Consultation Summary

Student workshop on
the topic of School Streets at
Sacred Heart Primary School

Contents

1   Summary

As part of the public engagement in relation to a proposed School Street at Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, a workshop was held with students of the school. The purpose of the workshop was to inform of the proposed changes, explore children's current thoughts on streets and traffic in the vicinity, and to develop design ideas for improvements to the proposed widened pavement adjacent to the main school entrance on Georges Road.

The workshop was held on 17 January 2023 with the School Council, a representative group of pupils from all year groups. The School Council then presented their work to Years 4, 5 and 6 in a school assembly on 26 January 2023, following which attendees completed a short survey. Both events were facilitated by external consultant Mark Lemanski.

The workshop yielded a 'snapshot' of participants' views on streets in the vicinity of the school and beyond, through a mapping exercise in which students marked their school journeys according to positive and negative characteristics such as safety, noise, and opportunities for socialising.
The responses show three clusters of positive characteristics; at the school, at a nearby park and at a pedestrianised shortcut. Negative characteristics were placed along nearby roads.

This was followed by a collaborative design exercise, which started off with observations of parents and students at pick up time; students then tried out possible improvements to the pavement with chalk markings and furniture. They proceeded to capture and develop these ideas for an alternative, child-friendly environment around the Georges Road school entrance through model building, producing three different design options.
Designs propose interesting spatial arrangements and comprise design elements such as planting, fairy lights, secret entrances into the school, mirrors, and a water basin. The models were subsequently translated into architectural drawings to demonstrate that many of the proposed ideas could be feasible public realm improvements.

The surveys handed out at the end of the assembly asked how students travel to school, which improvements could be made to their school journey, and what they like and dislike about it. A representative sample of 67 responses (14% of the school's 495 pupils) was received.
72% of respondents travel to school by Active Travel. 40% of respondents could think of ways to make their school journey safer.
36% of respondents thought that adding planting and green spaces

would improve their school journey, 15% proposed wider/less crowded pavements, 13% to reduce the number or speed of cars.
The most frequently mentioned most favourite part of respondents' school journeys is to walk and talk with friends and family (13%).
The most frequently mentioned least favourite part of respondents' school journeys are traffic and roads (12%)

2 Workshop

2.1 Participants

The workshop was held with members of the School Council, a small group of students from different year groups, who were able to discuss topics related to the School Street initiative with enthusiasm. The workshop exercises were designed to be suitable for the group's relatively wide age range.

Working with a smaller group of children allowed a more interactive discussion than would have been possible with a bigger group. Workshop experience and findings were then disseminated informally by individuals to their classes, and formally in a school assembly and through a summary in the school newsletter.

2.2 Workshop Structure

The workshop aimed to provide some background knowledge of how the rise in motorised traffic has changed our cities, how this has affected children particularly, and how Islington's School Street initiative aims to reduce road danger and improve public realm qualities. Students then discussed the specific environment of their school through a mapping exercise in which they reflected on the qualities of their individual school journeys. This was followed by observations of adults and children at pick up time, an in situ enactment of possible improvements to the pavement outside the school entrance in response to these observations, and a model building exercise capturing the emerging child-friendly public realm design ideas.

2.3 Step One: Streets have changed

By comparing historic and current images of two key London locations, students were able to debate how the rise of motorised traffic has changed roads; they observed that the historic images show a softer distinction between pavements and carriageways, that vehicles were horse-drawn rather than motorised, and appear to be moving more slowly than contemporary cars, and that pedestrians were often seen sharing the carriageway with other modes of transport.

Figure 1: Comparison of historic and contemporary streets, see Appendix I

2.4　Step Two: How has this affected children?

Students discussed how the ways children are shown to behave in the public realm in historic photos differ from their own experience of growing up in a city. They noted how children in the photos seem to be less fearful than today's children, even though they are taking seemingly greater risks, for example by swinging from lamp posts. Students suggested that as children have become used to being alert to traffic, their sense of risk might have shifted.

