LQRC
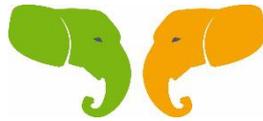
and

Clever Elephant LLP

Independent Evaluation of:
'Age Friendly Tyburn – Creating an Age Friendly Neighbourhood'

STAGE 1 EVALUATION REPORT

(June 2018 – March 2019)

**Dr. Leon Quinn (LQRC) &
Dr. Anna Hraboweckyj (Clever Elephant)**

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I. Executive Summary

> *"I didn't go out looking for it, I wasn't aware of it and now I am, so they have done well. I am also getting more aware of what people in the area need, what they want. This allows me to get involved in things in the community as a resident and volunteer."*
>
> Volunteer interviewee, AFT Project

Age Friendly Tyburn: Built Environment (AFT) is a project commissioned by BVSC on behalf of the Birmingham Ageing Better Partnership. Initial work began in June 2018, with a community engagement officer in post from September 2018. The project is being delivered by Sustrans and will run until June 2020 as part of the Ageing Better in Birmingham programme (ABB).

The AFT project is working in three particular areas of Tyburn ward: Birches Green, Castle Vale and Pype Hayes. Its first aim is to work with residents in these areas *"to support them in acting as co-designers to identify aspects of the urban environment that make travel and social interaction difficult".*[1] As the project's brief outlined, *"an initial audit of the area will lead to developing and trialling ideas that positively enhance their neighbourhood environment to make it Age-Friendly and make access for over 50s easier".*[2]

These trials were to be initially low cost and short term, but with the view to using them as evidence to propose lasting positive changes through the development of a 5-10 year implementation plan for the built environment in the area. The ultimate aim of the project is to make public places, outdoor spaces and local streets easier to access and more attractive to be in. As Sustrans put it, *"as a result of such changes, we hope this will encourage people to join more activities, access local services, travel around more actively and reduce the possibility of social isolation".*

The AFT project comprises four main stages:

- Stage 1: 'Discover' – Initial Area Assessments / Community Engagement
- Stage 2: 'Develop' and 'Design' – Community Workshops and Ideas Audit

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[1] Sustrans, 'Age Friendly Tyburn - Creating an Age Friendly Neighbourhood: Q1 and Q2 Interim Report (January 2019), p.3.
[2] Sustrans, 'Age Friendly Tyburn: Project Brief (December 2018), p.1.

- Stage 3: 'Deliver' – Quick Wins Identification / Ideas Trialling
- Stage 4: 'Legacy' – Production of Long-Term Implementation Plan

Starting with the initial assessments of the local built environment completed by Sustrans staff, it is clear that there has been early recognition on the project's part of the distinctive nature of the aforementioned three main neighbourhoods in which it works (see appendix 1 for a map of the project's geographical area).

To its credit, the project made early use of local residents, volunteers and organisations in putting together these initial area assessments. According to a volunteer from one of the other projects working in the area, this meant Sustrans was able to gain the necessary local knowledge it needed for the assessments, even though AFT's staff are not from the area.

The grasping of the differences between the project's different geographical areas was also reflected in the project's initial outreach and communications work. With the project worker in place by September 2018 and the first maps produced, the project was able to start going out to local people to get their feedback on the initial area assessments.

In terms of quantitative data, the project has reached 96 local people so far through a variety of innovative engagement methods, briefing them on the aims of the project, asking them for their ideas for changes and inviting them to join in to help co-produce the work. The project has also kept equalities data for those it has contacted. With 46% of people engaged being aged 60 or over and 20% over the age of 70 (with 3% over the age of 80), the project has achieved a reasonable balance of ages, with 48% of people engaged still in their 50s.

Looking at the qualitative feedback for this evaluation, interviewees seemed on the whole very impressed with AFT's work so far in terms of community involvement and embedding co-production values into the project. Picking up on the experience the delivery organisation brings, one interviewee from a local organisation noted that *"Sustrans are providing templates on how community development can be done"*.

The project's own report to funders contained a range of useful and practical potential solutions to issues that had arisen during its first stage – for instance, around how to achieve a more even balance of participation between the different neighbourhoods in which the project works.

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Nevertheless, there are still some potential suggestions arising from this evaluation that the project may wish to consider implementing in its remaining stages:

Recommendation I. Scenario planning for different BCC engagement levels

The role of the local authority was seen by all types of stakeholder interviewed as a crucial external factor influencing the project's chances of success. The project has been up front about this situation, for example, in its citizen involvement mechanisms or its plans for trialling potential 'quick wins'. This openness could, however, be further enhanced by explicitly including within the project's planning and co-production processes different scenarios and different success criteria relating to different levels of BCC support. This scenario modelling could further underpin the project's existing efforts to avoid raising expectations it cannot meet. It might also help encourage sustained buy-in from participants by underlining the pride which the project and its participants could take in any bottom-up changes to the local built environment achieved, even where those changes were small-scale, as may especially be the case in the earlier stages of the project.

Recommendation II. Extended use of age segmentation

AFT has already recognised the difficulties posed by the breadth of its target age range when it comes to practical elements such as the guided walks for the initial area assessments. The project may wish to take this a step further in subsequent stages and develop slightly different communications materials for different age ranges (with, for example, some materials aimed more at those in their 50s, and others, perhaps in more conventional formats, aimed more at the older end – distinguishing more explicitly between the 'young elderly' and 'old elderly' demographics). Where appropriate, emphasising the activity of younger volunteers as more akin to an 'ambassadorial' role, in which they reach out to those more lonely and more elderly than themselves, may also be a good way of harnessing the energies of those local citizens who, while technically part of the project's over 50s target group, would never otherwise see themselves as 'old' or a project like AFT as relevant to them.

Recommendation III. Project participant case studies

As noted in the introduction to this report, no data on the loneliness and isolation levels of AFT participants is being collected as part of the national

level evaluation. The same is true of the citywide ABB evaluation. In both cases, this is with good reason; the ultimate focus of the project is far more on helping its indirect beneficiaries (those older people so socially isolated that they will never have any contact with the project other than through experiencing the more age-friendly built environment it manages to create) than it is on helping its direct participants (those who engage with the project to help bring about those changes to the built environment).

While formal surveys of participants' isolation/loneliness levels before and after their engagement with the project may not be justifiable due to the time and resources required, co-produced case studies of project participants, and particularly the changes their involvement with the project has led to (both in terms of themselves and the local environment), would require a great deal less effort to produce. A small library of case studies amplifying the voices of the project's direct participants might provide a powerful supporting argument for the approach AFT is taking, especially when it comes to trying to convince more sceptical, financially-constrained strategic stakeholders that age-friendly changes to the built environment should be a priority when it comes to the funding of services for older people.

