

Britainthinks

— Insight & Strategy —

Session 3 at the ADEPT Autumn Conference Panel Discussion: Is it a phony war in the race for road space?

18th November 2021



BritainThinks is an insight and strategy consultancy

Insight

Shedding new light on the experiences, views, feelings and behaviours of your key audiences.

Strategy

Insight-driven strategic counsel to guide your decisions.

Communication

Pinpoint the messaging, tone of voice, words, images and spokespeople to deliver the greatest impact.

Engagement

Bring your key audiences with you. Build stronger relationships with colleagues, stakeholders, clients and customers.

We work across the public, private and third sectors



I am a Research Director with a passion for place-based research



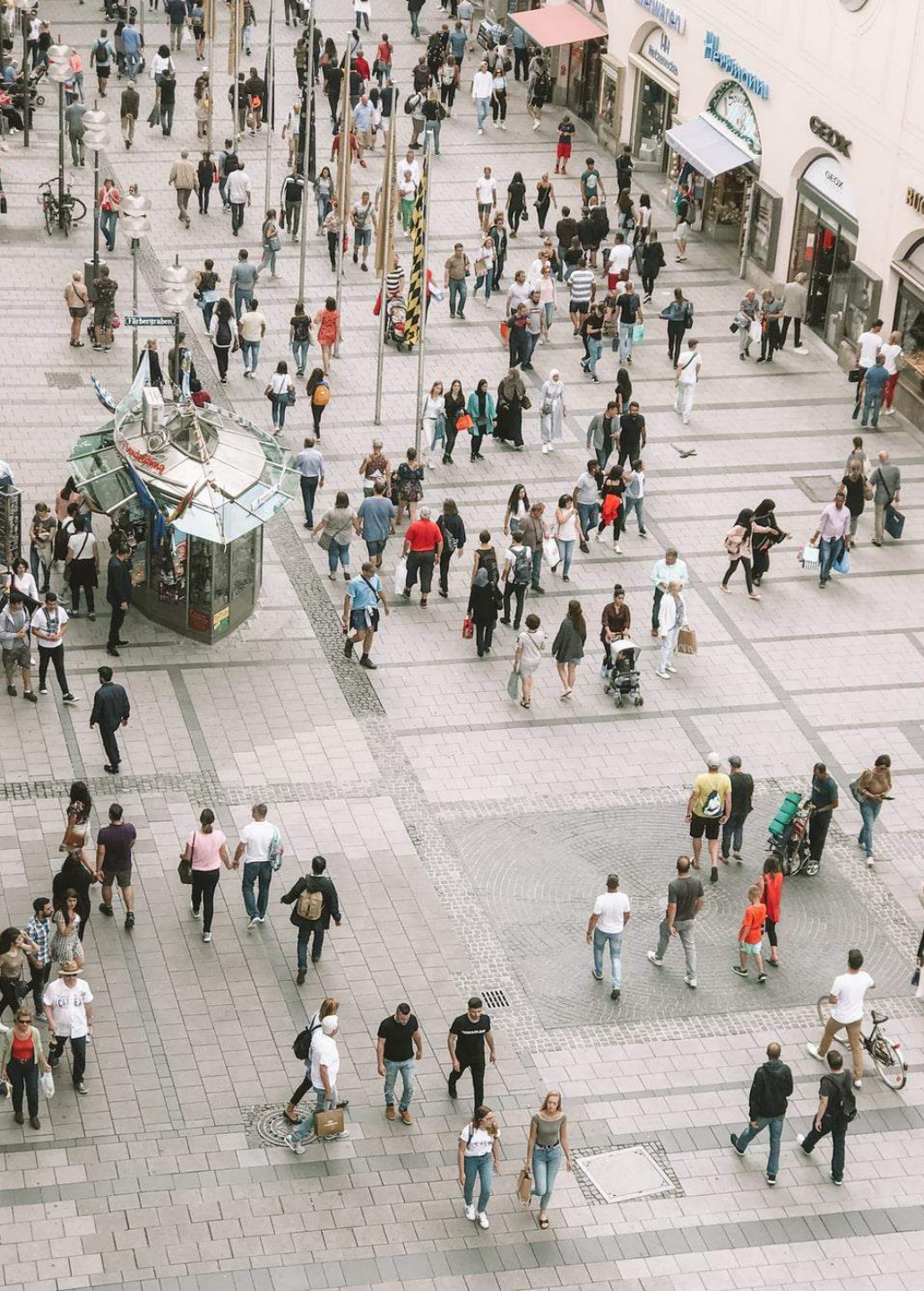
Lucy Bush, Research Director, BritainThinks

