



Our Place

Exploring the Built Environment

**An activity teaching pack
for pupils aged 8 - 12 years**

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key:



= activity sheet



= teachers' notes

introduction

This pack provides a set of pupil activities in a structure that allows teachers to use the built environment as a valuable teaching resource that is freely available and of use across a number of curriculum subjects. The material provides a valuable route into citizenship, sustainability and participative decision making. The activities engage pupils in practical processes and help develop a range of important skills.

Using the pack does not require teachers to be ‘experts’ on the built environment. It is designed for busy teachers who are keen to make pupils’ learning meaningful, challenging and fun.

The built environment holds important significance for us all. In buildings and towns we see a real expression of how society has developed over time. Buildings are rich in cultural messages and impact on us on a daily basis.

The idea on which the pack is based is that by looking closely at the built environment pupils can:

- Develop a personal commitment to their local area
- Develop skills, values and capabilities
- Appreciate the importance of buildings to their lives
- Create a valuable long term resource for the school and community

HOW TO USE THIS PACK

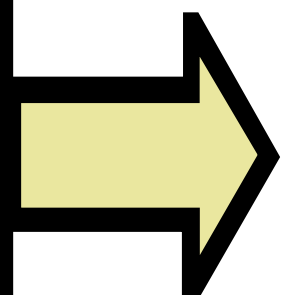
This pack can be used as the basis for an extended thematic study with a class or as activities to complement subject teaching. It adopts a 'layered' approach to studying the local built environment. The material is intended for pupils aged 8 to 12. Teachers will know best what level of detail and complexity is appropriate depending on the prior learning of the pupils. The pack's activities are arranged in a logical sequence that takes pupils through a process from induction through analysis and data gathering to presentation and reflection. Each activity is supported by detailed notes for teachers, as well as a pupil activity sheet which can be photocopied.

Activity 1 suggests that pupils make a visual representation of their daily journey to school. This is intended to introduce them, in relevant form, to the importance of town maps as a means of understanding the built environment.

An imaginary town map, which is included, provides the focus for **Activity 2**, a discussion of what maps can tell us about towns. Then, by using a map of the pupils' own town, **Activity 3**, they are invited to generate lists of features, types of buildings and objects they can identify. NOTE: It is important that the map you use provides enough detail to allow extensive list making.

After the data gathering exercise **Activity 4** asks small groups of pupils to take a specific grid section of a map of the local area and use it for a variety of tasks that relate to different aspects of the curriculum. By this stage the class will have gathered together a substantial amount of data, in a variety of forms (see Teachers' note 15). **Activity 5** is about using a variety of techniques for displaying and presenting information.

Activity 6 suggests ways that, with such an array of interesting and locally relevant information, the products of the town study would make an attractive class display to which parents, local officials and others could be invited. Pupils could then make oral presentations on specific topics of interest; for example, the history of local buildings, or an analysis of traffic flow and safety issues or a celebration of the local community.



The built environment across the curriculum

GEOGRAPHY

- Contours
- Materials
- Topography

HISTORY

- Change over time
- Cause & effect
- Heritage

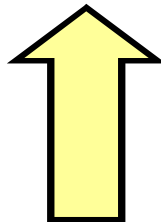
SCIENCE

- Materials
- Environmental influence
- Understanding energy and forces
- Earth & space

TECHNOLOGY

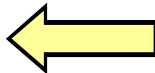
- Design & manufacture
- Materials
- Technology in society
- The Design process

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES



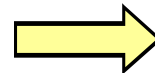
LANGUAGE

- Writing skills
- Interview & Interpretation skills
- Presentation skills



MATHS

- Measurement
- Scale model making
- Statistics
- Graph & charts
- Time, shape, position, movement



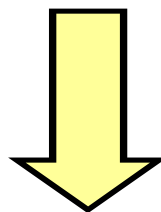
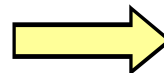
PERSONAL & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- Citizenship
- Amenities
- Ownership



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- Religion & culture
- Customs & rituals
- Religious buildings & interiors



EXPRESSIVE ARTS

ART & DESIGN

- Style
- Decoration
- Design/function
- Public art
- Model making

MUSIC

- Sound recording
- Composition

P.E.

