

A photograph of a residential street. The street is paved with grey cobblestones and leads towards a central brick house with a green door. The houses on either side are made of brick and stone. There are green bushes and plants along the path. The sky is blue with some clouds.

**Turning everywhere into somewhere:  
finding our path to a happier, greener  
and healthier future**

***1. Good design is not subjective: what are the discoverable links between place with health, happiness, prosperity and sustainability and why do they matter?***

*2. Planning better: putting more focus on creating and stewarding places that are popular and good for people and planet. The Office for Place and the Pathfinder programme*

# Your environment can affect...



How happy you are



How active you are



How many neighbours you know



How stressed and anxious you feel



How much you fear crime (or might suffer from it)



How proud you are of your neighbourhood



How likely you are to suffer from inflammatory diseases



How healthy your diet is

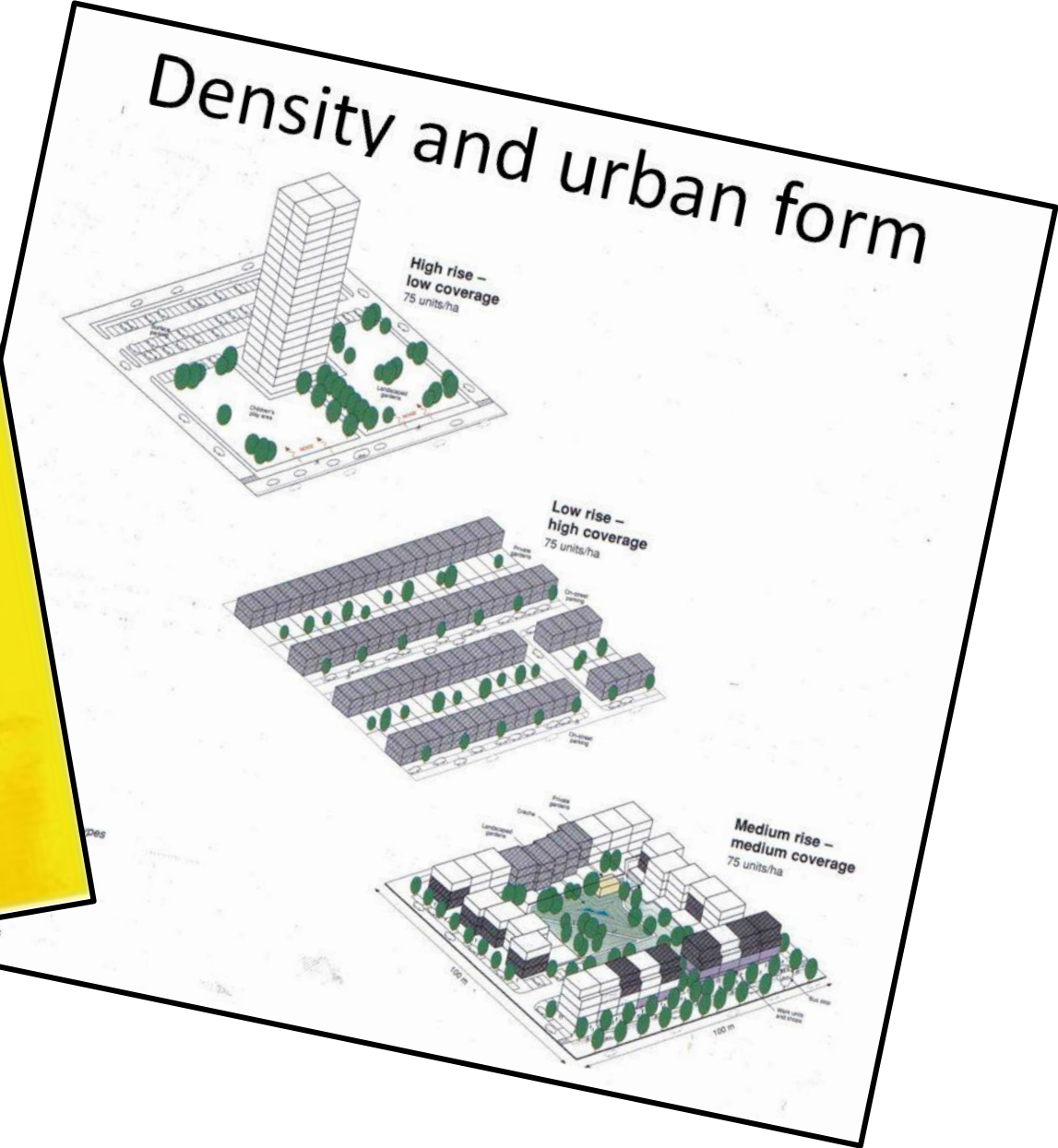
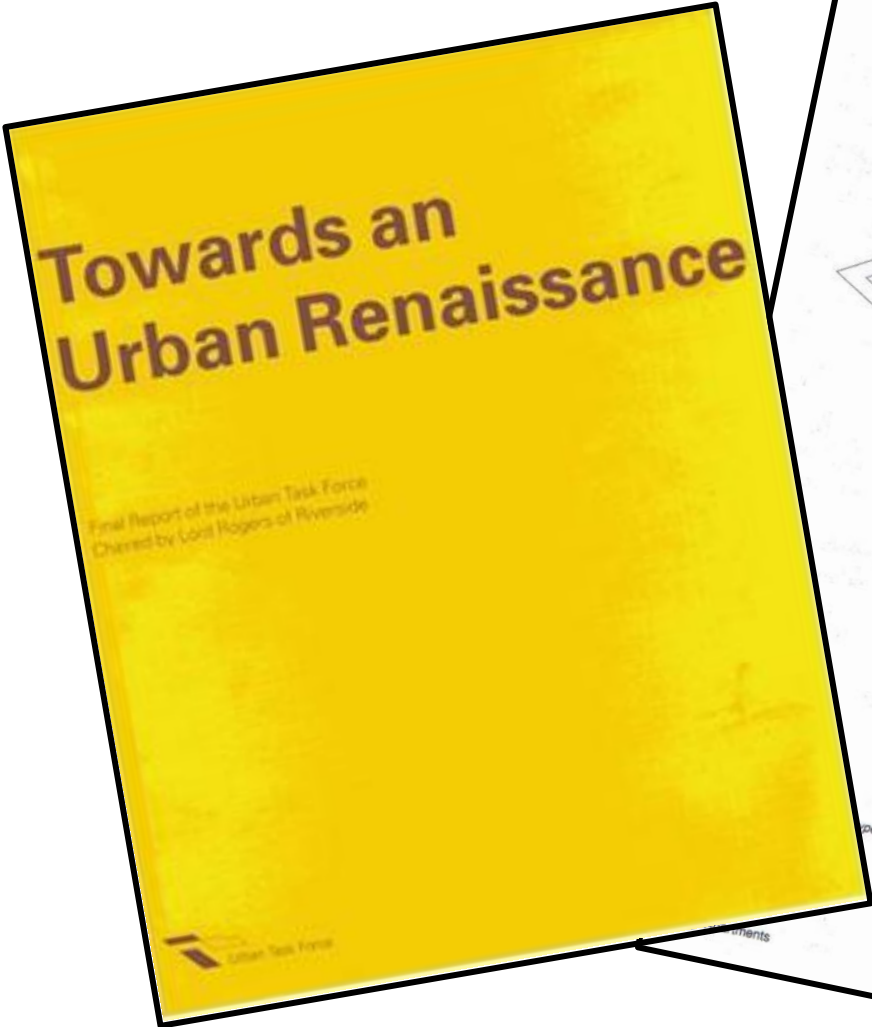


