

Roadmap for a Sustainable City

Brighton and Hove

November 2016

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1. Introduction

Brighton and Hove aspires to be a resource-efficient, One Planet, Zero Carbon City¹. The city has credentials and ambition: approximately 100 initiatives strive locally to make the city more sustainable whilst in 2013 it became the world's first designated *One Planet Living City*, and the wider city-region became the world's first designated UNESCO Biosphere Reserve to encompass a large urban area in 2014.

Achieving progress to a more sustainable future is undoubtedly hard work. 'Austerity Britain' makes this doubly so: for the City Council this means trying to do more with sharply reducing financial resources. It also means rethinking how the City Council operates, with suggestions of moving towards more 'collaborative' ways of working, inviting local communities to be more engaged in delivering local services. These changes are currently under discussion and are potentially far reaching. These changes also present an opportunity: they could accelerate progress to a more sustainable future or they could lock-in existing unsustainable practices for years to come.

Against this background, this roadmap considers some of the challenges and potential opportunities involved in accelerating progress towards sustainability in the city of Brighton and Hove. It presents findings and recommendations from the **ARTS research project** combined with outputs from an experimental artistic collaboration with ONCA Gallery and five stakeholder workshops held between May 2015 and May 2016.

The roadmap has been created for the benefit of people involved in local initiatives in Brighton and Hove who are striving to create a more sustainable and low carbon future, as well as those organisations and people seeking to support and govern change within the city. Its purpose is to inform them about the context in which they are working and to help develop their future strategies. Most importantly though the creation of the roadmap was itself an important process in which many local actors participated, learned from each other and developed shared, desirable visions of the future.

Using two themes – **Open Spaces** and **New Infrastructure Projects** – the move towards a collaborative Council is interrogated in terms of its challenges and opportunities for a more sustainable future and a list of collective actions tackling important issues within these two themes are assembled². This document concludes with a set of actions (developed through a series of three workshops) placed on a timeline as a roadmap for a more sustainable future in Brighton and Hove.

¹ Brighton and Hove City Plan Part One, March 2016

² The selection of these two themes as the entry point for discussion are explained later in the document in section 4.

2. Background to the ARTS project

ARTS - Accelerating and Rescaling Transitions to Sustainability - is a three-year research project (2014-2016) funded by the European Commission. The project aims to understand how local initiatives can accelerate progress to environmentally sustainable futures in five European city-regions: Brighton, Budapest, Dresden, Genk, and Stockholm. In Brighton the ARTS project is represented by a group of researchers at SPRU (Science Policy Research Unit) at the University of Sussex.

Accelerating and re-scaling Transitions to Sustainability

The ARTS project focuses on local, collective sustainability-orientated initiatives, such as community gardening projects or business greening initiatives, and their ability to influence change towards environmental sustainability within the city region. The project explores how local initiatives interact with and shape local governance processes, whether at the City Council or through other processes such as the City Deal or the Local Enterprise Partnership.

At the beginning of the project five potential acceleration mechanisms were proposed. The project has subsequently sought to explore the usefulness and applicability of these mechanisms in explaining progress towards sustainability within the city region:

- **Upscaling** of a single initiative through growth of members, supporters or users within the city region.
- **Replicating** new ways of doing, thinking and/or organizing of one initiative by another initiative.
- **Partnering** between initiatives or with other organisations to exploit synergies.
- **Embedding** new ways of doing, thinking and organising into city regional governance patterns.
- **Instrumentalising** (or 'making the most of') context conditions.