- Circulation
- Control
- Constraints

DRAMA

- Space/freedom
- Role play

Aspects of the Built Environment

It is important to help pupils appreciate the richness and variety of the built environment. By using some of the aspects listed below you can generate discussion and investigation about a wide range of issues and subjects

Meeting places

Shops

Houses

Main streets

Transport

Public Art

Short-cuts

Routeways

Street furniture

Waste ground and gap sites

Industry and work

Style

Texture

History and heritage

Symmetry

Materials

Facades

Services

Side streets

Parking

Contours /topography

Networks

Signage

Green spaces

Leisure spaces

Churches

Decoration

Underground/overground

Scale

Tessellation

How to go about **My journey to school**

As an introduction to looking at the built environment a valuable first exercise is to ask pupils to make a memory map of their journey to school

memorymaps

Encourage pupils to think about their daily journey. Ask them:

What buildings do you pass?

What sounds do you hear?

What smells do you smell?

What streets do you walk along?

What kinds of people do you pass on your journey?

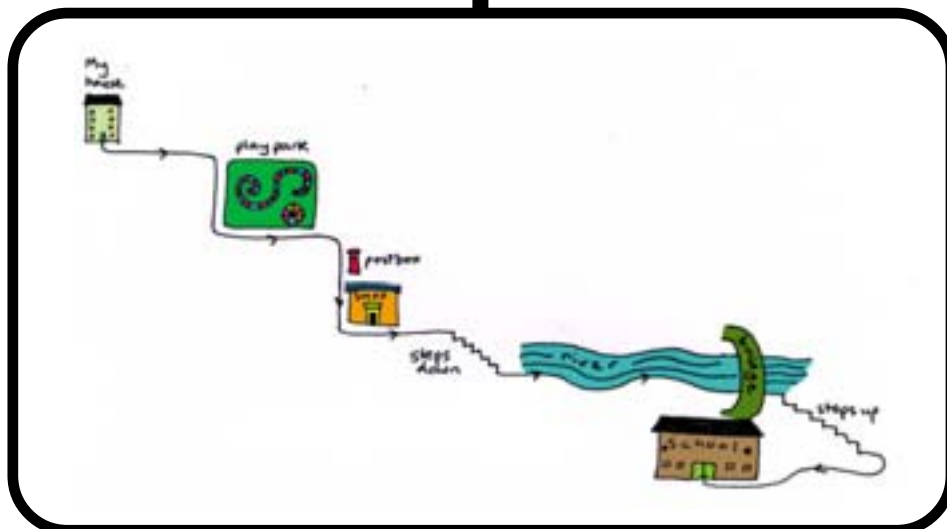
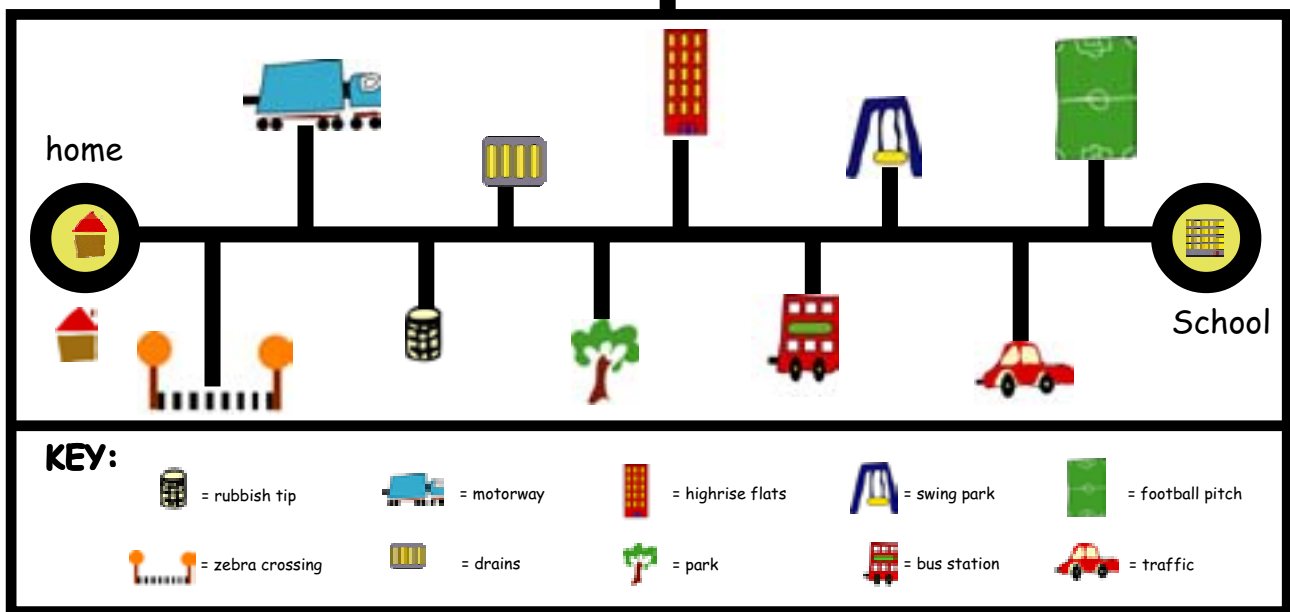
Make a word list of their responses as a useful database