Figure 2: Historic examples of playing children, see Appendix I

2.5　Step Three: How is this affecting you today?

Following the conversations on how streets have changed over the last century, students reflected on their own individual everyday experience of streets, by marking their school journey on a map of the area. Along this route they then annotated positive and negative characteristics with post it notes, including places which they like or dislike, and why, where they feel safe or unsafe, where they meet friends, etc.

Figure 3: Annotating school journeys

The responses of individual children were collated into one drawing, see next page. For examples of individual observations see Appendix II.

Annotations of positive characteristics could generally be grouped in three clusters: at the school, at Paradise Park, and at the pedestrian passage north of the school. They are often related to social interactions with adults and friends, and on a couple of occasions to the reassuring presence of people even though they are strangers.

2 Mark a spot on your journey that you like best with a sticker, and explain why.
Do the same for the spot that you like least.

Figure 4: Examples of prompts

Annotations of negative characteristics are generally located along streets, especially Holloway Road, with traffic-related noise, dirt and road danger frequently mentioned. Fear of getting run over and of crossing roads are repeatedly mentioned.
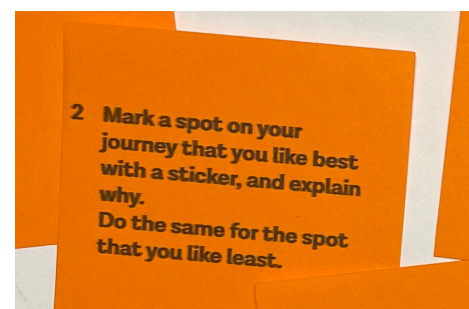
Don't like. Dirty traffic.

this might be a busy place because it has a lot of cars and lorries. This could be unsafe because someone could get hit.

i don't like Holloway Road because I feel like I get run over

I don't like Holloway Road because there are no crossings

safe

busy traffic

this is where i meet friends who go to tennis

safe

traffic. there are two places where cars come

I don't like the road because i might get run over

don't like it because there is lots of cars

I stop and look at his place

it's busy and fast

good place. It's open and there are plants and benches

I nearly got run over. No crossings.

bad traffic

traffic is a problem because there are lots of cars

I don't like this road because i might get run over. And there is no crossing, cars come from the corner at any time.

I like the bakery because i can get nice baked goods

There is a lot of pollution because there is a lot of people who go school in car.

I feel safe in school because there is a lot of people

It is too busy

I dislike it because it has lot of cars that create pollution

I feel safe in school because there are teachers.

safe here

make friends in school

i don't like this place because it is shared weirdly, it is just one colour

I take the car and sometimes i take the bus

lots of petrol

there are a lot of people

busy traffic

I feel safe because lots of people are there to protect us.

pick me up by car

it has lots of cars

there are no cars

I like this place because it is filled with greenery

I like going through the park because it is a wide space

I like this place because I like to play and it's a park

I feel safe her because it is a park

I don't feel safe because cars go zooming past no lets get past.

I like it because there is lots of space to play. I make friends here. I play football.

busy. like it.

i feel safe in Paradise Park and no one will hurt me

paradise park because there are loads of children and you can be friends

I play football

I like it because it is big so you could run around and play!

lots of traffic

traffic

you can go play and meet friends

I feel safe at a a park because there are no cars and you can play and be safe.

I don't like it because there are a lot of cars so there is a lot of pollution

⬤ Sacred Heart Primary School
— school journeys of workshop participants
🟥 positive environmental characteristics
🟩 negative environmental characteristics
🟦 neutral environmental characteristics

Figure 5: Collated overview of school journey annotations

2.6 Step Four: Design a child-friendly street...

Activity Detective

Following the mapping exercise, students observed adults and children leaving the school at pick up time and noted their observations on prepared cards. They paid special attention to activities and interactions, where these

Figure 6: Activity Detectives

were taking place, and the difference in activities in the school grounds and on the street. They thought about how changes to spaces could affect the activities taking place within them, and whether activities could be affected by seasonal changes.

