly, the process of how we engage with young people. The strategy was coproduced with young people. An expert and youth advisory panel oversaw the process and also held Ministers and the DCMS to account throughout. There was a consortium made up of #iWill, Savanta and My Life My Say. That took a number of different forms. There was a youth-led campaign called Deliver You. I have a copy here that I can send to the committee. I know that you may well have seen it, but you will note that the branding here is very different to your usual government branding. That came out of the conversations with young people, because they fed back that the first copy of the survey they were shown was technical and not very accessible, and quite honestly they are not necessarily going to engage with government logos. The branding was very purposeful around how a youth-led campaign could really relate to young people.

You had the branding and the way in which young people could engage online, which was very intentional in terms of the comms and survey, and there were other ways in which young people could engage. We had a number of democracy cafés where young people came together as a group to discuss ideas in their local areas and share their thoughts about the challenges. We had a number of hacks that were very solution-focused: "Here is an issue. What do you see as the as the solution?"

We also did a number of deep dives in different parts of the country. For example, there was one that took place in Manchester about young people in prison in the criminal justice system, one that focused on sport in Bristol, one with refugees and asylum seekers and one with care leavers. They aimed to look at and consider the unique needs and challenges of those different groups of young people.

We also produced a toolkit so that, for example, Members of Parliament, and youth groups themselves, could organise their own conversations. The toolkit talked them through how to construct engagement with young people.

As well as all that proactive engagement with young people, led by the DCMS, we also used a lot of the research that is already available, whether from the Youth Endowment Fund, OnSide Youth, the National Youth Agency or the Children's Commissioner. A lot of innovation has gone into *State of the Nation*, which diagnoses the challenges and the problems, and the national youth strategy, which is meant to be the 10-year plan to deal with these challenges.

We are really clear that we are not going to solve this problem overnight. If you look at the inheritance, number of youth centres and cuts to youth funding, they are obviously significant, alongside the point I made earlier about the experience of young people being completely transformed. The only other point I would add about meaningful engagement is that we feel that that was constructive, meaningful and led to a much better youth strategy than would otherwise be the case. But we do not want it to happen in isolation, so we have published guidance for other government departments. We have worked with DSIT, for example, which has adopted a very similar model in its consultation on the social media ban.

There are other examples from across government about how different government departments engage with young people, but we want to really make sure that what we have done here can be used by other government departments. As I said earlier, I have written to all departments to encourage them to sign the Power of Youth Charter.

Kayleigh, do you want to add any examples to some of the points I have made?

Kayleigh Wainwright: Our perspective on what meaningful engagement looks like is that it takes skilled people to facilitate it. Some of the work we are doing is around upskilling the youth sector. Trusted adults have those conversations with young people. We publish the guidance to which the Minister just referred, which is available on GOV.UK, for other departments to involve young people in policy-making. Within that are different inclusive ways for young people to be engaged, which is useful for anyone who wants to have those conversations with young people.

One of the important things is the feedback loop. We know that young people do not necessarily trust decision-making processes. That is often because they are asked for their opinion and then nothing is shared with them about what happens. That is probably the same for many people, not just young people, but one of the things we are trying to advocate for is having that dialogue afterwards, regardless of the decision. I think we referenced it earlier, but one of the things we did post-strategy launch was take all that information back, and share the data from those regions back so that they could use it for themselves and have that ongoing dialogue so that they can understand. That builds that trust with young people in those areas.

Stephanie Peacock: I might just add to that. Actually, if you look at the statistics—I am sure you have heard some of them—15% of young people trust Government, which is incredibly low. I am not sure it is hugely higher for other parts of the population. That accountability and that conversation is really important. When we actually launched the strategy, one of the young people came up to me and said that they felt very positive about the fact that accountability ran through the strategy. That is something that the Secretary of State has been very clear about—how we go back and have conversations. We are still working with the youth advisory panel; there will be a hearing each year so that young

people can speak directly to the department and to Ministers; and we are also looking at how we roll out the shared outcomes framework to track the impact across Government so that young people can see what is working, perhaps what is not, and how quickly progress is being made. Obviously, certainly compared to when I was growing up, the generation now are very used to things instantly, so it is about having that honest conversation about expectation and timelines as well, but the accountability throughout has been has been really important—having that ongoing conversation.

