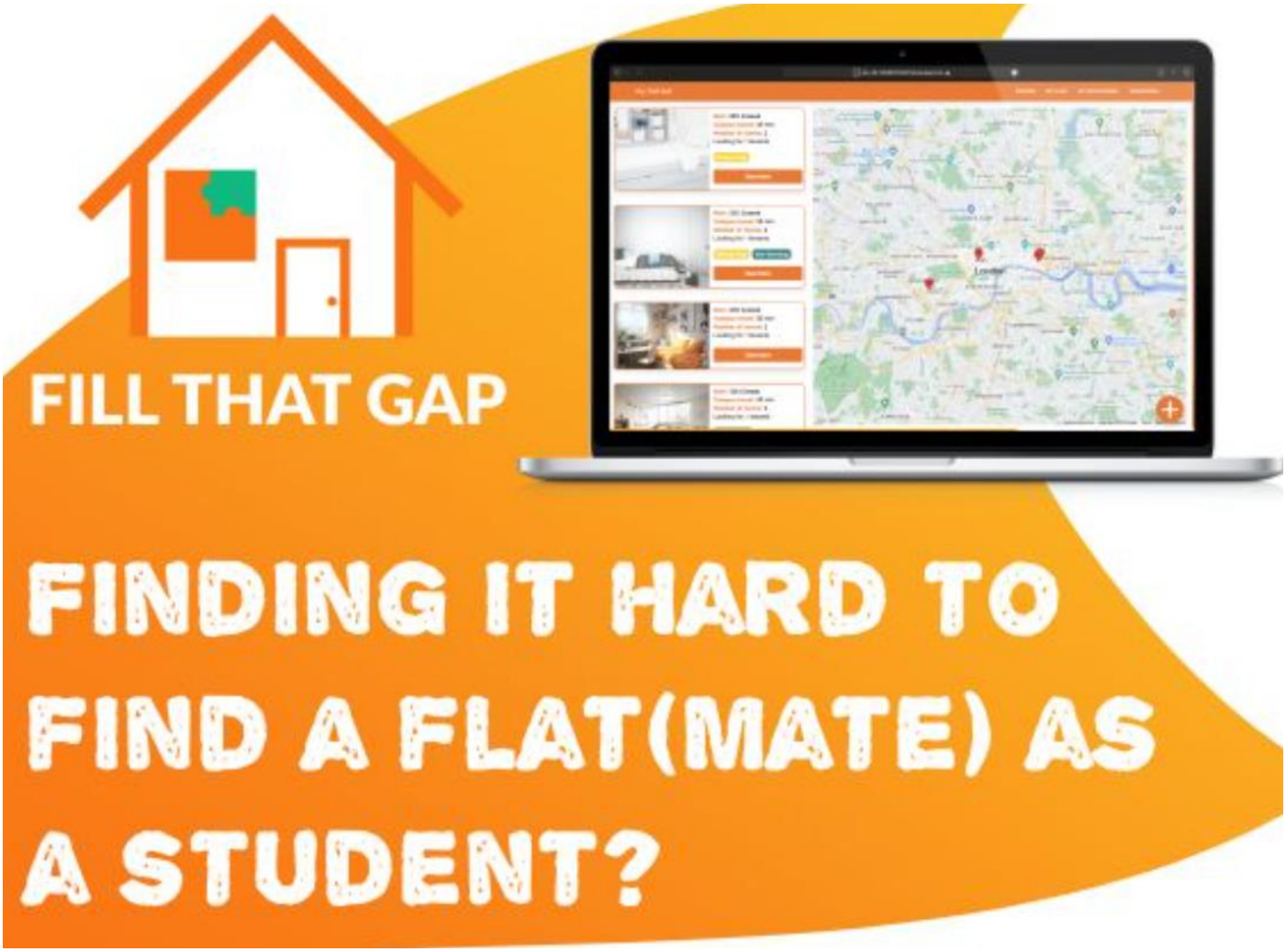


Fill That Gap - HCD Portfolio

Personas 2
Stakeholder maps 4
Current User Journey 6
Future (preferred) User Journeys 8
Initial Qualitative Research 10
Project Problem Context and Opportunity Statement 10
Examples of project development 11
User Interviews/ Feedback 12
Project Impact Asset 13

Personas

Anne

"I can't go live with these people anymore, it just makes it so hard to balance what I want to do."

Age: **21**
University: **Imperial**
Year: 2
Course: **Physics**
Character: **Work hard play hard**

Personality

Introvert	Extrovert
Thinking	Feeling
Sensing	Intuition
Judging	Perceiving

Frustrations

- Needs to have accommodation before the term starts as she cannot bear her flat.
- She lacks time to go out and find somewhere to stay
- Solutions are not tailored to students so it just seems like a waste to keep looking.

Bio

In first year Anne moved quickly to sign a flat with people in her halls, they secured a house in Hammersmith. Once they started living there they started to notice that the landlord would never repsoind and fix things and Anne felt that the rest of the flat were very disruptive for her busy schedule. They did not look after the place and it progressively got worse and worse, now Anne wants to move out and find a flat that better suits her. Finding people who are early risers and having a place near her local gym are of the highest property now that she knows the London area better but nothing seems to be for students.

Jane

"Financially I am really worried for next year"

Age: **22**
University: **Imperial**
Year: 3
Course: **BioMed Eng**
Character: **Relaxed**

Personality

Introvert — Extrovert

Thinking — Feeling

Sensing — Intuition

Judging — Perceiving

Frustrations

- With everyone graduating I cannot find a flatmate.
- I find it hard people who suit the way live
- No end to end system to solve the problem, have to resort to pen and paper adverts.