Enactments

Following their findings as Activity Detectives, students started mocking up ideas for how the activities they had just observed could be supported through design changes, and which other activities could be supported through new designs. They used chalk markings as well as school furniture. Figure 7 for example shows a new seating arrangement embedded in planting, with flowers separating the carriageway.

Figure 7: Enactments

Model building

These first ideas were captured in three scale models and further developed. Three simple base models of the main school entrance area placed on a simple plan of Georges Road served as a 'canvas' and gave a sense of scale together with small figurines of people and cars.

Figure 8: Model building

3 Designs

3.1 Overview

Three scale models were produced by small groups of students, capturing earlier observations and conversations, and proposing visions for a widened pedestrian area outside the main school entrance. The designs combine pragmatic problem solving with colourful intuitional fantacising, comprising play, natural materiality, and a wide range of amenity provision. These models were translated into isometric scale drawings to both test and demonstrate their feasibility.
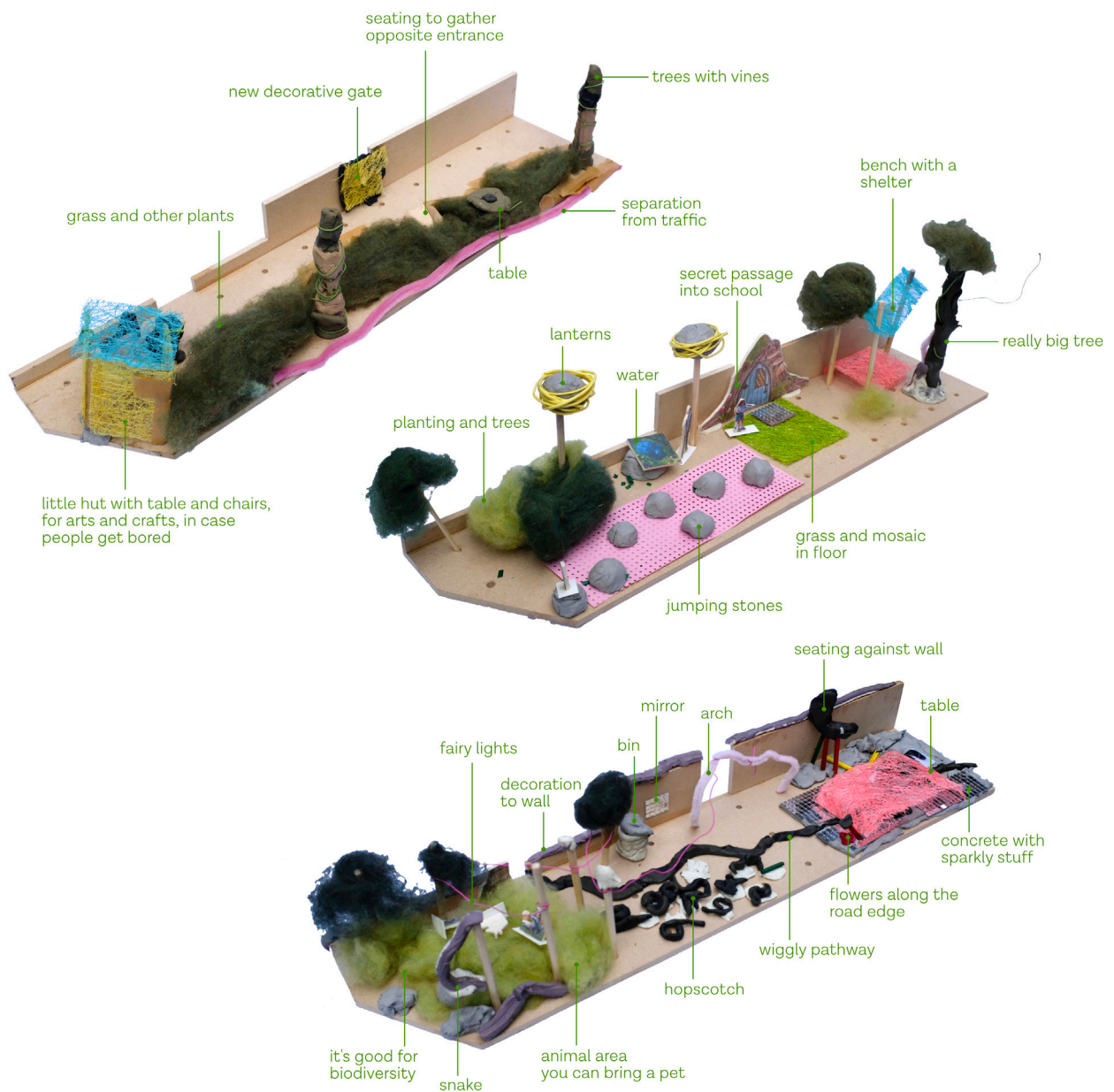