Deliberative, ethnographic and community engagement specialist.

Have worked with Warwickshire County Council, Essex County Council, Enfield Council, WMCA and City of Wolverhampton Council.



The debate on road space is often emotionally charged, dominated by loud angry voices, and damaging to relationships between communities and local authorities.



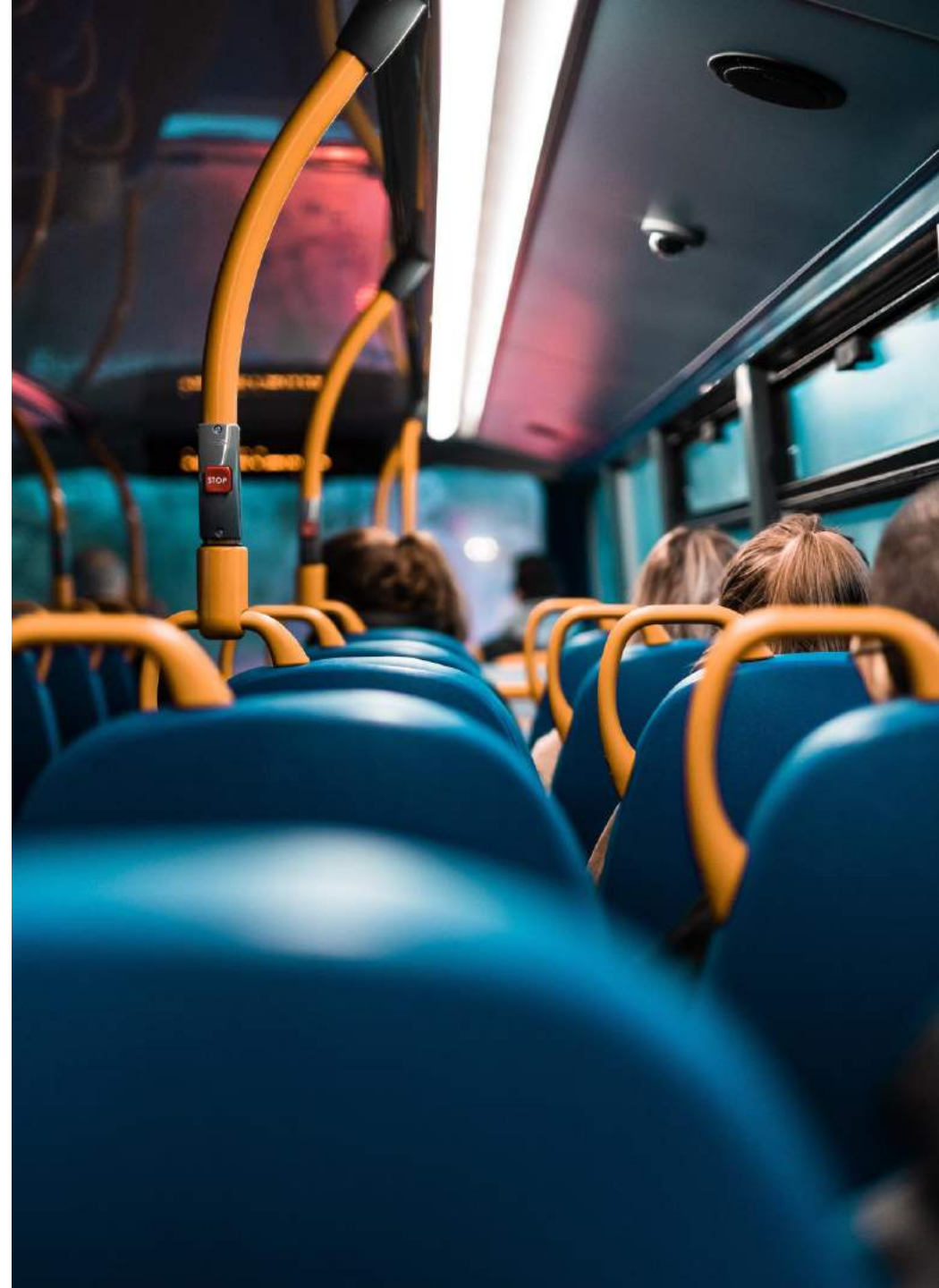
But listening to the quieter voices gets a different result



