# Approaches to supporting community-led design in historic places of worship

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The Open University
HRBA Big Update, Nov 2016

# EMPOWERING DESIGN PRACTICES

historic places of worship as catalysts for connecting communities
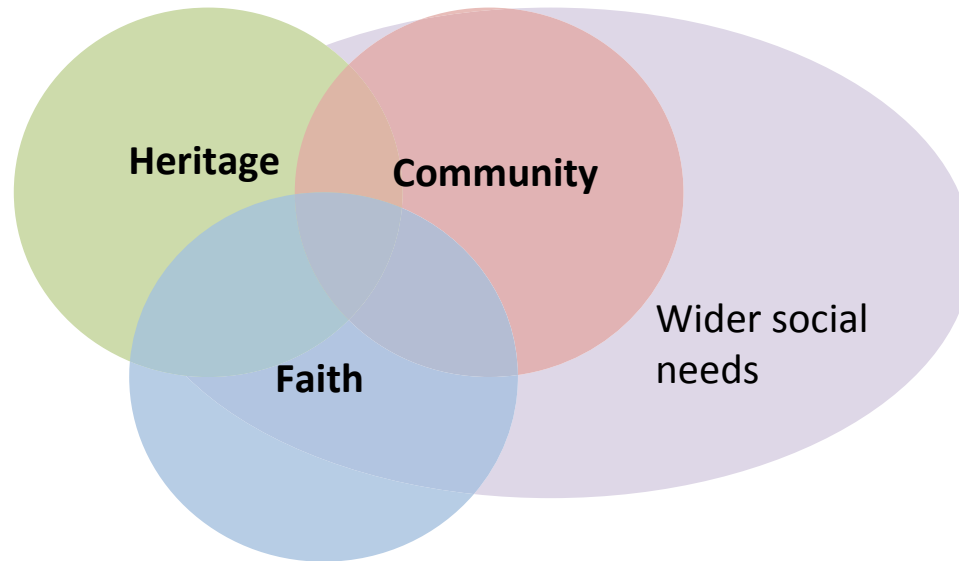
**Funded by** AHRC / Connected Communities and Design
**Budget:** £1.5 million
**Start date:** 21st October 2014   **End date:** 20th October 2019



The Open University

heritage lottery fund

Historic England

Historic Religious Buildings Alliance
a group within the Heritage Alliance

The Glass-House
COMMUNITY LED DESIGN

LIVE WORKS

silent cities

WRIGHT & WRIGHT ARCHITECTS

# The project

**Community-led design practices in the context of historic places of worship**

# Engagement in design – what does it mean?

**WHY** will we change it?

Reasons/effects of action

**WHAT** do we have now?

**WHAT** could the future be?

**WHAT** will we do?

Steps

**HOW** will we do it?

People     Resources

# The purpose

To explore and evaluate a spectrum of **mechanisms, processes, structures**



Workshops, networks, cultural events, games, prototyping, training programs, resources…

# The purpose

In order to support those who look after historic places of worship to **engage with their wider communities in design**



St Mary Magdalene, Baldock, Hertfordshire
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# The purpose

To develop the potential of their historic place to **meet wider social needs**

# Three pillars



IN TOTAL THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY

**14,500**

LISTED PLACES OF WORSHIP IN ENGLAND

St Mary Magdalene, Baldock, Hertfordshire
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**The buildings:** the future and sustainability of historic places of worship in England

**The people:** the importance of supporting the people who look after historic places of worship

**The potential:** of places of worship to connect with local communities and address wider social needs

# Research design

**Learn from** past projects

**Apply** approaches and evaluate them



**Learning (insights)**

**Development**

**Develop approaches** (e.g. workshops, events, training programs, networks) to empower communities to lead design projects