Ask each pupil to draw a map of their journey to school, starting with home and ending with school. Maps can be simple line drawings, with words and/or images to note key points on the journey. Pupils could be encouraged to create a key to explain visual symbols they have used.

It might be interesting to repeat this exercise at a later date to see how pupils' perception of their local built environment has changed as a result of the project

My journey to school

Our Place is all about our local built environment. What do you know about 'our place'? A good way to start is to make a memory map of your journey to school. Your mind map should include your home, your school, and the route you take between the two. Draw or write on your map all the most important things you pass on your journey. Here are some examples of how a memory map can look..... yours will be different!



Maps

Using the map overleaf

- **Present the imaginary town map to the class**
(use an overhead transparency to project the image onto a wall or photocopy the sheet for each pupil)
for an introductory discussion about maps and the built environment
- **This town map contains many features found in any town**

Some questions for starters...

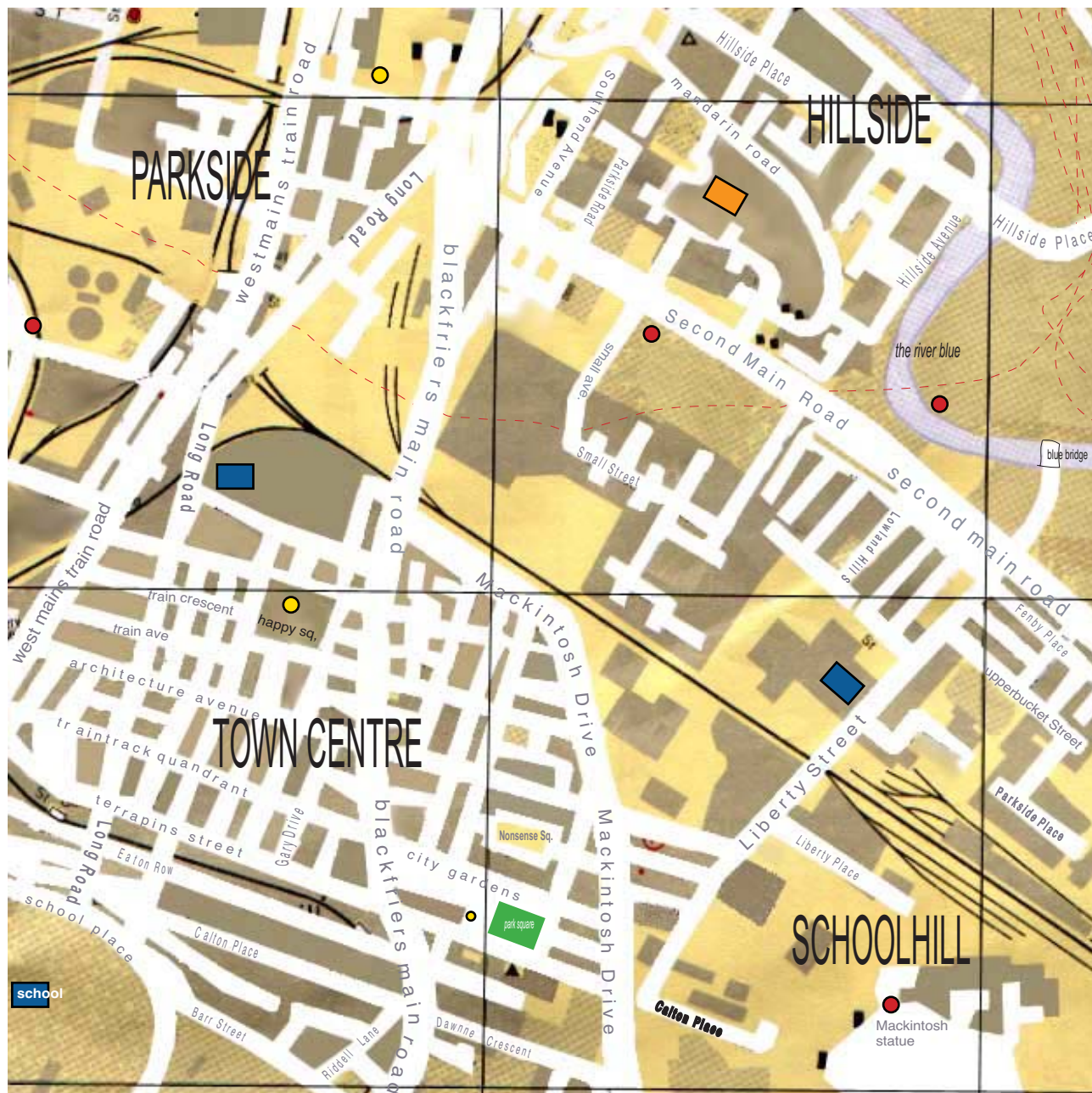
- **How does this map compare with your “journey to school’ map?**
- **What kind of information does this map give us?**