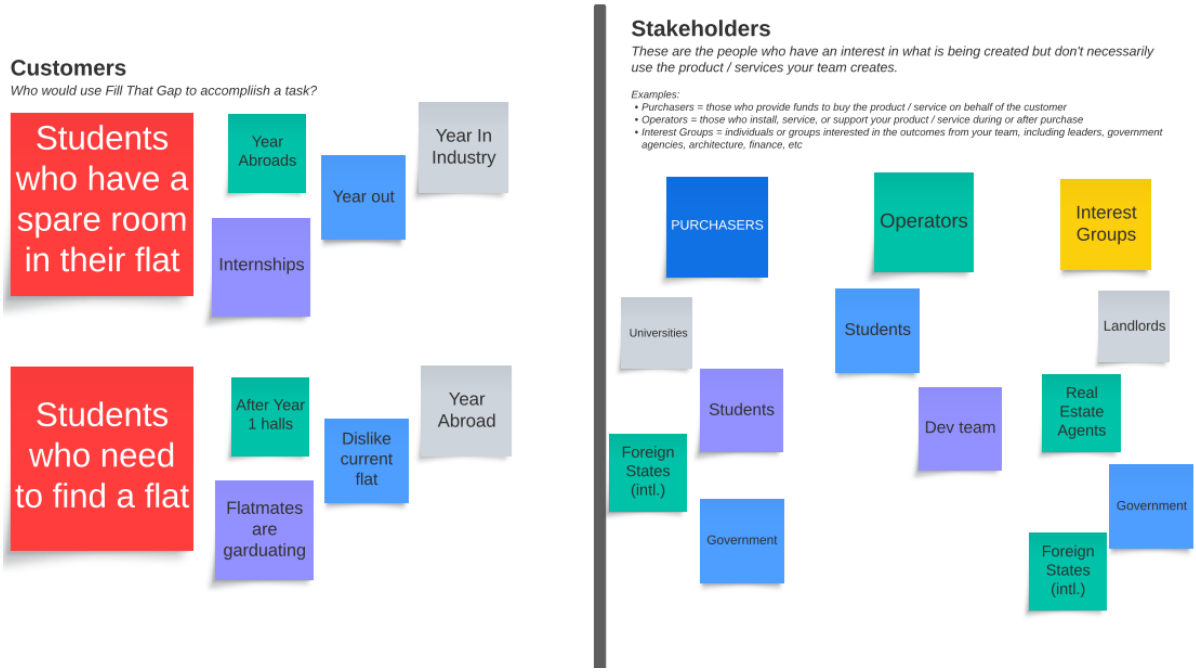
Bio

I have been trying to find flatmates to replace my flatmate that is leaving. The flat is perfect, we have gotten so lucky with landlords and the location to campus is perfect. I have tried finding people by advertising on Instagram, Facebook and by hand but I feel like I am wasting my time. I really want something where I can connect to people looking for a flat and before I connect with them see more about them so I know if they would be a good fit