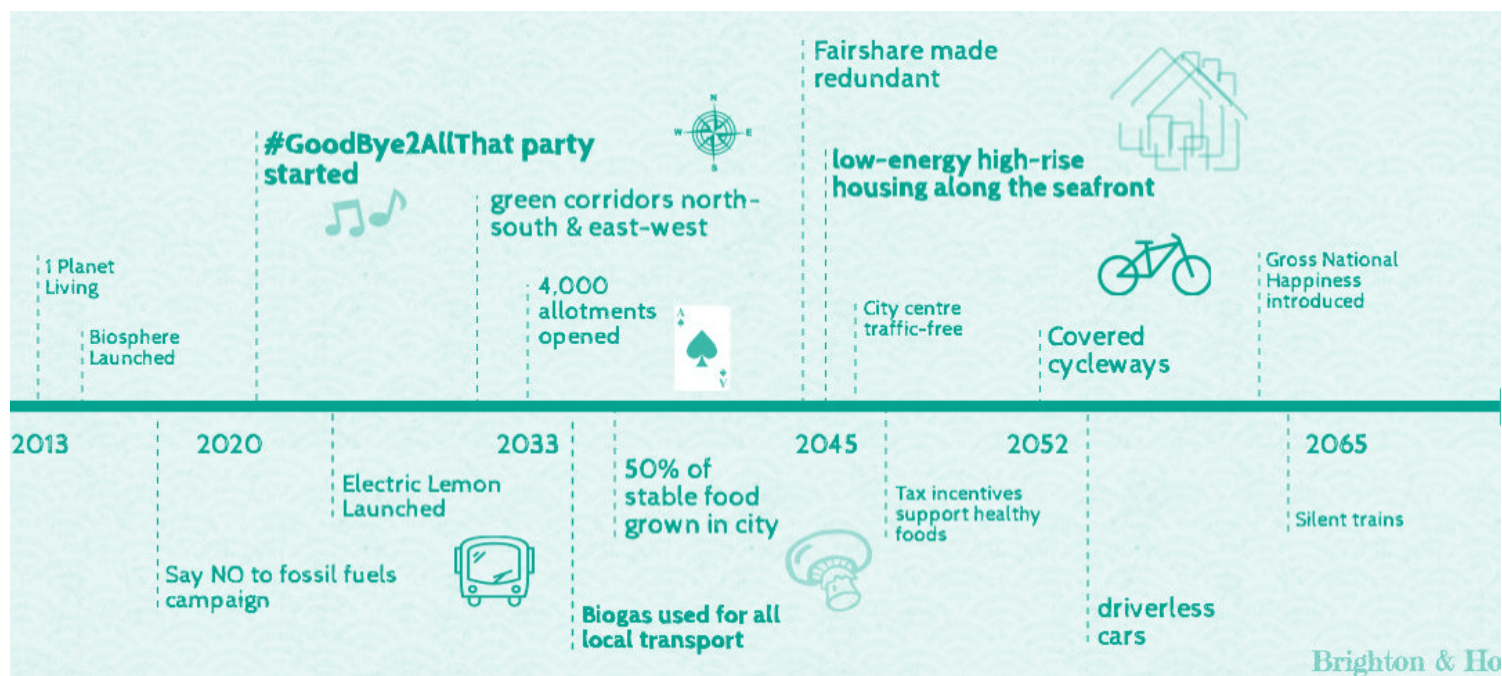
In December 2013 ARTS researchers began by systematically mapping local sustainability initiatives before reviewing and analysing the multi-level governance context (from the local authority through national Government to European Union directives). Researchers then selected 11 initiatives to study in depth and explored these initiatives' strategies for emergence, growth and impact.



Annabelle and Ben MacFadyen help participants explore their visions for a more sustainable future at a workshop in December 2015.

The project has also involved experimental participation of local people through a collaboration with ONCA gallery and has worked with a number of key local stakeholders and members of local initiatives to collectively understand the current situation and develop future strategies through a number of workshops.

The first workshop was held at the Brighthelm Centre in May 2015 and mapped local initiatives and institutions. It also introduced the research project as well as local initiative participants to one another. In the spring of 2016 a further series of three workshops entitled *Sustainability through Collaboration* discussed shifting national and local contexts, explored collaboration opportunities and sought to identify steps to accelerate progress to a more sustainable city. This series of workshops was brought together by the ARTS project team, working in association with the Brighton & Lewes Downs Biosphere Partnership and in collaboration with a core group of local sustainability-focused stakeholders, including Vic Borrill (Brighton and Hove Food Partnership), Duncan Blinkhorn (Community Works), Chris Todd (Friends of the Earth), Rich Howorth (Biosphere Partnership) and Mita Patel (Brighton and Hove City Council). 80 people from a range of local organisations signed up to participate in at least one of the three workshops.



