



Living Locally

The role of housing and planning within local councils



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Introduction



About APSE

The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) plays a unique role in local government. Working with over 300 councils across the UK, we strive to create a positive role for local authorities in delivering high-quality, effective and efficient public services. APSE provides a unified national voice for our members whilst offering opportunities – through training courses, seminars, benchmarking, briefings and research – for councils to share best practice and develop strong and sustainable frontline services.

As a not-for-profit organisation owned by our members, all surplus generated by APSE is reinvested into the services for the benefit of our local authority members.

APSE are at the forefront of ensuring local authority voices are heard at the highest level of UK governments. We run one of the largest research programmes in local government covering a diverse range of research subjects on policy – insourcing, housing, finance, scrutiny – and in our service areas. We produce self-supported research through our annual 'State of the Market' reports which draw upon surveys and analysis of the from our member local authorities. We use these to gauge trends in service delivery and gather views to inform our advocacy.

APSE are an Investors in People (IIP) Gold Standard accredited organisation as well as a Platinum accredited Carbon Literate Organisation (CLO). Headquartered in Manchester, we also have offices in Oxford and Hamilton.



About TCPA

The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) is an independent charity that works to challenge, inspire and support people to create and transform communities so that everyone thrives in socially just, healthy, sustainable and resilient environments. To that end, the TCPA aims to improve the art and science of planning in the UK and abroad and work to secure fresh perspectives on major issues, including planning policy, housing, regeneration and climate change.

Informed by the Garden City Principles, the TCPA's strategic priorities are to:

- Work to secure a good home for everyone in inclusive, resilient and prosperous communities, which support people to live healthier lives.
- Empower people to have real influence over decisions about their environments and to secure social justice within and between communities.
- Support new and transform existing places to be adaptable to current and future challenges including the climate crisis.

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Foreword

There is scarcely a day that goes by without a news report which warns of climate disaster. But this often has a global focus which can distract from more local issues. Often overlooked is the contribution well planned and designed neighbourhoods can make to more sustainable communities. This concept has been cited by some as 20-minute neighbourhoods or 15-minute cities; in this report we reflect that being overly prescriptive can create an adverse narrative. Therefore, we choose to use the term 'complete, compact and connected communities'. As awareness of climate action rises to the fore of public consciousness, local councils must also address the concerns of residents, by providing high quality, local neighbourhoods that offer greener and healthier places to live and thrive.

This latest report, once again the result of a collaboration between APSE and the TCPA, explores the actions taken by local councils to deliver greener and healthier local communities. Whilst recognising that living and working entirely locally is not possible for many people, the report reflects that much more could be done to reduce the carbon footprint of localities. Investing in walking and cycling routes is only a minor part of this equation but is nevertheless an important factor in reducing car miles and improving local air quality.

So too, we see amazing work within local councils to develop greener public realm through rewilding and biodiversity net gain, alongside managed tree planting schemes with all the benefits of carbon sequestration.

However, it is fair to say that local councils are hampered from maximising local returns by a combination of factors, not least the restrictions they face on planning, whereby their ambitions are often hampered by planning regimes which are tilted away from local powers and in favour of developers. Equally, resources are often limited, with competitive bidding a disliked feature of funding systems.

Whilst calling for resources for local councils to propel forward 'complete, compact and connected communities', it also makes a series of practical recommendations. Looking at the need for effective communications, with local residents and businesses, is one such recommendation. The report also calls for reforms to planning to enable better controls and interventions to support the development of complete, compact and connected communities. Perhaps most importantly, the value of local decent homes, offering mixed tenure based on local needs, is critical to the success of enabling people to live, work and thrive locally.

Once again, the TCPA have produced a practical and well researched guide to these issues, bringing together inspirational case studies from Leeds City Council, VeloCity and Blenheim Estate, London Borough of Newham, and the City of Edinburgh.

I commend this report to you.

Mo Baines, Chief Executive, APSE

Executive summary

The UK is facing multiple crises in housing, health, climate and biodiversity, and local councils have an important role in seeking to tackle all four of them. One of the most powerful tools at their disposal is their role in relation to housing and planning. Because, besides seeking to plan for and secure the homes people need, local councils also have the potential to plan, design and create places that will either help or hinder work to tackle issues including reducing health inequalities, the loss of biodiversity and responding to climate change. To help people and places to thrive, and to tackle these issues, we need to transform the way that we live. We need to create environments that make it easier for everyone to be more physically active, and local councils and planners have a vital role in this.

This report builds on previous APSE-TCPA reports and continues to track the housing crisis. But it also considers the role local councils can play and are playing through their planning and housing responsibilities to support the delivery of complete, compact and connected communities. By this, we mean places in which people are able to meet most of their daily needs within a short walk, wheel or cycle. This concept is referred to by some as 20-minute neighbourhoods or 15-minute cities, but others talk about liveable or thriving neighbourhoods or simply living locally.

Whilst the report recognises that the concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods and 15-minute cities has faced opposition and raised concerns in some places, it is clear that enabling more people to meet their daily needs more locally, which therefore reduces their need to travel by car and promotes active travel, has multiple benefits, where this can be achieved, with equitable outcomes. This recognition is demonstrated by the Scottish Government adopting a 'Local Living and 20-minute neighbourhoods' policy within National Policy Framework 4, which has a policy outcome of 'a network of high-quality, accessible, mixed-use neighbourhoods which support health and wellbeing, reduce inequalities and are resilient to the effects of climate change' [see section 2.3].

While Scotland might be leading the way in relation to national planning policy, the survey results set out in this report, as well as the more detailed case studies [see sections 3 and 4 respectively], highlight there is interest in, and support for, what many see as simply good place-making.

Whilst the survey results suggest there is a desire to achieve complete, compact and connected communities, this report also considers the barriers that exist to implementing them. Informed by that, the report makes several recommendations, across all four UK administrations for action that would help tackle those barriers.

Recommendations for national governments

1. **Local councils need to be properly resourced and supported to enable them to maximise the effectiveness of their planning function.** Planning is not the only tool that will support the achievement of complete, compact and connected communities, but it is a critically important one that can help deliver multiple benefits for people, places and the environment. While the case studies highlight that important work continues to be undertaken by local councils, local councils could do more if they had adequate funding.
2. Complete, compact and connected communities are an important concept if we are to tackle the housing, health, climate and nature crises. They should, therefore, be a policy priority and **England, Wales and Northern Ireland should amend their national planning guidance and frameworks to embed the concept.** As Scotland has demonstrated, local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods are not just an urban concept and can be beneficial everywhere.

Establishing this priority at the national level, should also make sure that the Planning Inspectorate for England and Wales and the Planning Appeals Commission in Northern Ireland are placing weight on the policy in decisions and in examining plans.

3. While amending planning policy is important, there also needs to be **cross government support for creating complete, compact and connected communities through place-based interventions.** This needs to be reflected in policy and funding decisions, for example in relation to the investment in new schools, health facilities and active travel.
4. Governments need to support the implementation of complete, compact and connected communities through enabling consistent and easy access to data. A range of datasets exist but local councils could be supported to work more efficiently and effectively if there was clarity about available datasets and how they can be accessed so each local council is not reinventing the wheel. Data on some elements, such as baselines on carbon emissions and carbon budgeting, also still needs to be developed. Such data should inform the initial policy development, but it is also needed on an ongoing basis so the impact of interventions can be monitored and evaluated.
5. All neighbourhoods need to include an integrated mixture of housing tenures and types that meet local housing need and support people at all stages of life. Social housing is an important part of that mixture. While local councils can plan for affordable housing, and take some steps to securing them through direct delivery and Section 106 Agreements, more needs to be done. Governments need to better support the delivery of social housing through a fully funded, long term programme.

Conclusion

Local councils continue to work hard to meet the needs of local communities and to tackle a wide range of issues, despite a lack of resources and the policy levers they need. The potential prize from supporting people to live more locally is substantial. This is already being recognised by both the Scottish Government and a number of local councils across UK administrations. The concept is a relatively simple one, but it is not easy to implement. It requires careful and compelling communications and work with local communities, a clear vision that supports cross departmental working and aligns strategies at the local level and, for local councils to be bold and implement interventions that will require behaviour change. The case studies highlight where action is being taken, with the recommendations also making clear, that changes at the national level would greatly support the implementation of this valuable concept.

Introduction

1 APSE and the TCPA have been collaborating since 2015 to track the housing crisis and provide guidance on how local councils are delivering high quality homes and places. This ongoing partnership has produced a series of reports which initially focused on housing delivery. These included Housing the Nation (2015), Homes for all - Ensuring councils can deliver the homes we need (2016); Building Homes, Creating Communities (2017), Delivering Affordable Homes in a Changing World (2018) and Housing for a Fairer Society (2019). Since 2020 the collaboration has continued to consider the role of local councils in relation to housing and planning, but the focus has widened slightly to consider the role of these functions in relation to important themes such as health and wellbeing (see At a Crossroads: Building Foundations for Healthy Communities (2020)) and enabling a green recovery (Bystanders or Innovators? How local authorities can use place making to drive the green recovery (2021). The most recent report, published in summer 2022, focused on the climate crisis and was entitled Rising to the Climate Change Challenge: the role of housing and planning within local councils.

As well as continuing to track the housing crisis, this year's research considers the role local councils can play and are playing through their planning and housing responsibilities to support the delivery of complete, compact and connected communities. By this, we mean places in which people are able to meet most of their daily needs within a short distance. This is because we know that how well we plan, design and create new places and regenerate existing ones will help or hinder work to tackle a wide range of issues, including health inequalities, climate change, and the decline in local high streets and economies. To help people and places to thrive, and to tackle these issues, we need to transform the way that we live. We need to create environments that make it easier for everyone to be more physically active, and local councils and planners have a vital role in this.

1.1 What do we mean by complete, compact and connected communities?

In recent years there has been a growing interest in shaping places to better equip them to be able to meet most of people's daily needs within a short walk, wheel or cycle. This concept is referred to by some as 20-minute neighbourhoods or 15-minute cities, but others talk about liveable or thriving neighbourhoods or simply living locally. This report uses the phrase complete, compact and connected communities, by which we broadly mean communities that include, or aim to include, most of the things that most people need for their day to day lives, such as shops, schools, parks and public transport [see also Figure 1].

As is discussed in section 3, working with communities to understand their priorities for what is accessible locally is important. Fundamentally, however, enabling more people to access what they need on a regular basis locally, and therefore reducing the need to travel by car and promoting active travel, has benefits for people and the planet. These include improving people's mental and physical health, reducing traffic and improving air quality, reducing the risk of social isolation and strengthening a sense of local community and supporting local shops and businesses.

1.2 Research approach

There are four components to the research that underpins this report:

- A high-level desk-based review of the national policy context in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.
- Responses to an online survey. The survey was sent to representatives at all local councils across the UK in December 2022 and 245 responses were received from a range of councillors and officers. The majority of respondents were based in England, but there was a good balance of representation of councils under different political control and between councillors and officers (see annex).
- Analysis of four case studies. These case studies were selected to ensure geographical diversity and represent different challenges and opportunities in relation to enabling complete, compact and connected communities.
- A roundtable with experts and people from local councils and additional conversations with local authority officers and experts to explore best practice, barriers, and opportunities.

Drawing on this research the report highlights important work already being undertaken by local councils through their approach to both housing and planning and hopes to inspire further action at the local level. While the concept of complete, compact and connected communities is a relatively simple one, the research suggests significant barriers remain to achieving them. This report also seeks, therefore, to better understand some of those barriers and makes recommendations about how they could be overcome.



Figure 1: The features of a complete, compact and connected community [from the TCPA's 20-Minute Neighbourhoods, guide for council planners in England]

The state of play: policy and legislative context

The United Kingdom faces multiple crises. These include the current cost of living crisis, but also challenges relating to poor housing, climate change, poor physical and mental health and nature. Whilst providing people with the choice to live locally more of the time will not solve all of these national and international issues, complete, compact and connected communities do provide benefits across many of these current issues. Reducing the need to travel by car, promoting active travel and supporting the use of local shops and businesses, has the potential to play a part in saving people money while promoting health and wellbeing, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Planning and place-making is, therefore, an important tool.

Back in 2020, the World Health Organisation and UN Habitat stated:

If the purpose of planning is not for human and planetary health, then what is it for?¹

The important role of planning in relation to human health and wellbeing was echoed more recently by the Chief Medical Officer, Prof Whitty, speaking at the TCPA's annual conference in November 2022 when he highlighted the roots of planning being linked to public health and suggested that proper planning was one of the things, after vaccinations, that had done most for tackling ill health. He also stated that we can literally, build ill health out of systems.

Evidence demonstrates that although the NHS is good at 'mending' people when they become ill, the things that keep people healthy are the places and communities in which they live.² Estimates suggest that around 70% of the causes of good health lie outside the NHS.³ Good homes, clean air, jobs, parks and green spaces, and trusted friends and neighbours are all important determinants of population health. The influence of the environments in which people live on their health is illustrated in Figure 2.

¹ *Integrating health in urban and territorial planning: a source book*. UN Habitat and World Health Organisation, 2020

² See, for example, *Health is made at home: hospitals are for repairs*. Crisp, 2020

³ *What makes us healthy?* The Health Foundation, March 2008. www.health.org.uk/publications/what-makes-us-healthy

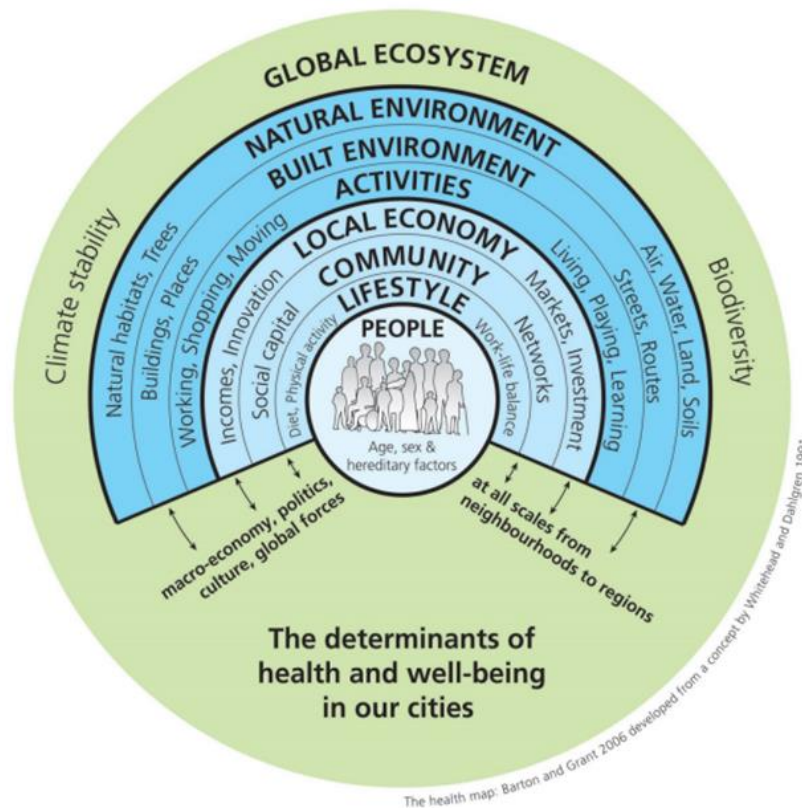


Figure 2 – The determinants of health and wellbeing [Barton and Grant 2006 developed from a concept by Whitehead and Dahlgren 1991]

The important links between places and health underpinned the creation of the statutory planning system, however they have not always been given sufficient prominence in policy or practice. The same can also be said for the links between planning and planetary health.

The most recent report by the TCPA for APSE, focused on the climate crisis and the importance of local councils in seeking to tackle it.⁴ The report highlighted that 85% of respondents to the survey undertaken to inform that report had declared a climate emergency and 78% of those respondents saying the declaration included a specific target. Many of those targets were more ambitious than the UK Government’s target as enshrined in legislation [see Box 1 below], with a portion of respondents saying that they will aim to be carbon neutral or net zero carbon by 2030 or earlier.

⁴ *Rising to the Climate Change Challenge: the role of housing and planning within local councils*. APSE and the TCPA, May 2022. <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Rising-to-the-climate-change-challenge-The-role-of-housing-and-planning-within-local-councils-with-annex-FINAL.pdf>

Box 1 - Climate change targets across the UK

In 2019 the UK became the first major economy in the world to pass laws to end its contribution to global warming by 2050.⁵ The target requires the UK to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. The UK subsequently enshrined a new target of reducing emissions by 78% by 2035 in law in April 2021.⁶

Each of the four nations are working towards achieving these reductions through different policies and strategies and each devolved nation also has its own climate change targets, supplementing action under the Climate Change Act 2008. In some cases, the devolved administrations are more ambitious than the UK as a whole:

Scotland plans to cut emissions to net zero by 2045, five years ahead of the target for the UK as a whole and generate 70% of Scotland's overall energy consumption from renewables by 2030. Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 requires local authorities to reduce emissions by 75% by 2030 and achieve net zero by 2045.