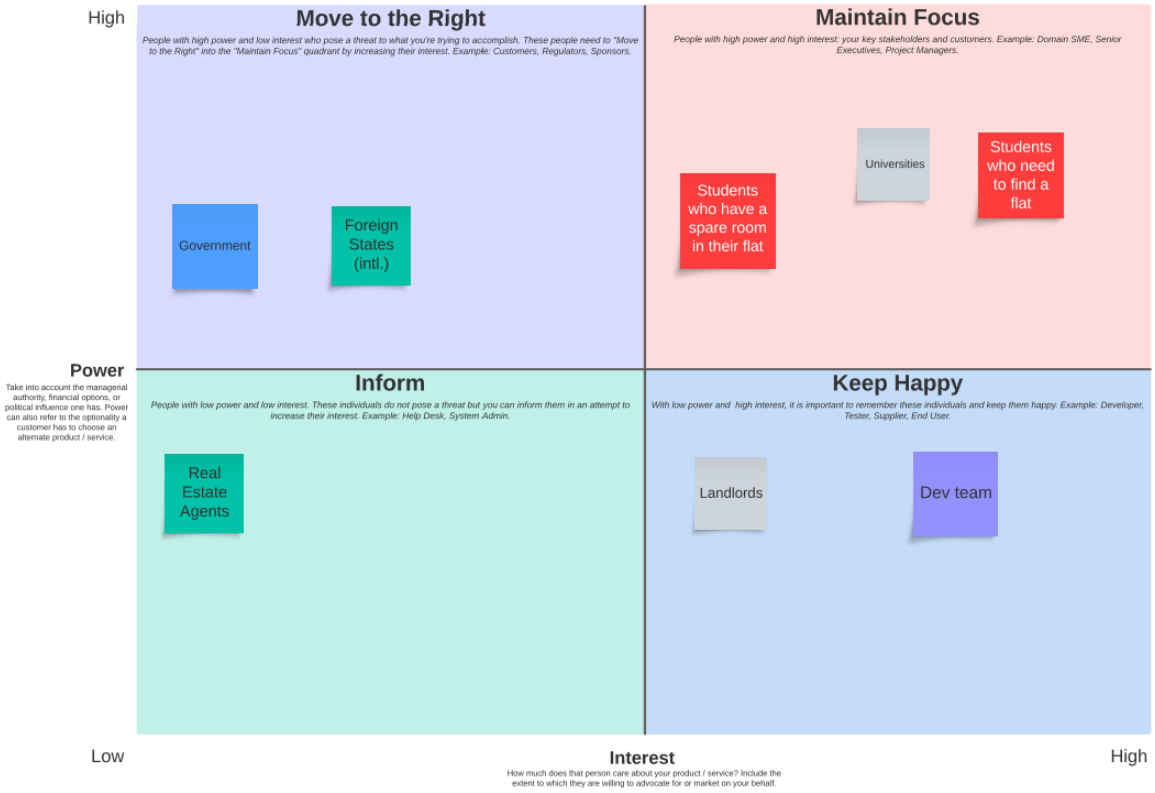
Stakeholder maps

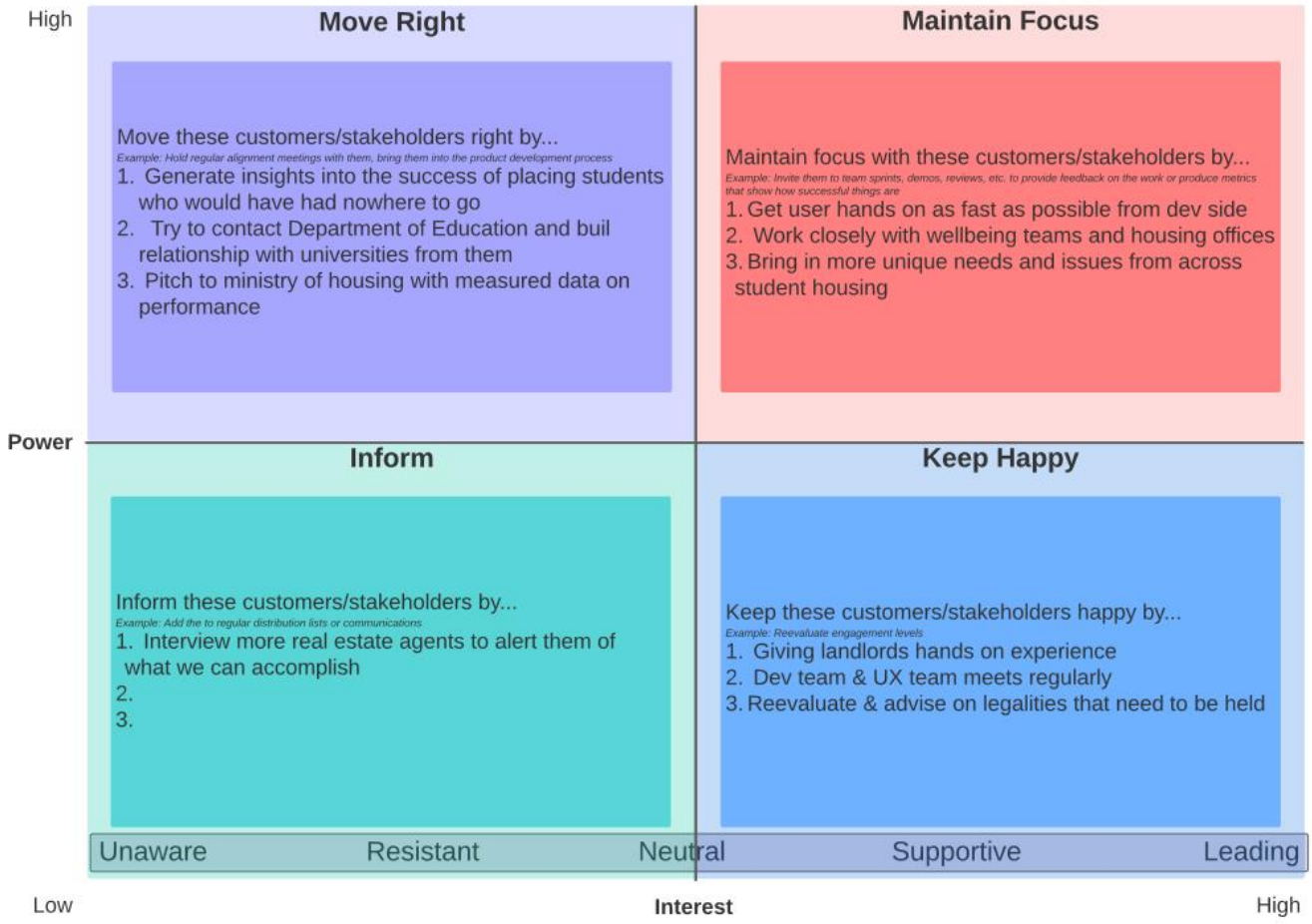
Who are the customers and stakeholders?

Scope:



How to keep all parties involved with the project with actionable points for each?



