Stronger Places Assessment Toolkit

Guidance for advocating, planning and investing in Places



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Introduction to Creating Stronger Places



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Introduction

In times of change, Place Leaders must advocate for the multifaceted concept of Place, which includes communities, the built environment, economy, and culture. With local government under pressure, it's crucial to make a strong case for Place.

The PACE programme focuses on building compelling narratives to advocate for Place, covering strategies for developing resilient and vibrant communities, emphasising storytelling techniques and explored approaches to sustainable investment.

This toolkit has been collaboratively developed by ADEPT, Amey, and a cohort of Strategic Directors for Place from across England, bringing together expertise and insights for impactful Place leadership.

Using this toolkit

This toolkit is meant to prompt your thinking- it poses questions about your Place and how its opportunities and problems are uncovered, articulated and advocated. Work through the whole document or dip into the parts which seem most relevant for you in your Place journey.





Pre-read material

The Place Leaders' Pioneering, Action-orientated, Creative and Entrepreneurial (PACE) programme is a joint venture from ADEPT and Amey. Launched in 2023, the PACE Programme aims to create space for senior place leaders to find strategic solutions to the wicked issues facing the public sector.

Designed exclusively for place directors and senior leadership, two of the fundamental principles behind PACE is to influence the future of placefocused strategies and support place leaders in driving change

The 2024 programme has focussed on "Making a Stronger Case for Place", held over three sessions themed on advocating, planning and investing. The output documents for each of these sessions can be found on this slide and form the foundation for the Stronger Places Assessment Toolkit.







Creating Stronger Places Insights

Exercises to support gathering the right knowledge. Prompts and guidance on gathering information and data.



What makes a Place?

Place is a complex ecosystem of diverse people and communities, the built environment and geography, economy and technology, and history and culture. It is full of story and heritage and for Place Leaders, the inevitable forward motion that comes from place-shaping for the future. Bringing all these interconnected elements together when designing new schemes and working to national policies and funding streams is a difficult process, but now, with local government facing unprecedented budgetary and political pressures, the need to make a strong case for Place has never been more vital.



Reflection: What do you mean by Place?

- Under what parameters do you define a Place?
- How could you think differently about your own Place?
- What resonates about your Place?
- What do you want to do, with whom and by when?
- Do we consider virtual Places in the same way, or differently to physical Places?









Who are Places for?

Consider the different lenses that you and others look through when thinking about place-shaping and the complex inter-relationships. Focus on how you can gain insight into how people connect and interact with the Place.

Think about the list of suggested lenses detailed below, consider if this information is readily available to you and other lenses that may be missing.

Spatial levels – local, regional and national	Community, isolation and self-interest
Formal constructs – villages, towns, urban, coastal etc	Immigration and migration
Citizens, elected members, officers and officials	Diverse background, experience, culture and heritage
A child's journey to adulthood	Ancestry – place-shaping now for future generations
Shifting communities of interest and economy	Legacy – diverse histories, colonialism and slavery

Reflection:

- Do you have data and insight to understand your place?
- What do you see and feel in your Place? Does your data support this?
- Can you balance the head vs heart decisions in what you see within your place?









What are the gaps in understanding your Place?

- Are there any questions you can't answer? Why?
- Are there any stakeholders you need to engage to answer these questions? Eg investors, neighbourood groups, local businesses etc.
- Are you confident in your answers? Would others give the same response?
- Is there sufficient data and insight to underpin and support your findings and views?
- Are there any case studies that support your reflections?









Planning for Stronger Places

Understand the beneficiaries of our places and plan to make stronger future places.

Develop skills and techniques for creating and telling impactful place-based stories adaptable to specific audiences

Harness the power of data and insight to underpin the vision for Place



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Understanding your Place. Use the prompts below to build a picture of your Place.

Past	Present	Future
What is the history of your place?	What is it known for now?	What are the ambitions?
Why is this your Place?	What is the current identity?	What are the opportunities?
What was it known for in the past?	Who lives/works/plays in your place?	What are the challenges?
What to embrace from the past?	Does it deliver what it needs to?	What does it want to be known for?
What to leave behind in the past?	What is the Place proud of?	How adaptable is the Place?
How does it impact the culture/feel now?	What are the frustrations?	Staying connected to past/present?
What has changed over time?	Relationships in the Place?	Are there local sensitivities?









What is the current story of your Place?

Vision is the story that brings to life an attractive future state for a place. Focussing on what you now understand of your Place and the strategies, policies and plans already in existence use the table below to pick out key themes and what that delivers for your Place.

		Theme 1	Theme 1	Theme 3
Purpose	Identify the why What is your current place values and strengths?			
Vision	What does it look likeWhere do you aspire to be? Do you have a well defined vision?			
Mission	How are you doing itAre you clear on what you need to do to achieve the current vision?			

Is the vision described strong enough to deliver on the purpose?









Assessing the maturity of your current approach. What are the strengths and weaknesses? (Continued on next page)

Part 1		Strength	Weakness
Vision	Is the vision shared? Are there siloed behaviours?		
Authority	How strong and consistent is your level of authority? Is it legit all of the time?		
Trust	What is the image and reputation of councils among communities in your Place?		
Attitudes	What is the culture of your organisation? Is it a top-down or bottom-up approach which connects or disconnects communities? Who knows best?		
Allyship	Building alliances with people at all levels, how strong are they?		







