

Urban Futures for Pendleton, linking city branding to urban regeneration

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper describes the work that we have undertaken as part of the process to establish an Area Action Plan for Pendleton, a mainly residential neighbourhood close to the centre of Manchester. The paper focuses on the first steps in this process: the analysis and the interactive process to establish a preferred development option. Our work combines two perspectives: the quest for a better identity and the design of urban plans. We have tried to combine the interactive process of working on the identity of the future Pendleton with the development of a wide range of options for regeneration. In this paper, we evaluate this approach.

Yet the work on the regeneration of Pendleton is ongoing. In parts, significant progress has been made, but overall the City of Salford is struggling to merge all conflicting demands and challenges. It is therefore too early to make a final evaluation. Instead, we compare our experiences in working in Pendleton with similar working experiences elsewhere. We hope that this interpretation will support urban regeneration teams in other areas.

2. WHAT IS PENDLETON?

Pendleton is a neighbourhood of Central Salford. It is around 2 km² and accommodates some 14,000 people. The area is predominantly residential, but also has a shopping centre, several parks, community facilities such as churches, an job centre and primary health care facilities. Pendleton is one of the poorer neighbourhoods of the UK. It ranks 12th out of 354 on the 'multiple deprivation index'. 41% of its population has no professional qualification, compared to a UK average of 29%. Those are some of the main indicators. They point out that action is needed. But the actual character of Pendleton needs closer examination.

Pendleton			
 Location in UK	 Map of Pendleton	2 miles to Manchester City Centre	Age structure Pendleton 0-15 16% 16-24 18% 25-34 14% 35-49 19% 50-64 16% 65-74 10% 75+ 7%
12 th of 354 Ranking of most deprived areas	2 km ² Surface area Pendleton	14,400 Number of residents	3,000 Council units
5% 3.7% Unemployment Pendleton England	41% 29% 16-24 year olds with no qualification Pendleton England	48% 63% Economic Activity 16-74 year olds Pendleton England	£390 483 Average weekly wage Pendleton England

Figure 1: Facts and figures of the Branding Report (Holland Branding Group)

At first sight, especially some of the older parts of Pendleton look very grim. Whole streets of very small terraced houses are boarded up, public space is unused and the area seems abandoned. But the people of Pendleton see this area as a sign of hope; a signal that investment and improvement are forthcoming. For these areas there are –quite daring- urban designs and architectural plans. The transformation is taking shape in this area around Chimney Pot Park. Prices are rising, reputations are changing and new target groups are moving into the area.

The areas that are in fact more problematic are the areas that were ‘redeveloped’ after slum-clearance programmes in the 1960s and 1970s. Here, the regeneration efforts by the public sector in the 1970’s have not at all resulted in a prosperous community. Housing complexes are fenced off and guarded by closed circuit television cameras. People live in their safeguarded complexes, afraid to go out at night. In fact everything is fenced and secured in these parts of Pendleton: schools, parks, the sports centre. The job opportunity centre even has three layers of fences, one of them with electric wires. For our professional eye, the atmosphere is shocking. But many residents take a different perspective. To them, the fences provide a level of safety that was lacking ten years ago. And that is emblematic of the character of Pendleton: people are satisfied that their housing complexes are protected, even if it means that their streets and parks have become more unsafe.

On the positive side, some people praise the views over the city from the higher floors of the housing towers, and some of the complexes work quite well as small living communities with communal facilities, gardens and services. But these seem to be the exceptions. Most of the nice places of Pendleton can be found in the older parts; in the slums that were not cleared in the 1970s. Here, urban renewal efforts over the last decade have resulted in some attractive community facilities, a small scale high street environment with a nice, cultural mix of shops, and in some revived streets, where people place pots and plants to make their streets attractive. These are the pockets of civic pride in Pendleton.

In our analysis of Pendleton, we have tried to combine an analysis of the urban identity with an evaluation of the spatial characteristics. This resulted in an interpretation of Pendleton that is ‘bi-lingual’. The identity was analysed through group meetings, interviews and observatory analysis. That resulted in an image of Pendleton as an isolated, dead-end neighbourhood with a harsh and ugly character. Sadness, a lack of vitality and civic pride, and a history of destroyed communities determine its character. To some extent, the residents tended to emphasise the positive aspects of the area. We attribute this to the strong desire of people to preserve their dignity. People always tend to make something out of their living circumstances and preserve their dignity in doing so. Residents were very open, also in discussing negative aspects. The discussions revealed a general climate of fear, a lot of petty crime (often committed by fellow residents) strong peer group pressure (do not report to police, do not try to improve your life) and intimidation. In general people talked about lack of community and no sense of communal ownership.

