

Measuring the social impacts of regeneration on the Aylesbury Estate

Results of the second social sustainability assessment
Summary report

May 2022

About this report

This report brings together the findings of a research project commissioned by Notting Hill Genesis into the social impacts of regeneration on the Aylesbury Estate in Southwark. An initial study was conducted in 2014-15. This second round of research took place between August 2020 and June 2021.

More about this research is on our website:
http://www.social-life.co/project/aylesbury_estate_2020/

We would like to thank the local residents, stakeholders and traders who shared their knowledge, hopes and fears with us. We appreciate their expertise and the time they put into this work and hope the report will help bring about the changes they would like to see in their local areas.

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All photos and illustrations are by Social Life.

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.

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Introduction

This report describes the findings of a research project exploring how the Aylesbury Estate regeneration programme in Southwark, south London, is currently affecting people living in the area.

Social Life was initially commissioned by the housing association Notting Hill Genesis in 2014 with the aim of exploring the social impacts of regeneration as the development progresses over the next two decades and to understand how local priorities and needs can inform future phases of planning, design and management. An initial benchmark study was conducted in 2014-15. This second round of research took place between August 2020 and June 2021, the bulk being carried out between August and November 2020, with some additional interviews in early 2021.

The research findings are a snapshot of how residents are experiencing regeneration in the early stages of the programme, when new housing has been developed but large areas of the older estate are still occupied. It compares how residents are faring now in comparison to when the baseline study was conducted 5 years ago.

The majority of the research took place in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the restrictions following the first lockdown in March 2020 were eased and the second lockdown in



Figure 1: Beaconsfield Road, Aylesbury Estate.

November 2020 had yet to start. Carrying out research at this time captured the experience of an estate living through crisis. The difficulties of life were reflected in many conversations and survey responses. The findings need to be put in the context of that time, and the fact that people's relationship to the place they had lived in changed. It also had a significant impact on the research itself, which needed to adapt to this new context of dramatically increased social distance that inevitably affected our ability to connect with people.

Southwark Council and Notting Hill Genesis intend to continue to repeat this assessment every three years throughout the regeneration programme. This report sets out the findings of the 2020-21 research presented to Notting Hill Genesis.

Thank you to all the residents, former residents, traders and local stakeholders who contributed to this research.