These three recommendations should not, however, detract from the positive overall picture of the AFT project to date. It is already well on the way to forming a genuine partnership with local people and organisations through its communications and outreach work, as well as through its efforts to encourage citizen participation and co-production in the changes to the built environment it is trying to achieve.

There remain challenges to bringing those efforts to all corners of the project's geographical area of work, and to all the older people that could benefit from it, particularly the most lonely and isolated individuals. There remain other more future-focused challenges too, particularly around the project's strategic fit in citywide terms and the factors that will always be beyond its direct control, such as the decisions of bodies with a much wider purview than just the Tyburn area. The project is, though, aware of these and other challenges to its work, and clearly taking steps to try to meet them. In terms of its first stage therefore, the project seems to have completed its work successfully and looks to be well set for the remaining three stages of its task.

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Dr. Leon Quinn
Dr. Anna Hraboweckyj

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II. Introduction and Methodology

Age Friendly Tyburn: Built Environment (AFT) is a project commissioned by BVSC on behalf of the Birmingham Ageing Better Partnership. Initial work began in June 2018, with a community engagement officer in post from September 2018. The project is being delivered by Sustrans and will run until June 2020 as part of the Ageing Better in Birmingham programme (ABB). ABB includes (or will include) the provision of several other projects for the over 50s in the Tyburn area:

- Tyburn Ageing Better Hub
- Community Organisers
- Walking Maps
- Good Neighbours
- Care and Repair

The AFT project is working in three particular areas of Tyburn ward: Birches Green, Castle Vale and Pype Hayes. Its first aim is to work with residents in these areas *"to support them in acting as co-designers to identify aspects of the urban environment that make travel and social interaction difficult"*.[3] As the project's brief outlined, *"an initial audit of the area will lead to developing and trialling ideas that positively enhance their neighbourhood environment to make it Age-Friendly and make access for over 50s easier"*.[4]

These trials were to be initially low cost and short term, but with the view to using them as evidence to propose lasting positive changes through the development of a 5-10 year implementation plan for the built environment in the area. The ultimate aim of the project is to make public places, outdoor spaces and local streets easier to access and more attractive to be in. As Sustrans put it, *"as a result of such changes, we hope this will encourage people to join more activities, access local services, travel around more actively and reduce the possibility of social isolation"*.

The AFT project comprises four main stages:

- Stage 1: 'Discover' – Initial Area Assessments / Community Engagement

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[3] Sustrans, 'Age Friendly Tyburn - Creating an Age Friendly Neighbourhood: Q1 and Q2 Interim Report (January 2019), p.3.
[4] Sustrans, 'Age Friendly Tyburn: Project Brief' (December 2018).

- Stage 2: 'Develop' and 'Design' – Community Workshops and Ideas Audit
- Stage 3: 'Deliver' – Quick Wins Identification / Ideas Trialling
- Stage 4: 'Legacy' – Production of Long-Term Implementation Plan

This evaluation will report on the project's progress at the end of each of its four stages, starting with this stage 1 report. As per the brief for this evaluation, this first report considers the effectiveness of AFT's initial communications and outreach activity, before going on to assess its community engagement work more widely, particularly in terms of its levels so far of volunteer involvement and citizen participation (in other words, its co-production performance). It then considers any more general, crosscutting issues to arise during AFT's first stage, before coming to initial conclusions and recommendations relating to project's overall work so far.

In terms of the methodology for our evaluation, the approach will be broadly similar at each stage. First of all, quantitative data from the project is analysed, including data and reports that are being produced at local, citywide and national level as part of concurrent evaluations running alongside this one.[5] For this stage 1 evaluation, equalities data from Sustrans have also been analysed, together with the project's engagement records and its initial six-month report to BVSC. These data have then been complemented by qualitative interviews with key stakeholders in the project. Interviewees included local residents and project volunteers, workers on other Tyburn ABB projects and representatives of other key organisations working with older people in the area. Nine key stakeholders were interviewed for this initial report, with the data for a further 96 project participants analysed for demographic trends.

As the project unfolds further, the scale of each report will grow with it. The project is designed to take a 'test and learn' approach throughout, with feedback at each stage of the project shaping the next stage. The emphasis throughout all the stages of our evaluation is on taking a realist approach, looking not just what has worked, but what has not worked, why, and – most importantly of all – what has been learned. It is with the question of what has been learned from the initial area assessments that this process now begins.

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[5] ABB is part of a national Ageing Better programme, which is being evaluated by Ecorys. Although some of the other ABB projects in Tyburn (such as the Hub or the Community Connectors) are part of Ecorys' Common Measurement Framework, AFT is one of the ones which is not listed as a separate project, so no data from their national level work was available for this evaluation.

III. Initial Area Assessments

"They've brought in very particular methodologies focused on access and movement. Sustrans was a good choice".

Stakeholder interviewee, AFT Project

Starting with the initial assessments of the local built environment completed by Sustrans staff, it is clear that there has been early recognition on the project's part of the distinctive nature of the aforementioned three main neighbourhoods in which it works (see appendix 1 for a map of the project's geographical area).

Interviewees were very clear about the differences between the three different areas. In the words of one stakeholder interviewed for this evaluation, *"Tyburn is predominantly white British apart from a small area in the north, but the areas within Tyburn are very different"*. The same stakeholder then went on to outline in more detail the differences they saw between the three main areas:

"Castle Vale has long had community resources and is well supplied with everything that the people living there need, so they do not have to go out of area for virtually anything. It's always been hard to get them to do anything outside of Castle Vale, but they are active in area."

"Pype Hayes was re-created from some poor housing stock, old houses were pulled down and new ones built in their place, residents moved. It only has one small community location and the age demographic is more mixed and younger than other parts of the area."

"Birches Green has no community space at all and the residents there tend to go to Erdington High Street for what they need. It is very difficult to access residents here, but we have done some work with a school there. The pop-up coffee clubs we do and occasional road closure can help get people out into their communities."

The disparity between the sizes of the three areas was another difference flagged up by a project volunteer interviewee:

"You could fit Pype Hayes and Birches Green into a corner of Castle Vale, and not even notice that they're there, Castle Vale is so big. It's the second largest council estate in Birmingham after Chelmsley Wood."

In terms of their built environment, one of the first things AFT did was to identify further differences even within these three neighbourhoods, particularly in terms of residential versus through-road areas. Its initial assessments therefore split the three neighbourhoods into further sub-areas, with the five main roads running through them (Chester Road, Tyburn Road, Kingsbury Road, Fort Parkway and Bromford Lane) each assessed separately and Pype Hayes split into three different parts to capture fully the distinctive character of its component areas.