Figure 9: Annotated models of proposed designs

3.2 Existing
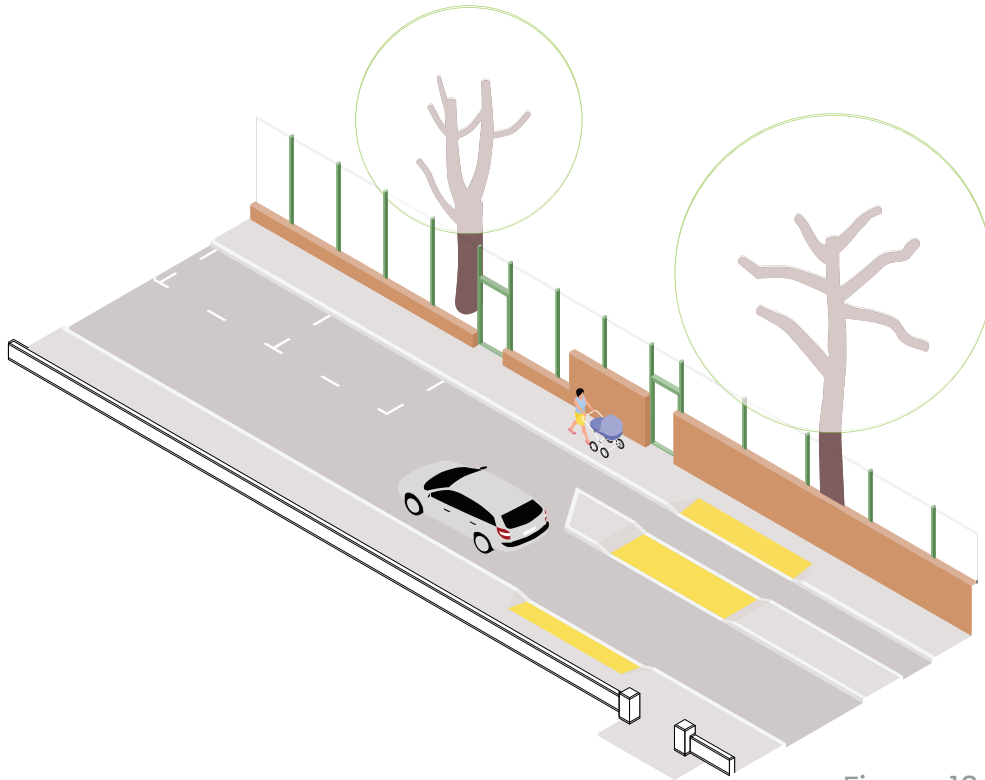
Figure 10: Isometric of Georges Road school entrance as existing

3.3 Group A

Figure 11: Isometric of proposed school entrance

3.4 Group B

Figure 12: Isometric of proposed school entrance

3.5 Group C

Figure 13: Isometric of proposed school entrance

3.6 Combined Design

Whilst some models might seem jumbled or impractical at first sight, close looking reveals a considered and wide selection of ideas that could be realistically implemented in a child-friendly public realm design.