Wales plans to reduce greenhouse emissions by 95% by 2050 but has ambitions to get as close to net zero as possible.

Northern Ireland has set targets for 2050 and 2030 for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, which received Royal Assent in June 2022.

The target for 2030 is that emissions must be at least 48% lower than the baseline. The legislation also requires further targets to be set for 2030 and 2040 that are in line with the target for 2050.

While ambitious targets at international, national, and local levels are important, urgent action is still needed if they are to be achieved. In March 2023, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published the final part of its sixth assessment report, called the Synthesis Report.⁷ The key message was that urgent action is needed now, or it will be too late to limit global temperature rises to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels. A slightly earlier report by the IPCC recognised that while a wide range of action is necessary, there is a very important role for local councils in relation to the built environment and reducing emissions:

A range of 5–30% of global annual GHG emissions from end-use sectors are avoidable by 2050, compared to 2050 emissions projection of two scenarios consistent with policies announced by

⁵ 'UK becomes first major economy to pass net zero emissions law'. Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Jun. 2019. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-becomes-first-major-economy-to-pass-net-zero-emissions-law>

⁶ 'UK enshrines new target in law to slash emissions by 78% by 2035'. Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Apr. 2021 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-enshrines-new-target-in-law-to-slash-emissions-by-78-by-2035>

⁷ Full report and summary available at <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/>

*national governments until 2020, through changes in the built environment, new and repurposed infrastructures and service provision through compact cities, co-location of jobs and housing, more efficient use of floor space and energy in buildings, and reallocation of street space for active mobility.*⁸

Whilst reducing greenhouse gas emissions may not be a strong element of the Westminster Government's levelling up agenda, the empowering local action, and the other multiple benefits offered from living locally, are relevant to a number of the missions set out in the Levelling Up White Paper.⁹ Whilst there may not be cross party support for how the missions, including narrowing the gap in Healthy Life Expectancy between local areas where it is highest and lowest, and improving pride in place, will be achieved, there is cross party support for the need to tackle inequalities.

Whilst the UK has a climate change target and levelling up missions, the mechanisms to achieve those commitments vary across the four nations. This is particularly true in relation to planning as each nation now has its own planning system. The policy interventions to also achieve complete, compact and connected communities are also wide ranging and go beyond the statutory planning system. The sections below explore some of the key legislative and policy hooks that will help, or perhaps hinder, the achievement of thriving communities.

2.1 England

As of June 2023, the Westminster Government is in the process of reforming the English planning system through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. Once the legislation receives Royal Assent it will create National Development Management Policies (NDMPs). The implications of this important change are briefly summarised in Figure 3. The Bill will also change the structure of development plans for local areas and create a new duty on local planning authorities to prepare a local design code.

What will be covered by NDMPs has not to date been confirmed, but civil servants have indicated NDMPs will be kept to a minimum and focus on national policy such as Green Belt and heritage protections, draft policies are yet to have been published. These will not then be allowed to be repeated in local development plans.

⁸ *Climate Change 2022: mitigation of climate change. Summary for policymakers.* Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, April 2022.

https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGIII_SummaryForPolicymakers.pdf

⁹ *Levelling Up the United Kingdom.* HM Government, Feb. 2022.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/105270/6/Levelling_Up_WP_HRES.pdf

Figure 3: Summary of proposed changes to the English plan-led system

Current plan-led system	Proposed new approach set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill
<p>Local development plans have to be in conformity with national planning policy.</p> <p>The law requires that planning decision makers must make planning decisions, such as the grant of planning permission, in accordance with the development plan, 'unless material considerations indicate otherwise'.</p> <p>National policy, including the National Planning Policy Framework, is a material consideration.</p> <p>Whether or not national policy or other material considerations 'indicate otherwise', and therefore a decision goes against the local development plan policy, is a matter of judgment for the decision maker.</p> <p>Where development plans are up to date, the NPPF is clear that decisions should be made in accordance with them.</p>	<p>The proposed reforms will create statutory National Development Management Policies (NDMP). These are in addition to the non-statutory National Planning Policy Framework.</p> <p>The Bill will prevent local plans from being inconsistent with any NDMP.</p> <p>Planning decisions will have to be made in accordance with 'the development plan and any national development management policies'. So, these policies are no longer just a 'material consideration'.</p> <p>If there is a conflict between the development plan and the NDMPs, the Bill states it must be resolved in favour of the national policies.</p>

Local policy on wider, strategic issues will, however, still need to be developed. These will be informed by national planning policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹⁰ and underpinned by Planning Policy Guidance¹¹. In late 2022, proposed changes to the NPPF were subject to consultation¹² and updates following that process are awaited. However, the consultation also noted that a 'fuller review' of the NPPF would be required 'in due course' and the contents of the next version would depend on the wider changes to the planning system. This would presumably include some policies relating to development management being removed to reflect the creation of the NDMPs.

¹⁰ *National Planning Policy Framework*. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Jul. 2021. <http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

¹¹ *Planning Practice Guidance*. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. <http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

¹² *Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to national planning policy*. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Dec 2022. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-reforms-to-national-planning-policy/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-reforms-to-national-planning-policy>

The current version of the NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. This is broken down into three overarching and interdependent objectives relating to the economy and environment, and a social objective which is:

to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being.

In light of the multiple features and benefits of complete, compact and connected communities much of the NPPF is relevant to their delivery, including chapters on promoting sustainable transport, meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal erosion, and promoting healthy and safe communities. It is worth noting, however, that no reference is made to 'compact' or 'walkable' communities.

While the reform agenda creates uncertainty, it is clear that the current Government continues to place an emphasis on good design and design codes. The *National Design Guide*,¹³ which was published back in 2019 and updated in January 2021, sets out ten characteristics for a well-designed place, which, together, the Guide argues will create a places character, nurture and sustain a sense of community and work positively to help address environmental issues affecting climate. One of the characteristics is 'built form', which highlights the benefits of compact forms of development that are walkable and contribute positively to well-being and placemaking. The guidance also states that compact forms of development:

Bring people together to support local public transport, facilities and local services. They make destinations easily accessible by walking or cycling wherever this is practical. This helps to reduce dependency upon the private car.

The benefits of compact and walkable neighbourhoods are also highlighted in relation to the resources characteristic. This section notes that a neighbourhood with a mix of uses and facilities '*reduces demand for energy and supports health and well-being. It uses land efficiently so helps adaptation by increasing the ability for CO2 absorption, sustaining natural ecosystems, minimising flood risk and the potential impact of flooding, and reducing overheating and air pollution.*'

The emphasis on good design is welcome and provides a number of hooks for local plan policy relating to securing complete, compact and connected communities, however not all policy decisions align with achieving high quality places. As highlighted in APSE and the TCPA's 2021 joint report, *Bystanders or Innovators?*,¹⁴ there has been an emphasis on deregulation of the

¹³ National Design Guide, Department for levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Jan. 2021. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/962113/National_design_guide.pdf Parts one and two of the National Model Design Code are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-model-design-code>

¹⁴ *Bystanders or Innovators? How local authorities can use place making to drive the green recovery.* APSE, Jul. 2021. <https://www.apse.org.uk/apse/assets/File/APSE%20TCPA%20Housing%20Report.pdf>

planning system over the last decade as demonstrated by an expansion of permitted development rights. This has resulted in local authorities in England having far less control over developments in their local areas, including changes of use on high streets, than they once had. Another example is while the publication of *Gear Change: a bold vision for cycling and walking*¹⁵ in 2020 was seen as a welcome commitment to promoting active travel and the multiple benefits it offers, in March 2023 the budget for active travel was cut by £380million.¹⁶

2.2 Wales

In Wales, all public policy and public spending is informed by the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015,¹⁷ which aims to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of the people of Wales. The Act sets out seven wellbeing goals which public bodies must work to achieve:

- A prosperous Wales;
- A resilient Wales;
- A more equal Wales;
- A healthier Wales;
- A Wales of cohesive communities;
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language; and
- A globally responsible Wales.

The Act also provides for better decision-making by requiring public bodies to take account of the long term, help to prevent problems occurring or getting worse, take an integrated approach, take a collaborative approach, and consider and involve people of all ages and diversity.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 is part of a strong legislative framework which provides a foundation to address climate change, sustainable development and wellbeing at national through to local levels. This includes the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013,¹⁸ which provides the framework for improving the provision of infrastructure and encouraging walking and cycling, and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016,¹⁹ which sets out requirements for the sustainable management of the Country's natural resources.

In last year's report, it was noted that a 2019 report by the Audit Office Wales found that 'insufficient capacity and reducing resources are eroding planning authorities' resilience', and that it was undermining the delivery of national planning policy and the Wellbeing of Future

¹⁵ *Gear change: a bold vision for cycling and walking*. Department for Transport, Jul. 2020.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904146/gear-change-a-bold-vision-for-cycling-and-walking.pdf

¹⁶ See coverage of the announcement for example - <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2023/mar/20/cuts-cycling-walking-budget-england-cost-more-long-term-labour>

¹⁷ Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/2/contents>

¹⁸ Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2013/7/contents/enacted>

¹⁹ Environment (Wales) Act 2016. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2016/3/contents/enacted>

Generations Act, which places significant additional burdens on local authorities.²⁰ While resourcing remains a concern *The Future Generations Report 2020*,²¹ which was published by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, clearly recognises the vital role of planning and place-making. Specifically, it states:

Wales is leading the way in policy-making, now we have to show the world how we apply it. Planning needs to underpin all corporate strategies and well-being objectives. It needs to be valued and prioritised at a senior leadership level...

...Some public bodies are seeing planning as an enabler in providing innovative solutions to meeting the well-being goals but this needs to be more consistent across all public bodies in Wales.

The strategic direction for planning and development in Wales over the next 20 years is set out in *Future Wales: The National Plan 2040*.²² As the foreword from the then Minister for Housing and Local Government, Julie James MS, states:

Future Wales positions [the Welsh] planning system to deliver a prosperous and fairer Wales where sustainable living and the efficient use of resources are the norm. We want to create places that support healthy and active lifestyles. By co-locating different land-uses we can minimise the amount of travelling we need to do to reach work, open spaces, shops and public services from our homes. Not only is this environmentally sound planning, it offers great social, economic and cultural benefits too.

The National Plan gives spatial expression to long-term economic, social and environmental objectives. It has development plan status and it is, therefore, part of the statutory plan.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW)²³ sits alongside The National Plan. The emphasis throughout the document is on placemaking, by which it means a 'holistic approach to the planning and design of development and spaces, focused on positive outcomes', that seeks to create places that 'promote people's prosperity, health, happiness, and well-being in the widest sense. PPW's policies on place-making set requirements for high-quality and well-designed communities in which residents can easily access all the services that they need. The policy is also explicit about the role of planning in promoting healthier places and tackling health inequalities.

In relation to housing specifically, the Welsh Government has proposed to introduce the Welsh Housing Quality Standard 2023, which aimed to improve the quality of social homes in Wales. The draft standard was consulted on between May and August 2022 with a summary of responses

²⁰ *The Effectiveness of Local Planning Authorities in Wales*. Auditor General for Wales, Jun. 2019 <https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files-old/publications/planning-services-2019-full-report-english.pdf>

²¹ *The Future Generations Report 2020*. Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, May 2020. <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/FGC-Report-English.pdf>

²² *Future Wales: The National Plan 2040*. Welsh Government, Jul. 2020. <http://gov.wales/future-wales-national-plan-2040-0>

²³ *Planning Policy Wales. Edition 11*. Welsh Government, Feb. 2021. http://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-02/planning-policy-wales-edition-11_0.pdf

published in December 2022.²⁴ The consultation document stated that it was anticipated that, in time, the Standard would apply to all types and tenures of housing. The ambitious proposals included making all existing social housing net zero carbon emissions by 2033.

2.3 Scotland

As set out in Box 1, Scotland also has a target for net-zero emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045. This target was embedded in the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019,²⁵ which amended the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.²⁶ This increased ambition was accompanied by revised interim targets, updated arrangements for Climate Change Plans to meet the targets and includes new measures, such as the creation of a Citizens Assembly.²⁷ The 2018-2032 Climate Change Plan²⁸ also lays out the Scottish Government's pathway to deliver the targets set by the Climate Change Act 2019, and how it will support a green recovery. The plan includes a road map for a co-ordinated, cross-cutting and systems-based approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, with themed sections on a whole-system energy approach, land use and nature-based solutions, the circular economy, transport demand, the planning system and wellbeing and national outcomes.

In relation to planning policy more specifically, Scotland's National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)²⁹ was adopted in February 2023. It replaced National Planning Framework 3 and Scottish Planning Policy, and brought together spatial and thematic policies into one document.

Following the adoption and publication of the final version of NPF4 it became part of the statutory development plan, alongside local development plans.

Part 1 of NPF4 sets out a national spatial strategy for Scotland to 2045. In its introduction the powerful role of planning in delivering change on the ground is recognised, as is the need for change in response to the climate and nature crises and longstanding inequality.

Six overarching spatial principles are set out:

- Just transition
- Conserving and recycling assets
- Local living
- Compact urban growth

²⁴ Both the consultation and summary of responses are available at <https://www.gov.wales/welsh-housing-quality-standard-2023>

²⁵ Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2019/15/enacted>

²⁶ Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/12/contents>

²⁷ More information on its achievements: <https://www.climateassembly.scot/>

²⁸ *Update to the Climate Change Plan 2018-2032: Securing a Green Recovery on a Path to Net Zero*. Scottish Government, Dec. 2020.

²⁹ National Planning Framework 4. Scottish Government, Feb. 2023.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/pages/1/>

- Rebalanced development
- Rural revitalisation

And it is argued that by applying these principles, the national spatial strategy will support the planning and delivery of:

Sustainable places, where emissions are reduced, and biodiversity is restored and connected;

Liveable places, where people can live better, healthier lives; and

Productive places, where there is a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy.

Part 2 sets out 33 national planning policies that aims to deliver sustainable, liveable and productive places. While the vast majority of the policies are relevant to delivering successful, complete, compact and connected communities policy 15 is worth noting in particular [see Box 2], which focuses on 'local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods'. In April 2023, the Scottish Government published draft guidance to support the application of the policy in Box 2.³⁰

³⁰ *Local Living and 20-Minute Neighbourhoods Planning Guidance: consultation draft*. Scottish Government, Apr. 2023. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/local-living-20-minute-neighbourhoods-planning-guidance/>

Box 2 – NPF4 policy on 20-minute neighbourhoods

Local Living and 20 minute neighbourhoods

Policy Principles

Policy Intent:

To encourage, promote and facilitate the application of the Place Principle and create connected and compact neighbourhoods where people can meet the majority of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home, preferably by walking, wheeling or cycling or using sustainable transport options.

Policy Outcomes:

- Places are planned to improve local living in a way that reflects local circumstances.
- A network of high-quality, accessible, mixed-use neighbourhoods which support health and wellbeing, reduce inequalities and are resilient to the effects of climate change.
- New and existing communities are planned together with homes and the key local infrastructure including schools, community centres, local shops, greenspaces, health and social care, digital and sustainable transport links.

Local Development Plans:

LDPs should support local living, including 20 minute neighbourhoods within settlements, through the spatial strategy, associated site briefs and masterplans. The approach should take into account the local context, consider the varying settlement patterns and reflect the particular characteristics and challenges faced by each place. Communities and businesses will have an important role to play in informing this, helping to strengthen local living through their engagement with the planning system.

Policy 15

- a) Development proposals will contribute to local living including, where relevant, 20 minute neighbourhoods. To establish this, consideration will be given to existing settlement pattern, and the level and quality of interconnectivity of the proposed development

with the surrounding area, including local access to:

- sustainable modes of transport including local public transport and safe, high quality walking, wheeling and cycling networks;
- employment;
- shopping;
- health and social care facilities;
- childcare, schools and lifelong learning opportunities;
- playgrounds and informal play opportunities, parks, green streets and spaces, community gardens, opportunities for food growth and allotments, sport and recreation facilities;
- publicly accessible toilets;
- affordable and accessible housing options, ability to age in place and housing diversity.