- **What different things can you see?**
- **What things does a map not tell us about a place?**

You might want to discuss such things as:

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| • Types of buildings | • Height of buildings |
| • Styles of buildings | • Public Art |
| • Age of buildings | • Types of shops |
| | • Seating areas |

ACTIVITY 2:

THE TOWN MAP



KEY:



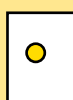
religious
buildings



historic
buildings



point of
interest



meeting
points



railway



motorway



river

How to analyse your town

- Find a map of your town which gives a good overview of the local built environment. You could use an Ordnance Survey map or a street map of the area
- Ensure that all pupils in the class can see the map easily. You could either project a large image of the map using an overhead projector, or give each pupil a photocopied version of the map
- Following on from Activity 2, pupils should know what to look out for on the town map
- Ask pupils to look closely at the map and to record on the activity sheet all the different aspects of the town environment that they can see

For example:

<u>Rivers</u>	1
<u>Schools</u>	6
<u>Rail bridges</u>	1
<u>Foot bridges</u>	2
<u>Churches</u>	5
<u>Market place</u>	1
<u>Colleges</u>	1
<u>Shopping areas</u>	1
<u>Parks</u>	2
<u>Motorways/highways</u>	1
<u>Cathedral</u>	1
<u>Housing areas</u>	3