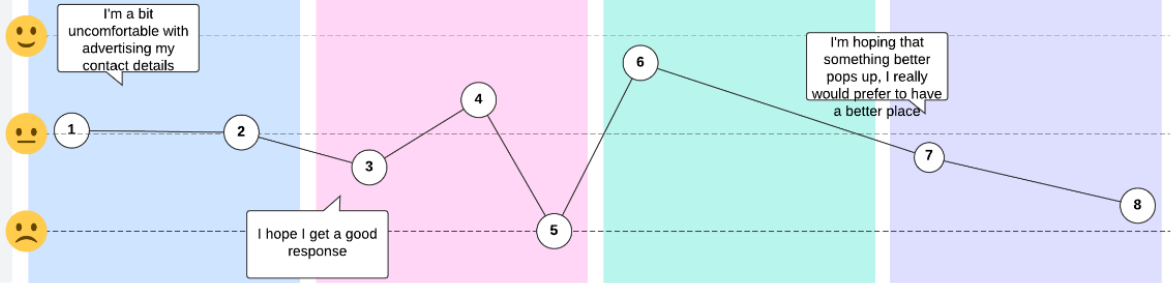

High
Move Right
Move these customers/stakeholders right by...
Example: Hold regular alignment meetings with them, bring them into the product development process
1. Generate insights into the success of placing students who would have had nowhere to go
2. Try to contact Department of Education and buil relationship with universities from them
3. Pitch to ministry of housing with measured data on performance
Maintain Focus
Maintain focus with these customers/stakeholders by...
Example: Invite them to team sprints, demos, reviews, etc. to provide feedback on the work or produce metrics that show how successful things are
1. Get user hands on as fast as possible from dev side
2. Work closely with wellbeing teams and housing offices
3. Bring in more unique needs and issues from across student housing
Power
Inform
Inform these customers/stakeholders by...
Example: Add the to regular distribution lists or communications
1. Interview more real estate agents to alert them of what we can accomplish
2.
3.
Keep Happy
Keep these customers/stakeholders happy by...
Example: Reevaluate engagement levels
1. Giving landlords hands on experience
2. Dev team & UX team meets regularly
3. Reevaluate & advise on legalities that need to be held
Unaware
Resistant
Neutral
Supportive
Leading
Low
Interest
High

Current User Journey

Anne

Scenario

Anne is fed up with her flat and wants to move out for her third year. She is looking for a flat close to her swimming pool, female-only flatmates and non-smokers. Wit ha a strict budget, she wants to find student friendly options with ease

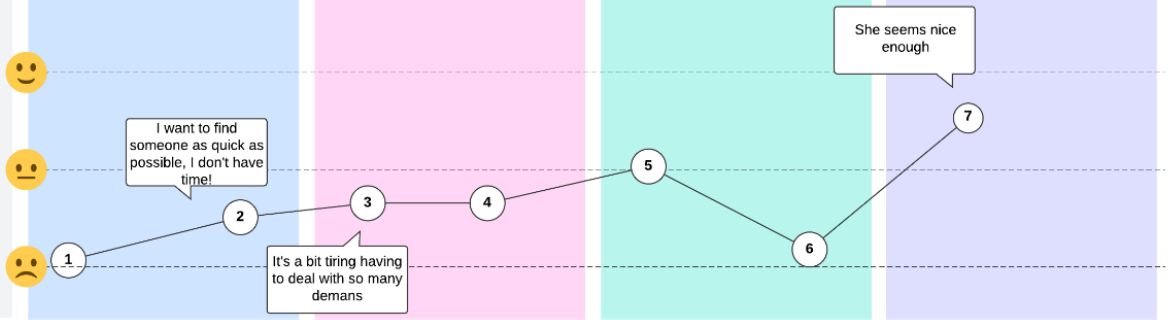
	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Actions	1. Design poster for advertising a place to look for and post it around campus 2. Look for rooms on room sharing website with strangers	3. Text group chats and friends for free places 4. Starts dialogue with landlords on room sharing websites 5. No response from posters	6. Anne starts receiving a few responses from posters 7. Not too happy with flat found on room sharing webite, wants to hold out for something better	7. Nothing works out from talking to responders from the posters, location is not ideal 8. Anne goes for the flat found on the room sharing website
Pains	• Wants to avoid living with strangers, does not feel comfortable • A lot of effort to design and print out posters, forces Anne out of comfort zone • Anne has no control over who sees her contact details	• Anne has no/little communication with prospective tenants	• With university starting to come to an end, Anne is becoming nervous about finding a good place	• Nervous about future flatmates, hopes that it will work out
Feelings				

Jane

Scenario

Jane has a flat she is very happy with but her flatmate is moving out. She wants to advertise her property and activate a legal name change on her contract. The landlord said that she is happy to accomodate a replacement as long as Jane finds the replacement herself. Otherwise, Jane will be stuck paying double rent on a place with a 2 year lease.

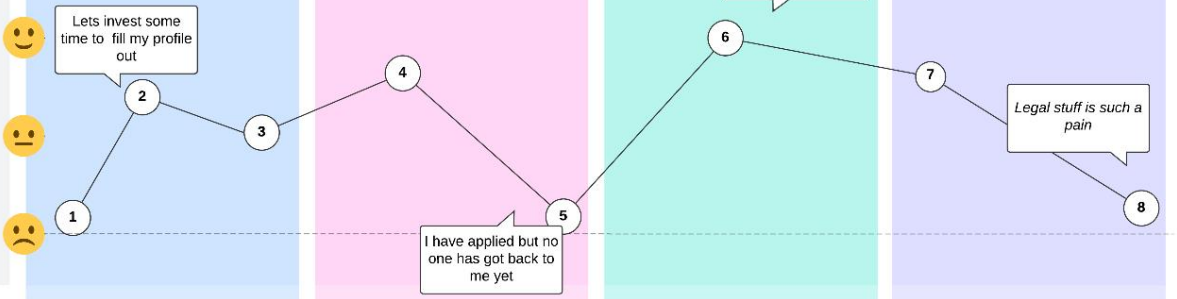
	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Actions	1. Post properties on a forum 2. Print out properties for a spare room on campus	3. Responses appear from posters, students ask for lower rent 4. Jane resorts to checking social media to see what sort of person a responder is	5. Jane agrees on a new flatmate, as they fit enough of her specifications 6. Jane corresponds with her new flatmate to sign legal contract	7. Flatmate signs contract and moves into new flat
Pains	• Similiar to Anne, designing and printing posters takes a large amount of time • Little control over advertising preferences	• Prospective tenants ask for more than what Jane is willing to give • Little time to organise face to face meetings to get to know prospective tenants better	• Jane has a difficult time to correspond with her new flatmate as she can only correspond via text	• Nervous about future flatmates, hopes that it will work out
Feelings				



