

Social sustainability mapping for Castle Vale, Birmingham

Social Life
July 2016

Introduction

Social Life was commissioned by Castle Vale Community Housing to map selected indicators from Social Life's Community Dynamics data for the Castle Vale Estate and surrounding area. The aim was to help understand the impact of over 20 years of investment in the area, and to feed into work to develop future priorities for the Estate.

This report

This report includes maps of data predicting levels of residents' sense of belonging, and the strength of local social relationships in Castle Vale.

These factors have been selected from Social Life's Community Dynamics data. This reveals aspects of social sustainability giving fresh perspectives on the residents and communities living on the Estate and in the surrounding area.

The data is *predictive*, it shows expected levels of belonging and the strength of local relationships.

Our aim was to explore how this kind of data can be used to support future decision making, and community engagement, in the Castle Vale area.

Social Life's social sustainability framework

Social Sustainability is defined by Social Life as "a process for creating sustainable, successful places that promote wellbeing, by understanding what people need from the places they live and work. Social sustainability combines design of the physical realm with design of the social world - infrastructure to support social and cultural life,

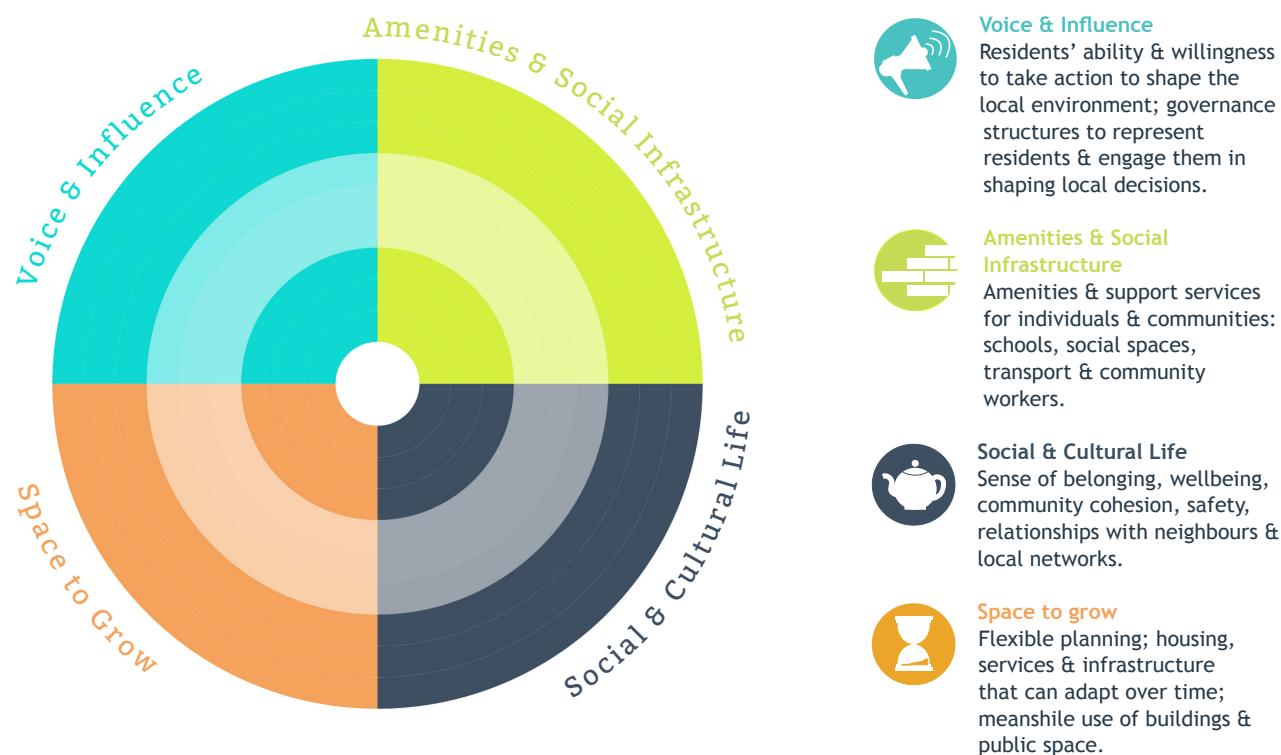
social amenities, systems for citizen engagement and space for people and places to evolve".¹

Social Life has developed a framework for understanding how places thrive. This is based on a review of the evidence from the UK and internationally about what makes places succeed or fail. The framework came out of a project originally commissioned by the Homes and Communities Agency, to influence how built environment professionals think about

creating new places. We call this our "social sustainability framework", it was first published in our report "Design for Social Sustainability".

