

processes and potential for local action by enabling groups to take on major assets to test out feasibility for longer term asset transfer.

Research into the practicalities of initiating temporary uses, and getting over barriers that restrict activity, could enable the findings from meanwhile activity to shed light on the bureaucracies that inhibit spontaneous and flexible activity, and why. In particular, there is an opportunity to explore potential for modifying the planning system to allow for alternative categorisation of policies, and to explore whether Local Development Orders are suitably placed to facilitate 'Meanwhile Zones'.

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GETTING THE MOST FROM MEANWHILE: A CHECKLIST FOR URBAN DESIGNERS

- 'Scenario-testing': long term visions for an area: how place usage, desire lines, nodes and demand for activity could be explored and adapted through live testing
- Make the most of opportunities for bringing services and uses out in to the open, as test beds or marketing opportunities that would expand their accessibility and people's awareness of them
- A chance to explore alternative processes for designing our towns and cities. Meanwhile could assist with managing big ideas that can be implemented incrementally and innovatively

Artists at Fabric created an impression of how the site might look, says Seymour; and all parties were quickly sold on the idea. Bradford residents were tired of having a gaping hole at the heart of their city. The developing garden is a popular place to stroll and relax



FIXING A HOLE IN THE HEART OF THE CITY

Bradford city centre has stagnated in recent years, partly because of a large physical hole in its heart – land in limbo, for the past four years, awaiting the development of Westfield's Broadway retail centre. With the site sitting idle, and no signs of potential progress, Gideon Seymour of Fabric, the arts development organisation for Bradford, approached Westfield to begin dialogue about temporary uses. In October 2009, the hoardings around the site were subjected to an 'art attack' proclaiming the site to be a 'wastefield'. By the following week, the conversation had begun. 'People in Bradford were fed up with walking round a huge hole in their city centre, and wanted the land to be used for something they could engage with – not car parking or advertising hoardings,' says Seymour.

Once the Fabric-driven plan for an urban garden gained momentum, both Westfield's directors and the council, along with Yorkshire Forward, proved to be enthusiastic about the project, each contributing £100,000 and, helping to ready the site for its transformation into the Bradford Urban Garden (BUG). 'Westfield deserve credit for getting involved in this,' says Seymour; 'especially as they have no obligation to help the town. They were generally very helpful and positive. It was a great example of everyone working together and adopting a "can-do" attitude.' Meanwhile also facilitated the project, supporting it to the tune of £25,000, and using lessons learned from the experience to adapt the buildings-oriented Meanwhile lease for use with land-based projects.

The council is a key player in the scheme, having leased the site from Westfield for five years, and in turn leased it on to Fabric, which has responsibility to 'animate' BUG, on a year-by-year basis. 'I think that there would be disappointment in the city if no progress is made on the retail centre within the next two years,' says Seymour. 'Until then, we hope to maintain the garden and its activities until summer 2012. We have an interesting opportunity to use this hiatus to have a conversation locally about how local people would like that site to look. There is a consensus that a standard shopping centre-type "box" is not the right answer for that site. We can engage people in the exploration of ideas that are a bit more imaginative and appropriate, possibly incorporating elements of BUG.'

■ www.creativebradford.co.uk