How likely you are to suffer from an air quality related disease



How well you sleep

# Towards an Urban Renaissance?



# More liveable cities over the last 20 years

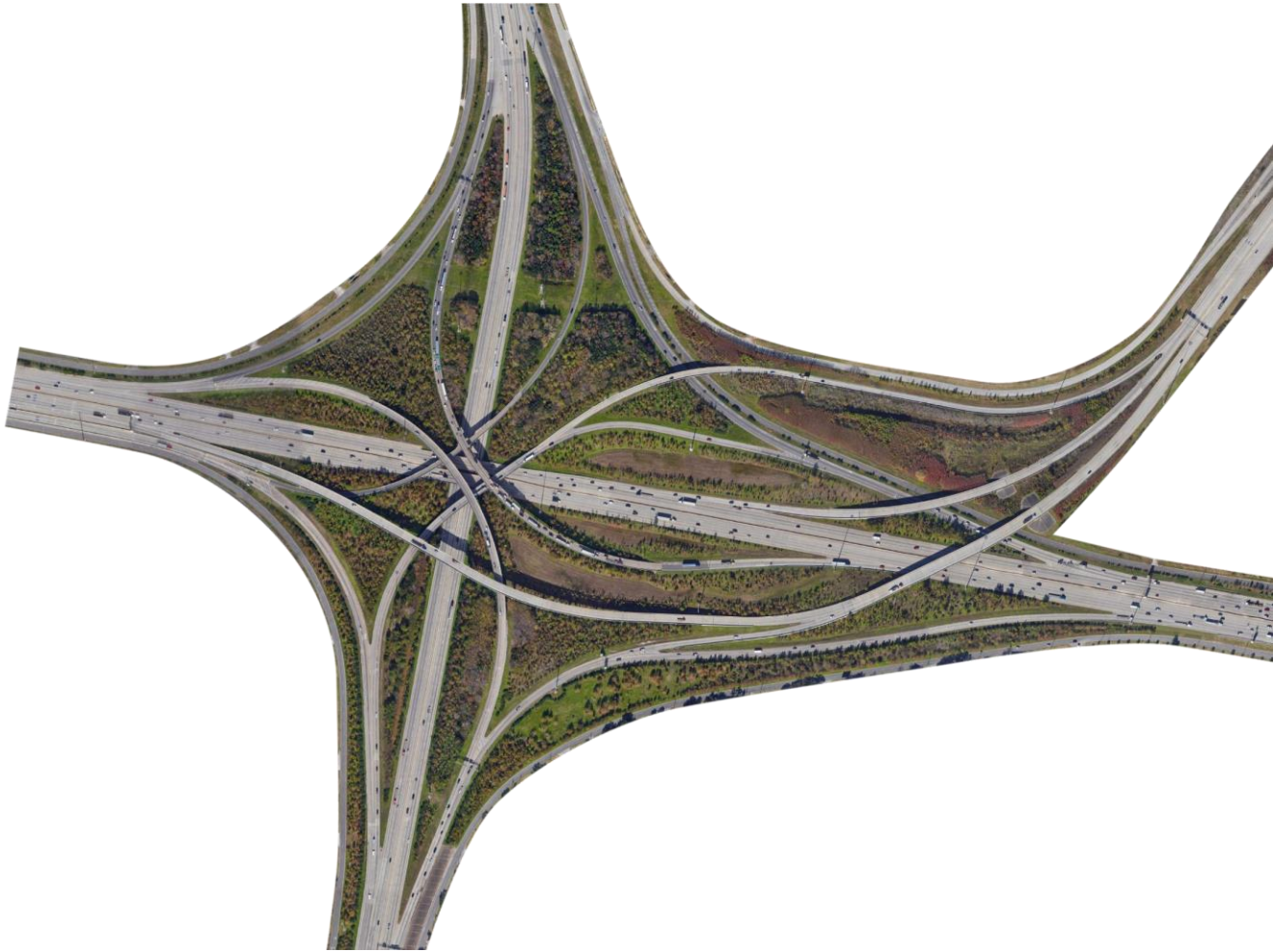


## Garden suburbs are consistently popular...

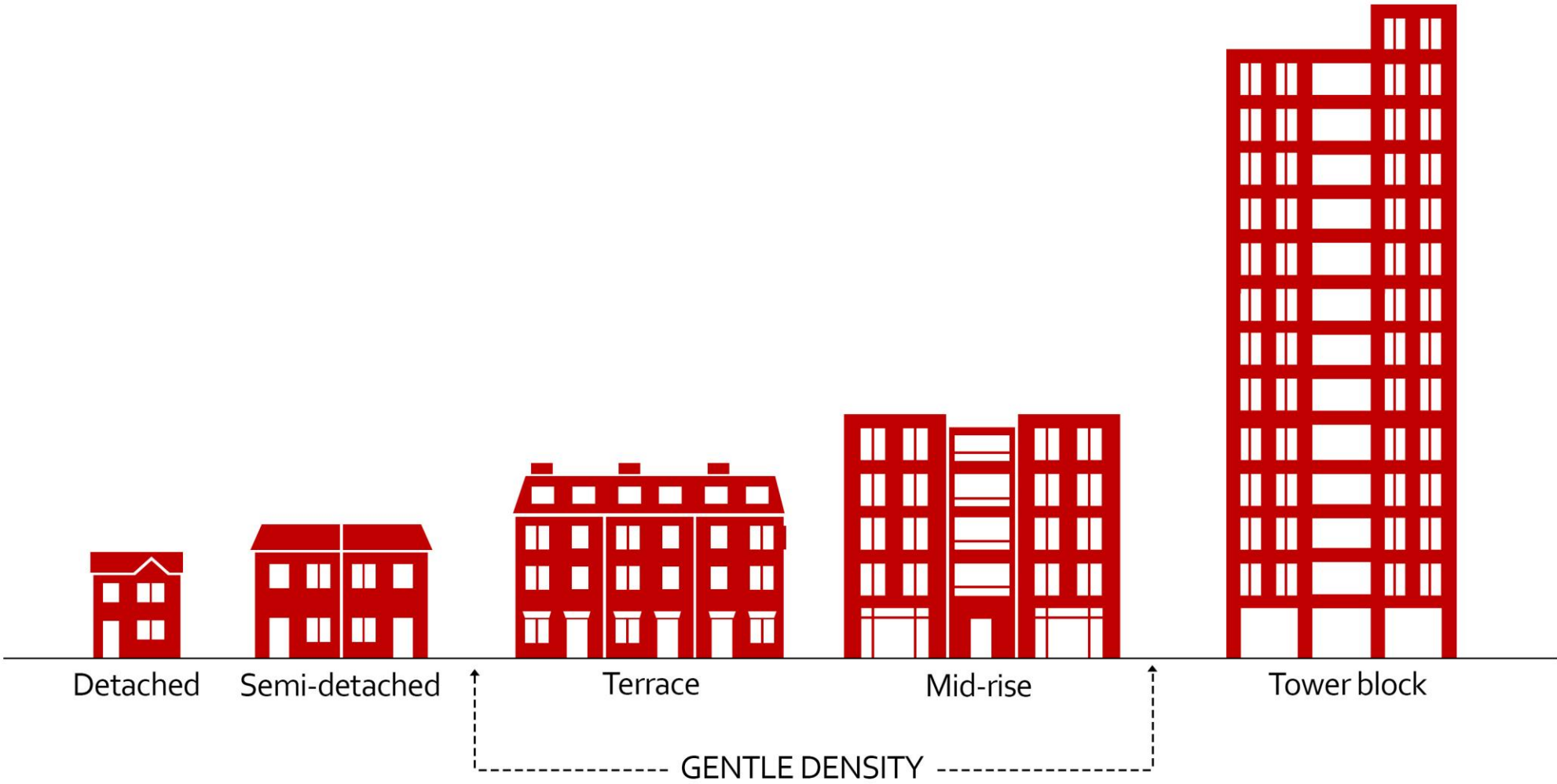


- 61% - 75% preference detached homes (2013 Europe wide survey)
- (9 out of 14 studies houses vs. flats)
- Space, personal greenery (OECD housing metrics)
- Multiple studies find that many people can be happier in suburbs

**Low density suburbs need much more space – even for their infrastructure**



# Gentle density trades off the advantages of propinquity and space





# Are very low density suburbs good for you or the planet?

Every 10 mins  
commuting cuts  
community  
involvement by  
10%

Doubling  
neighbourhood  
density reduces  
accidents by 5%

Correlations  
with blood  
pressure,  
frustration and  
divorce

## Green is good for you 'little and often'

### Green is good for you...

- Famous study by Roger Ulrich, showed patients recover better with view of natural scene
- 9 studies correlate vegetation with lower levels of crime & expected crime.
- Communal gardens & actually gardening can be associated with higher happiness, wellbeing
- View of greenery gives 5-30% more value (above all over water or when rare)
- Studies link street trees with reduction in speed and crashes, improvement of air quality and of both mental and physical health

### ... except when it isn't

- 8 studies that associate levels of greenery with higher fear and more fear of crime – specifically with denser vegetation. One study does correlate with higher crime
- Beyond 2-3 blocks people visit parks far less. (US)
- Focus groups suggest preference for personal space vs communal
- Some popular & complex have unsustainable running costs
- Health correlates most with “scenicness” (sic) rather than greenery.
- Consideration must be given to relationship with rest of built environment.

**Streets trees are associated with more walking, fewer accidents, slower cars, cleaner air and better residents' health**



# Traditional block patterns are associated with lower crime



- Clear blocks & fronts
- Mews
- Lower crime (Perth & London studies)
- Less traffic
- More walkable
- More useable green space

# Facades impact behaviour...



## *Volunteers posed as lost tourists by both*

**10% offered to help**  
**7% offered their phone**  
**4% led to destination**

**2.2% offered to help**  
**1% offered their phone**  
**1% led to destination**

# People don't like one way streets for example...

Louisville study, 2016



One way streets are associated with

- Higher speeds
- More accidents

In study of 2 streets which flipped to two way

- Collisions dropped by 36% & 60%
- Crime dropped by 23%

In study of 22 streets

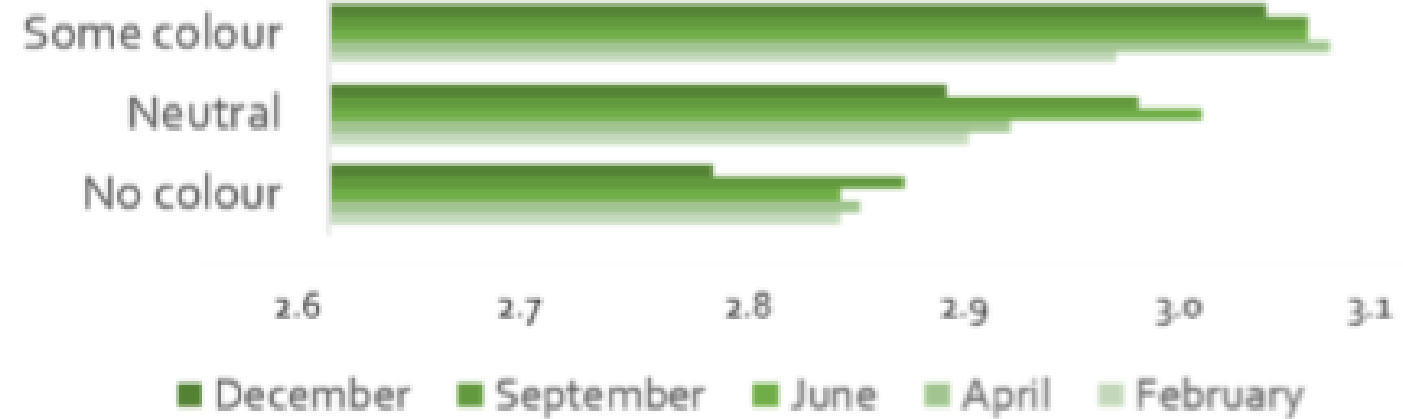
- \$152,629 vs \$64,681
- Lost tax revenue of \$2m

# Colour improves mood

Survey of 899 people in 4 countries

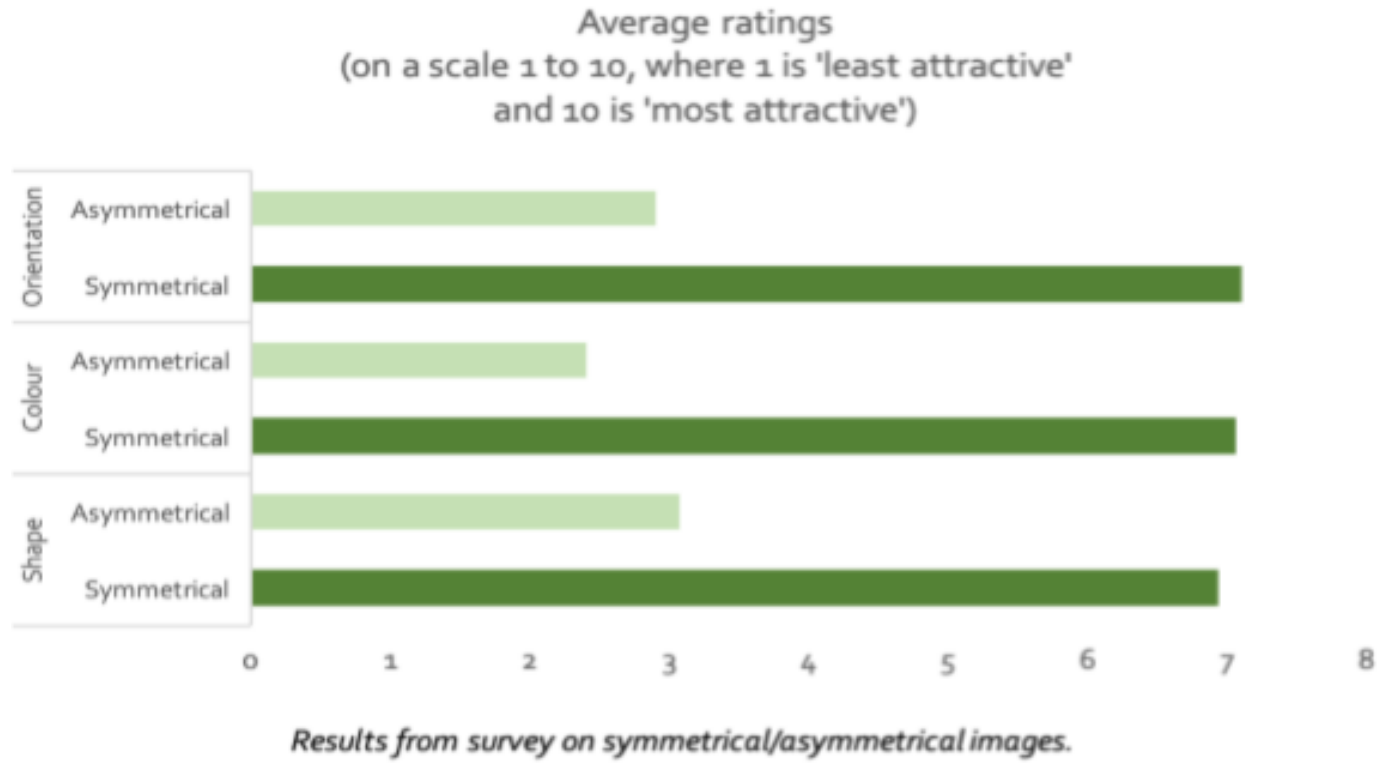


Effects of colour on mood.  
Ratings from 1 (negative) to 4 (positive)

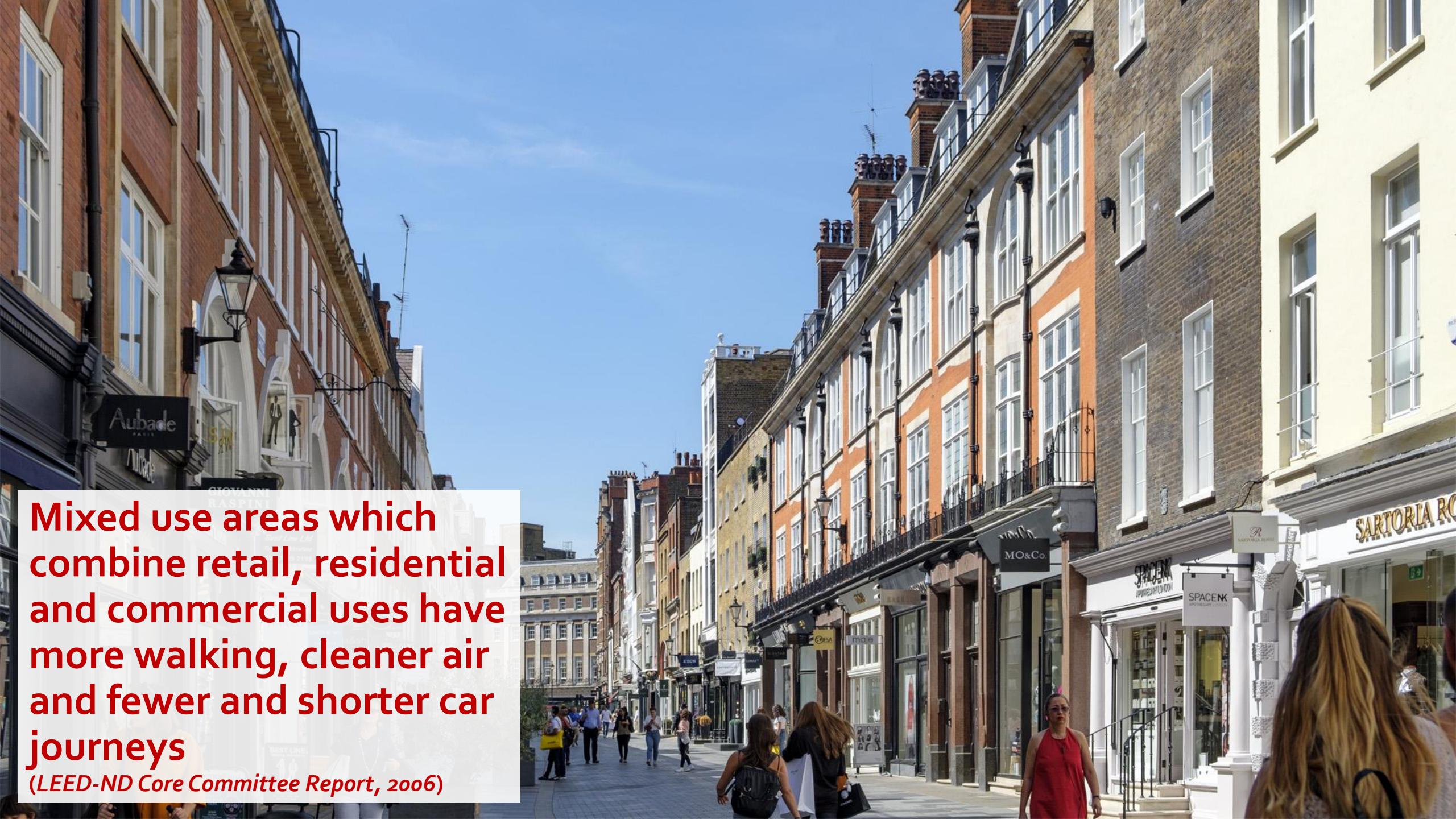


# People prefer symmetry or near symmetry

2006 Survey of 40 students







**Mixed use areas which combine retail, residential and commercial uses have more walking, cleaner air and fewer and shorter car journeys**