Social sustainability is often overlooked within the sustainability field and is largely neglected in mainstream debates. Past experience shows that the long-term social needs of new communities are often downplayed in the drive to deliver housing on a large scale. Without the right social infrastructure new communities can quickly spiral into decline.

Figure 1: Social Life's social sustainability framework



¹ Saffron Woodcract et al (2012) "Design for social sustainability: a framework for creating thriving new communities" Social Life

² for more on Area Classifications see <https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/geography/geographicalproducts/areaclassifications/2011areaclassificatio>

The data



The UK is rich in data from different surveys that explore how people feel about the neighbourhoods they live in. ONS (the Office of National Statistics) have created “Area Classifications” which enable us to map survey data to output areas (when it is appropriately coded).²

We have looked at national surveys held by government and research councils - including the Understanding Society Survey, the Community Life survey, the Crime Survey England and Wales - and extracted questions that shed light on the social sustainability of small areas.

This predictive data can be useful in itself to inform planning and design of schemes and projects. It also potentially allows us to compare actual data about residents’ perceptions to this prediction, giving us an assessment of how well the area is faring compared to similar places.

Mapping Community Dynamics in Castle Vale

The predictive data mapped in this document focuses on two important areas within Social Life’s Social Sustainability framework: residents sense of belonging and their local relationships with friends and neighbours. These are both important elements of the “Social & Cultural life” dimension of the framework.

The underlying data comes from two national surveys: the Understanding Society Survey and the Community Life Survey. These all ask questions about residents’ perceptions of the places they live in.

The sample sizes of these surveys are not large enough to disaggregate responses directly to small local areas. However, we can match this data to small areas using ONS’s Area Classifications 2015.

This enables us to see how residents of small areas are likely to feel. This is predictive data, not a robust portrait of the neighbourhood.

Local relationships

The “local relationships” data has been created by combining responses to the following questions,:

“[Do you agree or disagree that] *People in this neighbourhood pull together to improve the neighbourhood?*” (Community Life Survey)

“[Do you agree or disagree that] *The friendships and associations I have with other people in my neighbourhood mean a lot to me?*” (Understanding Society Survey)

“[Do you agree or disagree that] *I borrow things and exchange favours with my neighbours?*” (Understanding Society Survey)

“[Do you agree or disagree that] *I regularly stop and talk with people in my neighbourhood?*” (Understanding Society Survey)

“[Do you agree or disagree that] *I would be willing to work together with others on something to improve my neighbourhood?*” (Understanding Society Survey)

“[Do you agree or disagree that] *If I needed advice about something I could go to someone in my neighbourhood?*” (Understanding Society Survey)

Belonging

The ‘belonging’ data has been created by combining responses to the following questions from the Understanding Society Survey:

“[Do you agree or disagree that] *I feel like I belong to this neighbourhood?*”

“[Do you agree or disagree that] *I plan to remain resident of this neighbourhood for a number of years?*”

Data sources

Understanding Society Survey: University of Essex. Institute for Social and Economic Research, NatCen Social Research. (2014). Understanding Society: Waves 1-4, 2009-2013: Special Licence Access. [data collection]. 4th Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 6931, <https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=6931&type=data%20catalogue>

Community Life Survey: Cabinet Office. (2015). Community Life Survey, 2014-2015: Special Licence Access. [data collection]. UK Data Service. SN: 7837, <https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=7837&type=data%20catalogue>

What the data tells us

The Castle Vale Estate was built in the 1960s. Unusually for the time, 30 per cent of homes were for sale. Although popular in its early days, by the 1980s and 1990s social problems had proliferated. In response, in 1993 a Housing Action Trust (or HAT) was set up, beginning a programme of selective demolition and housing improvements. Linked to this, a number of projects and initiatives were set up to improve health, reduce crime and increase employment.

The HAT was wound up in 2003 and management passed to Castle Vale Community Housing and a Neighbourhood Partnership Board.