# Projects so far

**St Michael and All Angels Church** Mottram, Grade II*

**Holy Trinity Church,** Gee Cross, Grade II

**St Michael & All Angels,** Witton Gilbert, Grade II

**ISRAAC Somali Community and Cultural Association** Sheffield, Grade II

**Sheffield Buddhist Centre** Grade II

**St Peter's Church** Chester, Grade I

**St Peter's Church** Congleton, Grade I

**Church of the Holy Evangelists**, Normacot Grade II

**St John United Reformed Church** Stourbridge, Grade II

**St. Swithuns** Worcester, Grade I

**St. Peter's Peterchurch** Hereford, Grade I

**Stratford upon Avon URC** Grade II

**Church of St Helena,** Lundy, Grade II

**St Martin's** Nottingham, Grade II*

**All Saints Hanley** Stoke on Trent, Grade II*

**St Luke's** Oxford, unlisted

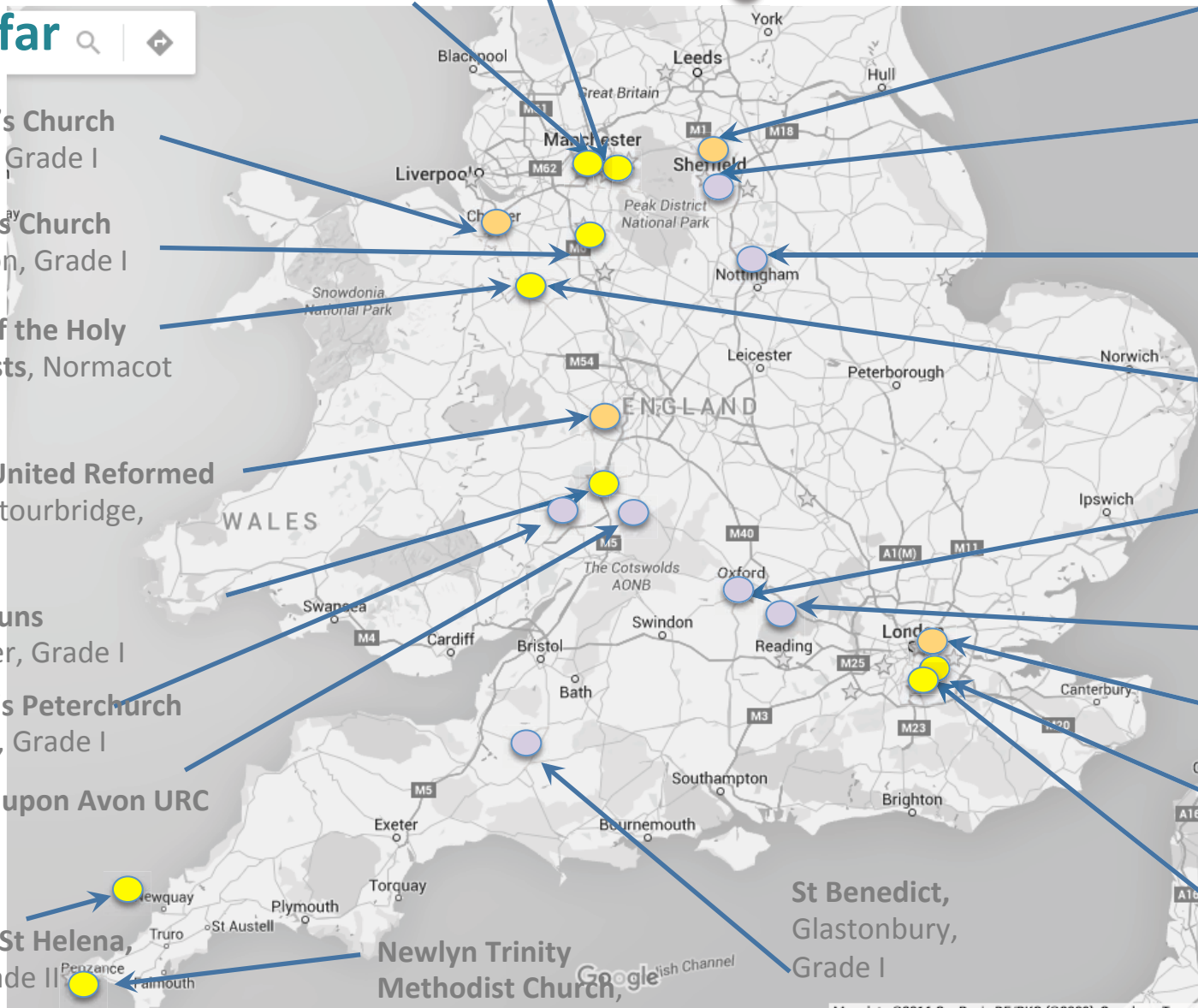**St John the Baptist** Stadhampton, Gr II