Analysis of our town map

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DATA COLLECTION

- 1 Select an area surrounding your school that is close enough to visit and which has sufficient variety in terms of land use and buildings to make an interesting study. It may be helpful to use an Ordnance Survey map or local town map when making your selection.
- 2 Select a map (or a sector of it) that corresponds with your chosen area and divide it into twelve equal sized, numbered squares. Display on a wall. (You may like to use the A4 grid sheet overleaf which can be photocopied onto acetate and projected onto the map).
- 3 Divide the class into twelve small groups and allocate a numbered square to each group.
- 4 Each groups' task is to gather as much information as possible about their allocated area.
- 5 Select questions from Some Questions for Starters (pages*) which will provide useful starters and ideas.
- 6 Use Gathering Information: Teachers' Notes* and Information Sheet: Gathering and Presenting Information* as the basis for discussing the various ways in which information can be collected and to plan how data will later be presented in the classroom. Explain how pupils can use a variety of materials and techniques to gather different types of information.
- 7 With appropriate attention to health and safety issues allow the class to spend a significant amount of time gathering their information. This might be carried out over more than one period of time.
- 8 Each group should be asked to analyse and list in chart form the main characteristics present within their grid square.

Suggested Resources

Map of the local area immediately surrounding the school
Grid drawn/copied onto acetate
Overhead projector
Photocopies of maps of the local area to hand out to pupils
Clipboards and notebooks
A range of drawing materials and papers
Cameras and film
Dictaphone

1.	2.	3.
4.	5.	6.
7.	8.	9.
10.	11.	12.

INFORMATION SHEET: SOME QUESTIONS FOR STARTERS

Here are some questions and tasks that might be helpful as you start your investigation of the local area. They are divided into a number of main categories. You will probably have questions and categories of your own.

Analysis of Our Place

Which of the following are found within your grid square?

Do you think these places and services are effective or could they be improved?

1. Places to shop
2. Places to play
3. Places to work
4. Places to rest
5. Places to park cars
6. Transport services
7. Public toilets
8. Places to deposit rubbish
9. Public art works
10. Places to cross the road safely

Buildings

- Identify what types of buildings are found in your grid square. Are they public, private, commercial or industrial?
- How many individual buildings are located within your grid square?
- Can you find out how old each building is?
- Make a note of how many floors each building has.
- Make a note of the colour of each building.
- What materials have been used to construct each of the buildings in your grid square?
- Note down the location of each building – you could draw your own map of your grid square on which to note locations.

Shapes and Patterns

- Select one particular building and study its visual impact. Look at its shape, scale, decoration, patterns.
- Compare and contrast the shapes of windows and doorways on different buildings within your grid area.

People and Work

- What type of people live and work in the area you are studying?
- What activities and jobs do people do in your grid area?
- What special arrangements have been made for particular people: play areas, sheltered housing, ramps for people with wheels!
- Identify places which are busy and others which are quiet; explain why.

Materials, Textures and Colours

- Within your area identify the different materials that have been used in the built environment. Show the different purposes to which they have been put. For example: stone – statues; cement – bins; wood - seating, tarmac – roads; metal – sign posts.
- Look at each building or object and explain why you think it has been built out of certain materials and not others.
- Select 5 different things with 5 very different textures and make rubbings of them in your notebook.
- Explain why you think certain colours have been used for different features or buildings in your grid square.
- Explain why you like or dislike the colours that have been used.

Movement and Circulation

- List the different ways people move from place to place in your grid area?
- What are the different types of public transport available in your area?
- List the main transport routes in your area?
- Are there any special routes for pedestrians and cyclists?

Environmental Matters

- What types of sounds and levels of sound are present in your grid area? Are there some that are very subtle?
- What scents and smells are present within your grid area?
- Can you detail and document the different types of plant life growing in your grid area? Remember some plants are very small!
- What graphic designs and other visual signs are present in your grid area?
- Are there environmental control systems presenting your area? For example; speed cameras, electricity cables or pylons, level crossing barriers, traffic lights.
- What are the environmental conditions in your area and how might these affect the people, plants and animals that live there?

