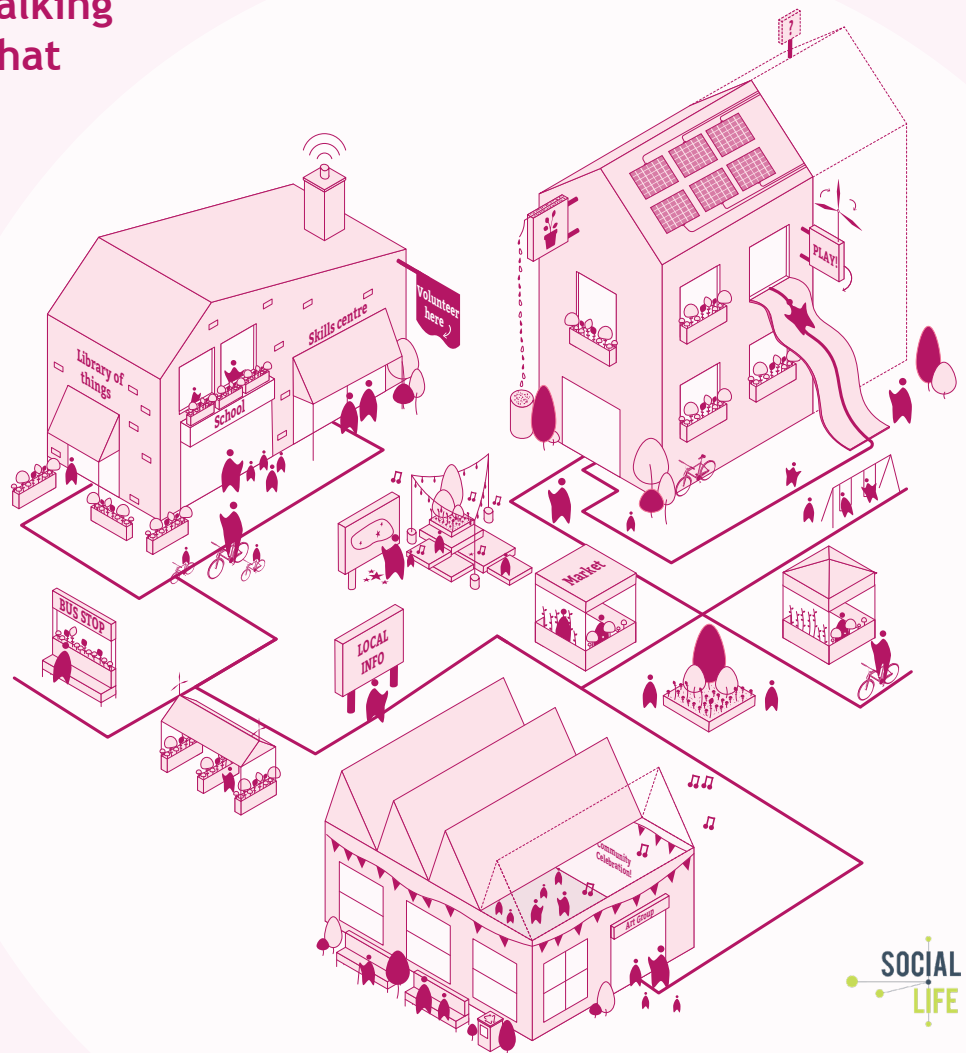


# Exploring social anchors in Walworth

This booklet shares a walking tour around Walworth that explored the everyday spaces that hold the communities together, and the organisations and networks that are vital to local life.

The walk was hosted by Social Life as part of the London Festival of Architecture 2026 in support of the theme 'belonging'.





This booklet was made as part of the London Festival of Architecture 2026. In response to the theme ‘Belonging’, Social Life designed a short walking tour around Walworth that explored local social infrastructure anchors.

We visited six different yet valued social anchors, sharing information about their histories and role in fostering belonging in an area undergoing transformation.

The walk offered a chance to see neighbourhood change through a different lens, celebrating community relationships that outlast the buildings.

Social Life uses the concept of the “*social infrastructure ecosystem*” to understand the interplay of different types of provision in an area, and how parks, GPs surgeries, local cafés, and online and offline networks and groups come together to support a community.

Through understanding how different sorts of provision reinforce each other we can understand what is missing, what is working well, and how change - through regeneration or new development - can both benefit existing communities and users of the space, and people who are new to the place.



# 1: Pullens Yards

Built by James Pullen between 1886-1901, the Pullens Estate is some of the last remaining Victorian tenement buildings, they originally served as live-work spaces for crafts people, makers and artists.