Whilst a few elements such as a crafting shed and roofs would probably challenge current safety concerns (as would snakes), most other elements, such as a secret entranceway, fairy lights, or a table, could easily be implemented.

The designs also propose interesting spatial arrangements, for example the meandering path structuring amenity and planting provision zones. Some of these ideas have been captured in the below sketch.

Figure 14: Sketch of collated proposals

4 Assembly & Student survey

4.1 Assembly

The School Council members held an 25min assembly for Year Groups 4, 5 and 6, during which they summarised the workshop purpose and outcomes, with each student presenting one or two slides, before taking questions from the school community. The Q&A session had to be cut short as students had too many questions to answer within the available time. Students of the School Council presented

Figure 15: Presenting to the school assembly

often difficult subject matter in accessible and engaging language.

4.2 Questionnaire

Following the assembly, students in the audience were given a simple questionnaire to complete (see figure 21). The first question 'How do you travel?' offered multiple choice replies, with multiple answers possible. The second, third and fourth questions were on road danger and ideas for improvements, and offered open text boxes, responses to which have been grouped where possible. See Appendix IV for full results.

4.3 Outcome

67 completed questionnaires were received.

Question 1: How do you travel to school?

walk	70%	(47 respondents)
cycle	3%	(2)
scoot	1%	(1)
public transport	24%	(16)
car	25%	(17)
other	7%	(5)

70% of respondents walk to school at least sometimes or for part of the way. 48% walk exclusively.
25% are driven by car at least sometimes or part of the way.
Only 2 respondents cycle to school sometimes, which seems low, but aligns with the national average of 3% of children cycling to school (DfT Walking and Cycling statistics, England: 2021)

Question 2: Are there things that could be done to help you feel safer on your school journey?

40% of respondents could think of ways to make their school journey safer.
6% each think that wider pavements or car-free zones would help, 3% each think that reduced car speeds or better crossings would help.

Question 3: Which changes would you make to the streets around the school to help make your school journey better?

36% of respondents thought that adding planting and green spaces would improve their journey, 15% proposed wider/less crowded pavements, 13% to reduce the number or speed of cars, 9% a calmer environment, 7% additional seating, 4% reduced pollution and better maintenance, 3% each signage, better crossings, or more colour.

Question 4: Describe your favourite, and your least favourite point of your school journey, and why you feel about them the way you do:

13% of respondents' favourite part of the school journey is to walk and talk with friends and family, for 6% it is to walk past or through a park, for 4% it's the road in front of the school, and 3% each like that it's short and that they get fresh air.

12% of respondents state that their least favourite part are traffic and roads, for 7% it is crossing of roads, also for 7% it is waking up, for 4% each it is cars not stopping for them, bikes going through red lights, leaving home and dog fouling. For 3 % each it is seemingly troubled people, sitting next to strangers on the bus, or that their school journey is long.

Figure 16: Questionnaire excerpts

5   Conclusions

Whilst most survey respondents travel to school on foot for at least part of the way, they seem detrimentally affected by cars on their school journey, with many thinking that their school journey could be improved in terms of road danger reduction or traffic-related pollution. Fear of being run over in general and crossing of roads especially is repeatedly cited as a negative public realm characteristic that is making children feel unsafe.

Additional planting, wider pavements, and reduced vehicle numbers and vehicle speeds are the improvements most often proposed by survey respondents. Socialising and walking with friends and family are the most frequently named favourite aspects of school journeys, with traffic the most frequently named least favourite aspect.