**Bow Church** London, Grade II*

**St John of Jerusalem** London, Grade II*

**Christ Church** Bexleyheath, Grade II*

**St Benedict,** Glastonbury, Grade I

**Newlyn Trinity Methodist Church,** Cornwall, Grade II*
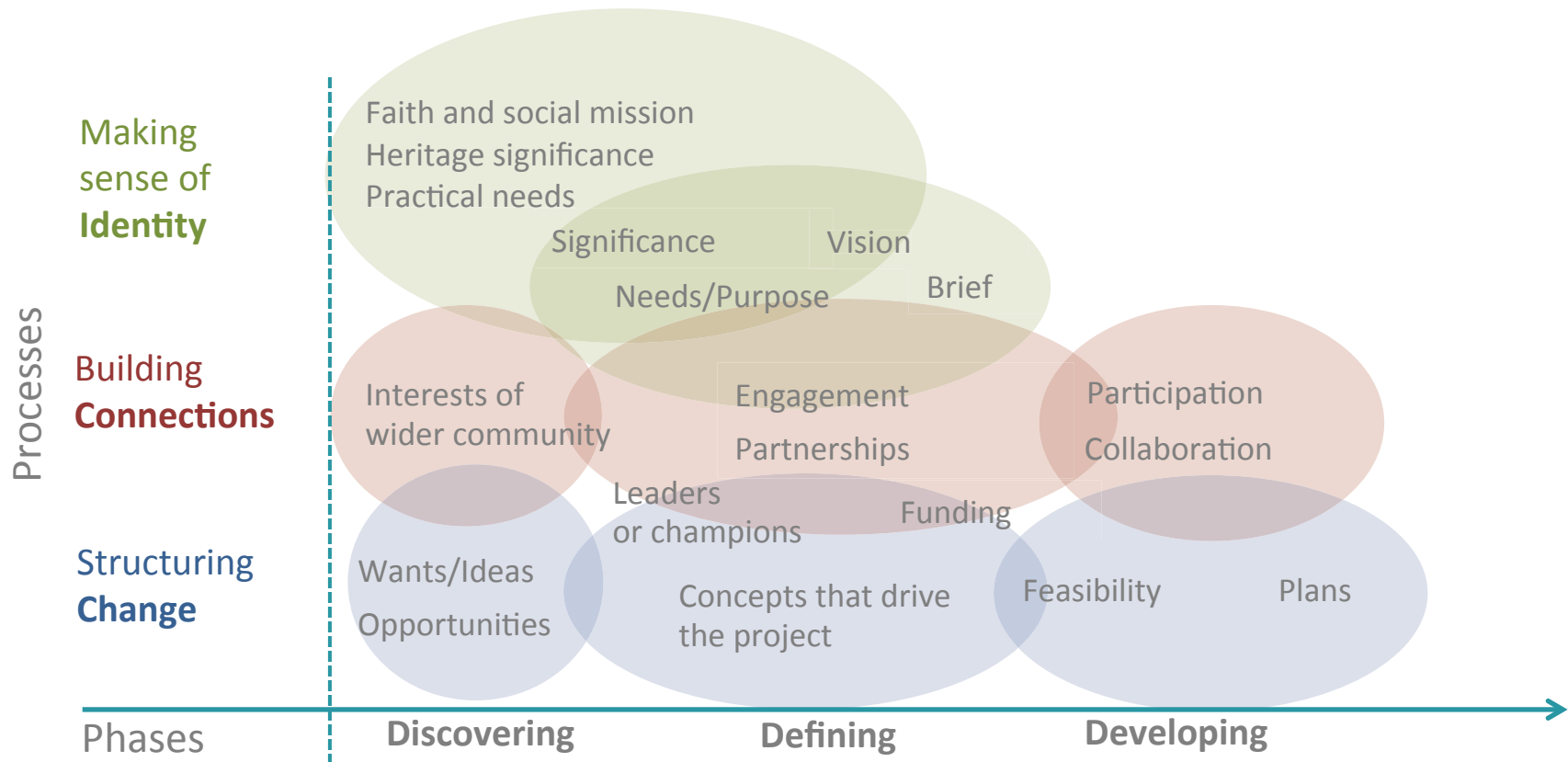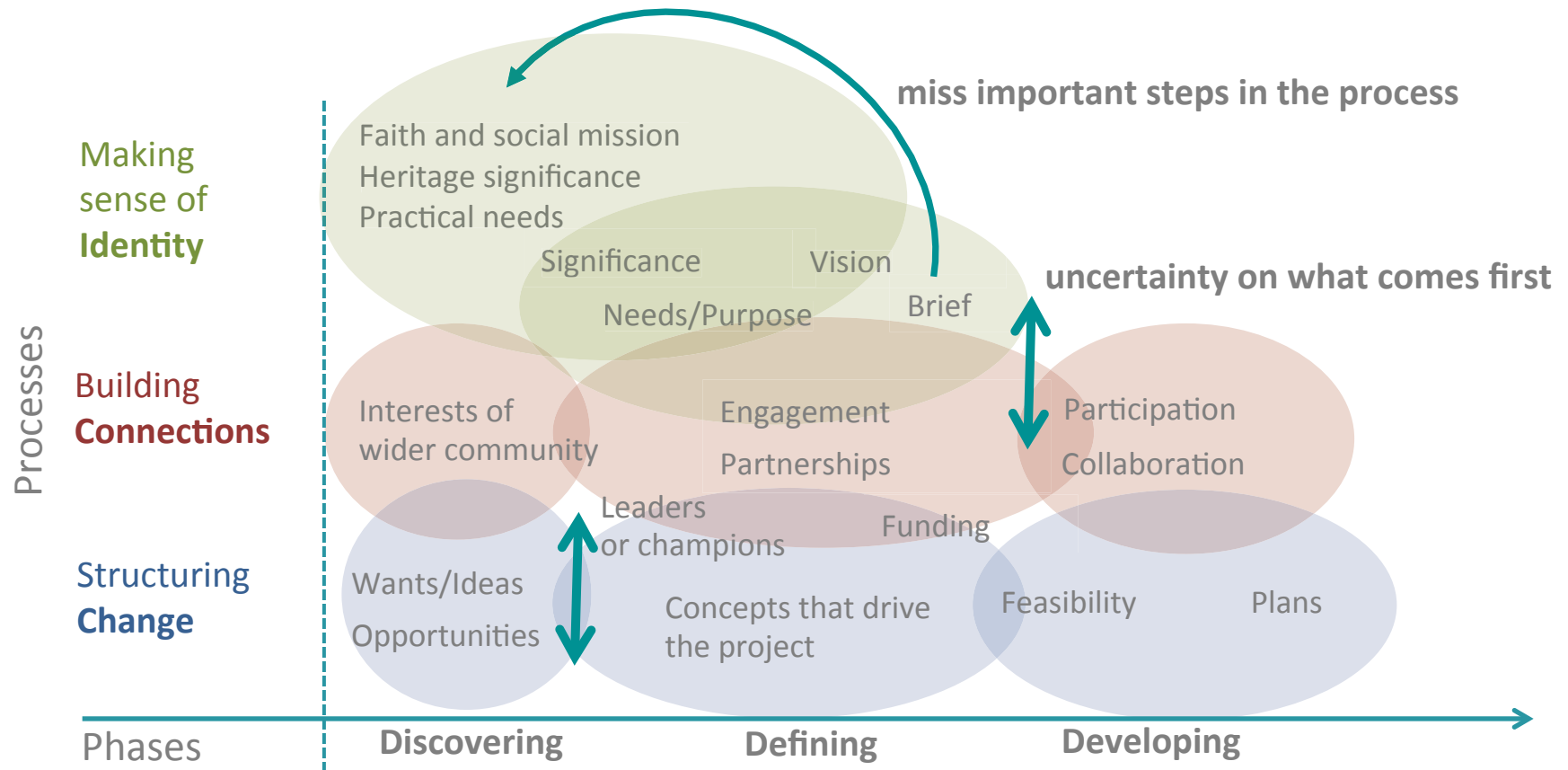
# Preliminary insights