The design supported a sustainable neighbourhood model where communities could live and work in the same place. In 1977 Southwark Council purchased the estate and demolished half the buildings for redevelopment.

Residents came together to prevent further demolition by inviting squatters to occupy the empty blocks.

Eventually the squatters were granted tenancies. Today the yards still house artists, potters, ceramicists and dressmakers - and serves as a living example of community resistance.

For more information about Pullens Yards, please visit: [pullensyards.co.uk](http://pullensyards.co.uk)



↑ Peacock Yard, where Social Life are based

# 2: St Paul's Church

The original church was built in the 1850s and was almost completely destroyed in the Blitz. The current church was built in 1959 in a modernist style using reinforced concrete and is Grade 2 listed.

Places of worship are some of our oldest pieces of social infrastructure and St Paul's has a community centre on the ground floor along with the church itself.

As well as hosting regular Sunday service, the church is used by a nursery group for stay and play for young children and their parents.

St Paul's Church also has mid-week activities for adults and a youth group that meets on a weekly basis. The church also host a foodbank.

For more information about St Paul's Church please visit: [stpaulslorrimoresquare.org](http://stpaulslorrimoresquare.org)



↑ St Paul's Church, Lorrimore Square



# 3: Walworth Garden

Walworth Garden was founded in 1987 after a group of local activists reclaimed a derelict corner of land in the busy London borough of Southwark, and made it into a thriving community garden.

Throughout the decades, it has served the community and remained a place where all are welcome, to relax, learn, and grow.

The garden offers accredited horticultural training, community workshops across health, wellbeing, and the environment, and hosts Social and Therapeutic Horticulture groups.

They host regular volunteering sessions and welcome visitors 7 days a week.

For more information about Walworth Garden, please visit: [walworthgarden.org.uk](http://walworthgarden.org.uk)



↑ Walworth Garden Farm on Manor Place

# 4: Alberta Fruit Commons

The Alberta Fruit Commons is an urban food-growing initiative located on the Alberta Estate. The project began in 2017 with the aim of reviving the estate's original planting from the 1950s, which included fruit and nut trees that were planted across communal garden areas.

Since 2017, the project has planted 26 trees and over 100 fruiting bushes and plants across eight communal gardens. Beyond food production and improving the local environment, the project aims

to support community cohesion through monthly garden sessions and annual events, bringing together long-standing residents, newcomers, as well as supporting inter-generational socialising.

The project was established by the Alberta TRA and the model encourages resident-led care, where watering and other duties are shared between residents.

For more information about Alberta Fruit Commons, please visit: [albertatra.org](http://albertatra.org)

↓ Alberta Fruit Commons



# 5: Newington Estate MUGA

The Newington Green estate was built in the 1980s and houses 430 properties. As part of the regeneration of Elephant and Castle, the Walk Elephant initiative has secured funding to connect local neighbourhoods and estates to Walworth Road.

The scheme connects Steedman Street and Hampton Street, connecting Draper and Newington Estate to Walworth Road and Elephant Park.

Social Life's office in Pullens Yards is around the corner and our staff frequently observe how well used the grass area is, as well as the TRA Hall and the caged play area (MUGA).

The MUGA is open from 9AM to 6PM in the summer months and is very popular with local children and teenagers.



↑ The Newington Estate

# 6: Fareshares Co-op

A couple of years after the 1986 evictions, Fareshares Food Co-op moved to the squatted empty shop, with volunteer workers providing cheap whole foods and vegetables at a fair price.

Fareshares is still running today and operates as a non-profit-making community project that provides good food for the community at affordable prices, supporting healthy eating.

The co-op claims it is not a shop but an experiment in community, it is run on an entirely voluntary, unpaid basis by the people who use it.

Fareshares serves as a vital piece of community infrastructure and encourages all users to become active in running the project.

For more information about Fareshares Co-op please visit: [fareshares.org.uk](http://fareshares.org.uk)



↑ Fareshares co-op and 56a Infoshop →



# Predicting belonging

Social cohesion, belonging and neighbourhood quality have become urgent topics, as fracturing community cohesion generates increasing concern and debate.