*(LEED-ND Core Committee Report, 2006)*

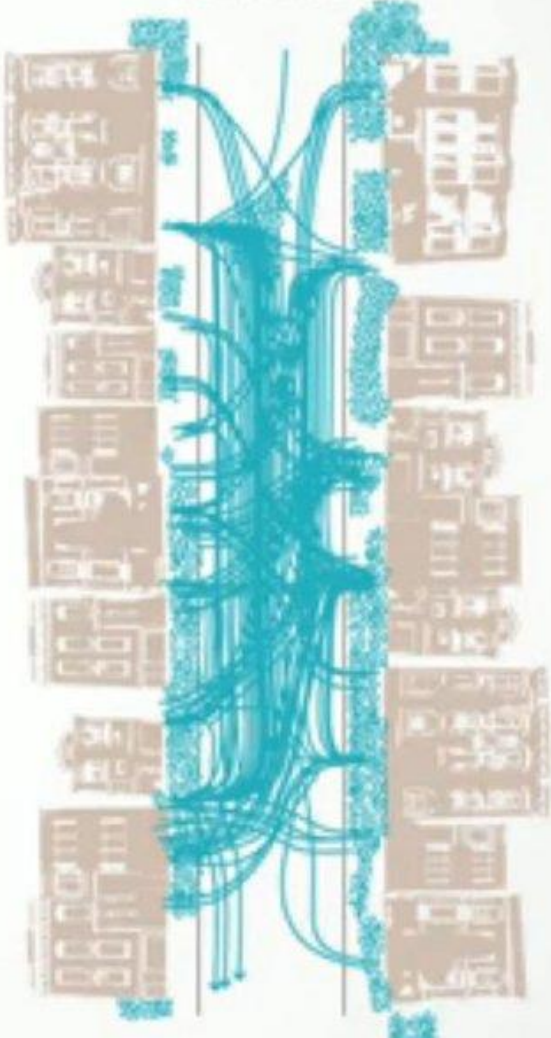
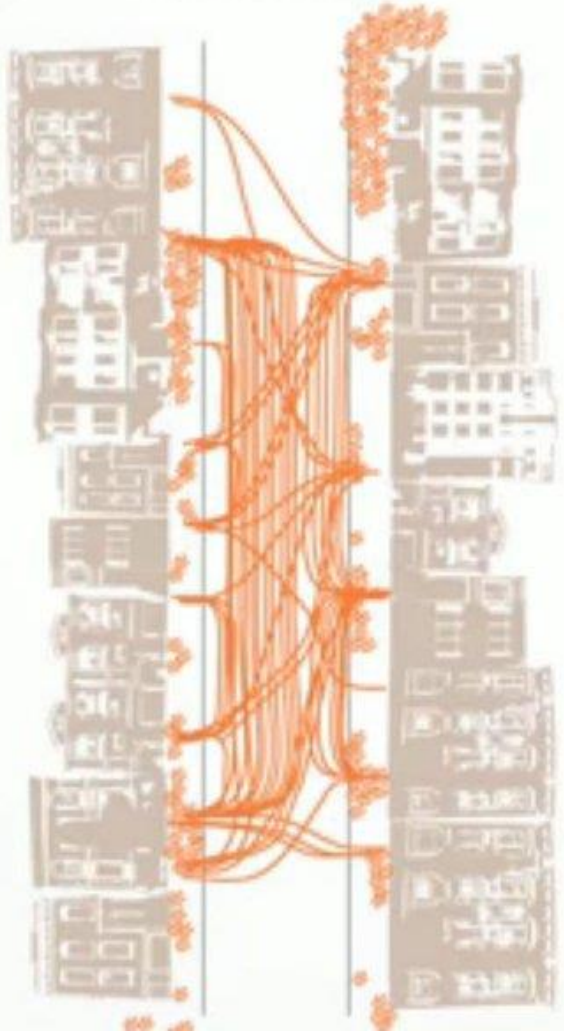
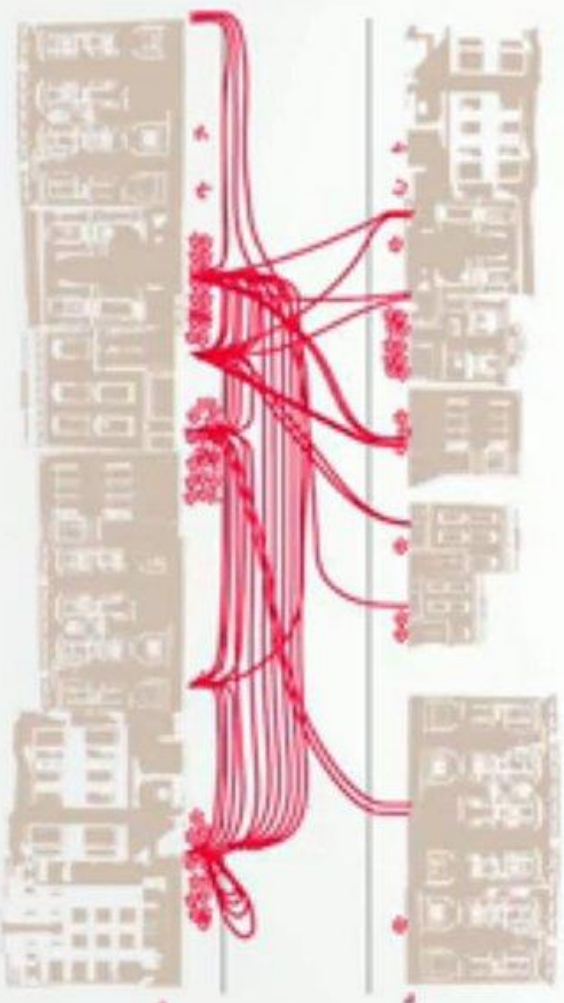
Streets with many cars tend to be related to knowing fewer neighbours

# Social Interactions on Three Streets - Neighboring and Visiting

HEAVY TRAFFIC

MODERATE TRAFFIC

LIGHT TRAFFIC



Where people have friends  
Where people gather

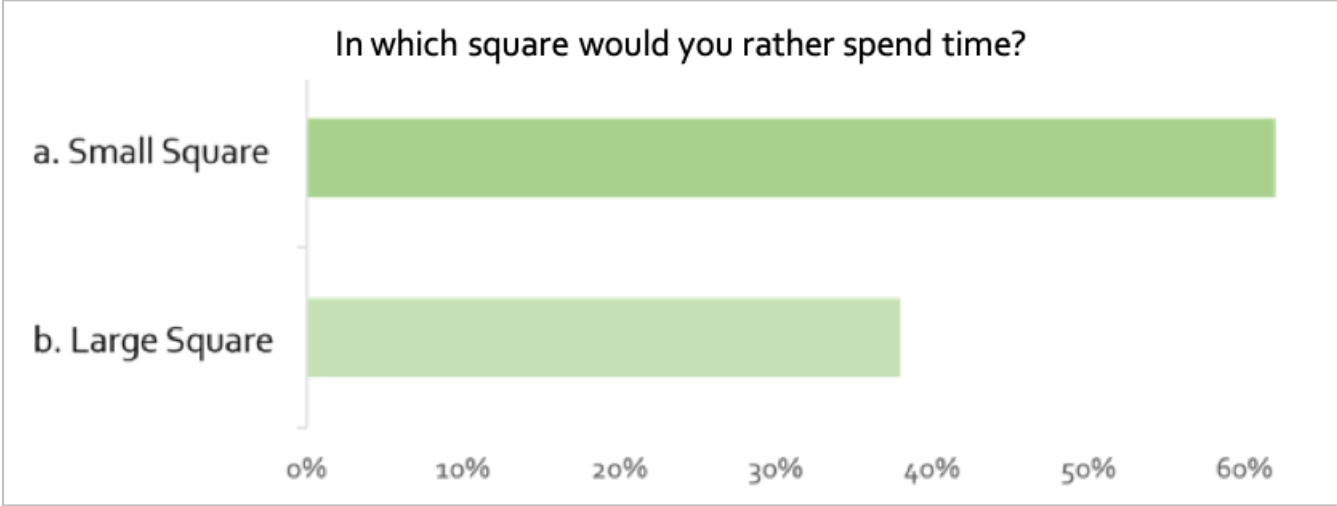
## Modest front gardens are good for knowing your neighbours...



- A Copenhagen study of two parallel streets (one with and one without front gardens) found **twelve times as much neighbourly activity in the street with front gardens versus the one without**
- Another Copenhagen study found that **35% more people used outdoor areas with front gardens than those without**
- An Australian study of similar streets in a neighbourhood found that **69% of neighbourly interactions took place in or adjacent to the modest front gardens**

# People appear to prefer slightly smaller squares with more enclosure

721 respondents online



Height to width ratio of 1:1 vs 1:3

# Does beauty matter for place satisfaction?

- 2011 survey of **27,000 respondents** in **ten US cities** found **stronger correlations** between a place's physical beauty and people's satisfaction with their communities than any other attributes
- Factors such as 'overall economic security' nowhere close

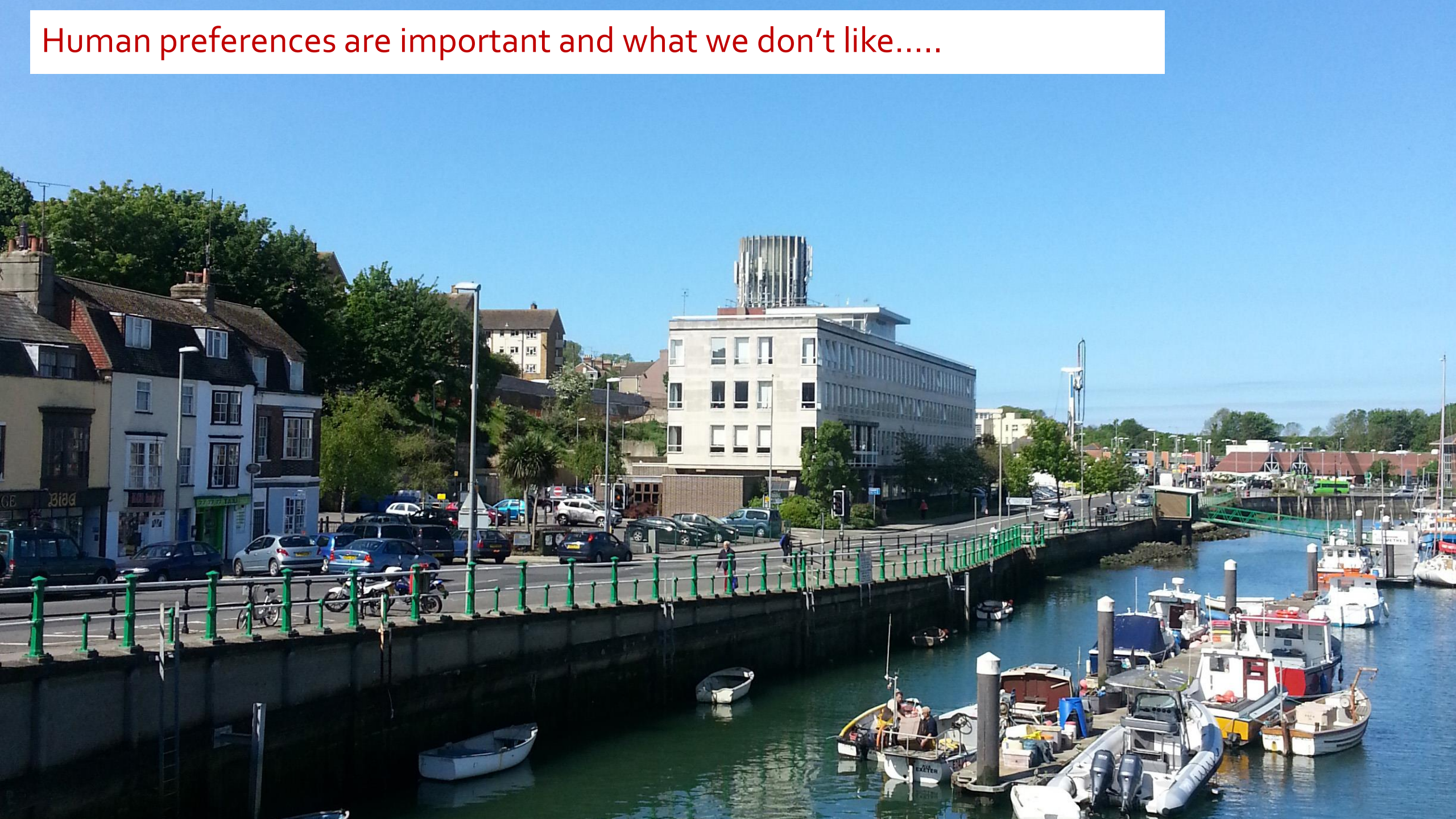


## Does beauty matter for health?

- UK survey of 1.5 million ratings of 212,000 images
- More 'scenic' places correlated with better health
- Correlated better than the amount of greenery



Human preferences are important and what we don't like.....