Policy impact:

- ✓ Just Transition
- ✓ Conserving and recycling assets
- ✓ Local living
- ✓ Compact urban growth
- ✓ Rebalanced development
- ✓ Rural revitalisation

Key policy connections:

[Tackling the climate and nature crises](#)

[Climate mitigation and adaptation](#)

[Sustainable transport](#)

[Design, quality and place](#)

[Infrastructure first](#)

[Quality homes](#)

[Blue and green infrastructure](#)

[Play, recreation and sport](#)

[Community wealth building](#)

[City, town, local and commercial centres](#)

[Retail](#)

2.4 Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland legislation on tackling climate change received Royal Assent in 2022. The legislation enables the creation of a system of carbon budgeting, requires regulations to be made relating to climate change reporting by public bodies and requires the establishment of an independent Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner.³¹ There is also a requirement on the Department for Infrastructure to develop sectoral plans for transport, which set a minimum spend on active travel from the overall transport budget of 10%.

In relation to planning policy more specifically, the *Regional Development Strategy: RDS 2035*³² was published in 2010 and is the spatial strategy of the Northern Ireland Executive. It sets out a long-term plan for economic growth and sustainable development and influences national investment and councils' decisions and investments. The document sets out eight specific aims, one of which is to 'take actions to reduce [their] carbon footprint and facilitate adaptation to climate change'. Other aims include to 'protect and enhance the environment for its own sake' and to 'promote development which improves the health and well-being of communities'.

More detailed policy is set out in 'regional guidance' (RG), including RG9 which states 'reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate mitigation and adaptation to climate change whilst improving air quality'. Paragraph 3.26 sets out a number of considerations relating to RG9 focused on mitigation, including:

Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport. This will include reducing the need to use the car. By designing neighbourhoods that have shops, workplaces and services, schools, churches, parks and other amenities near homes, residents and visitors will have increased opportunities for walking, cycling, or taking public transport as they go about their daily lives.

The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011³³ sets out that the objective of the planning system is to secure the orderly and consistent development of land whilst furthering sustainable development and improving well-being. To support the achievement of this purpose, in 2015 the *Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland: Planning for Sustainable Development* (SPPS)³⁴ was published. This document sets out strategic planning policy on a range of planning issues, with the aim of furthering sustainable development and improving the wellbeing of the population of Northern Ireland. It has a statutory basis, and it must be taken into account in the preparation of Local Development Plans.

³¹ See <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/climate-change-act-northern-ireland-2022-key-elements> for an overview of the key elements of the Act.

³² *Regional Development Strategy: Building a Better Future*. Department for Regional Development, Northern Ireland Executive, 2010. <http://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/infrastructure/regional-development-strategy-2035.pdf>

³³ Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2011/25/contents>

³⁴ *Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS): Planning for Sustainable Development*. Northern Ireland Department of the Environment, Sept. 2015. <http://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/infrastructure/SPPS.pdf>

The SPPS sets out five core planning principles for the planning system, which are:

- Improving health and well-being;
- Creating and enhancing shared space;
- Supporting sustainable economic growth;
- Supporting good design and positive place making; and
- Preserving and improving the built and natural environment.

The section on improving health and well-being includes a diagram on the wider determinants of health and well-being and explicitly states that 'the planning system has an active role to play in helping to better the lives of people and communities in Northern Ireland'. Paragraph 4.5 goes on to state:

When plan-making and decision-taking planning authorities should contribute positively to health and well-being through:

- *safeguarding and facilitating quality open space, sport and outdoor recreation;*
- *providing for safe and secure age-friendly environments;*
- *encouraging and supporting quality, environmentally sustainable design;*
- *better connected communities with safe pedestrian environments;*
- *better integration between land-use planning and transport;*
- *facilitating the protection and provision of green and blue infrastructure;*
- *supporting the provision of jobs, services, and economic growth;*
- *supporting delivery of homes to meet the full range of housing needs, contributing to balanced communities; and*
- *supporting broader government policy aimed at addressing for example obesity, and health and well-being impacts arising through pollution.*

3 Survey results and analysis

To inform this report, a survey was sent to representatives at all local authorities across the UK in December 2022. A total of 245 responses were received from a range of councillors and officers and there was an even representation of councils under different political control and across the devolved nations. The majority of respondents (84%) were based in the UK, reflecting the fact that 84% of local authorities in the UK are in England. The data is presented for all respondents, in the cases where there was a divergence in views between the nations, those have been highlighted in the report.

This chapter outlines the key findings from the survey and analyses the challenges and opportunities faced by local authorities. The analysis is also informed by the stakeholder roundtable, desk-based research and conversations with local authorities.

3.1 Delivering affordable homes in the United Kingdom

While much of the analysis below focuses on the key theme of this report – the role of local authorities in achieving complete, compact and connected communities through housing and planning – as with previous years the survey continued to collect longitudinal data to gauge changes in local authority perceptions and approaches to affordable housing.

As Figure 4 highlights, the vast majority of respondents characterised the need for affordable housing to be moderate or severe. Those considering it to be severe has risen from 58% in 2016 to 67% in 2023, although this is very slightly below the 69% recorded in the 2022 results.

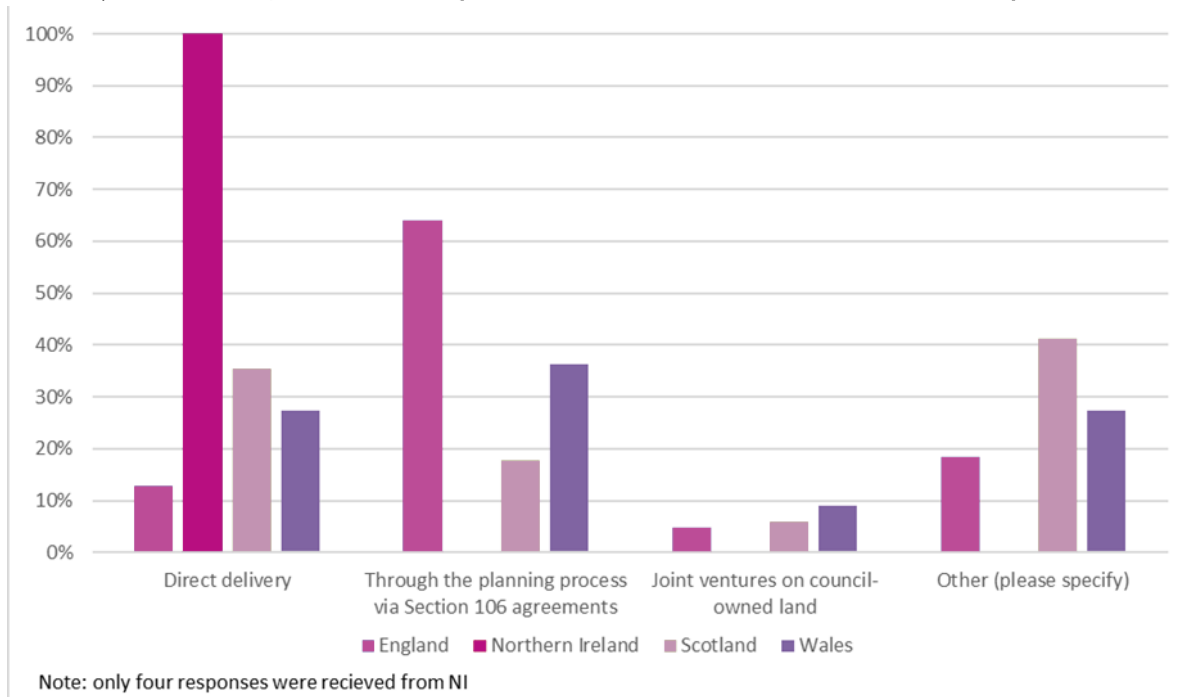
Figure 4: How respondents would characterise the need for affordable homes (i.e. homes available for subsidised or social rent) in their local authority area

	2016		2017		2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
Severe	58%	69	63%	96	63%	89	58%	92	64%	138	67%	125	69%	149	67%	163
Moderate	37%	44	35%	54	35%	49	40%	64	31%	67	30%	57	28%	61	29%	71
Not substantial	3%	4	1%	2	2%	3	2%	3	5%	10	2%	3	2%	4	2%	4
Don't know	1%	1	1%	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	2	1%	3	3%	7
Total		118		153		141		159		216		187		217		245

The survey found that 57% of respondents identified the planning system and section 106 agreements as the dominant model of delivering social and affordable housing in their local authority areas (see Figure 4), this is up 10% from the results of the previous year's survey. Reflecting trends year on year, while the number of respondents from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland were small (44 out of 281), Figure 5 illustrates that responses from devolved nations reflect a greater emphasis on direct delivery than the English local authorities that responded.

It is also interesting to note that direct delivery has declined from 23% to 16% between 2022 and 2023. This was also reflected in responses to a question about whether local councils had, or were considering, setting up a local housing delivery company. In 2017, 52% of respondents said they yes, they had set up, or were considering setting up, a wholly owned subsidiary of the council. Between 2018 and 2022 the responses ranged from 42% - 48% but in 2023 this has declined to 35%. This shift perhaps reflects the challenge local councils are facing from limited resources or pressures on costs as a result of the recent hikes in inflation.

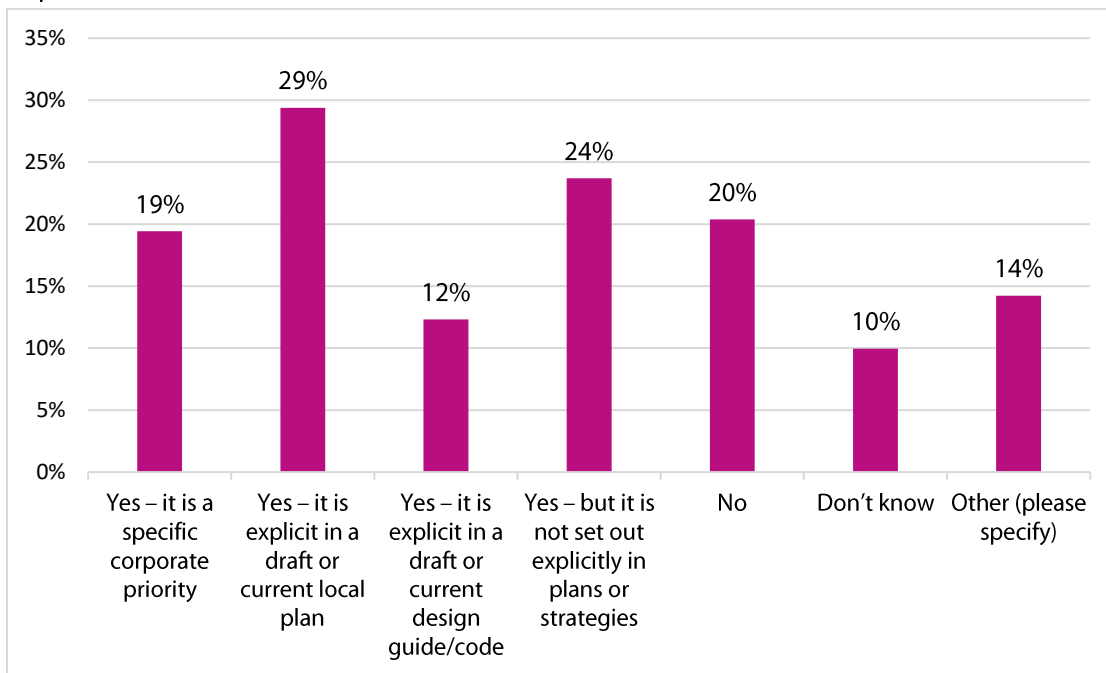
Figure 5: The dominant model of delivering social and affordable housing in respondents' local authority area (245 respondents) noting that in Northern Ireland the role of the Housing Executive.



3.2 Local authorities' commitment to delivering complete, compact, and connected communities

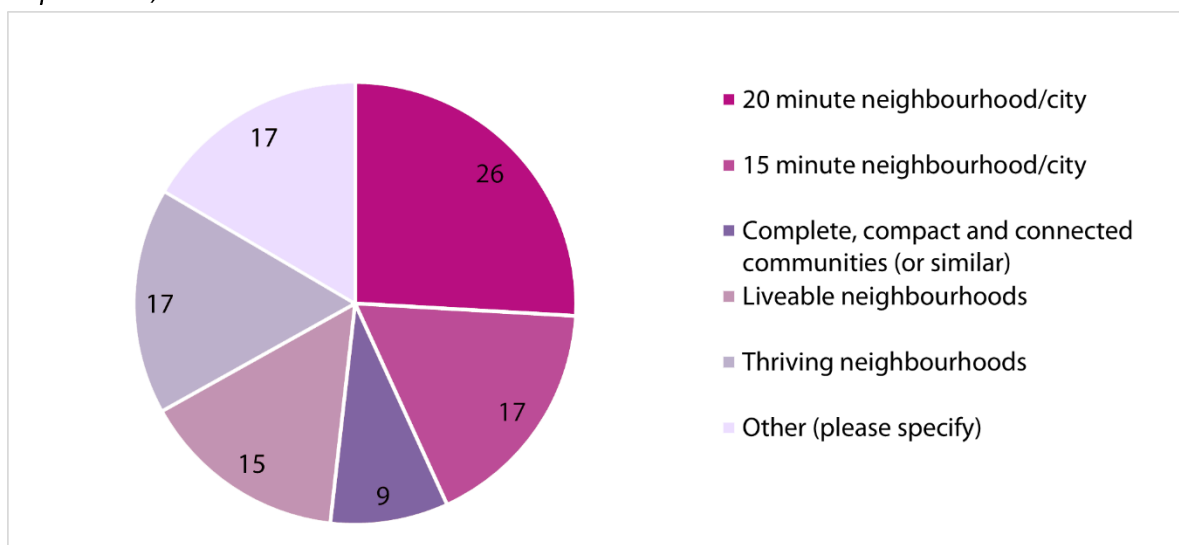
The survey results clearly reflect that, of those who responded, most local councils are committed to working to create complete, compact and connected communities. As shown in Figure 6, 60% of respondents indicated that the commitment was set out in either a specific corporate priority, draft or current local plan documents, or a draft or current design guide or code. A further 24% stated that while it was a commitment, it was not set out explicitly in a plan or strategy. Just 20% said that their authorities had not committed to the delivery of complete, compact and connected communities, although some respondents who responded 'other' justified this saying that while no formal commitment had been made, they were exploring what the concept could look like in their areas.

Figure 6: Commitments to working to create complete, compact and connected communities (211 respondents)



Respondents who confirmed that their local authorities had committed to the complete, compact, connected concept were asked what language they preferred to use when referring to it. As shown in Figure 7, 43% said they employed the 15- or 20-minute neighbourhood/city phrase while other popular language related to 'liveable' or 'thriving' neighbourhoods, and living 'locally'. Further terminology included 'walkable neighbourhoods', 'sustainable communities', 'connected communities', 'good growth', and 'building homes for a healthy lifestyle'. However, it is also recognised by a number of local councils and planners, including through discussion at the roundtable, that some places have long operated as 15-minute neighbourhoods, but previous language had included 'sustainable neighbourhoods' or simply 'good place-making'.

Figure 7: Preferred language for the concept (this question was not applicable to all respondents - 139 respondents)



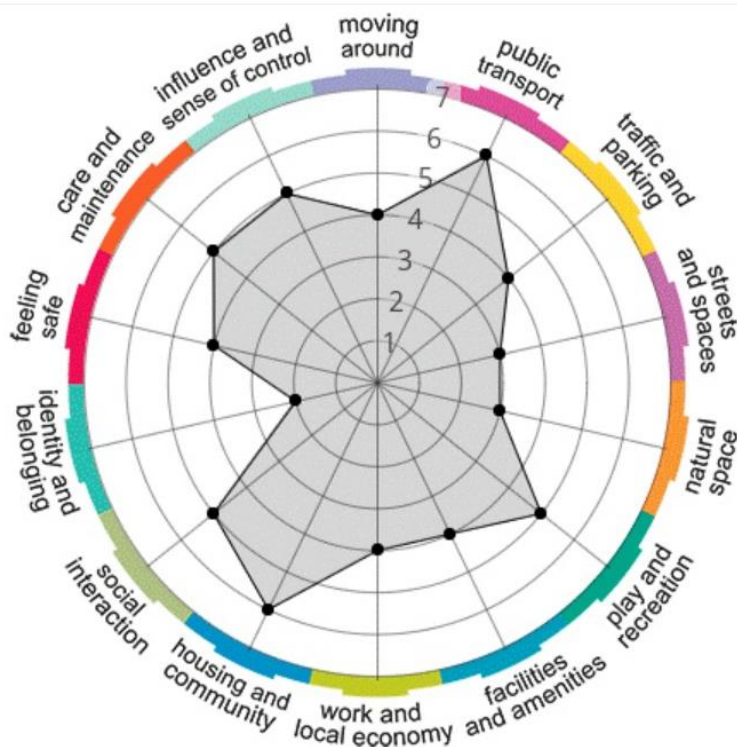
Respondents from local councils in Scotland overwhelmingly opted for the 20-Minute Neighbourhood language, at 73%. This reflects the language used in National Planning Framework 4, although 'local living' is also used in the policy [see section 2.3 above], which although only formally adopted in February 2023 had been published as a draft for consultation in November 2021.