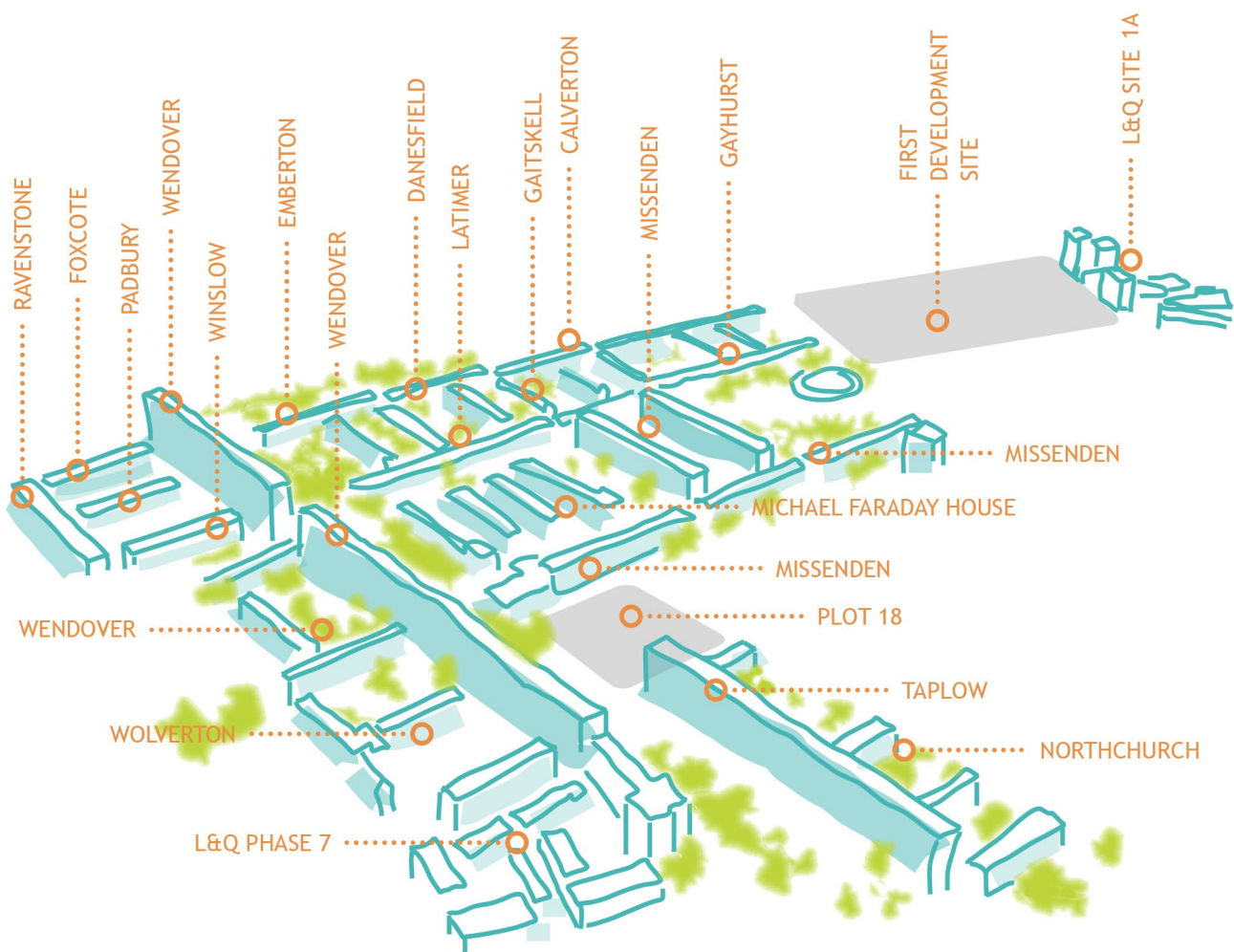


Figure 2: Aylesbury Estate block names and new phases.



Figure 3: Bird's eye view from Burgess Park of the regeneration area and wider context. Source: Google Earth.

Research methods

The aim of the research was to understand the everyday experience of people living and working in the Aylesbury Estate regeneration area and how this has changed over time. It explores how residents feel about their lives on the estate, what people feel about the neighbourhood and their neighbours, and about their situation at a time of significant change.

People living on the estate come from a very diverse range of nationalities, ethnicities and backgrounds which reflects the super-diversity of this part of Southwark. There are long-standing residents remaining on the estate but at the same time the population churn noted in 2014-15 has continued. New residents have moved into the L&Q blocks, many secure tenants and leaseholders have been rehoused or have moved away, and a significant number of temporary residents have moved into the emptying blocks. In other blocks, those in the later stages of the redevelopment programme, the resident population will have been more stable as demolition is not imminent and secure tenants have not yet been given any increase in priority. However even in these blocks some secure tenants and leaseholders are choosing to move away to lessen disruption and uncertainty. The result is that the changes taking place will be experienced in many different ways.

To try and capture the breadth of experiences on the estate, the research strategy devised to structure this project was mixed in approach, as no one single research method would reveal enough to build an understanding of the lives of Aylesbury's residents. It was not possible to replicate the approach used in 2014-15 as this relied on a door-to-door survey, which was not possible at a time

1. This approach has been developed by Social Life to help understand how areas are faring. It enables a prediction to be made of how residents are likely to feel about their neighbourhoods, their sense of belonging, their fear of crime, their wellbeing, and their relationships with their neighbours and between different groups living in an area.