Baroness Andrews: It is a marvellous template for the new towns—for making those communities and giving young people ownership of the future. It is very encouraging to know that you have got a template that will work in different policy areas across different departments. Thank you very much.

The Chair: The feedback point is something we got in evidence to us. I have got two quick follow-ups. The first is Lord Bassam, who is on online.

Q40 **Lord Bassam of Brighton:** Sorry, it takes us back slightly. I was interested in something that Joanna said apropos planning authorities, professional development and all that stuff. In my former local government experience, one thing that struck me very much was that different planning authorities had different strengths. Often you would find that the smaller planning authorities really had not got the capacity to do the sorts of imaginative things that have been talked about this morning. I wonder really if that issue is being addressed and what more we can do to get a better, more even spread of professional expertise into planning departments so that they pick up these consultation issues and engage properly with younger people.

Joanna Averley: Thank you for the question, Lord Bassam. I suppose the direct response is that local government reorganisation is in part dealing with or addressing those issues where, in effect, many district councils will evolve into unitary authorities. You will have both a geographically bigger organisation but also a bigger organisation in its capacity and reach. Various things will be important in that process; I will speak specifically and a bit myopically about planning.

One of the primary functions of district councils at the moment is planning. When we go into unitaries, it will be one of many functions. Again, working with the Planning Advisory Service, we are starting to talk to local authorities about what that transition feels like specifically for planning services. We are holding on to the best and learning also from those that have already gone through unitarisation. It has to be quite intentional, as it will be across all local authority services, that the change programme is invested in and, at the end of the day, the planning services are better off and actually can leapfrog some issues. For example, in the digital space, they can learn from very significant investment that the department is making in digital transformation of planning services, and leapfrog into a better set of systems through the reorganisation process.

The short version is that local government reorganisation in and of itself will create organisations with bigger reach and a deeper capacity, in my view.

Lord Porter of Spalding: Although it will bring them into conflict with adults and children's services, where most planning departments are not at the moment in that conflict space, because the budget is still not large enough, even with a real council, to deal with adults and children's services. They will then be coming into direct contest for available funds, which is why it was important to free up the ability to recover full cost on planning.

Joanna Averley: Indeed.

Q41 **Lord Bailey of Paddington:** There has been a lot about talking to children and things to make sure they are part of the conversation—spending time with them—but where was the emphasis around encouraging children to spend more time with their parents, and to spend more time with their wider community? It means that they ask for things that they know will impact them in their future, because the community is already talking about it. If you are 10 today, there is somebody who is 16 who will be able to tell that 10-year old what it feels like to be 16, and that 10-year old might have a slightly different version of what they might want in the future, because they are talking to someone who is experiencing where they will be shortly.

Of course, this use strategy is a good thing on the whole, but it leads, I imagine, to a lot of young people growing up believing they have lots of rights. Where does it say anything about their responsibility? People who have responsibility tend to deliver more rights for people than people who are just asking for lots of rights because they have been raised in that environment. The poorest communities in this country do the best when they are treated as if they have some agency. Where is the conversation around helping these young people to spend more time in and with their families, speaking directly to their parents to figure out what their community needs?

Stephanie Peacock: It is a very broad-ranging question. There are so many different examples of groups, organisations and activities that take place across the country where young people can engage in their communities, but also have the point you just made around older children working with younger children. A couple of weeks ago, I visited an organisation in Newham, Fight for Peace, where they do a lot of sport and physical activity, and they have a really good model of training young people and them staying involved, mentoring and supporting younger people. There are lots of examples that that we can talk to and can direct to.

