

***Grove Airfield
Consultation Process 2006***

***SCHOOL WORKSHOP
24th April 2006
Civic Hall, Wantage
FULL REPORT***

***Jeff Bishop and Rowena Harris
BDOR Limited***

INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this workshop was to provide a group of local young people with an intense, in-depth opportunity to contribute their ideas for the planning and design of the new development on the Grove Airfield site. It was also planned to interest those young people in the project in the hope that they would continue to contribute to the current round, and later rounds, of consultation (and maybe prompt interest with friends, parents etc.). Behind these aims it was also the intention to provide an enjoyable and stimulating learning experience about planning, design and decision-making.

The group of students (38 in total) all came from King Alfred's School. They were from Year 10 – 31, mainly but not solely from geography groups, and from year 12 – 7, from an art and design group. They formed themselves into task groups of 3/4/5 as they arrived.

The main task for the day for each group was to produce a plan or design, often in three dimensions, for all or part of the development. There were four specific tasks, one per group:

- *A plan of the whole development*
- *A plan of the 'Community Park' area (and perhaps a model of a 'pavilion')*
- *A model of a housing area (two different sites were used)*
- *A model of the proposed district Centre.*

The workshop was held in the Civic Hall in Wantage and covered a very full day (with refreshments provided). In summary the programme was as follows:

- *Arrive, form groups and Introduction to the day*
- *First round group planning/design work*
- *Help and support from project team professionals and others*
- *Finalisation of designs*
- *Evaluation of designs*
- *Final discussion, key messages to the team and evaluation*

Elements of the above are explained more fully in the relevant part of this report.

The day was arranged for the consultation team by Dagmar Hutt – many thanks to her for all her efforts both in the preparation and on the day itself. Help was also provided, on a voluntary basis, by Councillor Joyce Hutchinson (for the Vale of White Horse District Council), Grant Audley-Miller (planning officer with the Vale), Nicky Green (a planner with Kemp and Kemp and the developer's team) and Rowena Harris (also with BDOR Limited). The substance of the day was prepared and managed by Jeff Bishop.

The main purpose of this report is to draw out the core consultation results. As will be seen, these are all written – they do not include or fully capture the actual designs themselves. All the designs have been kept and photographs of some of them, and the day's activity, are included here. This is a slight pity because the intensity of the student's engagement, the commitment put in and the genuine interest in the actual designs were clearly an important part of their experience. Their involvement was quite remarkable and all involved are immensely grateful for that. We hope it knocks on to greater interest and future involvement.

All text in italics (as here) is explanation and commentary. All material in plain text is exactly as recorded on the day.



SETTING THE BRIEFS

Once the overall project and its components had been explained to the group as a whole, each task group was asked to produce a 'brief' for a project other than their own. (So, if a group's main task was to design the new Centre, they might produce a brief for a housing development.). Although the instruction focused on the sort of 'qualities' sought from a project (safety, lively, colourful, interesting etc.) some groups chose, quite reasonably, to also add ideas about the content of the project. The briefs produced (and who did them) follow below.

Brief for Group 3: HOUSING (done by Group 1)

- Family houses (3-4 bed)
- Flats/apartments
- 1-2 bedroom houses
- Eco-housing
- Disabled facilities
- Gardens (patio)
- Easy access to shops
- Social housing
- Rented housing
- Old people's homes
- Bungalow
- Detached
- Semi-detached
- Terraced houses
- Driveway/parking
- Garages
- Landscaping
- Amount of storeys (levels)
- Cellar/basements

- Shape of house
- Kitchen layout
- Electricity/plugs
- Bedroom size
- At least 1 ensuite
- Study
- Downstairs bathroom for disabled housing
- Slopes (wheelchair/buggy access)
- Front room/dining room
- Windows/patio doors
- Security systems
- Locks

Brief for Group 4: HOUSING (done by Group 2)

- Garden space – for most houses (everyone)
- Space for car parking, so they don't block up the roads (drivers)
- Include different types of housing for different people: senior citizens, families, first time buyers, disabled access houses
- Footpaths
- No high rise flats
- Three storey housing max
- Range of differently priced housing
- Some houses in a ring/green pattern
- Some loose knit, some nucleated housing
- Reasonable space in rooms, gardens

Brief for Group 5: CENTRE (done by Group 3)