This analysis was complemented with an analysis of the spatial structure and physical characteristics of the area. That analysis showed the –literal- dead end street landscape, a remarkable lack of spatial coherence and an area in which the public space is treated as hostile territory, with neglected pavement, garbage infested green spaces and omnipresent fences and control camera’s.

In urban design terms, Pendleton is a prototype of a fragmented urban neighbourhood. It has an estimated 100 dead-end streets. There are huge contrasts in building types, urban layouts and streetscapes. But there are hardly any clear orientation points or a road network or a structure of foot paths that connects places. The shopping centre is surrounded by parking areas, and pedestrian access into the area is dangerous and hostile.

A key characteristic of Pendleton in any language is the lack of beauty. Virtually everything in Pendleton is of low quality; the offer in the shops, the design of the public spaces, the quality of houses and amenities. The shopping centre has mediocre shops around an inner court. The main landmark of Pendleton is the housing tower in the shopping centre; a grey, ugly block with a big arrow to point people to the centre.



Figure 2: Overview of Pendleton (Salford City Council)

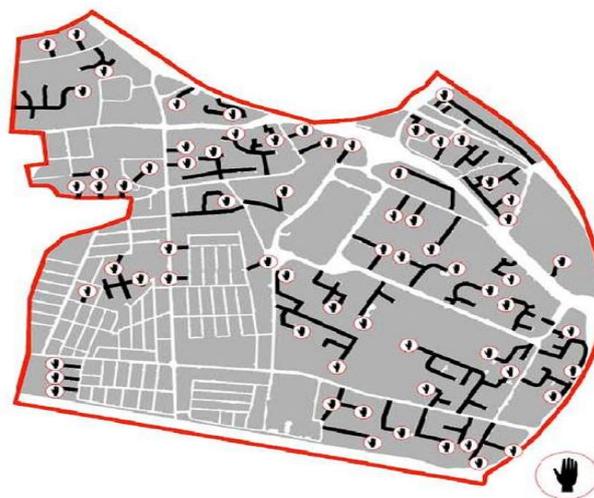


Figure 3: Dead end streets in Pendleton (Urhahn Urban Design)

3. BRANDING PENDLETON, AN INQUIRY INTO IDENTITY

The first approach through which we have worked on the future of Pendleton is the branding of the area. In this approach, developed by the Holland Branding Group, the team organises an interactive process through which the desired identity of the area is established. This is a harvesting process. The first step is the analysis. After an initial survey, briefing and location scan, a series of meetings with key 'informers' is held. In the case of Pendleton, the meetings

centered around three key questions: (1) Is the regeneration of Pendleton a process that is driven inside out or outside in?; (2) What can be the role of the new large supermarket?; and (3) What is the background of the enormous amount of fences, and do we need them in the future? The meetings and debates have helped to establish quite precisely what the key issues in the identity of the area are. These are described in the previous section.

The second step in the branding process is to establish what the desired identity for the future of Pendleton is. This is done in a full day branding session and the subsequent analysis of it. In the case of Pendleton, the 25 people who participated in the session came from a variety of backgrounds, representing the full width of the stakeholders of the present and future Pendleton. The session was informed and inspired by the ideas developed by the design team, but the key was to debate four questions that lead up to the core values of the future Pendleton through the eyes of its stakeholders. The questions were:

1. What does the neighbourhood where you live mean to you personal?
2. What kind of people, different from yourself, would suit you as new neighbours?
3. What place, no matter where in the world, can act as an example for the future Pendleton?
4. What are the most characteristic elements of Pendleton as you desire it to be in the future?