Visions of the future, FutureRoots

FutureRoots, a collaboration with ONCA gallery

In the project FutureRoots, ‘voicemails from the cloud of possible futures’ were collected from people working towards positive, transformational change. These voicemails expressed visions of Brighton and Hove into the future and the steps required to get there. Together they demonstrate the passion and commitment needed to achieve positive change. The timeline above collects together key elements from the voicemails, which can be listened to on the onca website:

www.onca.org.uk/ongoingprojects/futureroots

After leaving voicemails, Futureroots participants were invited to two workshops. The first workshop, led by Bridget McKenzie explored new evaluation methods, the second workshop led by Annabelle and Ben MacFadyen, and explored personal and collective visions and how to get there.

Following the workshops Miriam Steiner and Jake Barnes recorded their experiences within two blog posts. Both blogs can be accessed on the ARTS project website: <http://acceleratingtransitions.eu>

3. Brighton's ongoing sustainability-related dynamics

Transition initiatives

By the end of 2014 the ARTS project team had identified just under 100 initiatives from civil society, business and local government³ that were exploring ways to achieve a sustainable future. This is likely to be an underestimate. Initiatives ranged from small volunteer-based organisations to multi-actor partnerships and covered diverse sustainability related topics such as local food-growing, renewable energy generation, education, nature conversation, building construction using waste materials and bioethanol-run buses. The City Council is also actively involved, developing projects and using local legislation to promote sustainable practices.

The vast majority of initiatives are civil-society based, with only a handful of public sector or business-led initiatives (Figure 1). There is an even spread of initiatives operating at different geographical scales: below city, city, city-region, and above city-region (Figure 2). Nearly half have been set up since 2010, with the earliest established in the 1980's (Figure 3). Finally, in terms of activity there is a fairly even spread across different domains (i.e. energy, food, waste etc.), with many initiatives tackling several domains (Figure 4).

Figure 1: Initiating sector (n=98)

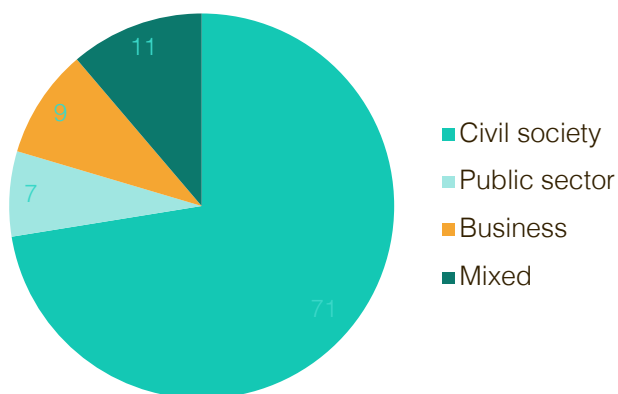


Figure 2: Initiative scale of activity (n=98)

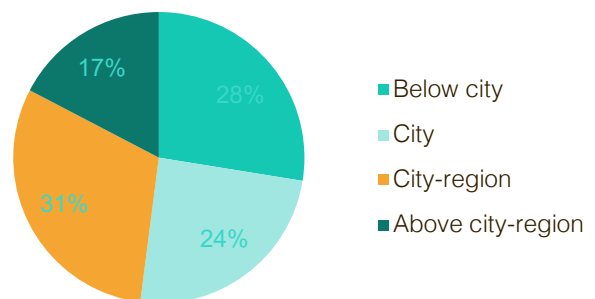


Figure 3: Founding dates of initiatives still operating in 2014, where known (n=50)