- Accessibility
- Services
- Disabilities
- Transport
- Café
- Security
- Local shops
- Vandalism
- Authorised graffiti
- Shrubbery
- Gardens
- Aesthetics
- Nature
- Food
- Shops – Food - pizza - kebab - chemist
- Airport
- Multistorey car parking
- Swimming pool
- Bouncy castle
- Ice rink
- Somewhere to sit/meet
- Hall
- Statue/water feature
- Parking
- Pool
- Supermarket
- Shopping mall
- Cinema

- Leisure facilities

Brief for Group 6: CENTRE (done by Group 4)

- Safety – zebra crossing/signs
- Entertainment
- Access
- Disability/eg lifts
- Shops
- Transport – eg, bus, taxi, train
- Emergency
- Eating
- Schools
- Hospitals
- Security
- Fire precautions
- Local planning (benches)
- Display – eg, statues (to make the place look nice)
- Toilets/phone boxes/post boxes
- Bins/street lamps
- Signs/safety signs

Brief for Group 7: HOUSING (done by Group 5)

- Apartments – communal garden*
- Good parking
- Houses for young/one parent families - garden*
- Big family houses
- Council houses should be nice
- Bungalows – elderly
- Old/disabled people's houses
- Renewable energy
- Recycling – outside home
- Detached/semi/terraced
- *Allotments – orchard
- Garages
- Privacy – space
- Security – CCTV, etc
- Varied costs
- Sewage/waste disposal
- Castle – moat/drawbridge, etc!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- Rental
- Youth hostel
- Safety – pedestrian areas

Brief for Group 4: HOUSING (done by Group 6)

- Variety of Housing Types:
 - sizes, family, elderly (no stairs – bungalows with small gardens)
 - types, bungalows, etc – big houses – family – small
 - lots of open/green space for recreation and gardens
 - parking areas
 - easy access – simple roads, not too confusing
 - space
 - greens
- Design and Appearance:
 - attractive bricks (red), as in not ugly ones (yellow)
 - windows

- wind turbines – yes! Solar panels, rotten vegetables
- home zones – safety, pavements, play areas
- garages – next to the big houses
- greenhouses/veggie patches
- trees? - roots harm houses

Brief for Group 9: PARK (done by Group 7)

- Cricket pitch – 200m(ish) diameter!!
- Recreation area/playing fields
- Wildlife area – lake, woodland, flower meadow, aviary
- Ecology – area only for wildlife (no people – just wildlife)
- Skate park
- Very flat land
- Also an artificial hill?
- Area only for biodegradable stuff
- Maintenance
- Roads: straight – Denchworth cheap/easiest but will divide

Brief for Group 1: OVERALL SITE (done by Group 9)

- 2,500 homes
- 2 primary, 1 secondary
- Centre (town centre)
- Park
- Roads and cycle ways (traffic calming)
- Renewable energy – windmills/solar panels
- In keeping with style of Grove
- Public transport links
- Green areas (trees, wildlife)
- Links to canal and brook
- Footpaths
- Local services – police, fire, ambulance
- Youth centre – SweatBox? (more than one)
- Essential meeting point
- Community space
- Skate park! Dirt track – one nearby (over road)
- Cinema – multiplex
- Bowling!
- Easy access to old Grove and Wantage and Technology Park
- Jobs
- Wide roads for buses
- Main road and smaller ones
- Focal points
- Bungalows
- Creche (nursery)
- Library
- OAP Centre
- Town Hall
- Leisure centre
- Swimming Pool
- Bridleways
- Tramways
- Shuttleways

Brief for Group 2: OVERALL SITE (done by Group 10)

- Individuality
- Incorporate a recycling centre
- Split green areas with all types of housing (not just one big green area)
- Spread shops about so they are easily accessible by everyone
- Must have 2,500 houses
- Integrate all types of housing
- Keep main roads away from schools
- Bigger cycle path network (link to schools)
- Link housing with community centre
- More emergency services (fire/police, etc)
- Youth clubs close to schools
- Parks
- Sports centre close to housing
- Elderly housing close to shops



‘RATIONALES’

Once each group had completed their plan or design, they were asked to list out the key reasons behind, it, main features, critical points etc. – their ‘rationale’. These follow below.