On the national youth strategy and engaging with young people, for far too long, young people have been shut out of the conversation. If we look at the record of the last 15 years, it is 1,200 youth centres shut and a 73% cut in youth services in England. That is a very difficult legacy, and

not something that we are going to reverse overnight. Of course, it is in the context of the experience of young people being completely transformed over the last 10 to 15 years—as I have referenced before, growing up in in an ever-digital way.

When we announced and formulated the youth strategy—perhaps Kayleigh can add to this—there was perhaps an assumption that young people would want to do more online. The statistic is that something like 75% of young people spend most of their time online—or maybe I have got that statistic the other way around, but they spend a huge amount of time online. When we had that conversation with them through the national youth strategy, they did talk about wanting places to go and things to do and not having enough spaces where they can simply hang out in their community and—you have heard this through your evidence—about not feeling welcome in communities. That is why, at a very basic level, the youth strategy does three things: it is somewhere to go, something to do, and someone who cares.

Someone who cares is really important. It is around trusted adults, because one in five young people does not feel they have a trusted adult outside of the home. That does not mean it replaces the role of parents, but it can be a scout leader; it could be a sports coach; it could be an aunt or uncle. It is somebody who is in your corner, has got your back and can provide support. You may have seen the announcement that the Secretary of State did with the King's Trust last week, which is interesting in a number of ways. It speaks very clearly to our point in the national youth strategy on trusted adults, but it also aims to reach a million young people—in the first instance, 25,000 of those most in need. There is £10 million of government money that is then match-funded. While our youth strategy is backed by £500 million of new money, of course that is not going to replace what was cut under the previous Government, and that is why we need to be quite clever about match funding. I can add to that in a separate conversation. Kayleigh, do you want to add any examples?

Kayleigh Wainwright: Definitely. We know from our research, but also other research, that young people in this generation are the most connected but often the most lonely. It was the stuff that you just referenced, Minister: 76% of young people spend most of their free time on screens, but actually, in *Youth Matters: State of the Nation*, when asked what they wanted to do with their free time and in their local area, the top five things were access to safe and accessible public spaces, which really links to this issue around the built environment and how young people are able to feel welcome in their local community. We know from that research as well, and from engagement with young people, that they want to do that. They want to engage with adults.

One of the things that quite surprised me was that young people want to be involved in community events and things like that; there is a perception that that is not what young people want to do. That was a really pleasant surprise in how we can then show adults in communities that young people do want to get involved, want to volunteer, and want

to do social action in their local areas—and there are some really good examples of where that is happening. How can we facilitate more of that? That is what is named in the strategy, especially in that "Seen and Heard" section.

The Chair: I want to bring in Lord Porter, because this leads into his area about safe spaces, really.

Q42 **Lord Porter of Spalding:** Safety has come up a couple of times already today. We have heard about it in a number of evidence sessions where we learned that young people just do not seem to feel safe in their neighbourhoods, their public spaces—they feel not safe and not welcome in some spaces. I have found today's session interesting because I think the stuff going on in both departments is really good. I think we ought to give you a chance to share some of that love with some of the other departments. What more can government do? I am thinking about other government departments. What more can they do to help try to straighten this up? I am sure that, when I was a kid, I used to feel unsafe about five minutes before I got a thump and then for about five minutes after I got it, but then for the rest of the time I always felt safe wherever we were. If that is not the case now, that must be because society has changed a hell of a lot since then. Is it the role of government and, if it is, what more can you do and what more can your colleagues in other departments do?

Stephanie Peacock: I am always struck by how there is a difference between being safe and feeling safe, but, from a young person's perspective, they are equally important. I have seen that in my own constituency, with young people feeling very concerned about being out, even though perhaps all the statistics would show that the area they are in is relatively safe.

