

# Towards Socially Sustainable New Towns

*Understanding the value of social perceptive data in the planning of New Towns using Community Dynamics*

# Introduction

Building new towns that can flourish and become socially successful is as important as ensuring that new towns are economically and environmentally sustainable.

Our aim must be to create thriving communities that support wellbeing and resilience and that sit comfortably within their wider area. New housing development should contribute to local identity, support local economics and create facilities for new and longer-standing residents, from parks to shops and schools. The social sustainability of new towns is an issue of public value and of social equity.

## An innovative type of place-based data

However, data describing the social aspects of place, from wellbeing to perceptions of neighbourliness, belonging and safety, is rarely available. In the first stage of any new housing development, data on demographics, the economy and transport, health and ecology will be analysed. Fine grained community data is usually missing from this early work.

Social Life's Community Dynamics data can fill this gap. Community Dynamics predicts, at the hyper-local level, how residents living in or close to the sites of new towns feel about their local areas. This throws light on the strengths and weaknesses of local communities and how they are supporting residents' individual and collective wellbeing.

Community Dynamics data is a strong starting point for new towns: for government, central and local, to set the strategic brief for each site; for developers to ensure the social success of what they build; for communities to understand their local assets as

well as vulnerabilities; for planning and design professionals to create the strategy for each site.

Social Life have been working with Community Dynamics data for over a decade, exploring how it can be used and evolving its content. It underpins our Social Sustainability Framework, a tried and tested tool for boosting the social success of communities.

This report explores Community Dynamics data around the three new town sites identified for early development: Tempsford in Bedfordshire, Chase Park and Crews Hill in Enfield and South Bank, Leeds.

## Why do we need better insight into communities?

The New Towns Taskforce has recognised the important role that social infrastructure and social capital play in the development and delivery of new towns. However, the report and accompanying industry literature do not yet offer practical tools and resources that directly address socially sustainability. This leaves agencies responsible for delivering new housing at scale without the tools or knowledge they need to systematically build strong and thriving communities.

In the past we have often seen how easy it is to overlook the social needs of communities in the drive for delivery and the cost of this for new and longstanding communities.

If you'd like to collaborate in using Community Dynamics or find out more contact [nicola.bacon@social-life.co](mailto:nicola.bacon@social-life.co) →

## The need for place-based data

Place-based data is a first step in building a picture of how communities are currently faring in the 12 areas identified as future new towns. Understanding existing social strengths and vulnerabilities will help understand what is already working well in these communities or not, and understand what support is needed.

By identifying strengths and weaknesses, we can target investment in social infrastructure, design to boost belonging and neighbourliness, creating places that feel safe and welcoming that complement and enhance existing communities. We can make sure that tensions between long-standing and new residents are minimised.

However, data describing how people feel about local areas is difficult to access without resource-intensive local research.

Social Life has created Community Dynamics data as a tool to understand local communities that can become a starting point to support place-based strategies for evidenced-based socially sustainable new towns.

### What the data shows and our observations

Looking at the sites of the three new towns proposed for early action, we see very different patterns of neighbourliness, community cohesion and wellbeing. Understanding these patterns enables

insight, engagement and strategic social infrastructure design to be focused from the outset on the issues that are most likely to lead to social success.

This acknowledges that every place has a local identity and meaning to the community, regardless of the number of people living on or near a site.

In places where community dynamics are likely to be strong around a site, like Tempsford, understanding what is supporting positive attitudes generates a robust starting point for developing social infrastructure, building on what is already working, and ensuring new communities quickly become part of the area.

In sites that sit between areas of strong and weak community dynamics, like Chase Park and Crews Hill, building on what is working in one area can strengthen both the new development and neighbouring areas.

In sites surrounded by areas that are weaker in their social strengths, like Leeds South Bank, priorities for the new development need to include strengthening social dynamics in neighbouring areas, to avoid creating an isolated community with potential social divisions.

Our recommendations and suggested next steps are presented on page 14.



↑ A Social Life field researcher talking to a resident of the Grahame Park Estate, London Borough of Barnet



↑ Residents taking part in Clapham Park Fun Day 2024, London Borough of Lambeth

# Social Life's Community Dynamics data

The UK is rich in data from different surveys that explore how people feel about the neighbourhoods they live in. Over the past ten years, Social Life has developed a methodology for predicting how residents of local neighbourhoods are likely to feel about key indicators, including their sense of belonging, their fear of crime, trust in neighbours and wellbeing.

Using data that is openly available from government and research councils, we can benchmark what we would expect residents to feel about the neighbourhoods they call home. These indicators are central to understanding social sustainability at the local level. This is the basis of much of our work.

We use predictive data to inform our understanding of places, we then test our predictions against the reality of what residents actually think, using a number of different methods. The predictive data we use comes from three national surveys: Understanding Society Survey, the Community Life Survey and Crime Survey England & Wales. 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 the ONS (Office for National Statistics) "Area Classifications" categories at "Output Area" level.

This enables us to see how residents of small areas are likely to feel. This can be very helpful for those planning and designing schemes and projects, both in regeneration schemes, proposals for existing neighbourhoods and new town development. This is predictive data, not a robust portrait of the neighbourhood.

We can use this data as the starting point for making recommendations and developing strategies for design, governance and management that can evolve over time.

Over the next pages, we explore three Community Dynamics indicators in three new town case studies: Tempsford, Enfield and Leeds.



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## Methodology

- 1 We establish OAC classifications of the areas we are focusing on.
- 2 Together with our clients and collaborators we agree which Community Dynamics indicators we are interested in.
- 3 We decide which questions from national surveys most closely match these indicators.
- 4 We take data from the relevant national surveys that include these questions and compare it to the OAC scores, testing for statistical significance.