Change and Continuity

- Can you see any evidence of how things have changed over time in your grid area?
- Can you find anything in your area that seems old or unusual? Explain what you think it was used for and how old you think it is.
- Is there any evidence of pollution, or population change, or redevelopment?
- Identify any buildings whose purpose has changed since they were built. How have they changed? What do you think of the changes?
- Can you find out something about the history of the area you are examining? Everything has a history!
- Can you find out about and record something about different cultures that have made an impact on your area?

This activity creates a class or school mural of the local area. Before starting on the activity decide where the mural will finally be displayed and divide the space available into 12 squares. Each group of pupils will create a 'tile' which, when fitted with the others, will form a decorative panel. The materials used are best decided by the teacher, although imagination and ingenuity on the part of the pupils will inevitably mean that the final product will be different from the one you imagined! This single activity could become a major expressive arts project but it will be consolidating lots of learning across the curriculum

GRIDSCAPE

1

Give each group a square of card or paper of the size decided on by the overall size of the mural. Ask them to draw out lightly in pencil the main features that connect their square with adjacent squares. This might include streets, paths, streams, bridges, fields, public spaces and so on

2

Ask the pupils to lay out their squares, joining them together like a jigsaw. Ask them to check that they fit together to form a larger 'map' of the local area. Some alterations and additions may need to be made at this stage

3

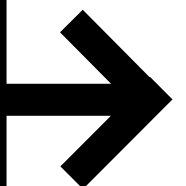
Now ask the groups to develop, decorate and add detail to their squares using a variety of materials and colour. (you may want to restrict the range of colours they can use in order to achieve an overall colour scheme.)

4

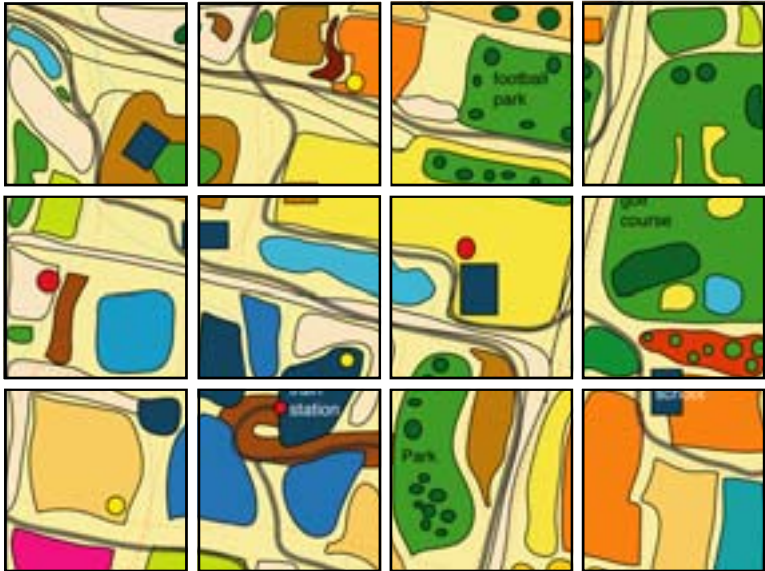
When the squares are completed have them firmly attached to the identified space

5

Discuss the impact of the mural and consider if and how it improves the environment of the school