There are some practical things that the Home Office is doing. For example, in terms of police numbers, there are the 13,000 new neighbourhood policing personnel. I know that the police in my area go into schools, although not always across the board—that can sometimes perhaps be improved—and have that conversation. There was a particular concern around fireworks in a part of Barnsley and the police going in and having that conversation really helped. So there are some practical things that different agencies and different government departments can do on the practical issue of being safe, whether it be policing numbers or the work that the Government are doing to tackle violence against women and girls.

There is also this issue around feeling safe online—we may come on to touch on the Government's work on social media and taking action on that. As part of the consultation, I attended an event at No. 10 alongside the DSIT Secretary of State, the Prime Minister and the Education Minister, where we heard from civil society, parents and young people in different groups about their thoughts about feeling safe, about social media and possible action but also about their experience online and what adds to their feeling unsafe in terms of the content they see.

So it is quite a complex issue in terms of that challenge with regard to safety—physical safety and mental safety. But it is also about the final point you made around feeling welcome in local communities. That speaks to the part of our strategy which is about somewhere to go. We are doing a couple of things on that. As the DCMS, we have £350 million going into the better youth spaces fund to refund or refurbish actual physical spaces for young people. But it is also about young people having a say in their local area as well. That goes back to the point that the Secretary of State often talks about: having that conversation with young people. Yes, they might want a new youth centre or they might want their youth centre refurbished, but equally they might want something else. The Secretary of State always talks about this example in Scotland, where she goes to a new facility and says to the young people, "So you want more of these?" They reply, "Well, no, actually there's one down the road, but we just can't get into it". It is about having that conversation: "Can't you access it?" or "Haven't you got the transport to get to it?" It is quite complex, between what more government can do in terms of provision, but also what more government can do to make sure it is joined up. That goes back to the challenge earlier on fragmentation that I know you have heard a lot of evidence about.

Joanna Averley: Just to come in briefly on when new places are being created, within the PPG for design and place making we directly address the principles for designing and laying out a new neighbourhood—the things to think about. These are well understood. We have all been working with the principles of designing out crime for some time, but when it works well it is not an add-on set of issues—a bigger fence or a slightly brighter light—but much more of an integrated solution. A scheme that I visited recently was striking because some of the houses had more windows. Eyes on to the street as well as on the street, or on to the public space, are important. That is a win-win: somebody gets a lighter, brighter home, but they are also looking out on to the public space and therefore thinking, "My child can play in that space and I'm happy with it". But it is also about a moderated approach to how high the fences are when you are going from wholly public into semi-private communal spaces and then into the private home.

These are all important principles, but particularly with the scheme I am thinking of, what was incredibly striking was the investment of, in this case, a housing association in engaging community in that ownership of obviously their own space, but also their communal spaces and then the public spaces, and that care and attention to bringing communities with them and providing opportunities for exchange and therefore connectedness within a community.

The other principles I think are important are very much done in the active travel space. Active Travel England, which is a statutory consultee to planning, has been doing huge amounts of work on walking, which is at the top of the tree in terms of the way we design our bits and involve the bits of our cities. How people walk around the place should be our predominant consideration—walking, cycling, all forms of ambulant or

wheel-based mobility, and then public transport and then the car. So it is about resetting our mindset as to how inviting places are for moving around in and therefore, again, both eyes on, on to and on the street make a big difference.

Stephanie Peacock: I will add an example. You may have heard of the initiative called Beat the Street, which I visited in both my own constituency and in St Austell in Cornwall. It is a nationwide scheme where, effectively, young people go out into their community; they can do it on their phone but they can have a traditional card. It is a little bit like old-style orienteering, if anyone's familiar with that—my dad took me but we were not very good at it. You go around and look for these electronic boxes, and you scan them and get points.

Young people tend to do it in a school—schools in my constituency get very competitive about it. I will visit them and they will say, "Have you seen how well this school is doing?" Children will go out with their family, and it is interesting that the feedback was that young people much prefer their parents to have the old-style cards, because it means that they are engaging as a family—they are not on the screen. Interestingly, they said the demographic that most wants to be on the phone is men in their 40s—I am pretty sure I remember that correctly.