To its credit, the project made early use of local residents, volunteers and organisations in putting together these initial area assessments. According to a volunteer from one of the other projects working in the area, this meant Sustrans was able to gain the necessary local knowledge it needed for the assessments, even though AFT's staff are not from the area. In the volunteer's words, *"we supply all the living geography, the shortcuts, the quick ways through, that they don't know about"*.

In terms of the three main neighbourhoods, Sustrans' initial area assessments also found differences between the three areas, both in general and specifically in built environment terms:

> *"Castle Vale has the most residents and also the most services and community involvement. It is also the neighbourhood with the highest scoring in the audit, meaning it has the best existing infrastructure of the three. Castle Vale has a number of community buildings, therefore there are more places to meet residents and potential volunteers."*

> *"Pype Hayes has a slightly lower audit scoring than Castle Vale with some good infrastructure, however there are some poorer scoring parts such as the cycle lane on Chester Road with usability compromised by pavement parking and intermittent connectivity."*

> *"Birches Green has the lowest scoring, with very limited connectivity and crossing points, which would lead to isolation of those unable to safely and confidently cross the roads. Birches Green has no services within the estate and limited services close by, with many residents using Erdington for shops and services."*[6]

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[6] Sustrans, 'Age Friendly Tyburn - Creating an Age Friendly Neighbourhood…', p.8. The project's report to BVSC on its first two quarters of activity added that there were no

With Birches Green faring worst in the initial audits, as well as being the area with the least community activity both according to stakeholders and according to Sustrans' own feedback, the initial assessments already seemed to underline the link between the built environment and an active community. Indeed, Birches Green's lower levels of community activity were confirmed by almost all the stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation, for example, one who observed that while their organisation had a running group in Castle Vale and a walking group based on Pype Hayes Park, *"there is nothing in Birches Green as yet though some development work was done with a local infant school"*. A volunteer interviewee also confirmed this impression, noting that *"Castle Vale is good for the project, Pype Hayes and Birches Green are smaller and much more difficult to work in"*. Indeed, the volunteer in question had actually been to Birches Green the day before we interviewed them and found that *"there seem to be a lot of people in conflict with each other"*, adding that *"it's hard to find a community space which is acceptable to them all"*.

So while the overview maps developed of the project's various built environments (see appendix 2 to this report) are the most visually impressive output of the project's work to date, it may be that the key outcome of the initial area assessments is the awareness of the differences and unique features of each of the project's three main neighbourhoods, as well as the sub-areas that lie beneath them.

Finally in terms of the initial assessments, to judge by the favourable impressions among interviewees of the quality of Sustrans' mapping work, it appears that the decision to develop a bespoke tool for project (based on Transport for London's Healthy Streets and the World Health Organisation's Age Friendly Cities criteria) rather than use an 'off the shelf' one has paid off. Likewise, the project's emphasis on the mapping using jargon-free, accessible language seems to have played a role in ensure a solid foundation to its efforts to map the built environment that it is seeking to make more friendly for older people in Tyburn.

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community venues in Pype Hayes or Birches Green other than churches, meaning more stand-alone events had had to be arranged, often using church halls for an indoor location for a coffee and a conversation after the event. The report also noted that it had found that there was very limited movement of residents between the three project neighbourhoods, especially in and out of Castle Vale.

IV. Project Outreach and Communications

> *"I didn't go out looking for it, I wasn't aware of it and now I am, so they have done well. I am also getting more aware of what people in the area need, what they want. This allows me to get involved in things in the community as a resident and volunteer."*
>
> <div align="right">Volunteer interviewee, AFT Project</div>

The grasping of the differences between the project's different geographical areas was also reflected in the project's initial outreach and communications work. With the project worker in place by September 2018 and the first maps produced, the project was able to start going out to local people to get their feedback on the initial area assessments.

Outreach work with local people primarily took the following four forms:

- *Cold Pop-ups – a stall in a location to speak to passing footfall – for example in the foyer of a local supermarket.*

- *Warm Pop-ups – delivery of a mapping workshop at an existing community event, for example delivery at a regular community lunch event.*

- *Planned and advertised workshops – where a targeted, invited group of people attends specifically for a mapping workshop – for example, the Community Organisers.*

- *Led Walks – the walks feature an audit of the route taken and a lunch and discussion afterwards. Existing signed up volunteers are invited, as are the general public and residents of the project area.*[7]

In terms of quantitative data, the project has reached 96 local people so far through means like the ones listed above, briefing them on the aims of the project, asking them for their ideas for changes and inviting them to join in to help co-produce the work. The project has also kept equalities data for those it has contacted. From those data, it seems to be reaching its age demographic at the moment, as the following chart from its report to BVSC records:[8]

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[7] Ibid, pp.4-5.
[8] See ibid, p.6.

Age of People Engaged
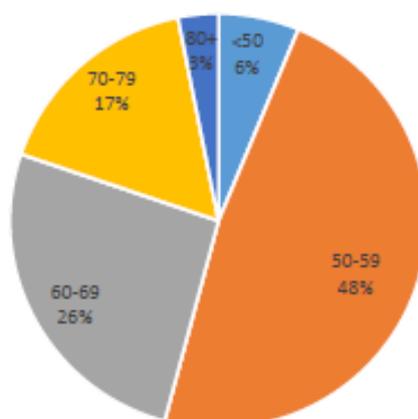
With 46% of people engaged being aged 60 or over and 20% over the age of 70 (with 3% over the age of 80), the project has achieved a reasonable balance of ages, with 48% of people engaged still in their 50s. Looking at its other demographic data, it has been particularly good at reaching participants with a disability, who have comprised 30% of those engaged so far. The project's reach so far has also been broadly in line with the area's ethnic and gender make up, with 9% of people engaged from BME backgrounds and a roughly even gender split (47% female to 53% male).

Turning to the qualitative data, the predominant feedback from stakeholders is that the project has communicated well with potential participants, as well as with other stakeholders in general. For example, one interviewee singled out the project worker for particular praise, commenting that they communicated well, while another felt that the project's staff *"have engaged well"* from the materials they had seen from them so far. The project's regular use of electronic materials was commented on by several interviewees as one of its strengths. In the words of an interviewee who follows the project on Facebook, *"a lot of stuff is being offered out all the time – the social media side of it is great"*. Another observed in a similar vein that *"information comes into my inbox regularly"*, adding that *"it's not immediately relevant to what I do, but it does all go out to the team and they put posters up at the centre where they are based"*.