We can compare the benchmark to actual data about an area, to find out how well a neighbourhood is faring, in comparison to similar areas. Data from actual neighbourhoods could come from:

- resident surveys
- focus groups
- observations
- local services

**This becomes our Community Dynamics benchmark, enabling us to understand the social sustainability of the neighbourhood.**

# Exploring Community Dynamics in three new towns

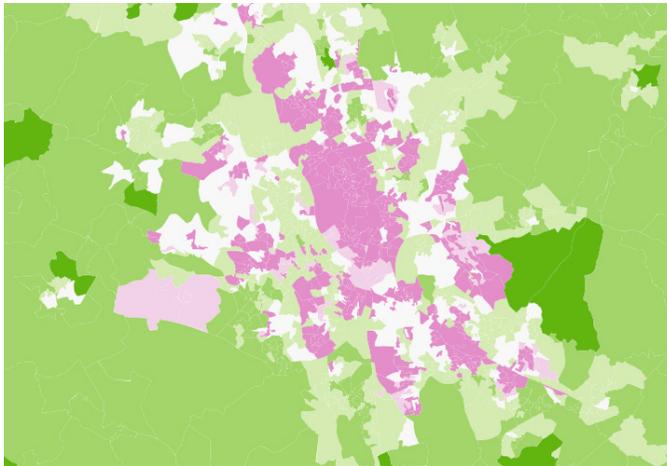
## Indicators we have used

### Neighbourliness

This indicator predicts sense of neighbourliness.

Output areas coloured in darker shades of pink indicate weaker predicted sense of neighbourliness than the national average. Output areas coloured in shades of green indicate stronger predicted sense of neighbourliness compared to the national average.

↓ Neighbourliness in Stoke-on-Trent



weaker predicted neighbourliness

stronger predicted neighbourliness

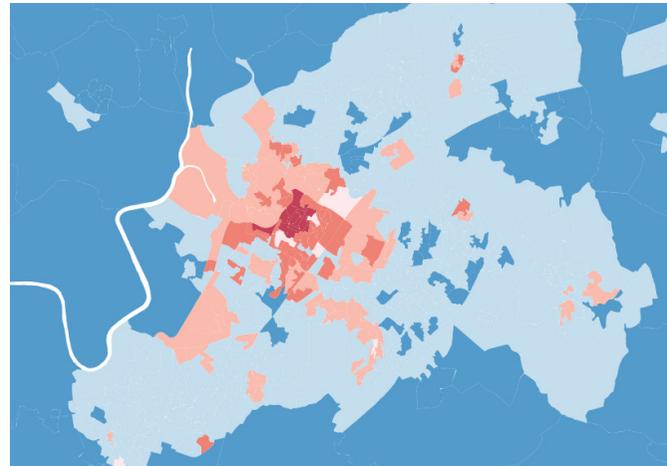
national average

### Social cohesion

This indicator predicts feelings of social cohesion.

Output areas coloured in shades of red indicate weaker predicted sense of social cohesion than the national average. Output areas coloured in shades of blue indicate stronger predicted sense of social cohesion compared to the national average.

↓ Social cohesion in Gloucester



weaker predicted social cohesion

stronger predicted social cohesion

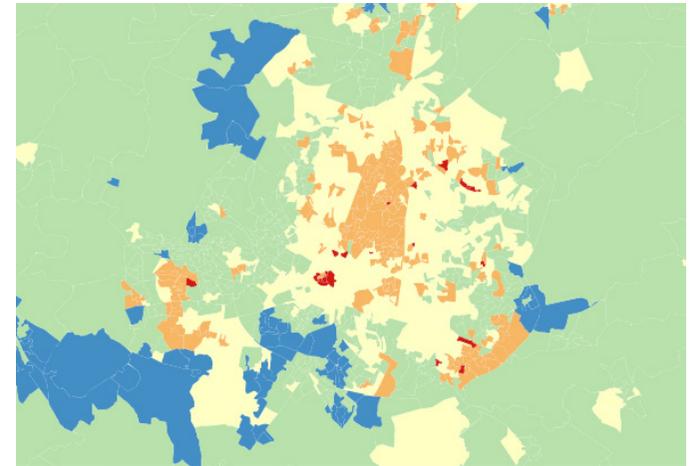
national average

### Wellbeing

This indicator predicts sense of wellbeing.

Output areas coloured in red, orange and yellow indicate weaker predicted sense of wellbeing than the national average. Output areas coloured in green and blue indicate stronger predicted wellbeing compared to the national average.

↓ Wellbeing in Coventry



weaker predicted wellbeing

stronger predicted wellbeing

national average

# A typology of proposed new towns

The proposed sites of the 12 new towns range from town and city extensions to greenfield development.

Each typology will demand a different approach to social sustainability to maximise benefits for communities:

## Greenfield

Greenfield new towns are proposed on undeveloped greenfield land. They are typically new, self-contained communities.

## Regeneration

Regeneration new towns are in existing urban areas typically involving densification, retrofit, and/or demolition.

- 1 Adlington, Cheshire East
- 2 Heyford Park, Cherwell
- 3 Tempsford, Central Bedfordshire

- 8 South Bank, Leeds
- 9 Victoria North, Manchester
- 10 Thamesmead, Greenwich

## Urban extensions

Urban extension new towns are built on greenfield or brownfield land. They are typically extensions of existing urban areas.

## Densification

Densification new towns typically involve building new homes in existing built up areas through infill development.

- 4 Brabazon and the West Innovation Arc
- 5 Chase Park and Crews Hill, Enfield
- 6 Marlcombe, East Devon
- 7 Worcestershire Parkway, Wychavon

- 11 Milton Keynes
- 12 Plymouth



In the next section we explore Community Dynamics in three new towns earmarked for early development. →

# *The case studies*

*Tempsford, Central Bedfordshire | pg 8-9*

*Chase Park and Crews Hill, Enfield | pg 10-11*

*South Bank, Leeds | pg 12-13*



## How to read the case studies

We have picked three case studies that have been prioritised by government for early action:

- Tempsford, Central Bedfordshire
- Chase Park and Crews Hill, Enfield
- South Bank, Leeds

The case studies are structured in the same way:

- ① Introduction page describing the location of the new town. It provides information about the planned new town including its capacity and transport links.
- ② Analysis of the three Community Dynamics indicators is presented. Each map is annotated with key patterns in each area.
- ③ Guidance on how to interpret the maps is provided under the subheading “Key observations”.
- ④ Our thoughts on what the data means for new towns is found under the subheading “Potential next steps”.

## Introduction page

**Tempsford, Central Bedfordshire**

**Tempsford today**

Tempsford is 11 kilometres east of Bedford in the centre of the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor, close to other villages including Roaton to the north, Sandy to the south, Great Bedford to the west and Everton to the east. It is close to the A1 and near two major train lines, with a new East-West rail station planned. The IMD scores the area as around the national average.