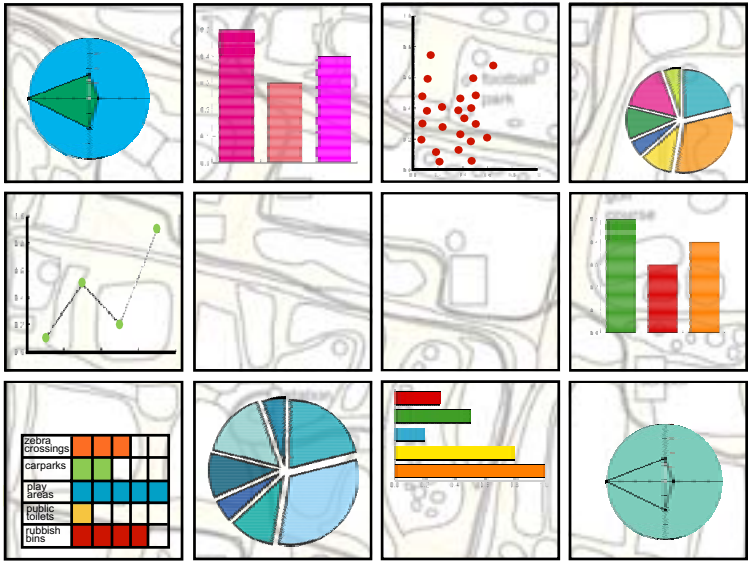


ACTIVITY 5: MURAL EXAMPLES

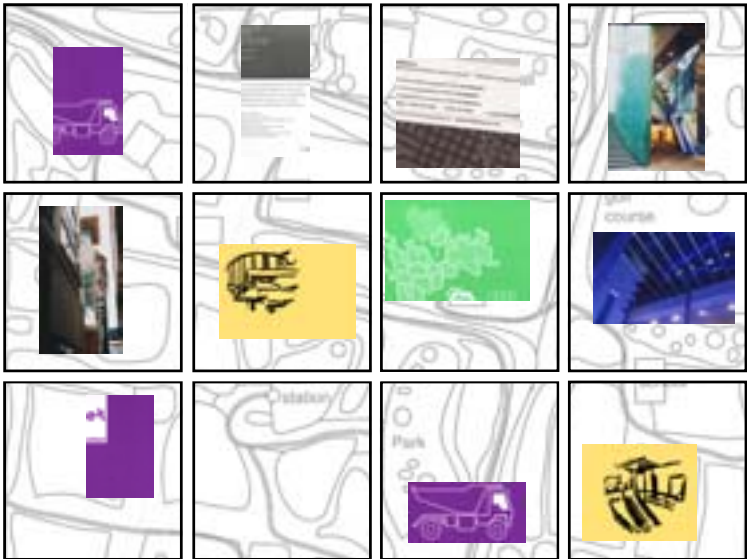


Expressive

Statistical



**Docu-
men-
tary**



Gathering Informaton...**INFORMATION SHEET**

There are many different ways of gathering information and data about your town. The pack encourages pupils to gather and present information in interesting and varied ways. Here are some suggestions for gathering information:

Visual information

Photographs
Video
Rubbings
Drawings
Paintings
Postcards
Maps
Diagrams

Statistical Information

Measuring
Counting
Databases
Classifying
Comparing
Surveying

Sampling

Building materials
Rubbish
Natural materials
Shopping bags

Written Information

Newspapers
Signage
Info leaflets
Questionnaires
Bus timetables
Advertisements

Aural information

Interviews
Conversations
Sounds

Here are some ways of presenting information:

Diagrammatic

Graphs
Pie charts
Venn diagrams
Flow charts
Mind maps
Gant charts
Maps
Drawings
Bar charts

Written/Audio

Class newspapers/magazines
Class books
Audio reports
Narrative accounts
Storytelling
Role plays
Performances
Presentations
Poems
Prose
Dance