data and reflections based on which we developed our first approaches to empowerment

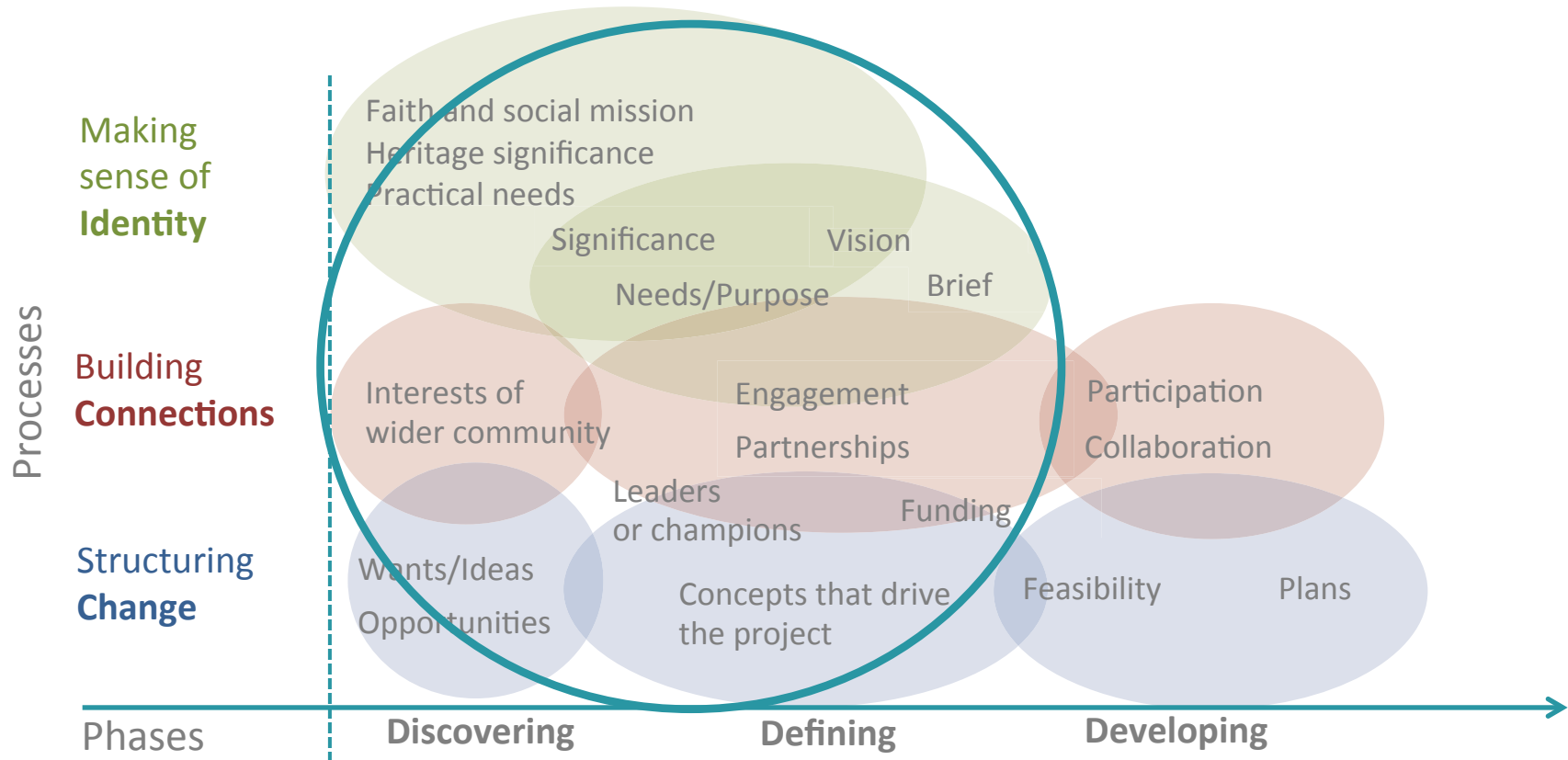**Insights:** identified **core capacities/processes** that communities are struggling to unleash
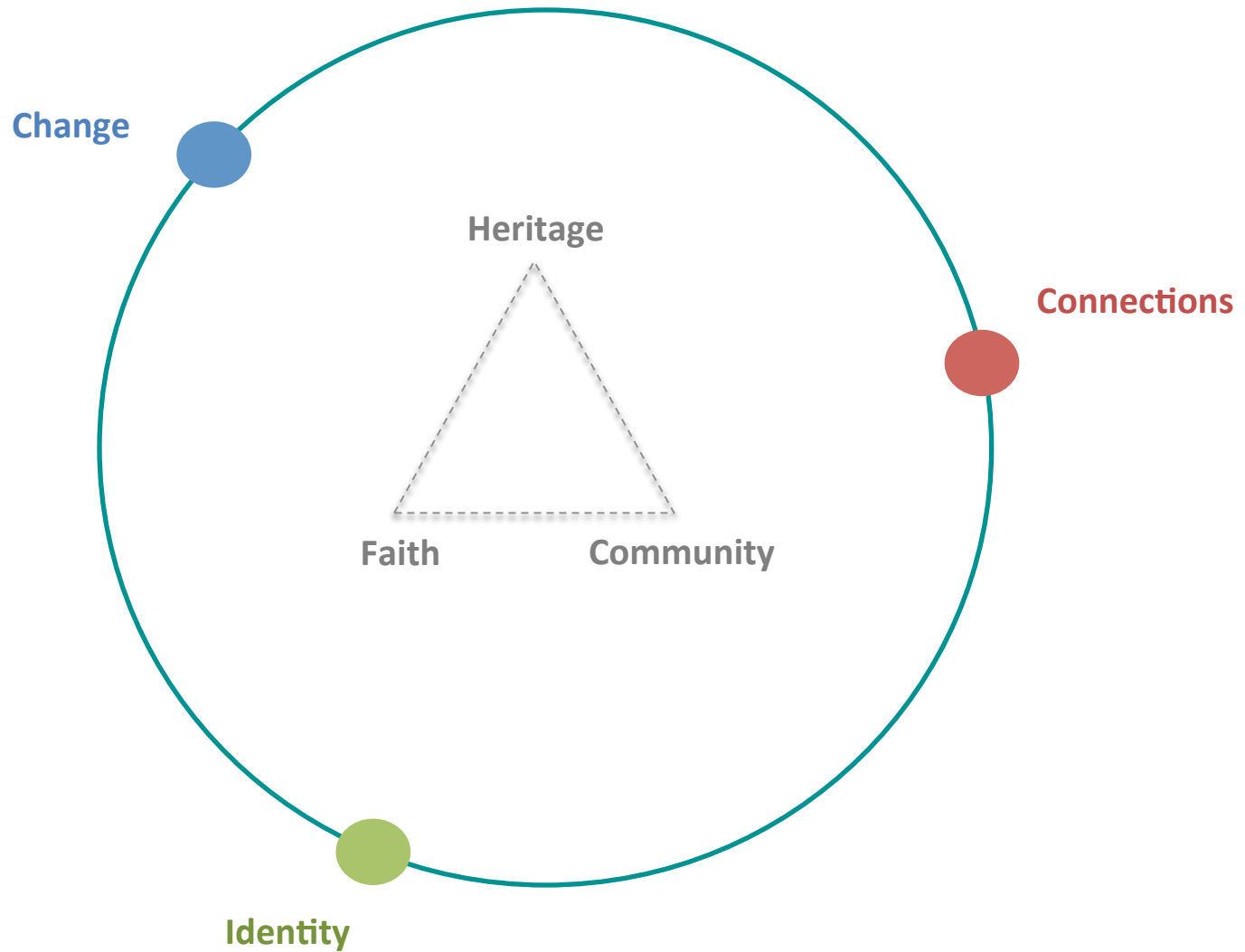