Tempsford is said to be where Boudicca fought the Romans. In the Second World War flights taking supplies to the resistance were launched from nearby RAF Tempsford. The village pub dates back to the 16th century. At the moment the parish has a population of over 600 people; new development in neighbouring villages is generating some local opposition.

**Tempsford New Town**

The new town proposal aims to create over 40,000 homes in a standalone greenfield settlement.





**Case studies**

## Social cohesion

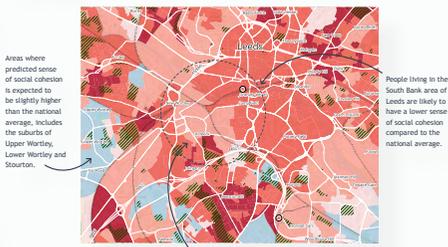
**South Bank, Leeds**

**Key observations**

In Leeds South Bank, neighbourliness and social cohesion are likely to be low in the areas surrounding the site. This suggests an opportunity to boost neighbourliness and social cohesion through new facilities and social infrastructure.

**Potential next steps**

1. Audit socio-economic data including IMD, jobs, local economy and health
2. Map existing social infrastructure and social supports, including informal groups and provision. Identify gaps
3. Agree an evolving strategy to build social supports for the new development, including formal and informal social infrastructure
4. Develop social design implications for first stages of development, including boosting neighbourliness and belonging in surrounding neighbourhoods.



Areas where predicted sense of social cohesion is expected to be slightly higher than the national average, includes the suburbs of Upper Wortley, Lower Wortley and Souton.

People living in the South Bank area of Leeds are likely to have a lower sense of social cohesion compared to the national average.

People living in areas around Holbeck are likely to have negative perceptions of social cohesion compared to the national average.

**Case studies**

## Neighbourliness

**Chase Park and Crews Hill, Enfield**

**Key observations:**

Neighbourliness, wellbeing and social cohesion are likely to be lower towards more urban areas of Enfield but strengthen moving into the green belt. Insight into what supports or undermines community strengths will ensure the benefits of new social infrastructure are shared, boosting community wellbeing, cohesion and neighbourliness where it is currently weak.

**Potential next steps:**

1. Audit socio-economic data including IMD, jobs, local economy and health
2. Map existing social infrastructure and social supports, including informal groups and provision. Identify gaps
3. Agree an evolving strategy to build social supports, including formal and informal social infrastructure
4. Develop social design implications for first stages of development, maximising linkages to existing assets.



Residents in areas around Crews Hill and Chase Park, with residents of small areas around Worts End, Grange Park and Oakwood likely to feel differently about their sense of neighbourliness.

Towards Enfield, people living in areas such as Gordon Hill and Fory Hill are likely to have lower perceptions of neighbourliness although these small areas are peppered among areas where perceptions of neighbourliness are more positive.

**Case studies**

## Wellbeing

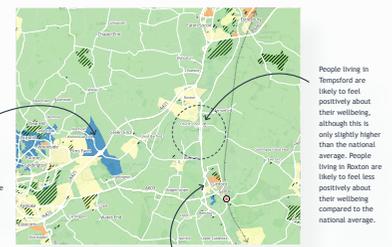
**Tempsford, Central Bedfordshire**

**Key observations**

In Tempsford neighbourliness and social cohesion in the areas closest to the site are likely to be strong. It will be important to understand what is supporting this, to underpin strategies to boost what exists and safeguard current strengths. Wellbeing is also likely to be strong, with pockets of weakness that need to be understood.

**Potential next steps**

1. Audit socio-economic data including IMD, jobs, local economy and health
2. Map existing social infrastructure and social supports, including informal groups and provision
3. Agree an evolving strategy to build social supports for the new development, including formal and informal social infrastructure
4. Develop social design implications for first stages of development, maximising linkages to existing assets to build neighbourliness and belonging.



People living in some of the north and eastern suburbs of Bedford are likely to feel positively about their wellbeing, including around the villages of Rotheroad, Workhouse End and Brinkhill.

People living in Tempsford are likely to feel positively about their wellbeing, although this is only slightly higher than the national average. People living in Roaton are likely to feel less positively about their wellbeing compared to the national average.

In Gifford, some small areas are predicted to feel negatively about their wellbeing. Some neighbourhoods south of Sandy are likely to have more positive perceptions of wellbeing.

**Case studies**

# Tempsford, Central Bedfordshire

## Tempsford today

Tempsford is 11 kilometres east of Bedford in the centre of the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor, close to other villages including Roxton to the north, Sandy to the south, Great Barford to the west and Everton to the east. It is close to the A1 and near two major train lines, with a new East-West Rail station planned. The IMD scores the area as around the national average.

Tempsford is said to be where Boudicca fought the Romans. In the Second World War flights taking supplies to the resistance were launched from nearby RAF Tempsford. The village pub dates back to the 16th century. At the moment the parish has a population of over 600 people, new development in neighbouring villages is generating some local opposition.



OpenStreetMaps



## Tempsford New Town

The new town proposal aims to create over 40,000 homes in a standalone greenfield settlement.



Station Road from Tempsford. Copyright Hugh Venables, April 2025: licensed for reuse under this [Creative Commons Licence](#).



View of Sandy looking north towards Tempsford. Copyright Thomas Nugent, May 2011: licensed for reuse under this [Creative Commons Licence](#).



Station Road, Tempsford. Copyright Richard Dorrell, November 2013: licensed for reuse under this [Creative Commons Licence](#).