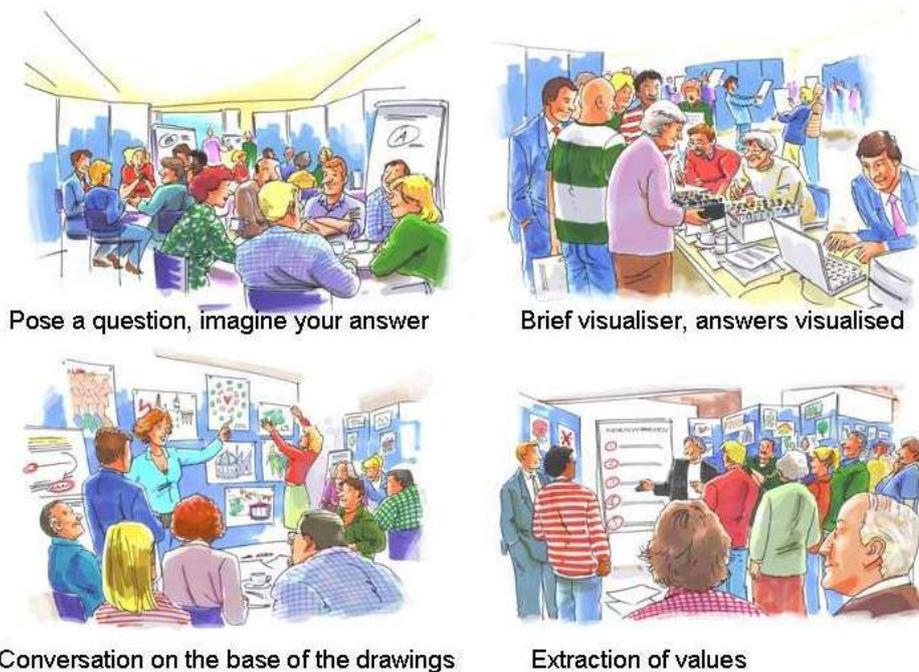


Figure 4: Process of harvesting identity (Holland Branding Group)



Figure 5: Drawings from Branding Session (Holland Branding Group)

These questions were answered in images that were drawn on the spot by two visualisers. The group works all the time in the same space, and they present their findings to each other. The focus is on extracting meaning and values, not on drawing conclusions. Images and values are the currency of the process. After the session we extracted the core values. That is a process of careful reconsideration of the discussions, the statements and the drawings. It led to a list and description of five core-values that together represent the future identity for Pendleton as perceived by the people that will shape its future.

The desired identity is represented in a list of core values and in a brandsheet that is represented by images (side one) and the 'corporate story' (side two). The main elements of the 'corporate story' of the future Pendleton are summarised below:

In the desired identity for Pendleton, connectivity is of major importance. The new Pendleton will have a connection with its environment in terms of spatial connection and all modes of transport. For its residents, Pendleton will also facilitate a connection to education, culture, employment and commercial activity. In Pendleton shops and activities will be of regional interest while at the same time the residents of Pendleton will have easy access to the outside world. The public life of Pendleton will encourage active participation, without being coercive. It will become increasingly natural to attend school, have a good job or run a company there.

Pendleton is building from its own character in a realistic way, not by sugar coating it and not by demolishing it and starting all over. Pendleton demonstrates a surprising beauty, by carefully and attentively renovating its monuments and unique places and buildings. Where new buildings appear, urban design and architecture are held at premium. No bluster, no elitism, no exaggerated approach by developers, no political correctness, but rather the self-conscious atmosphere of the streetwise middle class and (becoming ever more) proud of it.

In fact the area should function as an incubator, a fitness-centre for everyone who wishes to make something of his life. A good physical condition is certainly a big part of it, just as proper medical care, but Pendleton's concept of vitality is more extensive. It is an integral approach that challenges and supports in the design and creation of your individual and your family's (bright) future. Even small seeds of interest must be steered to find their way to education, connections with others, merchandise and work. Social, spatial, educational, cultural, economic and medical interventions will join together in this approach. In its

newfound role as a space of hope, Pendleton will serve as an incubator, a greenhouse with facilities that also have a strong appeal for new residents.

The new communal culture of Pendleton can be viewed as 'pride in progress'. The fact that not everything is perfect and there is still work to be done makes it a casual place in which all kinds of people can feel at home. As long as you are decent and show consideration for others, you will be met with hospitality and you will not find it difficult to feel welcome, as either a resident or a guest. Various places in Pendleton support encounters with other people: the shopping centre, boardwalk, small shops and the open marketplace, parks, pubs, restaurants, sidewalk cafes, various sport facilities, the library etc. The atmosphere is liberating, everywhere you can switch from being independent and on your own to social interaction with others.

Pendleton will combine human scale with urban features, 'friendly urban'. If it succeeds, Pendleton will easily become a place of choice. A place that cares and stimulates, a place that challenges and invites. In order for this to work well, every citizen of Pendleton should feel sheltered. It should be evident that care will be taken to keep the area clean and that law enforcement agencies are reliable in the event of incidents, thus leading to a climate free from fear also for children and elderly people.