Box 3 - The Place Standard tool

The Place Standard tool has been built jointly by NHS Health Scotland, the Scottish Government and Architecture and Design Scotland and provides a simple framework to structure discussions about a place to inform an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses.

The Tool asks 14 questions relating to themes covering both the physical and social elements of a place. These themes include 'moving around', 'natural space', 'housing and community' and 'feeling safe'. Participants aim to score a place for each theme and when these scores are plotted on a simple diagram, such as the one shown below, they help inform thinking about priorities for improvements.

It was designed mainly with community and third sector groups and organisations in mind, but it can be used by a wide range of people, including local councils and developers. It is relevant for both existing and new places.



More information and to access the tool please visit: <https://www.healthscotland.scot/health-inequalities/impact-of-social-and-physical-environments/place/the-place-standard-tool>

The issue of language was also discussed at a roundtable attended by a range of local authorities, including representation from Scotland. In the discussion they noted that 'local living' had been used as part of the policy to combat criticism of, and concern that, it is difficult to apply the 20-minute neighbourhood concept to rural areas. The applicability of the concept to rural locations is also covered in more detail in the draft guidance published by the Scottish Government in April 2023. It highlights that there is a need for 'flexibility of approach' and that while accessing the majority of daily needs within a 20-minute walk, wheel or cycle may not always be achievable in rural areas, 'it is still possible to support local living through planning for connected, attractive, sustainable places that respect the character and context of rural places.'³⁵ It also emphasises the need to create local hubs with good transport links and improved digital connectivity in order to reduce the need to travel.

The survey also explored how local councils engaged local communities to inform their thinking about the implementation of the complete, compact and connected communities concept (Figure 8). For those the question was applicable to, the most popular response was that consultation had been undertaken with the community but that specific groups had not been targeted. Local businesses, the local NHS and schools, academies and colleges were also consulted.

Of the respondents that stated that they consulted specific groups, these included young people and children, and elderly and retired people, and people with protected characteristics. Perhaps unsurprisingly, a strong theme from both the roundtable and the case studies was the importance of engaging local communities in discussions about what they need from their local area and what their expectations are about the services and facilities they need to 'live locally'. In practice, there had been nervousness about setting out a list of 'absolute must-haves', and discussions had helped both local councils and communities identify services that they accessed daily, for example a shop to buy daily supplies, which would ideally be closer, compared with something like a GP that might be accessed less frequently.. As highlighted in the Leeds case study, thought can therefore be given to weighting different services and facilities to reflect the level of priority they might be given within a local community.

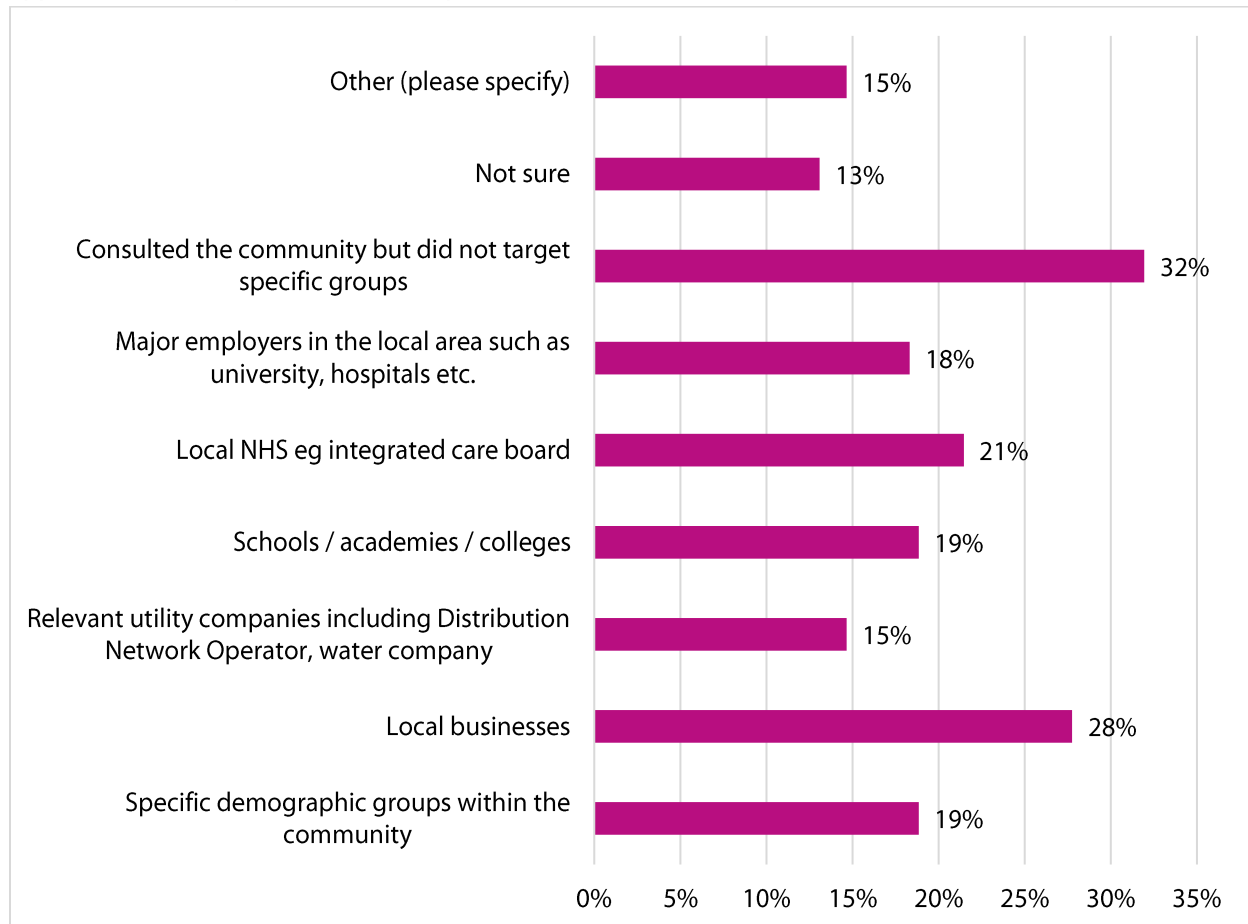
There are many examples of good practice in relation to community participation. As highlighted in section 4.3, Newham Council used a citizen's assembly and a poll of all residents to inform the priority issues to be discussed by that assembly. The Place Standard tool is also a useful framework for engaging people in a discussion about their current neighbourhood [see Box 3], to then help inform thinking about priorities for improvements. The Victoria State Government in Australia developed *20-minute Neighbourhood Checklist*³⁶ to support the implementation of the concept in Melbourne. The expected audience for the checklist was developers and councils and it was

³⁵ *Local Living and 20-Minute Neighbourhoods Planning Guidance: consultation draft*. Scottish Government, Apr. 2023. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/local-living-20-minute-neighbourhoods-planning-guidance/>

³⁶ *20-Minute Neighbourhoods Checklist tool*. Victoria State Government, 2023. https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0032/569084/Checklist-tool-v5.pdf

designed as a guide, rather than a pass/fail tool. The themes it covers, including places being 'safe, accessible and well-connected' and 'facilitating thriving local economies', and the subsequent questions it poses, could be helpful for engaging local communities in a conversation about the existing strengths and weaknesses of their local area. While these tools have been developed in Scotland and Australia respectively, they are applicable anywhere.

Figure 8: Involving elements of the local community to inform thinking (this question was not applicable to all respondents - 130 respondents)



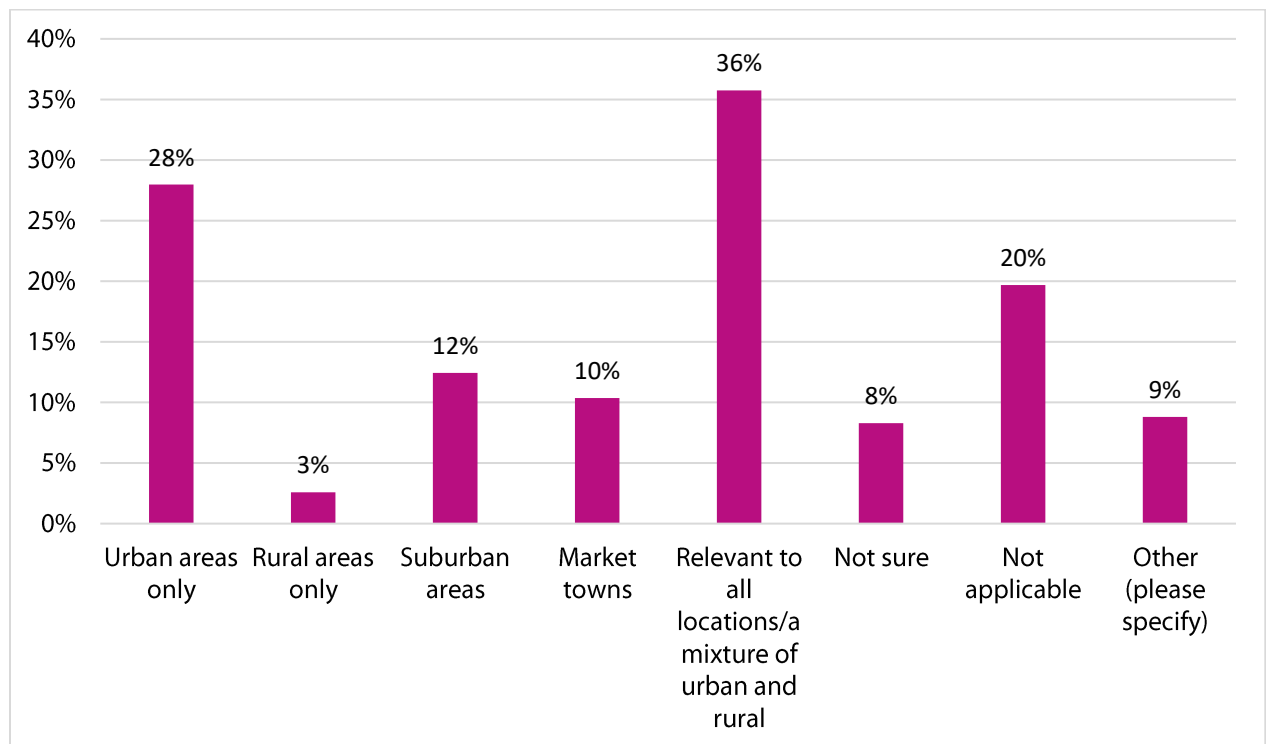
It is important to acknowledge that while the concept of walkable neighbourhoods is not new, many of the well-known early adopters of the 20-minute neighbourhood or 15-minute city name and concept are cities. This includes Paris, Melbourne, Australia and Portland, Oregon.³⁷ There are not as many well-developed examples of the concept being implemented beyond cities, although the work done in Scotland does include case studies and examples of how the 'local living' concept can and is being applied in rural areas and on islands. Drawing on the perception of the 20-minute neighbourhood being a more urban-focused concept, the survey asked those local councils considering the concept of complete, compact and connected communities, what sorts of

³⁷ For more information about how the concept is being applied in these places see section six of *20-Minute Neighbourhoods: creating healthier, active, prosperous communities. An introduction for council planners in England*. Town and Country Planning Association, Mar. 2021. https://www.tcpa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/final_20mnguide-compressed.pdf

places they expected to apply it to. As shown in Figure 9, 36% of respondents said that in their areas they expected the concept to be relevant to all locations, including a mixture of urban and rural. However, of the respondents who answered that their authority had already committed specifically to complete compact connected communities as a corporate priority, 38% viewed the concept as being relevant to exclusively urban areas.

Often the emphasis in more rural communities is on creating clusters and/or hubs, see for example the work to date in Cornwall in section 4.2, however the discussion at the roundtable highlighted that the emphasis on creating clusters is also relevant in urban settings. This was particularly the case in London Borough of Newham [section 4.3] where there was a desire for the community to have a choice about where they accessed their daily needs from. This does, however, have implications for the ‘town centre first’ concept and it was recognised that careful thought was needed so that the viability of high streets was not undermined.

Figure 9: Potential coverage of the complete, compact and connected communities’ concept (193 respondents)



3.3 Planning for complete, compact, connected communities

As noted in section one of this report, while the concept of complete, compact and connected communities is a relatively simple one, achieving them is more complicated. Strong planning policies are, however, an important potential lever for change. The survey asked, therefore, a number of questions focused on the use of development plan documents, including whether these documents contained an overarching objective or strategic policy to create complete, compact and connected communities. As Figure 10 shows, 38% of respondents said that adopted

or draft local plans included the objective while 30% said no. Of the 38%, 44 respondents said the objective was in a draft local plan, while 26 stated the objective was in an adopted plan. Of those who responded 'other', comments included that the objective was referenced in other plans including Local Transport Plans, but not in Development Plan Documents. Under 'other', a number of Scottish respondents pointed out that the objective is contained in the NPF4 documents. The relevance of a large number of local council plans and strategies to delivering complete, compact and connected communities was also strongly reflected in the case studies. While not a case study, it is interesting to note that Cornwall Council identifies 13 plans and strategies that it develops and will be relevant to delivering the vision they set out in *Towards a Future Cornwall: a plan for our places*.³⁸

Figure 11 sets out responses to a question about the types of policies local plans contain that relate to creating complete, compact and connected communities. It shows that a range of policies, including in relation to housing, active and sustainable travel, green spaces and health and wellbeing are being included by the majority respondents. However, policies around 'school streets', enabling local food production and healthy food environments and establishing community health hubs are less common.

The issue of density was raised and discussed at the roundtable as attendees noted that it was not highlighted in the survey as a policy local councils might have included in their development plan. One participant noted that a lot of the conversations they had been having in relation to creating complete, compact and connected communities within their area related to the relationship between access to facilities and housing density and height, and how changing housing density changes the distribution of where services can and need to be provided. Another participant echoed this point and work in their local council is considering where additional services need to be located to fill in gaps. It is also interesting to note that density is an important consideration in the case study focused on VeloCity's work [section 4.2].

³⁸ *Towards a future Cornwall: a plan for our places*. Cornwall Council, Apr. 2023.
<https://letstalk.cornwall.gov.uk/pc2050/widgets/46370/documents>

Figure 10: An overarching objective to create complete, compact and connected communities in development plan documents (181 respondents)