# Tempsford, Central Bedfordshire

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## Potential next steps

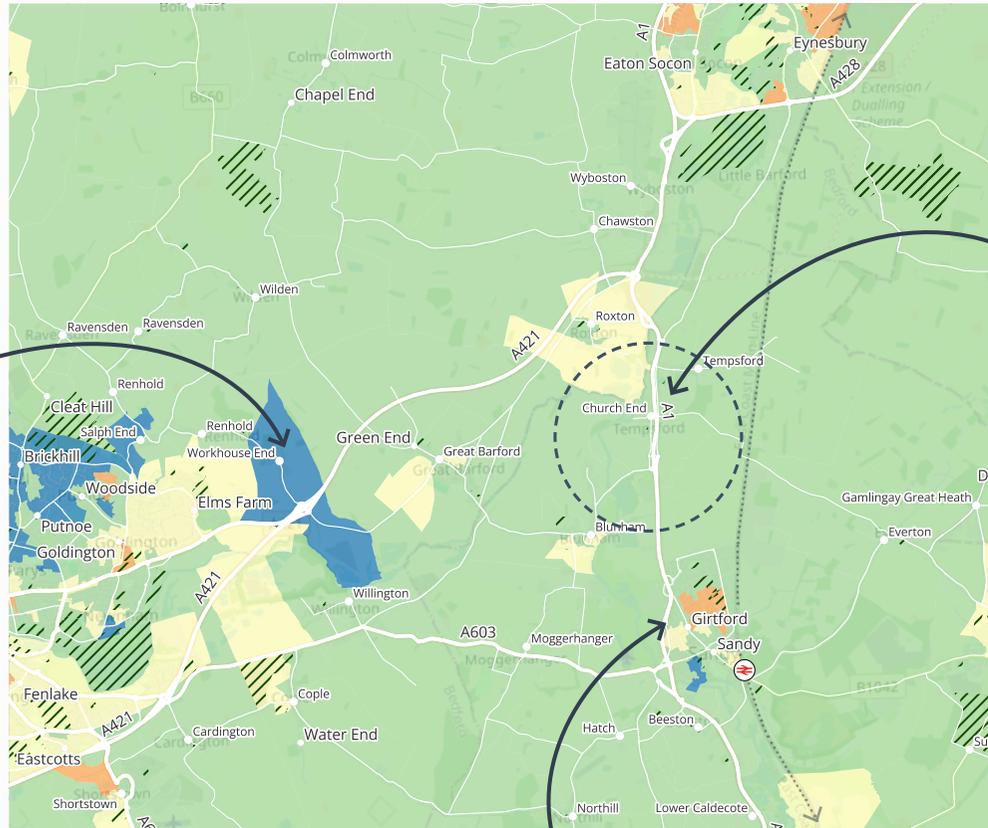
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### Case studies

## Wellbeing

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People living in Tempsford are likely to feel positively about their wellbeing, although this is only slightly higher than the national average. People living in Roxton are likely to feel less positively about their wellbeing compared to the national average.

In Girtford, some small areas are predicted to feel negatively about their wellbeing. Some neighbourhoods south of Sandy are likely to have more positive perceptions of wellbeing.

Data modelled from Understanding Society Survey data and ONS Area Classifications. Ordnance Survey Data - contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0. CDRC 2011 OAC Geodata Pack by the ESRC Consumer Data Research Centre' Contains National Statistics data Crown copyright and database right 2015; Contains Ordnance Survey data Crown copyright and database right 2015.

# Chase Park and Crews Hill, Enfield

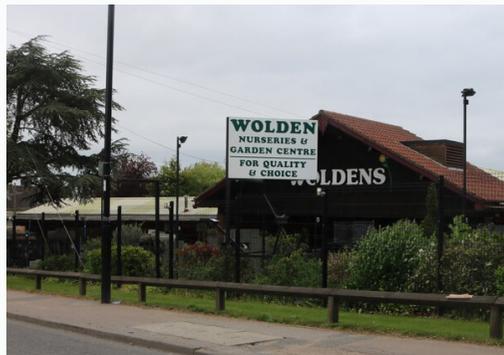
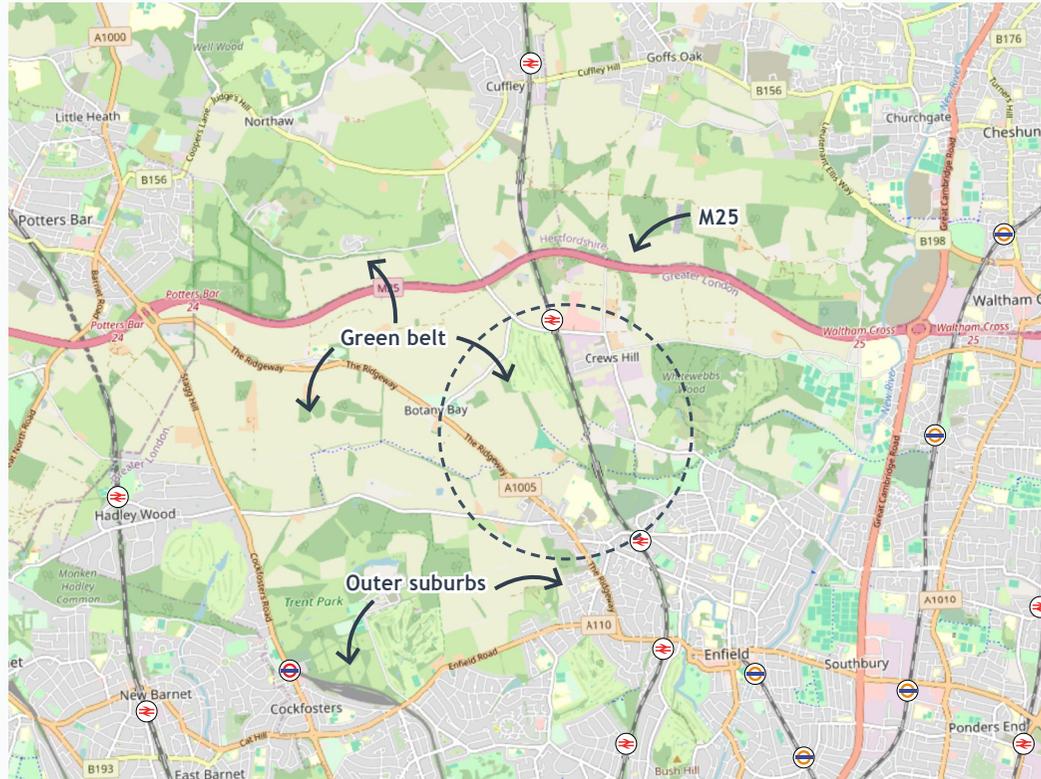
## Chase Park and Crews Hill today

Crews Hill is a small village which is home to several garden centres and plant nurseries, known as the “garden centre golden mile”. The village is surrounded by the Green Belt, and has a population of around 550. Chase Park is south of Crews Hill, next to Chase Farm Hospital on the suburban edge of Gordon Hill. It is also currently designated as greenfield land. The IMD scores the area as being more deprived than the national average.

The sites are both in Greater London, south of the M25, 2-3km north west of Enfield Town, an important employment and retail centre. There is some opposition to the scale of redevelopment in the green belt, and local groups have articulated concerns about affordability and pressure on services.