Pendleton – pride in progress



Figure 6: Brand Sheet Pendleton (Holland Branding Group)

3. URBAN DESIGN PROSPECTS FOR PENDLETON

Parallel to this process of establishing the core values of the future of Pendleton, a design team investigated, invented and proposed plans and ideas for the physical transformation of Pendleton. We termed these 'prospects for Pendleton' as a reference to what represents future value. During the early stages of the process, the design ideas were still fragmented, rough and incomplete. Their aim was to animate the discussion and show to the participants how Pendleton can actually change its characteristics, its qualities and ultimately its values.

Throughout the process, the design proposals were refined and increasingly ‘tuned’ to the emerging core values of the future Pendleton. The brand of the future Pendleton became the terms of reference for the design of the interventions. The sum of these proposals aims to effectuate the conditions for the core values of the future Pendleton. The proposals were organised in four bundles of interventions for Pendleton:

1. Powerhouse: the cultural, commercial, social and civic centre of Pendleton
2. Wide Area Network: the revitalisation of links with the outside world
3. Local Area Network: improving the social and physical coherence of Pendleton
4. Communities: creating better homes, better places, more social communities

Each bundle consists of a series of proposals covering a range of ambition levels. Some highlights are summarised below:

Bundle 1: Powerhouse, a new centre for Pendleton

This bundle includes a series of proposals to transform the run-down shopping centre in the heart of Pendleton into the civic heart of the community. The proposals aim to develop the centre into hub that links the community to Salford and the Manchester urban region. The new centre provides employment opportunities for the inhabitants of Pendleton, and attracts visitors into the area. It is to become a place of civic pride and a symbol for the new character and vitality of Pendleton.

We developed two alternative strategies: renovation and extension of the existing shopping centre, and phased renewal of the centre. In both cases, the centre of Pendleton can become a mixed use central district with housing, services, offices and shops. We propose to integrate the main communal services into the area and to create a public pedestrian realm that will become the meeting place for the people of Pendleton and beyond. The traffic and parking arrangements depend on the selected strategy. In the case of phased renewal, most of the parking can be arranged under the new shopping centre, while in the case of renovation of the existing centre, parking buildings would be provided. A key element in the future of the centre of Pendleton is the initiative to build a new major Tesco supermarket in the area. This initiative is integrated into the new heart of Pendleton.



Figure 7: Prospects for a new centre (Urhahn Urban Design)

Bundle 2: The Wide Area Network (WAN)

Pendleton has a strategic, but isolated regional position. The prospects for the Wide Area Network aim to alleviate this situation. The relocation –or redesign- of an existing train station, the proposed construction of a new tram line and the redesignation of bus lines help

to anchor Pendleton into the public transportation network of the Greater Manchester Area. Through these proposals, the centre of Pendleton becomes one of the regional hubs, and the people of Pendleton get improved linkages to the outside world. The proposed new station and the tram line in particular can serve as landmark developments that help to alter the reputation of Pendleton.

In terms of the road network, Pendleton is surrounded by major trunk roads into the centre of Manchester. The key proposals here focus on improving access from these roads into Pendleton. The upgrading of one of the main streets of Pendleton, Churchill Road, and the creation of a new entry road from the North are among the proposed interventions.