Processes

**Making sense of Identity**

Faith and social mission
Heritage significance
Practical needs

Significance                 Vision

Needs/Purpose          Brief

**Building Connections**

Interests of wider community

Engagement

Partnerships

Participation

Collaboration

Leaders or champions

Funding

**Structuring Change**

Wants/Ideas
Opportunities

Concepts that drive the project

Feasibility          Plans

Phases          **Discovering**          **Defining**          **Developing**

# Insights: **challenges** arise due to lack of overview and understanding of interactions

**miss important steps in the process**

**uncertainty on what comes first**

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the project

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Phases    **Discovering**    **Defining**    **Developing**

# Insights: lack of support at early phases

**Processes**

**Making sense of Identity**

**Building Connections**

**Structuring Change**

Faith and social mission
Heritage significance
Practical needs

Significance        Vision

Needs/Purpose        Brief

Interests of wider community

Engagement        Participation

Partnerships        Collaboration

Leaders or champions        Funding

Wants/Ideas        Concepts that drive the project        Feasibility        Plans

Opportunities

**Phases**

**Discovering**        **Defining**        **Developing**

# Insights: complex interactions and tensions in the process

# Insights: Tensions around **the identity of the place**



## Holiness – a recognisable spiritual place
Priority to enhance "traditional features" in order to create a more recognisable spiritual place