GROUP 1: OVERALL SITE

- Eco-friendly houses and nature, and energy saving options – including:
- Wind turbines
- Solar panels
- Allotments
- Nature reserves
- Compost heaps
- Water butts
- Recycling
- Footpaths/cycle paths – encourages to walk
- Bridle paths
- Shuttle bus (helps pollution) – traffic
- Lots of open, green area

GROUP 2: OVERALL SITE

- Corner Shops:
 - Having small shops at the edges of the groups of houses would mean less people had to buy lots at the main centre. People buying lots normally need a car to carry all they have bought, so having corner shops would reduce driving and pollution
 - Vehicle access means that the shops have to be situated close to a main road
- More Cycle/Footpaths:
 - Making it easier to walk or cycle around Grove will reduce the need to drive, promoting a better environment
- Pedestrianise Central Area (car park and cycle sheds nearby)
 - This would make the centre more attractive and safer. The car park would be close by so people still could drive here if needed
- Train Station
 - Reopening a train station would mean people wouldn’t have to drive to Didcot to catch a train (reducing pollution!) and less people would have to drive to the places the train went to
- Bicycle Racks at Central Area
 - If it was easier to park your bike, more people would be inclined to cycle – less pollution (again)
- Easy Crossing by Schools and Shops, More Zebra Crossings and Traffic Lights
 - Promote walking to school
 - Make Grove safer, less risks on the roads
- School by Playing Fields
 - Sharing of facilities means schools can give more opportunities sports wise
- Green Spaces – Houses in a Ring/Green Pattern
 - This would break up all of the buildings, making the area nicer
 - Would make Grove more attractive
- Houses Next to Shops Reserved for Senior Citizens/Disabled
 - This would mean it was easier for them to use the facilities
 - Could specialise – these specific houses to suit the needs of these people
- Cycle Paths to Technology Park
 - This would encourage people to cycle to work
- Organised Woodland
 - Space for wildlife

- Increases the beauty of the area
- More environmentally friendly

Principles:

- Encouraging more cycling and walking
- Environmentally friendly design
- To make it aesthetically pleasing
- To make it safe
- To make it a pleasant place to live
- To break up big blocks of housing with green spaces
- To make it an accessible area for everyone – that caters for everyone’s different needs

GROUP 3: HOUSING

- We chose non-grid patterns, because: privacy – interesting – aesthetically pleasing – variety
- We grouped houses so that people weren’t overlooked
- Left room for green spaces
- Every house is accessible
- Every house has a drive
- No road, for houses, comes from the main road – less traffic

GROUP 4: HOUSING

- View is more important
- South facing gardens
- Different types of housing:
 - OAP/bungalows
 - family houses and gardens
 - flats/cheap houses
- Parking areas
- Overlooking play area
- Sunshine
- Wind – houses are sheltered from the wind

GROUP 5: CENTRE

- Central point – a nice water feature
- Facilities suitable for all ages
- Aesthetically pleasing
- Good use of space –eg, multistorey
- Easily accessible
- Cafés/restaurants
- Primary school
- Facilities and access for disabled
- Grassy areas for parks
- Peaceful and tranquil
- Relaxing
- Youth club – somewhere for teenagers to go without causing trouble
- Range of shops
- Outside seating
- Rooftop restaurant
- A place of worship for all religions – multi-faith

GROUP 6: CENTRE

- Our aim was to create a wholesome and relaxed area for the community to be together:
- Easy access
- Primary school and nursery linked with church
- Shared parking – pub/shops/school
- Space for vans and lorries to unload to pubs and shops
- Safe community
- The church has access to the youth club for religious youth clubs
- The youth club has access to the school field
- Green areas for good appearance and open space
- In the local centre we placed the primary school at the back with easy access parking for teachers and parents. We also placed the school's playing field away from the road to ensure safety of the kids.
- We placed the church near to the youth club so that they can use it if they need, and the youth club is located on the back of the school's field so that they can use that too. Also, the school is located within walking distance of the church for religious assemblies, etc.
- The nursery has access to the school's field, but also has its own play park for younger children.
- Behind each of the shops and the supermarket, we have space for lorries unloading goods, etc
- In the main square, we put a fountain and seating areas near to the café. We wanted outdoor seating to bring the community together. We wanted as much space as possible so the centre isn't too crowded.
- In the main square, around the fountain, the ground is paved with cobbles like an authentic French street.
- We also included a lot of general parking for visitors to the church, youth club, school, nursery, café, meeting rooms (which are placed away from a lot of main meeting places to avoid a lot of noise), offices and the local pub.