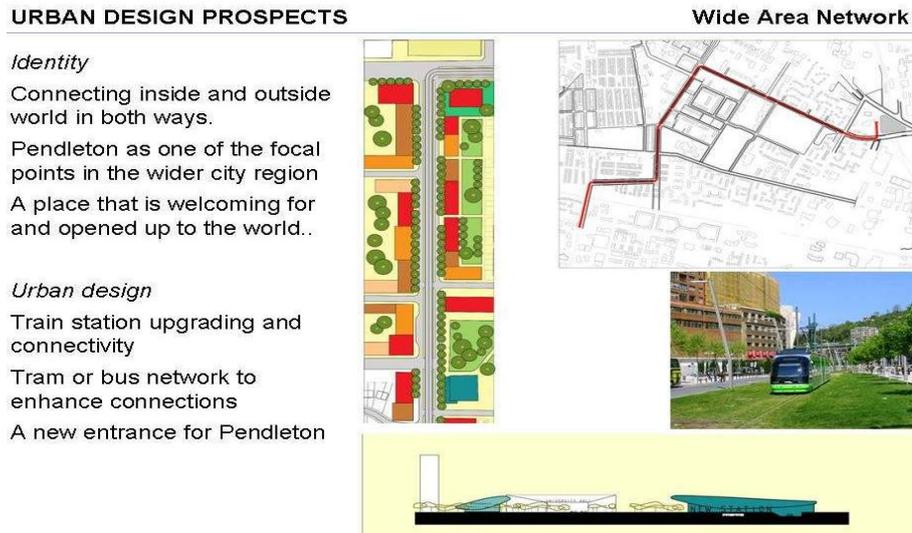


Figure 8: Prospects for the wide network (Urhahn Urban Design)

Bundle 3: The Local Area Network (LAN)

The proposals for the Local Area Network transform the urban environment from a no-go area into a place where people can safely meet and travel, a place that connects places and people rather than separate them. The key is to create an attractive urban landscape; streets, squares and parks that people find welcoming, friendly and safe. The hostility of the present local area network needs to be altered, allowing the people of Pendleton to live in a neighbourhood without fear.

The interventions we propose include the upgrading of existing main parks and the redesign of the relation of the parks with (existing and new) residential developments. A green pedestrian network is proposed to connect the main green spaces of Pendleton and beyond. In terms of the street network, improvements are suggested for the two existing main streets through a number of small and medium scale building projects (schools, shops, houses). These create destinations and will add 'eyes on the streets'. An easy-win project is the upgrading of the Broadwalk. This is currently the only pedestrian walkway outside the shopping precinct. It is now a very unsafe place, bordered by fences, walls and other blind sides. We propose a strategic selection of building initiatives plus the renewal of the public space and an improved connection into the shopping centre.

URBAN DESIGN PROSPECTS

Local Area Network

Identity

Connecting all parts of the inside world of Pendleton.

Isolated communities become reconnected

A public realm that invites communal activities

A place that is safe, open, welcoming

Urban design

Improvement of local parks

Integration of schools and sports facilities

Upgrading public pedestrian spaces

New local streets to improve interconnection of neighbourhoods

Building initiatives to reduce 'blind urbanism' and create eyes on the street



Figure 9: Prospects for the local network (Urhahn Urban Design)

Bundle 4: Community enhancement

A key challenge for the Area Action Plan will be to improve houses and public housing complexes to the level set out by the Decent Homes Act. This will require substantial investments and efforts. For some housing complexes, the improvement costs are too high and demolition and redevelopment is a better option. In addition, there are several areas in Pendleton where new neighbourhoods can be developed. The community enhancement bundle of prospects proposes housing types and urban design concepts that create better and more social living environments for the current residents while at the same time attracting new target groups into the area. An issue that raises concerns is the contrast between high-rise and terraced housing. The proposals include ways through which high rise tower blocks can be improved existing contrasts can be 'softened' by introducing an intermediate layer of low rise apartment blocks and town houses. A neighbourhood toolkit provides design suggestions to improve the urban lay-out of the individual neighbourhoods. One of the proposals in this toolkit is to make a small meeting place for each community. This could be developed in collaboration with the community.

URBAN DESIGN PROSPECTS

Communities

Identity

Dead end streets become connected places

Peer pressure is reversed and social communities reactivated

Where (old and new) residents find their home and communal space.

Urban design

Upgrading of housing complexes to Decent Homes Standard

Toolkit for neighbourhood improvement

New neighbourhoods for families, students and other target groups

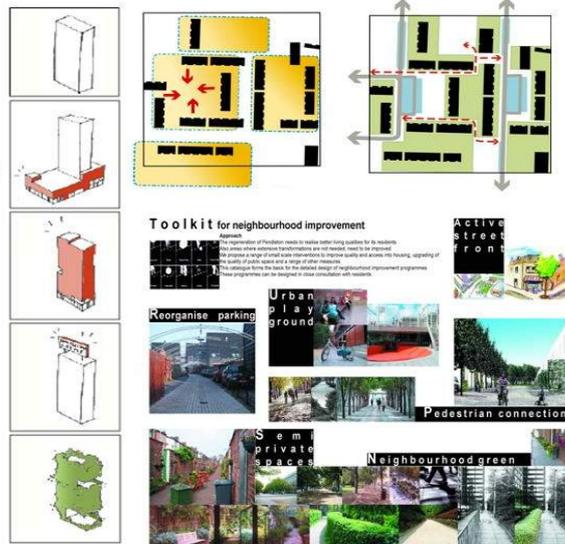


Figure 10: Prospects for better communities (Urhahn Urban Design)

