

Where will I live?

A geography teacher's guide to exploring
the key concept of place



C A B E

Contents

Introduction	3
Key ideas	4
Lessons and teaching resources	
Real and relevant places – what makes a well designed community, and what can be done to create better places in the future?	6
Perceptions of place – challenging perceptions and developing a sense of place	8
Students as citizens – opportunities for informed and active citizenship	10
Sustainable communities – developing a deeper understanding of sustainability	12
Conclusion – <i>Where will I live?</i> and curriculum development	14

Introduction

'The students have enjoyed the work. They have been encouraged to think in new ways about the built environment, to look at it through others' eyes and to realise that they have a stake in its future development'

Alan Young, Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Blackburn

This guide is the result of a partnership between CABE and the Geographical Association (GA) that brought together teachers of geography and citizenship to think about the housing market and the importance of design in creating good places to live.

Where will I live? assembled 25 geography and citizenship teachers, as well as 500 pupils, from South Cambridgeshire and East Lancashire, to share ideas and new thinking on these vital issues.

The result – presented here and in an accompanying website, www.geography.org.uk/projects/wherewilllive – is a range of teaching resources that explore key concepts such as community, sustainability, design, place, geographical imagination and interconnectedness.

A major part of geographical education is to develop deeper and broader understanding of these terms. You may want to ask your students what these concepts mean to them. Their responses can help you select from the teaching and learning ideas in this guide.

Only a fraction of the material from the *Where will I live?* initiative is contained here. The publication features quotes from participating teachers and students, but the website includes many more teacher responses along with detailed lesson plans linked to the relevant examination specifications. The website also includes examples of students' work, teachers' evaluation comments and detailed discussions about the project's emphasis and priorities. All of the online content is freely downloadable, so you can work with the ideas and make them appropriate to your own circumstances or use them as a stimulus for a new piece of curriculum development work. CABE and the GA recognise that it is the teachers in the classroom who are best placed to design and create appropriate curriculum and educational experiences.

You may also be interested in the Teachers' TV programme, *Engaging with their world: where will I live?* (available at www.teachers.tv). In the programme, David Beresford, an advanced skills teacher at C oleridge Community School and local project leader for *Where will I live?*, shares the work he developed with colleagues and students. The programme illustrates how geography helps equip students with the knowledge needed for future big decisions.

A partnership between CABE and the GA made perfect sense for this project. CABE's work involves inspiring the public to demand more from buildings and spaces. And the GA exists to promote geography teaching and the value of learning geography for all. An expanding area of the GA's work involves working with teachers to create local solutions to curriculum challenges. With the renewed emphasis on geography through a 2006–2008 action plan, this is timely.

Please do share your own experiences and resources with others through the *Where will I live?* website, www.geography.org.uk/projects/wherewilllive.



© Michele Turilli

Key ideas

Curious students

Teachers who worked on the *Where will I live?* project wanted to engage students in curiosity-driven enquiry about the housing market and design issues in real places involving real people at a variety of scales. This type of enquiry involves teachers in carefully selecting and using information in relation to students' prior experiences. In this way students' natural curiosity is harnessed, they are not simply required to learn a set of dislocated facts but are moved into the realms of informed thinking.

For example, one school used universal questions such as *What makes a house?* and *What makes a home?* as a stimulus activity. The teachers created a Powerpoint presentation of different houses around the world and asked students to locate them on a world map. The students immediately started to use geographical terminology, named countries and wanted to know more. This may be because they had been asked to first locate where they thought a house was, and then to justify their decision. If they had been asked to describe the house, they may have demonstrated a good use of adjectives, but would not have developed a sense of place in quite the same way. It is important to make choices about which activity to use when and for what purpose. Small but significant decisions can help students to 'think geographically'.

Themes in housing

A key focus of *Where will I live?* was to explore the interconnected nature of the housing market. It was important that East Lancashire and South Cambridgeshire were not represented as disconnected places with nothing in common. This approach is applicable to any location, no place exists in isolation. The outcomes may contrast greatly, but each locality is a part of the same national housing market.

An important consideration for East Lancashire is how best to manage urban regeneration. In South Cambridgeshire, the priority is how best to manage urban expansion.