... and do is remarkably predictable





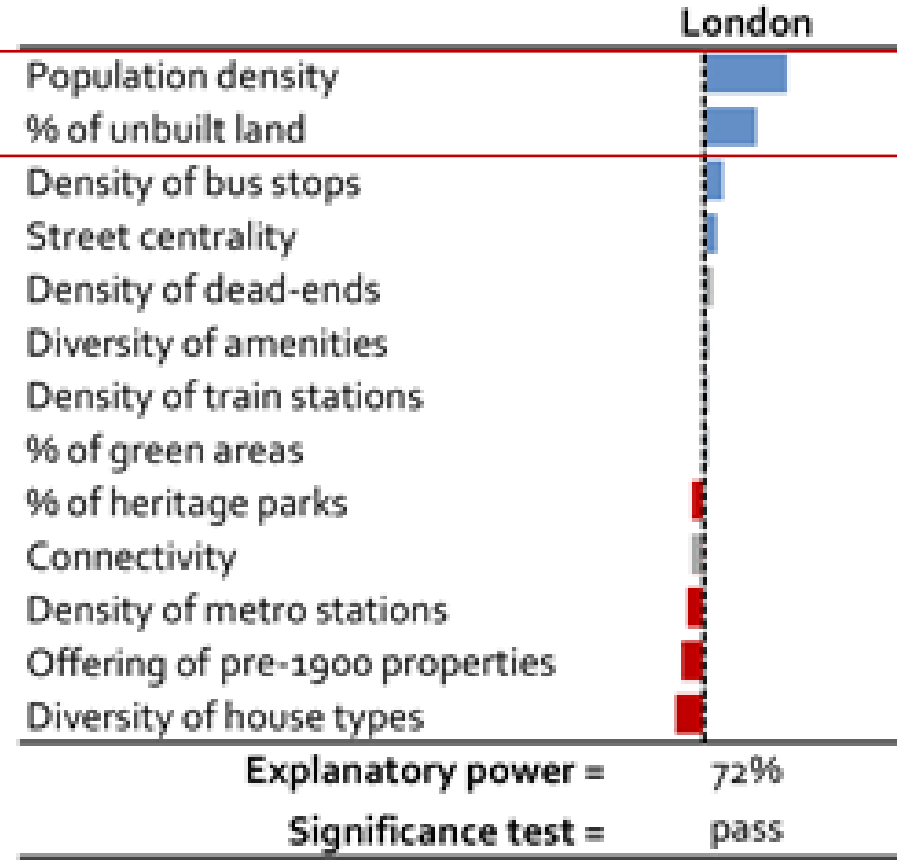
# Lessons from a study of every sale in London in 2016

## Sales premiums associated with different components

variable	London
House type detached [C]	70,789
House type semi-detached [C]	60,545
Offering of pre-1900 properties	58,397
Intersection density	57,556
Avg. no. bedrooms [C]	55,518
Prox. to closest her. park	51,004
Prox. to closest listed building	49,767
Freehold or leasehold [C]	48,469
House type terraced [C]	41,312
Prox. to closest metro station	37,879
% of all green areas	22,607
Diversity of transport modes	17,547
Prox. to closest forest	15,514
New build [C]	8,795
Connectivity	8,427
Diversity of amenities	675
Population density (OA)	-3,438
Street centrality	-5,024
Prox. to closest bus stop	-5,418
Prox. to closest park	-6,281
Prox. to closest rail station	-12,553
Prox. to closest rec. ground	-20,436

The heritage premium is up to **seven times** greater than the new build premium in London

## Index of Multiple deprivation associations



- Areas of high population and low ground coverage are significantly associated with higher deprivation

# Predictors of place quality - we took transects in 6 cities

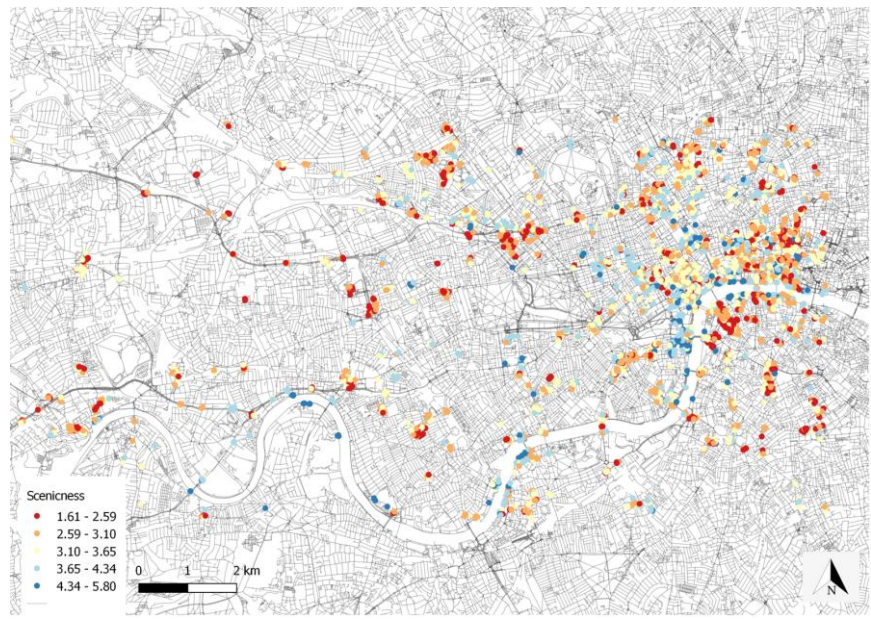
Place beauty analysis – base on 1.5 million ratings of >212,000 images



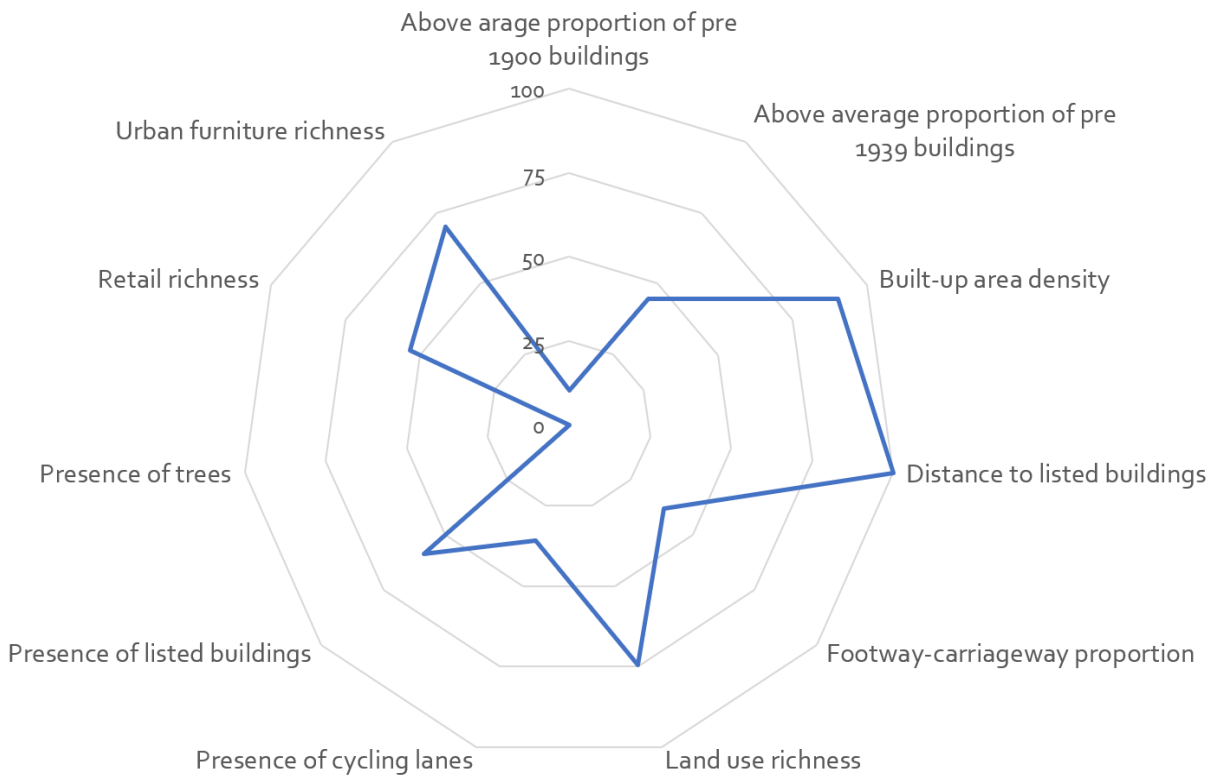
Source: *Of Streets and Squares*

# Predictors of place quality

Place beauty analysis – base on 1.5 million ratings of >212,000 images



London: predictors of 'scenicness'



Source: *Of Streets and Squares*

# Main predictors of popular places in London

Place beauty analysis – base on 1.5 million ratings of >212,000 images

- Distance to a listed building
- High built up area density
- Richness of land use
- Richness of urban furniture
- Immediate presence of a listed building
- Richness of commercial activities
- Average proportion of pre-1939 buildings
- Proportion of pavement vs carriageway

# London's least popular places

Place beauty analysis – base on 1.5 million ratings of >212,000 images



Score: 2.5



Score: 3.3



Score: 2.2



Score: 2.2



Score: 2.5



Score: 3.7

*Examples of low scoring places with a high number of trees.*

# London's most popular places

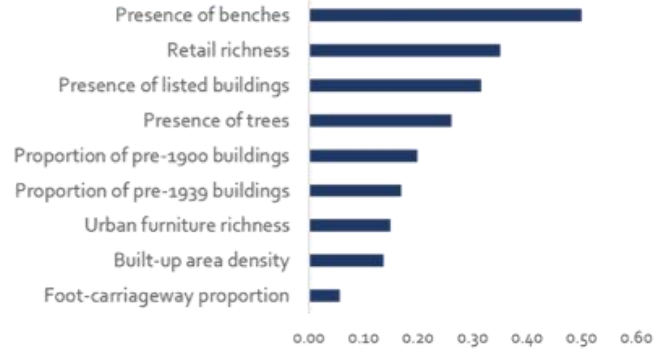
Place beauty analysis – base on 1.5 million ratings of >212,000 images



Old Square – 5.1



Soho Square – 5.1



Exhibition Road – 4.4

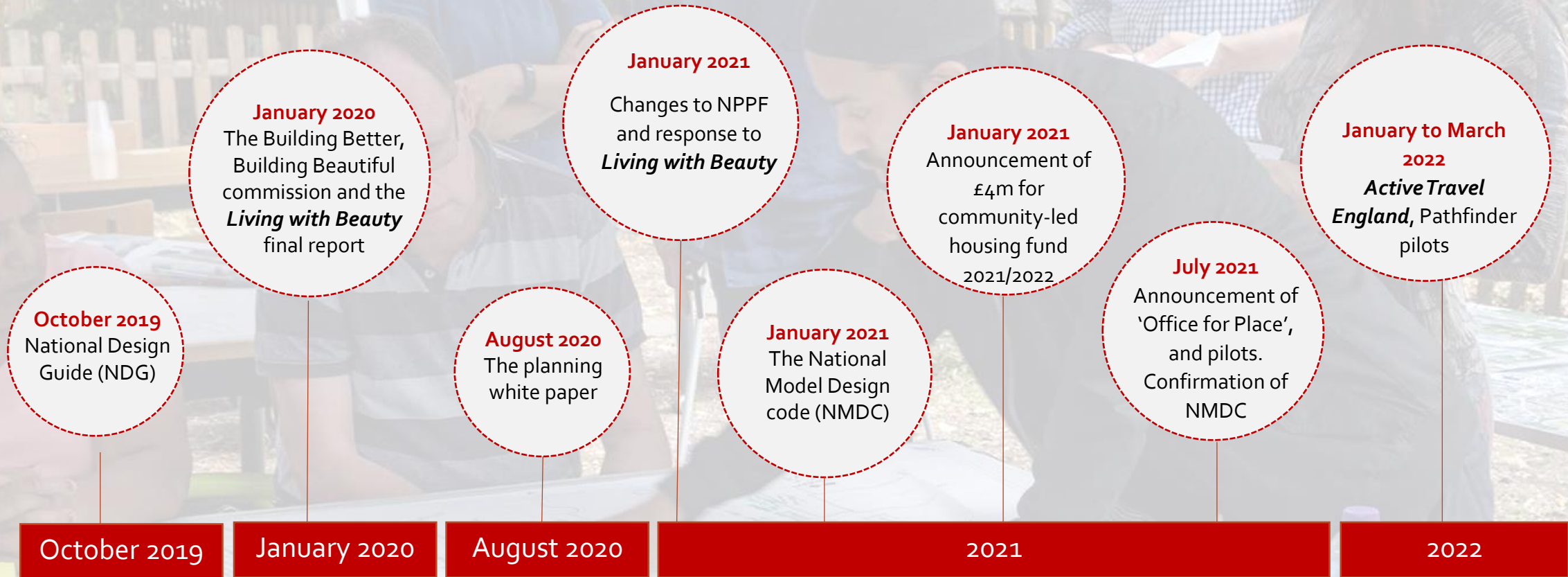


Source: *Of Streets and Squares*

*1. Good design is not subjective:* what are the discoverable links between place with health, happiness, prosperity and sustainability and why do they matter?