Assessing the maturity of your current approach. What are the strengths and weaknesses?

Part 2		Strength	Weakness
Institutional relationships	Understand who are the influencers in your place? How strong is the relationship?		
Short vs Long termism	What are the impacts of political cycles and funding settlement, transactional behaviours and policy vacuum?		
Data and Knowledge	How well do you know your place through collecting and collating data, analytics, evidence and best practice?		
History	Does the old model work? Will scaling up or deploying models because they have been successful elsewhere the right approach?		
Communities	Understand who are the influencers and community champions in your place? How strong is the relationship?		



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Advocating the case for Place

Understand what place means through different lenses to determine what makes a great place.

Challenge ourselves on the insight needed to create the right interventions in a place.

Advocate for places using tools and methods to support Place Leaders to become better advocates and story tellers.



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What are the key factors that will shape your Place in the future? What is the story you are telling? Can you evidence your observations? *(Examples in italics)*

	Influencing Factors Global	Influencing Factors National	Influencing Factors Local (Evidence and case studies)	Influencing Factors Hyper Local (Evidence and case studies)
Community	Aging population	Social Care Reform	Additional health care provision needed	Specifics health issues of X community
Individuals	Cost of Living	Taxes/Employment rights etc	Shortage of child care/ costs	Availability of nurses
Societal Trends	Changing Skills	Up Skilling/new sector	College skills/training	High unemployment rate
Environment	Climate Emergency	Energy transition	Public Transport not fit for purpose	Air quality
Economic	Ukraine/Russian War	Food prices	Food banks/ community support services etc	High levels of deprivation







How would you redefine the future story for your Place?

Reflecting back on your current story and the key factors that will shape your place in the future, use the table to capture any required reshape of the purpose, vision and mission for your Place.

		Theme 1	Theme 1	Theme 3
Purpose	ldentify the why , what are your Place's values	Lack of community space, not fit for purpose. Need a hub for services and connectivity in the community and encourage in investment		
Mission	How are you going to do it	Redevelop the town centre – e.g. the library. With multipurpose spaces and accessibility via transport investment etc		
Vision	What will it look like when it's done	A defined community space that provides the services needed in the community and a revitalised town centre where businesses invest and people connect.		

Is the vision described strong enough to deliver on the purpose?



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Creating a Narrative for your Place

Ideas

Facts Practical

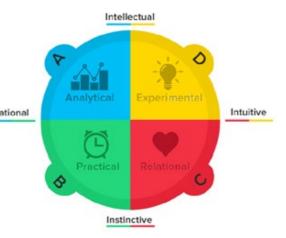
Heart

We tend to communicate with others based on our own thinking preference. A whole brain story appeals to audiences regardless of natural thinking preferences.

Based on the purpose, values and vision for your Place how ______ will you tell the story?

Incorporate all communication preferences in the narrative you create, highlight the whole brain communication preferences:

Narrative for Place



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A worked example of the whole brain approach can be found within the summary document for session 2.



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Facilitating Investment to Create Stronger Places

Harness the capacity and potential of local communities to invest in making their local places stronger.

Optimise long-term public & private sector investment in creating stronger places.

Advise purposeful decisions driven by Place Leaders.



Identifying the stakeholders and influencers within your Place.

- Identify Macro and Micro Assets
 - Macro assets involve broader economic factors and trends, often encompassing entire markets or economies
 - Micro assets focus on individual companies, sectors, or specific financial instruments.
- Identify key stakeholders in your Place. How do you engage with them?
- How do you bridge between the topdown and bottom-up investors and social capital in your Place?
- How do you build a shared vision and trust with local decision makers, businesses and communities?

Macro Micro Large building Skills & talents and construction projects Social entrepreneurs Infrastructure Investment projects • Community assets Anchor institutions Community and major business businesses Community

research

- Vacant buildings
 - Land

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How to source investment for your place?

Use the questions below to map your current investment strategy.

- 1. Have you identified the key localities towns and/or neighbourhoods for investment?
- 2. Have you got the right stakeholders influencers and decision makers to ensure political and strategic buy-in?
- 3. Do you have a wider investment strategy that includes macro and micro assets?
- 4. Have you got a platform to work with residents, community and grassroots organisations?
- 5. Do you have a community economic development plan?
- 6. Do you have the capability to attract a blend of public and private funding?
- 7. Do you have the resource to skills, capacity and capability deliver activities?
- 8. Do you evaluate and monitor the impact of investment social, economic and environmental?
- 9. Do you embed investment (human and physical capital) into mainstream policy and practice?
- 10. Do you have investable projects and a prospectus highlighting opportunities?
- 11. Are you clear what private investors need from you?









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What type of funding is appropriate for the investment required? How do you engage with the potential investors?

Key Questions for Investors

- What are the available funding sources?
- Is there transparency about the funding source?
- What levels of risk are you willing to take?
- What is the time frame for the investment?
- What is your return on investment?
- How will you measure key milestones, what are they?



Key Questions for Place Leaders

- How will you capture the measures of success for your Place?
- Do you have the capacity to engage in the market?
- Are your procurement processes fit for purpose?
- Is there political and corporate buy-in to the investment strategy?











Stronger Places Action Plan



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1.11

Action Plan – How are you going make your Place Stronger?

Theme/Vision	Audience	Value What does it bring?	Narrative What's the meaning?	What action do you need to take to deliver this?
Theme 1				
Theme 2				
Theme 3				



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