

EXAMPLE 1

A HOUSING ESTATE

How do people personalise their homes?

Introduction

Pupils need to consider the characteristic features of the houses here. What is the style, age and layout of the area? What age are the buildings? These facts may well inform them that these houses were built at the same time in a similar style – why did people come here? Population expansion? Moving to better quality homes?

Do we all like the same things? The fact is that we tend to personalise most of our possessions – we all like our own individuality to come through. The same feeling exists with our homes.

Task

Pupils investigate, by observation, the ways in which houses basically similar in design, are given an individual 'makeover'

This might include

- Changing the house itself – adding porches, changing windows, adding window boxes / hanging baskets, painting it a different colour, giving it a name.
- Changing the outside area – creating gardens, tubs of plants, do away with a garden, concreting the area for car parking, putting up fences etc

Pupils can sketch the houses, annotate a large scale map of the street, take pictures (carefully!) and talk to residents to identify how and why the changes have taken place.

Back in the classroom

- Pupils create a display of their findings.
- Discuss what they found, why it was like that and why some houses remained unchanged.
- Does it affect house prices? Obtain some examples of similar houses for sale from the local newspaper or the house agents.
- Which of the changes did they like best? Least?
- Finally what would they like to do if they lived there?

EXAMPLE 2

Activities linked to a local housing estate

Housing estates are often where many schools are located and so provide an area for investigating in a short amount of lesson time. Sometimes these estates are past their 'sell by' date and are not initially

the most interesting places for fieldwork. But fieldwork engages children in asking questions, identifying issues and thinking more deeply about places and so a local housing estate might be just the place to start! It is also important to remember that this might be where many of the pupils live and so it is important to be upbeat and non judgemental at least for some of the time.

It also makes a good place to learn the skills of identifying, evaluating, enquiring and sketching so these become embedded in the children's thinking when they set off to investigate another place wherever it is located.

It is best to get the children to find out much by observing first. If suitable then this can be followed up by posing questions to residents which have been worked out before hand.

Accessibility

- How well connected is this street to the rest of the area?
- Is there a bus service and if so, what is the timetable like?
- Are the bus stops within a reasonable distance or do people have to walk a long way to a main road for public transport?
- How much does a taxi cost for example from the nearest large supermarket?
- How do transport links affect the different age groups who live here? What time is the last bus in the evening? How will this affect young people and their leisure time?

Housing

- What is the age of the buildings in this area?
- What are the characteristic building materials used here? Are all buildings the same?
- What's the background to the area? Were the houses built to cater for an increasing population or to re-house people from other areas?
- How do people personalise their own properties? How are the houses different?
- Are there social meeting places in this area? What types of facilities are found here?
- Are there any gardens or do people use them for other purposes?
- One of the concerns in an urban area is the amount of concreting over for example in driveways. This increases run off of water and helps flooding to occur. Is that true of here?

The surrounding area

- How safe is the street? For example is the street lighting good? Is it a suitable place to use as a play area?
- What sort of boundaries can be found in this area? Why are they there? What sort of function do they fulfil?
- Evaluate the quality of the street environment. How does this compare with another street in the area?
- Record the street furniture – how far do people have to go for a post box, telephone box, fire hydrant etc?
- What difference would a touch of colour bring to the buildings?

People

- Do the pupils find this place attractive or not? Would they like to live here?
- What do the residents of the area like / dislike about the place?
- Do people have to use a car to get to other places?
- What changes are taking place?

- What will this place look like in 50 -100 years time?
 - If the local residents could change one thing about the place what would it be?
-

EXAMPLE 3

High Street Cloning

Introduction

Based upon research undertaken by New Economics Foundation (www.neweconomics.org) into the observation that British 'High Streets' are becoming clones of each other by offering the same range of services through national chain stores to the detriment of local independent stores.

Task

The 'original' NEF fieldwork can be undertaken by downloading a sample recording sheet from their website and undertaking a survey. This involves recording the services provided along a section of High Street and noting the type of service provided and whether it is provided by a chain or independent retailer.

Alternatively, why not investigate;

- Where in the High Street independent and chain stores are located?
- Are independent stores located in particular areas?
- Through questionnaires, what attracts people to chain/independent retailers?
- How do independent retailers differentiate themselves from chain stores? Do they 'market' their independent status?

Back in the classroom

What are the benefits/disadvantages to having chain and independent stores?

Would it matter if all High Streets looked the same?

Are there any shop types that are not represented within the town/survey? Why?