## Chase Park and Crews Hill New Town

The two sites have a combined area of 884 hectares, the intention is to build up to 21,000 homes. The New Towns Taskforce report sets the ambition that 50% of these homes would be affordable.



Wolden Nursery on Cattlegate Road. Copyright David Howard, May 2020: licensed for reuse under this [Creative Commons Licence](#).



The Ridgeway Enfield and farmland. Copyright Christine Matthews, March 2007: licensed for reuse under this [Creative Commons Licence](#).



Farmland north of Ridgeway. Copyright Bikeboy, November 2025: licensed for reuse under this [Creative Commons Licence](#).

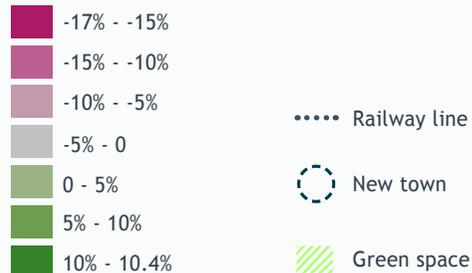
# Chase Park and Crews Hill, Enfield

## Key observations:

Neighbourliness, wellbeing and social cohesion are likely to be lower towards more urban areas of Enfield but strengthen moving into the green belt. Insight into what supports or undermines community strengths will ensure the benefits of new social infrastructure are shared, boosting community wellbeing, cohesion and neighbourliness where it is currently weak.

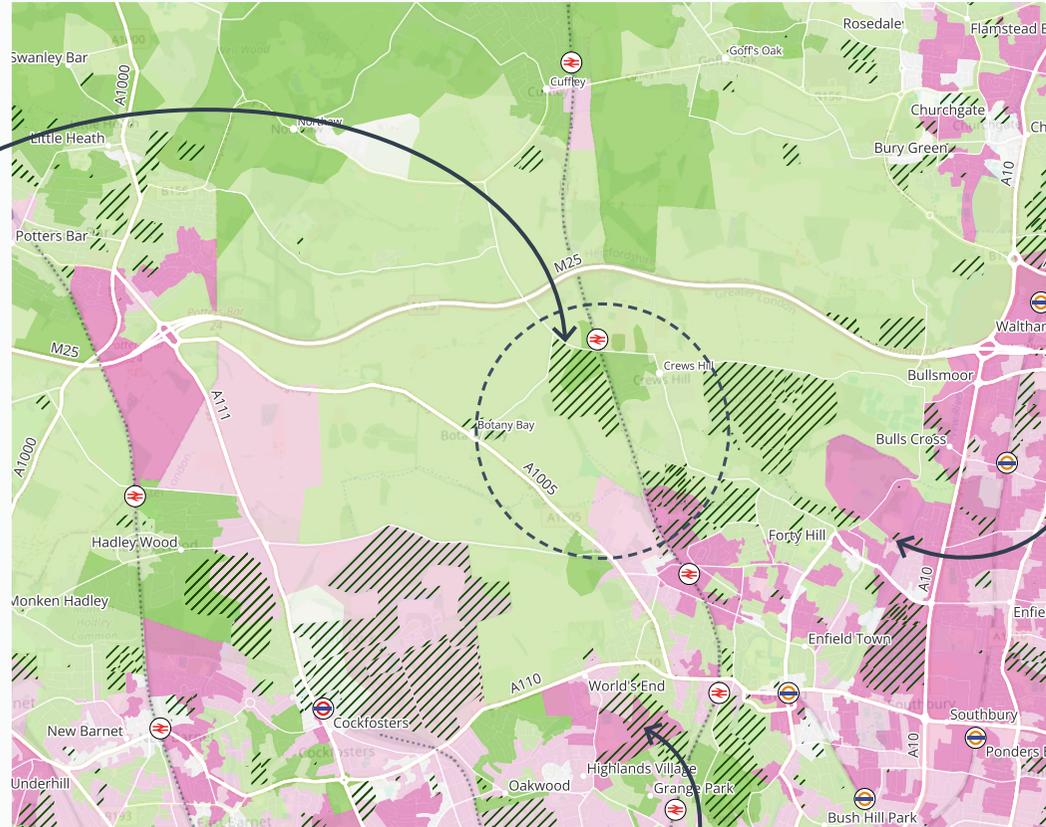
## Potential next steps:

1. Audit socio-economic data including IMD, jobs, local economy and health
2. Map existing social infrastructure and social supports, including informal groups and provision, identify gaps
3. Agree an evolving strategy to build social supports, including formal and informal social infrastructure
4. Develop social design implications for first stages of development, maximising linkages to existing assets.



## Neighbourliness

Residents in areas around Crews Hill and the Ridgeway are likely to have positive perceptions of neighbourliness. This sentiment is also predicted for areas north of the M25 including Cuffley and Northaw.



Towards Enfield, people living in areas such as Gordon Hill and Forty Hill are likely to have lower perceptions of neighbourliness although these small areas are peppered among areas where perceptions of neighbourliness are more positive.

There is a varied picture to the south of Crews Hill and Chase Park, with residents of small areas around World's End, Grange Park and Oakwood likely to feel differently about their sense of neighbourliness.

Data modelled from Understanding Society Survey data and ONS Area Classifications. Ordnance Survey Data - contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0. CDRC 2011 OAC Geodata Pack by the ESRC Consumer Data Research Centre' Contains National Statistics data Crown copyright and database right 2015; Contains Ordnance Survey data Crown copyright and database right 2015.

# South Bank, Leeds

## Leeds South Bank today

Leeds South Bank is a former inner-city industrial area around Holbeck and Hunslet, characterised by derelict buildings, empty land and industrial estates. Leeds City Council launched their plan to regenerate the area a decade ago - the Tetley Brewery site was the first site to come forward.

The River Aire runs to the north of the site, separating it from the city centre with its flourishing night-life and retail, and large student population. The M621 runs to the south, providing connection to the M62 and M1. The area is deprived, neighbouring areas have the lowest IMD scores in the city.

## Leeds South Bank New Town

The new town proposal for South Bank Leeds identifies capacity for up to 13,000 new homes and three million square feet of new commercial space, on a 258 hectare site.



OpenStreetMaps



Centenary Bridge Leeds .Copyright Chris Sayles, January 2025: licensed for reuse under this [Creative Commons Licence](#).



New high rise development, Water Lane Holbeck. Copyright Stephen Craven, March 2025: licensed for reuse under this [Creative Commons Licence](#).