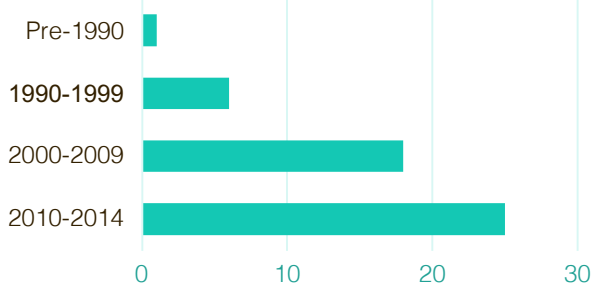
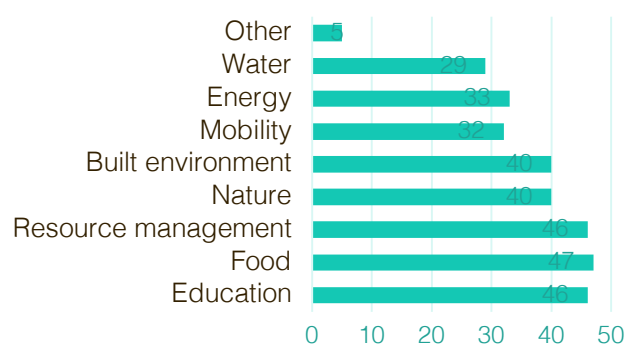


Figure 4: Initiative domains of activity (n=318)



³ To qualify as an 'sustainability transition initiative' within the project initiatives had to be locally-based, seeking to drive transformational change towards sustainability and be collective in some way. Initiative's driven by single actors, like the City Council or Southern Water where therefore not included.

Governance context

In the UK, government is highly centralised. Local governments, like Brighton and Hove City Council have few tax raising powers of any kind (apart from council tax) and have severe constraints on resources and what they can spend them on. Unlike in other European cities, there is now no significant regional dimension to policy between the national Government and local governance structures in Brighton and Hove. This means that even with favourable political conditions within the city-region, such as the former Green-led City Council, there are significant constraints on the local council, which in turn makes for a challenging context to achieve change.

At a local level, Brighton and Hove City Council (henceforth the Council) is an important governance actor. The wider city-region also extends into two further local government areas – East and West Sussex County Councils. This makes developing coherent regional approaches to sustainability issues such as land management, transport and biodiversity hard to achieve. Alongside the Council sit at least six further important governance actors, they include:

- the Biosphere Board,
- the South Downs National Park authority,
- the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP),
- the Local Strategic Partnership (also known as 'Brighton and Hove Connected') and
- the Greater Brighton Economic Board.

Many of these bodies are partnerships between public, private and civil society organisations. Most of these bodies have different geographical boundaries and varying functions, responsibilities and transparency but all of these bodies have some influence on city-regional governance and sustainability prospects.

Clearly the range of governance actors also makes for a challenging local context in which local initiatives seek to drive change. Together they make it harder for local people and initiatives to understand and navigate the local governance context. For instance, it may be unclear who is setting local priorities and policies and who holds key sources of funding.

However, there are also opportunities for local initiatives to accelerate change through local governance arrangements. In particular, if they are able to participate in the relevant local institutions then they may at times be able to influence and even transform the policies and programmes that would either support or hinder their progress. A number of the bigger and more established local initiatives have been able to successfully engage at this level. The *Brighton and Hove Food Partnership* has, for example, been very successful in influencing local policy and practice by actively engaging in local governance processes⁴. However, the local governance context is for the most part overlooked by local initiatives because of the dominance of the influence of national policy making on the local level (e.g. in terms of providing funds for low carbon transport infrastructure development or incentives for the deployment of renewable energy). Despite the challenges presented above, engaging with local governance processes provides opportunities through which initiatives can find support and scale up.

⁴ For more information on how the Brighton and Hove Food Partnership accelerates progress to sustainability why not check out our case study on the Partnership, accessed here: <http://acceleratingtransitions.eu/publications/>

4. Strategies for acceleration

After having sketched the challenging context for local action for sustainability, the second half of this report summarises discussion and outcomes from a series of three stakeholder workshops in the spring of 2016. The workshop series explored how to accelerate progress towards a more sustainable city-region and developed collective strategies through which to achieve greater impact. The series was informed by proposed changes in local governance arrangements, namely the development of a new ‘collaborative approach’ by Brighton and Hove City Council.

To create a focus for the workshops, two locally-relevant themes were used: **open spaces** and **new infrastructure projects**. The themes were chosen because they resonated with local stakeholders, are cross-cutting in that they typically involve a variety of the domains (e.g. food, energy, transport, etc) and – in the case of open spaces – are under active policy discussion with an open spaces strategy currently being developed by the Council. The two themes also represent what has been seen by local stakeholders as two different development models of the city. The development of open spaces, often by local ‘friends of...’ groups or community initiatives promoting the use of green spaces for a variety of uses (gardening, food growing, exercising), is seen as a bottom-up development model. On the other hand, large new infrastructure projects are typically proposed by commercial developers from outside the city-region and are mainly developed in bilateral negotiations with the council with relatively little community engagement.