These two place studies can be incorporated into your own teaching. For example, a number of schools made use of the two image sets that were commissioned as a part of the project, selecting from these to produce



High rise housing, Blackburn © Jason Orton



Detached house, Cambridge © Jason Orton



Bringing it home: local housing developments illustrate existing thinking in design, both good and bad, and can form the basis of excellent stimulus material

'The project has enabled us to have more time to consider students' views and experiences'

Rachel Leech, Ivy Bank Business and Technology College, Burnley

'One thing that was particularly successful was asking pupils to focus on a variety of solutions to housing in their home town and the wider issues across the country'

Brian Jeffery, Habergham High School, Burnley

PowerPoint slides. They then asked the students to identify whether the image was from Burnley or Cambridge.

The *Where will I live?* teachers wanted to challenge simplistic and stereotypical representations of places, in order to inform students' judgements (do they think of the poor north and rich south, and if so why and based on what evidence?). To do this, several teachers created their own local resources, combining the written word with images, using the internet and video. They found that this approach demonstrated alternatives – different perspectives and different solutions.

The bigger concepts

The teachers wanted to excite and engage students by dealing with 'the bigger concepts', promoting in-depth knowledge of real-world issues. Students were not asked to simply gather facts, but to relate facts to each other. The hope was that this would encourage growth in several aspects of their learning:

- their desire and capacity to ask geographical questions of themselves and of others
- their sense of the complexity of the world around them
- their sensitivity to the inner world of their own geographical imaginations and to that of others
- their capacity to make and articulate reasonable judgements about what is good, worthwhile or desirable.

Real and relevant places

One of the key aims of *Where will I live?* is to stimulate thinking about building design and what makes a well designed community.

These issues are directly relevant to the lives of students, although they sometimes seem remote. The project teachers found that by focusing on familiar places, students' motivation to learn was increased. These places were then used as comparisons with less familiar locations, deepening student understanding of complex housing issues. The following two lesson ideas show how Chesterton Community College drew upon year nine students' knowledge and experience to explore the concepts of housing, place, sustainability and design and to extend their understanding of housing into sophisticated pictorial and verbal representations of what a house could look like.

Lesson idea

Key question

Where would I like to live?

Learning objectives

Students will:

- develop and refine an understanding of the choices that informs house design
- assess the impact that house design can have on the characteristics of places
- know that there are variations in house prices in different parts of Britain
- know who makes decisions about housing provision.

Learning outcomes

Students will have:

- considered the features of a house they would like to live in and draw a sketch of it
- critically evaluated their choice of house design
- shown variations in house prices on a map of Britain
- thought about who makes decisions about housing provision and the implications of those decisions.

Resources

You will need:

- A5-sized pieces of paper
- photographs of local housing.

'We all appreciated the increasing complexity of urban matters and that it is alright to say that no one has all the solutions'

Jacqueline Billing, Parkside Community College, Cambridge

'The students had a real interest in what was being discussed and the options for regeneration provided by the council'

John Hargreaves, Ivy Bank Business and Technology College, Burnley



Family at Rainne Court © Michele Turrami



Restaurant, Cambridge © Jason O'ron



'The students really enjoyed working in the local area. All felt that they were 'expert' in the topic, which gave them the confidence to contribute to class discussion sessions'

Andrew Berry, Sawston Village College, Sawston

Our place: exploring our own homes, streets and neighbourhoods can help reveal what makes a well designed community

Activities

Begin the lesson by asking the class where they would like to live and why. Collect a number of responses before handing out sheets of A5 paper. Give the students five minutes to draw a picture of the house they would like to live in.

Display the drawings and ask the students what they notice about them. (At Chesterton College almost all the drawings showed variations on a traditional theme. There was only one modernist building and one subterranean building.)

This leads into a discussion about what governs our choices. Clearly the amount of money we can afford will be a large part of this, but also consider other factors, such as lifestyle, access to amenities and design preferences. An estate agent's listings of houses can be a good source of stimulus for such a discussion.

Students can then work in groups to look for broadly similar houses in different parts of Britain using web searches or print media, and try to create a map of different prices and 'pricing zones'.