***2. Planning better:* putting more focus on creating and stewarding places that are popular and good for people and planet. The Office for Place and the Pathfinder programme**

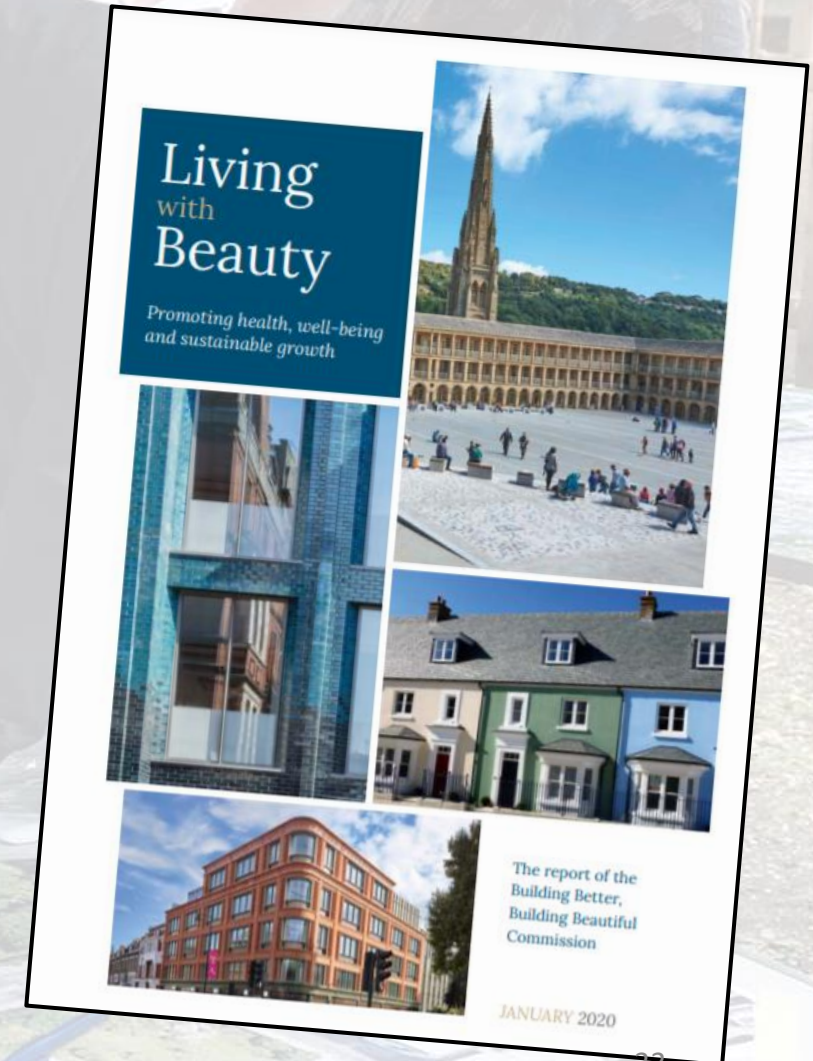
# A timeline of recent changes in planning





# The Building Better, Building Beautiful commission and the *Living with Beauty* final report

- Written by an independent body, set up by and commissioned by the government, and published in 2020
- The purpose was to advise the government and planning department how best to promote and increase the use of high-quality design for new build homes and neighbourhoods
- The paper was published in January 2020 and made three key recommendations:
  1. Ask for beauty
  2. Refuse ugliness
  3. Promote stewardship
- Local design codes were included to as a mechanism to create places for the long-term, and 'not faceless architecture that could be anywhere'



## The challenges #BBBCC set out to solve



The need for new  
homes



The need to be  
carbon neutral by  
2050



The need to end  
the scandal of 'left  
behind' places



The realisation  
that we need to  
worry (far) more  
about mental  
health & well-  
being

## People told us that new places should be better

“

This is a very timely report...It's urgently needed.

---

*Ian Harvey, Civic Voice*

”

“

*"Developers then parachute in and seem to know what is best for the area"*

*"My local experience is that the community is seen as an inconvenience to be swept aside"*

”

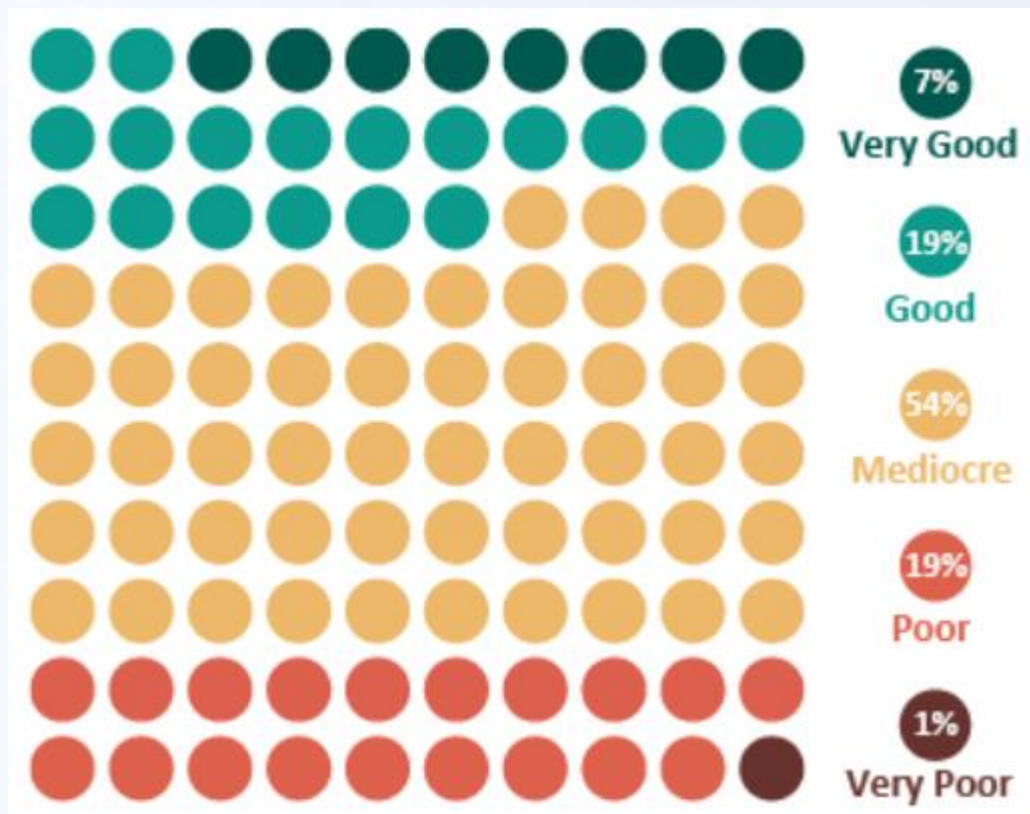
## Polls and focus groups told us new places should be better

63% felt beauty should be an aim of planning

86% felt that "beauty is important"

87% felt that good design helped promote new development

## UCL / Place Alliance found that 75% of development was mediocre or poor



- A small improvement
- But new housing design is overwhelmingly 'mediocre' or 'poor'
- Many schemes should have been refused
- The potential exists for good design everywhere
- Very patchy practice
- Resident satisfaction contrasts with community dissatisfaction

## The UK is not discrepant in credit rates, socially-rented homes or empty homes

Country	Empty Homes per hundred people	Homes Socially rented % <sup>8</sup>	Credit rate % <sup>9</sup>
Ireland	8.7	7	0
Spain	7.3	2.5	0
Portugal	7.0	4	0
Italy	4.5	5	0
France	3.7	18.9	0
Greece	2.8	0	0
Germany	2.2	12	0
<b>UK</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>18 (8)<sup>10</sup></b>	<b>0.75</b>
Finland	5.5	15	0
Netherlands	2.5	35	0
Austria	NA	23	0
Denmark	NA	20	-0.65
Belgium	NA	6	0
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>11.9</b>	<b>0</b>

## The UK has fewer homes per household

Country	Homes per inhabitant	People per home	Homes per household
Greece	0.59	1.7	1.46
Portugal	0.556	1.8	1.45
Austria	0.555	1.8	1.17
Spain	0.538	1.9	1.37
Finland	0.534	1.9	1.00
Denmark	0.491	2.0	1.19
Belgium	0.473	2.1	1.13
Ireland	0.440	2.3	1.18
<b>UK</b>	<b>0.437</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>0.99</b>
Netherlands	0.429	2.3	1.00
France	0.423	2.4	1.18
Luxembourg	0.406	2.5	0.97
Poland	0.360	2.8	0.99
<b>Average<sup>16</sup></b>	<b>0.492</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>1.12</b>

# The English Planning system is strange

Country	Link to policy instruments	Exceptions to the plan?
Austria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Application must be in compliance with binding plans &amp; regulations'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Only very limited flexibility to vary from the plan'</li> </ul>
Belgium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Application must be in compliance with binding plans &amp; regulations'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Only when not in conflict with the plan principles'</li> </ul>
Denmark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Application must be in compliance with binding plans &amp; regulations'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'There is only very limited flexibility to vary from the plan'</li> </ul>
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'The application must conform with the POS'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'There is only very limited flexibility to vary from the plan'</li> </ul>
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'The application must conform with the B-plan'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Exemptions from the provisions of a B-plan may be allowed in certain circumstances'</li> </ul>
Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Decision should not infringe provisions of town plans'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'For areas covered by town plans there is only very limited flexibility to vary from the plan'</li> </ul>
Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'The Plan is binding'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Flexibility to vary from the plan through the material contravention process'</li> </ul>
Luxembourg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Application must be in compliance with binding plans &amp; regulations'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'No Exceptions to the plan'</li> </ul>
Netherlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Application must be in compliance with binding plans &amp; regulations'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Departures from the plan are allowed in some circumstances'</li> </ul>
Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Application must be in compliance with binding plans &amp; regulations'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Minor changes that do not conflict with the plan's principles'</li> </ul>
Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'The application must be in compliance with binding plans and regulations or the old plan modified'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Only for state public works, in case of exceptional public interest'</li> </ul>
UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'The plan is not binding, but is the primary consideration in determining an application. Each application is considered on its merit.'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Departures are allowed if other material considerations justify this, but they are subject to a special procedure.'</li> </ul>