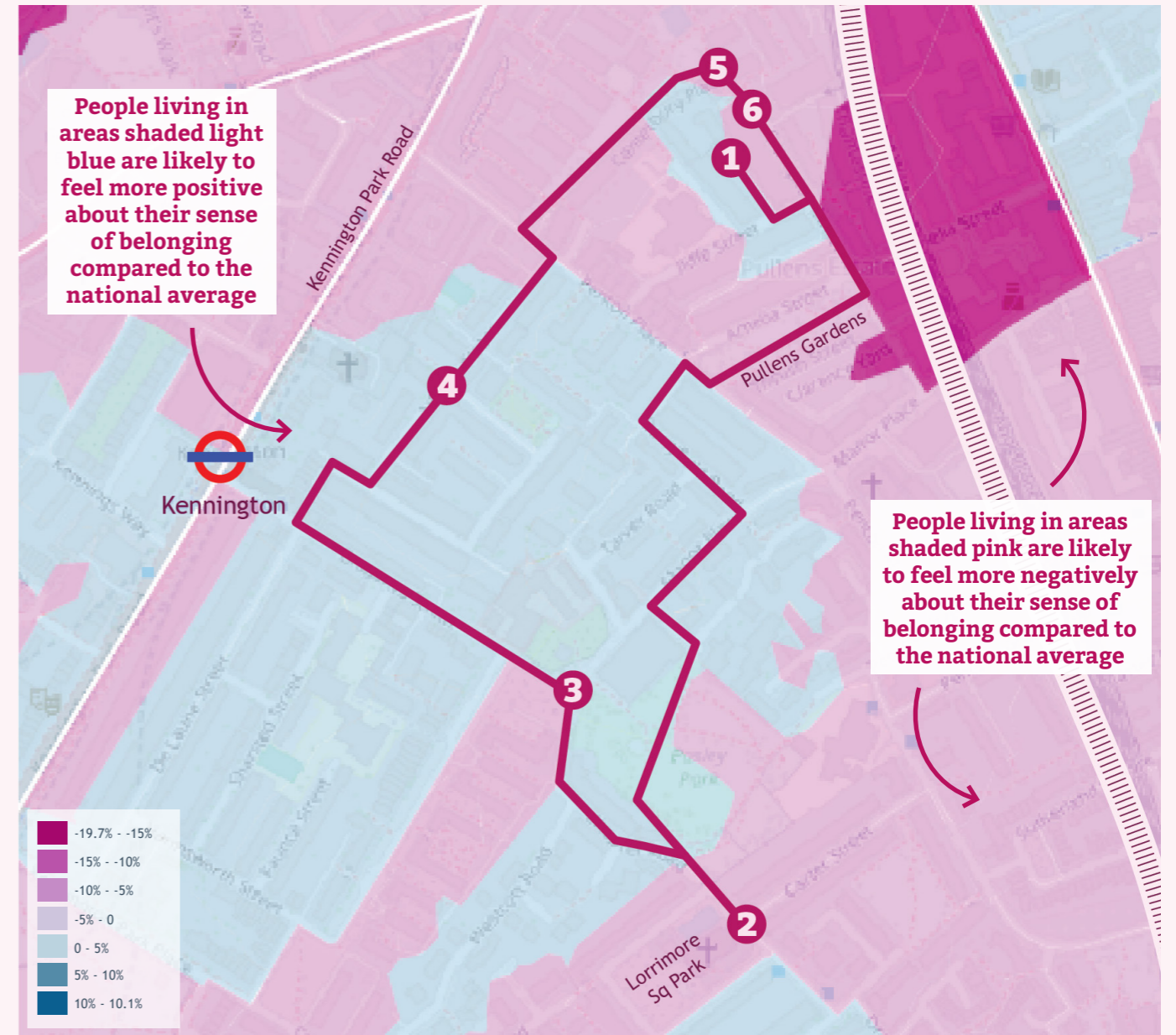
Agencies delivering services, government at different levels and local communities urgently need better ways of understanding the social life of places at the very local level, to help them make better local policies, to direct investment and address challenges.

Community Dynamics predicts how people are likely to feel about their local neighbourhoods - their sense of belonging,

safety, agency, and how they feel about their neighbours.

The adjacent map shows predicted sense of belonging in Walworth. Belonging is likely to be slightly higher than the national average around Pullens Yards and small areas east of Kennington. Belonging is likely to be lower than the national average near Lorrimore Square Park and Walworth Road.

Community Dynamics is predictive data, not a robust portrait of the neighbourhood. Get in touch if you'd like to know more or work with us on this, we are actively looking for collaborators!



↑ Community Dynamics: predicting belonging in Walworth

Thank you to Fareshares and St Paul's Church Lorrimore Square for welcoming us into your spaces and speaking to our guests.

Social Life was created by the Young Foundation in 2012, to become a specialist centre of research and innovation about the social life of communities. All our work is about the relationship between people and the places they live and understanding how change, through regeneration, new development or small improvements to public spaces, affects the social fabric, opportunities and wellbeing of local areas. We work in the UK and internationally.

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

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