In the design process, each of the proposals aims to contribute to all of the core values. Clearly, the emphasis differs, but the key question for each proposal has been “how does it contribute to each of the core values?”. Does it contribute to the general picture of the desired Pendleton, does it induce pride, does it help the Pendleton residents to improve their quality of life, does it help to build a better future? An initial appraisal of the proposed prospects shows that the proposals can help to address all of Pendleton’s intended core values. This was confirmed by the public consultations that were held. There was widespread support for the interpretation of future core values, and for the proposed prospects. At the same time, the appraisal and consultations made clear that the physical prospects in themselves would not be sufficient. The proposals would need to be complemented with investments in training, skills development, education, development of housing committees, review of the allocation mechanisms for social housing etc.

In working towards the Area Action Plan for Pendleton, the follow-up question is “which combination of prospects is best able to meet the aspired core values for the future of Pendleton?” That will be a question of balancing. Balancing new and old, balancing neighbourhood and city, balancing the level of investments with the intensity of their contribution in meeting each of the core values. This process is still only beginning.

4. LEARNING FROM PENDLETON

The Area Action Plan is still work in progress. The final consultations of the preferred option are underway and should be completed in July 2007. Physical changes cannot yet be observed. Yet our experiences in Pendleton allow us to draw some tentative conclusions that may be of relevance for others working on new futures for existing neighbourhoods:

On the mechanisms of change

Keen on change

Pendleton is quite a harsh place for many of its inhabitants and there is a lot of suspicion against planners and the public sector. Yet in our process, the people of Pendleton are quite keen to see their area change. They see the need, but they want to be involved and they want the changes to address their needs and aspirations. A serious dialogue like the one undertaken in the branding exercise, is needed to reveal those needs and aspirations. It is essential in the organisation and conduct of these dialogues to preserve the dignity of all involved.

A survival system for its inhabitants

The Pendleton sessions emphasise the role of the neighbourhood as a fitness centre for life, or in terms of the late Jane Jacobs: a system of survival. Improvement of the public realm and reconnection of the Pendleton people to the economy are the main issues in realising this. Pendleton demands a radical transformation. The people of Pendleton need to see that the neighbourhood –as their survival system- is slowly gaining strength with every step of the regeneration process. The radical transformation has to be managed as a process that involves and addresses the people of Pendleton. This will require activities like the ritualisation of the demolishing process, active employment support strategies, conquering the public realm through festivals and events like sports, film etc. Pendleton needs to become a more vital support system for its inhabitants, and the people of Pendleton have to be part of that transition.

Beyond the physical: more is needed

Although urban design has a central position in the transformation of areas, the realisation of a vital, bright future of Pendleton demands a practice of related interventions in the spheres of social interaction, economic activity, improved education, health care and physical well-

being and enforcement to prevent anti-social behaviour. Pendleton will need a dedicated taskforce that manages this integral effort.

On urban identity

Indigenous meaning

The question of urban identity is very important for Pendleton. Understanding its history, the history of its people, and how its character became what it is, has been a central point in our work in Pendleton. We have tried to understand the character of Pendleton from our professional, outsider perspective (emic). But we are convinced that it is at least as important to understand the indigenous (etic) meaning of what we saw. The fences of Pendleton are a case in point. Our spatial analysis shows how the fences limit routes and exchange between people. But the indigenous meaning was different; the fences provide the people of Pendleton with safe heavens in a hostile world. People are not particularly keen to live between fences, but they need the safe heaven that they felt they had lost. These are the indigenous meanings that are crucial in understanding urban identity.

Aspiration needed

Understanding the urban identity of a place is not enough to drive the planning process forward. It is not only necessary to know what a place is, and to understand what a place is to its people. We also need to develop an understanding of where a place got stuck in its development and what a place wants to become. What are the aspirations of its people, what are their dreams, and how do they want their community to contribute to those. In the branding process as carried out in Pendleton, much of the discussion was about change. The core values that are drawn from the process express what Pendleton wants to become. We see that as the crucial challenge, because that is the urban identity of the future, and the role of the Area Action Plan is to make that urban identity into a reality.