For more information see: http://www.social-life.co/publication/understanding_local_areas/

of COVID-19 restrictions and social distancing. Instead, a greater emphasis was put on qualitative data gathered through a smaller number of more intensive and in-depth interviews.

A snapshot of everyday life and feelings about the regeneration has been built through a collection of primary data gathered from stakeholder interviews, street interviews with residents, interviews with traders, walks, ethnographic observations, phone interviews and an online survey. Secondary statistical data has been collected from various government agencies and the local authority, Southwark Council.

Research themes

Social Life uses four key domains to assess the social sustainability of an area:



Amenities and Social Infrastructure: Facilities & support services for individuals & communities: schools, social spaces, transport & community workers; spaces and places that allow people to meet and develop their social relationships.



Social and Cultural Life: Sense of belonging, wellbeing, community cohesion, safety, relationships with neighbours, relationships between people from different backgrounds & local social networks.



Voice and Influence: Residents' ability & willingness to take action to shape the local environment; structures to represent residents & engage them in shaping local decisions; residents' sense of agency and control over their daily life in the neighbourhood.



Adaptability and resilience: Flexible planning; housing, services & infrastructure that can adapt over time; adaptable use of buildings & public space; ability to withstand future economic and social shocks.

For the initial research in 2014, the household survey results were benchmarked against what would be expected in comparable areas. This assessment of the estate in comparison to other similar areas across the UK gives an initial overview of how the area is faring as a whole¹. The 2020 research used more qualitative methods to gain more in-depth data, and also to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. This makes benchmarking of the data more complex, nevertheless, a wealth of primary data has been collected through other means and comparisons can still be made to the 2014-15 research to help understand the changes that have occurred since then.

Who we spoke to

In total, 157 different residents, traders, stakeholders and former residents were interviewed for this research. The main research findings were taken from street interviews and in-depth interviews with local agencies and stakeholders.

Figure 4: Who we spoke to, 2020-21

81	Street interviews with residents	26	Online survey of former residents
27	In-depth interviews with agencies and local stakeholders	10	Interviews with former residents
9	Walking ethnographies with 10 residents	4	Ethnographic observations
13	Local trader interviews		

Key findings

- 1. Amenities and Social Infrastructure:** Overall, people's feelings about amenities and social infrastructure in the area were very similar to 2014-15. There was a fall however in satisfaction with the current housing situation. This is very low as the condition of the old estate declines. The physical condition of the estate, and the lack of community spaces and facilities, is not supportive of residents' individual and collective wellbeing. However, transport, schools, health services and the nearby parks are all strong local assets in addition to a range of supportive third sector organisations who are very active and are valued locally.
- 2. Social and Cultural Life:** Neighbourliness and belonging are very strong on the estate. Many residents' families have lived here for generations and there are strong relationships and ties that have formed over the years with a very diverse population learning to live together. At the same time, the population is changing and this is having an impact on the social dynamics of the estate and is weakening some aspects of social and cultural life. With the demolition of the blocks, people are moving away and also new residents are moving into the new blocks and into temporary accommodation. People feel safe overall, however the blocks that are emptying out are becoming serious magnets for anti-social behaviour and crime.

3. **Voice and Influence:** Residents' sense of voice and influence is very low. People living on the estate often feel powerless and that they have little control over what happens in the area. This has been exacerbated by the visible decline of the condition of the existing estate, particularly during the pandemic, and a feeling that the council have been unable or unwilling to manage its upkeep. There are an increasing number of residents in temporary accommodation who have very little say or feeling of investment in the estate. There are more active long-standing residents, however their voice is not always representative of the estate's population.
4. **Adaptability and Resilience:** The research gave valuable insight into residents' experiences during the pandemic and how strong local relationships, social networks and the work of different agencies supported resilience and helped people get by in already difficult circumstances.
5. **Feelings about the regeneration:** There are very mixed feelings about the regeneration and there is a disparity between different people's experiences of the changes taking place. Attitudes toward the regeneration have changed for the worse since 2014-15. As residents see the blocks coming down, there is a sense of inevitability about the fact that they will have to leave their homes. Residents can see the new housing going up in the First Development Site, however it is not clear to them when they will be able to move in. Most council tenants want to stay council tenants despite many having animosity towards the council for the poor condition of the estate.

