

100
people
engaged

4
community
events

Social infrastructure and the process of mapping

The value of mapping local assets is primarily in the process. In asking questions about where different assets are located within a neighbourhood we have an opportunity to think differently about our neighbourhoods and to learn from others with deep local knowledge.

Mapping assets collaboratively across organisations can reveal knowledge and insights that may be hidden. It can be useful in pooling knowledge between individuals or partners who do not regularly work together, for sparking ideas and fresh thinking about how to develop local assets and to cut across the silos and structures that can inhibit innovative thinking.

What do we mean by assets? We include all the supports that residents use to meet their needs, to socialise, to take part in decision making, to have influence. This could include formal assets like libraries or community centres or informal groups or online networks.

Knowledge Quarter

The Knowledge Quarter maps are focused around the areas of Nechells, Newtown, Aston, Digbeth and Eastside, as well as the neighbouring areas. The first map demonstrates the density of social assets focused around Newtown and Nechells. Within the surrounding area there are more than 750 local employers which demonstrates the industrial and business nature of the area. The map shows major employers situated around the key transport corridors.

Nechells, Newtown and Digbeth emerge as the key clusters of social assets. Digbeth with focus on arts, culture and retail; Nechells and Newtown with a much stronger community and education focus. Nechells also hosts some key health facilities, serving the wider community. The map shows that there are few social assets enabling residents to have voice and influence. Green and blue infrastructure is identified as underused, the canals, river Rea and parks are disjointed and underutilised.

The second map shows the experiential and spatial definition of the area. It demonstrates how historic infrastructure (railways, major road arteries, canals and viaducts), as well as modern interventions (Birmingham Clear Air Zone, Hs2) dissect and sever historic communities. The radial and city centre focused developments create difficulties for local residents in terms of safety, transport accessibility and air quality.

The two major universities in the area - Aston and Birmingham City - are defined as separate entities, largely detached from each other and the communities they serve by major infrastructure.