The Estate has received substantial investment in physical and social infrastructure for the last 20 years. It is often held up as the poster child of the HAT-era of housing-led regeneration policy.

What does the predictive data say?

Levels of belonging on the Estate are likely to be both lower than the national and Birmingham averages. Residents living in the east and west of the estate are likely to have a higher sense of belonging than the middle of the estate, close to the national average.

Local social relationships are also lower than average, with residents living at the east and west ends of the estate being likely to have stronger local relationships. However local social relationships are not likely to be as low as in many parts of the city.

Research into residents' perceptions and experiences is needed to corroborate this data, to see whether predicted levels of belonging and local social relationships match the reality of local experiences. This could be carried out in a number of ways, through a structured face to face survey, or through less formal conversations.

One of the strengths of this approach is that it isolates the different aspects of what is often called "a sense of community". This can mean very different things in different contexts and is a phrase that can often generate more confusion than clarity. By separating out "belonging" from "local relationships" we can look at different aspects of residents' perceptions of community.

Other Community Dynamics indicators about residents sense of influence and willingness to act, their fear of crime, and their wellbeing could also be mapped and analysed.

More information about Social Life's use of national survey data to predict community dynamics is in the 2016 Social Life report [Understanding Local Areas](#).



The Castle Vale Estate 1983, from Birmingham Vale

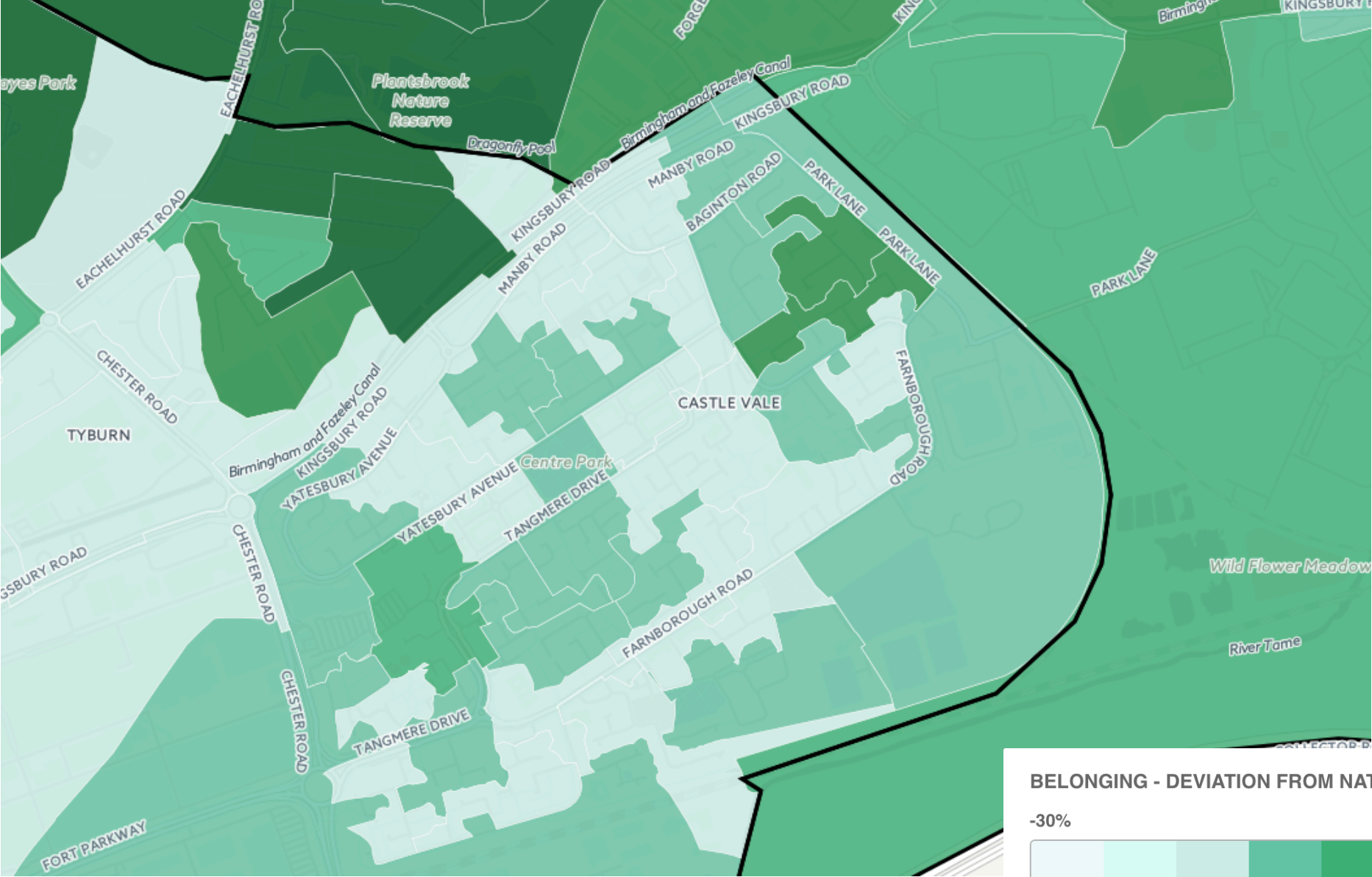
 CastleVale
Community Housing



The Castle Vale Community Housing Estate 2016

Predictive data maps

Belonging: Castle Vale Estate



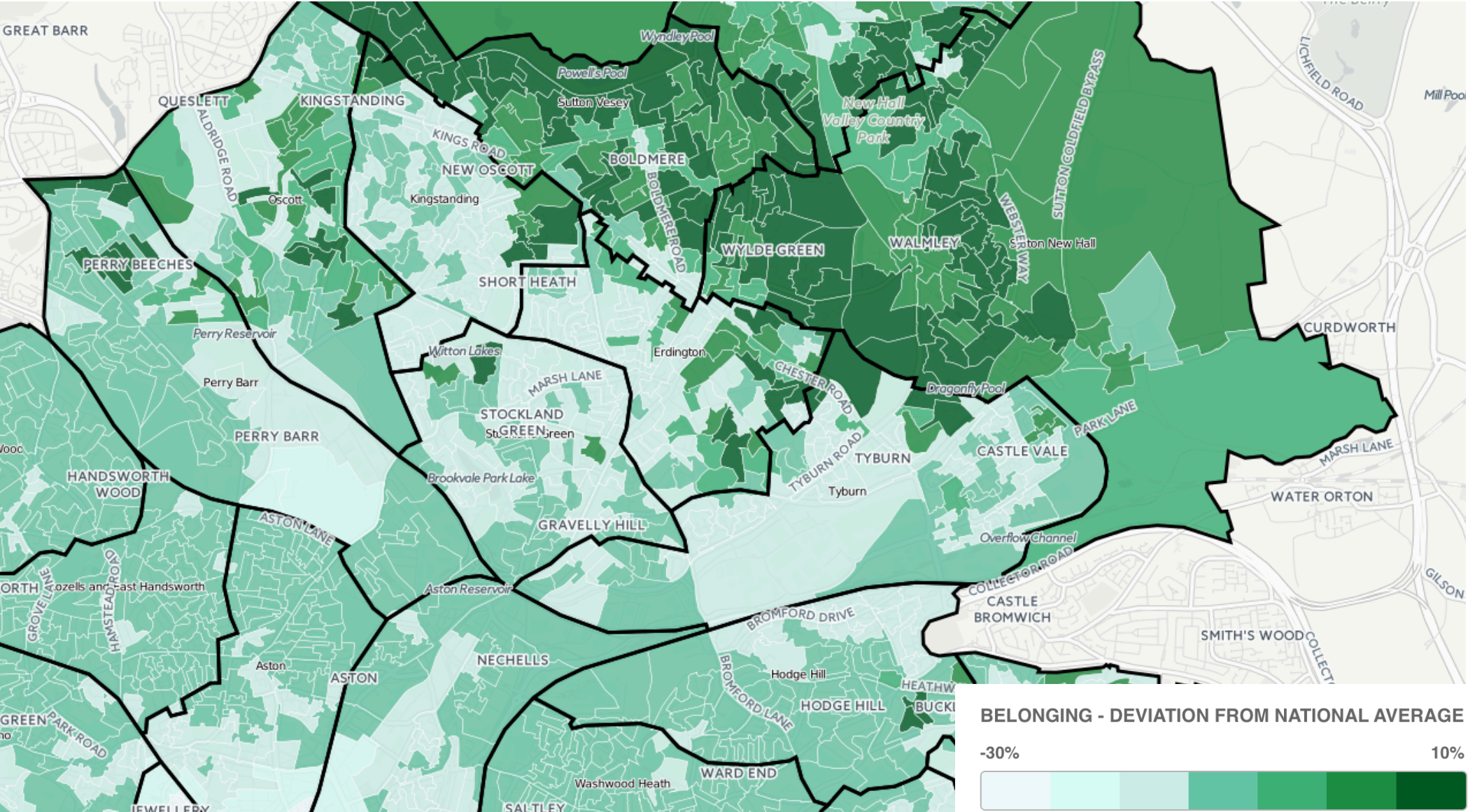