## Homeliness- a practical place
Priority to develop features that create more "user friendly", "adaptable" buildings

**IDENTITY**

## Openness-Community place
Priority to "make the religious features more discreet" to create more "open" places

**Insights:** Tensions around collaboration – who creates the identity and who is invited in

**People that share a (faith) mission**
Priority on connecting with the worshipping community

**People that belong to diverse communities**
Priority on engaging with wider community and other faith groups

**CONNECTIONS**

Leadership <-> partnership
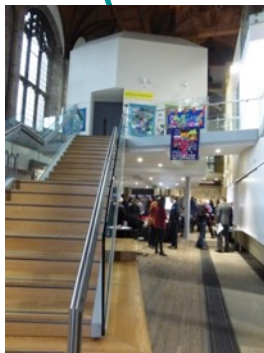
**People that bring enterprise**
Priority on growing the network of people that use and manage a place

# Insights: Tensions regarding structuring **change**

## Change for sustaining an identity
Emphasis on sustaining people's connection with the art, layout, features and uses of the building

## Change for creating an identity
Emphasis on creating a new emotional and cultural association with the place

**CHANGE**

## Change for sustaining a building
Emphasis on the 'survival' of the building, often prioritising 'strategic' or 'business' strategies and uses of the building

# Approaches to support engagement in design

# Focus on unlocking and building capacities

**Reflective capacity**
Making sense of own identity,
values, purpose and assets
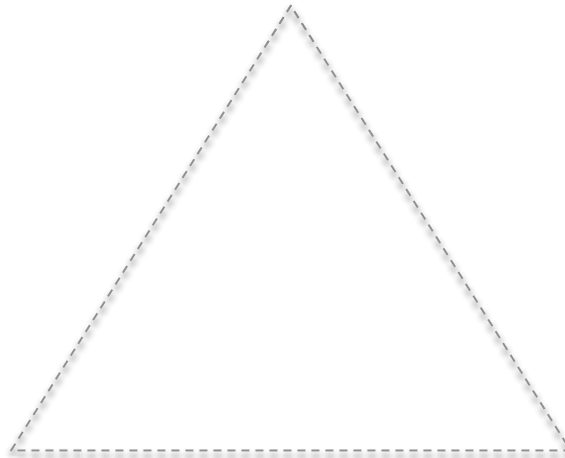
**Collaborative capacity**
Making connections, working
with others

**Creative capacity**
Generating ideas and growing
ideas into plans

# Different levels and purposes of engagement

Generating ideas

Sharing information and knowledge

Collecting views

Evaluating ideas

Unlocking skills and capacity

Generating resources

**YOU**          **A CORE GROUP**          **COMMUNITIES**

# Different levels and purposes of engagement

Generating ideas

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**YOU**

**A CORE GROUP**

**COMMUNITIES**

# Group level activities

# Approach: Map – Reflect – Create



**Purpose:** develop a shared understanding of challenges and potential of a place
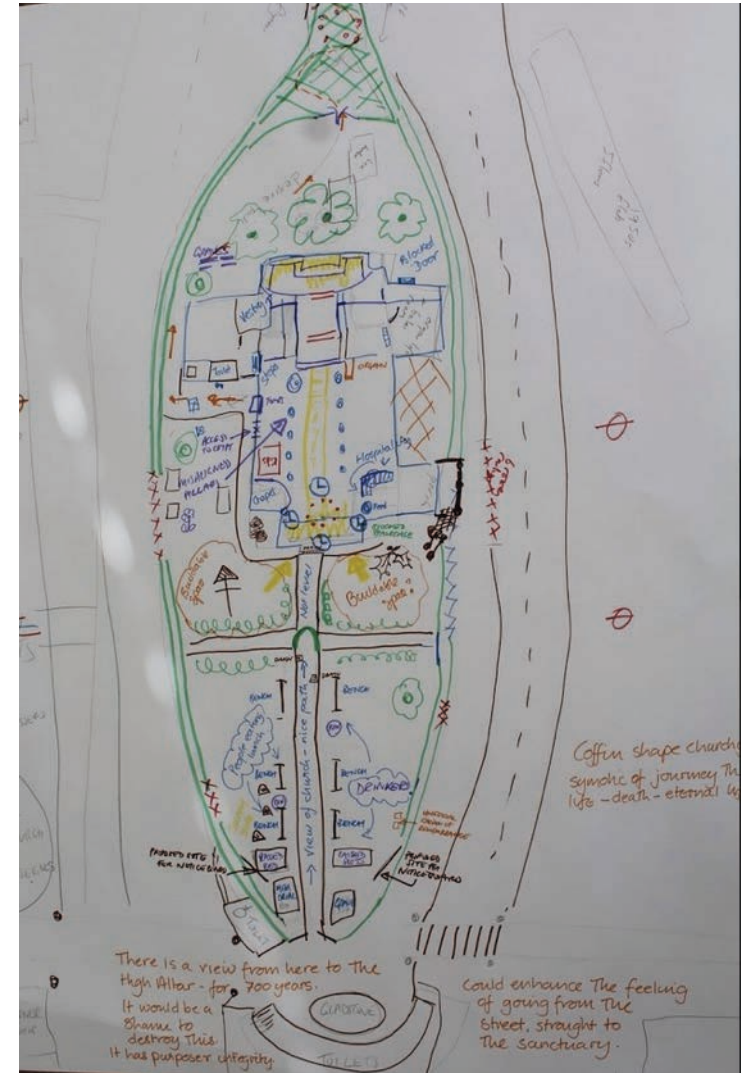
# Memory mapping