This last point is perhaps particularly important, given that more than one interviewee stressed the crucial role of non-electronic means of communications in reaching the most socially isolated and lonely older people who are the project's key target audience. One volunteer, for instance, felt that the project currently relied too much on one local organisation. The volunteer felt that sending things out to email lists was fine, but they did not know who was on that list, and that

"getting the word out requires more than this". Another stakeholder echoed this view, commenting that the project *"needs to carry out good old-fashioned community development work, going out street by street and knocking on doors"* if it is to succeed. The issue was also touched upon by a third stakeholder interviewee in their comments on the project's outreach and communications to date:

> *"We all put stuff on Facebook, Twitter, What'sApp and so on, but this is not the first port of call for many older people when they want information. Now that local papers don't report so much and there are fewer noticeboards, and those that do exist like ones in the supermarket, they are gatekeepered by supermarket staff, so this demographic can be easily marginalised. Really we are still reliant on the network of word-of-mouth. We need leaflets and articles in other people's bulletins such as Churches Together's or the hospice's. Some older people are excluded by the finances as well. They think that they cannot afford the internet and don't necessarily know where to go for free wi-fi."*

This interviewee observed too that whilst there are quite a few people active in the community who are easy to reach, it is difficult to get in touch with people who are isolated or alone at home. Their organisation had had to take portable equipment for things like coffee clubs out into the community to reach those kind of residents – simply setting up stalls in a road and inviting people to come out of their homes and have a chat. A new befriending service had been the concrete result of these activities, though, so it can work. It is therefore encouraging that the AFT project is taking a similar approach in terms of using pop-ups to reach out to people across the different parts of the area.

At the same time, stakeholders seemed in agreement that close ties between the project and local organisations would be an equally important factor in the success or otherwise of its outreach and communications, whatever their format. As the interviewee quoted above put it, *"we do get reports, and hear about what's happening through social media, but the best way is seeing each other and working together informally"*. It is therefore likewise encouraging at this early stage that the informal networking and creation of strategic links with other organisations appears to be already well underway. For instance, one stakeholder interviewed had first heard about the project through the AFT worker's attendance at 'Everyone Erdington', a regular face-to-face meeting for organisations working in the area and any other interested individuals. Likewise, the comments by other interviewees that they had already *"come across AFT in*

various meetings and forums" or that *"Sustrans have met with myself and another senior member of staff and briefed us on the project, so strategic level contact has been made"* indicate the good start that has been made.

There are still clearly challenges for the project to overcome in its communications and outreach work. These challenges are, for example, reflected in the quantitative data for the project, with only 2% of people engaged coming from Birches Green so far and only 13% from Pype Hayes, although the smaller sizes of these two areas in terms of population compared to Castle Vale does need to be factored in when considering these figures. Encouragingly, the project itself is already taking steps to try to redress this issue, for example noting in its report to BVSC that it was planning to put up more posters about the project in shop windows in Pype Hayes and Birches Green and have more pop up events in high footfall parts of those areas, along with bigger events with other organisations and projects including the Tyburn Hub, the Community Organisers and the police.[9]

Overall, therefore, there is little to contradict one stakeholder's view that AFT's outreach and communications has gone *"as well as can be expected at this stage"*, with the caveat that the stakeholder was *"not sure whether it has reached people in all the different areas"*. If some of the neighbourhoods may be difficult terrain for what the project is trying to do, though, then its staff are clearly already aware of that, and taking steps to redress those difficulties. This can only bode well for the project as it moves into its later stages.

V. Co-production, Citizen and Volunteer Involvement

> *"I'm quite impressed with the worker, she even bought her dad on a walk with us!"*
>
> Volunteer interviewee, AFT Project

Unlike the project's communications and outreach work, it will be hard to judge the quality of its co-production work through quantitative numbers even in the later stages of the project. Nevertheless, it is worth noting at this early point that out of the 96 local people engaged so far, 30 have signed up to volunteer with the project, and 8 have already been active within it on multiple occasions.[10] Reflecting the different sizes and natures of the project's three neighbourhoods,

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[9] Ibid, p.9.
[10] Ibid, p.6.

three-quarters of the regular volunteers have come from Castle Vale, with the remaining quarter from Pype Hayes and none yet from Birches Green. This bears out the view of one volunteer interviewed that *"it will be easier to engage residents in Castle Vale than in Pype Hayes and Birches Green, as these communities are more isolated".* At the same time, there appears to have been a conscious decision to some extent on the part of the project to privilege gaining crucial early momentum for the project by building on the strengths of the community in Castle Vale, rather going for a completely geographically representative spread of volunteers from the off. This approach fits with the 'learn' element of the 'test and learn' approach being applied to the other ABB projects in the Tyburn area; as recorded in the evaluation report for the early stages of the Community Organisers project, the strategy of starting citizen and volunteer engagement in Castle Vale then building out into the more challenging areas has worked well for that project, so it is heartening to see awareness of that learning shaping the AFT project too.[11]

Looking at the qualitative feedback for this evaluation, interviewees seemed on the whole very impressed with AFT's work so far in terms of community involvement and embedding co-production values into the project. Picking up on the experience the delivery organisation brings, one interviewee from a local organisation noted that *"Sustrans are providing templates on how community development can be done".* The interviewee expressed too how struck they were by the similarities between what the project was doing and the model that their organisation was trying to develop in order to improve older people's lives and give them greater access to amenities. While the interviewee counselled that Birches Green and Pype Hayes would definitely be more challenging areas in community engagement terms than Castle Vale (*"Castle Vale is an island, very unique a protected geography where residential and services are well connected, Pype Hayes and Birches Green will be harder to get into, they will need to apply all the community development lessons that they have learnt in Castle Vale"*), they also noted that the issues in the latter two areas remained the same as in Castle Vale: *"roads are unsafe in these two areas and dangerous for older people".*

As well as gaining credibility by putting co-production into practice even with their own family members (as per the quote at the start of this section), the project is using other means as well as it tries to embed co-production into its core. For

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[11] See A. Forshaw et al, 'Tyburn Local Action Plan Projects Evaluation - First Narrative Report (M.E.L. Research, October 2018), available at: https://www.ageingbetterinbirmingham.co.uk/images/RESOURCES/BVSC_Tyburn_LAP_First_Narrative_Evaluation_Report_September_2018_Final.pdf <accessed March 2019>, p.6.

example, one volunteer interviewee praised the way that "*when they are in meeting, Sustrans always have a big map up and you can put suggestions straight onto the map, things like road crossings or the problem with Jaguar Rovers single exit car park*". The same volunteer also praised the project for being honest about what could be achieved, another essential aspect of successful co-production:

> "*In terms of what it is saying, Sustrans has been crystal clear that this is just an inception phase and that there is no guarantees Birmingham City Council will follow through with any improvements, and even if they do it will take years. They've been careful not to build up expectations.*"

Indeed, avoiding the temptation to raise unrealistic hopes seems a particularly important characteristic for the project to retain, given that another interviewee from a local organisation emphasised how co-production could only be a gradual process, often based on small steps rather than 'big wins'. As they put it:

> "*People will involve themselves as co-researchers and co-designers but only once they've seen that their input makes a difference. It might be something small like changed timings on a pelican crossing, that might make a difference and pull them in.*"