I think it is a really interesting example of bringing together school and family, where young people engage and where they go out not just into the outdoors but into the built environment and are exploring their locality in a way that they may ordinarily not do. They may not have traditionally just gone for a walk around the block. As I say, I have seen examples in Barnsley and in St Austell, and I think it is a really good way of encouraging young people to explore the space on the doorstep. Where I represent in South Yorkshire we are very blessed with lots of lovely outdoor space. That is not always the case, of course, but this is a good way of getting people out and about and feeling more comfortable in their local environment.

Q43 **Baroness Janke:** I must say that I have been hugely impressed by the progress that has been made and the enthusiasm with which you talk about the way you are engaging with young people. I suppose my question is more about how you get the views of young people actually to be taken into account in, for example, the new towns. How do government departments prioritise this? You sound as though you have developed some innovative ways of engaging with young people, and the feedback is very good indeed and an excellent way of taking this forward. However, I suppose what we will want to see in the future is how the views of those young people actually penetrated the system and changed the kinds of new towns that were built so that they were places where people wanted to live and places that those people have actually had an impact on.

Stephanie Peacock: I can answer that in broad terms, but on new towns Joanna might be better placed. As to how it is meaningful, we did not set out with a youth strategy and test it against young people's

views. We did all the engagement that I have talked about and we listened to young people. We made it really intentional that it was the towns and villages up and down the country. But it is interesting that they told us three key things, which is that they wanted something to do, somewhere to go and someone who cares. The challenge is that, while obviously young people have their own different experiences and will have their own different environments they grow up in, the challenges of being online, of mental health, of money concern and of body image, and all sorts—all the things that you think about growing up—are very similar. What we wanted to do through that national youth strategy is to create a cross-government framework to try to address some of those issues. We are really aware that that will not happen overnight and that it requires a collective cross-government effort.

But we can clearly point to, for example, in terms of the engagement, how we changed it as a result of young people and some of the outcomes that young people pointed to and said, "That won't work; we think this should happen". The Secretary of State is clear on this. For example, in the ongoing rollout of the youth strategy, we have been talking to young people about how that money is spent. One of the things that we hear—I am sure you have heard it from the sector—is how it can be quite complicated and quite bureaucratic. We want to rewire the way we distribute money so that there is a single front door and it is much more straightforward to access funding. We are constantly responding to the needs, views and feedback of young people. On the new towns, I think Joanna might be better placed to answer.

Joanna Averley: On the new towns, the Government will announce final locations in due course. The new towns will be informed by place-making principles, which the Government are going to be highlighting. We have set out the place-making principles, but they will be amplified over time. As the projects move into the next stage of delivery, they will be very much informed by important principles, many of which we have talked about around this table: the provision of infrastructure alongside homes, the provision of landscape and green space, the provision of high-quality homes, et cetera. Those 10 principles will be brought to life in how the projects then go forward.

I highlight Cambridge and the development corporation that is just starting to emerge, which is very similar to a new towns programme. What has been really interesting in that regard is the quality-review panel in Cambridge which, for years, has been pursuing really good outcomes for communities in designing the layout of new homes and the provision of public space and other elements. Those principles of how you engage both a community and young people, but then also following it through by having a design in front of you and answering the questions of, "Is it doing what it needs to do? Does it follow through in terms of delivery?", is something that will be informing how new towns are progressed.

To your point, what is really interesting about how we engage young people, or anybody, in the planning system, is that sometimes you are

engaging in strategy, which is quite difficult to do. I can give you examples of where we have been testing digital ways of doing that, such as on points of principle. For example, in which direction do you want your town to grow? What is important to you in terms of density? How do you want the car to be dealt with? What is important to you about how your landscapes and public realm add up across the town?