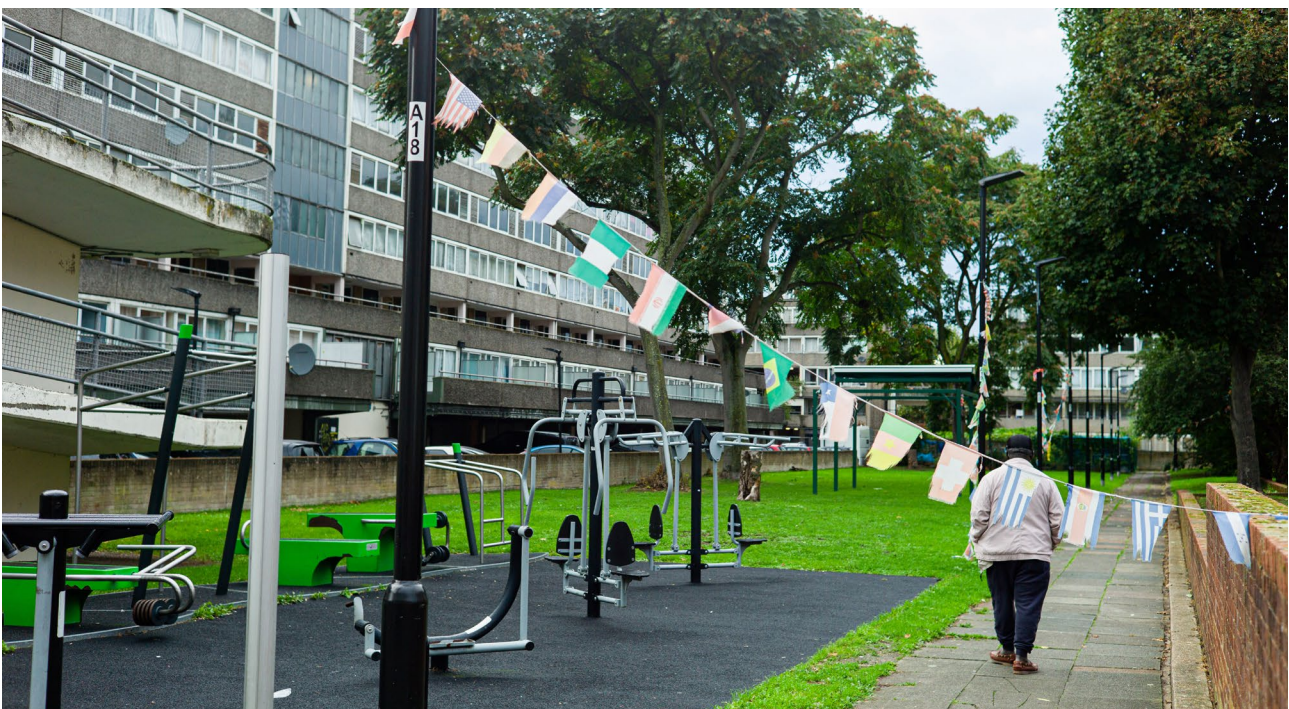