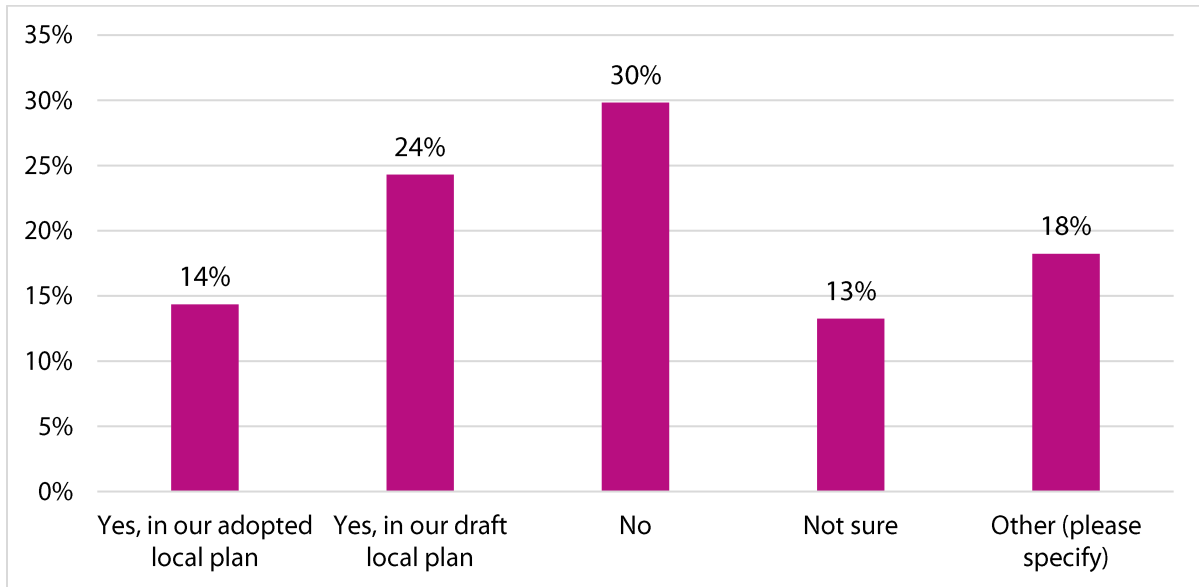
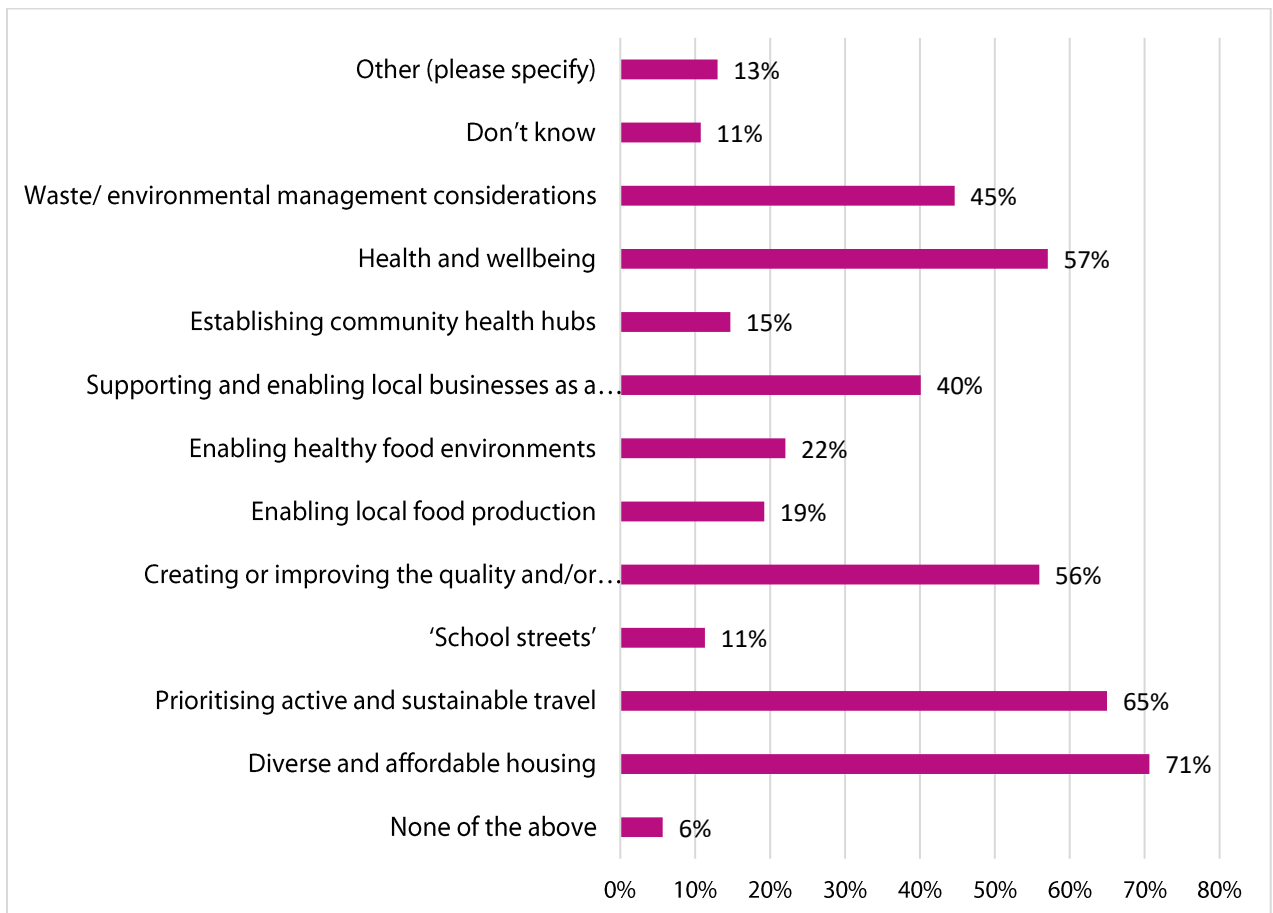


Figure 11: Policies relating to complete, compact, connected communities in development plan documents (177 respondents)



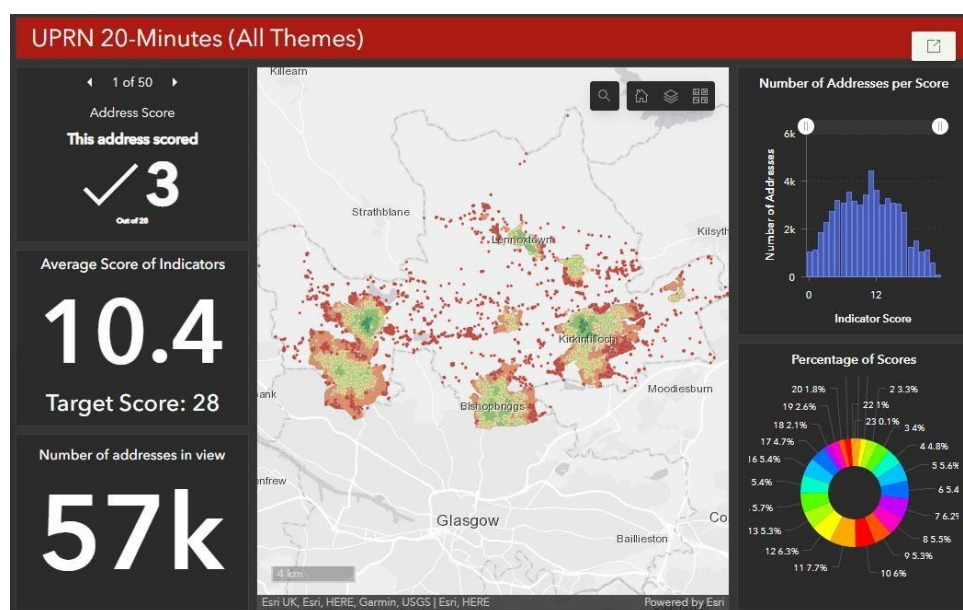
Box 4 - Developing the evidence base in East Dunbartonshire

East Dunbartonshire Council's initial emphasis has been on establishing a baseline to understand how the area currently fares with regards to the general concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods. The purpose of this has been to prepare for National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), which includes a policy on local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods, becoming a material consideration in the assessment of planning applications in Scotland. The work has also been intended as a starting point to inform cross-service discussions on how the wider concept can be adapted and refined taking local context into account. NPF4 also contains a housing land requirement that the council will need to meet through the release of land in the next Local Development Plan (LDP) and this was also an important part of the context for the work. The first stage was therefore to create an interactive tool through gathering a high quality and extensive evidence base.

They undertook digital mapping in-house as a partnership between the Land Planning Policy and GIS teams. As part of that process an initial list of the daily needs that people would want to have access to in their area was devised based on the policy within draft NPF4. The council also wanted to understand and reflect the quality of the different services and facilities being provided, rather than just acknowledging their existence.

The council also considered that, whilst a 10 minute walk each way would be appropriate for accessing some of the daily needs, a more flexible approach for others was required. Therefore, some judgements were made about the extent to which people would be prepared to walk to access different things. The council gave the example that people might be prepared to walk further to access a larger supermarket with a wider selection of goods than a smaller shop with a more limited offer. Therefore, the council has used a 10 minute walk for accessing a supermarket and 5 minutes for accessing a more local store.

All of this information was brought together to produce a heat map that shows how areas and individual addresses fair on accessibility to local facilities.



Acknowledging limitations and next steps

The mapping tool is still under development and one of the limitations at this stage is that it only considers access to facilities via road routes. It will be updated to reflect work being done as part of the *Active Travel Strategy* and will include off road walking and cycling routes in future.

Because the formal planning function can only secure certain elements of 20-minute neighbourhoods, the aim is to use the mapping to inform discussions with other departments and wider council decisions. As part of this, the council has recently set up a 20-minute neighbourhood and infrastructure working group to help guide the preparation of the next LDP. The council will also engage communities and stakeholders in how local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods should be delivered in East Dunbartonshire and the mapping tool will be updated and evolve through time to reflect these discussions.

While getting meaningful policies into local development plan documents is a really important step, those respondents who had indicated their local plan documents contacted relevant policies for implementing complete, compact and connected communities were then asked whether they believed the planning framework in which they were operating enables their local council to implement them. Of 120 respondents, 11% said 'yes', the majority (69%) said 'yes, to some extent', while 20% said 'no'. For respondents from Scotland, 92% said that at least to some extent, they felt their planning framework enabled implementation.

Respondents were also asked about whether their authority had sufficient data and evidence to inform the introduction of complete, compact and connected communities. This related to data about the location and distribution of assets such as green space, health care centres, shops, schools and so on. Of the 178 respondents, the most common response was 'yes, to some extent' followed by 'yes, we have all the data and evidence we need' (41% and 21% respectively). Of those that answered 'no' (23%), 10% said no but they were in the process of creating an asset register or log.

In relation to data, it was noted at the roundtable that local councils needed to consider the qualitative aspect, not just the quantitative. By which they meant understanding the quality of things and how people experience them, not just acknowledging their existence. As Box 4 sets out, and a number of the case studies note, the initial mapping phase is important to help 'take stock' of the current situation and inform thinking about what needs to change. As the work in East Dunbartonshire notes [see Box 4], using this evidence base to inform discussions with other departments within the council is an important step, just as it must also inform discussions with those who live, work, and visit the relevant area.

As well as using planning policies to shape places, several local councils have a role through delivering and/or managing development themselves. This can be through direct delivery or through a subsidiary company. The survey asked about these roles and the 140 respondents indicated that their local council were involved in work relevant to supporting the delivery

elements of complete, compact and connected communities and carbon reduction (see Figure 12). The most common roles were in relation to designing and supporting the delivery of places that promote active travel, implementing biodiversity net gain, and housing retrofit programme.

'Other' responses included:

We do not have our own stock, otherwise we would be looking at retrofit programmes. We are looking at renewable energy schemes and green construction skills but this is early stages.

Our wholly owned Direct Services company is developing products and expertise to support the roll out of EV charging for private vehicles - particularly around the challenges in Victorian terraced streets (often in Conservation Areas) with on-street car parking only.

Figure 12: Role for local councils, whether directly or through a subsidiary company, in delivering or managing development (140 respondents)

	Number	%
We have a housing retrofit programme	81	58
We are building carbon neutral/net zero homes	70	50
We are designing and supporting the delivery of places that promote active travel	94	67
We are implementing biodiversity net gain	94	67
We have a direct role in delivering renewable energy schemes	68	49
We have a direct role in developing green construction skills	37	26
Other (please specify)	18	13

Interestingly 58% of respondents have a housing retrofit programme and 49% have a direct role in delivering renewable energy schemes, 50% reporting that they are building carbon neutral / net zero homes. These results suggests that councils are increasing using opportunities for direct interventions in managing and delivering sustainable developments

3.4 Better understanding the barriers to effective place-shaping

The survey sought to explore whether respondents whose authority had committed to the creation of complete, compact, connected communities felt that progress was being made towards achieving that commitment. There was wide-spread feeling that progress was being made to various degrees. Respondents specified, for example, that progress was being made through new corporate strategies and through transport plans.

We are aiming to have 70% of our borough as a liveable neighbourhood in the next four years, as well as being net zero as a borough by 2030.

Yes, to a certain extent a number of development sites are now coming forward in sustainable locations that are well connected to the existing urban infrastructure and contributions secured towards improving connectivity including public transport.

Significant change since administration changed in May so climate change action has been prioritised with promoting more active travel, climate mitigation in design and well-being policies to integrate health and design in all developments.

While some said that it was too soon to say, only seven out of the 138 respondents (5%) said they did not believe that progress was being made.

Present national and local planning policies do not promote complete, compact and connected communities.

No, the principle of connected communities and the benefits are not yet established with elected members. The preference to regenerate Brownfield land first is compromised by poor economic viability within the borough's urban areas. Recent changes to the Use Classes Order have also undermined the town centre first principle to some extent, by facilitating the conversion of premises for E uses to retail.

The survey also asked respondents to indicate what they viewed as barriers for creating complete, compact and connected communities, regardless of whether or not progress was being made in their area. As Figure 12 highlights, a lack of financial resources was identified as a top barrier, with 90 out of 143 respondents answering that under-funding was the biggest obstacle. Specific comments included under 'other' included:

It's a vicious circle of lack of money, lack of skills and lack of capacity.

Lack of central government support in funding or policies [is the biggest barrier].

Development viability is a key issue that often means development cannot pay for all the policy requirements for infrastructure and we have to prioritise with affordable housing being prone to be squeezed out or down in terms of financial contributions from developers.

Other public sector infrastructure providers (NHS, Education, Highways) having changed their local priorities, or having significant challenges with their own project delivery or capital programmes. Our planning frameworks and design codes are generally working - however the delivery of supporting infrastructure (outside the planning system) operates to different investment priorities and governance frameworks; so the whole "community" does not get delivered to similar timeframes.

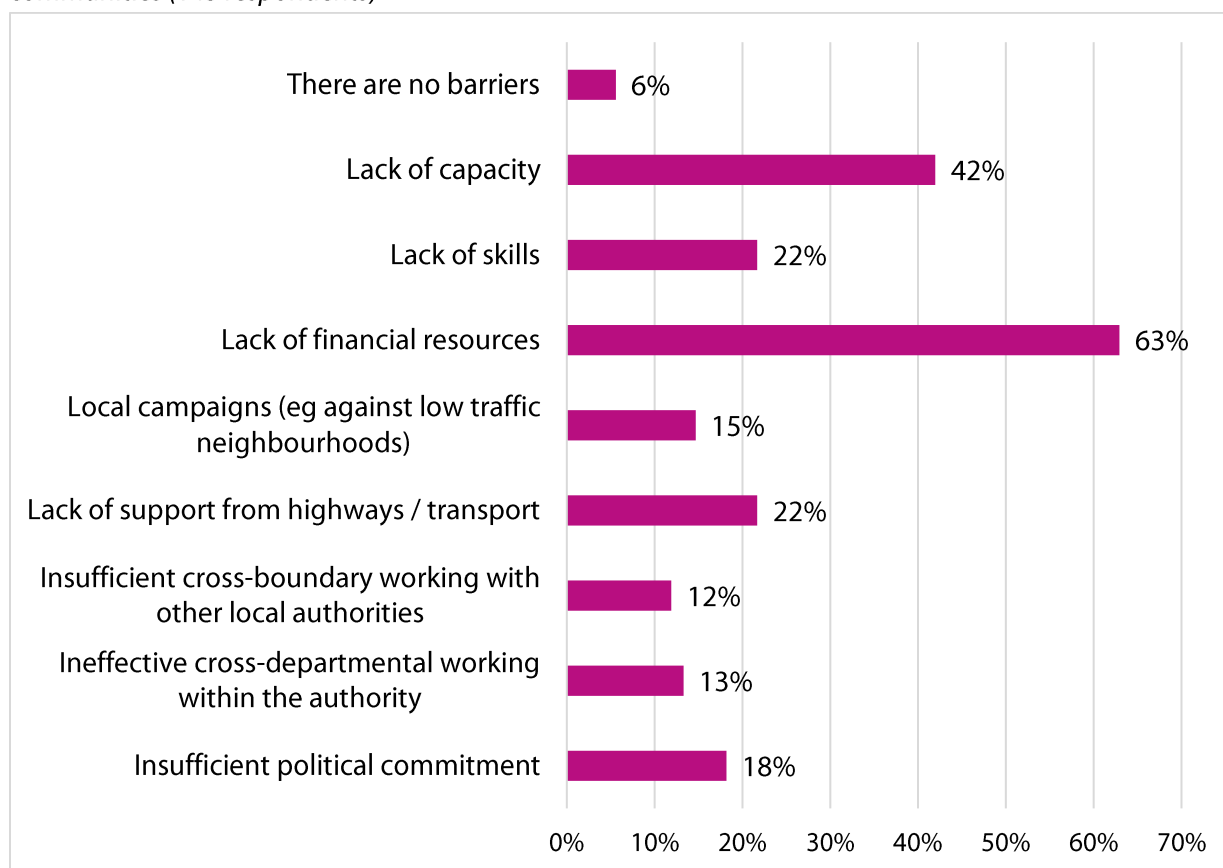
Community perceptions and interpretations of the concept.

20-minute neighbourhoods in a rural context yet to be defined.

Many rural areas don't see them as attainable - they are more for built-up areas in which housing, workspaces, shopping etc are located close together, which is not possible in smaller villages.

A lack of capacity was also a clear barrier to delivery, with 60 respondents listing it as a top obstacle. This reflects wider issues in the sector.