Additionally, sometimes you are engaging with a project, and then you are into quite a different conversation. The tools have to be right for the type of conversation you are having with a community and the level of detail to which you are seeking views. Ultimately, a planning system works on the basis that local councillors sign off on a plan, which will set out the principles for development and growth in an area, and for what a good outcome looks like in development management policies. Then there will be the decision-making, which will be for either the local councillors or officials, and the consultation—that very direct community engagement with those impacted by development—that is part of that.

Baroness Janke: I am thinking about delivering on the fact that young people need to be involved in their local community and in the provision of new communities. For example, in planning, there are usually statutory consultees. Whether young people ought to be statutory consultees, and whether it must be demonstrated that that has happened, are important questions. Sometimes there needs to be some top-down pressure. It is very good to have enthusiasm and encourage people to do things, but sometimes circumstances mean that you need a bit more top-down pressure to ensure that it actually happens.

The other thing I was thinking of is, if you are working cross-departmentally, whether there ought to be some possible way of getting the national curriculum to acknowledge that the influence of young people on the creation of the places where they are going to live is an important principle. Have you considered whether that could be reflected in some of the work that is being done on the curriculum at the moment, such as GCSE projects—et cetera—in the local area, where people could do some work on what they want to see their local community develop into? Have you considered anything like that?

Stephanie Peacock: On the curriculum, that is certainly a point I can reflect to the Department for Education, and I am sure they will take the views of the committee on board. From a DCMS perspective, we intend on mandating that funding applications show how they are shaping the priorities of the young people involved. If you are putting in a funding application, how have you got young people involved in that, and how is all the money that we are giving driving through those priorities? That sounds like an obvious point, but it is not one that always happens. It goes back to the fundamental point of your question: young people feeling like they are having a say and making a difference. We need people to be quite honest about that, because if you do a consultation on something—this will be very true in planning—you cannot always respond to everybody's concerns or needs and you are not always going to be

able to give everybody what they want in the tight fiscal environment we are operating in. We would love to do all the things we are talking about in every postcode; clearly there will be a challenge there. It is about being very honest about the parameters—

Baroness Janke: And making sure that people have got the skills. Quite often, you can be confronted with consultations, and, even with the best engagement in the world, people do not necessarily have the skills to make their views effective.

Stephanie Peacock: Totally. We very much saw that during the national youth strategy. That is why we had the toolkit that was really clear about constructing a meaningful conversation with young people. Some young people would want to fill in a long survey, some would want to come to one of our democracy cafes, or one of the hacks or conversations, but others may just want to have an instinctive say of one word or one sentence. I was keen for a digital postcard, and I engaged with a number of youth groups in Barnsley, including the youth council. I came with some printed copies of the postcard, and they were quite straight. They were like, "Oh, we thought it was online".

Baroness Janke: It is very important that there is evidence that their views have been taken on board and something has been done about them.

Stephanie Peacock: That is the point I am making through the strategy. If you look at the document, you can very much see that. Not only are there quotes from young people who have had their say, but we can directly point to what they have told us and how we are actioning that.

Baroness Janke: I am thinking particularly in relation to the built environment.

Joanna Averley: The PropTech fund—the property and planning technology fund—has been investing in testing how you use digitisation for lots of different ways of engaging people through different bits of the planning system. It concludes that how you use technology and how you engage, whether virtually or in-person, collectively or individually, has a part to play in the system.

I will give you a few examples. Our work with south-west Hertfordshire was really interesting. It used social media, but it was not a case of going into social media and getting lost; it engaged people with social media, but there was an end point, so it was not dragging people into endless doomscrolling. It used a platform called Give My View for targeted social media, utilising quickfire polls and developing and testing the style of engagement with a youth forum. Then, alongside engagement, there was an HQ with explainer videos, et cetera. These are ways that you engage online but then take the engagement HQ into different locations that young people would be in anyway, whether it is a shopping centre, libraries, train stations, et cetera. The combination of digital and going to

where people are and engaging face to face, rather than expecting people to come to you, seems to be a way forward.