GROUP 7: HOUSING

- Safety/security
- Elderly/disabled nearer to the local centre
- Elderly in bungalows – no stairs – safety
- Lots of green/open space
- Good parking facilities – no large car parks
- Based upon a central focal point
- Flats above garages to save space
- A variety of housing – large/small, expensive/cheaper
- First time buyer housing
- Family and individual housing
- Community-based

GROUP 9: PARK

- Make the space manageable by splitting it up into different sections
- Cut down on roads, focus on cycle/footpaths
- Safety
- Cater for all needs
- Easy access
- Restoration of canal
- Large eco area for local education and museum of local history
- Trim trail
- Expansion of allotments
- LA style boulevards on old runways to give international feel
- Variety of sports with clubhouses
- Large pavilion looking over park – pavilion catches sun

GROUP 10: PARK

- Individuality
- Suited for all audiences (the elderly, children, teens, etc)
- Have ecology areas (wildlife reserves, ponds)
- Lots of different sporting facilities
- Cycle paths – environmentally friendly form of travelling
- Hide eyesores (such as the electric substation)
- Easily accessible
- Facilities to be easily accessible by paths
- Enough car parking
- Keep history of airfield runways



EVALUATIONS

Once designs were complete and the rationales noted, groups moved around to undertake evaluations. Different groups undertook the evaluations (ie. not the same group as drafted the original brief). The notes below are first of all divided into positive then negative comments. Within that they are divided group by group.

Positive Comments

Group 1

- Lots of eco-houses
- Huge greens
- Foot and cycle paths
- Variety
- Lots of leisure activities – promotes health
- Lots of cycle paths

Group 2

- Environment-friendly / cycle paths
- Layout – well set out
- Includes a lot of information
- Includes detail
- It was well planned out

Group 3

- Very accessible – each house is easy to get to
- Each house has own garden and drive
- Lots of green areas
- Nice layout – aesthetically pleasing
- On the whole, very well thought out 7/10

Group 4

- Carefully considered different housing types
- Each “section” has suitable facilities – eg, a green
- Easily accessible
- Contained community

Group 5

- Local and accessible in some areas
- No high rise buildings
- Plenty of entertainment
- Aesthetically pleasing

Group 6

- Central focal point through use of a fountain in square – good communal area
- All shops in one area rather than scattered
- Lots of parking
- Church placed next to youth centre, so can be used if needed

Group 7

- Good layout
- Individual/creative
- Integrates different types of housing successfully
- Good size gardens

- Having tall houses near main road to obscure view and noise
- Ambitious but successful

Group 9

- Very good use of space and using the old runways as cycle paths
- The boat lake is good for an early day or afternoon out and everyone can enjoy it
- The idea of splitting up sections is really good, as the eco-friendly idea makes it fun and educational
- There are allotments as there is a long waiting list for them
- There are also picnic areas and watch towers to observe wildlife whilst eating, or looking for (wildlife) from above

Group 10

- Very well planned
- Includes variety of facilities
- Remembers history
- Good land use
- Looks pleasing

Negative Comments

Group 1

- Cramped/crowded
- Both schools joined
- Not much parking
- Shame runways aren't useful
- Shooting range – noise/path behind

Group 2

- Car parking
- All in big blocks, all kept to one place
- Not “gone to town” with the appearance
- Too many cycle paths
- Not enough roads – one big road

Group 3

- We don't think you put all your effort, or used all passion in this task, just believe and you will achieve!
- Fences?
- Haven't thought about scale
- You must plan your work
- Not a good sense of community
- Houses overlook bungalows – blocks out
- No outside facilities, eg, benches, parks – where do kids play?
- Principles could have been better

Group 4

- Not enough close parking
- Houses not spaced out enough, or evenly
- Layout could be clearer/more logical!