# Self-build catalogue in Sweden



Entréfasad

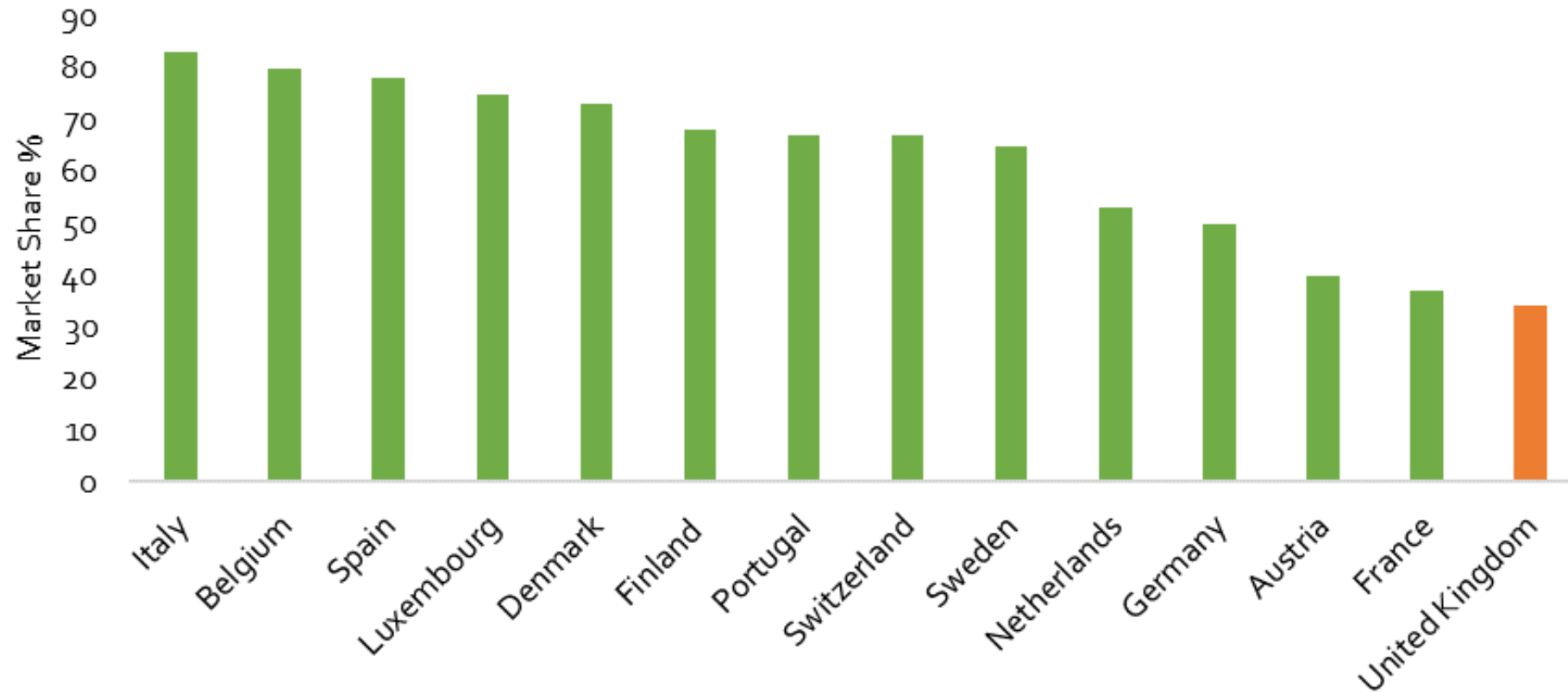


Gårdsfasad



Gavelfasad

## The proportion of SME and self-build in the UK is very low in comparative terms



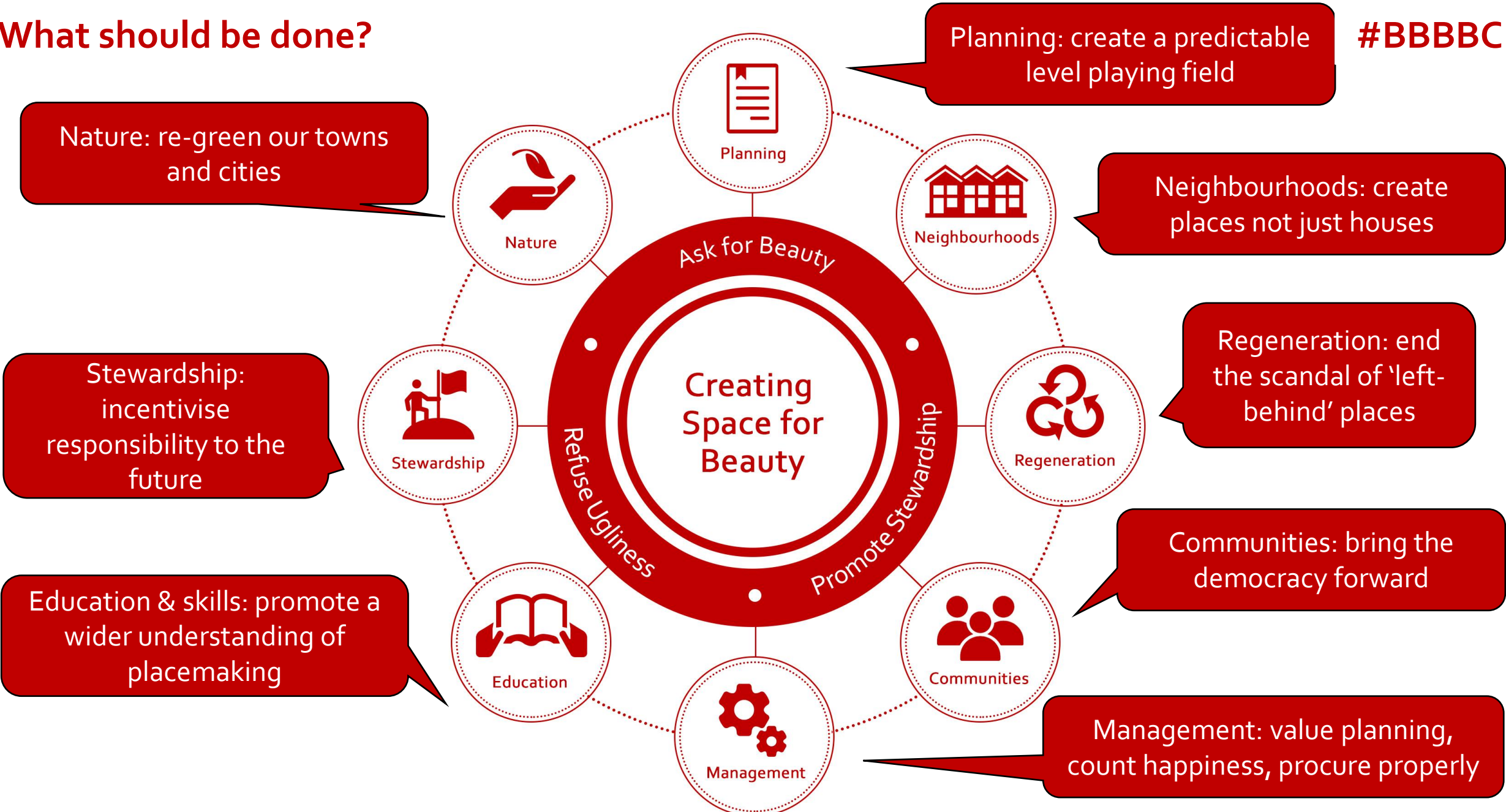
SME, self-build and custom build in UK compared to Europe, Eurostat

**Octavia Hill: "we all want beauty for the refreshment of our souls"**



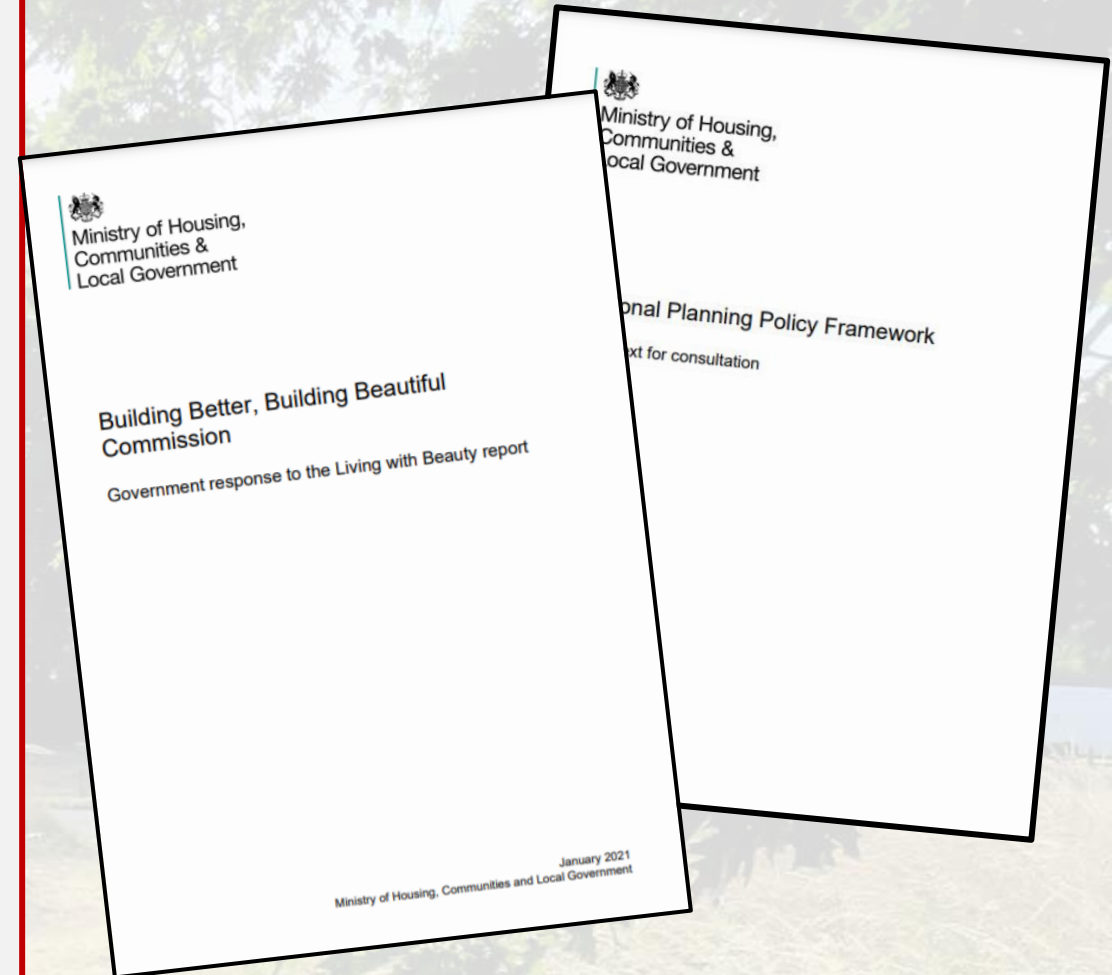
# What should be done?

#BBBBC



# Changes to NPPF and response to *Living with Beauty*

- Draft changes to the NPPF were released alongside a full response to the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission's stating the recommendations which they would be taking forward. These include:
  - making beauty and placemaking a strategic policy
  - putting an emphasis on approving good design as well as refusing poor quality schemes
  - asking local planning authorities to produce their own design codes
  - asking for new streets to be tree-lined
  - improving biodiversity net gain and access to nature through design

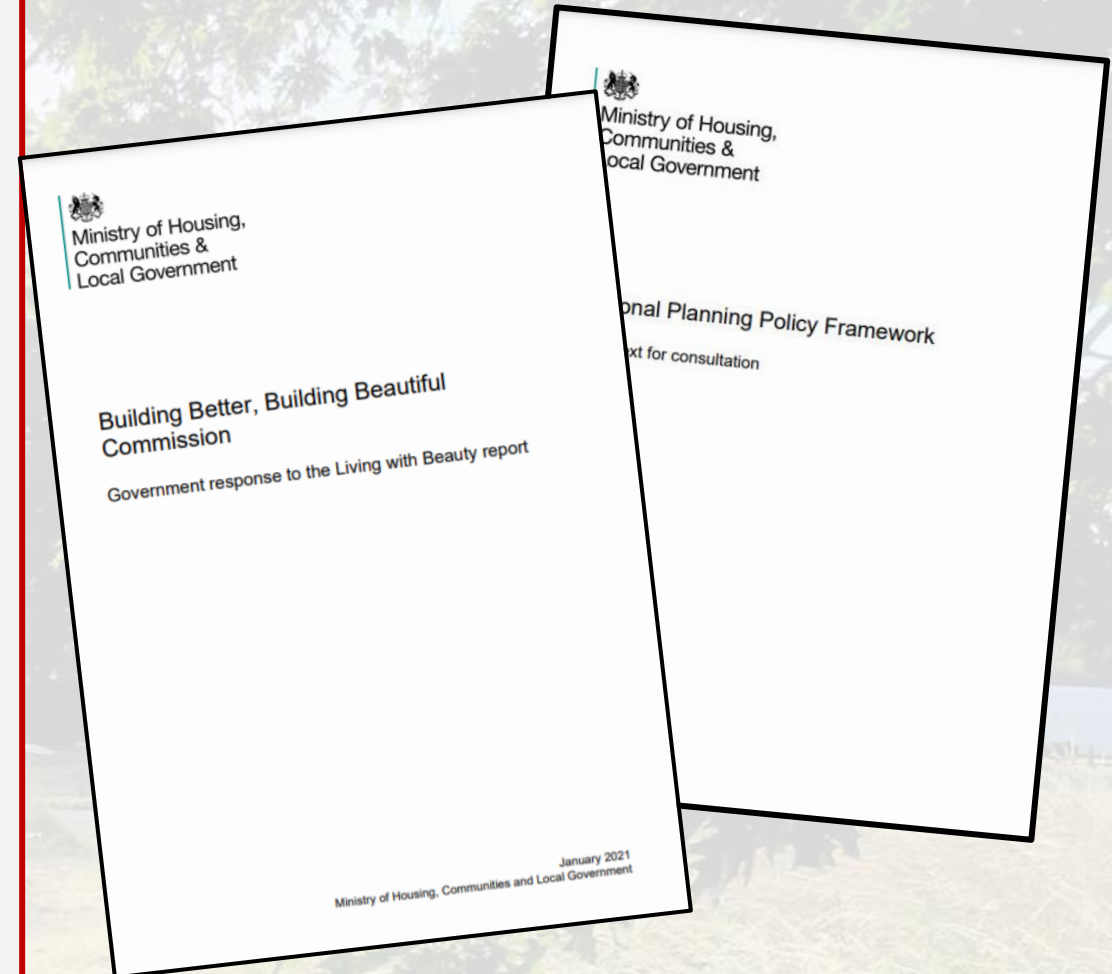


# Some of the key paragraphs

Para 127: “Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area’s defining characteristics.”