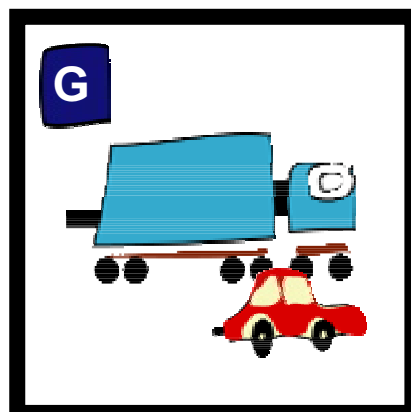
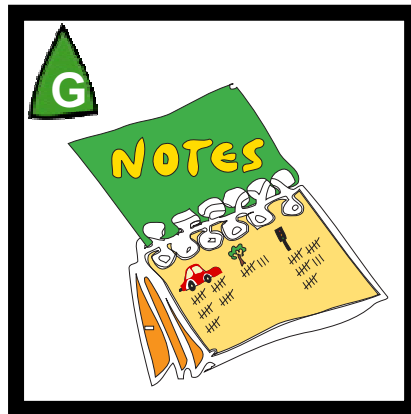
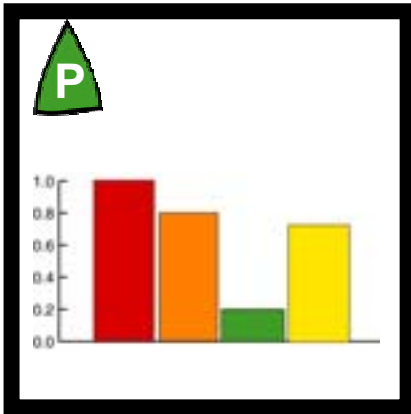
Visual

Videos
Photographs
3D models
Wall charts
Murals
Decorative panels
Collages
Paintings

INFORMATION SHEET:

Gathering and Presenting Information

There are many different ways of **G**athering and **P**resenting information on your town. Here are just some of them



G = gathering

P = presenting



= Count different aspects of the built environment and then present your findings on a bar chart, it may help to start off in a notebook



= Use a camera to take photographs which can then be presented in a classroom display



= Interview people who live in your town



= Record all the different sounds you can hear around your environment

ACTIVITY 6: TEACHERS' NOTES

Presenting and Evaluating Our Place

This activity is the culmination of all work done on the local built environment. It provides an opportunity to share, discuss, enjoy and celebrate the richness of the local environment (wherever that might be!) and the connections across different curriculum areas. By this time there will be a very substantial quantity of data in a variety of forms. As well as being rich in buildings and places, the built environment only becomes 'real' when people populate it. It makes good sense, therefore, to think about making the considerable amount of information, ideas and issues by the class available to a wider audience. Pupils also benefit from wider contacts as it helps them understand the importance of relating the outcomes of their work to the world beyond the classroom. Displays, exhibitions and other such events also create an opportunity to deal with aspects of education for citizenship such as participation and respect for the opinions of others.

This sheet offers some broad suggestions as to how the project work might be presented to and evaluated by others.

The variety of wall charts, photographs, text, recordings, statistics, images and other data the class has collected or generated could become a large-scale display. Models and maps could be presented on tabletops. Audio and video recordings can form part of the display.

The pupils will, by the later stages of the project, have become 'experts' on the local built environment. One powerful means of consolidating their learning, enhancing their self-esteem and confidence is to invite a real expert to visit the classroom display, to look at the work and to respond to questions from the pupils. This is rarely anything less than a successful experience for all involved. The visitor is impressed by the pupils' knowledge and understanding; the pupils feel good about being able to talk knowledgeably to professionals, and the teacher can gain a real sense of satisfaction in a job well done. The school also gains positive publicity and public recognition for its efforts.

Local experts that might be invited, depending on the particular focus of the project, include:

- Local architect
- Local authority planning officer
- Housing association representative
- Local historian
- Journalist/writer
- Public artist

Another opportunity that could be taken would be to have the classroom display coincide with a parents' meeting. Again, the pupils will be able to explain to parents and others the information, issues and ideas that have been researched and developed. Such a focus for a parents' meeting is usually very well received and can often attract positive publicity from local media.

Whatever is done the physical outcomes the pupils will have generated can be a valuable resource for subsequent learning and teaching.



**Created by The Lighthouse
Education Team in collaboration
with Ian Barr education
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Comenius funded project**

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