



STAPLETON ROAD

STUDENT CASE STUDY

OVERVIEW

Stapleton Road is a small high street in outer Bristol, characterised by its diverse range of small shops and cafes. It's seen to represent many of the less visible communities in Bristol that are largely made up of migrants from African Caribbean and Asian groups.

It's significance to these communities lies in the value of its retail and hospitality services and an organically-grown community hub.

IN THE PAST, STAPLETON ROAD HAS SOMETIMES BEEN REFERRED TO AS BRISTOL'S "MOST DANGEROUS STREET". AN OUTDATED PHRASE, THE CRIME RATE HAS BEEN INTRINSICALLY LINKED TO INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.



ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES



Shop fronts appear as small colourful sections at the base of Victorian terraced housing. This was one of the first case studies where we wanted to understand the character of a place. In many parts of Bristol, gentrification has taken a strong hold but here it is yet to make an impact.



Some of the components we looked at including materials, colours and textures as well as active frontages and transparency. We also wanted to understand more about other factors relating to community in the built environment - these included sounds and smells, formality and informality, as well as analysing where people meet or where paths cross.

“It is increasingly important to define what constitutes the unique character of our neighbourhoods, in order to identify what we value and should protect...it is the job of architects, planners, urban designers and other ‘place shapers’ first to work with communities to identify the character of neighbourhoods to identify what is valued and what is of value.”

COMMUNITY PROFILE

HOW IS THE SPACE USED BY THE COMMUNITY? WHAT DOES IT SERVE THE COMMUNITY?

Stapleton Road is located to the north-east of Bristol city centre, and falls within the Lawrence Hill ward. Drawing on the latest national Census data from 2011, 14.7% of those living in Bristol were born outside of the UK - this figure increases to 37.3% for those living in Lawrence Hill. Stapleton Road lies within an area that is ranked among the top 10% for most deprived in England, according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015.

We met Ann De Graft Johnston, Senior Lecturer in Architecture and Planning at the University of the West of England. Taking us for a walk in the area, she gave us her impressions of Bristol and Stapleton Road when she first arrived and explained the varied reactions from her students.

“There’s quite a lot of halal butchers as well as English butchers. Over the other side of Felix Road, there’s a synagogue. Quite a lot of the cafés whose clientele is predominantly male. There’s hardly any high street chains. Toby’s is a traditional fishmongers, they’ve been going for ages. They’re another unit that caters for quite a wide range of people, a range of diverse backgrounds. You’ll get pockets that have a real mix of people and then pockets where it’ll be just one group, or at least it appears to be one group.”



STAPLETON ROAD COMMUNITY MARKET, BRISTOL, 2014

USE

HOW HAS THE COMMUNITY USED THE SPACE IN THE PAST, TODAY AND HOW WILL IT BE USED IN THE FUTURE?



BASED ON THE AVERAGE OF JOBS PER UNIT, IT'S ESTIMATED THAT THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 407 JOBS ALONG THE STREET IN RETAIL, SERVICE AND CIVIC UNITS.

PRESENT

Looking at the way in which community and use intersect, we studied the Super Diverse High Street survey to understand more about the proprietors along Stapleton Road:

- Of the 154 units along the street, 100 are retail units and 13 are service or civic units.
- 10% of the non-residential units were vacant, and 47% of proprietors have been on the street for 5 years or less.
- Food-related retail accounts for by far the most prominent activity on the street - exactly half of the shops located there.
- On average, the units on this road that were non-residential provided between 3 and 4 jobs for the community.
- Using the survey answers of 43 proprietors, some 60% of those employed are reportedly non-family members.



REFLECTIONS

HOW HAVE COMMUNITIES OF DIVERSE ETHNIC HERITAGE HAD A VOICE IN THE PLANNING AND DESIGN OF SITES THAT ARE SIGNIFICANT TO THEM?

We can clearly see that Stapleton Road's shop front character is shaped by a range of communities of diverse ethnic heritage. The next step is to communicate the value of character to prospective planners and architects when changes inevitably take place in the neighbourhood.

It's worth considering how character can be used in the process of designing development. The crucial stage when the architect and the client decide the final priority of their goals e.g. budget, aesthetics or other.

The area provides service to the local community, evident in how it provides for the local community - both retail goods and a sense of unity through the hubs created for social activity.

