

Quality of Place

Improving the Planning and Design of the Built Environment

An analysis of issues and opportunities
June 2009

Making
government
work better

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to:

- Set out what is meant by *quality of place* and why it is important
- Review the challenges and opportunities facing quality of place currently and into the future
- Inform the development of a new government strategy on quality of place, which has been published separately: *World Class Places, the Government's strategy for improving quality of place*:
www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/worldclassplaces

Contents

Introduction and executive summary

The elements of *quality of place*

The place-making process

The role and importance of quality of place

Recent progress

Challenges and opportunities

A policy framework for quality of place

Contents

Introduction and executive summary

The elements of *quality of place*

The place-making process

The role and importance of quality of place

Recent progress

Challenges and opportunities

A policy framework for quality of place

- The meaning of quality of place & focus of this report
- Improving *quality of place* is important to achieving a wide range of government objectives
- Public policy has a key role to play in improving quality of place. There are four key ways that government shapes quality of place
- Much has been done over the last decade to promote quality of place. And there has been progress in the way communities are planned and designed
- But a range of concerns have been identified across the development process which detract from quality of place
- The economic downturn threatens continued regeneration and improvements in quality of place
- Government's response needs to combine steps to address its worst effects and longer term measures to ensure policies are in place when the upturn comes

Meaning of *quality of place* and the focus of this report

Definition

For the purpose of this report, *quality of place* is defined as ***the physical characteristics of a community that affect the quality of life and life chances of people living and working in it.***

Core elements

There are a number of elements to quality of place, including the range and mix of homes, services and amenities in a community, the design and maintenance of buildings and spaces, the treatment and use made of historic buildings and places and the provision of green space and green infrastructure.

Geographic focus

The analysis in this report extends across the whole built environment, from rural communities to large cities. But it is limited to England only.

Out of scope

This report focuses on the planning, design and physical upkeep of the built environment. Its focus does **not** extend to the day-to-day management of the built environment and the activities that taken place within it – to services such as street cleaning and policing or activities such as sport or street-parties. It is recognised that these services and activities have an important influence on people's experience of a place. But these have been or are being covered elsewhere.

Improving quality of place is key to achieving a range of important government objectives

Executive
summary



Public policy has a key role to play in improving quality of place

Other players

A wide range of 'players', including businesses and developers, home-owners, landlords, community groups, service users and citizens, planners and designers, have a role in the development process - and so shape quality of place

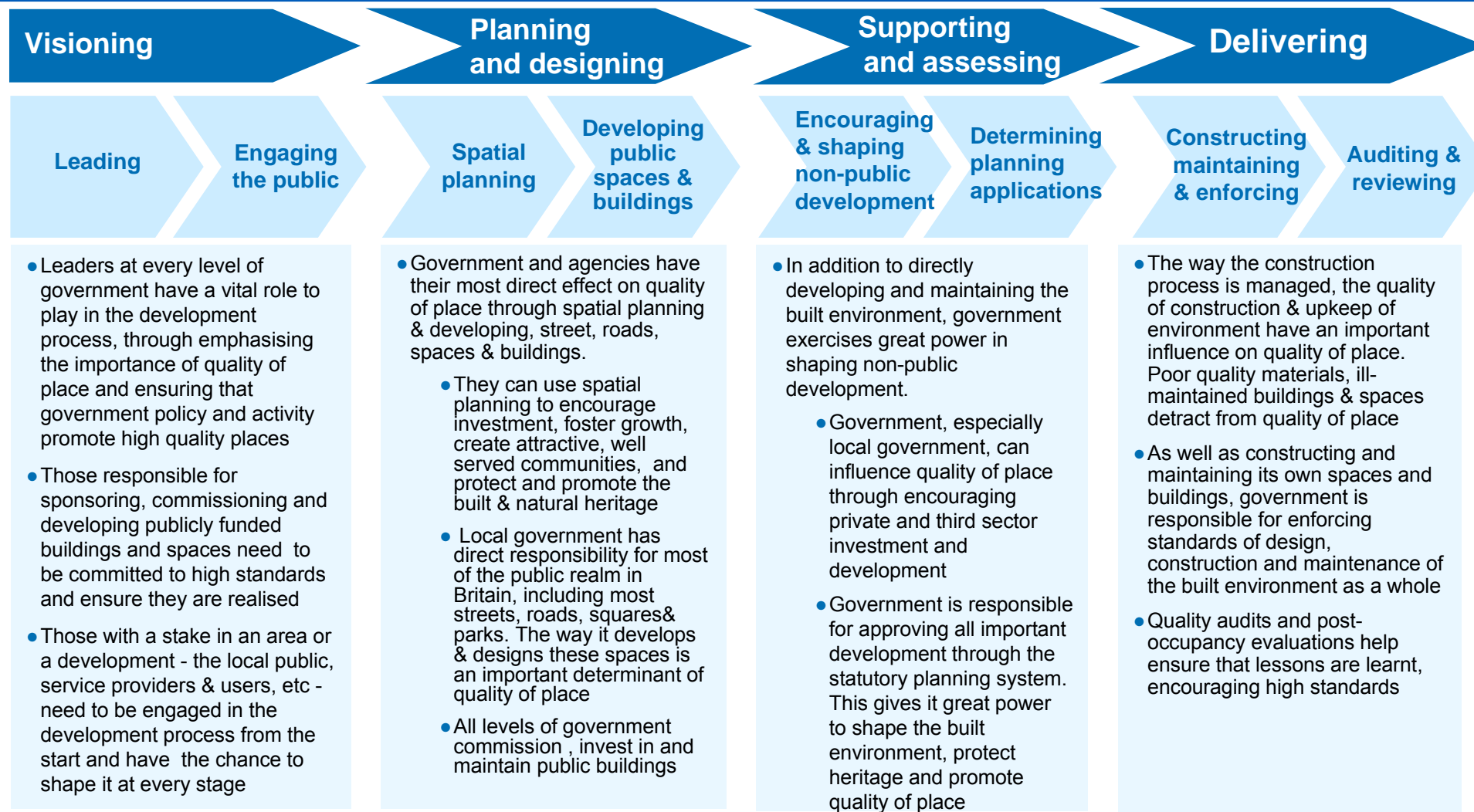
Government

But central, regional and local government and public services play an especially important part, by setting the policy framework within which all development takes place, determining planning applications and, more directly, by planning, designing and maintaining areas, buildings and public spaces

There are four key ways in which government shapes quality of place. Understanding these is important to understanding the policy framework, and how it might be improved

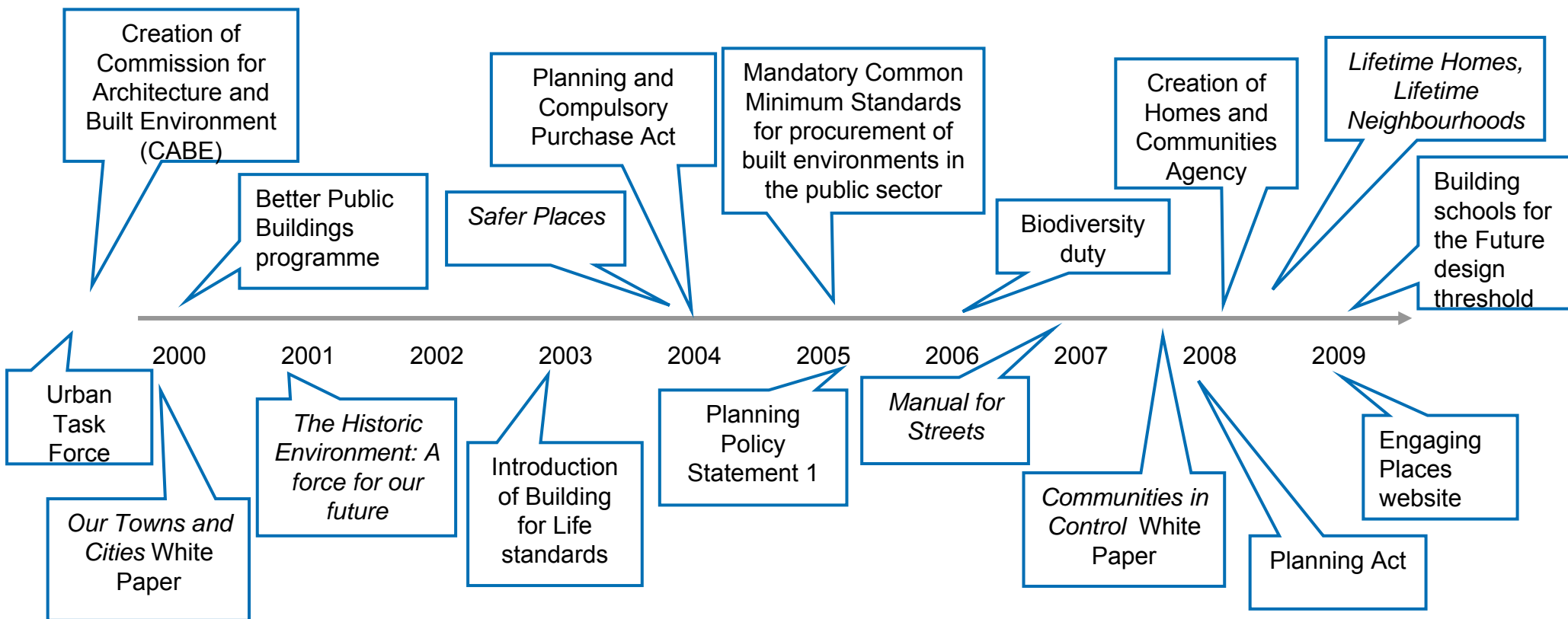
Executive
summary

Central, regional & local government's
role in quality of place



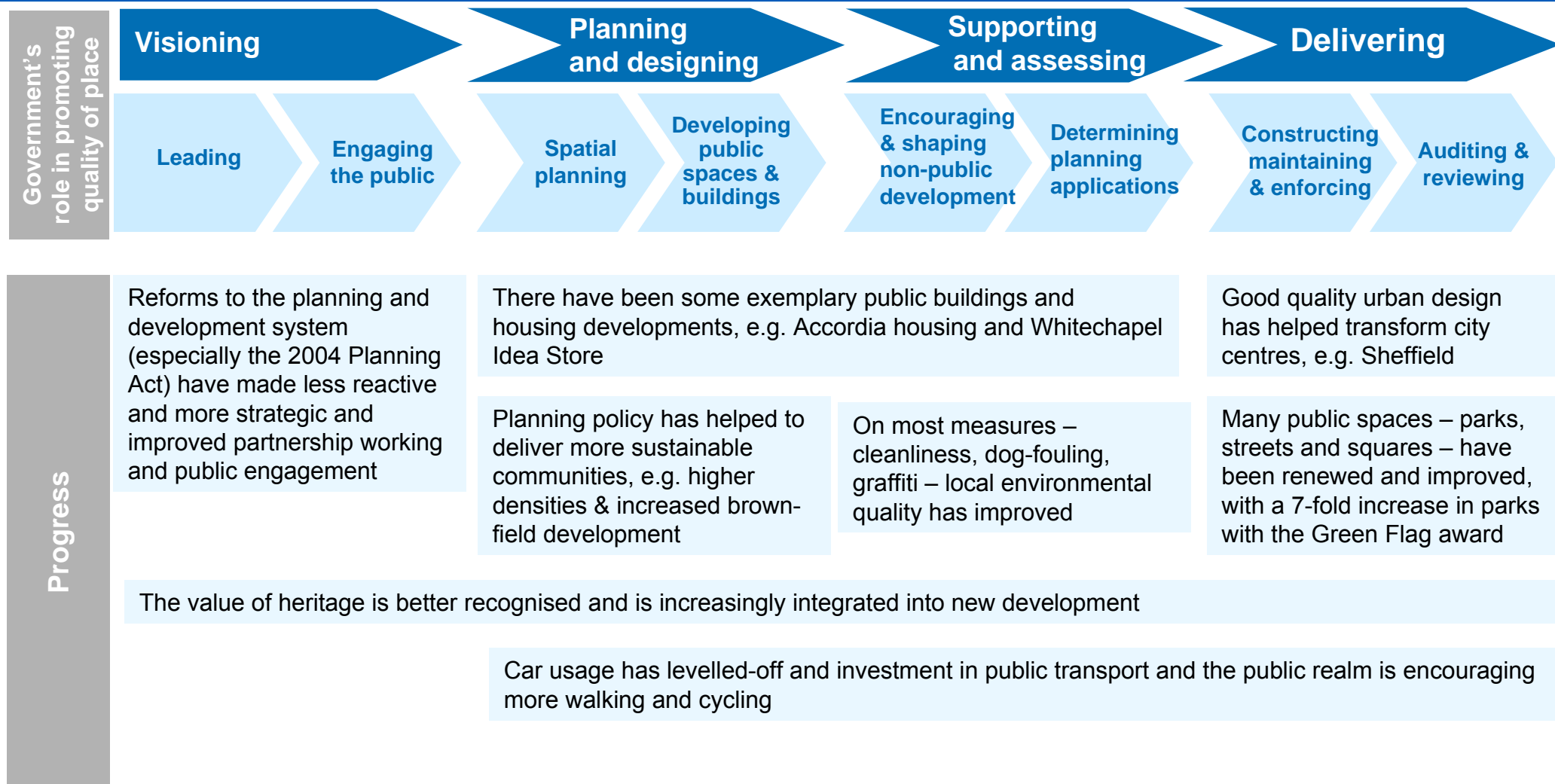
Much has been done over the last decade to promote quality of place

Executive
summary



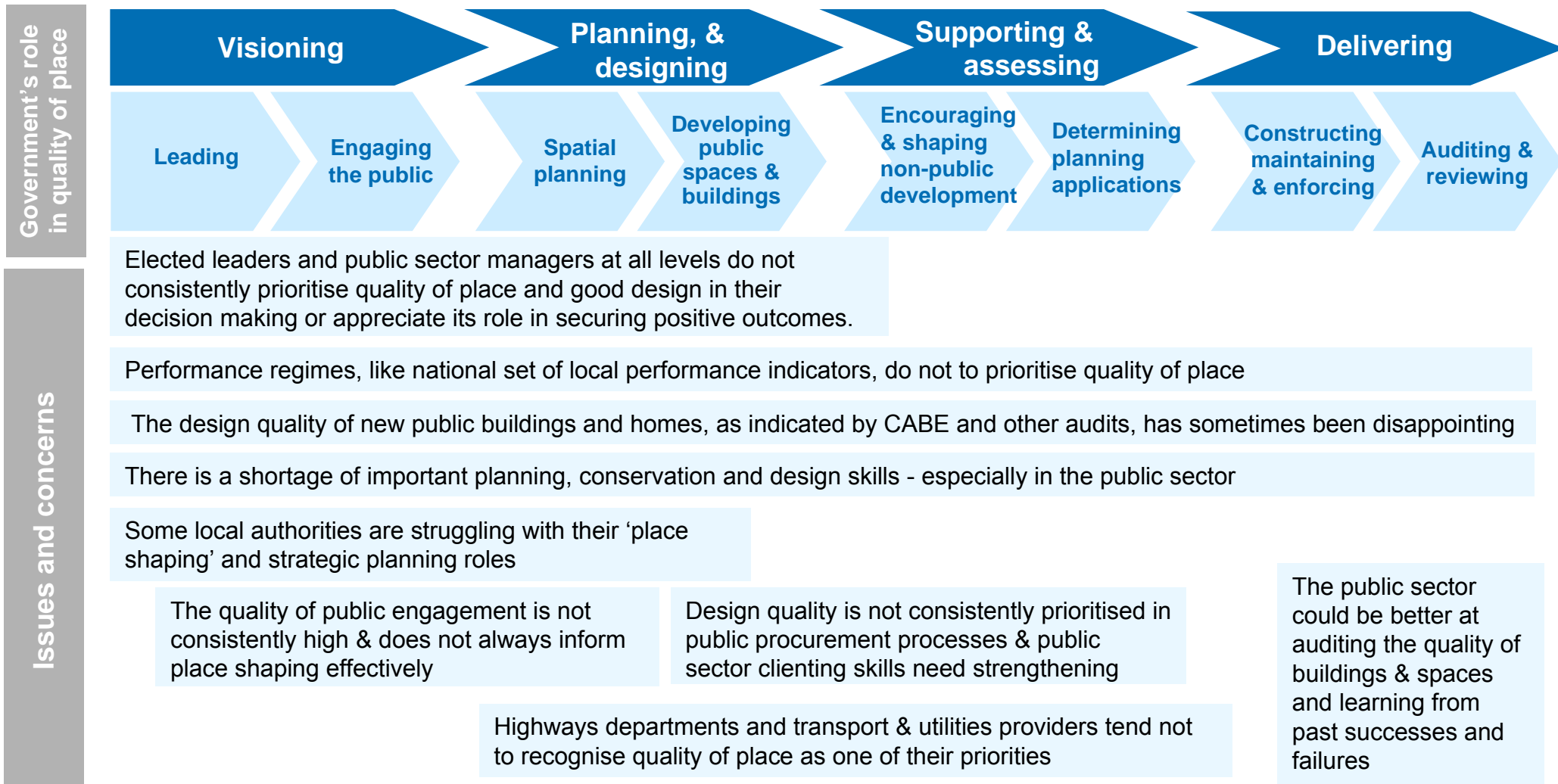
And there has been progress in the way communities are planned and designed

Executive summary



But there are a range of concerns across the development process, e.g., local leadership, skills shortages and standards of publicly funded development

Executive summary



This paper doesn't seek to identify concrete policy solutions. But it has been used to inform development of the Government's new strategy for quality of place, published separately

Executive
summary

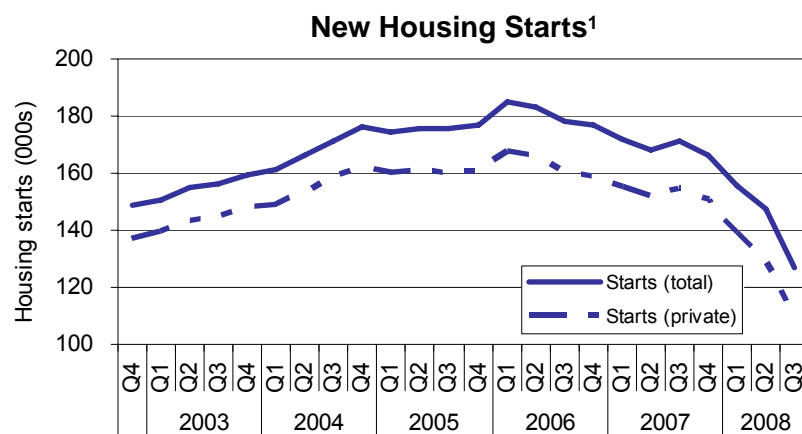
- This strategy lays out the following vision for quality of place: that ***all places are planned, designed and developed to provide everyone, including future generations, with a decent quality of life and fair chances.***
- It identifies 7 strategic objectives that the Government needs to achieve if it is to realise its vision. (See final slide for these objectives) The analysis of the challenges and opportunities laid out in this paper has informed the development of these objectives.
- The Government should **not** propose major reform to the planning system, which after a period of significant reform, is fit-for-purpose and needs a chance to 'bed-down'.