Things to consider as you create a memory map

**Map -** Share your experience of using and worshiping in this place

**Reflect** – Identify emerging themes or elements that can be the focus of your project

# Visioning





**Create –** a picture of the future drawing from the memory map and other inspirational materials, photos, words or sentences

# Approach: Asset mapping



**Purpose:** identify assets that can be mobilised to carry out a project

# Asset mapping





Common understanding of the assets available

Prioritise assets

Think about ways to mobilise and use them, start making plans

# Approach: Challenges, assets, opportunities



**Purpose:** identify opportunities through exploration of challenges and assets

# Challenges, assets, opportunities

Identify challenges and assets

Group challenges and assets

Identify opportunities for dealing with
challenges through utilisation of assets

# Approach: Negotiating conflicts and identifying shared purposes



**Purpose:** identify and negotiate conflicts, generate shared purposes

# Negotiating conflicts and identifying share purposes

| | INDIVIDUAL | SHARED | CONFLICTING |
|---|---|---|---|
| **PRIORITIES** (what do you want or need to change) | | | |
| **CONCERNS** (what are the main issues) | | | |
| **PRINCIPLES** (what are the core values that drive your decisions) | | | |

Reflect on **priorities**, **concerns** and **values**

Share and cluster those as individual, shared or conflicting/contested

Generate purpose statements

# Engaging wider communities in design

# Types of engagement

**Questionnaires or surveys** (door to door or online media)
**Purpose:** evaluate ideas / gather evidence about needs and wants

**Social media**
**Purpose:** communicate ideas / evaluate ideas / gather evidence about needs and wants / mobilise people

**One-to-one conversations**
**Purpose:** communicate ideas / evaluate ideas / gather evidence about needs and wants / mobilise people
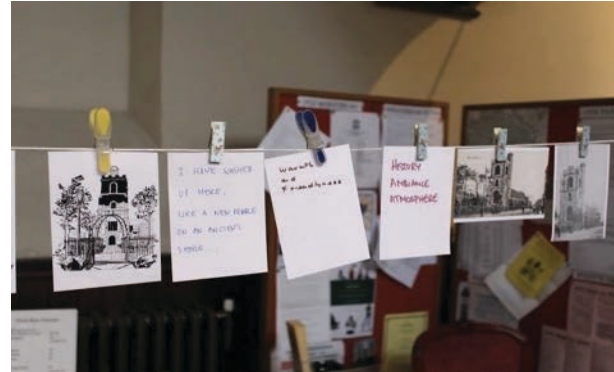
**Events**
**Purpose:** communicate ideas / evaluate ideas / crowd source ideas / gather evidence about needs and wants /mobilise people / fundraising

# Approach: Interactive public events



**Generate ideas**
What could make this place better?



**Gather views**
What is special about this place?



**Share dreams**



**Stimulate conversations**

# Interactive public events



**Collect comments on design ideas**



**Create an identity**



**Generate ideas**

# Approach: Prototype and experiment


Open the door


Arts activities


Services

**Important for planning and testing feasibility of ideas**

# Impact

# Why should people be engaged in design?

## Impact on the building

- Increased use
- More comfortable / more accessible
- Feels refreshed, revitalized
- [More] loved building

## Impact on individuals and group leading the project

- Sense of achievement
- Confidence
- Feeling worthwhile
- Refreshed skills

## Impact on the wider community

- Focal point of community / putting the town into focus / recognition
- Development of friendships and network of trust, social capital

# Contact us

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