Future (preferred) User Journeys

Anne

Scenario	Expectations
Anne is fed up with her flat and wants to move out for her third year. She is looking for a flat close to her simming pool, female only flatmates and also non smokers. With a strict budget she wants to see student firendly options with ease.	• Be able to find a flat to live in • Contact them and see if it is the right fit • Easy to filter based on needs

	Phase 1: Profile	Phase 2: Find a flat	Phase 3: Approval	Phase 4: Post Approval
Actions	1. Create a profile 2. Fills out extra details section to improve success 3. Browse other listers to see their profiles	4. Explores options that are suited to Anne 5. Applies to a few open flat postions, she really likes one of the properties	6. Anne gets approved by one of the flats she likes	7. Goes on to meet the tenants and decides if she likes the flat 8. Start the legal formalities to allow her to move in
Pains	• Does not want to give away private contact details publically • Does not know how much info she should give	• Have to spend time looking for flats from lots of options. • Want to know if they have a high liklihood of getting that place	• Time to get organised with flat viewings and meetings tenants	• More traditional problems with the renting market, having to deal with lots of 3rd parties.
Feelings				
Opportunities	• Help give advice on filling out good profile • Minimise time to fill out this info	• Help the user know the liklihood of being accepted based on profiles • Easily narrow down flats based on her specific needs	• Connect the lister/ prospective renter.	• Legal help/ reccomeneded next sreps

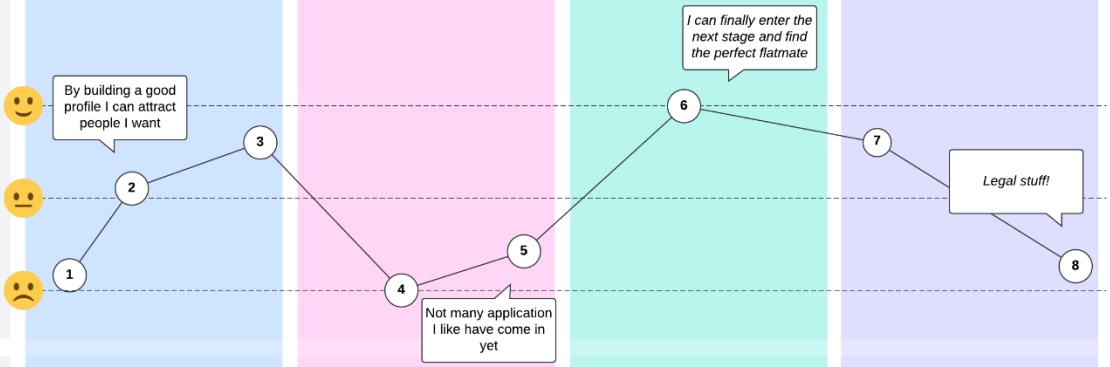
Jane

Scenario

Jane has a flatmate that she needs to replace but she has an amazing house. So she wants to advertise her flat to activate a legal name change that the landlord has said is her problem due to a 2 year lease. She has strict requirements of the type of person she wants in the flat but needs someone fast.

Expectations

- Able to list all details about the flat
- Look through applicants
- Choose who to take further to fill the gap, and who she would not want to live with.

	Phase 1: Profile	Phase 2: List Flat	Phase 3: Approval	Phase 4: Post Approval
Actions	1. Creates a basic profile 2. Fills in extra details for potential applicants to see 3. Check other profiles to see if enough detail	4. Add all key details to the flat to make it look good 5. Post this advetisement and what to see applications come in	6. A good looking applicant applies, approve them	7. Begin to enter open conversation with the applicant 8. End with a change of name/ signing contract
Pains	• Again not sure how long to spend on this as learn much more by meeting in person	• Traditional pains of advertising a flat and making it look good, lots of information to convey/ an applicant would want	• Even though someone might have a good profile that could be fake/ not the same in person.	• As students are often unfamiliar with the legalities here this can be quite hard to get new contracts drawn up and signed by all parties involved
Feelings				
Opportunities	• As a lister what is the best information that an applicant wants to see	• Advertise this flat widely, in a targetted way. To generate interest.	• Begin an open discourse between the two parties post approval	• Give some help to the lister on how they can most efficiently & legally get this person into their flat

Initial Qualitative Research

"We were supposed to be in a group of 5 but all of the suden 3 people left. Now it's July and we don't have a flat yet!"

"The exterminator said it was the biggest bed bugs infestation he's ever seen!"