Tower Works. Copyright Alan Murray-Rust, December 2017: licensed for reuse under this [Creative Commons Licence](#).

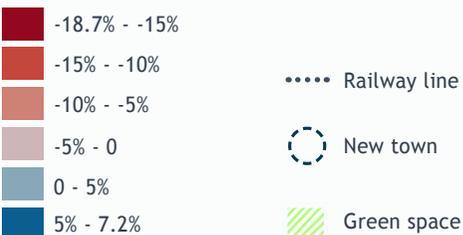
# South Bank, Leeds

## Key observations

In Leeds South Bank, neighbourliness and social cohesion are likely to be low in the areas surrounding the site. This suggests an opportunity to boost neighbourliness and social cohesion through new facilities and social infrastructure.

## Potential next steps

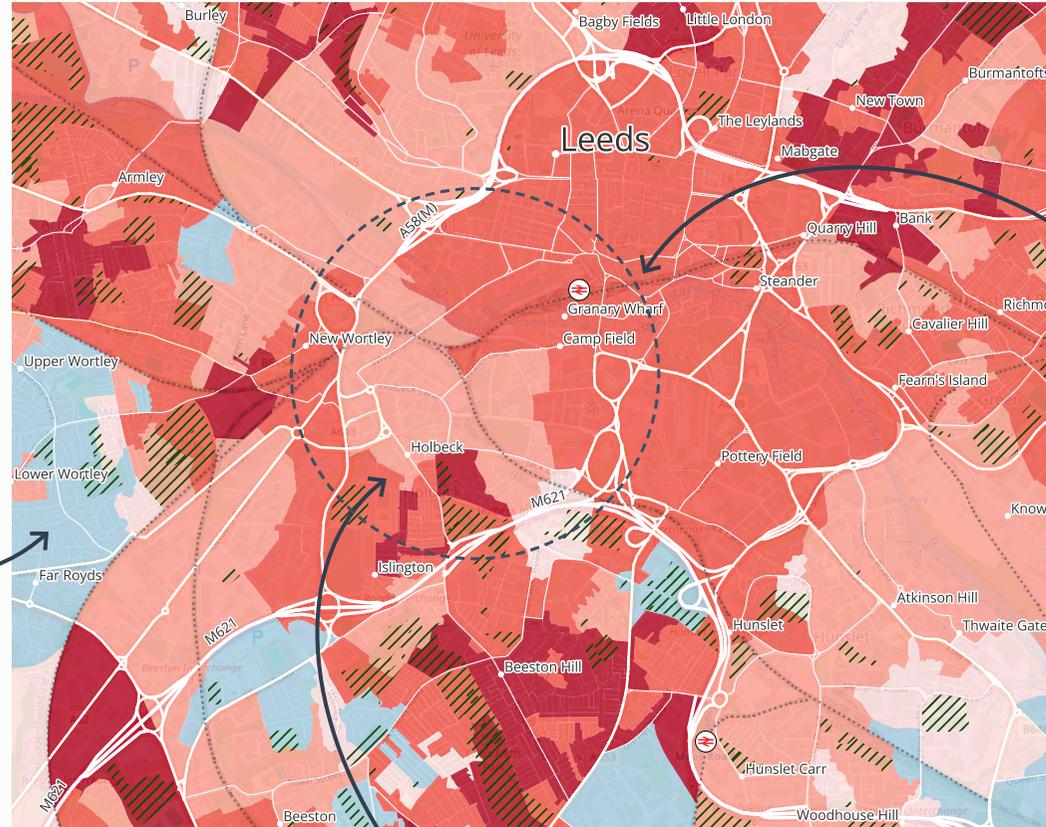
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### Case studies

## Social cohesion

Areas where predicted sense of social cohesion is expected to be slightly higher than the national average, includes the suburbs of Upper Wortley, Lower Wortley and Stourton.



People living in the South Bank area of Leeds are likely to have a lower sense of social cohesion compared to the national average.

People living in areas around Holbeck are likely to have negative perceptions of social cohesion compared to the national average.

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# Moving from predictive data to place-based evidence

## Our recommendations

The three new towns we have mapped in part are set in wider areas where predicted neighbourliness, wellbeing and community cohesion show different patterns.

Planned new towns will be developed in places where existing communities have very varied experiences.

The starting point for developing strategic plans to boost social sustainability is therefore different in each place. We see **four** steps to developing a comprehensive approach to social sustainability. →

- 
- |          |                                     |  |
|----------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Build a data portrait</b>        | Audit data describing social and community need alongside Community Dynamics data to build an initial data portrait.   |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Assess social infrastructure</b> | Assess existing social infrastructure and social supports, considering how they are used and by whom. Social infrastructure should be defined widely to include informal supports like cafés and on- and off-line networks. This can dovetail with or become part of early engagement.   |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Early stage strategies</b>       | Develop early stage social infrastructure and social sustainability strategies, working with communities and agencies across sectors. These can set out a phased route to thriving community. These must maximise the use of existing assets, temporary and meanwhile provision and incremental development of social infrastructure. Plans and strategies should serve different groups and interests of local communities within and beyond the red line of development. |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Develop design strategies</b>    | Develop social design strategies: to identify how design of buildings and landscape can boost sense of belonging and neighbourliness, taking advantage of the existing physical environment and landscape, working with the grain of what already exists.  |
|          | <b>and then consider...</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– In-depth research with residents of areas identified for new towns to understand how communities are faring today, as well as their hopes and worries for the future;</li><li>– Ongoing engagement with residents through governance and stewardship structures enabling them to take part in decision-making and action.</li></ul>  |
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# For agencies involved in taking forward New Town developments, we can:

Provide in-depth analysis of Community Dynamics, cross-referencing this with deprivation and other social needs data.