Figure 13: Top barrier that exists for local authorities in creating complete, compact and connected communities (143 respondents)



The survey was undertaken in late 2022/early 2023 and it is interesting to note that ‘local campaigns’ against, for example, local traffic neighbourhoods, were raised by only 15% of respondents. The issue of concern in the media, both locally and nationally, about the 20 and 15 minute neighbourhood concept was, however, discussed at the roundtable. One participant noted that local opposition to the concept now existed in their local area as the concept had got ‘caught up in traffic measures’. This link was reflected by Nick Fletcher, the MP for Don Valley, when he spoke in Parliament in early February to raise concerns about the 15-minute city and 20-minute neighbourhood concept, highlighting that Ultra Low Emission Zones do ‘untold economic damage in any city’ and that ‘personal freedoms’ are being taken away.³⁹ Media coverage of existing and proposed Low Traffic Neighbourhoods has also argued that cars will be ‘banned’, and that ‘green zealots’ are pitting residents against motorists.⁴⁰

Such coverage has resulted in a number of local councils having to publicly distance themselves from the 20-minute neighbourhood concept – or at least to try and correct the misinformation and address concerns. In Norfolk, for example, the acting leader had to address concerns being raised

³⁹ See <https://twitter.com/NickFletcherMP/status/1623699476366991360>

⁴⁰ See for example <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/hackney-london-ltn-car-ban-council-pollution-toxic-air-b1055476.html> and <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11677055/How-Oxfordshire-Councils-green-zealots-sparked-violent-civil-war-motorists-residents.html>

that the concept might be applied within the county. It was reported that critics believed that it would be a 'precursor to people needing permits to drive and the introduction of 'climate lockdowns', with people forced to stay home to protect the environment.⁴¹ Similar concerns had to be addressed in Cornwall, when the concept was misrepresented on social media and people claimed that the council was considering introducing '15-minute travel limits in towns'.⁴²

It was also noted in discussions informing this report that while the concept has been misrepresented, this should not be used as an argument to dismiss all and more genuine concerns. For many local residents, especially those living outside of urban areas, the only feasible option is currently to travel to work by car. While some people have benefitted from a shift to more flexible working this does not apply to a wide range of jobs and through the pandemic this resulted in a widening of inequalities. It was also noted that a decrease in the need to travel may be positive in relation to reductions in carbon emissions, a reduction in the use of public transport may create new challenges in relation to the viability and cost of remaining services.

The need for a better understanding of the impacts of the pandemic on certain groups of people was also raised. During the COVID lockdowns women working at home were generally carrying a higher childcare burden than those who worked away from home. A much deeper analysis is yet to take place on the impact of localised or home working on women and other more vulnerable workers. The pandemic also exposed the appalling housing conditions of many, including a lack of access to greenspace, local shops and healthcare.

Whilst these are important challenges, the case studies highlight that part of the aim of complete, compact and connected communities is to tackle inequalities and improve access to local services and employment, and greenspaces. The work in Edinburgh [section 4.4], for example, seeks to support the implementation of a strategy that drew on advice from the Edinburgh Poverty Commission, which highlighted that part of solving poverty in the city depended on residents having services located in their communities. The programme of work being delivered in the London Borough of Newham [section 4.3] is part of their COVID recovery programme and focuses on an area of the Borough that includes areas of that suffer from high levels of deprivation.

People's confidence in the planning system to reject poor quality proposals was also explored. When asked about the extent to which respondents felt able to turn down planning applications for a set of reasons, from 'not confident at all' to 'very confident', responses were mixed (see Figure 14). Overall, respondents felt fairly or very confident in their ability to turn down applications for reasons relating to the quality of design (57%) and poor green space provision (53%). Respondents were much less confident, however, on areas relating to poor health and well-being outcomes (57% of respondents felt 'not at all confident' or 'slightly confident'), environmental reasons (52% either not at all or slightly confident), and reasons relating to poor social outcomes (59%).

⁴¹ See article published on 29 March - <https://www.thetfordandbrandontimes.co.uk/news/23417478.20-minute-neighbourhood-claims-slammed-norfolk-leader/>

⁴² See article published on 16 February - <https://www.falmouthpacket.co.uk/news/23325394.15-minute-city-plans-denied-cornwall-council/>

These results are perhaps unsurprising due to the emphasis in English planning policy in recent years on good design or 'beauty', and, despite it not yet being statutory, on biodiversity net gain.

Figure 14: Confidence in ability to turn down planning applications for various reasons (140 respondents)

	Not at all confident	Slightly confident	Not confident or unconfident	Fairly confident	Very confident	Weighted Average
Poor design	10%	19%	13%	43%	14%	3.31
Environmental reasons (including achievement of low or zero carbon targets)	30%	22%	19%	21%	8%	2.55
Poor health and well being outcomes	35%	22%	24%	14%	5%	2.32
Poor green space provision	9%	24%	15%	41%	12%	3.22
Poor social outcomes (including health inequalities)	35%	24%	24%	13%	4%	2.28
Poorly located for active travel (eg isolated sites)	17%	29%	18%	27%	10%	2.85

Resourcing and skills

As reflected in Figure 13, under-resourcing is a barrier to delivering complete, compact and connected communities but the survey also explored the extent to which a lack of resourcing was a barrier to effective delivery in a set of planning and place-shaping policy topics. As shown in Figure 15, the majority of respondents believed that under-resourcing was hampering delivery across policy areas. The policy area where under-resourcing was seen as the highest barrier to delivery was climate change adaptation, where 72% of respondents identified a lack of financial support as a high or extreme barrier. This figure has risen from 59% last year. Climate change mitigation was also identified as a significant challenge where under-resourcing was concerned, as well as housing stock retrofit and local sustainable transport.

Across all the listed planning-related policy topics, the weighted averages were higher in this year's survey than the one conducted to inform our 2022 report, indicating that under-resourcing is becoming an increasing challenge to effective delivery. One respondent commented:

Lack of capacity and financial resources are preventing the planning system delivering. National and local policies cover a lot of topics and can be very complex. It is very difficult to undertake assessments and then negotiate with developers in very short timescales. The Planning Inspectorate [PINS] should only be able to look at the reasons for disagreement / refusal between a local planning authority and Applicant. PINS should not be able to approach decisions on a de novo basis.

Figure 15: The extent to which under-resourcing is a barrier to effective delivery in each of the planning-related policy topics. 'One' indicates that the factor is not a barrier at all, while 'five' indicates that it is an extreme barrier (145 respondents)

	Not at all a barrier				Extreme barrier		
	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Weighted Average
Urban design and aesthetics	4%	15%	21%	31%	25%	4%	3.61
Health and wellbeing	1%	19%	28%	29%	21%	1%	3.5
Climate change adaptation	2%	6%	20%	35%	37%	1%	3.99
Climate change mitigation	2%	9%	19%	38%	32%	1%	3.89
Green space/infrastructure	2%	15%	32%	28%	21%	1%	3.52
Housing delivery (market)	9%	21%	23%	18%	26%	3%	3.33
Affordable and social housing delivery	4%	8%	21%	28%	36%	3%	3.87
Reducing inequality and injustice	1%	11%	37%	22%	26%	3%	3.61
Local sustainable transport	1%	11%	21%	26%	40%	2%	3.96
Housing stock retrofit	1%	9%	17%	26%	37%	10%	3.98
New communities	2%	10%	30%	14%	27%	17%	3.64

As shown in Figure 16, respondents saw a lack of skills as less of a barrier than resourcing, however a lack of skills was still somewhat of a barrier in the policy areas they were asked about. As was the case with under-resourcing a lack of skills was seen as a barrier to the greatest extent in relation to respondent's ability to tackle climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as housing stock retrofit.

Figure 16: The extent to which a lack of skills is a barrier to effective delivery in each of the planning-related policy topics. 'One' indicates that the factor is not a barrier at all, while 'five' indicates that it is an extreme barrier (141 respondents)

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Weighted Average
Urban design and aesthetics	7%	22%	19%	33%	17%	2%	3.32
Health and wellbeing	5%	28%	30%	30%	6%	1%	3.03
Climate change adaptation	5%	17%	32%	28%	17%	1%	3.36
Climate change mitigation	7%	17%	33%	25%	17%	2%	3.28
Green space/infrastructure	8%	28%	39%	13%	8%	3%	2.84
Housing delivery (market)	13%	29%	26%	17%	9%	6%	2.78
Affordable and social housing delivery	11%	30%	29%	17%	10%	4%	2.85
Reducing inequality and injustice	7%	28%	34%	16%	13%	2%	3.01
Local sustainable transport	6%	25%	36%	19%	13%	2%	3.09
Housing stock retrofit	4%	14%	30%	25%	14%	12%	3.34
New communities	7%	20%	33%	9%	13%	17%	3.03

National policy and leadership

National level policy continues to be a barrier to effective delivery across policy areas (see Figure 17), and respondents observed that constant planning policy changes are unhelpful to plan making.

Inconsistency and indecision from government is the biggest barrier at present and lack of ambition with regard to delivering energy efficient homes. Pressures arising for housing delivery which outweigh the provision of good designed and well-located development.

As was noted in the 2022 report, and continues to be the case, potential changes in relation to how housing requirements should be calculated is resulting in a number of local plans being withdrawn and paused.⁴³

⁴³ See for example analysis published by Lichfields in April 2023 -

Figure 17: The extent to which current national-level policy is a barrier to effective delivery in each of the planning-related policy topics. 'One' indicates that the factor is not a barrier at all, while 'five' indicates that it is an extreme barrier (142 respondents)

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Weighted Average
Urban design and aesthetics	9%	24%	27%	24%	14%	3%	3.12
Health and wellbeing	6%	24%	31%	19%	16%	2%	3.14
Climate change adaptation	4%	19%	20%	26%	28%	4%	3.59
Climate change mitigation	3%	17%	22%	27%	28%	3%	3.62
Green space/infrastructure	4%	26%	30%	20%	18%	3%	3.22
Housing delivery (market)	12%	19%	26%	16%	22%	4%	3.17
Affordable and social housing delivery	4%	9%	23%	25%	35%	4%	3.84
Reducing inequality and injustice	3%	21%	27%	24%	20%	4%	3.4
Local sustainable transport	1%	14%	29%	27%	26%	3%	3.64
Housing stock retrofit	3%	17%	21%	21%	26%	13%	3.56
New communities	4%	17%	32%	17%	17%	14%	3.29

Asked about the extent to which current national-level policy is a barrier to effective delivery across a range of topics, responses suggest that the delivery of affordable and social housing is suffering most from the lack of national-level policies, with 60% of respondents suggesting that this was a high or extreme barrier to delivery.

As was the case with resourcing and skills, national policy is also seen as a major barrier to the effective delivery of climate change adaptation and mitigation policies.

These trends are continued in the responses to a question regarding the extent to which national political leadership was seen as a barrier to national policy (see Figure 18). 72% of respondents found that national political leadership was a high or extreme barrier to delivery of affordable and social homes.

Once again, responses showed that the delivery of policies relating to climate change adaptation and mitigation were experiencing significant barriers, with 64% and 63% of respondents answering that national political leadership was a high or extreme barrier respectively.

Figure 18: The extent to which national political leadership is a barrier to effective delivery in each of the planning-related policy topics. 'One' indicates that the factor is not a barrier at all, while 'five' indicates that it is an extreme barrier (137 respondents)

	1	2	3	4	5	Weighted Average
Urban design and aesthetics	7%	21%	30%	20%	22%	3.29
Health and wellbeing	4%	20%	27%	27%	22%	3.41
Climate change adaptation	5%	11%	20%	26%	38%	3.82
Climate change mitigation	4%	13%	19%	28%	36%	3.78
Green space/infrastructure	5%	21%	28%	21%	24%	3.39
Housing delivery (market)	111%	13%	24%	21%	30%	3.47
Affordable and social housing delivery	3%	10%	16%	29%	43%	3.99
Reducing inequality and injustice	6%	15%	26%	24%	29%	3.55
Local sustainable transport	4%	15%	23%	26%	32%	3.68
Housing stock retrofit	5%	12%	23%	23%	37%	3.74
New communities	5%	13%	32%	17%	33%	3.59

In every policy field, national political leadership was identified as a greater barrier to delivery than when the question was posed in the survey that informed our 2022 report.

4. Case studies

4.1 Leeds City Council

Strategic context and key drivers

Leeds City Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and set an ambitious target of achieving net zero by 2030. This commitment then informed several processes and the development of a number of strategies. This included a review of the Leeds Local Plan, which was undertaken in 2020. The conclusion of the review was that a two-stage approach should be undertaken to updating the Plan, with the first Local Plan Update focusing on five topic areas: carbon reduction; flood risk; green and blue infrastructure; place-making and sustainable infrastructure.⁴⁴ 20-minute neighbourhoods as a concept were considered within the place-making topic, reflecting that a reduction in the shortest-distanced car trips could help in reducing emissions as well as reflecting on the need to create more resilient neighbourhoods and communities, which was highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. A further and more comprehensive update, Leeds Local Plan 2040, is then being undertaken on a slightly different timeline.

The climate emergency and the implications for Leeds and place-making have also been reflected in important strategies. *Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy*⁴⁵, which was published in 2021 and includes a vision for Leeds as a city where ‘you don’t need a car’. The city also published its *Best City Ambition*, which sets out the overall vision for the future of Leeds, in 2022. At the heart of the strategy is a mission to ‘tackle poverty and inequality and improve the quality of life for everyone who calls Leeds home’.⁴⁶

The Best City Ambition sets out three pillars:

- **Health and wellbeing** – in 2030 Leeds will be a healthy and caring city for everyone: where those who are most likely to experience poverty improve their mental and physical health the fastest, people are living healthy lives for longer, and are supported to thrive from early years to later life.
- **Inclusive growth** - in 2030 Leeds will have an economy that works for everyone, where we work to tackle poverty and ensure that the benefits of economic growth are distributed fairly across the city, creating opportunities for all.
- **Zero carbon** - in 2030 Leeds will have made rapid progress towards carbon neutrality, reducing our impact on the planet and doing so in a fair way which improves standards of

⁴⁴ Background papers on all of these areas are available at <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan-update/background-papers-documents>

⁴⁵ *Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy*. Leeds City Council 2021.

<https://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/documents/s226223/Connecting%20Leeds%20Report%20Appendix%20A%20111021.pdf>

⁴⁶ *Best City Ambition*. Leeds City Council, Feb. 2022. <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/plans-and-strategies/best-city-ambition>

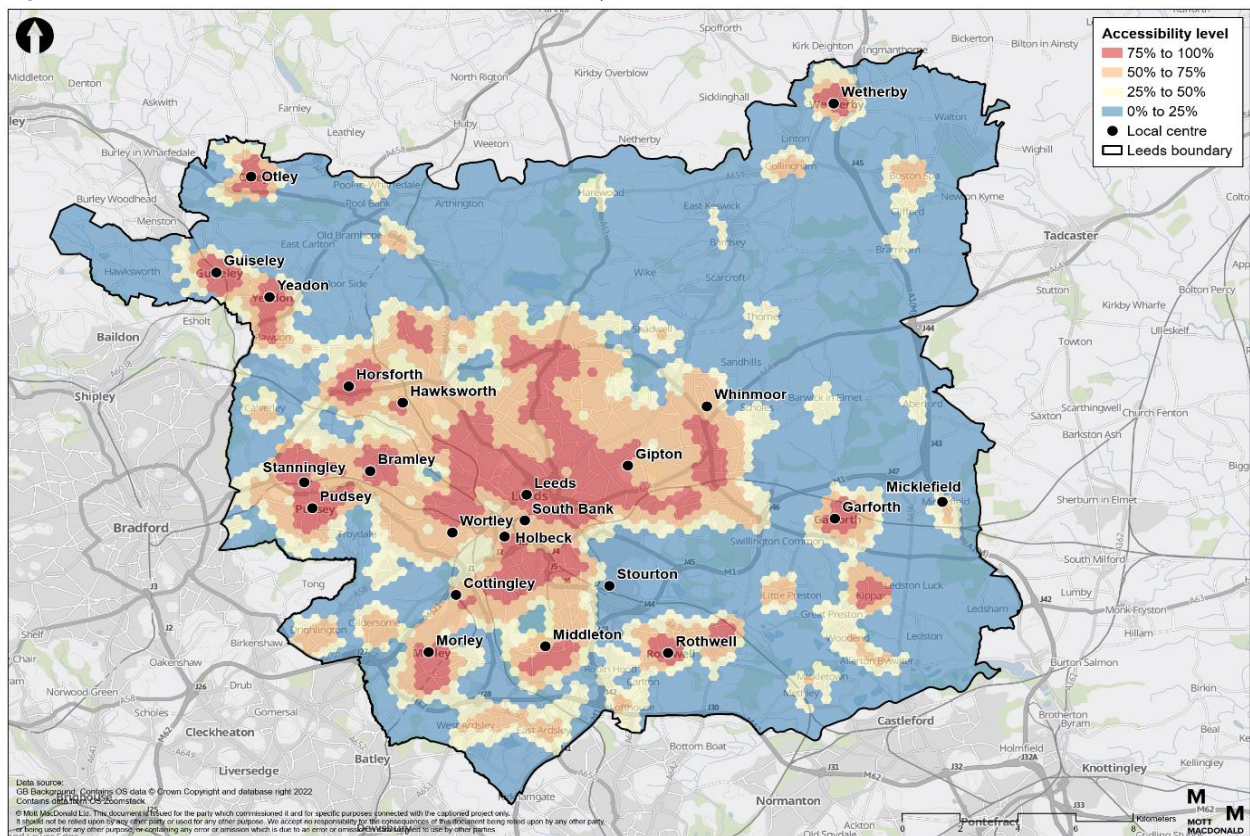
living in all the city's communities.