The economic downturn threatens continued regeneration and improvement to quality of place

The downturn is likely to bring some benefits¹

- It will become cheaper and easier for public sector developers to assemble land¹
- A fall in planning applications and private sector development could give planning authorities the space to draw breath and focus on longer-term improvement
- Increased public investment in development will allow government to demand higher standards, especially for homes and neighbourhoods



... but many challenges, especially in the short term¹

- The downturn is adversely affecting all development sectors
 - Residential-led redevelopment has been hardest hit. But the slow-down is likely to intensify across other sectors in the course of 2009
- The slowdown in investment in the built environment has been greatest in the Midlands and North of England, but all regions are seriously affected
- Private sector contribution to quality of place is under pressure with many developers unable/unwilling to deliver on '106' agreements on infrastructure, affordable housing and public realm
- Developments in poorer areas are at particular risk because returns on investment tend to be lower
- Local authorities are under pressure to cut planning, environmental and heritage budgets

Government's response to the downturn needs to combine steps to address its worst effects and longer term measures to ensure that policies are in place when the upturn comes

Executive
summary

- Given the importance of improving quality of place to broader government objectives and the long terms gains in up-front investment in the built environment, government needs to ensure that any adverse affects of the downturn on development and quality of place are kept to a minimum
- Government policies to promote better quality places need to combine measures to address short term challenges with those aimed mainly at addressing longer term issues, ensuring that when the upturn comes local authorities, developers and others are in a position to make the most of it

Introduction and executive summary

The elements of *quality of place*

The place-making process

The role and importance of quality of place

Recent progress

Challenges and opportunities

A policy framework for quality of place

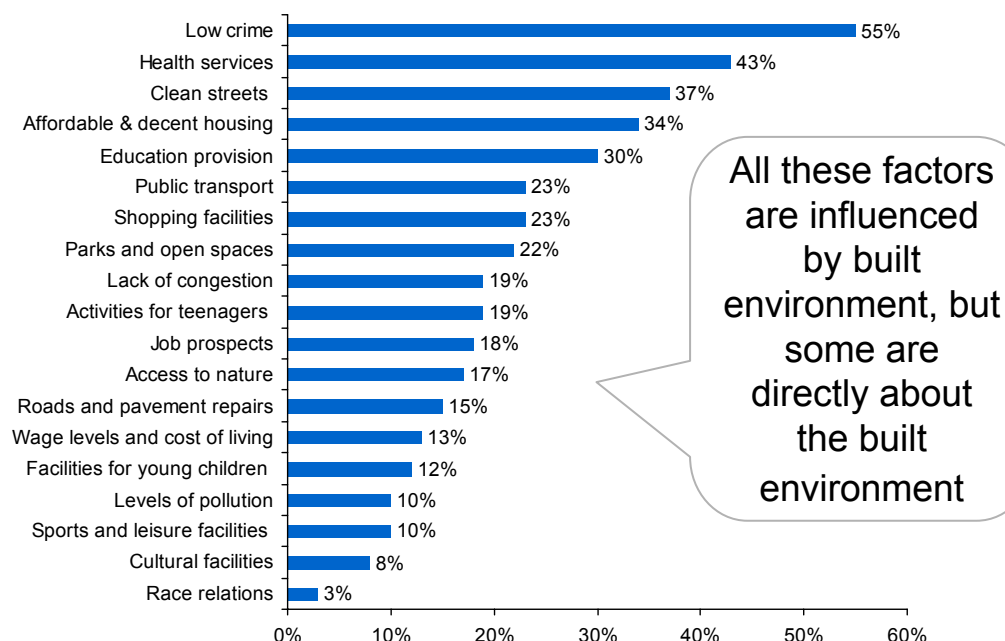
- Qualitative and quantitative research offers a good picture of what people want from places
- Factors affecting quality of place can be classed under four broad headings – the four elements of quality of place
 - Range and mix of homes, services and amenities
 - Design and maintenance of buildings and spaces
 - Provision of green space & green infrastructure
 - Treatment of historic buildings and places
- High quality places tend to perform strongly across all for elements

Qualitative and quantitative research offers a good picture of what people want from the places where they live and work

The public value safe, clean and green communities, with local, easily accessible amenities, services and transport connections

What makes somewhere a good place to live

% of people stating factor is in top 5 most important things to making somewhere a good place to live¹



- Focus groups with existing and potential residents of the Thames Gateway showed that, despite some differences across class and incomes, ‘there was a strong consensus among the public on the factors that make for desirable neighbourhoods and homes’¹. Those consulted wanted:

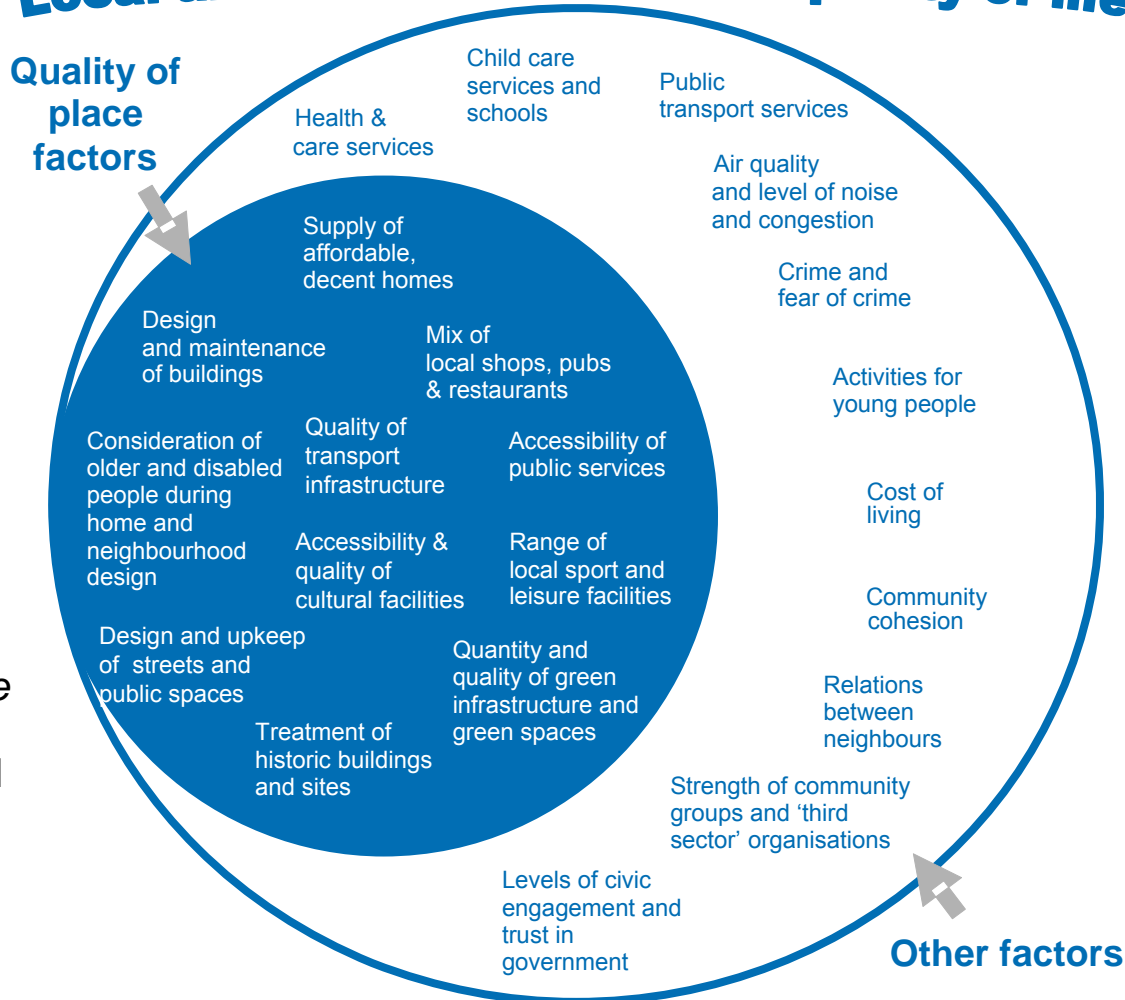
- A safe neighbourhood with a sense of community and identity
- Affordable but well designed homes, with character and individuality
- Communal space – especially green space – outside or close to homes
- A good range of local shops, pubs, restaurants and takeaways
- A short walk to a nursery or primary school, and a doctor’s surgery within 15-20 minutes travel time
- Parking space and good transport links

The factors making for quality of place are best understood as subset of those factors that make for a good place to live

Elements

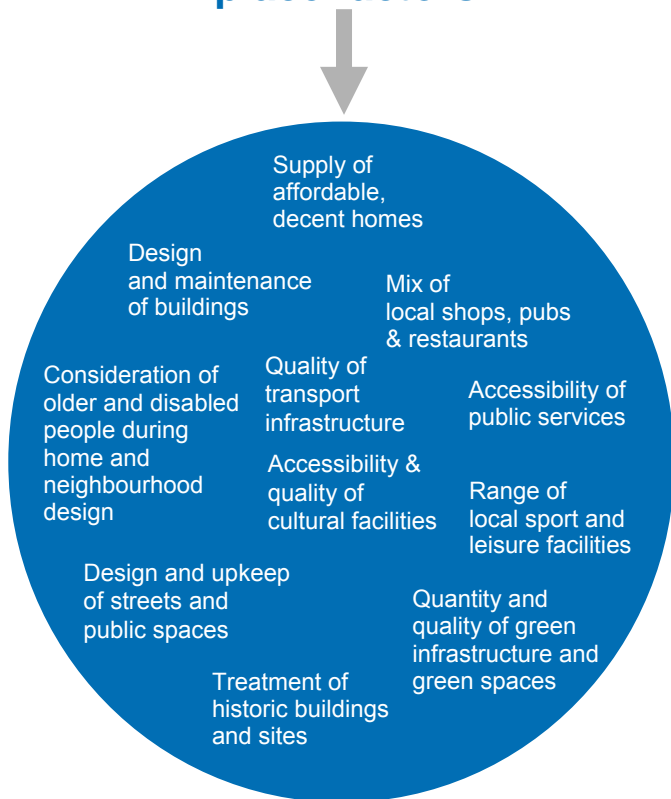
- The places where people live & work have a profound effect on their quality of life & life chances
- But this effect is mediated through a range of factors, including crime levels, pollution levels, employment opportunities, access to and quality of services and access to green spaces
- Quality of place factors that are the focus of this report represent a subset of this broader range of factors. They are factors that affect people's quality of life and life chances through *the way the environment is planned, designed, built and maintained*
- But a *good quality of place doesn't, alone, make for a good place to live*. Localities work best where good spatial planning and design, inward investment and strong markets, well managed services and strong communal ties support each other

Local area factors that affect quality of life



The factors determining quality of place can be classed under four broad headings – the four core elements of quality of place

Quality of place factors



4 core elements of quality of place



High quality places tend to perform strongly across all four elements

Elements

- There is no easy route to creating quality places. The challenges & opportunities facing localities vary. Making the most of opportunities involves commitment, skill and judgement.
- But high quality places tend to perform well across the 4 quality of place elements.



The rest of this section explores the character of each of these four elements in more depth

Introduction and executive summary

The elements of *quality of place*

- **Range and mix of homes, services & amenities**
- Design and maintenance of buildings & spaces
- Provision of green spaces and green infrastructure
- Treatment of historic buildings and places

The place-making process

The role and importance of quality of place

Recent progress

Challenges and opportunities

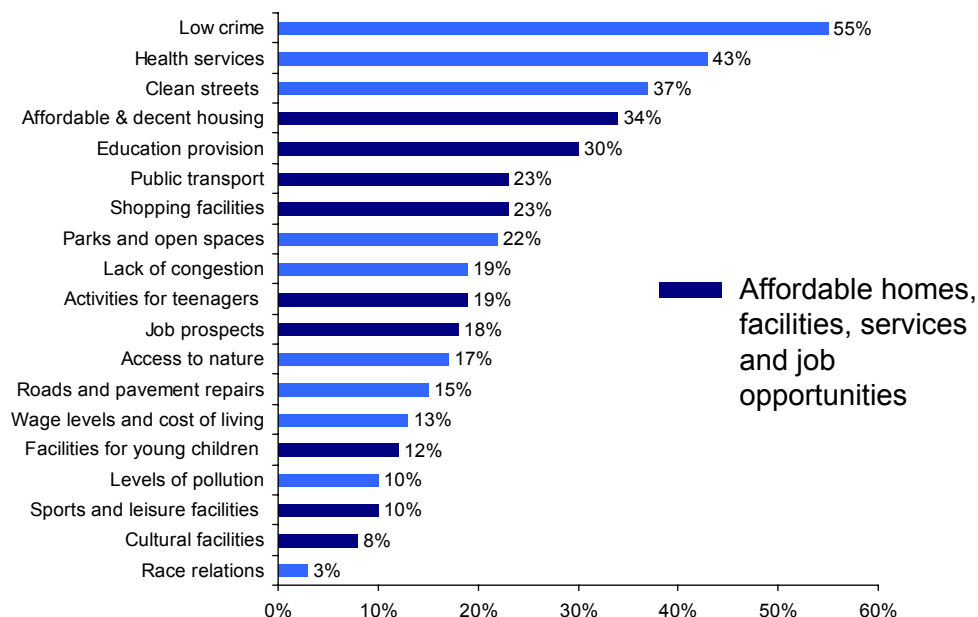
A policy framework for quality of place

- The range of homes, services and amenities on offer is an important determinant of quality of place
- Communities that offer a good range of homes and services have many advantages - but they require relatively high levels of density
- Good planning and design can do much to prevent problems sometimes associated with density

The range of homes, services and amenities on offer is an important determinant of quality of place

People want a good range of services, including shops and pubs, schools, health and public transport services, close to where they live. They also value not having to travel long distances to work

% of people stating factor is in top 5 most important things to making somewhere a good place to live¹



When I go to a house I look at the street, where the shops are located, bus stops and train stations - facilities I am going to use everyday

Resident in temporary or inadequate accommodation, Tower Hamlets¹

You need shops you can walk to. Just for bread or milk, and maybe a takeaway

Middle income resident, Lewisham²

While planning policy can't alone deliver mixed, well serviced communities, it can make a major contribution to this objective

Communities that offer a good range of homes and services have many advantages - but they require relatively high levels of density

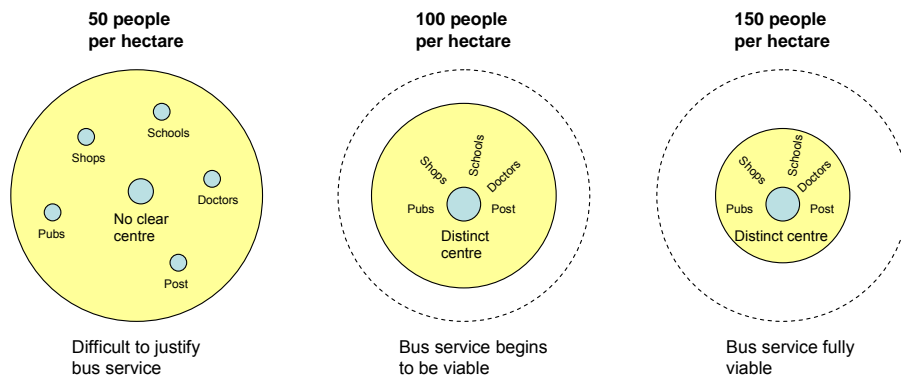
Elements
Range of homes
and services

Well-served communities lessen car dependency and increase ease of access – especially for poorer or less mobile groups. They encourage social interaction and a sense of local identity and vitality. Areas that are dominated by one type of building, like dormitory suburbs, tend to be less sustainable or more problematic in other ways.

For shops, pubs, services and facilities to become viable, a community needs to be relatively densely settled

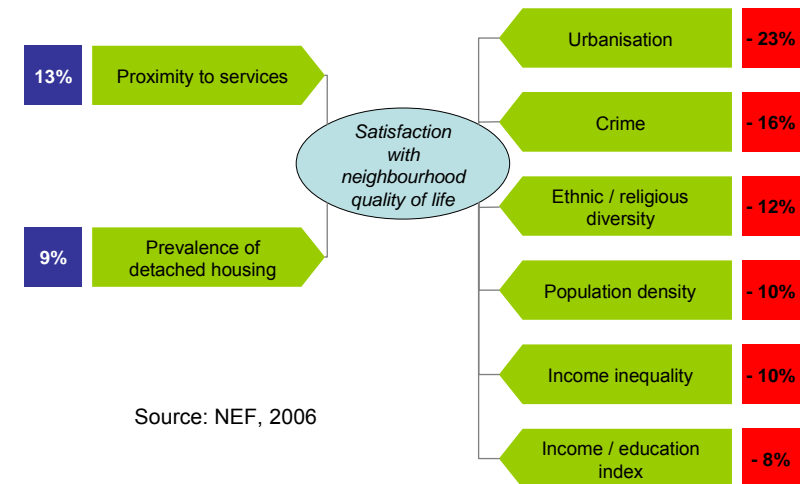
However, density can be associated with negative outcomes – as a general rule the denser an area the less satisfied people are with it

Viability of services across different residential densities



Source: Adapted from Urban Task Force, *Towards an urban Renaissance*, 1999

Significance of objective local area factors in explaining satisfaction with local area



Source: NEF, 2006

Good planning and design can do much to prevent problems sometimes associated with density

- High density developments can be designed to give all residents generous internal living space, while providing easy access to safe, supervised semi-public gardens and play space
- The average density of many well-loved Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian terraces are considerably higher than the density limits in many local plans and would generally not obtain planning permission today¹
- High density does not have to mean high-rise. In fact, high-rise developments of the 1960s and 70s did not always deliver high-densities



Introduction and executive summary

The elements of *quality of place*

- Range and mix of homes, services & amenities
- **Design and maintenance of buildings & spaces**
- Provision of green spaces and green infrastructure
- Treatment of historic buildings and places

The place-making process

The role and importance of quality of place

Recent progress

Challenges and opportunities

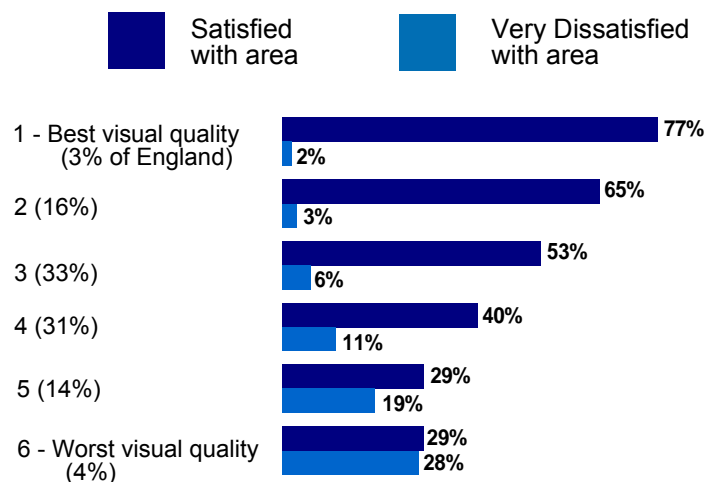
A policy framework for quality of place

- Well designed and maintained buildings and public spaces are an essential element of quality of place
- Public spaces, like roads and streets, aren't always seen as in need of 'design'. Yet these spaces are particularly important in shaping quality of place
- High quality public places put pedestrians first
- Well designed buildings make a vital contribution to quality of place
- Buildings don't have to be iconic to be high quality
- The difference in cost between a well designed and poorly designed scheme doesn't have to be large – and yet the difference in outcome can be dramatic
- Buildings and spaces don't just need to be well designed but well maintained

Well designed and maintained buildings and public spaces are an essential element of quality of place

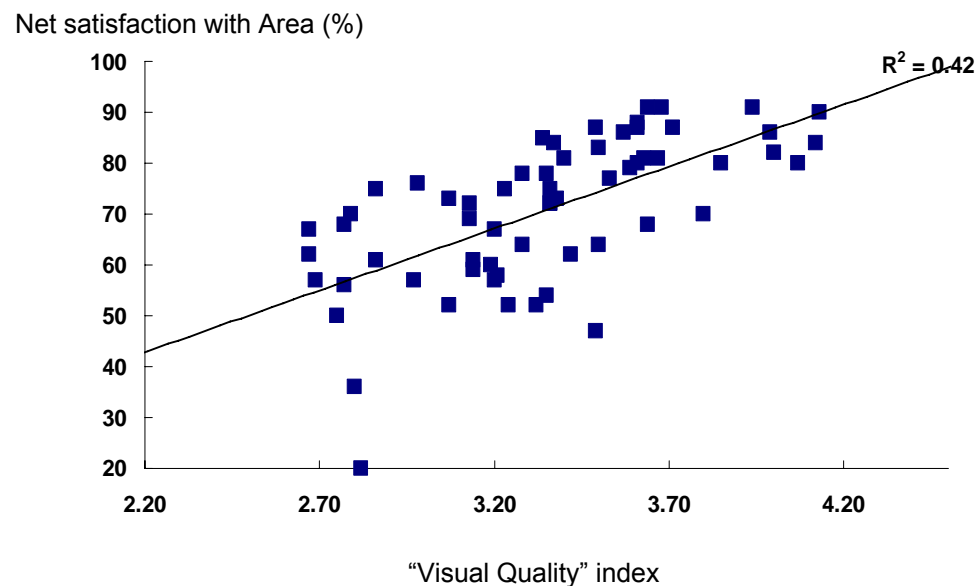
Research shows a strong association between people's satisfaction with an area and the quality of its built environment

Resident Satisfaction with Area versus Surveyor Assessment of Visual Appearance¹



Source: EHCS 2001 unweighted data, Ipsos MORI,
Physical Capital: Liveability in 2005

Satisfaction with Area versus Visual Quality¹



Source: Ipsos MORI

¹ Note that the terms ‘visual appearance’ and ‘visual quality’ include factors such as litter, graffiti and heavy traffic, and not directly the design quality of buildings.