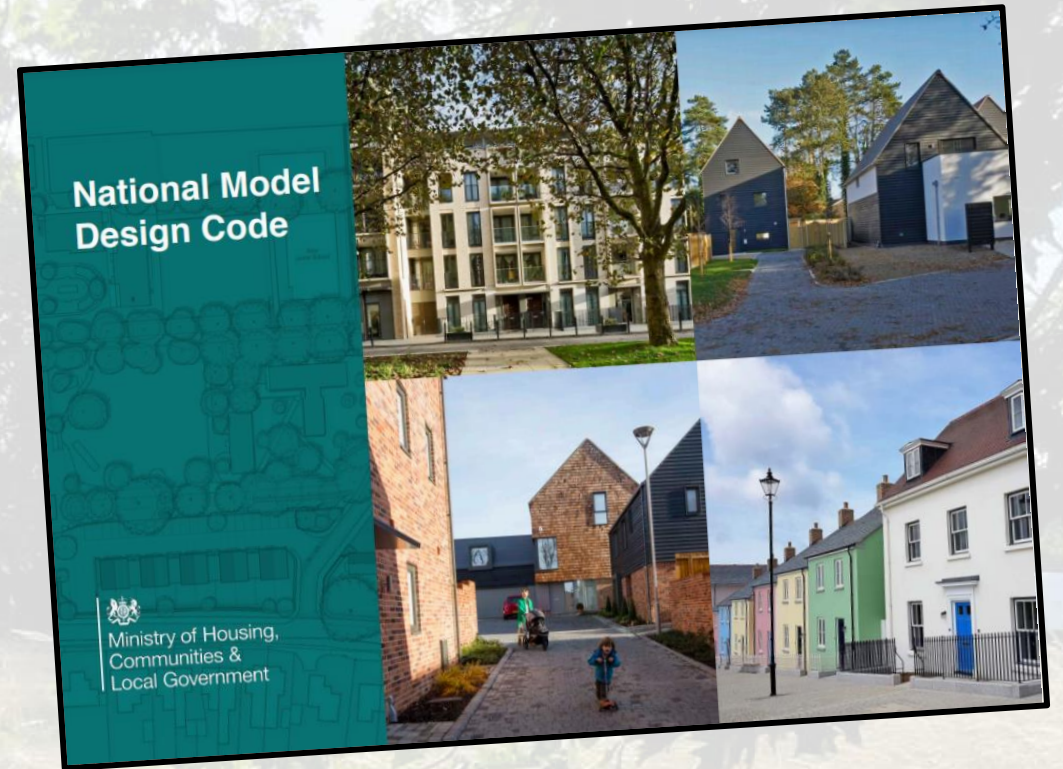
Para 128: “To provide maximum clarity about design expectations at an early stage, all local planning authorities should prepare design guides or codes consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code, and which reflect local character and design preferences.”

Para 129: “Whoever prepares them, all guides and codes should be based on effective community engagement and reflect local aspirations for the development of their area, taking into account the guidance contained in the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code. These national documents should be used to guide decisions on applications in the absence of locally produced design guides or design codes.”



# The National Model Design Code

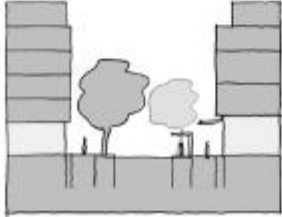
- Created as part of the revised suite of planning practice guidance and released in **January 2021** (to be read and used together with the NDG and NPPF)
- Actually a process for creating them not a code
- The purpose is to make it easier and simpler for local authorities to create successful design codes for their area
- Design codes are a great tool to help local authorities create better places and to encourage smaller house builders
- It was co-created by MHCLG and Urbed, an urban design practice in Manchester
- Here is a quick 2 minute introduction from Andy Von Bradsky, the Head of Architecture at MHCLG...



# New National Model Design Code



55. An example of a low traffic / traffic free high street.



56. An example of a market town high street



55

**Varied roof line:** A variety of heights and roof configurations

**Plinth:** Where the building meets the ground



**Portrait:** Vertical window configuration

**Setbacks** privacy strip



Our ultimate purpose is to make it easier for all neighbourhood communities, wherever they may be, sustainably to require what they find beautiful and to refuse what they find ugly. Our vision is to:

- catalyse a fundamental change within and across all levels of government, the development industry, the planning system and society to support the creation and stewardship of popular, healthy, beautiful and sustainable places;
- help neighbourhoods, communities and public servants on their behalf routinely to ask for and to deliver both new places and manage existing places to be beautiful, popular, healthy and sustainable; and
- support with pragmatic expertise public sector planners and the British design and development industries to be the best 'place-makers' in the world aided by improving UK and international data on happiness, health, popularity and sustainability.

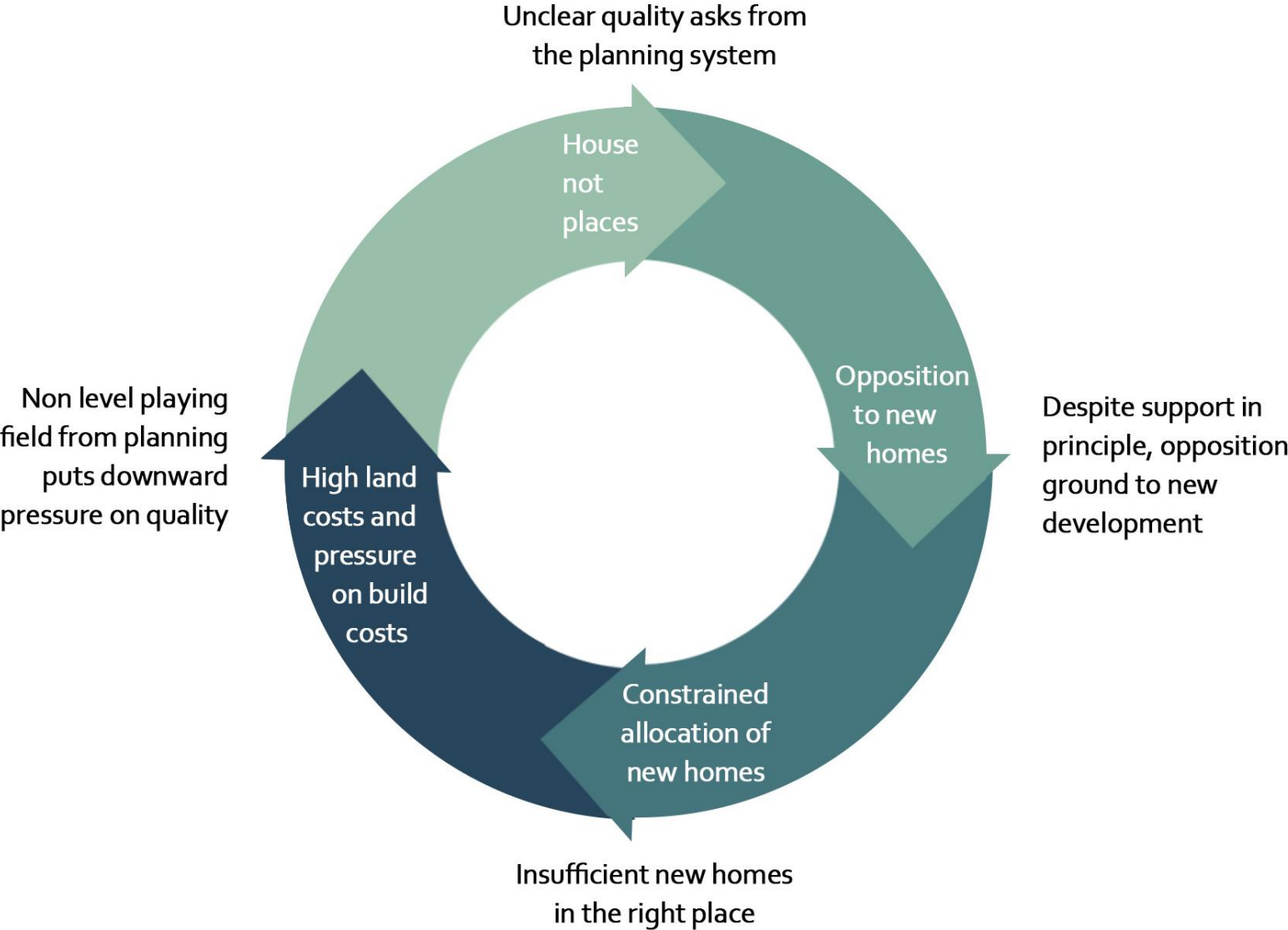
# We have lost trust in the system

Office for Place

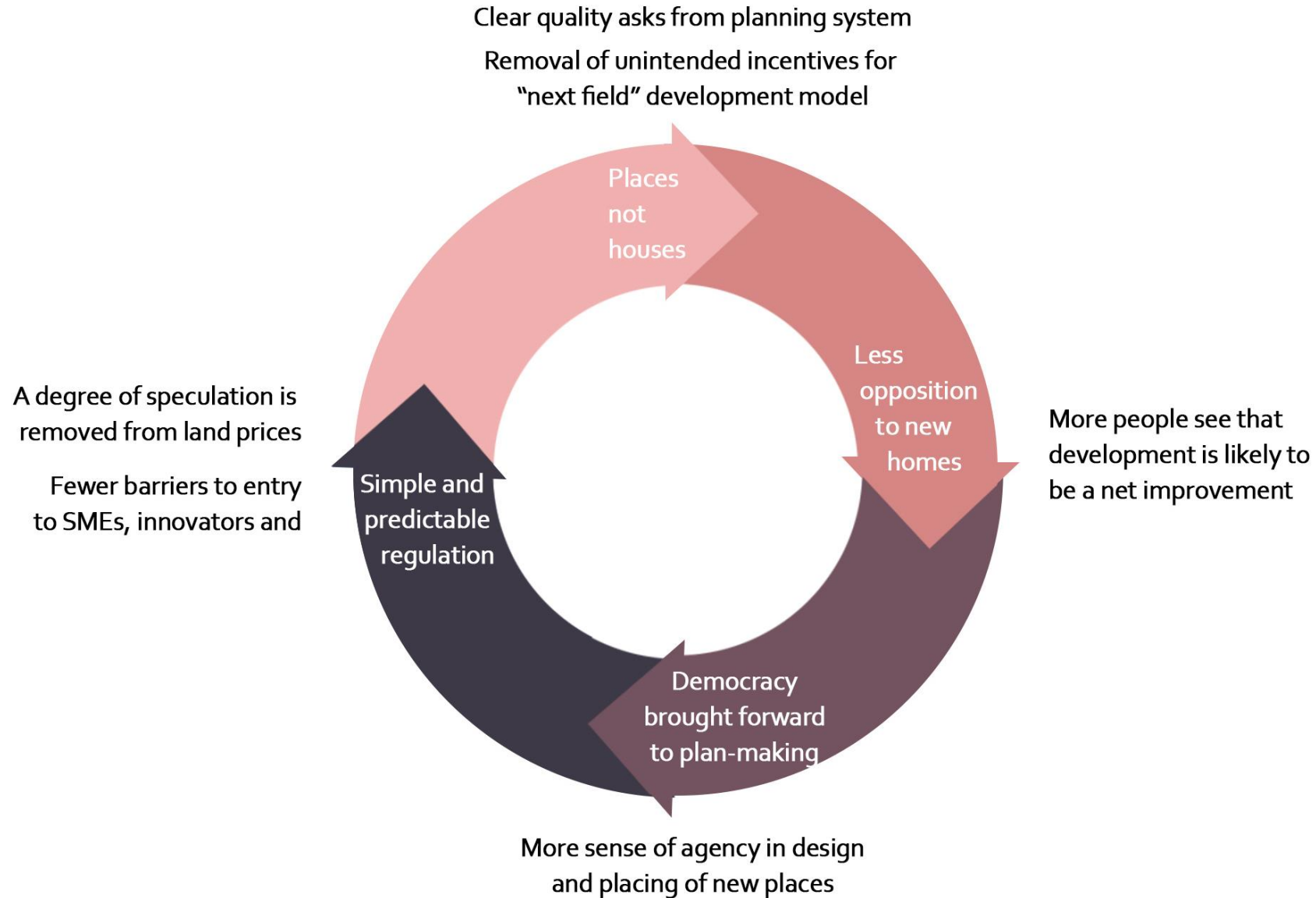
2% trust developers to act honestly on large developments

7% trust councils to make the right decision on large developments

# From a vicious circle of parasitic development...



# ... to a virtuous circle of regenerative development



**Office for Place: five activities**

**Office for Place**



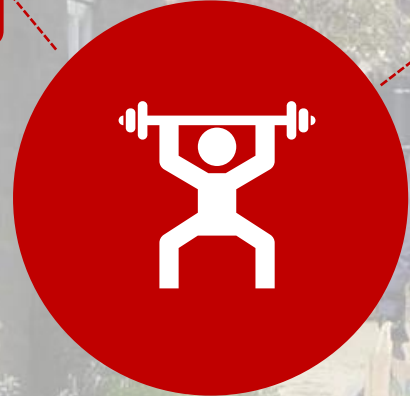
**Researching**



**Training**



**Advising**



**Supporting  
& Accrediting**



**Celebrating**



## Researching

1. We **asses** what evidence is needed.
2. We **measure** what people like & need & where they prosper.
3. We **map** skills and capacities of ((i) LPAs (ii) community & (iii) design network to inform our focus.
4. We **identify** lead responsibilities.
5. We **define** business model options.