Both the transport strategy and the Best City Ambition re-enforce the case, therefore, for the 20-minute neighbourhood concept.

Local Plan Update

Within the place-making topic area a policy on 20-minute neighbourhoods has been developed and consulted on. The draft policy, SP1A, is a new policy setting out the principles of a 20-minute neighbourhood and how the Council would aim to 'score' windfall development on its walkability. The scoring mechanism is based on mapping work the Council commissioned Mott MacDonald to undertake and applied GIS analysis to create 'heat maps' of the district (Figure 19).

Figure 19: Heat map [Mott MacDonald for Leeds City Council]



Initially, the mapping looked at the extent to which there was walkable access to a range of core amenities that were considered essential for sustainable and local neighbourhoods. These amenities included local shops, early years education, GP surgeries, public transport and green spaces. However, drawing on initial mapping work the analysis was tailored to reflect the importance of different amenities and services so that 'essential' services and facilities were given more weight. A survey was used to help define essential versus desirable services and facilities and

a table is included in the draft Local Plan Update⁴⁷ (see Figure 20). The approach also drew on concerns raised when the council consulted at the scoping stage, that there would not be a one size fits all approach across the district, which, as shown in Figure 19, is a mixture of urban and rural.

The draft policy focuses on windfall development only at this stage but aims to establish strategic principles for where new growth could be located, because the location offers the best opportunity for active travel and public transport. It will also help capitalise on existing local community assets and ultimately help to form resilient and high-quality places for residents. Further consideration is being given to how the work could be applied to all forms of development and existing communities but that will be progressed as part of the more comprehensive local plan update, to develop Leeds Local Plan 2040.

The consultation on the Local Plan Update closed in late 2022 and the 550 representations are being analysed and considered. Responses relating to the place-making policies seem to be largely positive and it is hoped that the Local Plan Update will be submitted for examination later this year.

Figure 20: 20-Minute Neighbourhood expectations and weighting [Leeds City Council]

Where 5 is weighted highest for both range and importance

0	Amenities with limited or no data	3	Place of worship; Postal Collection; Post Office; Secondary school; Supermarket or Market; Dentist; Library
1	Co-Working Space; Allotments; Emergency Services; Hospital; Museum or Art Gallery; Theatre or Cinema	4	ATM; Community Hall; Café, Restaurant or Fast Food
2	Leisure Centre; Public House; Household waste and recycling sites; Bank; Vet and animal services	5	Transit Stop; Primary school; Parks or Public Green Space; Playground or Recreation Area; Convenience Store; Nursery school; GP practice; Pharmacies; Post Box

Acknowledging limitations and criticism

The council acknowledges that criticism has been received in relation to the mapping tool and its role in assessing the walkability of new development schemes. If it is to do that it will need to be both robust and kept up to date. It has also used certain parameters, for example the average walking speed of three miles per hour is used. The council would like to explore further what the

⁴⁷ See <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan-update/proposed-policy>. There is also more information about the mapping exercise at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/5601f5c5f1304518bf48fab8379f8b67>

implications would be if, based on age and ability, the average walking speed to local facilities was reduced, how this would alter the heat map. They also recognise that the mapping while a useful start, makes no assessment of the quality of the routes or the quality or capacity of the amenity/service. Further collaboration with the Highways Authority and other services and third parties would be needed to continue to refine the assessment.

As highlighted, the council is undertaking a two-stage local plan update. The first stage focused on climate change and the second stage will be a more comprehensive update of the local plan. Testing the principles of 20-minute neighbourhoods will be a key part to setting out spatial policies and also as part of assessing the suitability and sustainability of future site allocations. Criticism has been raised, therefore, that the introduction of 20-minute neighbourhood principles in the first part of the local plan update is premature against the further work to be undertaken as part of the second stage.

The council is also clear that the current draft policy is a tool to assess the walkability of new windfall development and is not there to retrofit existing communities. There is, therefore, a need to manage community expectations, as well as being clear on what developers can reasonably and proportionally provide by way of new infrastructure.

Key lessons

- The delivery of a successful 20-minute neighbourhood cannot be reliant on planning policy alone. There are many partnerships and third-party interventions, as well as individual behavioural changes and choices that need to feed into the process too.
- Securing public buy in is really important. A key success for the council was running a targeted smart survey to enable community groups to comment on the list of 'essential' and 'desirable' services and facilities. It should be acknowledged, though, that engaging with the community has been made harder recently due to the negative press around a misunderstanding of the concept. But despite that, there is definitely no one size fits all policy when it comes to the 20-minute neighbourhood concept so it is essential to understand and listen to each unique community and tailor the approach to reflect their needs.
- While work was commissioned by Mott MacDonald it was also supported by in-house GIS and data teams. It is essential to keep on top of all of the data and it needs to be maintained and robust. This can be resource intensive.

4.2 Living Locally in a Rural Setting – VeloCity and Blenheim Estate

VeloCity was a proposal developed by a multi-disciplinary team in response to the National Infrastructure Commission's 2017 placemaking ideas competition. The competition invited visions for the future of development within the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. The VeloCity proposal won the

competition⁴⁸ and has continued to be promoted since then and is now shaping potential growth on the ground.

Although the proposal was developed in relation to the Arc, the principles it built on are relevant to creating complete, compact and connected communities in more rural settings.

The VeloCity team published a manifesto called *Growing Villages Differently* in 2019, and an updated edition was published in March 2020.⁴⁹ The manifesto recognises that traditional village communities are struggling to be environmentally, economically and socially sustainable but not much research or thinking has been devoted on how to deal with that challenge. The VeloCity team recognise the increasing pressure to build new homes in rural areas and argue, therefore, that:

'With the gradual reduction of car use [they] see the opportunity to re-invigorate community life and think about how we can do new development and housing in villages differently.'

The manifesto sets out five overarching principles:

- People over cars - creating new movement networks
- Compact not sprawl - keeping the special character of villages
- Opportunity over decline – unlocking land for new places to live and work
- Connected not isolated – linking villages with shared resources, to benefit everyone
- Resilient not fragile – promoting sustainable environments, health and wellbeing.

A key emphasis in the approach is around densification of existing developed areas, rather than development sprawling [see Figure 21]. While such an approach will be seen as controversial by many people, the VeloCity team highlight that high quality housing, that is well integrated with the existing character of the place, will support and enable a village community to thrive. Such development needs to include a range of housing typologies, and thought also needs to be given to the re-use of existing buildings.

⁴⁸ See <https://nic.org.uk/news/velocity-wins-growth-arc-ideas-competition/>

⁴⁹ *Growing Villages Differently*. VeloCity, Mar. 2020.

https://velocity651476576.files.wordpress.com/2020/05/velocity_manifesto_may2020.pdf

Figure 21: A more strategic approach to rural housing development [Growing Villages Differently]

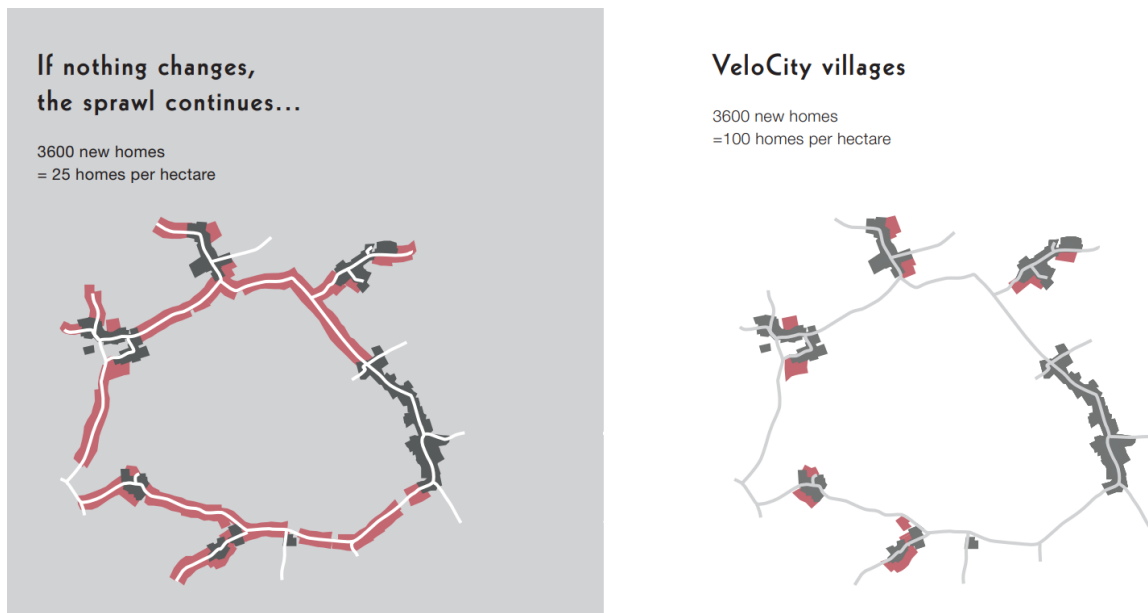
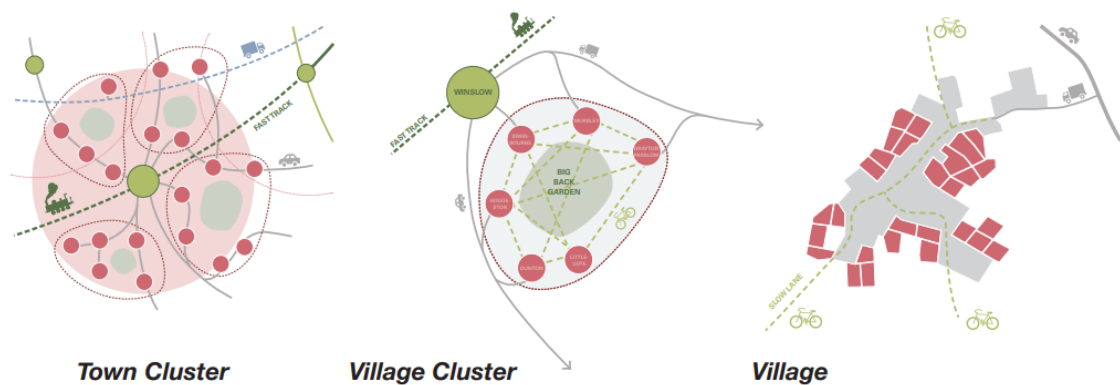


Figure 22: VeloCity proposition for clustering [Open Thought Submission]



Moving from proposition to reality

The VeloCity team is now working with Blenheim Estate to try and shape real change on the ground. This is being done by considering the future of development on the Estate, but also through trying to influence the wider strategy for development in Oxfordshire.⁵⁰

The Estate has developed a spatial strategy focused on the land and villages that are part of the Blenheim Estate but also other villages that are within eight kilometres of its boundary. The vision is underpinned by the Estate's commitment to being a net generator of green energy by 2027. For that areas a series of objectives have been developed under three key themes.

⁵⁰ See *Our Open Thought Submission*. Blenheim Estate and VeloCity, Feb, 2021. <https://www.blenheimestate.com/assets/files/downloads/property/VeloCity-Open-Thought.pdf>

- **Connectivity** – proposed interventions include generous and secure bike storage within homes, introducing village care hire and car share schemes, the introduction of local village; work places; providing centralised facilities and an alternative to working from home, and increasing the population within the cluster to enable initiatives to be sustained
- **Living and working** – this theme recognises the need for comprehensive and long term planning of the village cluster to enable appropriate growth, but also to secure superfast broadband and providing each village with a hub that can act as a collection/distribution point, village shop, co-working space and for be for community use. It also commits to putting in place structures to enable consultation, participation and local decision making.
- **Climate** – this would see investment in renewable energy schemes that are integrated with the landscape and habitat creation, compact development that delivers biodiversity net gain, and the more sustainable management of existing landscape and provision of new open space that enables local food production, water management and nature recovery.

Acknowledging limitations

The Blenheim Estate has a long-term interest in its estate and the local community. This is often not the case with traditional housebuilders. The principles being developed are, however, relevant to the future of many rural areas. But even though the Estate can play a leading role as a developer, landowner and long-term steward, it will still require many partners and the community to help implement the vision.

The Estate recognises that implementing a cluster will take time and expects the first 10 years to be about building a foundation and enabling the transition, with the change taking about 20 years in total. Their work could, however, be seen as a pilot for wider changes that could then be implemented across the county, or more widely.

Perhaps most importantly, VeloCity recognise that current planning policy does not necessarily support the densification of villages and a shift away from focusing growth on market towns. If complete, compact and connected communities are to be implemented beyond cities, thought will need to be given to the evolution of national planning policies.

4.3 London Borough of Newham

The work in Newham to consider the delivery of 15-minute neighbourhoods was initially to support the ambitions stated in their *Towards a Better Newham: Covid-19 Recovery Strategy*.⁵¹ The aim of the strategy was to create happier and healthier communities, where residents can access basic or day-to-day services within a 15-minute walk or cycle from their home. At the time of its

⁵¹ *Towards a Better Newham: Covid-19 Recovery Strategy*. Newham Borough Council, Nov. 2020. <https://www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/3035/towards-a-better-newham-strategy>

publication in November 2020 Newham was believed to be the first London borough to make health, well-being and happiness prime measures of recovery from the pandemic and a marker of economic success.

The strategy set out two distinct stages – recovery and reorientation – and eight pillars of activity, which drew on projects from around the world. Pillar five drew on the principles of 15-minute neighbourhoods and makes explicit reference to the approach in Paris. Pillar five stated:

The council will enable every resident to live in an accessible and inclusive neighbourhood which will provide all their social, civic and economic essentials.

It also linked strongly to the desire to support the recovery of their local high streets.

This recognises the vital role that the Borough's high streets play in providing the social connections, goods and services to support residents' essential needs. Now, more than ever, there is a need to ensure that they continue to thrive as diverse, vibrant and successful hubs which act as local focal point for all of our communities, provide a platform for engagement in community wealth building, and provide opportunities for the development of personal economic outcomes.

Other important strategies and plans included *50 Steps to a Healthier Newham* and *Social Integration Strategy*. All of this fed into the development of the Newham 15 Minute Neighbourhoods Programme.⁵²

Another driver for change was a real sense of spatial inequality within the borough. Some areas of the borough were very well connected, while others were very poorly connected to even basic facilities. One of the main issues was, for example, inequality regarding access to food shops, as well as community facilities and places of worship. This became an important factor in the 15-minute network scheme.

The programme is also now feeding into the development of the borough's updated local plan. A second round of engagement (regulation 18) was undertaken in relation to the Draft Plan in January/February 2023⁵³ and, at the time of writing, responses are still being considered.

Newham 15 Minute Neighbourhoods Programme

The proposed programme, which received Levelling Up funding, focuses on the north of the borough, which includes places that suffer with existing high levels of deprivation that have now been seriously exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic. Newham also features large areas where the population is not very dense, making it currently very car dependant with most large shopping centres being located 'out of town' and not easily accessible by foot.

⁵² See <https://www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/3925/newham-15-min-neighbourhoods-appendix-1-delivery-plan-redacted>

⁵³ See <https://www.newham.gov.uk/planning-development-conservation/newham-local-plan-refresh/2> for an overview to date

The evidence base to underpin this work has been important, and community engagement has also been central to the work. Newham hosted a citizen's assembly with residents, to discuss their views on the 15-minute networks. The assembly meetings featured a variety of speakers and participants, such as people from universities and local organisations, the TCPA and international speakers from Sweden and the mayor's advisor from Paris to assist the conversation on the 15-minute network strategy. They covered the benefits and challenges and asked the participants to come up with recommendations based on a more informed understanding.

The citizen's assembly provided a very high-level discussion, the outcome of the session saw positive feedback regarding the importance walking and cycling within the borough. The session also provided more general thoughts and feelings regarding safety and accessibility within the borough, which was also helpful to a number of departments within the council.

Newham Council also incorporated virtual-walks and Google mapping tools into their research that allowed citizens assembly members to virtually walk around different locations; they were then able to feedback their thoughts on what worked in terms of walkability within Newham and what did not.