Extending students' thinking

Invite a deeper inquiry into how questions of design affect our housing choices by asking: *Who designs our houses?*

Comparing photographs of houses in the same area, with similar accommodation but very different designs will stimulate the discussion. These can be found in the property pages of newspapers, from the internet or from a collection of students' own photographs of the local area. Encourage students to discuss why certain types of housing design dominate an area, who decides that this should be the case and why?



Perceptions of place

Two key ideas underpin the *Where will I live?* project. First, that learning will become more meaningful and relevant when students can express their own views and perceptions in an informed way. Second, that the location and juxtaposition of places affect the decisions that are made about their layout and organisation. Perceptions and awareness of local constraints are as important as the priorities of decision takers.

It is often difficult to avoid an over-simplified representation of place in geography lessons. But this can be unhelpful in preparing young people for a changing and complicated world. Simplified descriptions can be misleading and do not promote more creative, critical enquiry and open-ended questioning.

It was this consideration that inspired Westholme School to develop a 'mystery activity' (downloadable from the website). This challenged the students to consider why location is central to explaining house-price differentials. The teachers set their students this challenging enquiry question: *Why do two similar houses in different areas of Blackburn have such widely differing values?*

One house was in Mellor and on the market in 2005 at £167,500 and the second similar house was in nearby Darwen, priced at £40,000. By participating in the activity, students were encouraged to investigate, evaluate and compare socio-economic and environmental inequalities.

Lesson idea

Key question

Why does the cost of a house differ in different locations?

Learning objectives

Students will:

- analyse a range of interconnecting factors that lead to a local disparity in property prices
- appreciate how people's values and attitudes differ and may influence social, environmental and political issues and develop their own values and attitudes about such issues
- recognise some of the inter-relationships that operate in this complex, diverse changing locality.

Learning outcomes

Students will have:

- carried out a geographical enquiry to find reasons for variations in house prices in different places
- used different formats and types of media to synthesise information about places.

Resources

You will need:

- local estate agent information about two similar properties in different areas on the market at very different prices
- local development and re-development plans. It is worth contacting your local planning officer to see what they can provide. Alternatively the RTPI may be able to help you with appropriate contacts and resources: www.rtpi.org.uk/resources/schools/
- local government statistics and data about localities www.statistics.gov.uk

'The project has helped me to reflect on how I can use more topical local and national issues in my teaching'

Carol Pearson, Comberton Village College, Comberton



East Anglia home © Justin Kisse/Alamy



South-derbyshire house © Barry Mason/Alamy



Westholme conducted the activities on a day when the timetable was suspended for post-16 students. For the resources specific to Westholme School's enquiry please visit the project website.

Activities

Divide students into two groups. Give each group the property details for both houses but without the location or price.

Ask students to:

- describe the houses – annotate the house details
- decide on a value for each house.

Once students have fed back their ideas, reveal the house prices and locations.

Explain that students are going to solve a mystery: why do two such similar houses have such different values?

Ask students what they need before they can answer the question. If students need some prompting you might suggest: maps and other information about the locations; evidence that this price disparity is not just an isolated case; first-hand impressions of the properties and locations; socio-economic and environmental data.

Explain that you are going to conduct a fieldwork exercise and that this will involve a variety of tasks, for example:

- gathering photographic and/or video evidence
- completing a bi-polar semantic differential test (see website for details)
- using noise and air pollution data logger equipment
- gathering personal impressions of the localities
- producing impression maps of the localities
- interviewing or polling local residents.

Take students to the areas in turn to conduct their fieldwork.

Back in school, ask students what secondary sources of evidence they need. Where these are not readily available, task students with researching them through the internet and other sources.

Ask students to create a concept map explaining why the two houses differ in price. Large flip chart paper and coloured pens will be useful to help them classify or categorise information. Make sure they understand that evidence must be provided to back up their ideas.

Extending students' thinking

Ask students to produce a PowerPoint presentation using all resources available to them to explain why the two properties differ so much in price.

Review the presentations as a class and then discuss whether a solution is needed to address the property price differential. Is it a symptom of deeper social, economic and environmental inequalities? If so, how can these be overcome?