The workshops aimed to (a) develop an understanding of shifting national and local governance and (b) produce a set of actions that could be taken collectively to increase the rate of progress to a sustainable, low-carbon city. Key elements of this improved understanding and the proposed collective actions are reported under the following three headings:

- 1) a collaborative council and sustainability,
- 2) open spaces and sustainability and
- 3) new infrastructure projects and sustainability.



Temujen and Maia beside their visual notes from a workshop in March 2016.

4.1 A collaborative Council and sustainability

Background – By 2019-2020 the Council forecasts an annual funding gap of £102 million. This gap is being created by reducing levels of central government funding, increasing costs of service provision, and increasing demand for local services. In response, the Council hopes that a new ‘collaborative approach’ – between communities, businesses and local government – will reduce costs.

Policy status – The minority-led Labour Council is currently guiding the formation of a collaboration framework that (it is hoped) will reflect local priorities, including environmental sustainability. However, sustainability has not been made explicit within this framework.

Research insights – Research undertaken by the ARTS project team suggests these changes to local governance could be used as an opportunity. Changes to local governance structures provide opportunities through which to alter the rules by which decisions are made. For instance, changes can be made which embed new policies that are supportive of sustainable development and local sustainability initiatives. An example is the Council’s hope to foster greater community control of open spaces which may offers possibilities of more sustainable management practices. Equally, these changes have the potential to lock-in unsustainable practices and policies that could make it much harder to achieve a sustainable city. Thus, local stakeholders need to act opportunistically and push for policies that are supportive of their sustainability ambitions.



The 21st century public servant, used by Emma McDermott (Head of Communities and Equalities, Brighton & Hove City Council) to introduce council officer roles under a collaborative council model during a workshop in March 2016. Illustration by Laura Brodrick for the research project the 21st Century Public Servant at University of Birmingham.

Key recommendations arising from the workshops:

- 1. First principles: sustainability.** Neither the proposed 'Cooperative Council' principles or 'collaboration framework' currently contain reference to sustainability. Given the urgency and scale of climate change and existing sustainability commitments (included in the One Planet Living status of the city for example) we propose sustainable development should be foregrounded within all future proposals.
- 2. Extent of change and the need for further engagement.** Whilst there are some clear drivers behind this process of increased collaboration the extent of possible change remains unclear. This is true for people working both within and outside of the Council and depends, in part, on the willingness of actors from all sectors to further engage with the process.
- 3. The need for an open, learning culture.** Because of the variety of actors involved, significant learning about each other's roles, resources and capacities is required and necessary for success. For the City Council this means actively supporting a cultural change amongst civil servants in their ways of working along the following principles:

Early and open engagement. For a wide range of people and organisations to get involved and embody the move to a more collaborative way of working, honest, open and early engagement is necessary.

A city with vast expertise and passion. The city is vibrant and diverse. For the new collaborative approach to flourish it needs to engage with and utilise existing expertise and passion from a diverse set of actors.

Recasting old relationships. Previous ways of working and relationships require scrutiny. There will need to be changes to the way all actors view themselves and their role within the city, whether they are councillors, council officers, businesses or civil society organisations.



Emma McDermott (Head of Communities and Equalities, Brighton & Hove City Council) introducing the Council's 'cooperative ambitions' at a workshop in March 2016.

4.2 Open spaces and sustainability

Background – There are over 100 open spaces within Brighton and Hove. They vary in size and use and include parks, playing fields, allotments, playgrounds and green verges. These open spaces, like the Council more broadly, face reductions in funding. To address this challenge new ways of managing, maintaining and using the city's open spaces are being pursued. Again, a collaborative approach has been suggested.

Policy status – In January 2016 the Council started developing a new Open Spaces Strategy. The strategy aims to guide the development of the city's open spaces for the next 10 years. The strategy is currently under development and will be publicly consulted on in Autumn 2016.