The school journey mapping element of the workshop showed clear allocations of negative and positive characteristics. Positive clusters are located at the school, at Paradise Park, and at the pedestrianised passage north of the school. Several children also mentioned their homes, which have not been annotated on the summary drawing. Roads and especially Holloway Road are frequently characterised negatively, particularly because of traffic-related noise, pollution and road danger.

A fitting analogy might be of islands of safety within a sea of danger: children feel safe in destinations such as their homes, their school, or the local park, with the in-between routes described as unsafe (with the exception of the pedestrianised shortcut).

Results reiterate that students' perception of the public realm is dominated and negatively affected by motorised traffic.

The design exercise was propositional and creative, allowing participants to explore characteristics of an imagined, child-friendly public realm, rather than focusing on the detrimental limitations of the status quo. The proposed designs correspond to the priorities expressed by children in questionnaires, they make space for planting and wildlife, socialising and play, and fantastic and imaginary elements within an expanded, generous and safe pedestrian zone.

Appendix I: Historic comparison

1890

today

1905

today

Figure 17: Comparison of streets in central
London, 100 years apart

Figure 18: Collection of historic images of
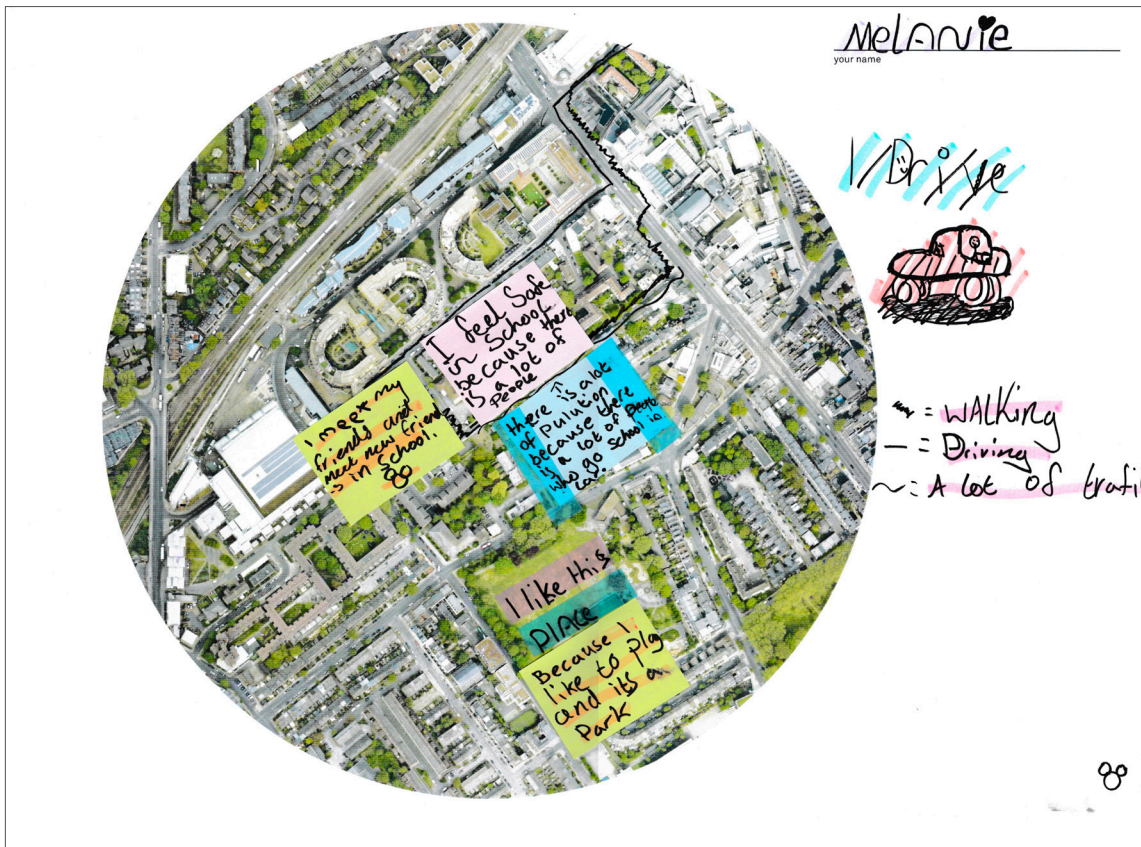children playing in the street