Less positively, the same interviewee was of the view that "*there is some scepticism about, as local people been consulted before and nothing has happened as a result*", adding that "*the city council doing something is vital if gains are to be made*". It is therefore a plus point that the AFT project is already explicitly working with local organisations to try to avoid any confusion among local residents between itself and the other ABB project ins Tyburn, as well as to avoid any duplicate consultation processes or risk of 'consultation fatigue' among local residents and volunteers.[12] Indeed, the interviewee in question felt that the project was going about the task of co-producing its plans in the right way to combat any scepticism, commenting on how AFT had worked with their organisation to make use of its volunteers and existing links in the area:

> "*We have had volunteers and residents traipsing around the streets doing community pop-ups with maps, getting residents out to talk about the plans and what's being suggested and to take in their views. There has been some really, really good work with the community.*"

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[12] Sustrans, 'Age Friendly Tyburn - Creating an Age Friendly Neighbourhood…', p.9.

Generally, stakeholders have a positive view of the work done so far by the project in terms of its citizen and volunteer involvement, which in part seems to be a reflection of the strengths and experience Sustrans as an organisation is perceived to have brought to the project. Equally, though, a large part also seems to be down to the way the project's staff have set about their task. Other volunteers interviewed were impressed by the development worker's approach, with one, for example, noting approvingly how the worker had run a street stall the previous week just down from where they lived, and that it had had a good response – *"it was sunny and we showcased what we were doing, nabbing people who were over 50 as they walked past"*. One interviewee whose organisation works in the project area had been similarly impressed by the project's hands on approach. They had seen the project *"engage people around Pype Hayes and Erdington and link in with litter collecting, so I have seen examples where this is working well"*. Volunteers who engage with the project in the future might derive some unexpected benefits from doing so too, judging from the feedback from one volunteer that they had only discovered some local community facilities by going on one of the project's area walks!

In general, the qualitative data for this stage 1 evaluation strongly support the project's comment in its report to BVSC that *"there has been early feedback from some of the volunteers that they are enjoying participating and are interested to see how the project develops"*.[13] Despite the different challenges posed by the three distinct neighbourhoods in which it is working, there seems to be a great deal of optimism locally about what the project might achieve in relation to co-production and community engagement given the start it has made. As one worker from a local organisation summarised the situation in their interview:

> *"I see no reason why they will not be able to engage local residents especially in Castle Vale and Erdington, where there is a desire for local influence on what happens in the area. Replicating this across the larger area might be trickier, as some communities are not so proactive. Some communities have been struggling to cope for a long time and have been disappointed when they've been ignored in the past. But you don't need huge numbers of people with co-production and co-design, so there is every reason for such strands to be able to do this. There is a determination to do something, to make changes."*

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[13] Ibid.

VI. Crosscutting Issues and General Themes

There were several issues raised by interviewees for this stage 1 evaluation report that, while related to the project, were not directly related to its outreach or co-production work. Perhaps the most common was the strategic context within which it is working. The **importance of links with local authority planning processes** was the most frequently raised general theme for the project. For example, one interviewee from a local organisation summed up their view on the current situation as follows:

> *"Hopefully we will see some changes through the project. The situation at the moment is that grass roots models are more likely to give results than ones emanating from the council, given the difficulties the council has."*

Another interview from a local organisation was unsure how rooted the project will be in council planning of housing developments, or other strategies such as air quality or the Birmingham housing trust – in their words, *"it's a question"*. The importance of Birmingham City Council's role was flagged up by volunteers too. As one put it:

> *"When you are out with Sustrans, you can see what needs to happen, but the council don't listen. You wouldn't believe how many levels there are in the council to go up and down."*

The same volunteer was also of the view that having to wait on the local authority to implement most of the changes *"could take forever – doing smaller things like painting the tiger on the road or putting the bench in Birches Green might be quicker"*. While project staff themselves were optimistic in their report to BVSC about the prospects of getting council planners on board despite the local authority's current severe financial difficulties (*"Initial conversations and meetings with BCC for permissions for the quick-wins and longer term trials have been very forthcoming and positive to date"*), there were no specific contacts from the council sufficiently familiar with the project to interview for this stage 1 report, and the effectiveness of the project's links with the local authority remains an area where more work may need to be done.[14]

The second strategic context question to emerge was the project's **potential fit with the new Neighbourhood Networking Schemes (NNS)**. Part of

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[14] Ibid, p.8.

Birmingham City Council's new 'prevention first' approach to adult health and social care in the city, NNS are locality and constituency based networks that aim to support older people *"to connect with individuals, groups, organisations, activities, services and places in their local neighbourhood"*.[15] They will invest in, and support the development of, community assets, together with the individuals, groups and organisations who are delivering community activity.[16] Networks will also locally commission activity, through a micro and small grants scheme.[17]

One interviewee from a local organisation summed up the issue in relation to AFT's work as follows:

> *"How does the project fit in with the NNS, which is about keeping people out of care. This is Birmingham City Council's flagship programme, £2m over 10 areas – how does it link with that?"*

Another interviewee from a local organisation explicitly expressed the hope that NNS would help the project:

> *"This is a citywide scheme. Social services has been reconstructed so that social work teams will now be local and will signpost people into local provision. Of course whether they will have time to actually take people into local projects or programmes is a different matter."*

This interviewee was particularly concerned that handholding support would not be available under NNS, commenting that their organisation is *"often dealing with bereaved people who have spent a lifetime with a partner and just don't know how to go it alone or how to join a group on their own – they need our help to make the introduction, then they can fly"*.

The question of whether NNS will add to or subtract from the AFT project's ability to reach the most lonely and socially isolated over-50s therefore seems still to be an open one. Its importance is magnified, however, by the fact that the wider **ABB programme is projected to cease the year after AFT finishes**. Feedback from interviewees in relation to this was that ABB should be funded for longer than currently planned, with one interviewee commenting that *"it has taken five years to*

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[15] See Ageing Better in Birmingham, 'Neighbourhood Networking Schemes', available at: https://www.ageingbetterinbirmingham.co.uk/neighbourhood-networking-schemes <accessed March 2019>.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.

build up to where we are now and we are just starting to get results, seeing people sustaining their own groups and not just leaving everything to 'the office'". At a more strategic level too, it is worth noting that the second year evaluation of the ABB programme observed that while the programme was *"seen by stakeholders as timely, innovative and influential"*, it might find value in considering *"if and how to reposition the programme with a greater focus on community development"*.[18] Such a change would most likely be to the benefit of the AFT project, given the strengths it is already showing in this area.