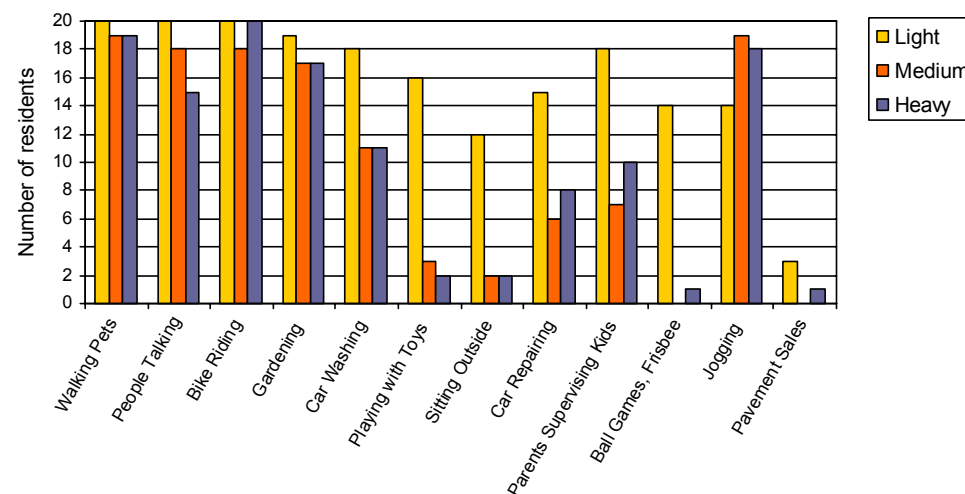
Public spaces, like roads and streets, aren't always seen as in need of 'design'. Yet these spaces are particularly important in shaping quality of place

- A well-designed town or city will be made up of a range of attractive and enjoyable open spaces, from private (garden or terrace) to the semi-private (shared garden) to the semi-public (children's playground) to the local public (residential street or neighbourhood square) to the full public (city square or park).
- This can give local people a greater choice of who they interact with and how – and build up different kinds of networks or 'social capital'
- Good planning will link up an area's public space into a seamless public realm, with well designed lighting and street furniture, etc. This will encourage walking and cycling and attract people to spend time out of doors

Traffic and local quality of life

A number of famous studies from the 1960s and 1970s by the Californian urbanist Donald Appleyard showed that people who lived on high traffic streets had a poorer quality of life. A recent study of three Bristol streets re-affirmed this pattern, with residents on the quietest streets having more local social connections and being more likely to garden, sit outside and let their children play on the street and go to school unaccompanied.¹

Street activities reported as happening frequently or occasionally on three Bristol streets, 2008



¹ Joshua Hart, 2008, *Driven to Excess: Impacts of Motor Vehicle Traffic on residential Quality of Life in Bristol, UK*, University of the West of England

High quality, well designed public places put pedestrians first

Motor vehicles have a place in towns and cities, but where they dominate, they create a hostile and unsafe environment¹

- High levels of traffic, uneven surfaces, fences and bollards can discourage pedestrians - especially young, older and disabled ones. One study found that 96% of all residents using London's Oxford and Regent streets were between 15 and 64 years old
- Pedestrians don't want to be corralled in order to free up vehicle movement – only around 23% of pedestrians traversing London's St Giles Circus choose to take the pedestrian underpass, the rest jay-walk, risking their safety

Two faces of London

Motor-centric



Pedestrian-friendly



Well designed buildings make a vital contribution to quality of place

Well-designed buildings typically display a wide range of qualities

- The ability to meet the needs of clients and user
- Respect for urban context, built and natural heritage
- Environmental sustainability
- Technical innovation and ingenuity
- Adaptability, through the building's life-time, to new technology and changing demands

And ...

- A composition, use of material and attention to detail that make for integrity and beauty

Questions of taste and fashion often arise in discussion about architecture. Tastes vary and fashions change. Appreciation of the beauty of the new may grow with time and familiarity. However, the basics of good design have been understood for centuries. They transcend fashion and personal taste.

Good Design: The Fundamentals
CABE

Design is not just what it looks like and feels like. Design is how it works.

Steve Jobs

Buildings don't have to be iconic to be high quality

Attention to detail is key to successful design of buildings and public realm

- The basic layout of many admired and sought-after neighbourhoods is fairly artless – often a simple block structure, with front and back gardens.
- What makes these places desirable is the detailed design of the buildings – the quality of materials, the corner door and window details, the planning of squares and small green spaces – the variety of architectural styles from different periods, and the presence of 'landmark' civic buildings, like churches, libraries and town halls¹

... as is adaptability

- Despite their relatively low-tech construction and materials, older buildings have often proved exceptionally adaptable to changing technologies and demands. Edwardian terraces have been adapted into flats and sculleries converted into family kitchens. Warehouses have been converted into offices and flats.
- It is important that new developments display the same adaptability

The difference in cost between a well designed and poorly designed scheme doesn't have to be large – and yet the difference in outcome can be dramatic

Elements
Design and upkeep
of buildings &
spaces

Poor materials, insensitive design, little provision for pedestrians or cyclists & no green infrastructure or play space make for an unsustainable, unattractive & unfriendly development

Here, by contrast, high quality materials and pedestrian friendly design make for an individual, sociable and sustainable neighbourhood – The Manor, Lower Earley, John Thompson and Partners



CABE



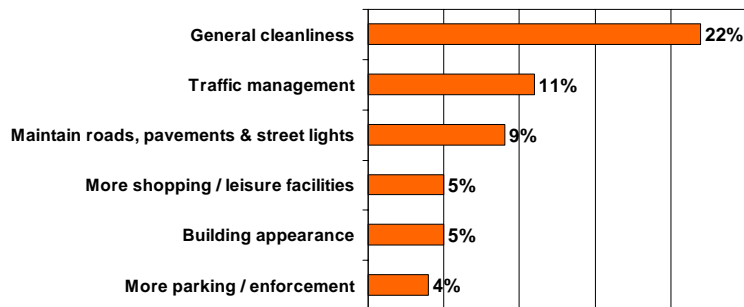
CABE

The 'skin' of a building generally only accounts for 1% of the sale value of a property, and yet can make a major contribution to its long term value and surrounding quality of place. Even if a developer uses high quality bricks, it should only add 1-2% to construction costs.¹ Further, good design can allow developers to maximise density, as displayed in the right hand example.

Buildings and spaces don't just need to be well designed but well maintained

The public attaches particular importance to cleanliness, traffic management and maintenance, and lighting of streets & roads

Changes that would most improve appearance of local area



Source: MORI / Base: All respondents (1,018)



- Barricades, bollard and street clutter can have a huge impact on the quality of a local area
- Poor quality and uneven paving is not only unsightly, but impedes access and mobility and causes accidents
- Metal shutters, dark shop doorways and windows and ugly signs or lighting can make for a hostile environment, especially at night

Introduction and executive summary

The elements of *quality of place*

- Range and mix of homes, services & amenities
- Design and maintenance of buildings & spaces
- **Provision of green spaces and green infrastructure**
- **Treatment of historic buildings and places**

The place-making process

The role and importance of quality of place

Recent progress

Challenges and opportunities

A policy framework for quality of place

- There is a growing recognition of the contribution that our built heritage has to make to high quality places
- The best way of protecting our built heritage and making the most of its value is not merely to preserve it, but find ways of incorporating it into development and everyday life
- Green spaces and infrastructure are an increasingly important element in creating quality places
- Green space and infrastructure not only make for more enjoyable and attractive places to live, but have a range of other benefits – including addressing climate change

There is a growing recognition of the contribution that our built heritage has to make to high quality places

Built heritage is everywhere

- Sensitive treatment of historic buildings and sites is particularly important in a densely populated and long settled country like Britain. Most contemporary development takes place within a historic environment – approximately a fifth of England's dwellings were built before 1919.¹
- Built heritage extends beyond castles, stately homes and cottages to include ancient sites, historic infrastructure - such as canals, docks and railways - and 20th-Century architectural masterpieces

People value it

- Just over 50% of people in England state they live in a 'historic area'. And more than 9 out of 10 agree that when trying to improve local places it is worth saving their historic features²
- The value people attach to historical buildings is reflected in their price. A pre-1919 house is worth on average 20% more than an equivalent house from the post-war era. The premium rises to 34% for a Jacobean period house³
- The number of listed buildings in a locality directly affects house prices⁴

... and are actively engaged with it

- Last year Heritage Open Days attracted around a million visitors – England's biggest and most popular voluntary cultural event⁵
- Britain has an exceptionally large and active voluntary heritage sector. There are 850 civic societies, representing 250,000 people and 300 Building Preservation Trusts⁶
- There were almost 450,000 historic environment volunteers in 2005-07¹
- Both National Trust membership and volunteering have risen in recent years, indicating an increased public interest in heritage and related activities⁷

1 EH, 2008, Heritage Counts

2 DCMS, 2006/07, Taking Part

3 EH, 2003, Heritage Counts

4 Savills, Sept 2008, Residential Property Focus

5 www.heritageopendays.org.uk

6 English Heritage figures

7 National Trust data

The best way of protecting our built heritage and making the most of its value is not merely to preserve it, but find ways of incorporating it into development and everyday life

- Many of the most successful regeneration schemes of the last decade have invested in renovating local heritage to attract further investment – for example, the Baltic Centre in Gateshead and Fort Dunlop in Birmingham
- Adapting or converting buildings is often more efficient than demolishing them. It can lessen the pressure on land, reduces the use of building materials and the production and construction of waste¹
 - Research in Manchester showed that a Victorian house was almost £10 per square metre *cheaper* per year to maintain (2003 values) than a property from the 1980s¹
 - Research in North West England has also shown that, on the basis of repair cost projections stretching over 30 years, the cost of repairing a typical Victorian terraced house was between 40 and 60% cheaper (depending on the level of refurbishment) than replacing it with a new home¹

Rather than being a constraint on design creativity, the historical environment can be a spur to it

Urban Splash's **Chimney Pot Park** in Salford displays a very imaginative conversion of 349 19th century terraced houses. The development won the 2008 Housing Design Award.



Urban Splash



HCA

A public/private/voluntary sector partnership transformed a disused prison on the historic site of **Oxford Castle** into a multi-award winning mixed-use scheme.

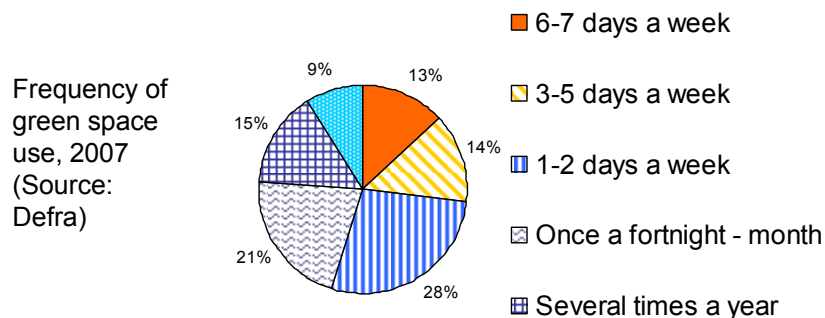
Green spaces and infrastructure are an increasingly important element in creating quality places

Green space is a highly valued and widely used public good

- A study in London showed that the amount of green spaces in wards is the 5th most significant indicator in explaining variation in house prices.¹
- Other research has found that a nearby local park can enhance the value of a flat by 7.92%, a non-detached property by 9.44% and a detached property by 9.62%.²
- A nearby city park can enhance the value of a detached property by nearly 20%.²

Use of Green Space

27% of people visited green space three or more times a week in 2007, with only 15% visiting it less than once a month.



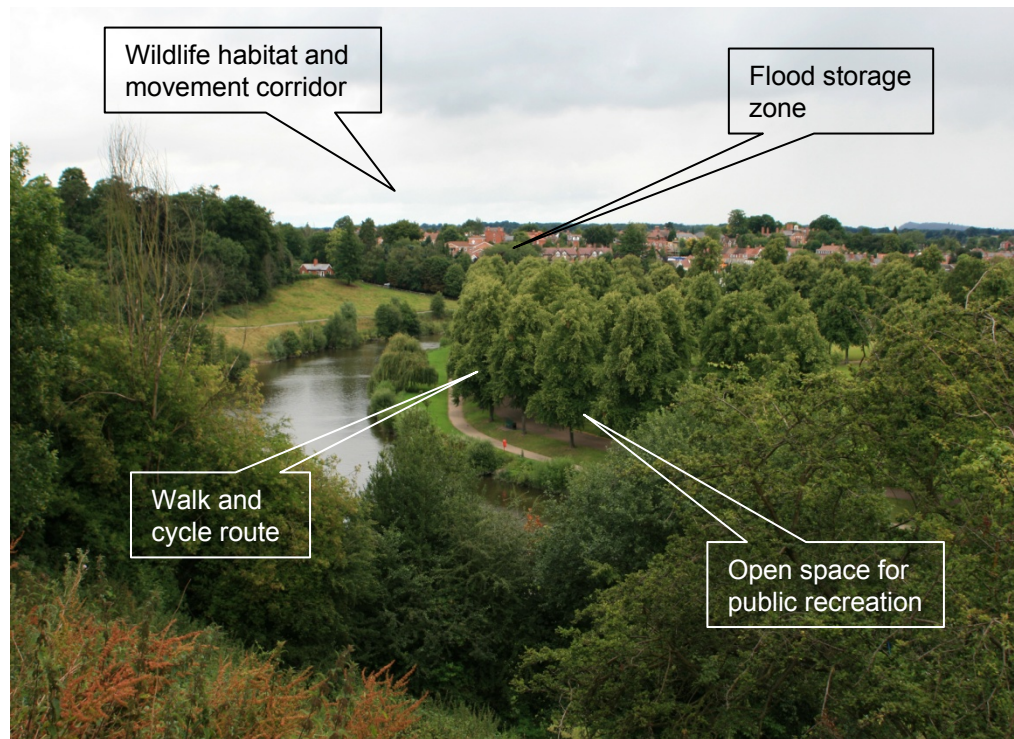
Some of the best residential developments have strong green infrastructure integrated into them



The Hammarby Sjöstad, Stockholm scheme - Masterplan by Stockholm City Planning Bureau with Jan Inghe-Hagström as lead architect - includes a strong network of parks and green spaces, and utilises the natural landscape very effectively – particularly in the waterfront area of the development.

Green space and infrastructure not only make for more enjoyable and attractive places to live, but have a range of other benefits – including addressing climate change

A single urban green space can provide a range of benefits



Natural England

...in particular, green space – parks, trees, meadows, green roofs and other absorbent surfaces – and ‘blue space’ – canals, ponds, ditches – play a vital role in mitigating the effects of climate change, and promoting bio-diversity

- Urban trees can have a dramatic effect in reducing ‘urban heat island’ effects. Comparisons of temperatures in city parks and surrounding urban areas in Japan have demonstrated differences of 2.5 to 4°C¹
- Vegetation can reduce excessive runoff and increase rainfall capture. As well as reducing the risk of flooding in low lying areas, this can also recharge soil moisture and groundwater²

Urban agriculture

Urban food production – in the form of allotments, fruit trees and orchards, vegetable and fruit gardens, school farms and city farms – has many benefits. While this sort of production can only ever meet a small proportion of urban food need, it can add to an area’s attractiveness, provide positive activities for young people, encourage healthy and more active life-styles and better mental health.³

Introduction and executive summary

The elements of quality of place

The place-making process

- **Places are shaped at three broad scales**
- Four groups are involved in creating high quality places

The role and importance of quality of place

Recent progress

Challenges and opportunities

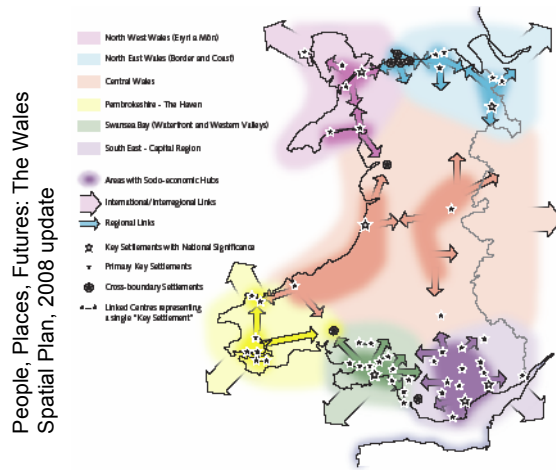
A policy framework for quality of place

- Places are shaped at three broad scales:
 - At the area level, through spatial planning
 - At the neighbourhood level, through urban design
 - And at the building level, through design of buildings and spaces
- Spatial planning integrates the physical aspects of a place with other influential strategies and policies
- Urban design focuses on the planning & design of urban centres, neighbourhoods, towns & villages to ensure they are attractive, sustainable, economically viable, inclusive and offer a sense of place

Places are shaped at 3 broad spatial levels: at the area level (through spatial planning), at the neighbourhood level (through urban design) and individual level (through design of buildings and spaces)

The place-making process

Spatial-Planning



Urban design



Designing spaces/buildings



Spatial planning aims to integrate physical aspects of place shaping with other strategies and policies that influence the nature of a place

The
place-
making
process

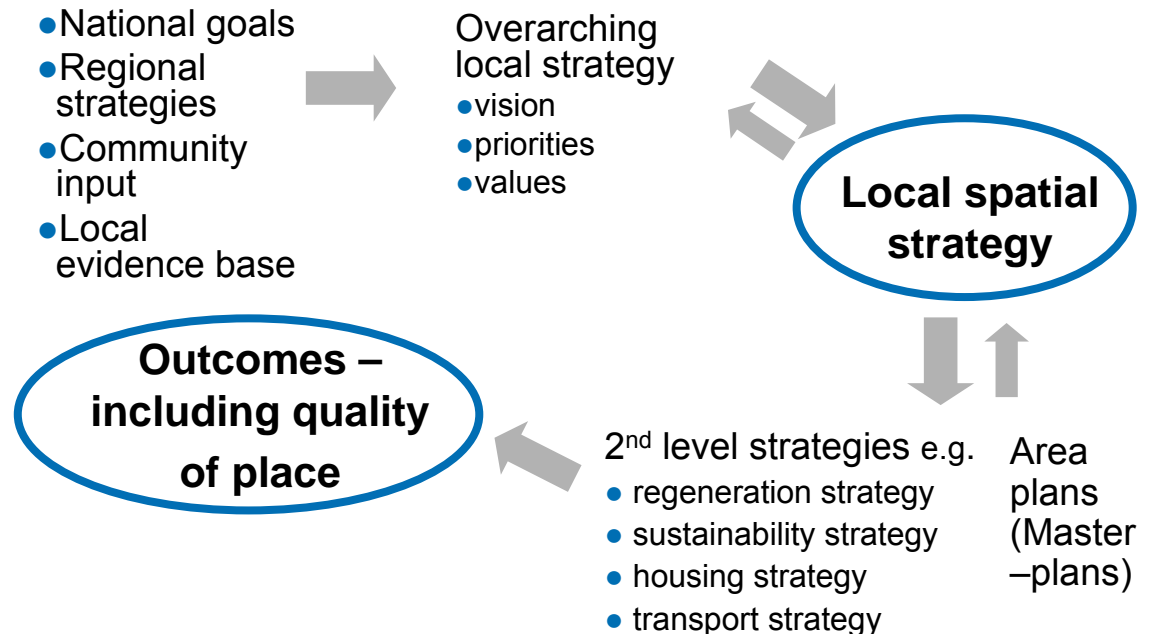
Spatial planning is the geographic dimension of place shaping. It aims to shape the physical development of a place so as to:

- Promote inward investment and economic development
- Ensure this is sustainable and enhances local character
- Match people's need to services
- Strengthen opportunity and inclusion

Spatial planning at the local level

At the local level, successful spatial planning needs to be informed by a shared vision and agreed objectives for a community. This vision should be based on:

- a good understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing an area
- strong partnership working between local government leaders, public services, business & third sector organisations, regional bodies and neighbouring areas
- meaningful public engagement.



Urban design focuses on the planning & design of urban centres, neighbourhoods, towns & villages to ensure they are attractive, sustainable, economically viable, inclusive and offer a sense of place

CABE's report *Urban Design in the Planning System* identified 7 'objectives' of urban design:

- Character – *a place with its own identity*
- Continuity and enclosure – *a place where public and private spaces are clearly distinguished*
- Quality of public realm – *a place with attractive and successful outdoor areas*
- Ease of movement – *a place that is easy to get to and move through*
- Legibility – *a place that has a clear image and is easy to understand*
- Adaptability – *a place that can adapt itself to new needs*
- Diversity – *a place with variety and choice.*

These objectives can be advanced through 8 aspects of urban form ...

- Layout – urban structure
- Layout – urban grain
- Landscape
- Density and mix
- Scale - height
- Scale - massing
- Appearance - details
- Appearance - materials

...using a range of tools and techniques.