Appendix II: Mapping Examples

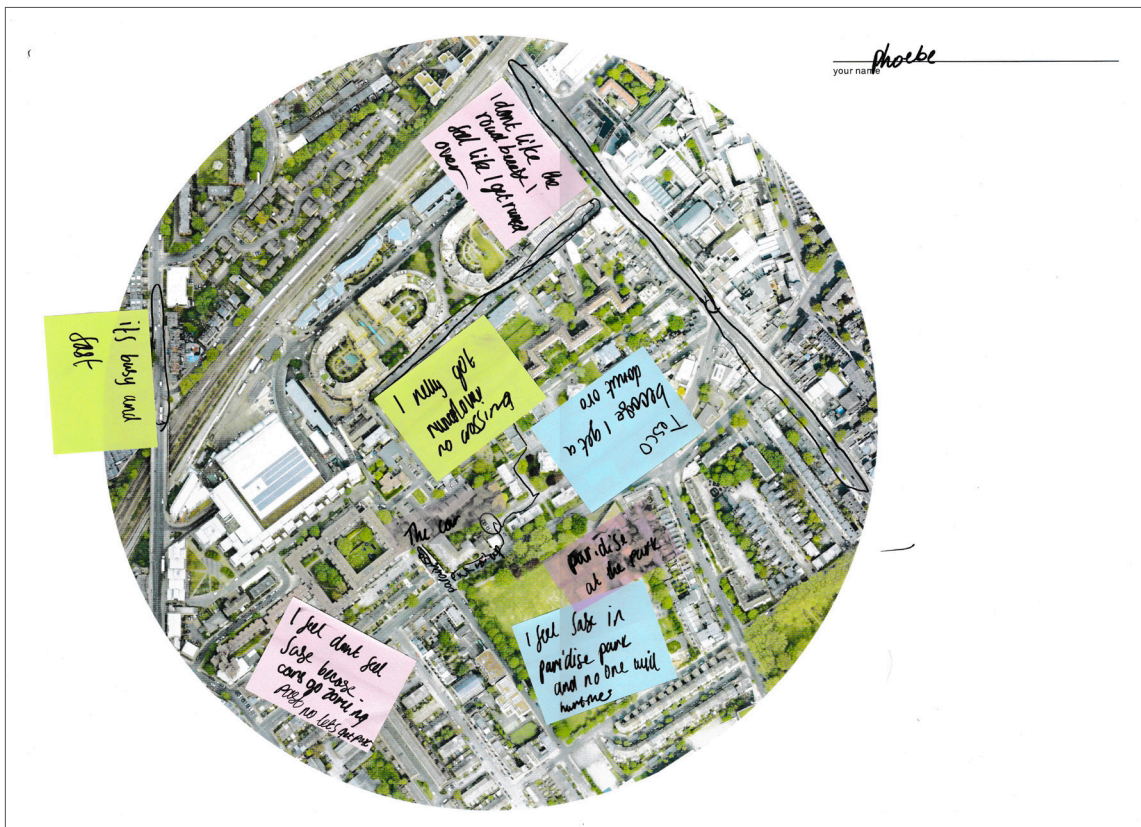
Figure 19: Example of annotated school journey

Figure 20: Example of annotated school journey

Appendix III: Questionnaire example

_____ Marley _____   St Maximillian
your name   your class

1 How do you travel to school?

☐ walk   ☑ public transport such as bus or train
☐ cycle   ☑ car   _and_
☐ scoot   ☐ other

2 Are there things that could be done to help you feel safer on your school journey?

☐ no
☑ yes. If so, what are they?