Indeed, there was evidence of some appetite for the AFT project to work more widely than it already does, with one interviewee seeing **potential for the project to expand its geographical and age range** and cover the whole of Erdington, including putting together the kind of information around journey times that the project was collecting for the existing neighbourhoods in which it works. In their words:

> "*What Sustrans is doing for Tyburn is applicable to Kingstanding as well, and also not just limited to older people, young people rely on public transport too. This research is really exciting because it's new information that's very local and has a big impact on the social life of older people who use public transport.*"

The **relatively early stage the project is currently in** was another general issue raised, with one interviewee from the local area feeling that there would be points of connection between AFT and their organisation, but that they would need to think about this as they were not sure of AFT's future direction yet. Similarly, another stakeholder interviewed felt in future there would be more links between their project and AFT than there was now (*"potentially we can help each other with connections"*). The still nascent nature of the project appears to be one of the reasons for the lack of interviewees available for this evaluation from the likes of the council or the local police. It was also the reason why no-one from the 'Age of Experience' group felt sufficiently familiar with the AFT project to be interviewed for this evaluation.[19]

Finally in terms of crosscutting issues, the **age categories for the project** were

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[18] R. Moreton et al, 'Evaluation of Ageing Better in Birmingham: Year Two Report' (CFE Research, 2019), available at: https://www.ageingbetterinbirmingham.co.uk/media/attachments/2019/02/22/bvsc_ageing_better_year_2_report_160718_final.pdf <accessed March 2019>, p.2.

[19] 'Age of Experience' is ABB's regularly meeting group of 'Experts by Experience', which is composed of older people from across the city, including a significant number from Tyburn.

questioned by one volunteer interviewed. In their view:

> "Over 50 is too young or else they're going to have to change their
> marketing materials. Our society has a pejorative view of the elderly, how
> dare you have a wrinkle and not iron it out, and the 'over 50's' don't
> associate themselves with 80-year-olds. I'm not sure they should be
> marketing at 50-year-olds at all."

Sustrans themselves also noted in their report to BVSC that the 50+ age range
stipulation comprises *"a very wide criteria and ensuring activities and workshops
suit all ages and abilities is challenging"*.[20] The current age bands derive of course
from the project's status as part of the wider ABB and national Ageing Better
programme, so are unlikely to change. But the volunteer interviewee's point about
segmenting marketing materials and means of involvement is one the project
will need to continue working on as it goes into its later stages, especially as one of
the main reasons for Tyburn's status as a key focus for ABB activity in the first
place was its relatively high numbers of very elderly people (those aged 85+)
compared to other parts of the city – over 15% according to Aston University
figures.[21] That the project is already aware of the extra barriers faced in reaching
the most elderly participants is another positive sign, with its report to BVSC
recording that it had introduced shorter and longer versions of its led walks to
make them more accessible for those more elderly participants more likely to have
mobility problems.[22]

Overall, the project's ability to reach the people it needs to reach, especially (as
discussed in the previous sections of this report) in Pype Hayes and Birches
Green, remains the most frequently cited key issue it faces. All of the crosscutting
issues discussed in this section will affect AFT to some degree though, and
potentially grow in importance as the project goes on. The effectiveness and
similar struggles of other projects and programmes working locally (captured, for
example, in one interviewee's general observation that *"Ageing Better is working
really well in Castle Vale, Pype Hayes and Birches Green are much more
challenging"*) will in turn affect their ability to help the project, especially amid the
general context of austerity and cuts that will no doubt continue to set the
backdrop to its work for some time to come. When a volunteer interviewee reports

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[20] Sustrans, 'Age Friendly Tyburn - Creating an Age Friendly Neighbourhood…', p.9.
[21] J. Collins and C. Holland, 'Older Adults Living Alone in the Birmingham Area With
Projections to 2020' (Aston Research Centre for Healthy Ageing, 2013), available at;
https://www.ageingbetterinbirmingham.co.uk/media/attachments/2019/02/22/analysis-
loneliness.pptx <accessed March 2019>, slide 32.
[22] Sustrans, 'Age Friendly Tyburn - Creating an Age Friendly Neighbourhood…', p.9.

that the local newsletter in Castle Vale has stopped or the club for the over-50s club has run out of funding (*"I only found out what's going on through the club"*), these may only seem like small things, but they are part of a backdrop to the project that will only make its task harder as it moves into its remaining stages.

VII. Conclusion and Recommendations

"The project team have been very focused and across the board have not deviated from their plans and are hitting their targets. I think they are going about this the right way"

Stakeholder interviewee, AFT Project

Sherry Arnstein's 'Ladder of Citizen Participation' is one of the older community development tools still in common use. Dating from 1969, it divides community engagement into eight rungs or levels, with non-participation at the bottom and full citizen control at the top. One of reasons it has lasted so long as a method for conceptualising involvement is that it covers not just what is effective citizen participation, but also what is not:
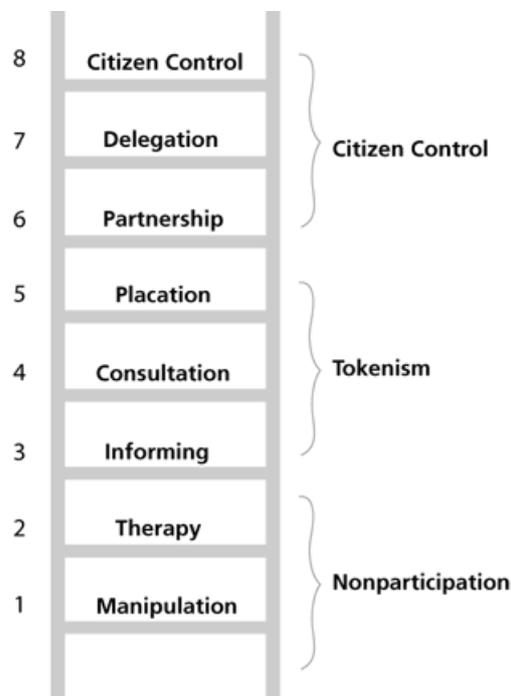
Arnstein's Ladder (1969)
Degrees of Citizen Participation

To quote Arnstein herself, in detail the levels of involvement that the rungs of the ladder represent are as follows:

> *"The bottom rungs of the ladder are (1) Manipulation and (2) Therapy. These two rungs describe levels of 'non-participation' that have been contrived by some to substitute for genuine participation. Their real objective is not to enable people to participate in planning or conducting programs, but to enable powerholders to 'educate' or 'cure' the participants."*

> *"Rungs 3 and 4 progress to levels of 'tokenism' that allow the have-nots to hear and to have a voice: (3) Informing and (4) Consultation. When they are proffered by powerholders as the total extent of participation, citizens may indeed hear and be heard. But under these conditions they lack the power to ensure that their views will be heeded by the powerful. When participation is restricted to these levels, there is no follow-through, no 'muscle', hence no assurance of changing the status quo. Rung (5) Placation is simply a higher level tokenism because the ground rules allow have-nots to advise, but retain for the powerholders the continued right to decide."*