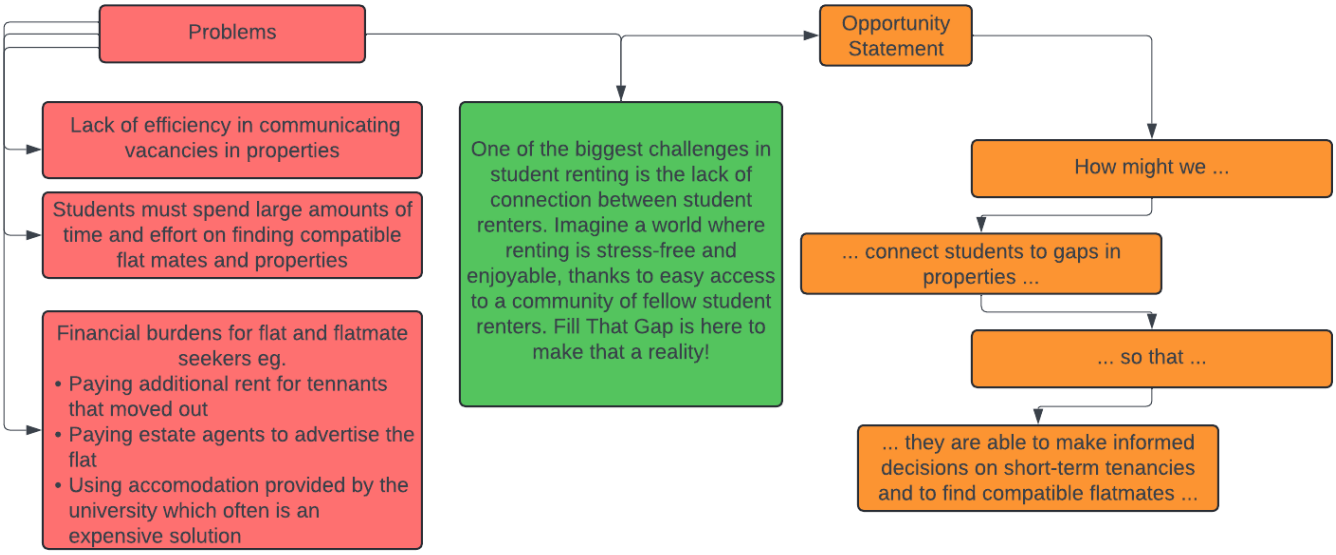
Sudden changes in plans often leave students scrambling to find a flat quickly, resulting in a stressful and overwhelming situation. Many students find themselves unsure of where to start or how to navigate the rental process under such tight timelines.

"One of my friends moved with his girlfriend. We really like this flat but we don't have another flatmate to move in!"

"My flatmate was going for a year abroad and we were left with a 2 year lease"

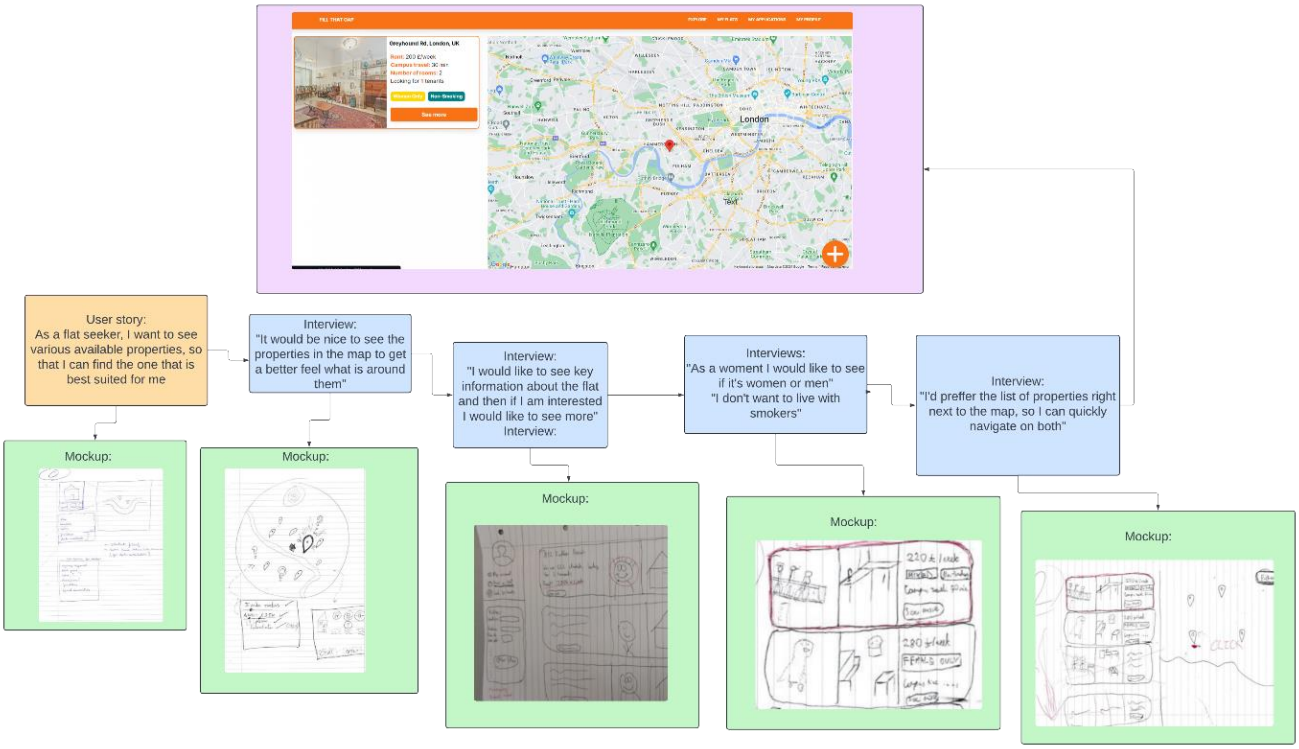
Unexpected changes, such as flatmates leaving for a year abroad or moving in with a partner, can leave students with an ongoing lease and no one to share the rent. This creates a challenging situation where they need to find a new flatmate quickly to maintain their living arrangement.