- Master-plans
- Transport plans
- Guidance and design codes on, e.g.,
 - use and mix
 - density
 - building heights
 - building materials
 - shop fronts
 - domestic alterations and extensions
 - public art

Introduction and executive summary

The elements of quality of place

The place-making process

- Places are shaped at three broad scales
- **Four groups are involved in creating high quality places**

The role and importance of quality of place

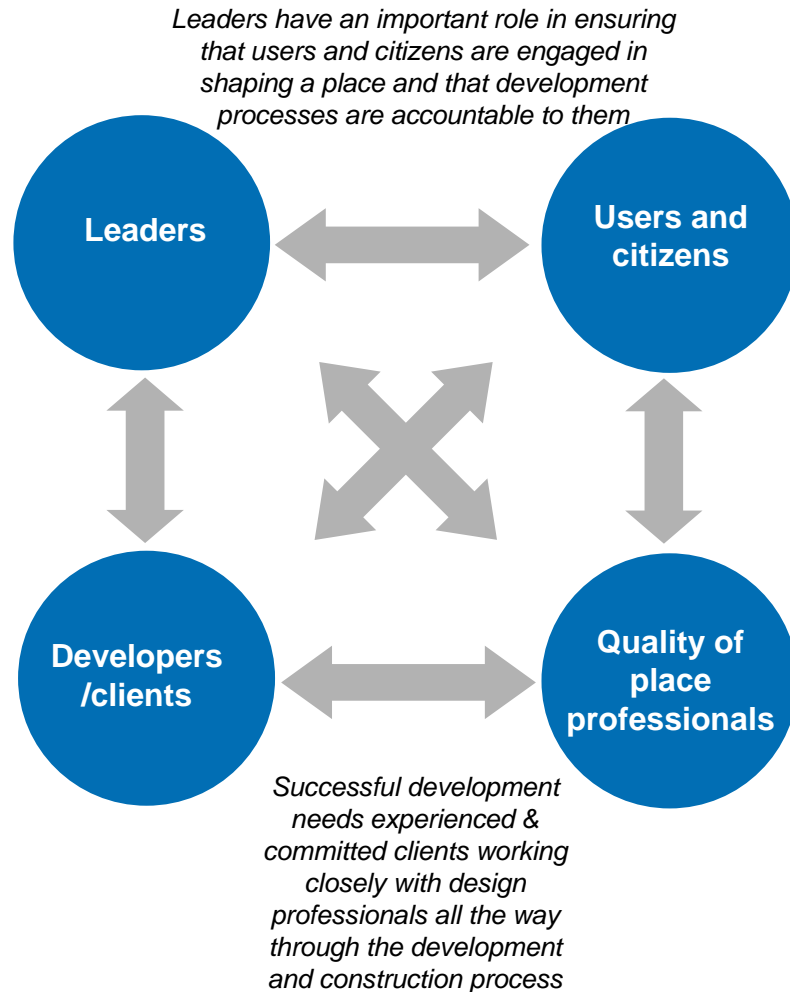
Recent progress

Challenges and opportunities

A policy framework for quality of place

- Four groups are involved in creating high quality places. Engaging and skilling each is key to successful development
 - Leaders
 - Developers
 - Quality of place professionals
 - Citizens and users
- Leaders can play a vital role in improving quality of place, through setting priorities, supporting design professionals and ensuring that development processes are accountable
- Creating high quality places depends on professionals working together across disciplinary boundaries
- A development is only as good as its developer
- The public tends to be wary of architects, planners and other quality of place professionals
- ... but users and citizens have a vital contribution to make to building and maintaining high quality places

There are four key groups involved in creating high quality places – engaging and skilling each is key to successful development



Development works best when developers & professionals work with users & public to understand their needs & aspirations, and win their support

The rest of this section explores the character of each of these groups in more depth

Leaders can play a vital role in improving quality of place, through setting priorities, supporting design professionals and ensuring that development processes are accountable

The
place-
making
process

- Leaders include national political leaders, senior public servants, elected local leaders and senior local officials
- They can exercise an important influence through the priorities they set and their degree of engagement in improving quality of place

If you look at the places which, over the last decade, have developed a really strong record on place-making you will always find a small group of people at the top of the organisation, sometimes elected, sometimes officers, who are really committed to this agenda

Planning expert, SU seminar

Some of the best public buildings of recent years have come from what is now the Ministry of Justice, like courts. That's because you have had two Ministers in a row who cared about the design of public buildings

Public sector construction expert, SU seminar

Elected members can make a huge difference to the look and feel of a place. The Essex Design Guide, which has been very influential nationally, was member-led. And it was a member who insisted on the de-cluttering of Kensington High Street

Regeneration practitioner, SU seminar

Creating high quality places depends on professionals working together across disciplinary boundaries

- The range of professionals with a role in creating quality places is very broad, including planners, urban designers, heritage experts, architects, engineers, transport planners, landscape designers, green infrastructure specialists and public involvement experts
- High quality places result where these are engaged early on in the development process and work together - with developers, users and the public - to develop a shared vision and objectives
- Some experts argue that quality of place would be improved if more professionals had generic 'urban design' skills, in addition to their more specialist skills, and that urban design should be widely taught
- As society becomes less deferential, quality of place professionals will need to do more to engage the public in their work
- It is important that local leaders and developers respect the expertise of quality of place professionals and give them the space in which to develop creative solutions.

Although things have got better, it is still the case that very often heritage experts are only brought into a development half-way through. They then end up playing a negative role, simply telling everyone that they can't do this or that, when if they had been brought in at the beginning, they could have played a positive role, helping think through how the historical environment could be used to positive effect

Heritage policy expert, SU interview

Planners and designers need space in which to be creative – one of the great challenges is for the public sector is to protect creativity from bureaucratic processes and risk aversion

Public Sector planner, SU seminar

A development is only as good as its developer

- There are many types of developers, including commercial developers, other private sector firms, private clients, 'third sector' clients, local authorities, local public services, transport authorities and central government
- Successful development requires a good developer or project sponsor. These need to be committed and confident, with some experience or able to draw on people with experience of the client role
- There are a number of ways of helping first time or infrequent clients through the development process
 - CABE and others run an enabling service, providing input from expert design and construction advisors into the design of a scheme
 - Some public services have successfully used 'professional clients' – experienced commissioners – to guide them through the process.

Design competitions

While there are many different ways of commissioning or procuring a good development, and no one way that is guaranteed to deliver good results. But design competitions offer one potential route. They have several advantages:

- They can give younger, less experienced designers a chance to compete
- They can help developers/clients clarify the brief

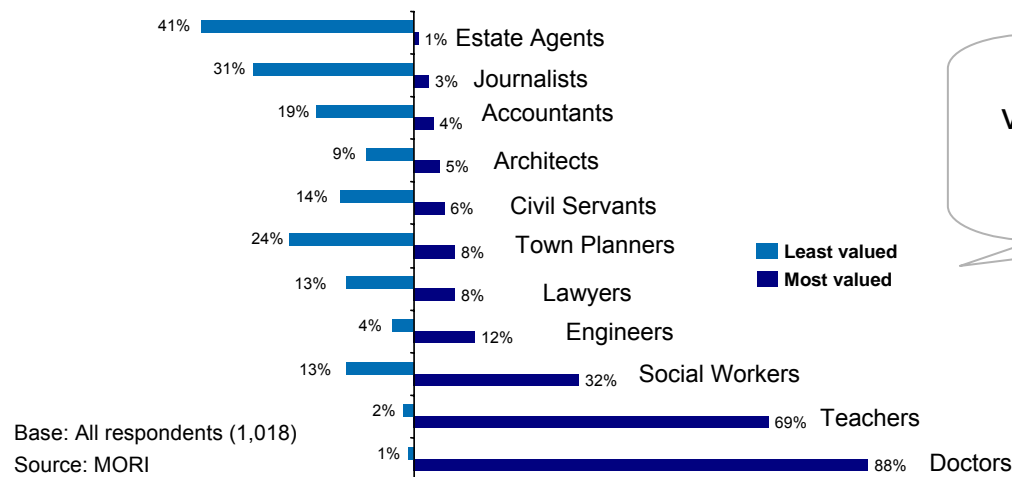
“ Design competitions are an excellent way of procuring quality in urban development. They provide an open, transparent and democratic process which, if well managed, produces value-for-money and optimises the design and development potential of a site. Most of the successful projects visited by the Task Force were the result of competitions sponsored and organised by the public or private sector ”

Final Report of the Urban Task Force, 1999

The public tends to be wary of architects, planners and other quality of place professionals

This can make engagement and involvement harder but also more important

Most valued and least valued professions



Doctors are the most valued profession among the public; planners are among the least valued

- The public attach much less value to quality of place professionals than to teachers or doctors, with planners having a particularly poor reputation
- As well as posing a challenge for those who want to work with the public, this deters people from choosing architecture or, in particular, planning as a career
- Public engagement has an important role in building up trust in quality of place professionals.

... but users and citizens have a vital contribution to make to building and maintaining high quality places

Public engagement works best where it begins early on, and evolves into a trusting and respected relationship

- Recent decades have seen the development of a number of innovative approaches to engaging citizens and service users in the place-making process, including public 'charettes', 'planning for real' and collaborative design workshops
- Advances in digital technology are also opening up opportunities for further engagement
- However, engagement can lead to public cynicism if it is not well run, or if viewed by the public as tokenistic

Community Planning – Upper Calder Valley

Regeneration funding from Yorkshire Forward, Yorkshire's Regional Development Agency, offered five market towns of the Upper Calder valley the chance to create a new future for themselves. Local people have been closely involved in this process. At the outset they were invited to attend a series of all day 'action planning' town workshops. These included trips around the local area, exploration of strategic options and planning sessions. The public have since been kept closely involved. Since December 2002 the process has involved over 2,000 people and generated over 10,000 hours of community planning.



John Thompson & Partners, courtesy of Yorkshire Forward

Introduction and executive summary

The elements of quality of place

The place-making process

The role and importance of quality of place

- Environmental role
- Social role
- Economic role

Recent progress

Challenges and opportunities

A policy framework for quality of place

- The case for investment in quality of place has to be made on a case by case basis
- However, there is a strong prima-facie case for investment in quality of place, as high quality places promote a range of positive outcomes. These include:
 - Environmental benefits
 - Social benefits
 - Economic benefits

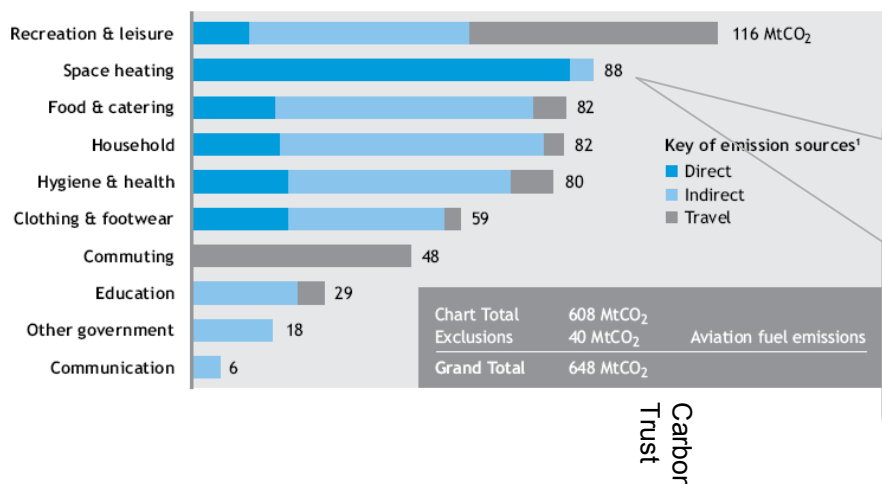
As with all public investment, the case for investment in quality of place has to be made on a case by case basis

Role and importance

With increasing demands on government funds, public policy needs to be based on a robust-as-possible analysis of the cost and benefits of investment in quality of place relative to investment elsewhere

- While, for instance, investment in quality of place can promote inward investment and better social or environmental outcomes, it is not always the most cost effective way of achieving these outcomes
 - For instance, investing in insulation tends to be the most cost efficient way of reducing domestic carbon emissions¹
- ...but, quality of place related measures can also be very cost efficient
 - Cycling infrastructure interventions generate returns in excess of their costs and offer high value for money

Breakdown of individuals' carbon emissions, 2005



One of the most efficient ways of reducing carbon emissions is through reducing domestic energy use

Benefit-cost assessment of cycling infrastructure interventions¹

Average benefit	Value per km
Comfort	0.20
Health	0.71
Short-term	0.60
Travel time	0.05
Average Cost	
Capital	0.22
Maintenance	0.01
Cost-benefit ratio (BCR)	6.78

Using DfT Value for Money Guidance, a project will generally be high value for money if its BCR is over 2.

However, there is a strong prima-facie case for investment in quality of place, as high quality places promote a range of positive outcomes

Role and importance

Good quality of place

Environmental benefits

- Lower car use
- Mitigation of urban heat island effect
- Less flooding
- Greater bio-diversity
- Lower emissions from buildings

Social benefits

- Lower crime and anti-social behaviour
- More physical exercise & improved mental and physical health
- More inclusive environments
- Greater satisfaction with local area
- Stronger social ties

Economic benefits

- Increased inward investment and job opportunities
- Increased retention of skilled workers
- More cost-effective public services
- Lower-cost, longer lasting public buildings
- Better public services

Introduction and executive summary

The elements of quality of place

The place-making process


The role and importance of quality of place

- **Environmental role**
- Social role
- Economic role

Recent progress

Challenges and opportunities

A policy framework for quality of place

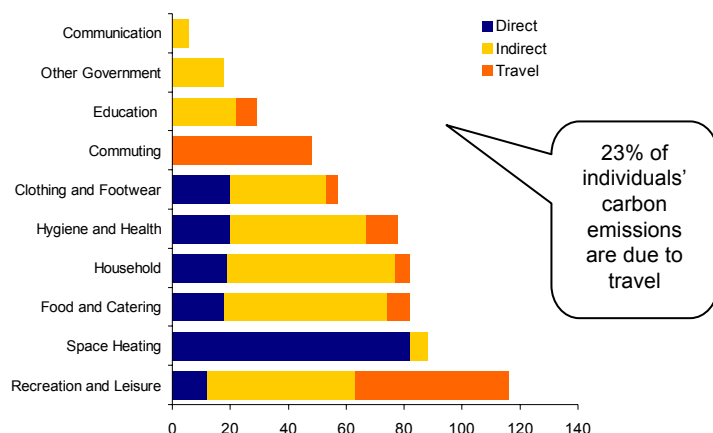
- 
- The way places are planned, developed and designed is important for their environmental sustainability
 - Good design, including the incorporation of green infrastructure and green spaces, can help reduce flooding, as well as other problems

The way places are planned, developed and designed is important for their environmental sustainability

- Planning and design can help reduce the polluting side-effects of all areas of human activity
- Reducing emissions is not just about the design and management of buildings and changing individual behaviour. It is also about planning and designing for sustainability at the scale of neighbourhoods, cities and regions

Communities designed to lessen travel can make a substantial impact upon carbon emissions

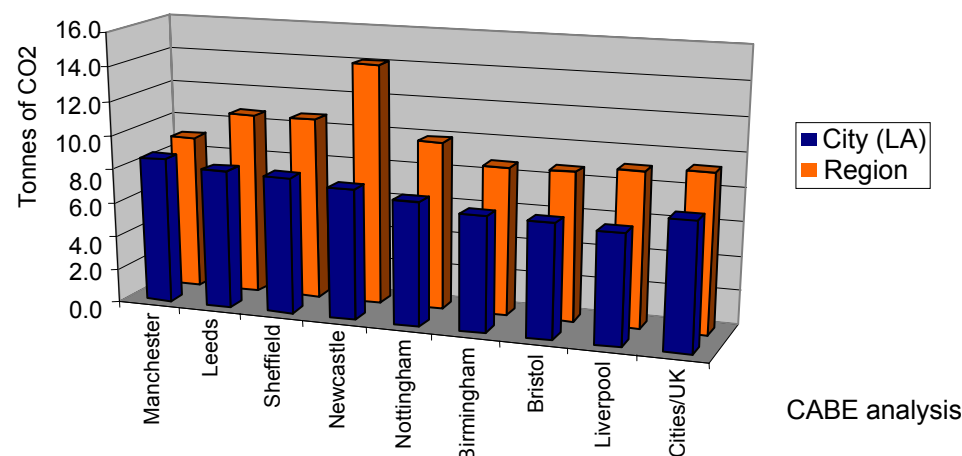
Breakdown of individuals' carbon emissions, 2005, CO₂²¹



- City centre living is generally relatively low carbon. Residents of city centres make less use of cars. And more of them live in flats, which tend to be better insulated
- Cars also emit large amounts of particulates, which probably have a higher marginal cost than carbon. The OECD prices air pollution at 0.53p per km & climate change at 0.26 per km²

City centre living is generally relatively low carbon

Per capita emissions – city centres verses city regions



CABE analysis

Good planning and design, including the incorporation of green infrastructure and green spaces, can help reduce flooding, as well as other problems

Role and
Importance
Environmental

- Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SUDs) – such as green roofs, permeable pavements, rainwater harvesting, and infiltration trenches and basins – slow down the process of water getting into the watercourse and help prevent flooding.
- Through good design, SUDs can be incorporated at different levels:
 - at an individual property level (e.g. Water butts, green roofs and permeable driveways)
 - at a community level (e.g. swales, detention basins and porous paving of highways)
 - at a strategic level (e.g. large balancing ponds and wetlands)¹

Green roofs are a simple way to create environmental benefits in dense urban areas. They have been demonstrated to make buildings more thermally efficient, prolong the life of the roof, ameliorate extremes of temperature and humidity, moderate surface water run-off and help to reduce air and noise pollution.²



¹ Sir Michael Pitt, 2007, Learning Lessons from the 2007 Floods, Cabinet Office

² Goode D, 2006, Green Infrastructure: Report to the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution

Introduction and executive summary

The elements of quality of place

The place-making process

The role and importance of quality of place

- Environmental role
- **Social role**
- Economic role

Recent progress

Challenges and opportunities

A policy framework for quality of place

- The way communities are planned and designed affects levels of physical activity and so health
- Good design can also promote positive health outcomes through the development of social capital
- The way communities are planned and designed is an important driver of community safety
- Planning and design can make an important contribution to social inclusivity, through making places more welcoming and accessible
- Good planning and design can help create 'lifetime neighbourhoods' suitable for older people
- Quality of place has an important influence on children's happiness, health, development and life-chances
- Poorer people are particularly dependent on their local environment and have most to gain from improved quality of place

The way communities are planned and designed affects levels of physical activity and so health

Role and
Importance
Social

Encouraging physical activity is increasingly important to improving health

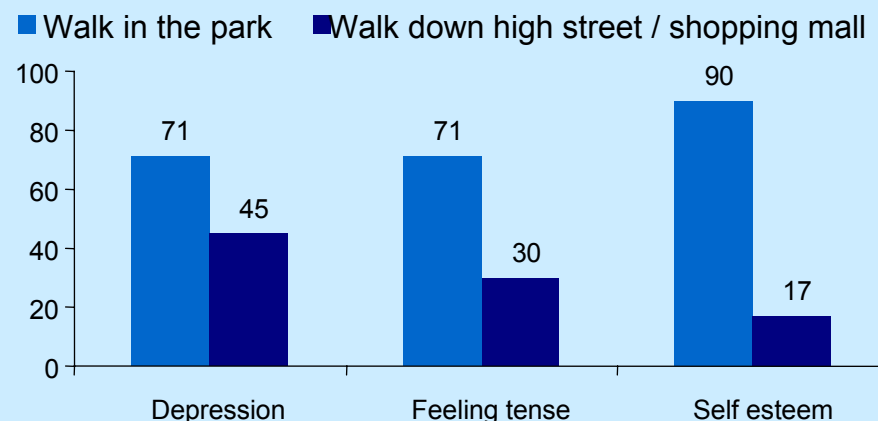
- People who are physically active reduce their risk of developing major chronic diseases – like coronary heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes – by up to 50%, and the risk of premature death by about 20-30%¹
- The annual costs of physical inactivity to English economy is estimated at £8.2 billion – including the rising costs of treating chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease and diabetes. This does not include the contribution of inactivity to obesity –estimated to be £2.5 billion per year

...and simple design measures to encourage physical activity can have strong impacts

- The introduction of a traffic-free cycle and walking path alongside the A259 between Seaford and Newhaven in East Sussex has seen an increase in usage from 17,000 trips in 2004 to 63,000 in 2005²

Access to green space has a positive effect on mental health and well-being

% people reporting improvement in mood from walk in the park vs walk in shopping centre or retail environment³