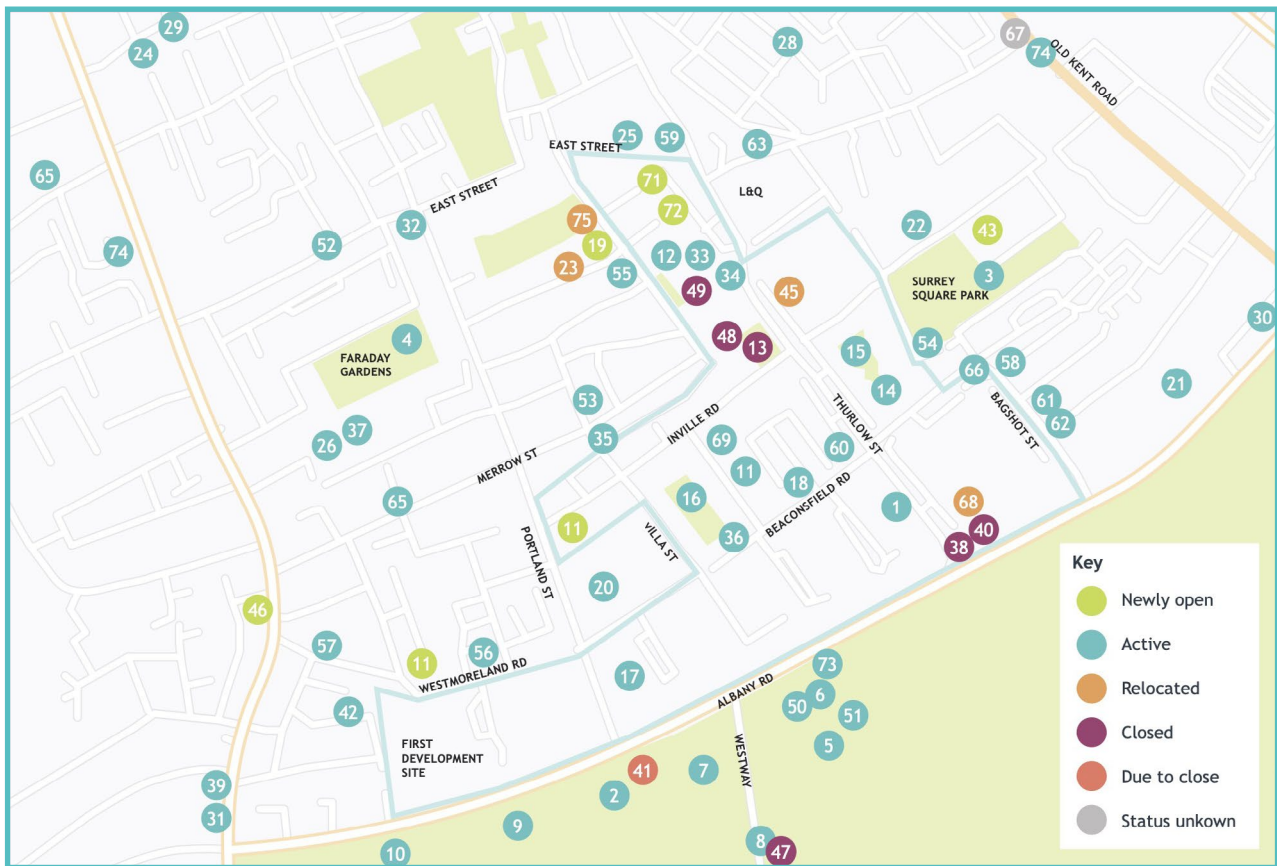