Research Insights – Local sustainability initiatives predominantly operate within domain silos, such as energy, food, water, waste, the built environment, nature and conservation, and so on. However, there are many opportunities for and benefits to be derived from partnering across domains. This is especially true in the development of open spaces. More broadly, public spaces provide very important spaces in which sustainable solutions can be experimented with and in this sense are vital to accelerating progress.

Sustainability priorities for developing open spaces –

The following list of sustainability priorities for developing open spaces was developed and refined during the workshops. The forthcoming strategy on open spaces, we argue, should encourage greater community involvement and develop capacity and resources to support this. It should also include the following priorities.

- Conserving and enhancing biodiversity, including sustaining pollinating insects, creating green corridors between spaces and using existing spaces as demonstrations for further public/private biodiverse green spaces
- Reducing flood risk in vulnerable areas
- Increasing tree cover
- Encouraging and enhancing the health and recreation benefits of existing green spaces,
- Increasing access to food growing and food waste composting
- Increasing opportunities for education
- Encouraging multi-functional and sustainable approaches to design, management and use

Key recommendations arising from the workshops:

- **Open spaces offer huge potential for more sustainable practices.** Whether it is supporting more active and healthy lifestyles, food growing or educational opportunities, the city's open spaces provide a wealth of opportunities to support more sustainable lifestyles.
- **Diverse and ambitious.** There is significant diversity within the city's open spaces in terms of current use and ambitions for the future. There are examples of good working relationships between local groups and the Council which could provide useful templates for the future.
- **Community involvement is critical.** Effort should be made to work with volunteers, community groups and local residents to encourage ownership. Moreover, the Council should facilitate capacity building through training and advice to help make involvement more sustainable and independent.
- **Public health and wellbeing.** There are a range of potential synergies to be made from linking public health considerations to open spaces. This includes using open spaces to support more

active and healthy lifestyles. This may involve the engagement of non-traditional users, such as green gym groups, to diversify support and this may involve drawing on health related budgets.

- **Creating trust and clear lines of responsibility.** A more collaborative way of working requires establishing trust between parties and developing strong working relationships with clear lines of responsibility.
- **Creating space for collaboration.** There is a clear need for an inclusive space in which all parties can meet, learn about and from one another, share ideas, collaborate and develop a range of approaches to finance, manage and use open spaces.
- **No one-size-fits-all.** No single approach will be able to accommodate the diversity of open spaces in the city and so approaches should be adopted that suite individual needs.

Collective actions agreed by workshop participants:

1. **Create an open forum.** It was agreed that a new forum should be created in order to enable and support various initiatives to engage with green spaces and to support the open and participatory development of the Council's open spaces strategy. It was agreed that the forum should be an inclusive space, involving council officers and rangers, alongside 'friends of...' groups and interested sustainability initiatives. Furthermore, the forum should also act as a network to increase collaboration and a hub for information. To progress the idea it was agreed:
 - a. To discuss the forum with Brighton City in Bloom and their proposal for a *Volunteer Alliance for Community Open Spaces*
 - b. Develop a funding proposal to support the creation of a forum.
2. **Develop links to public health.** It was agreed that there were potentially significant benefits of linking public health to open spaces. To further these links it was agreed that:
 - a. 'Social prescribing' and 'health walk' programmes would be investigated,
 - b. The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Health and Wellbeing board should both be approached, since they help set the health strategy for the Council.
 - c. The Synergy Centre will run a workshop in the Autumn on this topic.
3. **Deliver management plans on a phased basis.** Whilst the Council aims to have management plans in place for all open spaces by 2020 it was agreed that a phased approach should be developed in which existing management plans are shared before templates are developed and circulated.



Group work during a workshop in April 2016.

4.3 New infrastructure projects and sustainability

Background – Brighton and Hove’s population is expected to increase by approximately 10% to nearly 300,000 by 2030. Access to affordable housing is frequently recognised as a major issue alongside a shortage of affordable work spaces and premises. Urban expansion is constrained by the sea to the south and the South Downs National Park to the north. In this context the way that infrastructure projects are designed and implemented has far reaching consequences for creating sustainable communities: new infrastructure projects literally ‘set in stone’ lifestyles and practices for future generations.