On the interaction between branding and design

Two complementary languages

Branding introduces a new language in the community of professionals that work on urban design and the restructuring of neighbourhoods. Although it is a language a little alien to the world of spreadsheets, planning and building programmes, it is very familiar to our personal experiences, in which our particular history and stories, as well as our style, brands and aspirations play an everyday role. The professionals who can easily switch from introspection (how would this be for me personal?) to the professional case at hand, usually pick up working with branding more easily. Once one develops a method to speak and combine the two languages in professional teams, the implementation of for instance the bundles mentioned above accelerates enormously.

Multi faceted, non-linear

The set of core values does not relate in a linear way to the design proposals. It takes some time to get acquainted with a brand and to see more easily what suits it and what not. There are usually some tensions between the values as well, just like we can find in personal characters. This can make professionals, in particular engineers, a little impatient, because they are used to more linear, more concrete reasoning and methods that tell them what to do. While none of these methods are being criticized, the technique of branding enriches the more instrumental approaches with the cultural flavour of the local community, its innate character, its corporate story and its sincere aspirations. Working with images and values as carriers of this communal flavour works out well.

Good design inspires aspirations

In our process, design solutions were developed in parallel with the identification of intentions and core values. Our experience is that the design proposals (and sometimes provocative ideas and far reaching perspectives) help people to articulate what they do and do not want from the renewal process. It brings the future to life, helps people to focus on their core values and focuses the discussion on the real options for the future. In this way, design ideas help to sharpen the brand of the area.

On progressing from aspiration to change

Continuity needed

A weak point in the process towards the Pendleton Area Action Plan has been the lack of continuity between the initial stages of the process described here and the more procedural steps towards the actual plan. The initial stages generated enthusiasm and inspiration, but that momentum has not been maintained. The vision statement for Pendleton and the design of the preferred options that have been undertaken since, have not fully benefited from the work we did. This lack of continuity is partly procedural: the Area Action Planning is a new instrument in the UK and the Salford City Council has struggled with the procedural complexities. The case of Pendleton was particularly complex because a number of public and private programmes had to be integrated in the overall plan. Our interpretation is that the project team has not been successful enough in convincing the higher administrative echelons and the politicians of the aspirations and opportunities of Pendleton. This has allowed the engineers, appraisers and procedural planners to take over the project without internalizing the previous steps. The Pendleton experience has reconfirmed our conviction that an open mind and a reasonable level of support are needed for the successful continuation of an open design process.

From branding session to client team

In relation to the above, we consider the definition of who the client or commissioner for the regeneration is, as crucial. In the case of Pendleton the participants of the branding session have not had a pivotal role in the further planning process. Our emerging experience from other projects has increasingly led us to believe that this involvement is crucial. We would now strongly advocate an approach in which the individuals who are involved in defining the aspirations and core values of the future of neighbourhoods, actually become the client team of the further planning and transformation process. Such a team would include present and future residents, the municipality, private and public investors. It is our experience that this expedites the entrepreneurial spirit, speeds up the planning process, and creates a strong support base for the proposed interventions.

Act now

We advocate an approach in which urban transitions are made visible from the start. In the case of Pendleton, the repossession of the public realm as a space for cultural and sport activities can start now and will begin to invite residents to open up their fences and come out. This will require activities like theatre groups, films in open air, music-festivals, sports and playground activities open up the area. It does not have to be too expensive to get exposure nationwide. Pendleton needs to open up so that people from the Manchester region start visiting, see it on TV or read about it in the newspapers.

Endnotes

- 1) We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of staff of Salford City Council, the people of Pendleton and the teams of Halcrow, Urhahn Urban Design and the Holland Branding Group. In particular we would like to mention the work of Northon Flores Torche, Jessica Hammarlund Bergmann and Phannarat Kiatrabin for Urhahn Urban Design; Robert-Jan Hofhuis for Holland Branding Group; and Stefano Smith, Ashley Stratford and Andy Spracklen for Halcrow Group.
- 2) More information on the current status of the Pendleton Area Action Plan can be found on <http://www.salford.gov.uk/pendletonaap>

Authors: Luc Vrolijk and Maarten Königs

Both authors worked together on the initial stages of the Pendleton Area Action Plan. Luc Vrolijk (www.urbanprogress.nl) was the design director. At the time, he was director of Urhahn Urban Design. He has since established Urban Progress Studio. Maarten Königs (www.hollandbrandinggroup.nl) was the expert for branding. The work was commissioned by the City of Salford and carried out with the Halcrow Group. The Area Action Plan is expected to be completed in 2008.