Group 5

- Multi-faith ‘church’ would not work!!!
- More parking required
- Accessibility is limited in some areas

Group 6

- Narrow alleyways – scary if not lit at night
- Nursery playground right next to road as well as school
- No backs to shops (no rubbish disposal area/lorry delivery areas)
- More routes through centre for pedestrians and bikes

Group 7

- One way system may get crowded and is a bit confusing
- Limited parking
- Roads are too narrow

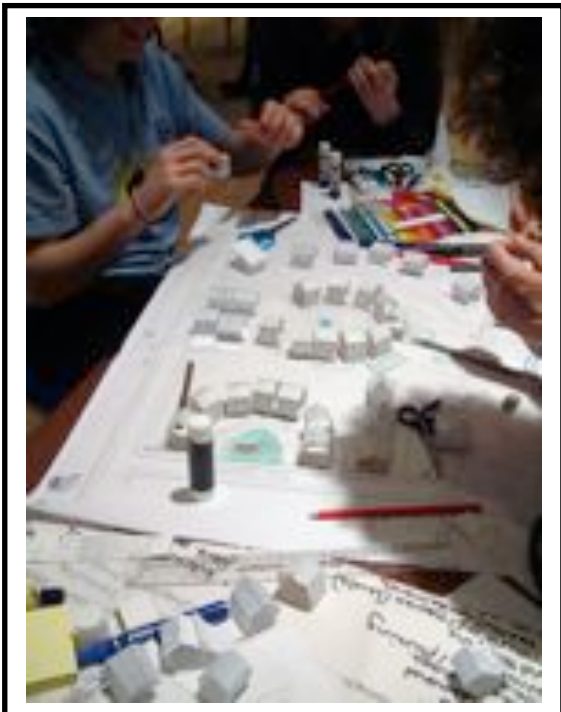
Group 9

- It may be too big for the amount of houses required to fit and be too big a project

Group 10

- Crowded sports area – out of scale
- Picnic area too close to the road
- Footpaths across roads
- Expensive to maintain





KEY MESSAGES TO THE DESIGN TEAM

As an (almost) last activity, each student was given 3 post-its to note down what they felt to be key messages to the project team based on any aspect of what they had covered in the workshop – or anything else. The points made have been roughly grouped by topic. (NB. Some post-it comments were inappropriate for this report!)

- It's changed my mind a lot. I came here not liking the idea, and now I'm for it
- I'm a lot more positive about the development now
- The amount of detail that has to go in
- Good to involve young people in the development
- I appreciated being asked for my ideas

- The design is going to make a big change to our social outlook. Wantage and Grove will have a bigger name
- Don't let it overtake Wantage
- Make environmental for future living
- Keep the 'feel' of Grove, but don't make it full of identikit houses – CHARACTER!

- I think it's important to make the development aesthetically pleasing
- Aesthetically pleasing
- Looks nice
- Modern and open
- What about cramped space?
- Don't put too much in – keep it open
- Make nice place to live. Keep away from bad selling points
- Make sure designs will stand the test of time – not more 60s eyesores!!!

- Keep historical points
- Remember airfield history
- Preserve history
- Preserve the airfield
- Preserve the runways
- Keep the runways
- Rebuild the airfield
- Don't build on the airfield!!
- I think the runways should be used as cycle paths

- No high rise flats (ruins 'look' of Grove)
- Integrate different housing
- Few houses
- Less housing x 3
- Affordable – but not CHEAP – housing, good quality
- Don't make another rabbit warren of houses

- Wildlife reserve x 2
- Make sure you give the animals living in the fields a place to live
- Please be environmentally friendly – don't turn it into a town
- Keep loads of green space.
- Open and green centre
- Make sure there is a lot of green space
- Lots of green x 7
- Loads of green spaces between houses
- Lots of outdoor nature and activities

- Cater for nature!
- Woods and lots of trees
- Woods
- Lakes

- A park the size of the one in our brief may be too large – but the brief offered great facilities
- Conserve the rugby fields!

- Plenty of facilities x 2
- I want a cinema x 3
- A new colosseum would be nice
- Open spaces, but lots of shops!
- Big shops
- New improved skate park
- Big skate park x 2
- Big bike park
- Bigger skate park
- More entertainment x 3
- Youth club x 2
- Youth x 2
- Things for teenagers to do
- Have facilities for teenagers
- Plenty for youths to do
- Something for youths
- Important to tackle the lack of stuff to do for youths in Wantage, with stuff in Grove
- Lots of facilities and services for teenagers
- Stuff for young people
- Enough facilities for younger people
- Things to do for all ages
- Large SweatBox
- Theme park
- Chill-out places – cafés, apexes, lakes, parks and benches