There is another really great example. We think of 3D modelling and twin cities as being something that you just hold online, but they do not have to be. That can be an immersive experience that engages people together in a community conversation, as we were talking about.

Baroness Janke: I am trying to guess at how those views are delivered in the end. You can do all the consultation in the world, but the response of, "Thank you very much for your views; we will put them on the shelf and look at them when we come to this subject again", is often what people get, whereas I imagine young people want to see evidence that what they have done is being produced.

Joanna Averley: I should have said at the start that what makes digital interesting is that it gives you the ability to have data and evidence. You can then go back and report on whether you delivered against that. To some extent, you can get a richer set of perspectives, and you can also have a potentially more representative amount of data, which you can then report on. If we get it right, you will have more information against which to judge success, and more information to go back to a community with and say, "This is what you told us, and this is how we have acted in terms of planning or decision-making".

The Chair: I am going to bring in Baroness Lawrence, because I know that this area is something that she is interested in as well.

Q44 **Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon:** Yes. Good afternoon. I will start by declaring my interests in the register. I am the chair of the Stephen Lawrence Day Foundation. Part of our work is around architecture and getting young people into architecture, and we have a relationship with the RIBA. In fact, I have been listening to all the information and all the stuff that has been coming out, and I am quite encouraged by how you have started putting young people at the heart of what you are doing, and how you prioritise young people and the digital age of young people. That is important. Moving forward, that is their life, and that is how they communicate with people. My question is: how will the Government encourage effective and appropriate use of digital tools to widen participation in issues around the built environment among children and young people?

Stephanie Peacock: I will answer that in broad terms and then Joanna can speak specifically to the built environment. This challenge of the digital environment, of online accessibility and of social media is obviously incredibly relevant at the moment. The Government have very clearly set out their intention to take action on social media and the Prime Minister has been really clear; he made a speech yesterday and set out a challenge to the tech companies.

As I referenced earlier, I took part in an event with parents, young people and civil society to discuss this issue around social media. In the context

of this conversation, the debate is somewhat more nuanced. You heard as part of your evidence a number of different examples of online and of gaming that are very relevant to the built environment and which really help young people to develop skills—particularly, often young people with learning needs, who will find gaming accessible and very useful. It is quite a nuanced debate, and it is a balance which involves using technology for what it is good for. As Joanna referenced earlier, it means that you can get data and you can access a huge amount. In that conversation with parents, they shared the example of how there is quite a difference between young people accessing the online world on a smartphone versus a family computer, so there is quite an interesting tension there.

There is also this point around quality versus quantity, and again, it depends on what young people are doing online. I think you saw some evidence around how, if young people have spent hours and hours constructing something in the online environment, will they necessarily share it in the same way as if they made a Lego model or a painting? I visited a school in my constituency on Friday where, rather than give out stickers and certificates, they really encourage young people, whatever they are doing, to seek out an adult and to share what they are doing, and they are finding that that is a really effective way in a more broad sense of encouraging young people to do well.

I will make another point. Barnsley, which I represent, has been named by the Government as the first tech town, so when you visit Barnsley College, you look at lots of different ways in which the college is going to work with employers across the town to support further training in AI and in the online environment. There is obviously huge opportunity with the online environment and with digital, and there is particular opportunity in the built environment, but there are inherent challenges in young people's access and the sort of content that they are being subjected to. That goes back to the earlier question, which is obviously something the Government are very much dealing with, led by DSIT but cross-government, to try to deal with some of the challenges that young people find themselves confronted with.

Joanna Averley: Thank you for the question. When it comes to digitisation in the planning system, the Government are being very intentional about the investments that are being made and, to some extent, what to point digital innovations towards in the planning system. It is a pretty serious investment and is referred to as open digital planning, and the website is a very good basis for just seeing what is already available and the innovations that are being worked on.

