ARP Focus Group Session 2 Agenda_17th November 2025

Focus Group Session 2: Let's Debate (60 mins) Building on insights from Session 1, students will engage in a structured debate. Each student will adopt a character and argue from a specific viewpoint in response to a design-related question. After a short break, characters will be rotated and a new question introduced. The same question may be asked at the start and end to measure any change in perspective.

17.15 Participants Arrive and Settle in
Welcome and explanation of the agenda
- We will delve deeper into your position on inclusive design through methods of debate and role play.

17.30 Free writing experience (5 minutes)
- Let participants read and begin

17.35 Debate (20 minutes)
- **Activity 1: Debate Topic**
Should a new government-funded £5m public park prioritise inclusive features for groups who face barriers in accessing public spaces (such as: Girls, disabled people, LGBTQ+ communities, the elderly, and neurodiverse users), even if it reduces space for general recreational uses? The previous plan was for the park to deliver a new basketball court and running track for local community groups, who have been advocating and campaigning for several years.

18.55 Debate with Role Play (35 minutes)
- **Activity 2: Debate Topic**
A major mixed-use development is proposed in a rapidly changing neighbourhood. The architect and design team are proposing ambitious, inclusive-design measures: step-free public realm, gender-inclusive play spaces, accessible housing above policy minimums, sensory-friendly routes, high-quality and detailed materials to help members of the visually impaired community, affordable workspaces, and a community-led co-design process.

However, new climate-resilience requirements have been introduced, as the project has initial conversations with the council's planning team, which places additional pressure on the project budget.

The developer argues that the combined cost of inclusive-design features and environmental upgrades threatens the project's viability and delays delivery. The council is under political pressure to approve the scheme quickly to meet housing targets and sustainability commitments. Community groups hold mixed views.

Given rising costs and competing priorities, should the inclusive-design proposals be reduced, modified (if so, how?), or protected?

18.25 Reflections on the session

18.30 Next Steps
- Semi-structured interview
- Location F103
- All asked the same questions

Role Play Characters and Prompts

Architect (Lead Designer)

Values: inclusive design, design ethics, long-term social value
Pressures:

- Wants to maintain design integrity
- Knows the inclusive features will raise cost + complexity
- Faces the risk of being dropped from the project if they push too hard
- Needs to gain planning approval

Conflict: *How much can they compromise before the design stops being "inclusive"?*

Developer / Client

Values: investment return, risk mitigation, programme certainty
Pressures:

- Claims viability is threatened
- Investors want a quicker, cheaper scheme to ensure the financial return they signed up for
- Worried that inclusive elements are "non-standard" and harder to market and get more return to get more initial funding for
- Concern about political fallout if they're seen as anti-inclusion

Conflict: *Are cost arguments genuine or strategic? Pressure is coming from above to meet the project budget and gain planning approval.*

Local Councillor (Planning Officer)

Values: public interest, local voices, political survival
Pressures:

- Housing targets from the central government
- Local voters are demanding both inclusion and quick delivery
- Lobbying from developers
- Public scrutiny if they approve an "exclusive" scheme

Conflict: *Is inclusive design a luxury or a requirement? The council need to move quickly to meet housing targets ahead of elections.*

Disabled Resident & Access Advocate

Values: equity, legal rights, meaningful inclusion
Pressures:

- Constantly experiencing physical and mental barriers
- Has seen other schemes come forward with only tokenistic inclusive design
- Suspicious of "designing to minimum standards"
- Sees inclusive design as a human-rights issue
- Limited influence compared to developers
- Believes that at all costs, the scheme should be an exemplar approach to inclusive design

Conflict: *Why are disabled people always asked to compromise first?*

Local Elderly Resident (Long-term Homeowner)

Values: neighbourhood identity, safety, stability in daily life

Pressures:

- Fears the development will push out existing residents
- Concerned that new 'inclusive features' will do the opposite and attract large groups or "outsiders," increasing noise or anti-social behaviour
- Has personally experienced recent safety concerns, especially affecting elderly neighbours
- Feels older residents' needs are overlooked compared to youth, gender or accessibility-focused proposals

Conflict:
Wants neighbourhood to have better safety measures, but fears that ambitious, inclusive-design changes may alter the familiar character of the community they value.

Youth Representative (Teenage Girl / LGBTQ+ young person)

Values: safety, visibility, representation
Pressures:

- Rarely heard in planning
- Feels unsafe in existing spaces
- Sandwiched between adults' decisions
- Advocates for sensory-friendly and gender-inclusive spaces
- Represents the future generations of the neighbourhood
- Understands the need to consider the climate crisis in the project

Conflict: *Questions whose needs count in the design of public space? Why is it one <u>or</u> the other and not both?*