Figure 6: Aylesbury Estate, outdoor gym.

Figure 7: Asset map of the Aylesbury Estate regeneration area, June 2020.



Parks, gardens, playgrounds, and sport facilities

1. Thurlow Street MUGA
2. Burgess Park Adventure Playground
3. Surrey Square Park
4. Faraday Gardens
5. Chumleigh Gardens
6. Southwark Tigers Rugby Club
7. Burgess Park BMX
8. Lynn Boxing Academy
9. Burgess Park outdoor gym
10. Burgess Park Tennis Centre
11. Aylesbury Community gardens
12. Dawes Street playground & MUGA
13. Thurlow Street skate park
14. Small MUGA
15. Young children's play space
16. Large playground
17. Gayhurst basketball pitch
18. Aylesbury outdoor gym

Education

19. University Academy of Engineering Southbank
20. Michael Faraday Primary School
21. Walworth Academy
22. Surrey Square Junior School
23. Sacred Heart RC Secondary School
24. Saint John's Walworth Church
25. Dyason pre-school

Faith and religious

26. St Peters Church of England

27. United Pentacostal Church
28. Pembroke House
29. St Johns Walworth Church
30. Old Kent Road Mosque and Islamic Centre
31. Walworth Methodist Church
32. East Street Baptist Church

Health

33. Aylesbury Health Centre
34. Aylesbury Medical Centre
35. Villa Medical Centre

Community facilities and services

36. The Cabin, Creation Trust
37. Inspire + The Crypt at St Peter's
38. Thurlow Lodge Community Hall
39. Golden Oldies Community Care Project
40. Divine Rescue foodbank (Thurlow Lodge)
41. Giraffe House (Creation Trust, Burgess Sports, Half Pints nursery)
42. Southwark Resource Centre
43. Walworth Living Room
44. Citizens Advice Southwark
45. 2Inspire: youth training and arts
46. Southwark Works
47. Wells Way Pop Up

Early years

48. Tykes Corner Nursery
49. Aylesbury Early Years Centre
50. First Place Children's Centre

Food, shops, and markets

51. Burgess Park Café
52. East Street Market
53. Merrow Street shops - various
54. Grove Food and Wine
55. Chris Convenient Store
56. Westmoreland street shops and barbers - various
57. Arments - Pie, Mash & Eels
58. Amigos Mediterranean Restaurant
59. Sussan Coin Wash Laundrette
60. The Hour Glass pub and hotel
61. Dambuk - Afro Caribbean grocery
62. Shanghai Surprise
63. East Street shops - various
64. Queen Elizabeth Pub

Safety

65. Walworth Police Station
66. Londis Store - safe house
67. East Street Library - safe house

TRAs

68. Thurlow Lodge TRA
69. Aylesbury TRA
70. Wendover TRA

Arts and culture

71. ASC art studios
72. TURPS art school
73. Art in the Park
74. East Street Library



Figure 8: L&Q Site 1a

The social sustainability assessment

Everyday life on the Aylesbury Estate has changed between 2014-15 and 2020-21. Increasing disrepair, population churn, the replacement of longer standing residents who were often part of stable social networks with more vulnerable people on temporary tenancies have taken a toll on community life. In spite of this, many of the estate's assets remain: its strong services and access to facilities, its neighbourliness and sense of belonging.

In 2015 the benchmarking research concluded with a social sustainability assessment of the estate. We have revisited this assessment, drawing on the qualitative data from this first round of research.

- **Amenities & infrastructure:** the provision of services and facilities remain a strength of the estate, however physical infrastructure is dilapidated and the score also reflects the ongoing impact of housing disrepair on residents' lives. This is weaker than in the previous assessment.
- **Social & cultural life:** this is lower, reflecting the loss of social supports and social networks and weaker relationships between groups as the population has changed.
- **Voice & influence:** this is unchanged, remaining weak. Residents continued to report feeling powerless.
- **Adaptability & resilience:** The strong response of agencies during the pandemic has supported residents, in spite of poverty and difficulties, this is unchanged since the benchmark.

Figure 9: The Aylesbury Estate Social Sustainability score, 2014-15 and 2020-21

Aylesbury Estate social sustainability 2014-15



Voice & Influence

Low sense of influence, control and involvement in actions to shape environment.



Amenities & Social Infrastructure

Good schools, health services, transport, green spaces. Poor quality environment.