## Supporting & Accrediting

1. We **pilot** design code creation.
2. We will **create and manage a Kite Mark** for excellence with KPIs for design codes.
3. We **write 'how to' templates** & guidance. We advise on how to run public ballots and visuals preference surveys.
4. We **share best practice** widely.
5. We **write job descriptions & KPIs** for place makers, strategic planners, highways officials and others.

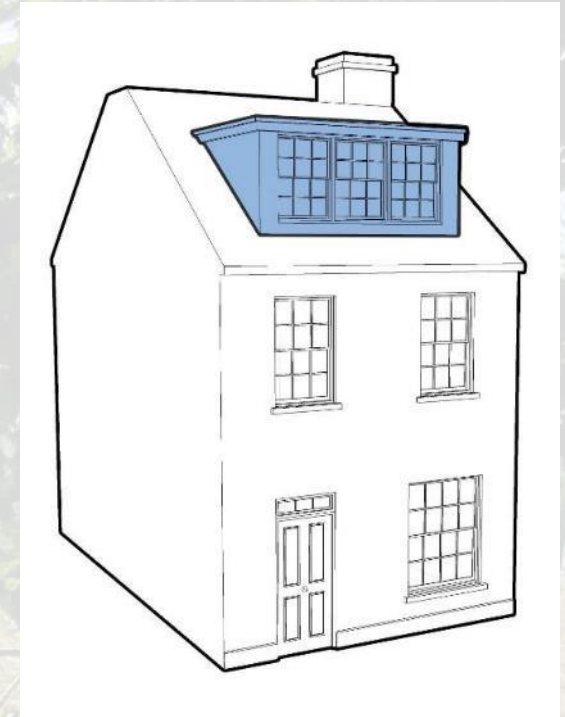
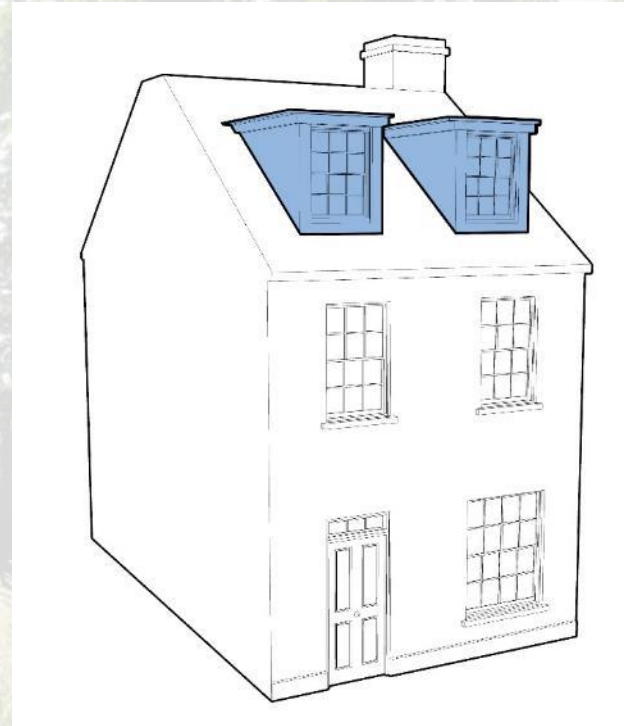
## Use simple clear and concise language throughout – coding with things developers 'must do', 'should do' and 'could do'

- We recommend using simple language and clear 'coding' to differentiate which things 'must' be included, 'should' be included or 'can' be included.
- Set this coding out at the beginning of the document to make it easy to read.
  - **MUST:** Mandatory design practices; developments that do not abide by them will not be permitted.
  - **SHOULD:** Design practices which are strongly encouraged due to the benefit that it will have on the neighbourhood, except in situations where the design practice cannot be applied for specific reasons.
  - **CAN:** Design practices which are recommended but whose absence will not drastically affect the overall quality of the development.
- This is so that the document is easy to read and accessible to all users

*Building height and mass*  
Building heights **must** respect the surrounding heights, and **must not** create overlooking or impede access to natural light. Developments **should not** be more than five storeys and **should** have a setback on the fifth storey. In the Brooks, buildings **can** be up to six storeys in height. On Castle Road, buildings **must not** exceed three storeys. On Luton Road, buildings **should not** exceed four storeys, except for the area between Castle Road and Luton Primary School, where they should not exceed three stories. Figure 23 highlights acceptable building heights in different areas of the neighbourhood. Bay widths **should not** surpass 6 meters except in cases where an increase in width can be justified.

## Design codes should be short, visual and numerical

- Keeping the code as short as possible makes it easier to read and more accessible to users
- Pictures and drawings are an effective way of expressing what you are trying to say quickly and simply
- It prevents ambiguity – especially for members of the community and smaller developers





# Underpinned by the evidence and research on what makes for happy, healthy, popular and sustainable places



# Co-create it with the community who have knowledge of the local area

## *Why?*

- The earlier you are to involve people the more likely they are to trust you
- It is important to let local people tell you about their place –often they will have local knowledge that no one else will
- It will also ensure that design codes reflect local aspirations
- Can help to develop a strong relationship and trust with local communities

## *How?*

- We recommend engaging **wide and deep**, both with a wide range of people and in depth with a few
- **Engage using a range of tools** to ensure you are reaching a wide audience – combine **online mapping tools with in-person engagement**
- **Don't be afraid to ask simple questions!**



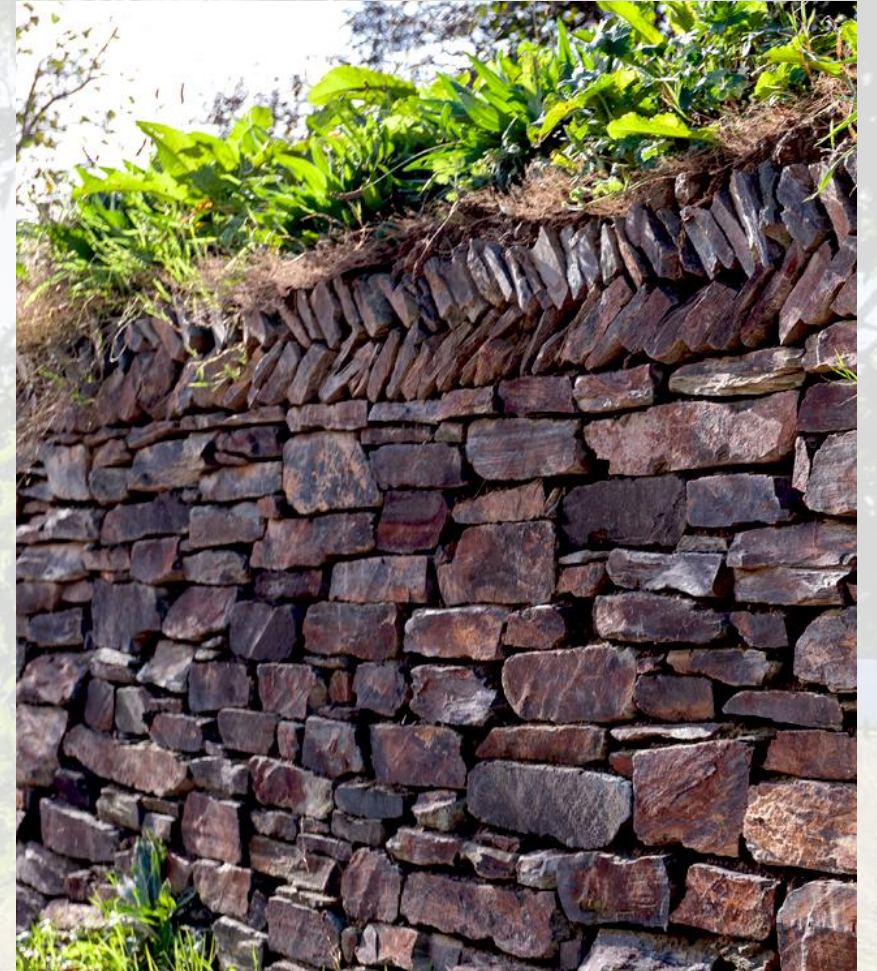
## Co-create it with builders and local craftspeople

### *Why?*

- This is very important as they know what the local build costs are to inform decision making
- They have knowledge on local materials
- They have information on supply chains

### *How?*

- Invite them to charrettes and workshops – involve them in the work of creating codes
- Code for local vernaculars which can be manufactured locally – In Nansleden the use of Cornish slate and granite has created new jobs and secured the future of several local slate and granite quarries and businesses



## New places should be greener than old places



- Keeping hedgerows
- A fruit tree for every home
- Allotments
- Green corridors
- Street trees
- Sustainable drainage

**We should recycle buildings not just bags. This barn is 600 years old and has just been converted into an art gallery**

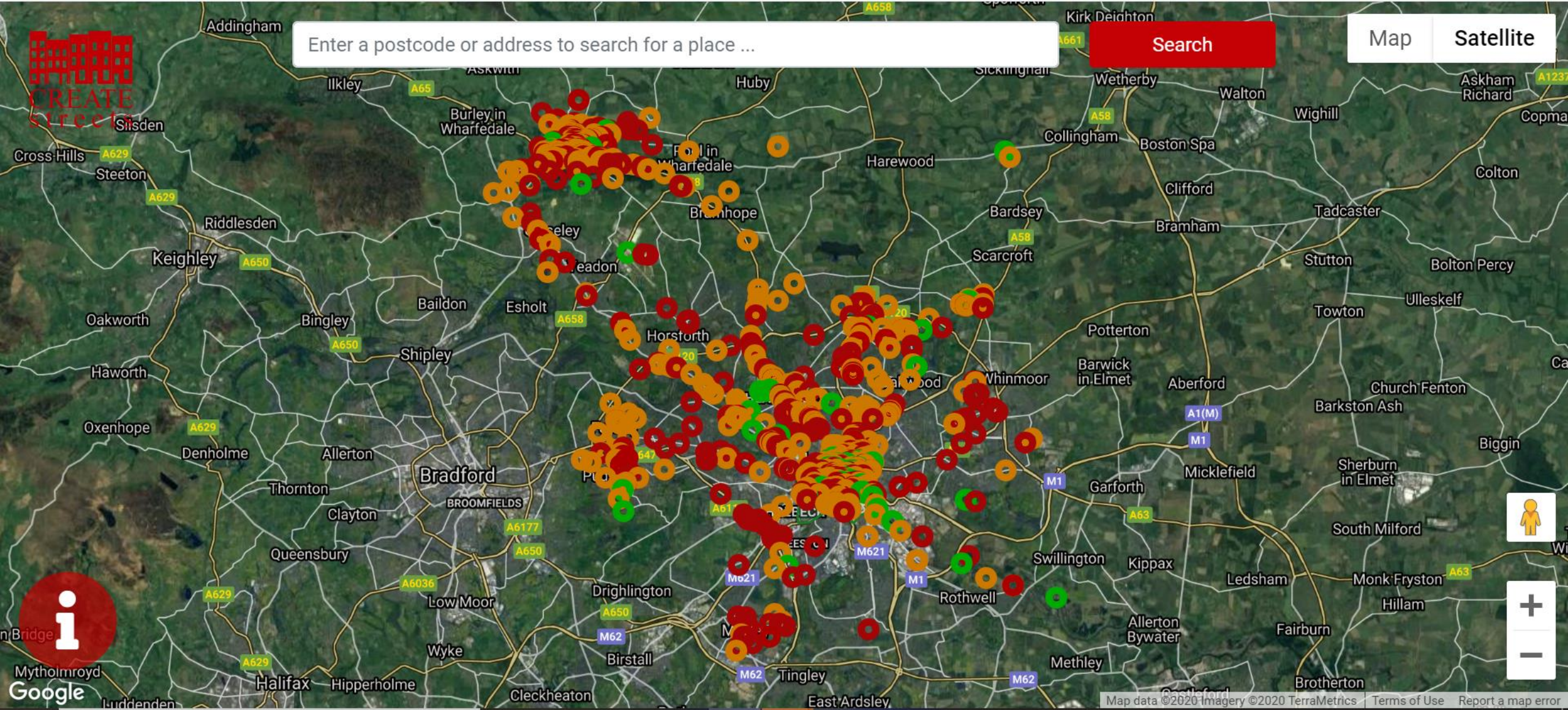


# Key elements of good engagement

A group of people are gathered around a table outdoors, engaged in a collaborative activity. They are looking at various documents, including what appears to be a site plan or map. One man in the foreground is pointing at a document. There are markers, sticky notes, and a water bottle on the table. The background shows a wooden fence and some greenery.

1. Engage early
2. Engage honestly and simply (don't be afraid to ask visual questions)
3. Set clear parameters
4. Engage wide AND deep (face to face and online)

# 905 individual comments in 4 days



# An example: street view access



Enter a postcode or address to search for a place ...

Search



Google

← A64(M)  
Leeds, England