Project Problem Context and Opportunity Statement

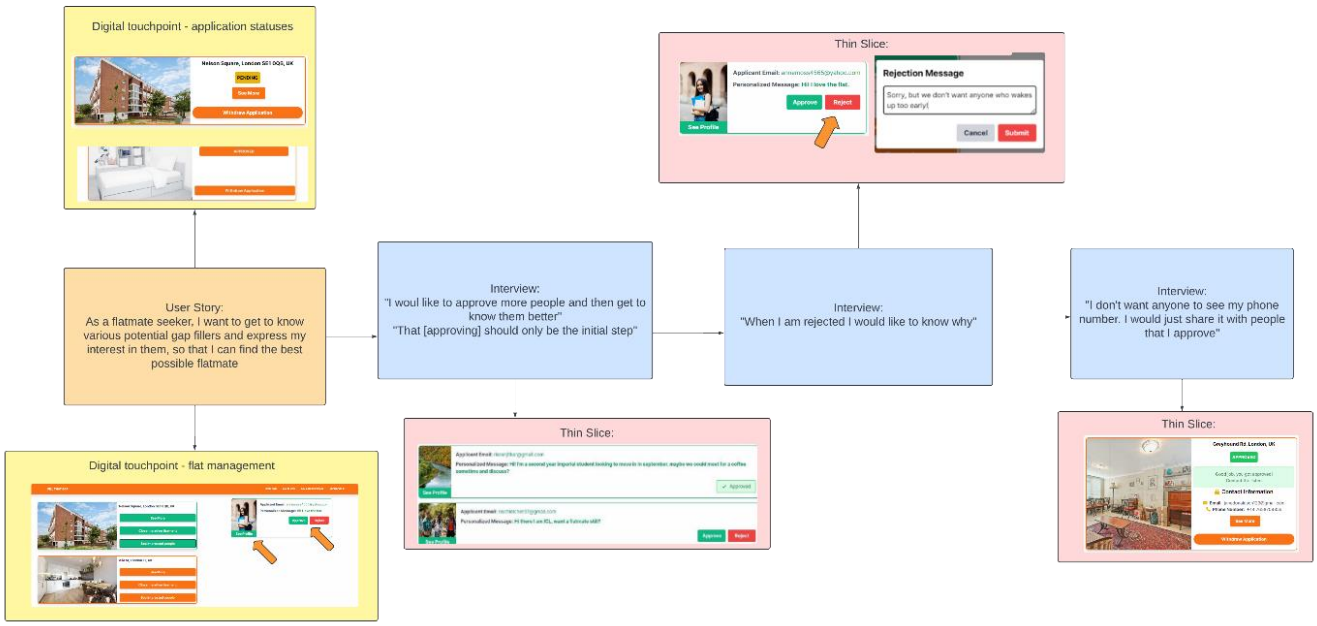


Examples of project development

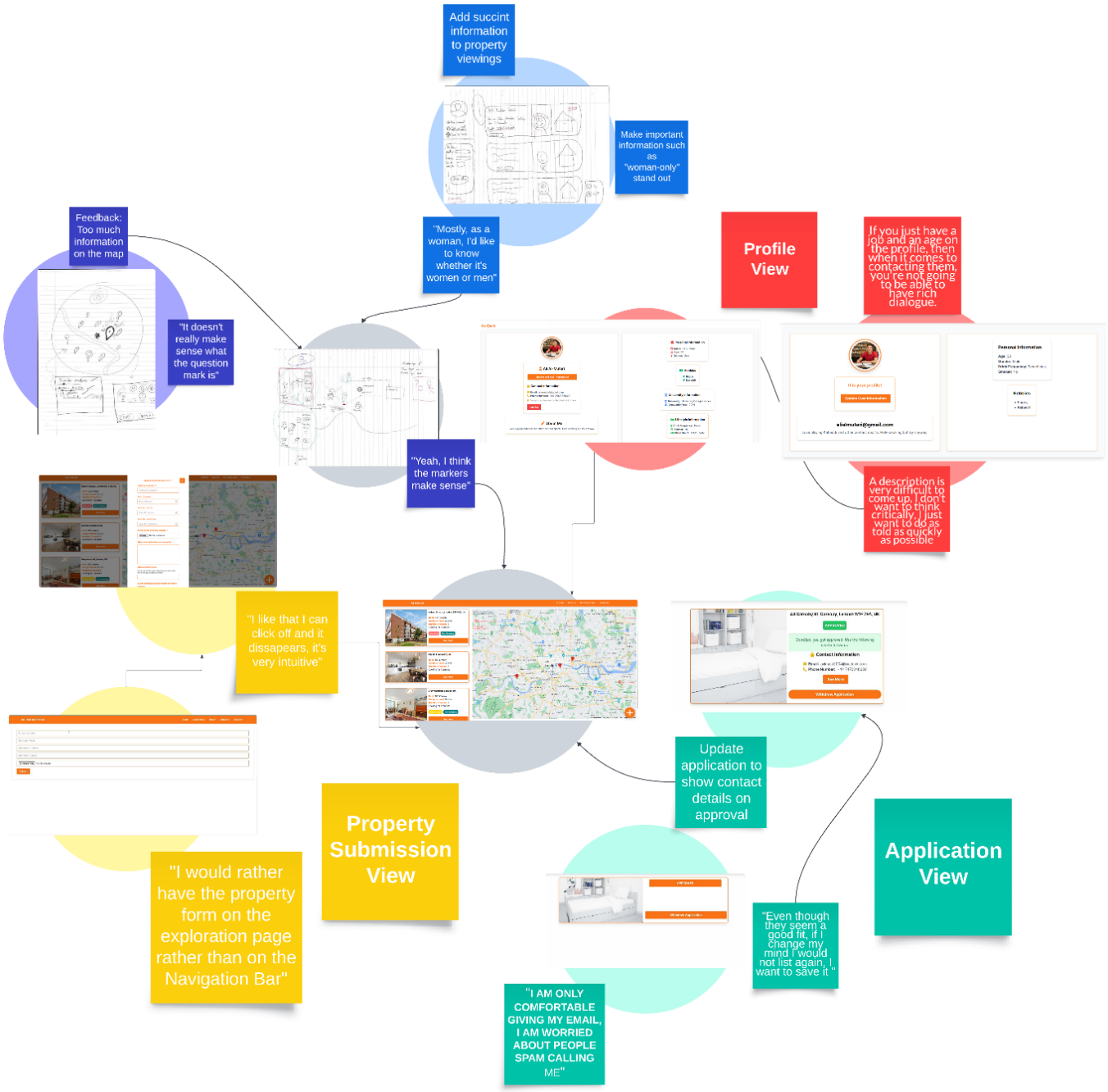
Flat Exploration



Approval process



User Interviews/ Feedback



Project Impact Asset

Wednesday June 21, 2024 Issue 10

STUDENT RENTING REFORM

How Fill That Gap is changing the digital renting game

---------- AVINASH BOMMAREDDY

Fill that Gap is a new flat(mate) finder platform which has entered the market. Students have struggled with finding places to stay year after year, where they have felt that existing solutions in this technological age are simply not built for them. They are stuck with clunky and hard-to-use services which often leave them with descriptions that say NOT FOR STUDENTS. Here is what one student had to say about how they found their current flat:

"I HAVE TO USE FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM OR WORD OF MOUTH"

In such a technological world we have left our students behind. So how does Fill That Gap fit into the picture? With an end-to-end solution that provides students with a way to advertise their flat to students who need a place to stay this web app gives students power. If you have a flat and a circumstance changes so you will have an empty room then this is going to be a financial burden. So if you could easily find a person to fill that gap then that financial risk can be mitigated. The development team worked closely with users to ensure that the process worked to maximise the efficiency of the process. You can list a flat, explore the flats in the area, filter through the flats that exist, see details on flats and the tenants inside of those flats and then approve/ reject people based on their profiles. This all happens in less time than designing an advert on a piece of paper and sticking it up in a university building. Users have already begun to use this application to save time and stress. This application has already begun to make a massive impact on the student scene.

Universities are often left in a dire situation when students come to them and say that they do not have accommodation for the year as their previous one has fallen through. Some universities like Imperial College London have a housing guarantee where they will place you in halls of residence to mitigate this but no student wants to be in this situation and very few universities have this. With the total number of students in private housing being near

600,000 STUDENTS

there is a large stress on university housing offices to help their students. This has a large impact on the mental health of the students who have gone through problems with their private housing. A well-being officer from Imperial College London stated that they have seen people an interruption of studies due to housing and said:

