



Abingdon-on-Thames  
**Neighbourhood Plan**

# PLACE Analysis

## for a neighbourhood plan

The purpose of this download is to help you create a map of elements that, when used together, show the character of your place. For this analysis, we are defining PLACE as Planning, Landscape, Architecture, Culture & Engineering.

Through this activity, you can start to establish what makes your place special, the qualities you want to build on and keep and what doesn't work — the things you would like to change. This activity will provide an insight into the way the design of the built environment needs to be considered as part of the neighbourhood plan process. Crucially, your research will inform future choices the steering group make about the focus of the neighbourhood plan.

Your neighbourhood plan potentially represents a once in a generation opportunity to shape the future of the neighbourhood and its surroundings. A question we need to ask ourselves is this: If sites were to come forward for new development, or sites for redevelopment and improvement were to be identified, what would be the right design response? What will your community consider good planning and good design? Only once we can answer this question, can we start to prepare the policies to be included in your plan.

Working in teams of five, each team member will be responsible for either Planning, Landscape, Architecture, Culture or Engineering. Each team of five will undertake a critical analysis of a specific area and its immediate surroundings. As you walk try to remain open-minded. Read through the prompts before you start and think about how to annotate the map. It important to undertake this task without any specific design proposals in mind.

# CULTURE

This download is for considering cultural issues only. We ask that when you are out on site — either in the real world or online — you focus your observations around the prompts provided for this aspect only. You can make notes directly onto a map and in the spaces provided in this download.

Once the audit for your area is completed, it can be used to produce a complete map that registers the full complexity of the area, allowing, for example, architectural elements to be in conversation with engineering and landscape or culture. This whole picture will inform the neighbourhood plan and enable you to begin a full analysis of the specific issues you want to focus on.

Please record your field notes. There follows some prompts and ideas for you to consider. These prompts are by no means exhaustive. You will no doubt have your own ideas too.

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C1. As you walk, note down on the map places you would consider to be sites of culture. These maybe obvious places — theatres, museums and art galleries — but may also include music venues, religious sites, or the sites of particular events. For example, for many villages the main cultural venue might be the village green. Likewise many cities now host music events and festivals in parks. *Do you consider this to be culture? Write your thoughts below. Note down on the map, any landmarks, meeting places or other important historic features on the site and in the immediate area.*

C2. What are the traditions and local history of the site context? Are there any inherited characteristics, important events, and associations with locally known or famous people or incidents? *Note down anything that comes to mind here.*

C3. Think about street types — from boulevards to courtyards, from civic squares to crossroads. Which are the ones that have greatest resonance with the history of this area or have a place in today's culture? *Note down anything that comes to mind here and annotate on the map.*

C4. Is there any evidence of building decoration in the area? Could some of this be retained or replicated in any new developments, either in whole or in part? *Note down or draw anything that comes to mind here and annotate on the map.*

C5. As you walk, consider whether certain buildings could be maintained, restored and adapted, rather than demolished and replaced? *Note down on the map where these buildings are.*

C6. How adaptable is the place? Are there conservation features that make the area adaptable to new uses when economic conditions change? For example can an historic frontage be persevered but developed as housing or historic housing become a museum or nightclub? *Note down any flexible buildings on the map.*

C7. What boundaries, both natural and artificial, define this area? Are they successful and desirable? Roads and railways lines often create psychological boundaries as do hedges, rivers, historic sites. *Note down on the map where these boundaries lie.*

C8. How is this place perceived by those who do not live here. What is your understanding of this locale. *Note here how others perceive this area.*

C9. How easy is it to find your way around? Are there landmarks, buildings, works of art, or other features creating views and helping people find their way around?

*As you walk, note down on the map specific way points you see.*

C10. Signs and street furniture — are there too many or too few? Appealing or garish? Uniform or clashing? What do the signs and street furniture tell you about the character and culture of this area? *Note down your thoughts below.*

C11. Street and building names — are these clearly visible or not? Are there opportunities for plaques and information boards, ironware (e.g. manholes, tree grilles) that can help interpret heritage assets?