Informed by the engagement the 15 Minute Neighbourhoods Programme includes three broad strands of projects. These are:

- **Our places for community and enterprise** – which includes the delivery of new community facilities, bringing vacant spaces back into use for affordable workspaces and artist studios.
- **Our shared spaces** – this covers a range of interventions including urban greening, enhancing public spaces, creating public art and redesigning key junctions.
- **Our connected neighbourhoods** – this includes the delivery of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, healthy school streets and active travel corridor.

Challenges

One key challenge has been around communicating what a 15-minute neighbourhood approach is and how it relates to the other key spatial approach taken in the new draft Local Plan, which is the creation of 16 neighbourhood policies. The principle driving 15-minute neighbourhoods was for residents to be able to reach key local facilities within 15 minutes of their home, however these may not all be in the same neighbourhood as their home or each other. It has been crucial to stress that the neighbourhoods form a network and are not self-contained units.

This messaging has been vital, particularly following increasing national misinformation regarding 15-minute neighbourhoods, which has misappropriated terminology and given rise to conspiracy theories, particularly focused on threats to freedom and choice. The Council found, therefore, that they needed to communicate carefully in order to address residents' fears surrounding the concept. Newham found that using the concept of a network, was helpful to explain that the principle behind 15-minute networks was to increase freedom and choice, by better distributing services across the borough and making them easier to access.

The second challenge Newham faced, was trying to find a balance between the importance of the town centre within communities and the new 15-minute network concept, to ensure they could work together in a local plan. The council wanted to make sure they maintained the town centre hierarchy, while also delivering 15-minute neighbourhood principles. To resolve this, the Town Centre network review sought to ensure that all residents would live within a 15 minute walk of two designated shopping areas and by creating additional policy flexibility for smaller community facilities to be located in a more flexible range of locations.

Other considerations and challenges have been around land availability, which makes it harder to create new facilities in some parts of the borough where access to them is currently limited; the acceptability of trade-offs which may be required to a wider distribution of services viable, including increased density to ensure a sufficient user base and public sector resource constraints which make it challenging to fund new services. Community engagement has therefore been key to carefully consider these aspects and inform the proposals.

Key lessons and reflections

- Newham has found that the most important element of the scheme was how it was communicated to residents and the need for a strong narrative about the proposal and the benefits it will bring to communities. Related to this, it is crucial to be honest and realistic about what is possible and the challenges and trade-offs involved.
- Creating a 15-minute neighbourhood network will take the involvement of the whole local authority as well as relevant partners. To be successful, the network scheme must look to collaborate with the providers of existing key facilities within the neighbourhoods as well as work out what is deliverable at different spatial scales within different areas. There needs to be recognition that residents and users are probably willing to walk or travel further to access some facilities than others.
- It is important to be clear about, and continue to refer back to, the problems that can be solved using the 15-minute neighbourhood approach. This helps get support for the solution. The council is also able to draw on the information about the problems they are trying to tackle, to help set out the expected benefits. For example, the overall programme is expected to deliver benefits of £170.64 million. In addition to those monetised benefits, it will also have social benefits, such as ensuring older residents remain socially engaged and independent as well as aiming to improve social inclusion and accessibility for low income, elderly, and young groups.

4.4 The City of Edinburgh Council

Strategic context and key drivers

As noted in section two of this report, in Scotland, the Government has adopted National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), which includes a policy on local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods. The concept now has to be integrated into local plans and made relevant to individual places.

In Edinburgh there is general support for the concept of complete, compact and connected communities. The City of Edinburgh Council has had a Strategy on the 20-Minute Neighbourhood approach since 2021.⁵⁴ The Strategy has the aim of creating places where people's daily needs can be met within a 20-minute round trip by walking, wheeling, cycling or using public transport. It is about living well locally and the key elements for this are set out in Figure 23.

The Strategy's vision is to achieve a significant shift away from longer journeys to reduce congestion, increase active travel and meet the Council's 2030 net zero carbon target. The Strategy states:

The Edinburgh Poverty Commission found that solving poverty in this city depends on residents being able to build trusted relationships with services located in their communities. The Edinburgh Climate Commission, meanwhile, told us that investing in 20-Minute Neighbourhoods is at the heart of a sustainable community and would contribute to reducing local emissions. This is essential if we're to deliver our target for Edinburgh to be net zero by 2030.

The concept has been embedded into key policy documents such as the Climate Strategy, the City Mobility Plan and the City Plan 2030 – the Council's local development plan⁵⁵ which aims to achieve four key outcomes around sustainability, affordability, transport and shared economic success.

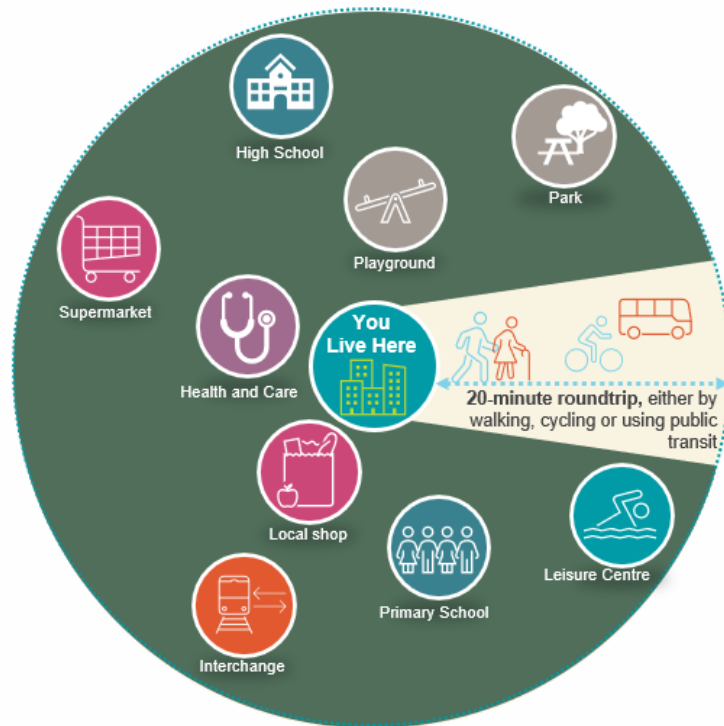
One of the main aims of the City Plan is to create '20-minute walkable neighbourhoods and embedding a 'place-based' approach to the creation of high quality, high density, mixed-use and walkable communities, linked by better active travel and public transport infrastructure, green and blue networks and bringing community services closer to homes.'

⁵⁴ *20-Minute Neighbourhood: living well locally*. The City of Edinburgh Council, Jun. 2021.

<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/33192/20-minute-neighbourhood-strategy-june-2021>

⁵⁵ Available at <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/cityplan2030>

Figure 23: Key elements of healthier, greener and thriving neighbourhoods where everyone can meet most of their daily needs within a short walk, wheel or cycle from their home.



The Council has set up a 20-Minute Neighbourhood Board to bring different services and partners together to identify opportunities for collaboration and join up projects. A dedicated multidisciplinary 20-Minute Neighbourhood programme team has also been set up to support a wide range of services embed the principles in their work. This includes working with team's involved in regeneration, poverty prevention, schools and libraries. The Strategy identifies the key principles or 'building blocks' that are guiding this work:

- Working with communities
- Supporting people to access the services they need locally
- Delivering multiple services from a single location
- Partnership working
- Using road networks more sustainably and effectively:
- Designing green and people-focused town and local centres

Identifying neighbourhoods

Edinburgh's agreed strategy identifies 19 priority areas for focus, each with its own unique cultural identity and local heritage.

The Council first looked at the local town centres which provide many of the essential facilities and services that people need easy access to. Further focus areas were identified because they had lower scores on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) (lower scores indicate an area is more deprived than higher scoring locations) or because they were in more rural locations.

Challenges

The Council recognises that all of the focus areas have their own unique needs, layouts and histories, and has identified that there cannot be a 'one size fits all' policy approach. Given the different densities across the city, however, the expectations of what can be achieved in local areas will vary. For the more central urban areas people may expect that they should be able to access a food shop within a five minute walk, whereas people in the more rural areas may accept that some facilities may have to be accessed by cycling or using public transport. The different needs of communities as well as different layouts of neighbourhoods', means that places need to be considered individually.

Examples of work underway

The MacMillan Hub in the Pennywell area of the city is being developed in a partnership between the Council and North Edinburgh Arts as part of a substantial regeneration scheme. Once completed, the hub will be a centre for culture and learning for the communities and neighbourhoods of North Edinburgh, offering much needed early years childcare places, a new library and learning hub, as well as an integrated cultural, arts and community support delivered by North Edinburgh Arts.⁵⁶

Nearby, the Granton Waterfront programme is strengthening the existing area with a £1.3bn project to develop a sustainable 20-minute neighbourhood. It will be an area where people live in affordable environmentally friendly homes, have excellent transport and active travel links to the rest of the city and access to open and green space, arts, sports and culture.

The Council has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with a consortium, West Town Edinburgh, to development a new 20-minute neighbourhood on an 83-hectare site. This will take forward proposals in the local plan, which identified the area as having the potential to accommodate 7,000 new homes and associated services and facilities. A new station is also part of the proposal.⁵⁷

Key lessons

- There is a need to take a systems-wide approach to working towards achieving complete, compact and connected communities. The City of Edinburgh Council has found that having a board or joint working forum to bring people together from across the council services has been hugely helpful.

⁵⁶ See <https://northedinburgharts.co.uk/development/> and https://www.heraldscotland.com/business_hq/20158474.edinburgh-macmillan-square-flagship-work-start/ for more information about the proposals

⁵⁷ See <https://west-town-edinburgh.com/news/>

- While the Council has an important role, it cannot deliver the vision on its own. Engaging with communities is essential, but so too is partnerships with the private and third sectors.
- There cannot be a one size fits all approach to creating 20-minute neighbourhoods so progress will be made on different timelines across the city. But identifying early opportunities for intervention and progress can help build momentum and engagement in the concept and its benefits.

5. Reflections and recommendations

Within Scotland, local councils are now required to consider local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods, however in England, Wales and Northern Ireland there remains a choice. The research underpinning this report has highlighted that there is a clear desire among local councils to achieve the delivery of complete, compact and connected communities for the many social, economic and environmental benefits they offer. As has been noted, the concept is not new and for many involved in planning and housing represents 'good placemaking'. But the COVID pandemic, as well as the climate and health crises, have acted as catalysts for many places to look again at their local area and consider how it might be improved. As is reflected in a number of the case studies, tackling high levels of deprivation and inequalities within local areas is also a strong motivation.

While there is much interest in the concept, there is still more to do to implement it on the ground. This section of the report highlights some key reflections and lessons from the research for local councils. It also makes recommendations to UK wide government administrations about what needs to change if local authorities are to deliver the essential changes necessary to secure complete, compact and connected communities.

Corporate priority and strategic alignment

As noted above, many planners would argue that local living or complete, compact and connected neighbourhoods is simply good placemaking. This requires, therefore, a strong vision, political leadership and holistic approach for the area. Planning is important to both informing and delivering that vision, but it cannot do it on its own. The vision needs to be a corporate priority, and as shown in the case studies, a number of strategies and plans then need to be aligned to help work towards achieving it.

That corporate priority then helps drive and inform work with external partners, including but not limited to those in the private sector. And investment decisions.

Language and communication are critically important

While the concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods and 15-minute cities has resonated with some people, we also know it is causing concern and even vocal opposition in some places. The concept should be used as a starting point to help inform thinking. How the concept is tailored for the local area, and communicated is, therefore, a very important ingredient for success.

Engaging communities from the beginning to understand their priorities is essential. This is also an opportunity to help people understand the problems the area and/or local community face, and the issues the council is trying to address, and the potential benefits of the concept once changes have been secured. As highlighted in this report, there are existing tools and frameworks to help structure these conversations, such as the Place Standard tool. But councils will also need to work hard to make sure all parts of the local community have a voice.

Using local evidence and data

Informed by local discussions, the council also needs to draw on data to inform its narrative and wider strategy. This data needs to inform the understanding of the current situation in relation to issues including health inequalities, levels of deprivation, access to greenspace, the local economy, housing need and carbon emissions. Mapping also needs to consider the quality, not just quantity, of local amenities, and what gaps would need to be addressed to support people to live locally. This data and evidence can then inform thinking about the solution because, as highlighted, there is not a 'one size fits all' approach to securing complete, compact and connected communities.

An important first step for developing and understanding the evidence is an internal stock check to understand which departments have data already available.

Being brave to achieve real change

The concept of complete, compact and connected communities is flexible, and local approaches should be informed by the local community. But local leadership and ambition is also important. The survey results demonstrate that there is a good take up of policies around active and sustainable travel, access to greenspace, and securing diverse and affordable housing in local plans. General health and wellbeing policies are also being included, however, that general policy does not seem to be being supported by the inclusion of more specific policies relating to community health hubs, healthy food environments, 'school streets' and enabling local food production. Such policies may not be seen as the 'norm' yet, and so may not be raised by local communities, but they are important interventions to support improvements in health inequalities and population health.

Data will need to underpin the implementation of such policies, as well communication. As highlighted in the case studies, it is important to be clear about, and continue to refer back to, the problems that can be solved using the proposed approach to get support for the solution. But data is also needed for monitoring and evaluation purposes. Adaptation and flexibility are likely to be necessary to make sure interventions are working as effectively as possible.

5.1 Recommendations for national governments

1. **Local councils need to be properly resourced and supported to enable them to maximise the effectiveness of their planning function.** Planning is not the only tool that will support the achievement of complete, compact and connected communities, but it is a critically important one that can help deliver multiple benefits for people, places and the environment. The survey results indicated that respondents believe that under-resourcing is a barrier to enabling action in relation to both climate adaptation and mitigation, retrofitting housing stock, local sustainable transport and the delivery of affordable and social housing. While the case studies highlight that important work continues to be undertaken by local councils, local councils could do more if they had adequate funding.

2. Complete, compact and connected communities are an important concept if we are to tackle the housing, health, climate and nature crises. They should, therefore, be a policy priority and **England, Wales and Northern Ireland should amend their national planning guidance and frameworks to embed the concept**. As Scotland has demonstrated, local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods are not just an urban concept and can be beneficial everywhere.

Establishing this priority at the national level, should also make sure that the Planning Inspectorate for England and Wales and the Planning Appeals Commission in Northern Ireland are placing weight on the policy in decisions and in examining plans. As highlighted by the survey results, at present respondents do not feel confident in the ability of the planning system to reject planning applications on grounds relating to poor health and well-being outcomes, environmental reasons, or reasons relating to poor social outcomes. If the planning system is to be transformational, it is essential that poor quality applications can be rejected, and those local decisions are not overturned on appeal.

3. While amending planning policy is important, there also needs to be **cross government support for creating complete, compact and connected communities through place-based interventions**. This needs to be reflected in policy and funding decisions, for example in relation to the investment in new schools, health facilities and active travel.
4. Governments need to support the implementation of complete, compact and connected communities through **enabling consistent and easy access to data**. In England, Natural England recently launched an England wide map of existing green infrastructure⁵⁸ and the Environment Agency publishes data in relation to flood risk. The Office for National Statistics also makes local data available for the UK, including a Health Index and it is noted above that local councils have access to range of datasets internally already. Local councils could however be supported to work more efficiently and effectively if there was clarity about available datasets and how it can be accessed so each local council is not reinventing the wheel. Data on some elements, such as baselines on carbon emissions and carbon budgeting, also still needs to be developed. Thought should also be given to supporting the mapping of existing facilities, again to try and reduce inefficiency and share learning.

Such data should inform the initial policy development, but it is also needed on an ongoing basis so the impact of interventions can be **monitored and evaluated**.

5. All neighbourhoods need to include an integrated mixture of housing tenures and types that meet local housing need and support people at all stages of life. Social housing is an

⁵⁸ Available at <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Map.aspx>

important part of that mixture. The survey results highlight that 96% of respondents would characterise the need for affordable homes in their area as 'severe' or 'moderate'. While local councils can plan for affordable housing, and take some steps to securing them through direct delivery and Section 106 Agreements, more needs to be done.

Governments need to better support the delivery of social housing through a fully funded, long term programme.

5.2 Conclusion

Local councils continue to work hard to meet the needs of local communities and to tackle a wide range of issues, despite a lack of resource and all of the policy levers they need. Complete, compact and connected communities are a valuable concept. While some people see it as simply good place-making, more recent language around 20-minute neighbourhoods and 15-minute cities has sparked interest and resonated with some communities in a way that talking to people about planning does not! Despite some misunderstandings, it is a flexible concept that is adaptive and, informed by discussions with local communities it can and should be tailored for local areas.

Supporting people to live locally can have multiple and important benefits. The survey results underpinning this report, and the in-depth case studies, highlight that important work is being undertaken to try and tackle the housing, health, climate and nature crises, but more could be done with additional funding, stronger policies and clearer guidance.

To find out more:

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