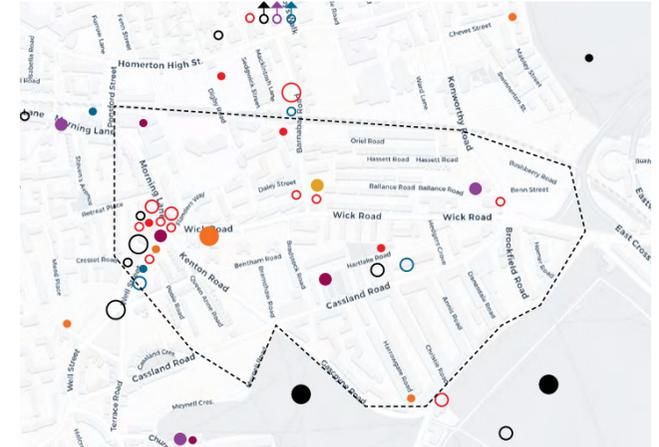
➤ Read more about our multi-method assessment of the impact of housing growth including a comprehensive data portrait of Southwark for Southwark Council: [Understanding Southwark](#)

Develop social sustainability strategies to ensure that design, management, governance and provision of social infrastructure are put in place to support new communities and their integration with existing communities, and evolve over time to meet changing need and demand.



➤ Read more about our fourth social impact assessment on the South Acton Estate in west London: [The social impacts of regeneration in South Acton](#)

Develop social infrastructure strategies that set out a plan for new permanent and meanwhile provision, and how this can leverage the strengths of existing provision in neighbouring settlements - ensuring that both long-standing and new residents benefit from the building of new towns.



➤ Read more about our work on social infrastructure and social integration for the GLA: [Connective Social Infrastructure](#)

**If you'd like to collaborate or find out more, we'd love to hear from you:**

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[nicola.bacon@social-life.co](mailto:nicola.bacon@social-life.co)

Simeon Shtebunaev, Senior Researcher:  
[simeon.shtebunaev@social-life.co](mailto:simeon.shtebunaev@social-life.co)





# *From understanding social data to achieving social sustainability*

# Socially sustainable new towns

Social sustainability is often overlooked within wider discussions about sustainability and tends to be sidelined in mainstream debates. In the UK, social sustainability is mandated by national planning policy, but, as in many other countries, it is rarely the focus of decision-making in planning policy or guidance on new development.

Without the right social infrastructure and supports to build a sense of belonging, neighbourliness and local identity, new communities can quickly spiral into decline.

Managing the long-term costs and consequences of poor social design and social failure falls on communities and agencies across sectors. Weak social sustainability leaves communities vulnerable to tensions and division.

There is increasing global interest in social sustainability amongst policy makers, academics, governments and the various agencies involved in the process of house building, planning, and urban regeneration.

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***“Social sustainability is a process for creating sustainable, successful places that promote wellbeing, by understanding what people need from the places they live and work in. 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.”***

Social Life’s definition



↑ RockiFest, The Rockingham Estate, London Borough of Southwark



↑ A resident’s new home in South Acton, London Borough of Ealing

## Social sustainability in the new towns literature

As the government progresses its work on the 12 locations earmarked for potential new towns across England, the central need for social sustainability needs to be acknowledged.

The New Towns Taskforce has acknowledged the need for well-considered provision of social infrastructure, and the importance of consistent community engagement in creating resilient design proposals.

A resident-led process, as outlined in the report, empowers residents to build social capital, increase voluntary participation, foster a sense of ownership over proposals and shape the new town's local identity.

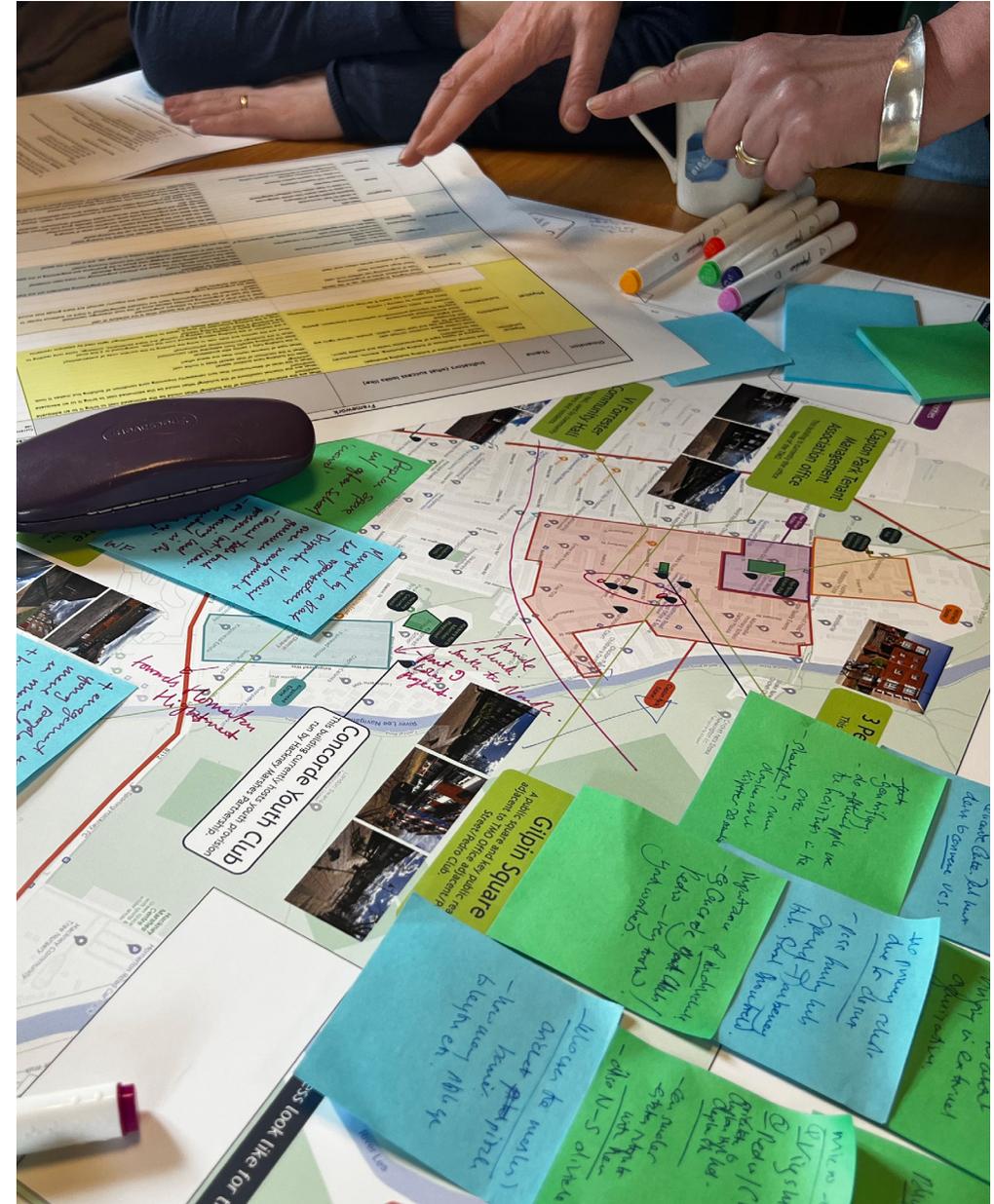
### ➤ [Design for Social Sustainability](#) (Social Life, 2012, page 5)