'The pupils have been encouraged to think in new ways about the built environment, to look at it through both their own and others' eyes and to realise that they have a stake in its future development'

Amanda Alderton, St Bede's Inter-Church School, Cambridge

Students as citizens

Developing a perspective about a complex issue requires both time and resources. These are often in short supply, so effective curriculum planning is essential. Geography's key concepts provide an excellent structure for such work. The concepts focused on here include: place; community; and sustainability. Teachers who make these concepts transparent to their students help them to develop geographical understanding transferable beyond the classroom.

Many planning and design professionals are eager to elicit the views of young citizens. Indeed, planning legislation requires the inclusion of young people's views. Geography teachers can use the subject to nurture young citizens' ability to participate actively in improving the design of their communities.

The following lesson idea is the plan for a follow-up lesson to some fieldwork that students at Ivy Bank Business and Community College carried out. They were asked to consider the three different regeneration options contained in their local Neighbourhood Action Plans (NAPs) for their area (Padiham) and to select one. (These are available on local government websites, to view Padiham's example, visit www.burnley.gov.uk/site/scripts and click on 'Padiham' in the 'Transports and streets' section of the site. To find one for your area, go to: www.direct.gov.uk/DI1/Directorries/LocalCouncils/fs/en.

A planning department representative considered their presentations as a part of the community consultation.

'I've learnt that if we all put our ideas together and discuss our choice, something good can happen and we can change it for the better'

'I understand the word 'option' more. It means that we have to make a choice'

Year 8 student, Ivy Bank Business and Technology College, Burnley

Lesson idea

Key question

How can choices for alternative futures be made?

Learning objectives

Students will:

- consider options and take decisions about the development of a local area
- identify the nature of interactions between places.

Learning outcomes

Students will have:

- used maps and plans to apply geographical ideas for problem solving
- reached decisions and justified them based on evidence from field study research
- evaluated the effects of change on different groups of people.

Resources

You will need:

- option maps (available from the local planning department)
- stands to mount the maps on
- clip boards for data collection
- worksheets for assessing options.



Righting wrongs: a strong sense of place is essential in choosing the best regeneration option



Out and about:
there is no substitute
for fieldwork in
developing an
understanding of place

Activities

Explain that 'options' are a series of choices. This can be clarified with reference to the curriculum choices, or options that students need to make in year nine. Students will then be able to apply this notion to either a planning option (making an informed choice from three different proposals) or their year nine curriculum choices.

Students visit the area covered by the Neighbourhood Action Plan and annotate an options map to illustrate the potential impact of the three different options or scenarios described in the plan.

Back in the classroom, they use this fieldwork evidence to express their point of view as to which option is the best. They work in groups to offer reasons for their preferred option and justify their ideas. They will have been able to ask geographical questions whilst in the area. Finally, they produce a leaflet explaining their preferred option for the area.

'I now understand about Padiham. I used to think that it was just a town full of vandalism graffiti and litter but now I've learnt that there are some nicer areas as well'

Year 8 student, Ivy Bank Business and Technology College, Burnley

Extending students' thinking

Ask the students to explain what the term 'public consultation' means. Have they been involved in such a consultation, or do they know anyone who has?

Ask students why they chose their option. As a class agree the final two options that are preferred.

Ask students to identify the different groups who might be affected by the proposals. What are their different needs? What advantages and disadvantages does each option have for the different groups?

Homework

Students interview a local resident about the planning proposals for their area. Have they heard of them? How do they think they will be affected? Do they approve of the plans or do they intend to object? What changes would they like to see?

Based on the interview, students prepare two questions that they would like to put to a local planner about the option selected. If possible, invite the planner to come to the class to answer the questions (it may help if he or she has sight of some of the questions in advance).

Sustainable communities

Planning professionals sometimes complain that it is no longer viable to represent plans and designs on maps because people don't know how to read them. And yet maps and plans remain an essential tool for understanding place and community.

Many of the *Where will I live?* teachers found that maps were a natural part of their explorations and that student responses tended to be more 'geographical' when doing map work than when they were using other resources. It is not surprising that students tended to use more sophisticated geographical language when using maps.

Through the regular use of maps students also developed familiarity with the relative locations of places and features. Many of the teachers encouraged their students to create maps to illustrate potential developments within the built environment.

Cartographic skills improve with practice. Asking students to create their own maps to represent their understanding of a place helps them to become more thoughtful about how to interpret the maps and plans of other people.