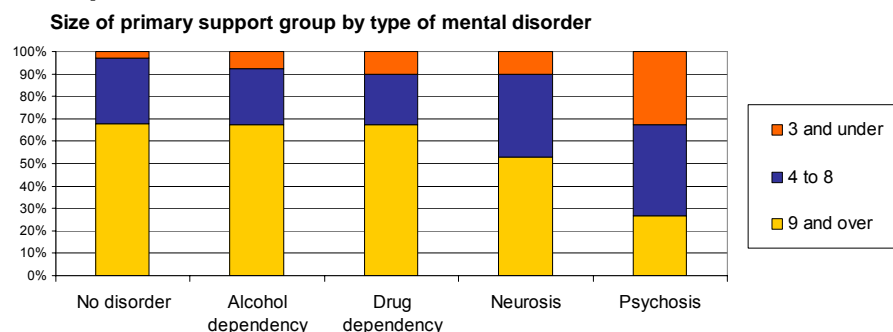
- However, evidence as to the efficiency of investing in better public space and green spaces, as opposed to other approaches to improving public health, is still limited and inconclusive⁴

Good design can also promote positive health outcomes through the development of social capital

Role and
Importance
Social

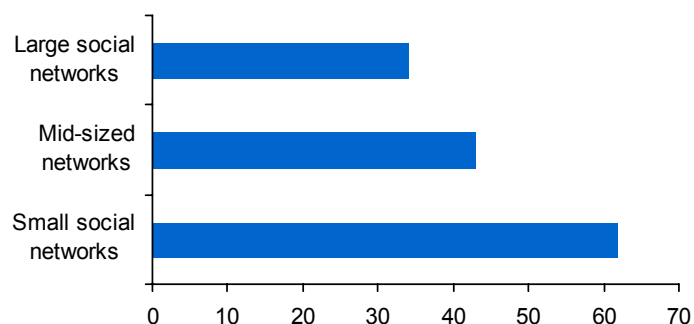
Social interaction has been shown to have a potential impact upon mental and physical health

Having more close relationships reduces the risk of mental health problems¹



People with more diverse social networks are less susceptible to colds

Controlling for other factors, percentage getting a cold by social network diversity²



... and well designed places can encourage social interaction

Urban design is known to have very significant impacts on social networks... Quite simple and low cost interventions can have extremely positive and dramatic results... David Halpern³

In Salford, The Seedley and Langworthy Trust created enclosed communal spaces behind rows of houses, to create places where neighbours could interact. This created safe areas for children to play, and was associated with an increased in reported community spirit and reduced crime.⁴

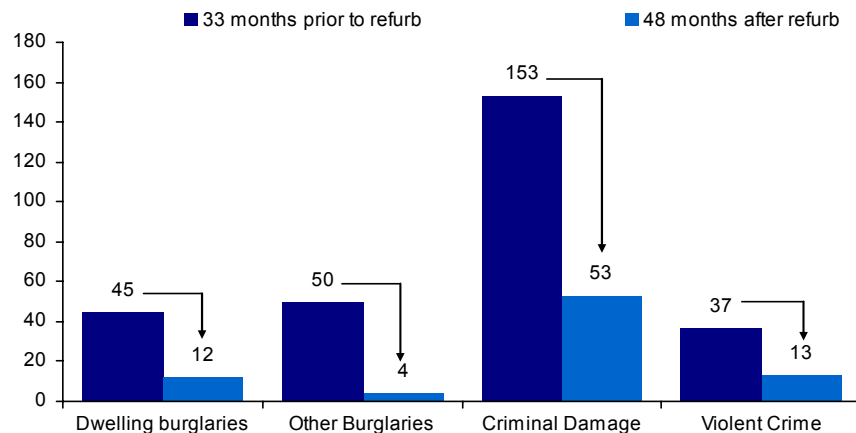


The way communities are planned and designed is an important driver of community safety

- There is now a good body of evidence about relations between planning & design and crime
 - Crime can be reduced in areas where the front windows of houses face each other across the street, creating a system of natural surveillance¹
 - Well designed, well maintained public spaces can contribute to reducing the incidence of vandalism and anti-social behaviour, and result in long term cost savings²
 - A comprehensive redesign of a 1970s housing estate in Edinburgh, which included fundamental changes to the estate layout as well as to individual units, reduced housebreaking by 65% and vandalism incidents by 59%³

The effective refurbishment and redesign of estates can have a lasting impact on crime levels as much as four years after the initial investment

Crime figures before and after the refurbishment of North View, Swanley¹



Ways to create a safer neighbourhood

Responses from focus group participants when asked what specific design measure can most increase safety⁴



1 Butterworth Architecture, 1991, Crime free housing

2 Green Space, 2004, The Link Between the Quality of Parks and Behaviour

3 Shaftoe, 2001, Crime Prevention and Security in Great Britain, University of the West of England

4 CABE, 2005, What Homebuyers Want

Planning and design can make an important contribution to social inclusivity, through making places more welcoming and accessible

Role and
Importance
Social

The way a locality is planned and designed has a particularly important impact on the quality of life of more vulnerable groups – including young, old and disabled people

- A number of design features can help make a place more inclusive. These include manageable slopes, drop down curbs, plenty of seating, accessible public toilets, wide foot paths, good lighting, safe crossing places, spaces that are easy for visually impaired people to navigate, clear signposting and well maintained paving¹
- Designing homes that are adaptation-ready for older and disabled users saves costs if alterations do become necessary later on
 - The cost of installing a stair-lift varies from £1,500 up to £5,000, depending on each individual case. For example, factors such as the adjacent wall quality and any bends in the staircase affect the cost. These can both be designed early on in a way that lessens the costs if a later installation is required²

A lack of consideration for the disabled during the design of streets, roads and places can be hazardous³



¹ See CAGE, 2008, *Inclusion by Design*; CLG, 2007, *Towards Lifetime Neighbourhoods*; WHO, 2007, *Global Age Friendly Cities: A Guide*

² SU interview with Foundations

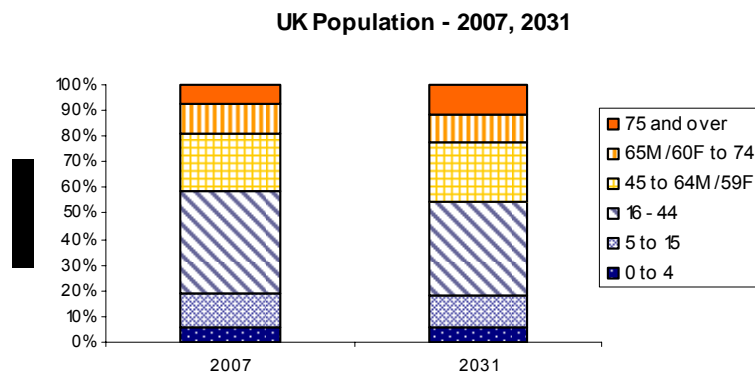
³ Gehl Architects, 2004, *Towards a Fine City for People*

Good planning and design can help create 'lifetime neighbourhoods' suitable for older people

As Britain's population ages, it will become more important to design our communities to meet the needs and aspirations of older people

- 7% of those aged 75+ find it difficult to access a corner shop, post office or doctor, compared to only 1-2% of 16-44 year olds¹
- 10% of people aged 65 and over say they are often or always lonely²
- Older people tend to spend more time at home and in the immediate outdoor environment than younger people do³

The proportion of the UK population above 65 years old is projected to increased considerably in the coming decades – by 17%



Source: ONS

Just as our homes have not been built with an ageing population in mind, neither have our neighbourhoods, streets and public spaces. Seemingly trivial problems, such as poor paving and street clutter, or lack of benches and toilets, can become significant barriers to moving around the neighbourhood, especially as we grow older. This can make a trip outside the home a daunting prospect.

Lifetime Neighbourhoods Strategy, 2008

Quality of place has an important influence on children's happiness, health, development and life-chances

Outdoor play

- Children benefit from outdoor play and everyday interaction with nature. Older children benefit from the independence that comes from being able to walk or cycle to school or to see friends or family
- But the way an area is planned and designed will shape whether children are allowed or encouraged outside
- The average age at which children are allowed outside unsupervised has risen from around 7 years in the 1960s and 1970s to just over 8 years in the present day. Research suggests that as many as one in four children aged 8–10 have never played outside without an adult²
- There has been a long term decline in the proportion of children walking to school. Though this has levelled off in recent years, there has been a continued decline in children who walk to school unaccompanied by an adult. The main reason parents give for accompanying their children to school is 'traffic danger' (59% for parents of 7-10 year olds) and 'fear of assault/molestation' (36%)³

Play happens everywhere – Vauban Germany

Children benefit most when they can play not just in designated spaces but across a neighbourhood. The Vauban 'eco-district', on the edge of Freiburg, has been designed on this principle. It is practically car free, with car owners parking in garages on the edge of the development. The majority of outside space is given over to green, child-friendly space.



¹ CABE, 2002, *The value of good design*

² DCMS, 2008, *Fair Play: A Consultation on the Play Strategy*

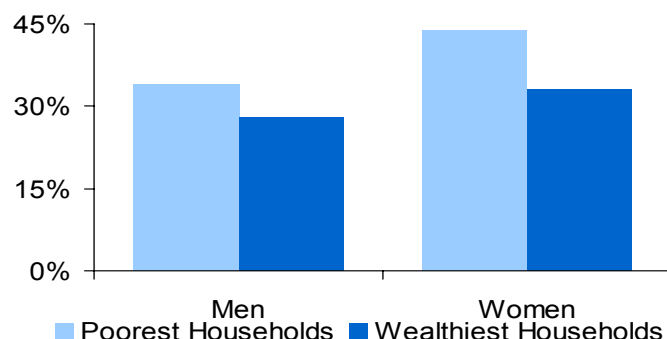
³ *Travel to school – personal travel fact sheet*, DfT, March 2008

Poorer people are particularly dependent on their local environment and have most to gain from improved quality of place

- The poorest people in the UK tend to live in the poorest quality environments
 - Deprived neighbourhoods have fewer local amenities & less public and open space, and what they have is more likely to be poorly managed & maintained¹
 - People living in disadvantaged areas are more likely to suffer the impacts from high traffic volume, with its associated noise, disturbance & poor air quality, and a greater likelihood of being killed or injured on the road.² 60% of child pedestrian casualties occur in the top three deciles of deprivation by Local Authority ward³
- Yet quality of place arguably plays a particularly important role in shaping quality life for less advantaged people. They typically spend more time in their localities and are more reliant on local public facilities, including public spaces and public transport

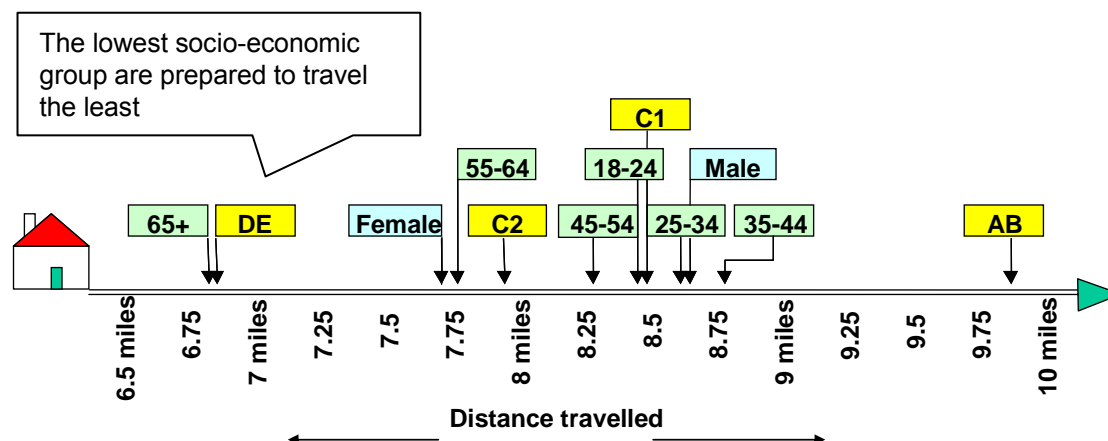
People in less well-off households are more likely to lead inactive lives – places that encourage walking and outdoor activity could be particularly beneficial for them

Proportion of people in different households classed as sedentary²



Poorer groups are more reliant on their neighbourhood

Average distance prepared to travel across all shopping, all leisure, commuting distance & distance moved from last home⁴ (by age, sex and socio-economic group)



Introduction and executive summary

The elements of quality of place

The place-making process

The role and importance of quality of place

- Environmental role
- Social role
- **Economic role**

Recent progress

Challenges and opportunities

A policy framework for quality of place

- There are strong economic arguments for investment in quality of place
- Well designed and maintained public buildings can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public services
- Health care is just one public service that can benefit from well thought-through design
- Quality of place can help to promote economic development and job opportunities
- High quality places and developments are not necessarily more expensive, even in terms of upfront costs, than lower quality ones
- And even where quality is delivered through up-front investment, this can generally produce value for money when whole-life costs are considered

There are strong economic arguments for investment in quality of place

Role and
Importance
Economic

Well-designed places tend to have greater financial value

- Research has shown that in London an achievable improvement in high street design quality can add an average of 5.2% to residential prices and 4.9% to retail rents¹
- Properties that overlook a park are on average 5-7% more valuable than neighbouring properties²

The financial, as well as social & environmental, costs of bad design can be huge

- Holly Street estate, Hackney³
 - Completed 1975, demolished and rebuilt 1990s. Physical redevelopment costs - £92m
- St Georges Park, Birmingham³
 - Laid out during 1970s, refurbished 2003/04. Cost £1.2 million, in part necessary because of poor initial design

Good quality of place can give nations and cities an advantage as they compete in an increasingly globalised economy

- Quality of life factors can be important in attracting investment and skilled workers. These factors include a place's range of facilities and cultural offer, but also its architectural distinctiveness and housing quality⁴
- Britain's reputation as a country with a rich historical environment and vibrant cities with striking new buildings are important factors in attracting tourists⁵

¹ CABE, 2007, *Paved with Gold*

² CABE, 2005, *Does Money Grow on Trees?*

³ CABE, 2005, *Cost of Bad Design*

⁴ 2006, Parkinson et al, *State of the English Cities*

⁵ Anholt-GMI Nation Brands Index, 2007

Well designed and maintained public buildings can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public services

- Good design can increase service user numbers. For example, two years after Peckham Library's bright, high-quality new building was opened in 2000, annual visits had increased from 171,000 to 500,000, and book loans had risen from 80,000 to 317,000¹
- The design of schools has a significant impact pupil attainment and behaviour. Studies on the relationship between pupil achievement and behaviour have found that test scores in well designed buildings were up to 11% higher than those in poorly designed buildings.²
- Well designed public buildings are more likely to last longer, and thus require less maintenance or replacement
- Spaces and buildings designed with sustainability in mind can reduce energy consumption. For instance, Oldham Library and Lifelong Learning Centre in Manchester relies predominantly on natural ventilation and light, which minimises energy consumption. Rainwater from the green roof is also collected, treated, stored in tanks in the basement area and used to flush toilets throughout the building. This significantly reduces mains water usage²
- Design can also have an effect upon staff turnover. One major UK company found that staff turnover, an expensive operating cost for many organisations, fell by 11% after moving to new premises³

The evidence reveals that good design improves public services. It makes services easier to deliver, thereby improving productivity; it can help recruit and retain staff, cutting the costs of staff turnover; and it can help reach out to sectors of society who may previously have been excluded.

Better Public Building, HMG

Health care is just one public service that can benefit from well thought-through design

Role and
Importance
Social

Hospital design is important in increasing patient recovery rates

- Eighty six per cent of directors of nursing say that hospital design is 'important' or 'very important' in relation to the performance of nurses,¹ and over 90% of nurses and all directors of nursing believe that a well designed environment is significantly linked to patient recovery rates²
- A 10-year comparative study of post-operative patients in Pennsylvania showed that hospital stays for patients with tree views was significantly shorter, they required fewer painkillers, used less medication, and nursing staff reported fewer negative evaluation comments in the medical records
- A study of prisoners in Michigan found that those who had cells overlooking farmland and trees had 24% fewer sick visits than those in cells facing the prison yard

Evelina Children's Hospital - finalist in the 2006 Prime Minister's Better Public Building's Award



During the design of Evelina Children's Hospital children were consulted on what they most wanted to see in the new scheme. The building is themed around the natural world, from the sea at ground level to the sky at the top. It has visual symbols to make getting around easier and themed artwork on the floor of each level. A central conservatory area, the social heart of the building, houses a gallery and performance space, café and the hospital school. It is enclosed to provide maximum daylight but naturally ventilated so fresh air fills the building. The new hospital had an impact upon staffing numbers - vacancies for nursing staff fell from 30% to 20%, and applications from consultants doubled.⁴

1 The Role of Hospital Design in the Recruitment, Retention and Performance of NHS Nurses in England, 2004, CABE and PricewaterhouseCoopers

2 Attitudes Towards Hospitals, 2003, CABE and ICM research study

3 Ecotherapy: The Green Agenda for Mental Health, 2007, Mind

4 Information and image supplied by CABE and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

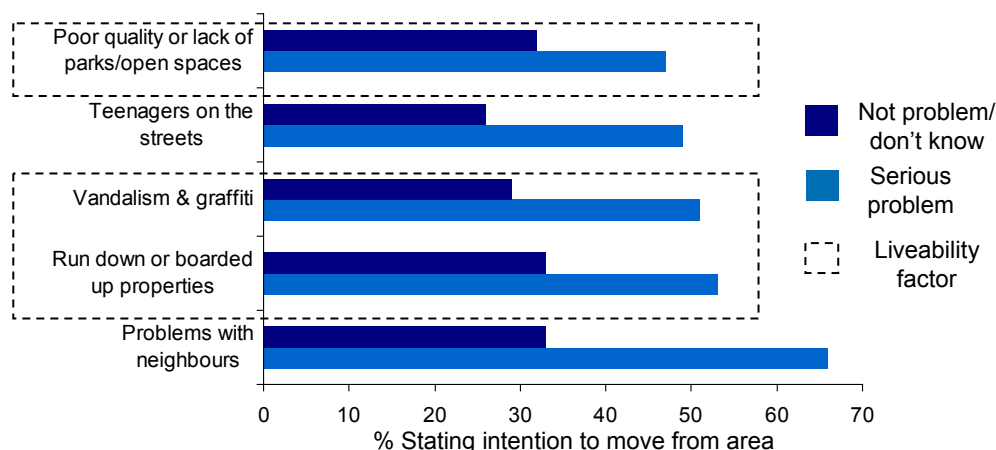
Quality of place can help to promote economic regeneration and job opportunities

- Well-planned improvements to public spaces within town centres can boost commercial trading by up to 40% and generate significant private sector investment¹
- In Coventry city centre, improved pedestrianisation, a new civic square and better placement of street furniture has, combined with the introduction an alcohol-free zone to increase footfall on a Saturday by 25%¹
- Research in London found that 85% of respondents identified the quality of the streetscape as 'important' in the ability to attract customers and tenants²
- Poor quality green space can negatively affect local activities and businesses, undermining an area's image and the confidence of both local inhabitants and potential investors³

While investment in education and skills can promote the regeneration of an area, those that do well will tend to move out unless this approach is accompanied by investment in the liveability of the area.

Liveability problems in an area increase the desire to move...