Policy status – The City Plan: Part 1⁵ was adopted by the Council in March 2016. It sets out a vision – to achieve a sustainable, resilient low carbon economy – and objectives for development in the city to 2030. The development of the City Plan: Part 2, in which the remaining development sites and detailed planning policies will be articulated, is now under development. Again, the Council expects to work closely with all societal sectors to achieve these plans.

Key sustainability priorities for developing new infrastructure projects –

The following list of sustainability priorities for developing new infrastructure projects was developed and refined during the workshops. Ongoing planning decisions should give considerable weight to these factors, with an aim to incorporating them into, or strengthening them within, policy when opportunities arise.

- Maximising use of land
- Creating accessible and high quality zero carbon developments
- Providing local services nearby wherever possible
- Creating adaptable and lasting community buildings
- Increasing access to green space
- Increasing access to food growing space
- Increasing facilities for composting, reuse and recycling
- Minimise water use and impact on aquifer
- Creating an ‘active travel policy’ based on good pedestrian and cycle links and good quality public transport infrastructure, to minimize car use & create car-free streets
- Increasing biodiversity through local & native planting

Key considerations arising from the workshops:

- **Avoid demolition where possible.** Rather than building anew, the reuse of buildings should be considered first.
- **Demonstration.** Contemporary developments, such as ‘Toads Hole Valley’ provide opportunities to create innovative and sustainable community developments. These should be seized as local demonstrations.
- **Local planning.** Local planning laws should push high sustainability requirements on all new developments regardless of weak national requirements.
- **Democratic engagement.** Planning processes remain opaque to many. The development of large new infrastructure projects, such as those at the Preston Barracks or Blackrock sites even more so. Ways to increase knowledge and participation outside and in addition to planning processes should be investigated.

⁵ The City Plan: Part 1 can be accessed online here: <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/planning/planning-policy/city-plan-part-one>

Collective actions agreed by workshop participants:

1. **Create a working group** – with the aim of promoting and embedding sustainable development in the city/Biosphere region through engaging and contributing to strategic planning and project delivery. This would be the Sustainable Cities Working Group, taking the same name from a similar group that worked under the City Sustainability Partnership. It was agreed the group should (a) bring together relevant stakeholders and guide action where possible, (b) create a challenging but supportive environment, (c) engage early with planning processes, (d) create space for volunteers to freely input, and (e) be facilitated by an independent party. To progress this idea it was agreed:
 - a. A short outline of the group would be drafted collectively
 - b. Both universities would be approached to help facilitate the working group
 - c. A list of relevant people to invite would be developed.

At a consultation meeting on the City Plan held by the City Council in September 2016, there was widespread support for the setting up of this Working Group, under University of Sussex chairing/facilitation, and ARTS project members will be engaged in bringing this initiative to fruition as an ongoing contribution to advancing environmental sustainability in the city-region.