- Typically, it's residents with an 'axe to grind' who are motivated to share their views.
 - Traditional consultation approaches often represent a highly-engaged minority.
- There can be a tendency to give more weight to the loudest and angriest voices in the debate.
- But people who are not engaged are still important members of the community.
 - They either need support to get their views across.
 - Or proactive engagement to get them thinking about the issue.

Giving people time, space and information helps too

- The issues in the debate about road space are complex and involve trade-offs.
 - It's not just about the knee-jerk response.
 - Nor is it 'all about me' – it's about living in a society with others.
- In deliberative consultation approaches, a 'citizen mindset' is generated.
 - You start by understanding experiences and background views.
 - Then provide impartial evidence and opinions from different sides of the debate.
 - And mix people up so they hear from different perspectives.
- Allowing people to deliberate is a way to understand what really matters and to work through some of the trade-offs.





If you create the right space, constructive conversations can happen



- You just need to...
 - Recruit a group of people who are:
 - Representative of the local population.
 - Not activists or people with an existing relationship with the local authority.
 - Ensure your engagement is accessible to people with different communication needs.
 - Be clear what's on the table.
 - Expose people to information they might not have seen before (allow an 'insider' view), as well as different opinions and alternate perspectives.
 - Allow participants to listen to and respond to each other.

And you learn there's more openness to change than you might expect

- Reliance on cars and problems associated with car travel are common causes of concern.
- People are worried about climate change and have a broad understanding that car usage contributes to that.
- Many expressly want a transport system that is greener and cleaner.
 - The Warwickshire Citizens Panel voted to 'put the environment at the heart of all decisions' relating to the Local Transport Plan 4.

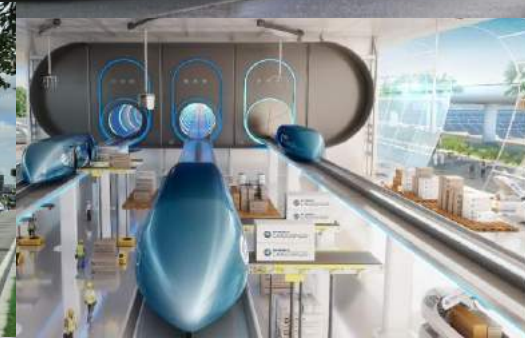
How do you feel about travel and transport in Warwickshire currently?



Pre-pandemic, most urban areas in the UK registered illegal levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) pollution, and the nation's overall levels exceeded World Health Organisation limits



What would you like travel and transport to look like in 10 years' time?





You also learn why people hold the views they do



- The overriding importance of convenience in driving transport choices.
- The influence of social norming and not wanting to be the one to 'make sacrifices' if no one else is.
- Recognising that 'tackling climate change' is too big and too intangible to motivate most people.
 - But that local environmental benefits, or health benefits are more appealing.
- Or that a lot of negative responses to change are a fear response, e.g. being scared to get on a bike or scared that you're going to be priced out of easy travel.



A deliberative consultation approach does not eliminate confrontation.

It creates the space for constructive conversation and opens up opportunities where there would otherwise be dead-ends.

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Thank you

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