BELONGING - DEVIATION FROM NATIONAL AVERAGE

-30% 10%

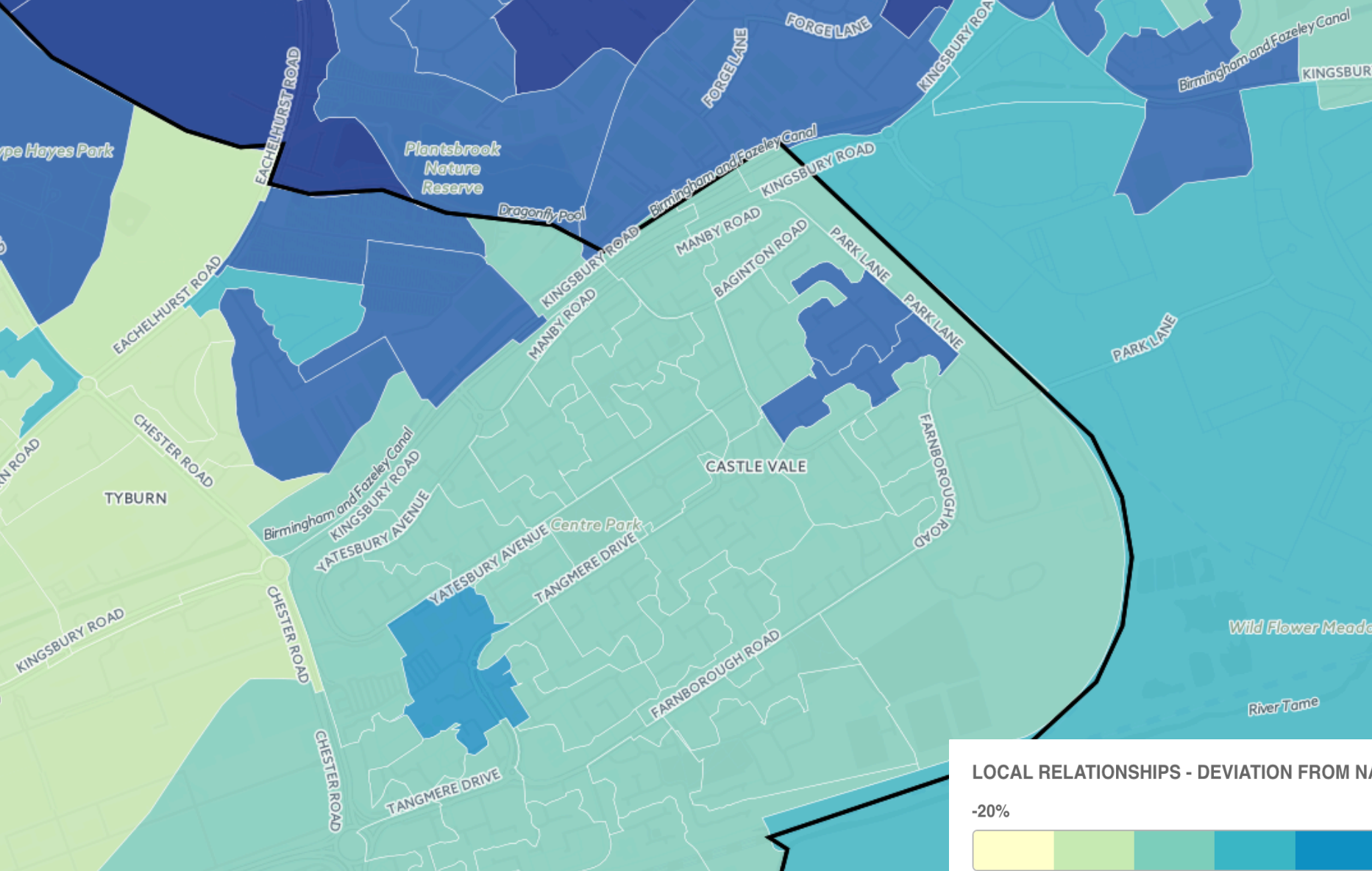


↑
National average

Belonging: wider Birmingham area

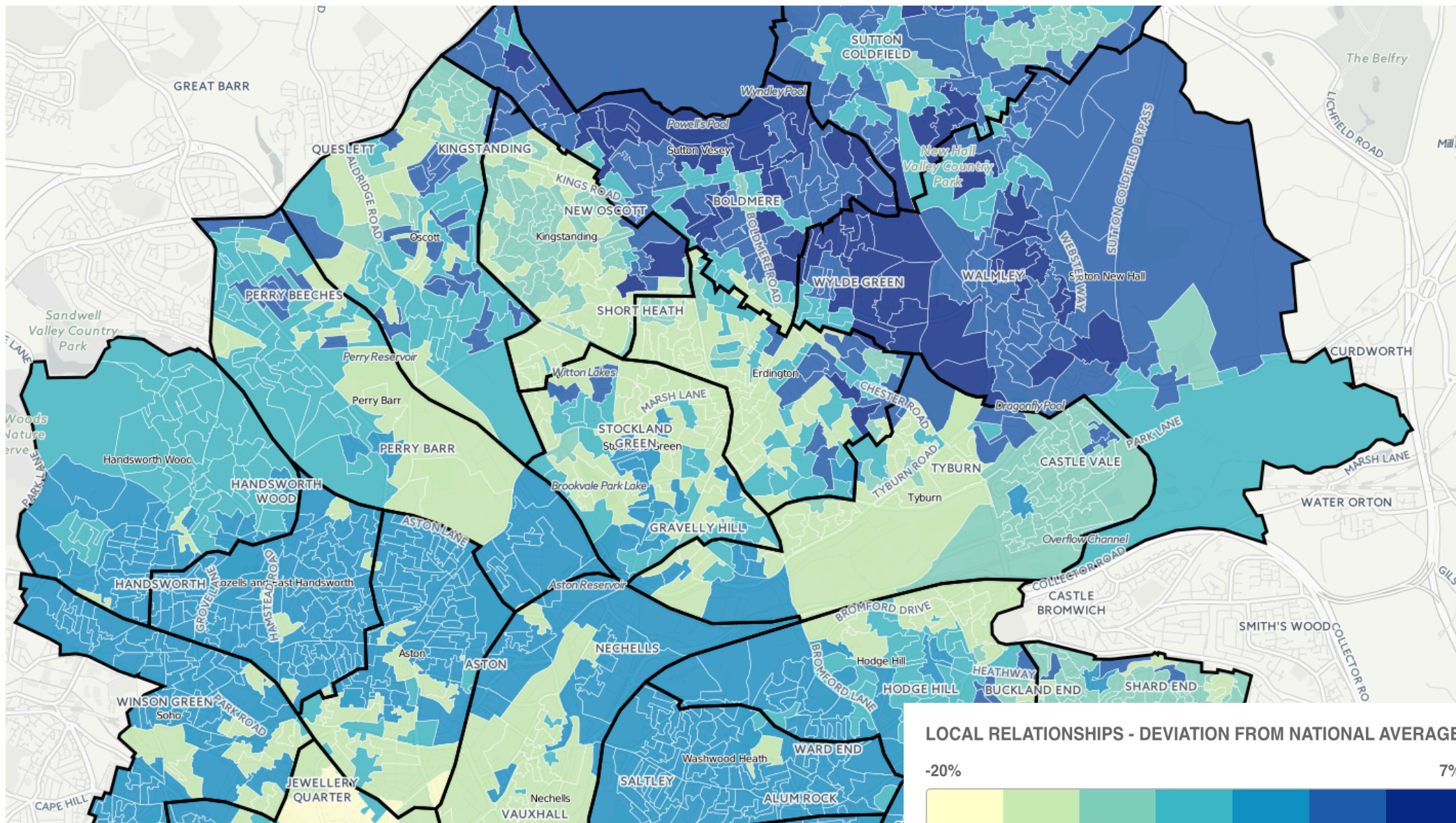


Local relationships: Castle Vale Estate



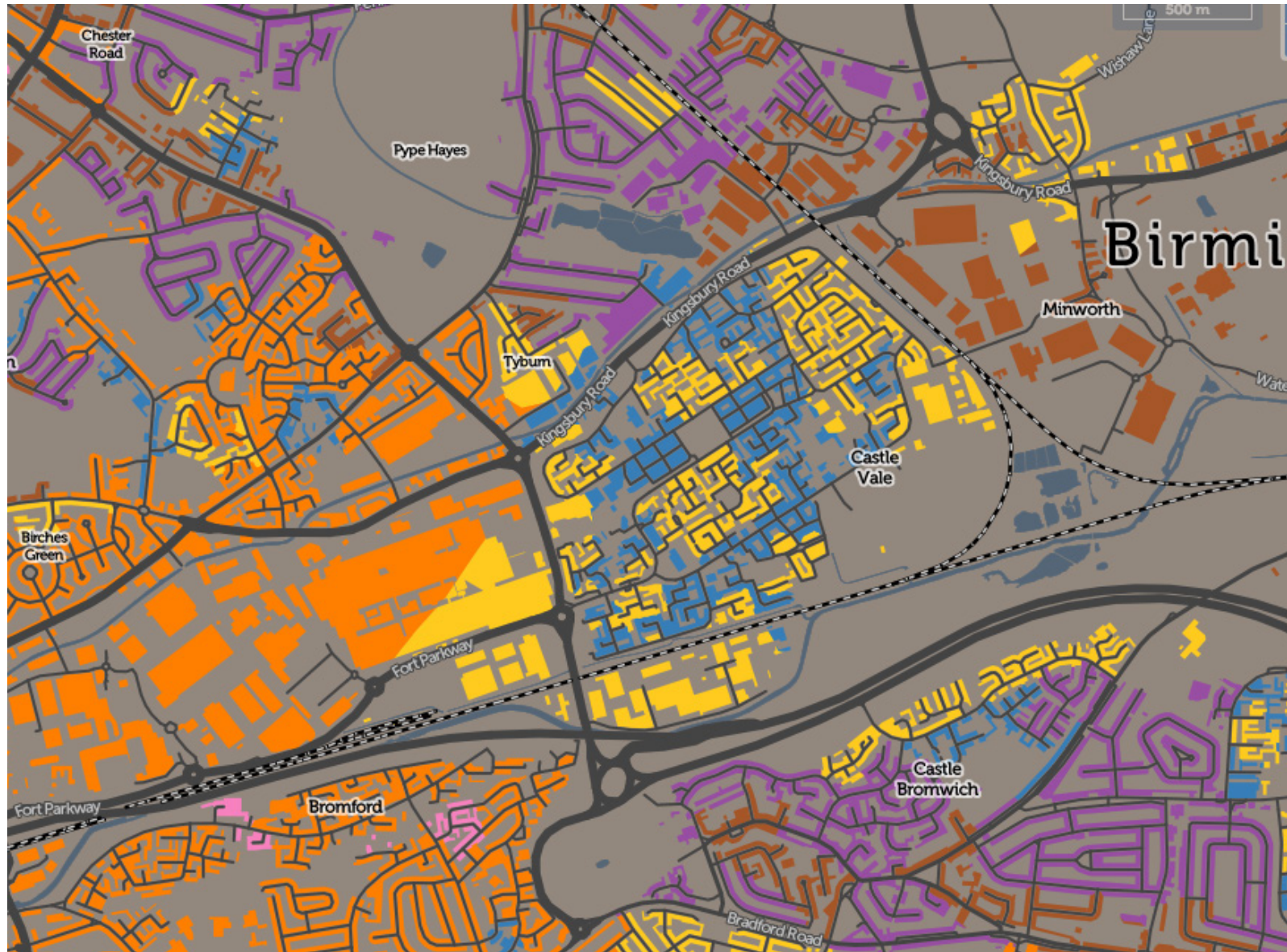
National average

Local relationships: wider Birmingham area



Appendix: more on Area Classifications

Map of Output Area Classifications: Castle Vale Estate



ONS has named the different Area Classifications³

Blue = “Constrained City Dwellers”