I think a bigger pavement so ~~Me and~~ me, my brother and dad can walk with out getting pushed by other people esspecilly since the other side is on construction blocking the pavement.

3 Which changes would you make to the streets around the school to help make your school journey better (for example calmer, greener, more pleasant, or more sociable)?

More green areas, More clean areas, more bigger areas and more colourful areas.

4 Describe your favourite, and your least favourite point of your school journey, and why you feel about them the way you do:

I don't have a favourite - I live far away and my least favourit is wakeing up and leaving the house and I also don't like the tube

Figure 21: Example of completed questionnaire

Appendix IV: Questionnaire responses

		counting mulitple replies		not counting multiple repli	
	Questionnaires completed	67			
1					
	Walk	47	70%	32	48%
	Cycle	2	3%	0	0%
	Scoot	1	1%	0	0%
	Public Transport	16	24%	6	9%
	Car	17	25%	10	15%
	Other	5	7%	2	3%
	Mix Active Travel			10	15%
	Mix incl car			7	10%
2	No	39	58%		
	Yes	27	40%		
	Wider Pavement	4	6%		
	No cars/road closures/School Streets	4	6%		
	reduce car speed/make it calmer (Caledonian Road Station Underground	2	3%		
	better crossings	2	3%		
	more space on bus	2	3%		
	better lighting to dark areas	1	1%		
	cyclists to be more considerate	1	1%		
	open up road closures	1	1%		
	pepper spray	1	1%		
	would rather walk than take car	1	1%		
	going by car	1	1%		
	walking with my mum	1	1%		
	more greenery	1	1%		
	could be cleaner	1	1%		
	electric cars/less pollution	1	1%		
3	More planting/pocket park (with café)/gree/flowers/nature/wildlife	24	36%		
	wider/less crowded pavement	10	15%		
	reduce car speed/fewer cars	9	13%		
	calmer	6	9%		
	more seating (with table) to relax	5	7%		
	reduce pollution (fairness).less petrol	3	4%		
	better maintenance (fixing, cleaning)	3	4%		
	signage	2	3%		
	better crossings	2	3%		
	more colour	2	3%		
	announce road closures before implementation,	1	1%		
	more sociable	1	1%		
	water fountain	1	1%		
	playable things	1	1%		
	things to do for older children	1	1%		
	street corners are dangerous because of visibility/cant see cars coming	1	1%		
	telling everyone to stay on pavement	1	1%		
4	meeting with,walking and talking with friends or parents (on pavement i	9	13%		
	passing by/through park (watching dogs)	4	6%		
	the school road	3	4%		
	that it is short	2	3%		
	fresh air	2	3%		
	it's quick in a car	1	1%		
	dropping off my brother	1	1%		
	going on the bus	1	1%		
	buying bubble tea after school	1	1%		
	when there is no cars	1	1%		
	seeing the sky	1	1%		
	empty bus	1	1%		
	observing animals	1	1%		
	just walking, it's calm	1	1%		
	when the bus goes fast	1	1%		
	traffic/roads	8	12%		
	crossing roads	5	7%		
	walking/waking up	5	7%		
	cars not stopping for me/paying attention	3	4%		
	bikes going through red lights	3	4%		
	leaving home	3	4%		
	dog poo	3	4%		
	crazy' people (the homeless man near Tesco scares me)	2	3%		
	sitting next to people I don't know on the bus	2	3%		
	long way	2	3%		
	worry that children will get hurt by cars	1	1%		
	pavements too busy	1	1%		
	dark areas	1	1%		
	my jouney in a car causes pollution	1	1%		
	slow bus/being late	1	1%		
	walking alone	1	1%		

Figure 22: Table of survey results