***“Pressure to provide decent and affordable private and social housing in communities that are economically, environmentally and socially sustainable will present huge challenges to governments.***

***This is not a new problem; there is much to be learnt from past experience of creating new towns and communities.”***

***“The provision of social infrastructure is also fundamental to the success of new towns, in making them not just housing developments, but fully functioning new communities that meet the everyday needs of residents, as well as fostering a sense of belonging and identity. By integrating schools, health services, and community spaces early in the development process, new towns can attract a diverse population and support economic growth.”***

New Towns Taskforce Report (2025, paragraph 253, page 107)



↑ Social Life running neighbourhood workshops in Kings Park, London Borough of Hackney

## Social Life's framework

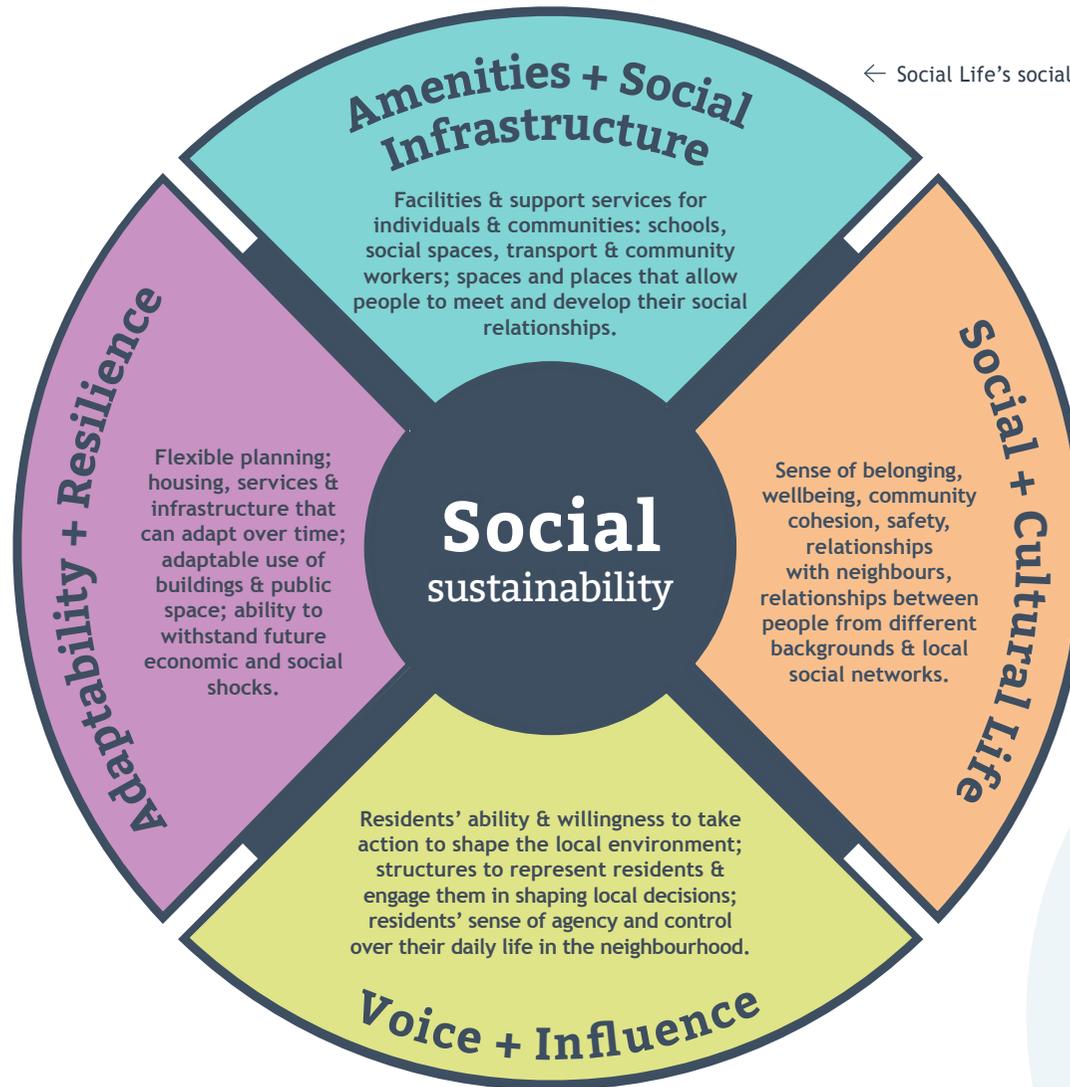
Social Life has developed a framework for understanding how places thrive. This is based on a review of the evidence from the UK and internationally about what makes places succeed or fail, originally commissioned by the Homes and Communities Agency. We call this our Social Sustainability Framework.

It has four key dimensions:

-  Amenities & social infrastructure
-  Social & cultural life
-  Voice & influence
-  Adaptability & resilience

All four elements are needed in every place, however social success and sustainability cannot be prescribed and described in the same way as standards for green building and job creation.

Flexibility is needed to reflect local circumstances and the particular nature of every community and its residents.



← Social Life's social sustainability framework (2024)

We want to use the framework to improve the quality of new house building by working with different agencies and organisations.

This could be through short interventions or larger scale involvement. Get in touch if you would like to work with us, or just to speak more about our ideas:

[nicola.bacon@social-life.co](mailto:nicola.bacon@social-life.co)

Document produced by Social Life. Sketches by Toby Pollard.

### **About Social Life**

Social Life is an independent research organisation created by the Young Foundation in 2012, to become a specialist centre of research and innovation about the social life of communities. Our work is about understanding how peoples' day-to-day experience of local places is shaped by the built environment - housing, public spaces, parks and local high streets - and how change, through regeneration, new development or small improvements to public spaces, affects the social fabric, opportunities and wellbeing of local areas.

[www.social-life.co](http://www.social-life.co)