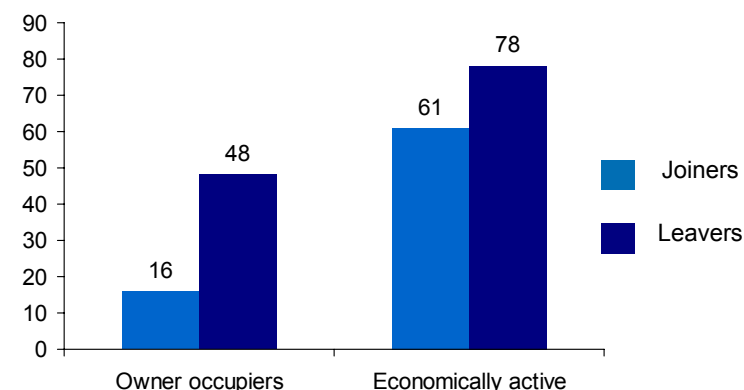
Desire to move vs problems in the area, 2004



Source: Housing and the physical environment, NDC evaluation

... the people who leave problem areas tend to be more economically successful than those entering

% of people moving in / out of New Deal for Community areas



Source: Housing and the physical environment, NDC evaluation

¹ DoE and The Association of Town Centre Management, 1997, Managing Urban Spaces in Town Centres – Good Practice Guide

² Quality Streets: The Economic Benefits of Good Walking Environments

⁽³⁾ Land Use Consultants, 2004, Making the Links: Greenspace and Quality of Life

High quality places and developments are not necessarily more expensive, even in terms of upfront costs, than lower quality ones

Role and
Importance
Economic

Many quality of place decisions cost little or no more to get right than wrong

- Appropriate mix and density of uses
- Getting buildings in the right place
- Pedestrian friendly streets and roads
- Appropriate scale, height and massing
- Continuity and enclosure defining streets and space
- Locally appropriate materials and details
- Planting that encourages bio-diversity
- Rehabilitation or reinvention rather than replacement of historic buildings
- Layout and sight-lines that promote community safety
- Mix of communal and private gardens rather than all private gardens

The HCA's £60,000 home project, shows that high quality homes don't have to cost more than lower quality ones

- The Design for Manufacture competition, led by the HCA on behalf of CLG, challenged the development industry to build high-quality sustainable homes to a construction cost of £60,000 or £784 per m²
- 1,000 homes will be built over 10 sites across the country
- All are required to meet the HCA's demanding Quality Standards.
- Walls, floors, and other components are often prefabricated in a controlled factory environment, reducing costs, while ensuring a better quality produce



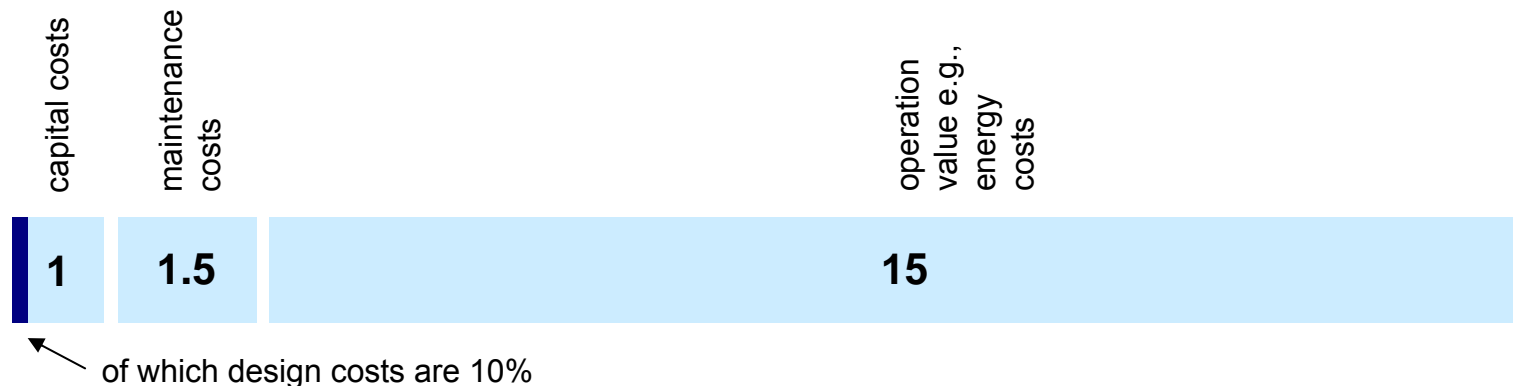
HCA images

And even where quality is delivered through up-front investment, this can generally produce value for money when whole-life costs are considered

Role and
Importance
Economic

Cost benefit calculations, extending only to the capital and running costs of developments, show additional investment in planning and design provides good value for money over the whole life of a development

Ratio of capital to maintenance and operating costs of a typical commercial buildings¹



- A US study assessed the contribution architectural quality made to the value of buildings. It showed that the quality of a building's design had a strong impact on rental levels – offices rated in the top 20% for the quality of their design could charge rents 22% higher than those rated in the bottom 20%. Good design was shown to cost more on average but not in every case²

Introduction and executive summary

The elements of *quality of place*

The place-making process

The role and importance of quality of place

Recent progress

Challenges and opportunities

A policy framework for quality of place

- Post-War governments struggled to improve quality of place
- Government has done much over the last decade to promote quality of place
- Good quality urban design has helped transform city centres and many poorer areas over the last decades
- More people are choosing to live in the heart of our older cities
- There has been a significant improvement in local environmental quality
- Standards in green space have improved
- Overall, access to local amenities and services has remained steady or improved
- There have been some exemplary public buildings and housing developments
- There have been improvements in the conservation and regeneration of the historic environment
- Planning policy has helped ensure better planned, more sustainable communities
- Car usage has levelled off
- Reform to planning and development processes have made for a more strategic, collaborative and participatory system

Post-war governments struggled to create and improve quality of place

Progress

- The post-1945 decades made some important contributions to quality of place, e.g.
 - 1946 - New Towns Act and the creation of New Towns embodying 'garden city' principles
 - 1947 Planning Act, creating democratic local planning authorities with power to regulate development
 - 1947 onwards, creation of greenbelts around London and other towns and cities
 - 1983 establishment of English Heritage and strengthened public protection of historical environment
 - Greater public access to & enjoyment of built heritage through expansion of National Trust, English Heritage, etc
 - Creation of many fine modern public buildings – around 430 post-1945 buildings are now listed.
- But central and local governments struggled to create high quality places
 - Investment in welfare services was not matched by investment in built environment
 - Cars came to dominate streets and urban centres.
 - New developments were built to low densities, undermining viability of services and amenities – often with little feel for existing context
 - Social housing was often ill-conceived or of a poor standard and ill-maintained, most obviously when it came to high rise 'system' housing

Since the Second World War, this country has seen very extensive urban development and renewal. While there are exceptions, a great deal of this development has been third-rate and is lacking any 'sense of place'. At worst the results have been downright ugly and unpleasant. Fine urban fabrics have been spoilt through the process of redevelopment. The remarkable built heritage flowing from the English urban tradition has yielded to banal and monotonous development, humdrum in design and dominated by traffic. We have repeated standard housing types and layouts, retail boxes and road layouts so many times, with little or no regard to local context, until we find that now almost everywhere looks like everywhere else.

English Partnerships, Urban Design Compendium (2000)

Much has been done over the last decade to promote quality of place

Executive summary

1999 Creation of **Commission for Architecture and Built Environment (CABE)**, with remit to promote standards of architecture, design and (later) public space

2000 Establishment of **Better Public Buildings programme**, including the creation of ministerial design champions, promotion of design champions throughout public services, and introduction of the Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award

2001 Publication of **The Historic Environment: A Force for Our Future** which recognised that heritage is all around us and can contribute to achieving objectives across government

2003 Establishment of **Building for Life standards**, demanding sustainability and design standards for new homes and neighbourhoods. It has been adopted as statutory for a number of public bodies, including the HCA

2004 Publication of **Safer Places: The Planning System and Crime Prevention**, emphasising the importance of designing out crime at the planning stage

2004 **Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act**, giving planning authorities a more proactive role in planning development and shaping places, with emphasis on sustainable, inclusive and well-designed development

2005 Issuing of **Planning Policy Statement 1**, creating a positive obligation on all planning authorities to promote sustainable development and good design

2005 Creation of **mandatory Common Minimum Standards for procurement of built environments in the public sector**, intended to ensure investment is cost effective across the whole life of the building and promotes sustainability and good design

2007 **Manual for Streets**, emphasising need to design residential streets as social places

2007 **Heritage Protection** White Paper, setting out a more efficient, transparent and flexible approach to protecting our heritage

2008 **Communities in Control** White Paper, with proposals for increasing public engagement in planning and design

2008 Creation of **Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)**, with an explicit mission to promote good design

2008 **Planning Act**, which places all planning authorities under an explicit obligation to promote sustainability and good design

2009 Launch of **Engaging Places** website, to support teaching and learning through built environment

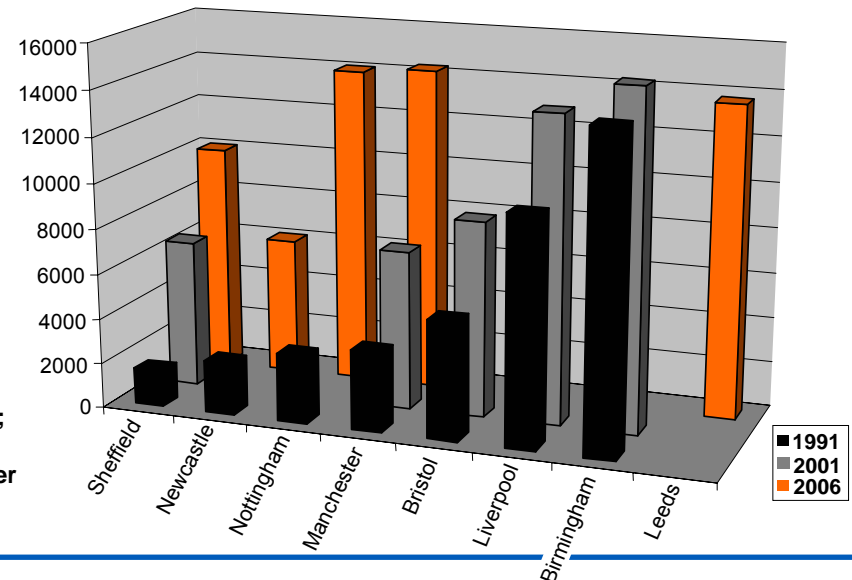
Good quality urban design has helped transform city centres and many poorer areas over the last decades

Progress

- Government policy has strongly encouraged and enabled the physical redevelopment of Britain's city centres and cities more generally
- Many of Britain's formerly declining urban centres have been transformed for the better
 - Case studies of Leicester and Manchester, undertaken for the *State of the Cities* report concluded that focus and investment in 'liveability' had 'yielded significant results, both in terms of performance and residents' perceptions'¹
 - Between 1990 and 2001 property in the 20% most deprived wards on the Index of Multiple Deprivation delivered real returns on investment that compared favourably with non-regeneration areas¹
 - Many people are choosing to live at the heart of our older cities. All major cities have seen their city centre populations outperform national population growth trends since 1991
 - Neither Birmingham or Bristol saw any growth in their over-all populations, but their city centre populations increased by 10% and 39% respectively

Various sources: Geoforum, January 2007; Centre for Cities, January 2006; Manchester City Council, November 2007; Sheffield City Council November 2006; and Leeds City Council, March 2007

City centre populations – 1991, 2001 and 2006



Progress: Towards an urban renaissance

Both images of Brindleyplace, Birmingham, Argent (UK Developments) Ltd



NewcastleGateshead Initiative

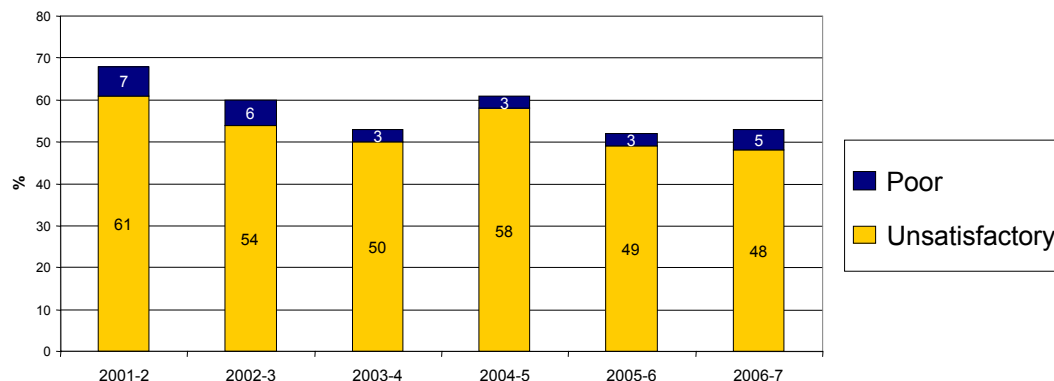
NewcastleGateshead Initiative / Peter Atkinson

Over-all there has been a significant improvement in quality of the local environment

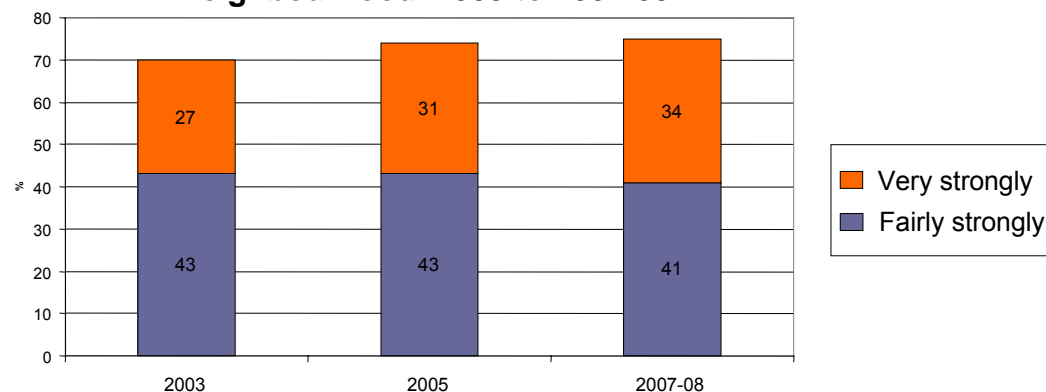
Progress

- Objective assessments of area quality, conducted annually, suggest that local environmental quality has improved significantly in recent years
 - Note however that this survey scores on 'softer' factors, like litter and dog fouling, as well as the harder 'quality of place' factors like 'condition & maintenance' that are the focus of this report
- While public satisfaction with local area has remained level at around 66-67 %¹, the proportion of people saying that they feel they belong to their neighbourhood has increased from 70% to 75%

Assessment of Local Environmental Quality (England)
2001-2 to 2006-7¹



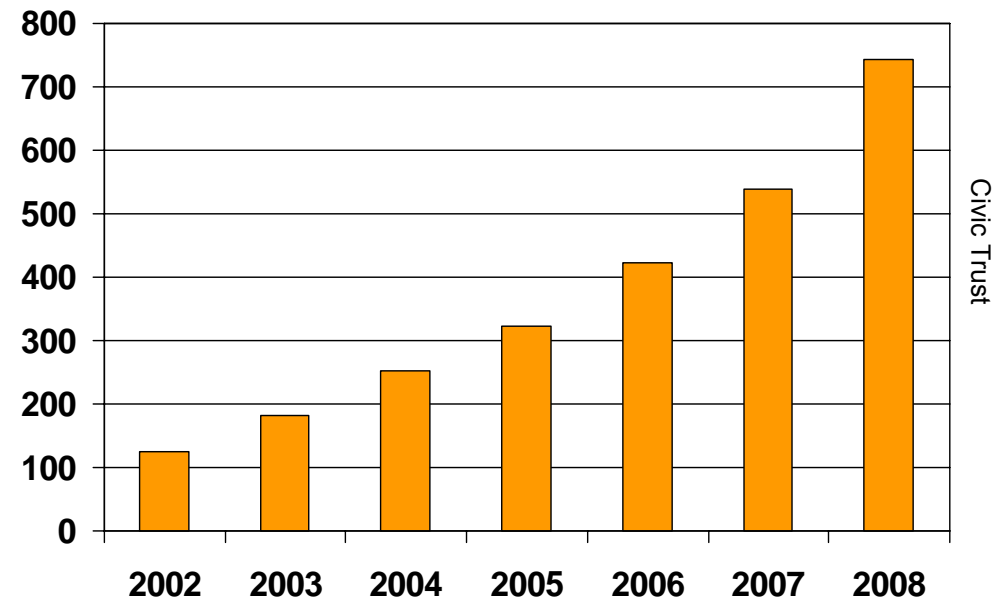
Extent to which people feel they belong to their neighbourhood 2003 to 2007-08²



Standards in green space have improved

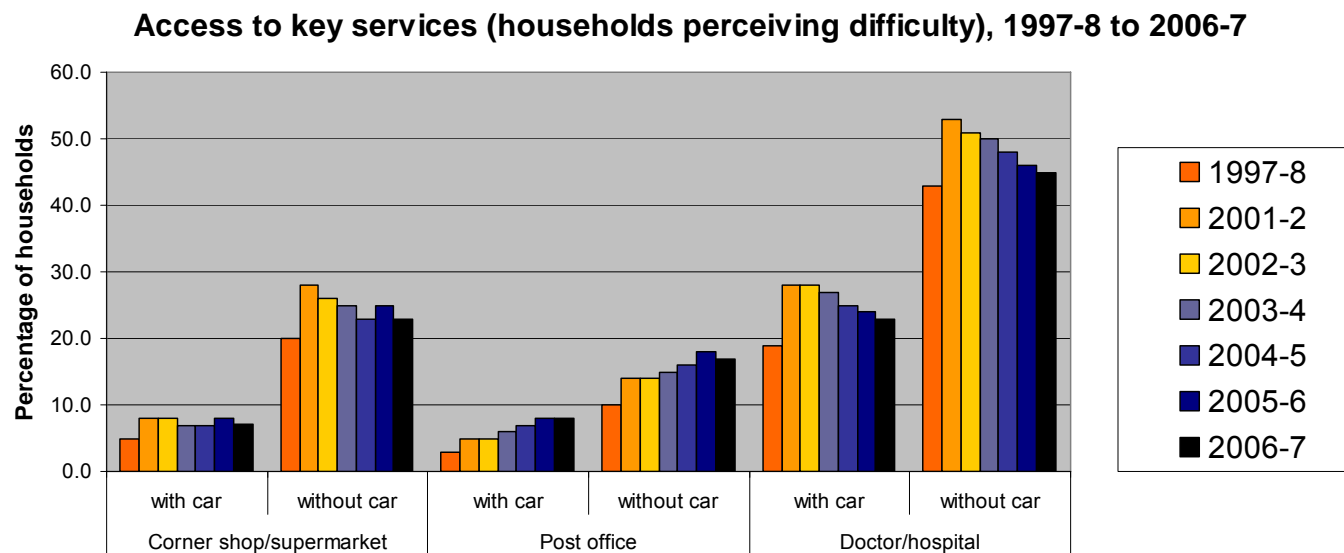
- In 2005, 84% of green space managers in urban local authorities believed the quality of their parks was stable or improving; this compares to less than 44% in 2000¹
- In 2000, 55% of urban local authorities considered their green spaces were declining in quality. This had fallen to 16% in 2005¹
- While year on year expenditure figures are not obtainable, there appears to have been very significant increase in investment in urban green space during the last decade, with almost £700 million invested in 2004-05 alone¹
- The Green Flag scheme – established to recognise and reward the best green spaces in the country – has seen a steady increase in awards made

Increase in number of Green Flags awarded each year



Overall, access to local amenities, job opportunities and services appears to have remained steady or improved

It is widely assumed that increased car travel has undermined local amenities and opportunities. But while there has been an increase in people reporting difficulty accessing post offices, since 2001 access to shops and medical services appears to have got slightly easier - even for people without a car.



Source: Sustainable Development Indicators, 2008, Defra

Government has done much to foster better public buildings. And this is reflected in many outstanding public buildings

Progress

Government policies to promote standards include:

2000 Prime Minister's Better Public Building programme including:

- Nationwide network of local government and public services design champions
- Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award

2005 Common Minimum Standards

2009 Introduction of design threshold for all secondary schools built through Building schools for the future programme

Significantly, 3 out of the 4 UK buildings on the shortlist for the Stirling Prize for architecture this year were public buildings.

These included the Manchester Civil Justice Centre and the Westminster Academy school. Other public buildings that have been shortlisted for the prize include the Idea Store, Whitechapel & Laban Dance Centre, Deptford.



MottMacDonald

Margherita Spiluttini

Westminster Academy

There have been some outstanding residential developments

The Government has undertaken measures to improve the quality of housing design

- Design quality of new housing is now measured for the first time. The Building for Life scheme, led by CABI and the Home Builders Federation, is a national standard for well designed homes and neighbourhoods
- DCLG now has a specific housing quality target
- The Housing and Communities Agency was established with a statutory duty to promote design quality
- The 2007 Housing Green Paper specifically champions the importance of good housing design
- The Government and CABI have promoted housing design codes. These provide clarity for developers as to what constitutes acceptable design quality for a particular site or area. They are not mandatory for local authorities, but encouraged¹

...and we have seen some very well designed housing developments

Architects are being increasingly creative in their designs, with the challenge of creating green housing pushing housing design in new and interesting directions.

This year's Stirling prize for architecture was won by a housing development- Accordia in Cambridge - for the first time



Bill Dunster's Upton development is the country's first housing scheme to meet the highest Code for Sustainable Homes rating – level 6



HCA images

There have been improvements in the conservation and regeneration of the historic environment

Progress

In the past decade the Government has undertaken a number of specific heritage related measures, including:

2001 *The Historic Environment: A Force for Our Future*

2004 Promoted local historic environment champions. 292 local authorities currently have historic environment champions¹ – an increase of over 30% since they were first recorded in July 2006

2008 Heritage Protection White Paper

2008 Initiated Engaging Places scheme jointly with CABE, providing opportunities for young people to connect with their local built heritage

And we've seen a shift in the way local authorities and the public view built heritage:

- There is now a wider recognition that heritage is all around us, on every street, and an asset rather than a problem. Heritage has been at the heart of many regeneration schemes, adding quality, status, local distinctiveness and identity.
- There has been a 13% reduction in buildings and monuments at risk in England since 1999².