"I WOULD RECOMMEND THIS FOR ANY HOUSE DRAMA!"

Mental health is a growing concern for students who are already going through so much with their studies. They also should be enjoying this amazing time of their lives but with so many having to deal with distant landlords, unlivable conditions and not feeling like they are in a home. Fill that Gap can come in and provide a way to change your scenario and be a driving force for good simply because it takes that simplistic approach to solving this problem. Moreover, this can allow a growth in the communities that students live in. It is well known that it can be problematic to have student neighbours as they have a bad reputation for partying and being disruptive. With Fill That Gap there can be information uploaded that includes what the neighbours are like and what type of vibe the surrounding area conforms to. As a person looking for a flat that wants to live a more raucus life this would be clear from the get-go and perhaps the student would look to another flat in a different area.

This benefits not just the students as the local community will be a factor in driving students into that area. We spoke to a resident about how this could impact his area

"I HAVE TO BE UP AT 6 AM EVERY MORNING, I CAN'T HAVE PARTYING STUDENTS NEXT DOOR"

In addition to this at the core of a community are the individual houses and if the houses themselves have people who get on well and enjoy each others' company they are more likely to get out and get involved with the community. There is a market for the data that Fill That Gap is collecting, as the needs and wants of the users can be tied to the flats that they look to apply for. For example, a flat that houses a group of student-athletes might want to have access to a gym in the building or a more musical set of people would want a dedicated piano room. From these insights, real estate agents can better stage their flats to target certain groups of students. Meeting their needs whilst effectively advertising and filling their properties from non-trivial insights that arise out of thousands of profiles, applications, and approvals that go through the service. This is what one local real estate agent in Hammersmith had to say in order to increase their profit:

"THE SHORT TERM MARKET NEEDS TO MATCH THE DEMAND OF REQUIREMENTS"

So by getting insights into how they can adjust flat advertising on the local level they can in turn boost their outreach whilst increasing the overall experience for students.

In the end of the day in the private renting scene

"20% OF STUDENTS ARE DISSATISFIED."

Fill that Gap provides a way for students to have some power in getting out of tough situations that they can live without, they already go through so much. Now we need to make sure we hold landlords to high standards and don't forget students are also real people.