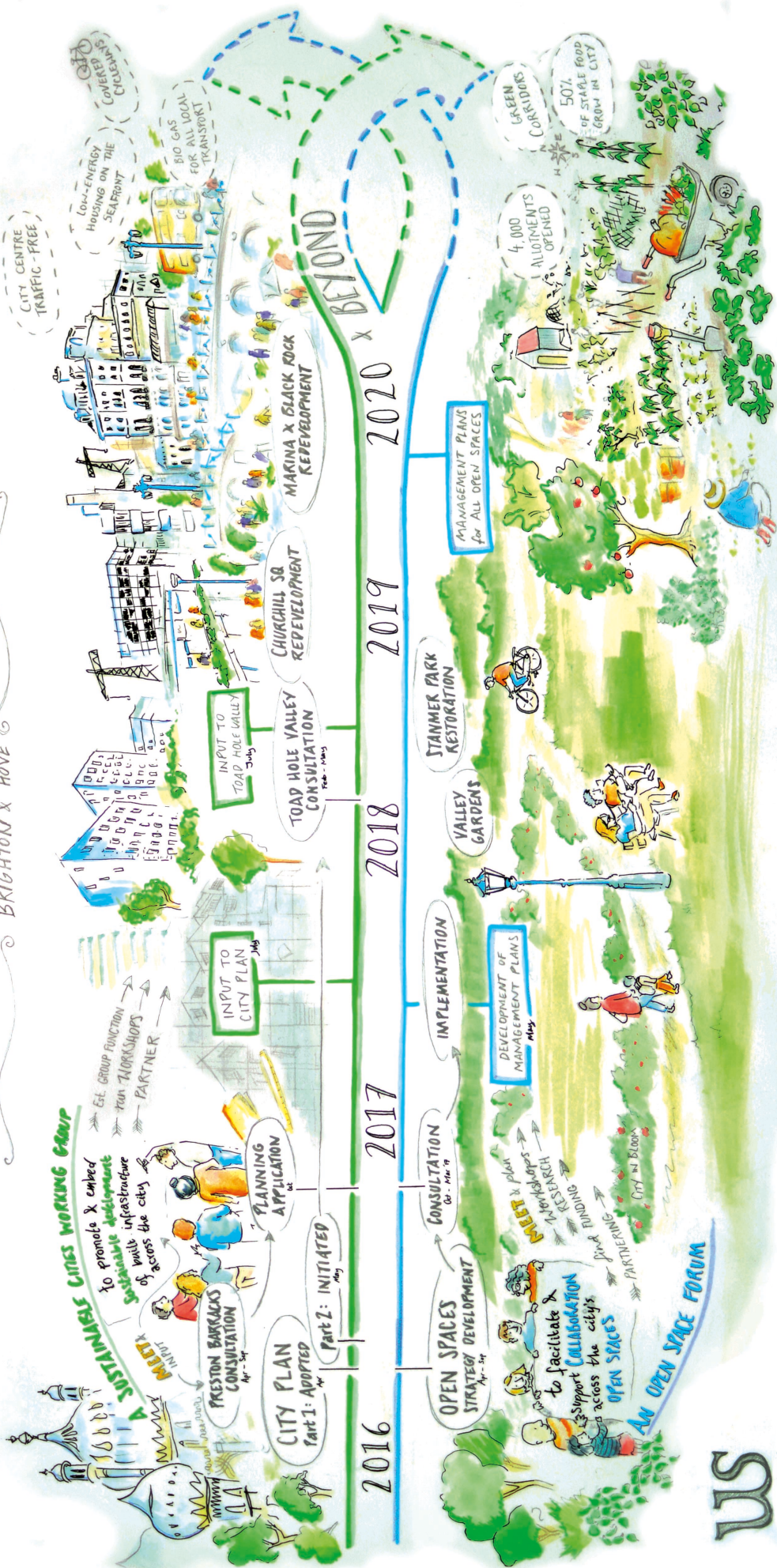
2. **City Plan: Part 2** – It was agreed that the new working group should, as its initial activity, contribute to the development of the City Plan: Part 2 due to begin development in the Autumn 2016.
3. **Understanding the Planning process** – It was agreed that a workshop would be organised to learn about the planning development process. The @FEILD site currently based on the Preston Barracks development site was suggested as a timely venue with the University of Brighton hosting the workshop and ARTS researchers facilitating.



Participants of the second workshop in April 2016.

ROADMAP for A SUSTAINABLE CITY

BRIGHTON & HOVE



An ARTS project COLLABORATION with local initiatives

UPSCALING - REPLICATING - PARTNERING - EMBEDDING

Artwork by Tenjam.com

This roadmap and the research on which it built would not have been possible without the participation of a wide range of individuals and organisations. In particular, we would like to thank Mita Patel, Rich Howorth, Chris Todd, Duncan Blinkhorn and Vic Borrill for helping shape the workshops in a way that made them both interesting and useful to local actors. We are also very grateful to a wide range of individuals and organisations for contributing their time towards the project. In particular, we would like to thank:

Brighton and Hove City Council,
Brighton and Hove Food Partnership,
Brighton and Lewes Downs Biosphere Partnership,
Brighton Bike Hub,
Brighton Energy Coop,
Brighton Paper Round,
Brighton Peace and Environment Centre,
Green Centre,
City Sustainability Partnership,
Hanover Action for Sustainable Living,
ONCA Gallery,
Sustainable Business Partnership,
Waste House



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