LCR/Troika Editions

St Pancras Station, London



Civic Centre, Sheffield



CABE

Grainger Street, Newcastle



Allies and Morrison, RIBA

Royal Festival Hall, London

¹ www.helm.org.uk, data for January 2009

² English Heritage, 2008, Heritage at Risk Register 2008

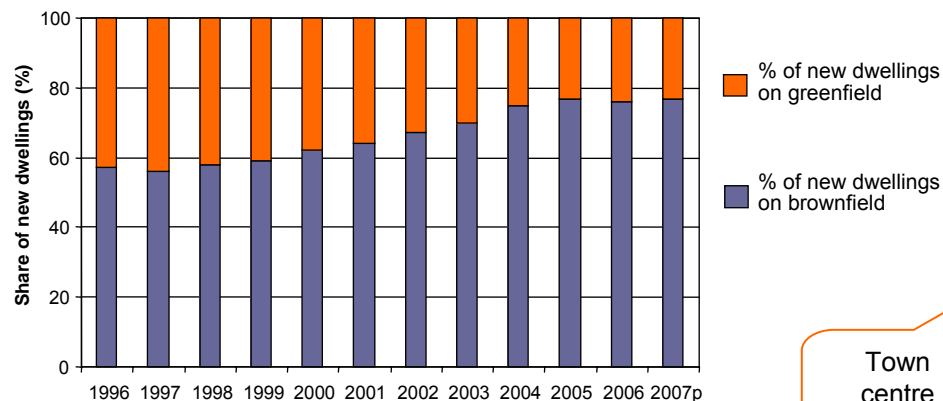
Planning and regeneration policy has helped ensure better planned and more sustainable communities

Progress

Government policy and planning guidance has promoted increased brownfield development and higher retail and residential densities

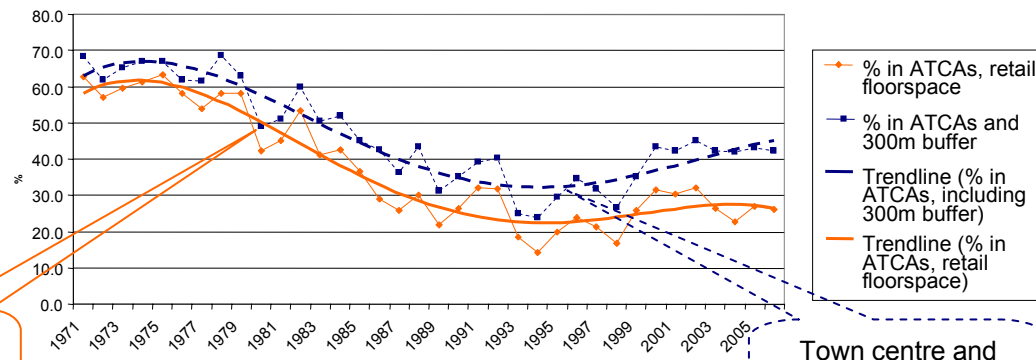
- The proportion of development on brownfield land increased from 56% in 1997 to 77% in 2007 (provisional estimate)
- Since the mid-1990s there has been a general upward trend in the proportion of development going into town centres and edge-of-centre locations.
- Average densities of residential developments have increased from 25 dwellings per hectare in 1997 to 44 in 2007¹

New dwellings: greenfield vs brownfield in England



Source: Land Use Change Statistics, CLG

Percentage of newly built retail floorspace in CLG Areas of Town Centre Activity (ATCAs), with and without 300m buffer



Source: CLG, 1st April 2007 data

1 Land Use Change Statistics, October 2008, CLG – note the 2007 figure is a provisional estimate

2 'Edge of centre' refers to a 300m 'buffer' around the city centre

Car usage has levelled-off and investment in public transport & public realm is beginning to encourage more sustainable forms of travel

Progress

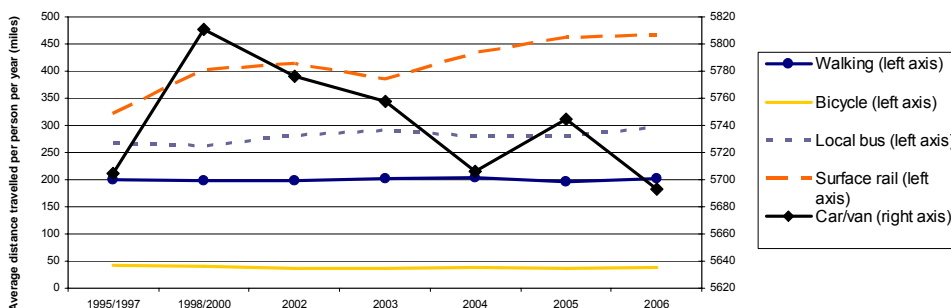
The Government have undertaken a number of specific initiatives to develop sustainable transport

- Promotion of Home Zones and low speed limits on residential streets
- Investment in public transport, cycling and walking. For instance, the budget for Cycling England has been considerably increased for the coming years¹
- The publication of *Manual for Streets* – laying out standards for the good design of residential streets

This has helped reduce long term trends

- Having increased dramatically for most of the post war period, the average annual distance travelled per person by car has now levelled off – the 2006 figure, 5,693 miles, was very similar to the 1995/97 figure (5,705 miles). The average distance covered by walking has also remained stable, and the distance travelled by public transport has increased²

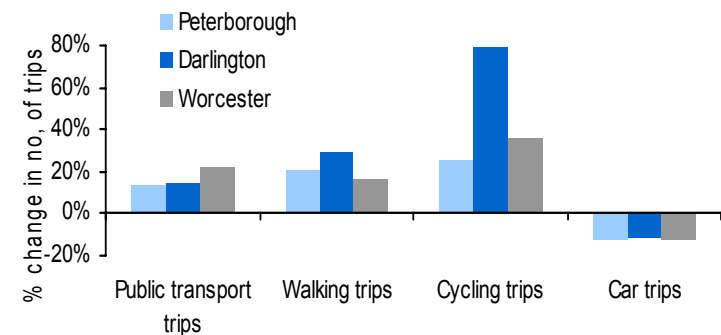
Average distance travelled per person per year by mode of travel - 1995/7 to 2006



Sustainable Transport Demonstration Towns

In 2004 Darlington, Peterborough and Worcester became 'showcase' demonstration towns, with government funding to promote healthier and more sustainable modes of transport. This initiative showed how a concerted drive, including capital investment in public transport and improved infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists, can promote a shift in travel patterns, so improving quality of place.

% change in number of trips by mode in the 3 Demonstration Towns



Reform to planning and development processes have made for a more strategic, collaborative and participatory system

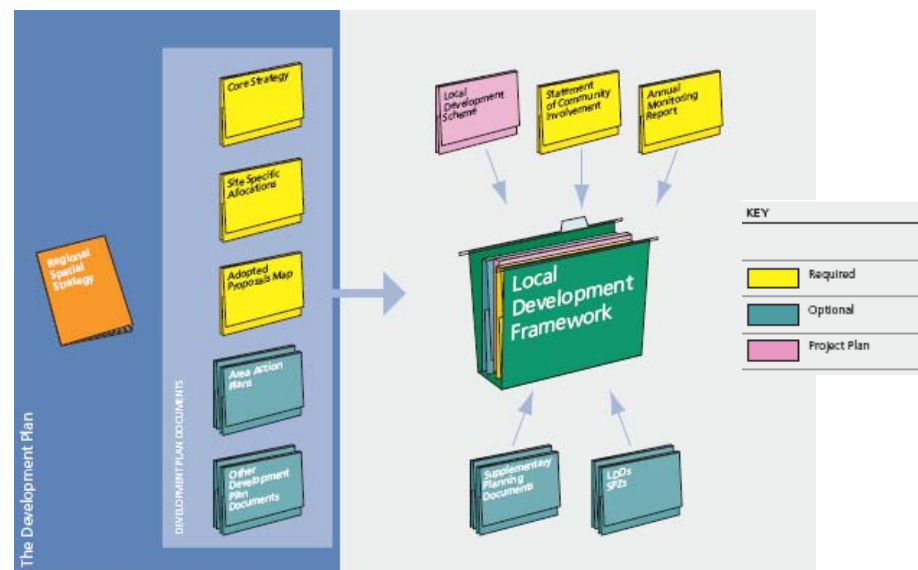
Progress

- The 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act and related guidance aimed to change the role of local planning authorities from regulating development to actively shaping it. It emphasised the importance of:
 - working with the full range of local agencies, leaders and investors
 - engaging communities
 - ensuring flexibility in adapting plans
 - sustainable, inclusive and well designed development
- Further reforms and initiatives, including the *Strong and Prosperous Communities White Paper* and the *Empowerment White Paper*, have sought further to strengthen local leadership and skills and encourage public engagement in shaping the built environment
- A thorough independent evaluation of local planning authorities found
 - ‘promising moves towards more collaborative working in plan making’ within local authorities and across boundaries
 - many cases where the use of deliberative methods of engagement focused on specific sites had helped build a local consensus¹

Local Development Frameworks

All local authorities are now required to produce a Local Development Framework – a suite of documents including a:

- Local Development Scheme with clear time-line for spatial development
- Core Strategy laying-out a spatial vision and key spatial objectives for the area
- Statement of Community Involvement laying out how the authority will engage local people



Introduction and executive summary

The elements of quality of place

The place-making process

The role and importance of quality of place

Recent progress

Challenges and opportunities

- **Outcome challenges**
- Delivery challenges and opportunities

A policy framework for quality of place

- All areas face planning and design challenges - although these can differ dramatically from place to place
- English cities generally under-perform by international standards in terms of quality of place
- City centres have improved but progress has been slower in outer-city & suburban areas
- Continued public investment in new buildings will have an important impact on quality of place – for better or worse
- But audits of various public building programmes show standards have been patchy at best
- And the design quality of new homes and neighbourhoods has often been disappointing
- Challenges remain in improving standards of green space and green infrastructure – particularly in deprived areas

All areas face planning and design challenges – although these can differ dramatically from place to place

Challenges & opportunities

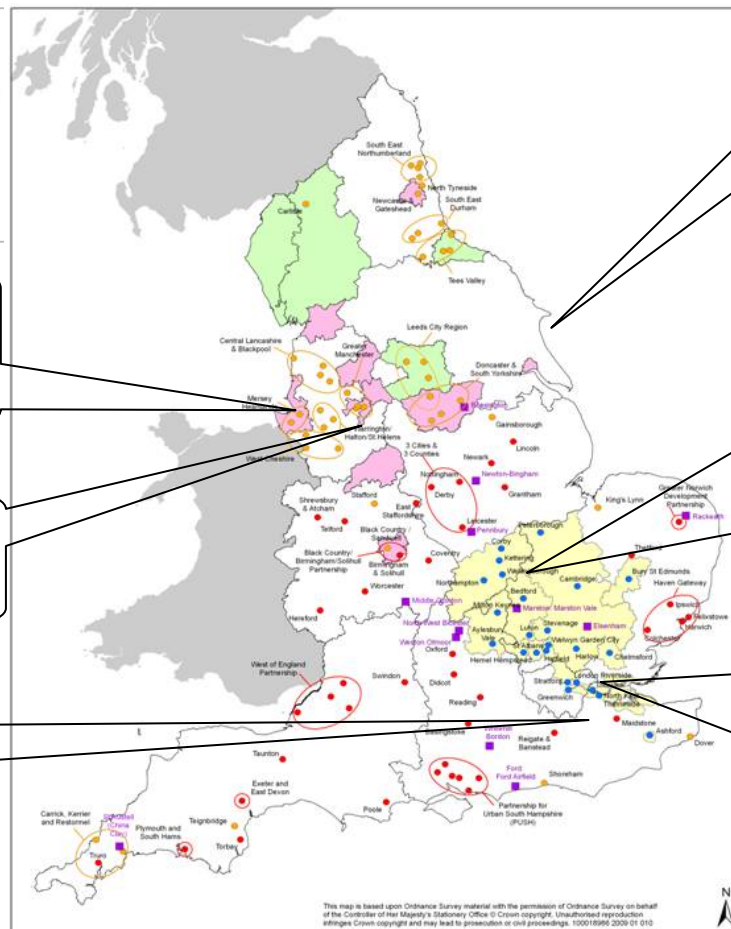
Development pressures and opportunities vary widely across the country, with some areas facing very significant change. Good planning and design is key to ensuring this development leaves a successful legacy

While in many areas demand for homes for outstrips supply, Pathfinder areas have unwanted housing

Britain's larger old cities still remain highly unequal, with pockets of concentrated poverty

In London, the 'urban heat island effect' could amplify temperature rises experienced elsewhere

- Growth Points
- Growth Point Partnership Areas
- Additional Growth Points
- Additional Growth Point Partnership Areas
- Key Growth Area Locations
- Growth Areas
- Pathfinder Regions
- Areas of Wider Lower Demand
- Eco Towns



Eastern areas face the most increased risk of flooding

Growth areas will see significant housing development over the next decade, often in the form of urban extensions

The Olympics and Thames Gateway are among the biggest regeneration projects in Europe

English cities generally under-perform, by international standards, in terms of quality of life

While there is no authoritative international ranking of cities for quality of place, as this report defines it, English cities do not score well on quality of life and sustainability rankings

Quality cities

The best known lists ranking the world's top 50 cities in terms of quality of life feature only two British cities – London and Manchester (London is ranked 38th and 51st in two surveys, and Manchester is rated 46th in one). This contrasts with, say, Germany which has six cities in Mercer's top 50 for quality of living¹, and Canada, which has four in the Economist Intelligence Unit's top 50 ranking.²

Out of 40 applicants for the European Union's recently established European Green Capital award, only one was from England - Bristol. By contrast, six German and six Spanish cities applied. This award is given to a city which has a consistent record of achieving high environmental standards, is committed to further environmental improvement and sustainable development. Bristol, however, made the top eight finalists.

Applicant cities for the 2010/2011 European Green Capital award



Source: EU

1 http://www.citymayors.com/features/quality_survey.html

2 Economist Intelligence Unit, February 2009, Livability Survey

While many city centres have experienced an urban renaissance, progress has been slower in outer-city and suburban areas

Challenges & opportunities

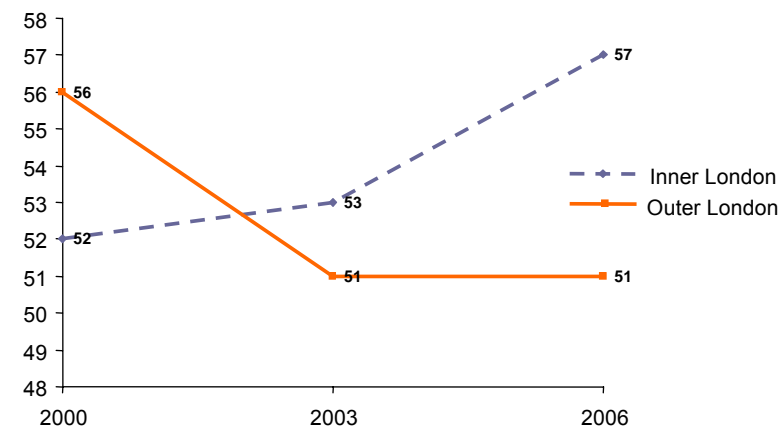
The high levels of investment seen in England's city centres during the past decade has not been matched in their immediate residential areas

- Recent research by the Centre for Cities has highlighted the disparities within our older industrial cities, with seven out of the eight Core Cities appearing in the 10 least equal cities in the country.
 - These typically have (a) more vibrant city centres, (b) under-performing fringes, and (c), further out, more prosperous suburban areas, creating a 'donut' effect
 - This research found that Manchester was the most unequal city in England. While the city centre is doing well, Manchester City local authority area as a whole is doing much less well than surrounding areas like Trafford or Stockport.¹
- The same donut pattern can also be observed in London

People are tending to say that we've done all these grand projects in the centres of cities – the squares and public places. But the outer areas feel neglected. Ratings of quality of life in inner London now outstrip outer London on a range of measures – a reversal of the position a decade ago.

Ben Page, Ipsos Mori

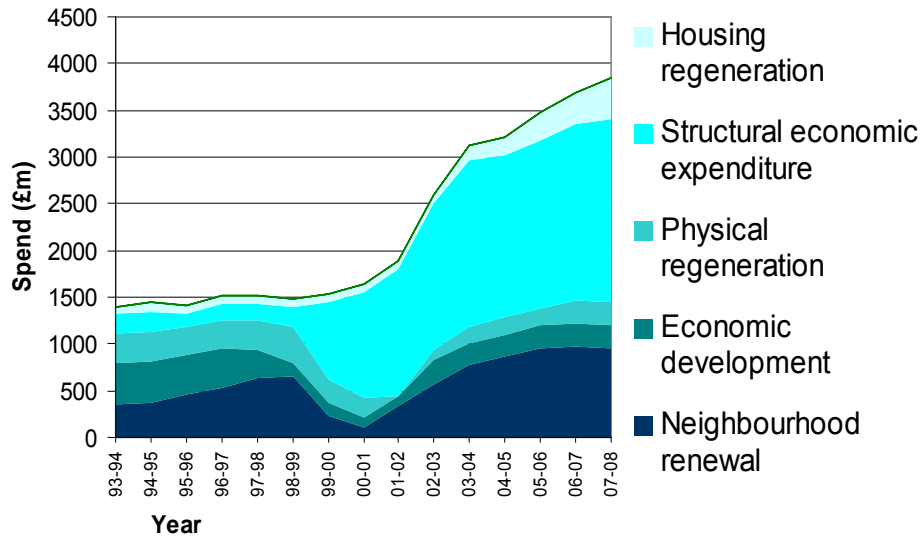
Satisfaction with local areas



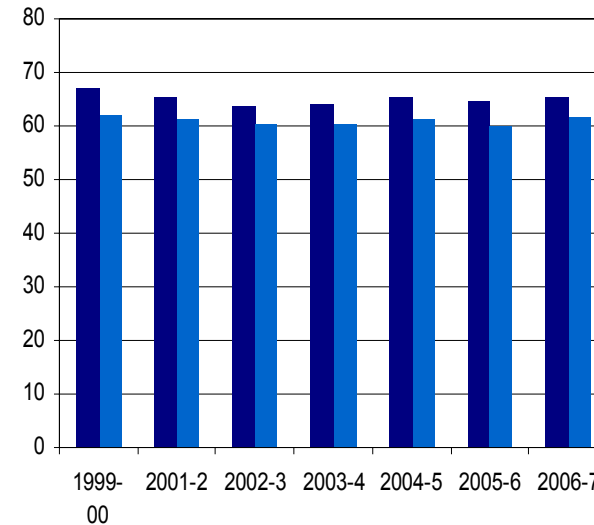
Source: MORI, 2005

Despite very significant increases in regeneration spending on poor communities, much of it directed to improving the built environment, satisfaction with local area does not appear to have increased

Expenditure on regeneration and renewal programmes¹



Satisfaction in local area²



Residents in poorer communities are only slightly less satisfied – perhaps a manifestation of lower expectations

■ England

■ Deprived areas (NRF districts)

And average levels of satisfaction have remained stubbornly fixed at around 66%

- Low income groups are 22% more likely to think traffic in their area is dangerous to pedestrians and other road users³
- People in deprived areas also 4 times more likely to describe their area as 'shabby'⁴

Continued public investment in new buildings will have a important impact on quality of place – for better or worse

Across the UK, the public sector spends around £20 billion pa on new buildings and infrastructure, including some major programmes¹

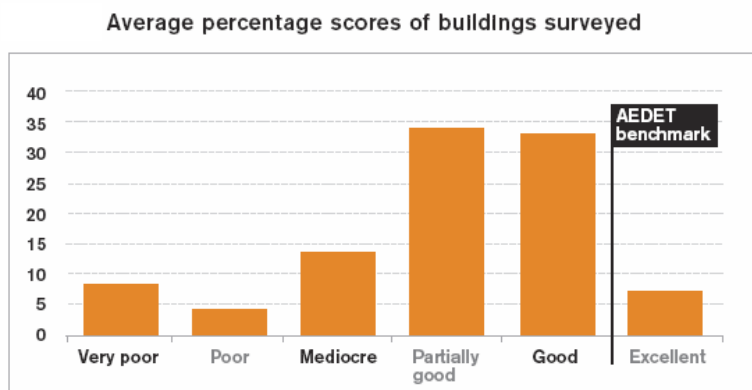
The Government has set demanding targets for increasing the supply of new homes, many publicly funded – two million by 2016 and three million by 2020