- Eco-friendly x 5
- Use solar power – think for the future
- The houses should be at least solar powered, they will sell quickly 'cos they have no gas bill
- Wind turbines x 2
- Wind turbines in back gardens

- Sensible and workable bike paths
- Plenty of cycle paths
- Safe road networks
- Safety

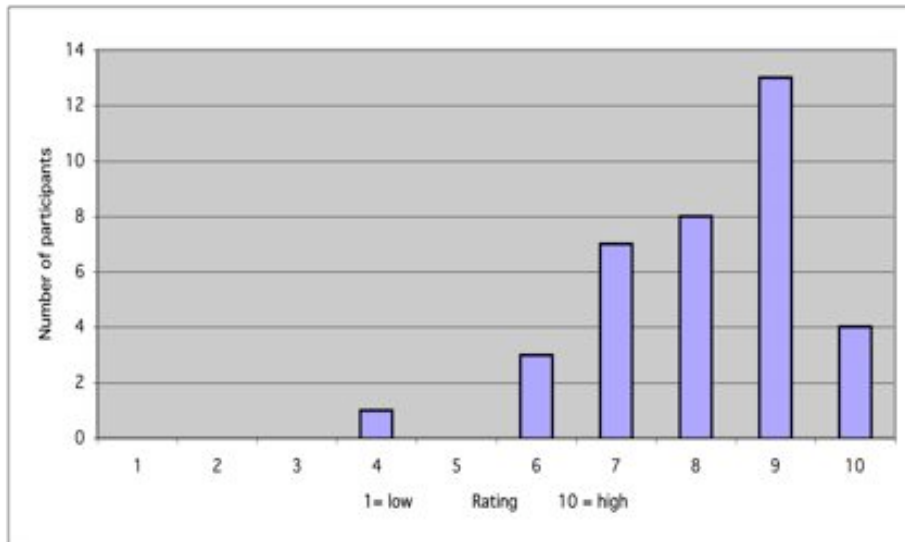


EVALUATION OF THE DAY

As a last exercise, students were asked to evaluate the day. Three 'scales' were offered (each effectively from 1 to 10) and each student ticked along a line to show what they felt about the enjoyment of the day (or otherwise), their learning from it (or not) and the value the results might (or might not) have for the project team. The results are shown below.

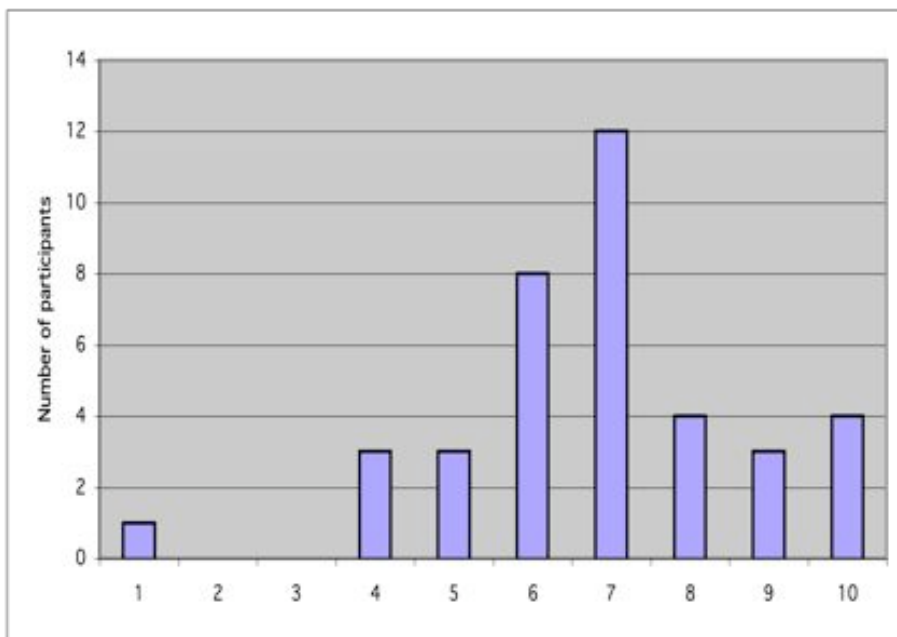
1. TOTALLY BORING

ENJOYABLE/STIMULATING



2. LEARNED NOTHING

LEARNED A LOT



3.

NOT HELPED THE DESIGNERS

HELPED THE DESIGNERS

