Spaceshaper balances the disparate views on how a space could be improved

Located in the centre of High Wycombe, Frogmoor is a public space dating from the 18th century. Last redesigned in 2001, when it was cleared of large trees and a road along one side pedestrianised, Frogmoor is surrounded by a mix of shops, cafés and restaurants but was felt not to be fulfilling its potential.

Workshops aims
Spaceshaper was chosen as part of the initial consultation process for redesigning Frogmoor. The findings were planned to contribute to a design competition for the site.

Who took part and what happened?
Due to the large number of stakeholders, two workshops were held, involving participation from 33 people, encompassing local businesses, bus operators, the police, students and councillors. Each workshop included a visit to the site, completion of questionnaires and discussion of the results.

“"The site visits were good opportunities to look at the space in a different way, with the Spaceshaper questions in the participants' minds”

What were the results?
The workshops both highlighted the importance of Frogmoor as a public space within the town centre and widespread dissatisfaction with its present character. Despite a regime of regular cleaning, the space was perceived as dirty with litter problems. Participants expressed strong support for further pedestrianisation and additional traffic controls.

Despite ambitions of the 2001 redesign to create a café culture in the park, participants generally felt the space wasn’t a place to linger in. Other issues raised included anti-social behaviour, particularly late at night. Remedies discussed included enhanced policing and licensing restrictions.

Spaceshaper's facilitated approach was particularly well-suited for this project. “Our facilitator was very good at managing different opinions,” says Catherine Silva Donayre, development manager at Wycombe District Council. “There were quite a few differences, and it was important to make sure everyone got a chance to speak.”

What happened next?
Partly as a result of the Spaceshaper workshops, the redevelopment project was not taken forward. “Spaceshaper got people thinking about all the issues affecting the space,” Catherine explains. It showed that tackling Frogmoor in isolation, without addressing wider issues within the town, was not a suitable way forward. “We realised that all the problems couldn’t be solved at this point.”