> *"Further up the ladder are levels of citizen power with increasing degrees of decision-making clout. Citizens can enter into a (6) Partnership that enables them to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional power holders. At the topmost rungs, (7) Delegated Power and (8) Citizen Control, have-not citizens obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power."*

> *"Obviously, the eight-rung ladder is a simplification, but it helps to illustrate the point that so many have missed – that there are significant gradations of citizen participation."[23]*

Using the ladder to conceptualise the current location and future aims of the AFT project would perhaps place it surprisingly high up in view of the project's still early stage. Judging from the breadth of its involvement and steady flow of information from the project attested to by interviewees for this evaluation, it has already climbed past the initial rungs of non-participation, and is

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[23] Quoted in Open Learn, '4.1 – Arnstein's Ladder of Participation' (Open University), available at: https://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=21024-&section=4.1 <accessed March 2019>.

comfortably at the consultation level of the ladder at the very least, with the aim of climbing higher still in its three remaining stages to come.

In an ideal world, the project would no doubt wish to bequeath a set of geographically representative volunteers capable of raising and overseeing fully the implementation of further age-friendly improvements to Tyburn's built environment, even after the project's close. Given the views expressed around the reliance the project will have to place on the local authority to achieve its goals, however, this highest rung of the ladder could be very challenging in terms of reachability for the project. Indeed, even the next level down, the 'delegation' rung, may likewise be beyond it during its lifetime, given that decision-making processes crucial to its impact will remain with the local authority for the foreseeable future.

It may therefore be that the partnership rung is the level the project may most likely realistically achieve during the remaining stages of its work. This is especially likely given that not just the non-technical ideas, knowledge and enthusiasm of local individuals, organisation and communities, but also the engineering and technical expertise of Sustrans will remain crucially important when it comes to making Tyburn's built environment more age friendly.

In terms of other recommendations at this early stage, it should be noted that the project's own report to funders contained a range of useful and practical potential solutions to issues that had arisen during its first stage – for instance, around how to achieve a more even balance of participation between the different neighbourhoods in which the project works.

Nevertheless, there are still some potential suggestions arising from this evaluation that the project may wish to consider implementing in its remaining stages:

Recommendation I. Scenario planning for different BCC engagement levels

The role of the local authority was seen by all types of stakeholder interviewed as a crucial external factor influencing the project's chances of success. The project has been up front about this situation, for example, in its citizen involvement mechanisms or its plans for trialling potential 'quick wins'. This openness could, however, be further enhanced by explicitly including within the project's planning and co-production processes different scenarios and

different success criteria relating to different levels of BCC support. This scenario modelling could further underpin the project's existing efforts to avoid raising expectations it cannot meet. It might also help encourage sustained buy-in from participants by underlining the pride which the project and its participants could take in any bottom-up changes to the local built environment achieved, even where those changes were small-scale, as may especially be the case in the earlier stages of the project.

Recommendation II. Extended use of age segmentation

AFT has already recognised the difficulties posed by the breadth of its target age range when it comes to practical elements such as the guided walks for the initial area assessments. The project may wish to take this a step further in subsequent stages and develop slightly different communications materials for different age ranges (with, for example, some materials aimed more at those in their 50s, and others, perhaps in more conventional formats, aimed more at the older end – distinguishing more explicitly between the 'young elderly' and 'old elderly' demographics). Where appropriate, emphasising the activity of younger volunteers as more akin to an 'ambassadorial' role, in which they reach out to those more lonely and more elderly than themselves, may also be a good way of harnessing the energies of those local citizens who, while technically part of the project's over 50s target group, would never otherwise see themselves as 'old' or a project like AFT as relevant to them.

Recommendation III. Project participant case studies

As noted in the introduction to this report, no data on the loneliness and isolation levels of AFT participants is being collected as part of the national level evaluation. The same is true of the citywide ABB evaluation. In both cases, this is with good reason; the ultimate focus of the project is far more on helping its indirect beneficiaries (those older people so socially isolated that they will never have any contact with the project other than through experiencing the more age-friendly built environment it manages to create) than it is on helping its direct participants (those who engage with the project to help bring about those changes to the built environment).

While formal surveys of participants' isolation/loneliness levels before and after their engagement with the project may not be justifiable due to the time and resources required, co-produced case studies of project participants, and particularly the changes their involvement with the project has led to (both in terms of themselves and the local environment), would require a great deal