Just to give a sense of it, it is broadly around four themes. One is data and the availability—the ready, open-source availability—of standard data, which any local authority can draw down in an open-source way. You can go on to the website now and go into any part of England and draw down the data that is already available that the program has cleaned up and tidied up, and so on. That will build over time. That is

really powerful because, when you are starting to do a strategic plan for the first time, your data is there and you do not have to go and commission a load of new work, which is obviously one of the expensive bits of plan making, or a local plan for that matter. As a community, even if you are a geography teacher, your kids can go in and play around with things such as, "Where's my green belt? Where's my ancient woodland and where's the edge of the urban area? Where are our administrative boundaries?" There is the data.

Related to that, which I think are really important, are data standards. Within the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act, the Government have the ability to set data standards for local authorities so that information coming out of local authorities comes forward in a consistent way. That means you can build up this information over time in a really sophisticated way, but also protect data and make sure that appropriate data is coming forward.

The second strand is software. That is where we can help by using really smart software to speed up planning processes or improve planning processes. The one that is incredibly current is in AI. AI can basically draw from lots of different sources of information and put it into a very accessible, formatted environment, which can help decision-makers. Lots of work is going on about how you start with householder planning applications, and you can basically draw in all the information, and if you are sitting as a planning officer, you can say, "Okay, I've got everything I need to make a decision". AI does the heavy lifting; it looks at all those loads of documents, brings it all together, and then the human element comes in, which is making the final judgment as to whether to give planning permission. There is lots more going on in that software space.

In that space is also where we are doing all this testing on digital engagement, so a lot of work has been going on about testing the opportunity but also the limits, the challenges and the risks involved in digitising different bits of the planning system. That is particularly the PropTech fund, but is also about energising the market to see this as a really exciting area for investment. That has been running for a couple of years now.

The fourth element is people. We work with many local authorities, and all local authorities can join into the programme to learn as we learn and share as we share on the innovations that we are making, obviously directly funding some local authorities to really be trailblazers and both develop the software and then share it with others. It is a very engaged programme.

Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon: If you go back, especially to architectural drawing and using software, I think they are finding that the technical skills that you would have had in the beginning when you start doing architectural work is getting lost, which comes down to the digital age now. How are you able to bring those two together? If you are not careful, you will not be using those technical skills that you really need to start off with any more. You will have gone straight into digital. Working

around that, how do you start to try to bring those old skills and new skills together?

Joanna Averley: I think that is right. The digital capabilities are quite astonishing. I have seen software where you can have a standard housing type, for example, that architects have designed, and you can have a site or numbers of sites and can say, "Okay, tell me what the viability is of developing that small site and do me a layout, drawing on good architectural design, to lay out some housing, and tell me whether it's going to be viable or not". The opportunities in the digital space are massive, but I absolutely recognise your point about where it leaves the professional human skill and that point of judgment and point of creativity. Through what we are doing, we are trying to find the right path through that. But that talks back to all the great work you have done over the years and which we have been talking about around this committee, which is: how do you equip young people with the desire to come into the built environment professions and then the right skills to then operate in an increasingly digital environment and an increasingly AI environment? I am very conscious that we are all, as politicians and professionals, learning about that very rapidly.

My overall perspective is that what digital can do in the planning space is to shortcut some of what were quite long, quite technically complicated and resource-intensive processes to leave the professionals and the politicians, local and national, to engage in the decision-making and do the creative thinking and the creative engagement as well. Weirdly, it frees up us to do the creative bit if we get it right, and lets digital do some of the heavy lifting, which otherwise would take a lot of time.

The Chair: Thank you. It is Westminster Games Week as well, so it is great to hear, Minister, about the virtue and value of gaming. Thank you, all three of you, for your time and your upbeat nature, but also for the care and the interest which you have displayed to the work of this committee— not just what we are talking about but what others have said to us. It has been a great inquiry and we appreciate your time. Power to your elbow, as Baroness Miller said to all three of you. With that, that is the end of the meeting.