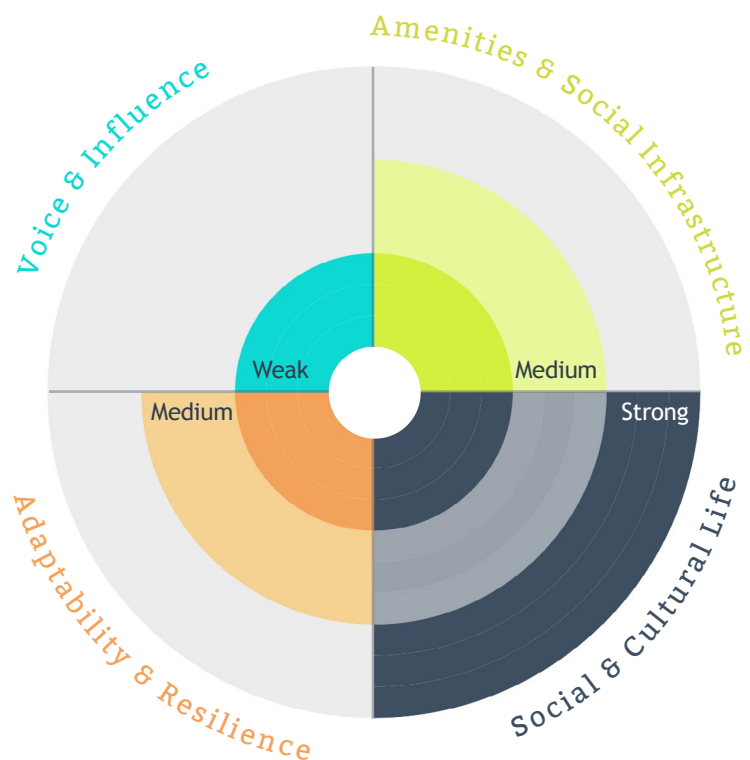
Social & Cultural Life

Good neighbourliness, sense of belonging, community cohesion.



Adaptability & Resilience

Adaptable population, good social supports. High poverty and vulnerability.



Aylesbury Estate social sustainability 2020-21



Voice & Influence

Low sense of influence, control and involvement in actions to shape environment.



Amenities & Social Infrastructure

Good schools, health services, transport, green spaces. Poor quality environment, lack of community spaces.



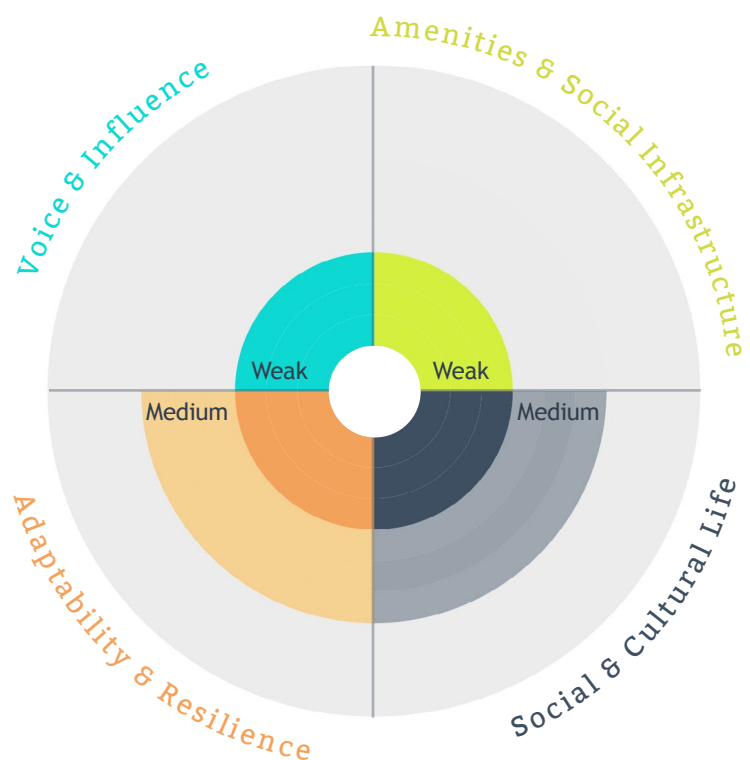
Social & Cultural Life

Good neighbourliness, decrease in sense of belonging and community cohesion.



Adaptability & Resilience

Adaptable population, good social supports. High poverty and vulnerability.



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