Yellow = “Hard Pressed Living”

Brown = “Urbanites”

Purple = “Suburbanites”

Orange = “Metropolitan Multi-cultural”

Source: Consumer Data Research Centre <https://maps.cdrc.ac.uk/#/geodemographics/oac11/default/BTTTFTT/14/-1.7977/52.5153/>

³ ONS (2015) “Pen Portraits for the 2015 Area Classification for Output Areas”

Detailed descriptions of Output Area Classifications: Castle Vale Estate



The Castle Vale Estate and the surrounding area includes Output Areas (areas with a population of between around 120 households) that have a wide range of different Area Classifications, including eight different supergroups (listed below).

Area Classifications are descriptive of a broad set of sociogeographic characteristics. The “pen portraits” of each supergroup in the area below are taken from ONS descriptions.

Constrained city dwellers (supergroup 7)

This supergroup has a lower proportion of people aged 5 to 14 and a higher level aged 65 and over than nationally. It is more densely populated than the UK average. People are more likely to be single or divorced. There is a lower representation of all the non-White ethnic groups and of people who were born in other EU countries. There is a lower proportion of households with no children. Households are more likely to live in flats and to live in social rented accommodation, and there is a higher prevalence of overcrowding. There is a higher proportion of people whose day-to-day activities are limited, and lower qualification levels than nationally. There is a higher level of unemployment in the supergroup. There are no particular industries in which workers are most likely to be employed, but some industries such as information and communication, and the education sector are underrepresented.

Hard pressed living (supergroup 8)

The population of this group is most likely to be found in urban surroundings, predominately in northern England and southern Wales. There is

less non-White ethnic group representation than elsewhere in the UK, and a higher than average proportion of residents born in the UK and Ireland.

Rates of divorce and separation are above the national average. Households are more likely to have non-dependent children and are more likely to live in semi-detached or terraced properties, and to socially rent. There is a smaller proportion of people with higher level qualifications than the national average, and higher rates of unemployment. Those in employment are more likely to be employed in the mining, manufacturing, energy, wholesale and retail, and transport related industries.

Urbanites (supergroup 5)

The population of this group are most likely to be located in urban areas in southern England and in less dense concentrations in large urban areas elsewhere in the UK. They are more likely to live in either flats or terraces, and to privately rent their home. The supergroup has an average ethnic mix, with an above average number of residents from other EU countries. As a result of this, households are less likely to speak English or Welsh as their main language. Those in employment are more likely to be working in the information and communication, financial, public administration and education related sectors. Compared with the UK, unemployment is lower.

Suburbanites (supergroup 6)

The population of this supergroup is most likely to be located on the outskirts of urban areas. They are more likely to own their own home and to live in semi-detached or detached properties. The population tends to be a mixture of those above retirement age and middle-aged parents with school-

age children. The number of residents who are married or in civil-partnerships is above the national average. Individuals are likely to have higher-level qualifications than the national average, with the levels of unemployment in these areas being below the national average. All non-White ethnic groups have a lower representation when compared with the UK, and the proportion of people born in the UK or Ireland is slightly higher. People are more likely to work in the information and communication, financial, public administration, and education sectors, and use private transport to get to work.

Multicultural metropolitans (supergroup 4)

The population of this supergroup is concentrated in larger urban conurbations in the transitional areas between urban centres and suburbia. They are likely to live in terraced housing that is rented - both private and social. The group has a high ethnic mix, but a below average number of UK and Irish born residents. A result of this is that households are less likely to speak English or Welsh as their main language. Residents are likely to be below retirement age. There is likely to be an above average number of families with children who attend school or college, or who are currently too young to do so. The rates of marriage and divorce are broadly comparable with the national average. The level of qualifications is just under the national average while the rates of unemployment are above it. Residents who are employed are more likely to work in the transport and administrative related industries. Public transport is the most likely method for individuals to get to and from work, since households are less likely to have multiple motor vehicles available to them.

Social Life was set up in 2012 by the Young Foundation to take forward work on innovation and placemaking. All our work is about the relationship between people and the places.

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