less effort to produce. A small library of case studies amplifying the voices of the project's direct participants might provide a powerful supporting argument for the approach AFT is taking, especially when it comes to trying to convince more sceptical, financially-constrained strategic stakeholders that age-friendly changes to the built environment should be a priority when it comes to the funding of services for older people.
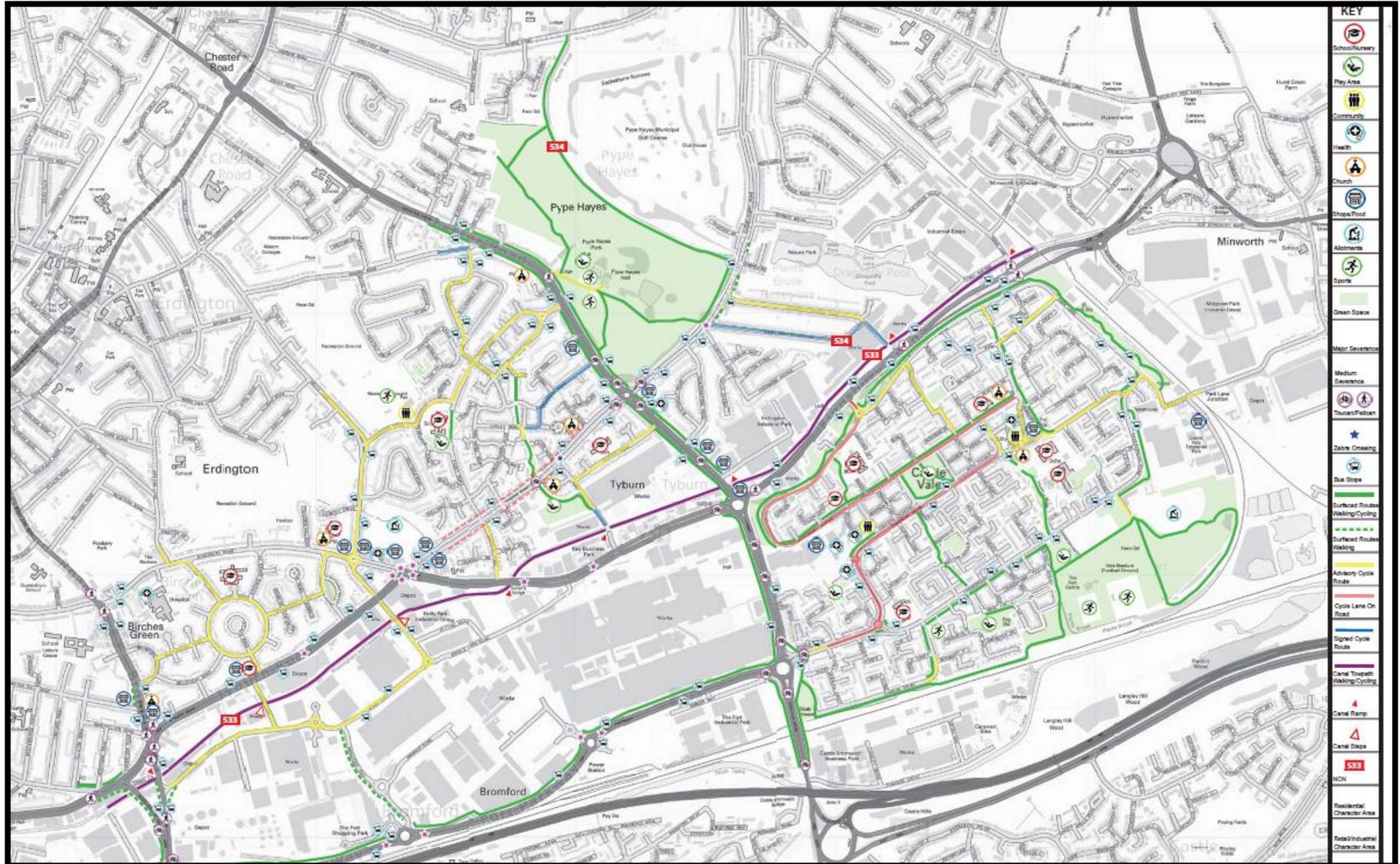
These three recommendations should not, however, detract from the positive overall picture of the AFT project to date. It is already well on the way to forming a genuine partnership with local people and organisations through its communications and outreach work, as well as through its efforts to encourage citizen participation and co-production in the changes to the built environment it is trying to achieve.

There remain challenges to bringing those efforts to all corners of the project's geographical area of work, and to all the older people that could benefit from it, particularly the most lonely and isolated individuals. There remain other more future-focused challenges too, particularly around the project's strategic fit in citywide terms and the factors that will always be beyond its direct control, such as the decisions of bodies with a much wider purview than just the Tyburn area. The project is, though, aware of these and other challenges to its work, and clearly taking steps to try to meet them. In terms of its first stage therefore, the project seems to have completed its work successfully and looks to be well set for the remaining three stages of its task.

APPENDIX I: AFT Project – Geographical Areas of Work
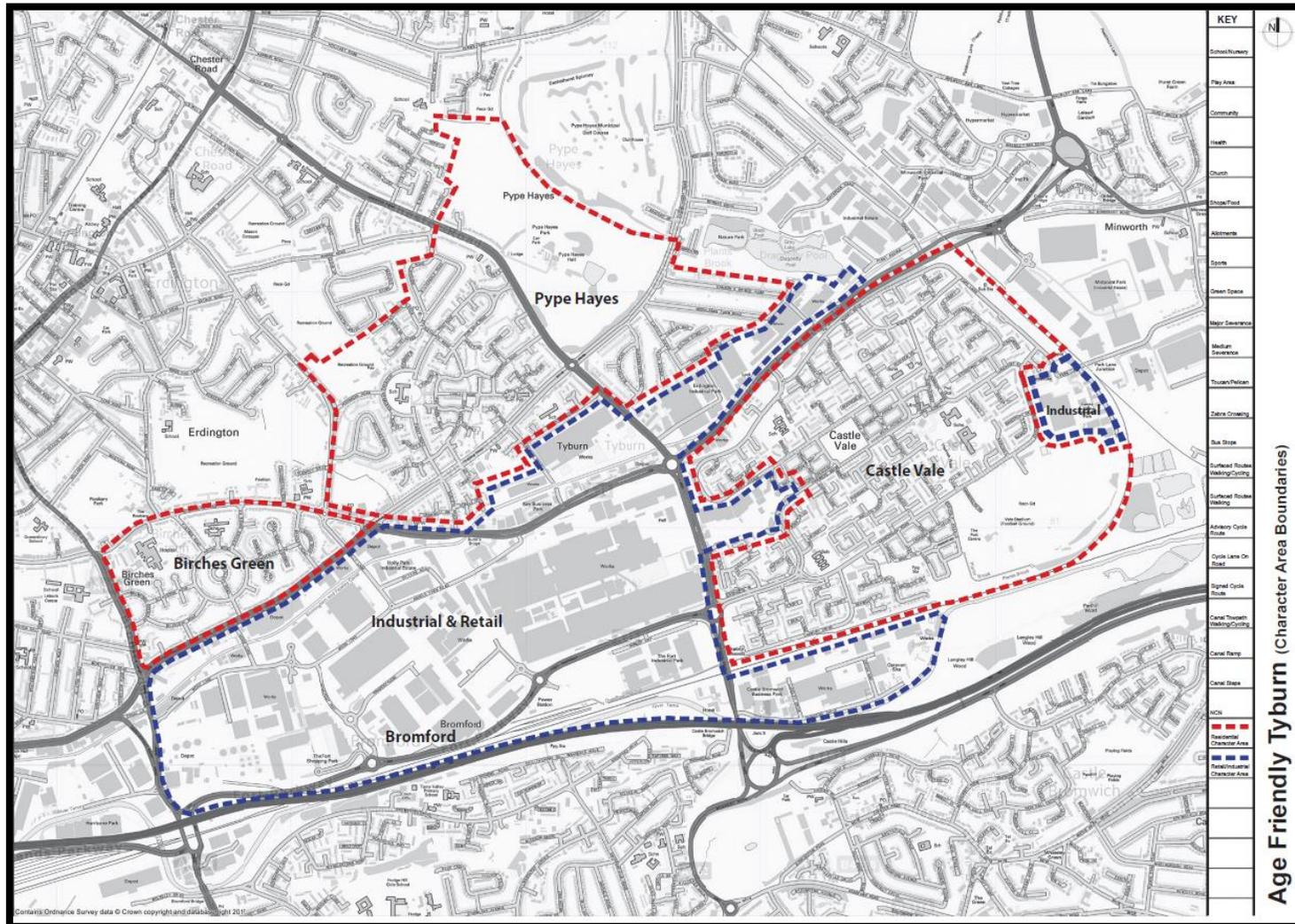
APPENDIX II: AFT Project – Example Initial Area Audit Map