What follows is an example of how teachers at Comberton Village College in Cambridgeshire, used maps to develop students' ability to make reasoned judgements.

'The project has helped me to reflect on how I could incorporate topical local and national issues into my teaching. This has been really valuable, especially as a teacher of citizenship and geography'

Claire Willis, Habbergham High School, Burnley

Lesson idea

Key question

How can settlements be built and managed so that they can be sustainable?

Learning objectives

Students will:

- know the features of a settlement that contribute to its sustainability
- identify the different factors which make a settlement sustainable.

Learning outcomes

Students will have:

- annotated a map to understand patterns and distributions of human habitation
- ranked features of a settlement based on their degree of sustainability.

Resources

You will need:

- A1 sized sugar paper
- blank cards – postcard sized for the 'continuum' activity.



Bike rack Cambridge © Jason Orton

Behind the bike sheds: sustainability is about more than just solar panels and wind turbines – it is a part of every aspect of a well-designed place

Conclusion

Where will I live? and curriculum development

As we enter a period of curriculum change combined with a renewed emphasis on geography, the challenges for teachers are clear. The ability to work together and respond creatively, developing 'local solutions' rather than depending overmuch on text books and published materials, can transform a time of turbulence into one of opportunity.

The *Where will I live?* emphasis on place, students' thinking and conceptual learning will be increasingly important to all, as new geography curricula and specifications are developed. Concepts, such as place, space, interdependence, sustainability, community, environment, are essential in helping students make sense of and participate in a complex interconnected world.

Developing your students' understanding of such concepts requires creative thinking about both the resources that you use and the strategies you employ. The *Where will I live?* project has provided excellent examples of teachers doing precisely this. Teachers found that their students were better informed and more aware of the complexities of housing design, the housing market and the significance of location by the end of their projects.

Clearly, a publication such as this one can only replicate a small part of the excitement and creative process of a development project such as *Where will I live?*, but on the website there are suggestions as to how each scheme could be adapted by you for your school and students.

Other useful resources

www.cabe.org.uk

www.geography.org.uk

www.geography.org.uk/projects/wherewillilive

www.rtpi.org.uk/resources/schools/

www.statistics.gov.uk

www.direct.gov.uk/DI1/Directories/LocalCouncils/fs/en

www.teachers.tv

'Head up, grey cells working, renewed hope for the subject'

Susan Proctor, Edge End High School, Nelson

'More useful and inspiring than any other course previously experienced'

Rob Richmond, Sawston Village College, Sawston

'I have enjoyed discussing housing issues not only with other teachers, but also with planners, designers, architects and CABE'

Katharine Hutchinson, Chesterton Community College, Cambridge

Published in 2006 by the Commission for
Architecture and the Built Environment

Written by Diane Swift

Graphic design by Mascot
www.mascot-creative.co.uk

Cover image © Alys Tomlinson

Printed in the UK by Arkle Print on Starfine
environmentally friendly paper.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication
may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system,
copied or transmitted without the prior written
consent of the publisher except that the material
may be photocopied for non-commercial purposes
without permission from the publisher. This
document is available in alternative formats on
request from the publisher.

CABE is the government's advisor on architecture,
urban design and public space. As a public body,
we encourage policy makers to create places that
work for people. We help local planners apply
national design policy and offer expert advice to
developers and architects. We show public sector
clients how to commission buildings that meet the
needs of their users. And we seek to inspire the
public to demand more from their buildings and
spaces. Advising, influencing and inspiring, we
work to create well-designed, welcoming places.

CABE 1 Kemble Street London WC2B 4AN
T 020 7070 6700 F 020 7070 6777
E enquiries@cabe.org.uk www.cabe.org.uk

This guide reports lessons learned from when CABE and the Geographical Association brought together 25 geography and citizenship teachers from two regions to explore the question: where will I live? The innovative and creative lesson ideas help students to consider the forces that make their built environment the way it is, and what can be done to make it better.

1 Kemble Street
London WC2B 4AN
T 020 7070 6700
F 020 7070 6777
E enquiries@cabe.org.uk
www.cabe.org.uk

Commission for Architecture
and the Built Environment

The government's advisor
on architecture, urban design
and public space