- Around **£6 billion** is spent by central government, the rest by local authorities and public agencies
- The Building Schools for the Future programme will invest **£45 billion** in 3,500 schools over 15 years (2005-2016)
- The Primary Capital Programme will invest **£7 billion** in 8,000 primary schools (including 2,000 new builds) over 15 years (2009-2024)
- The LSC's Building Colleges for the Future programme is aiming to renew all further education colleges by 2014. Over **£2.3 billion** has been invested in projects during 2008-09.
- The Government is investing **£250 million** in the first phase of the Local Improvement Finance Trust (LIFT) initiative in primary and community healthcare facilities
- A programme of train station modernisation will invest **£504m** in the refurbishment of Birmingham New Street other stations between 2009/10 and 2013/14. This figure does not include station improvements to be carried out as a major part of other schemes, like the Thameslink project and East Coast route – the total scheme will cost over **£5 billion**²
- The HCA will invest **£17 billion** in 180,000 affordable homes over the next three years alone (2008-2011)
- The downturn in the private housing market means that Government, through the HCA, will be taking a greater role in funding new homes and neighbourhoods – at least in the short term

... but audits of various public building programmes show standards have been patchy at best

LIFT buildings

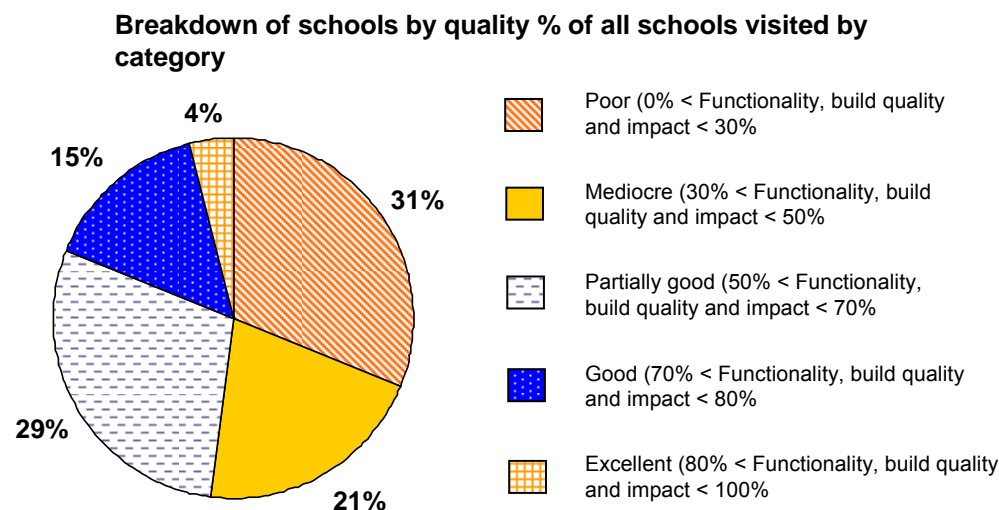
- In 2008 CABE undertook audits of 20 LIFT primary healthcare buildings constructed between 2002 and 2006. Their findings reveal “a variable picture of design quality in the new buildings”



Source: Assessing design quality in LIFT PCT buildings, 2008, CABE

School buildings

- A CABE audit assessed half of the schools completed in the first five years of this decade – before the BSF programme began – ‘poor’ or ‘mediocre’. Standards of BSF programme have been addressed, but government is embarking on major investment in primary schools and FE facilities and lessons need to be learnt.



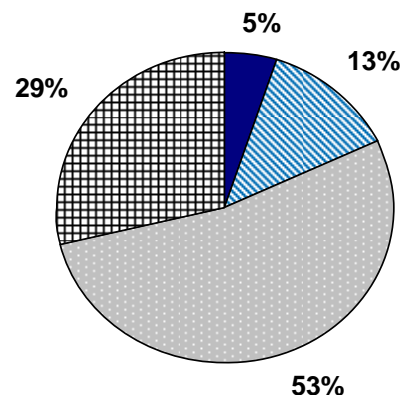
Source: CABE

...and the design quality of new homes and neighbourhoods has often been disappointing

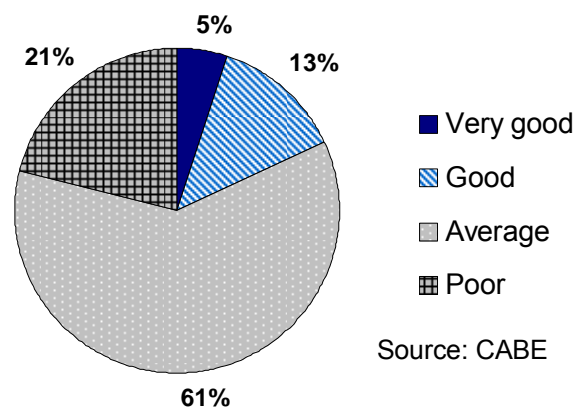
Audits of new residential developments show design standards need to improve

- CABE's housing audit found that fewer than one in five private housing developments completed between 2001 and 2006 were acceptable in terms of design quality, and almost a third should not have been given planning permission³
 - Recurrent problems include poorly defined streets and public space, illogical site layouts and the failure to create a distinct sense of place.
- Standards of affordable housing have also been low. Only 18% of social homes completed between 2004 and 2007 met a good or very good design standard⁴

CABE Audit of private housing findings (2006)



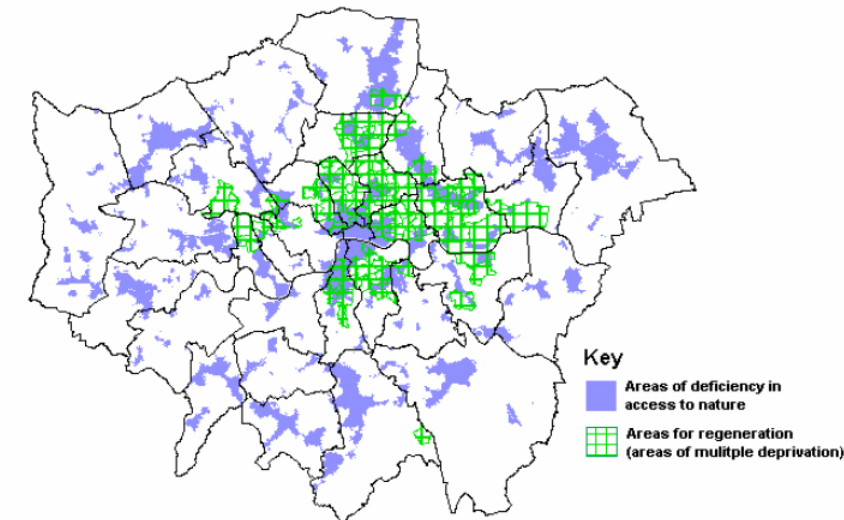
CABE Audit of affordable housing findings (2008)



Challenges remain in improving standards of green space and green infrastructure – particularly in deprived areas

- Many people in urban areas do not have good access to green space – many areas of London are more than a kilometre from accessible natural greenspaces¹. This is particularly true of people in deprived areas²
- Challenges surrounding the quality of urban green space also remain. Despite progress, in 2005 one in six urban local authorities still said that their green space was in decline²
- Urban flooding due to drainage systems being overwhelmed by rainfall is estimated to cost £270 million a year in England and Wales, and 80,000 homes are at risk.³ Green infrastructure can be important in tackling this problem

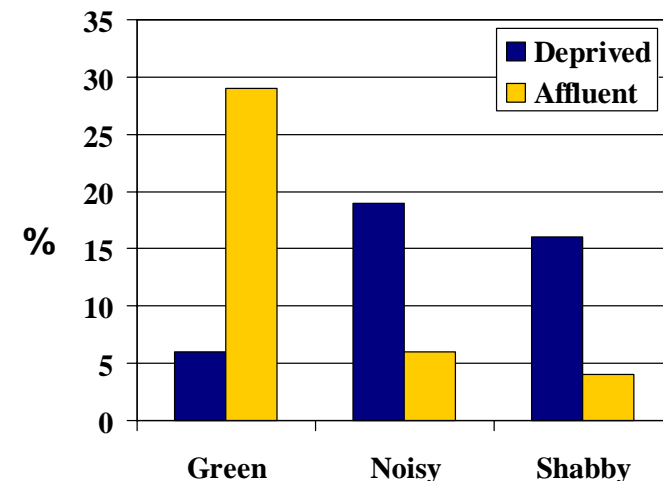
Deficiency in access to nature and multiple deprivation



(c) Crown copyright. All rights reserved (GLA) (LA100032379) (2006)

Source: *Improving Londoners' Access to Nature*

How people feel about their local area



Source: *Omnibus Survey October 2004*

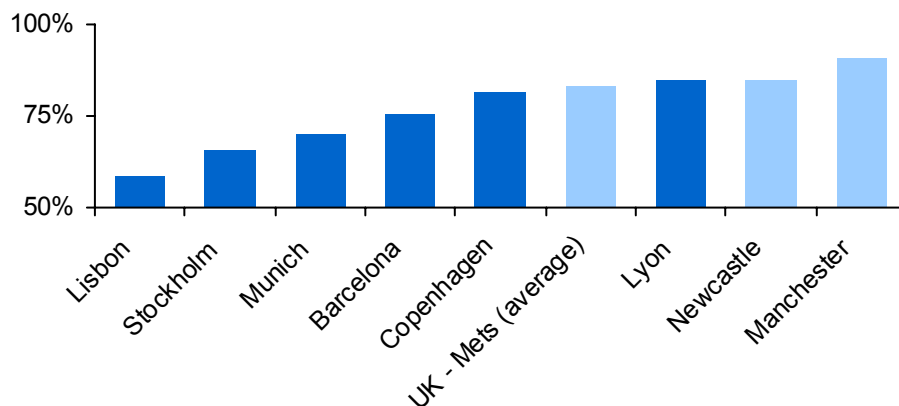
Though use of motor vehicles is no longer increasing, we are far from the shift in travel patterns we need to meet quality of place and climate change objectives

Challenges & opportunities

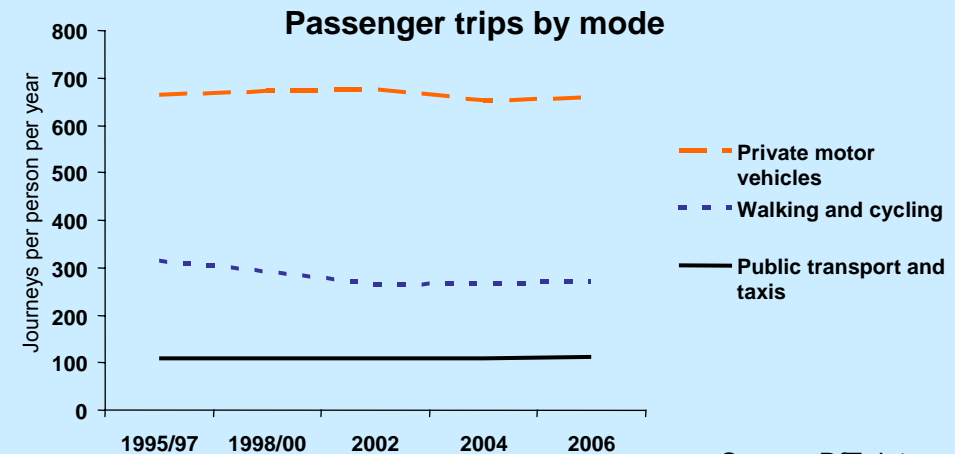
- Most towns, cities and villages remain designed around the car. Streets are often unwelcoming to children, and the less able-bodied. One 2004 study found that 96% of all residents using London's Oxford and Regent streets were between 15-and 64 years old.¹
- When asked what most needs improving in their local area, residents identify 'congestion' and 'road and pavement repairs' along with 'more activities for teenagers' as top priorities².
- Transport noise bothered 21% of those questioned in a recent survey.³

Car use in UK cities is high compared to other European cities

Car miles as a percentage of distance travelled by all motorised modes^{1,2}



Despite increases in urban density, investment in public transport and emphasis on 'mixed development', car remains by far the most popular form of travel – even for short journeys



Source: DfT data

- In 1995-7 the average person made 311 trips a year (29% of all journeys) by walking or cycling. By 2006 this had fallen to 265 trips (26% of all journeys)
- From 2002 to 2006, however, average number of trips by bicycle or walking has remained steady
- Outside London, 77% of all journeys to work are by private car. The number falls to 51% for London (excluding Central London) but only 12% for Central London

Contents

Introduction and executive summary

The elements of quality of place

The place-making process

The role and importance of quality of place

Recent progress

Challenges and opportunities

- Outcome challenges
- **Delivery challenges and opportunities**

A policy framework for quality of place

- Central government leadership and performance regimes do not prioritise quality of place. And regional support could be stronger
- While some local authorities have taken on the place shaping challenge, others appear to be struggling
- Building standards and guidance have the potential to be improved in a number of ways
- Our built heritage faces a number of challenges
- Public sector skills around procuring new developments tend to be poor and public procurement processes don't tend to prioritise good design
- Highways departments and transport & utilities providers don't tend to recognise quality of place as a priority
- There remains a shortage of public sector planners – though the downturn should make this less of an issue in the short-term
- There has also been a shortage of other quality of place skills in the public sector, including design, conservation and green space skills
- Despite progress, urban design skills still remain relatively under-developed
- The quality of public engagement is often poor and does not inform place shaping effectively

Central government leadership and performance regimes do not prioritise quality of place. And regional support could be stronger

Challenges & opportunities

National and Regional

- Only one Government department, CLG, has a quality of place target among its departmental targets (relating to 'life-time homes' standards)
- Of 135 Regional Development Agency board members, across 9 regions, only one identifies himself as having a planning or design background¹
- Government provides financial incentives to encourage more residential development, but not better standards of development
- While some RDAs provide a design review service to quality-assure local development, three regions do not (London, North East and Yorkshire and Humber)
 - as a result of insufficient resources, only around 300 schemes are seen in total each year by the existing six regional design panels
- Regional 'enabling' support is patchy and the funding is not secure
- While all regions have regionally funded architectural or build environment centres that provide support to local authorities and promote engagement in the built environment, funding is low and future funding uncertain

Local

- In April 2009, the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) will replace the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) as the primary measure of local government effectiveness. Comprising an area assessment (real world outcomes) and organisational assessment (fitness to deliver), the CAA could be a powerful incentive framework for delivering quality of place. Yet, there is little evidence currently that the framework will give significance to quality of place:
 - None of the 198 local government Performance Indicators, which will form the basis of the CAA, directly and explicitly measure 'quality of place'
 - The CAA Framework Document, which sets out how CAAs will be delivered, makes minimal reference to local development frameworks or local government quality of place functions
- A number of tools for assessing or auditing the quality of local places have been developed. Yet these are not widely promoted by government and are not much used.
- While the green flags scheme encourages local services to invest in parks and recognises those that do, there is no equivalent scheme for neighbourhoods or town centres

While some local authorities have taken on the place shaping challenge, others appear to be struggling

Many local authorities are struggling with the demands of the new planning framework – the move from regulation to active place-shaping & greater public engagement in the process

- ‘The majority of local authorities are experiencing delays in implementing the reforms and getting plans in place, and overall, progress has been slow’.¹ In mid-February 2009, about 300 plans should have been submitted, but only 100 have been²
- The standard of some of the early development plan documents has been disappointing, especially with respect to spatial planning and quality of place issues
- Only two thirds of senior local planners surveyed feel the LDF is a corporate priority or believe members are supportive of the LDF¹

There are a range of reasons for these problems

- A lack of clarity about standards expected of LDFs to gain government approval, and also over-caution from local authorities because of fears about submitted plans being designated ‘unsound’
- Excessively demanding reporting and other requirements – although these were addressed by the Government in 2008 with revised regulations and guidance
- A lack of resources being fed into the process by local authorities – particularly with the current economic climate causing a drop in income from planning fees
- A lack of understanding and buy-in to the new style plans from LA leaders. Few LA leaders have a background in planning or design and many don’t feel confident about the new framework or planning and design in general.

Building standards and guidance have the potential to be improved in a number of ways

New developments are encouraged or required to adhere to a range of standards

Standard	Managed by	Description
Building for Life	CABE and the Home Builders Federation	Consists of an assessment which scores the design quality of planned or developed housing developments against a series of criteria. Formal assessments can only be carried out by a Building for Life assessor.
Code for Sustainable Homes	DCLG	Using a rating system, the Code measures the sustainability of a new home against nine categories of sustainable design, rating the 'whole home' as a complete package. The Code was established by DCLG.
Lifetime Homes Standard	Habinteg Housing Association	Provides a set of criteria for homes which are suitable for people of all ages.
Secured by Design	Association of Chief Police Officers	Focuses on crime prevention at the design, layout and construction stages of homes and commercial premises.
Space standards	HCA	Provide detailed standards for floor space and room sizes within homes

...but there are a number of problems with these standards

- Most existing standards are aimed at new-residential development
 - They are not generally utilised for changes and renovations to existing buildings and neighbourhoods
 - They are also not applied to mixed use developments – which is where a great potential lies for affecting quality of place
- The qualification requirements for building standard assessors are minimal. For instance, to qualify as a Building for Life accredited assessor requires just two days training
- There is scope for building standards to be tightened up, so that they rely less on subjective judgement. The stringency of standards is currently varied, and whilst some are quite rigorous, others are less so
- Standards, as sometimes interpreted, can encourage poor design and quality of place, rather than good – e.g. Secured by design standards encouraging 'target hardening'
- The large number of standards makes passing them all burdensome. Building for Life alone scores against over 80 criteria

Our built heritage faces a number of challenges

Despite improvements in recent years, much of England's built heritage remains at risk¹

- 3.2% of grade I and II* buildings are at risk
- 21% of scheduled monuments are at risk
- 7% of registered parks and gardens are at risk
- Since 1999 the proportion of buildings which it is economic to repair has fallen from 16.7% to 12.8%, suggesting that those which remain are often the most difficult and intractable cases¹

Local authorities currently lack sufficient heritage related skills – a situation which is not improving

- 34% of local authorities report a lack of officers with conservation skills¹
- The number of experts employed in local authority historic environment services fell by 5% between 2006 and 2008, reversing increases seen in previous 3 years²

Planners, developers and local leaders still often see heritage as a constraint on development, rather than as a local asset

- With the postponement of the Heritage Protection Bill, Government needs to find ways of signalling the importance of built heritage and the need to treat it as an asset.
- Anecdotal evidence suggests that heritage officers and experts are often still not being engaged early enough in the development process.

Conservation teams are still often located in a different part of a local authority to planning or regeneration teams. They are only alerted to a scheme when it is submitted for planning permission and then all they can do is play a negative role

Heritage policy expert, SU interview

Public sector skills around procuring new developments tend to be poor and public procurement processes don't tend to prioritise good design

Challenges & opportunities

Public sector commissioning/clienting skills are under-developed and many public sector clients are first time commissioners

- Only a fraction of government investment into the built environment has gone into skilling and supporting clients, yet this is essential to delivering successful developments¹
- Despite government backing for design competitions – and their successful use in a number of PFI schemes – these have been little used
- Despite much good practice, engaging service users in the design process is far from the norm
- While all development undertaken by government departments has to meet Office for Government Commerce standards, in practice adherence is chequered, and there is a lack of similar binding standards governing NHS, local government and other services

The standard Public Finance Initiative (PFI) model, used to procure many public buildings, can lead to various problems

- In the standard PFI model, the client appoints a consortia who provides 'design' as part of the package. Problems associated with this include:
 - insufficient direct contact between the client and a design team during early stages of brief development and design development
 - insufficient time given to the design process
 - lack of design input into later 'on-site' stages of a development
- Alternative PFI models – including stipulating that providers work with a one of a short list of designers – have been little used but promise better results

¹ Successive studies, dating back to the 1995 Levene report, and confirmed by research commissioned by the Public Sector Construction Clients Forum in 2008, suggest that a lack of sufficient and appropriate clienting skills in the public sector is undermining outcomes and the efficient use of public money.

² Morrell P, Lipton S and Rogers P, 2005, 'Towards an outcome-based partnership model', in The Smith Institute, 2005, Public sector procurement and the public interest 97

Highways departments and transport & utilities providers don't tend to recognise quality of place as a priority

Public utilities have enormous effect on the built environment, not least through the installation and maintenance of infrastructure which often disrupts the public realm. The Traffic Management Act 2004 has improved co-ordination, but concerns remain

- At local authority level highways functions are not always integrated into planning and place-making functions
- Some highways departments are still resisting the changed priorities reflected in the recently published Manual for Streets¹
- There is no equivalent manual for design and management of traffic in town or city centres
- Transport for London is the only transport body with an explicit design objective, despite the importance of the quality of streets and transport infrastructure in creating successful places
- In contrast to overall motoring costs, public transport fares have risen in real terms since 1980. In 2006, bus and coach fares and rail fares were both 40 per cent higher in real terms than in 1980. Over the same period, average disposable income has nearly doubled in real terms.

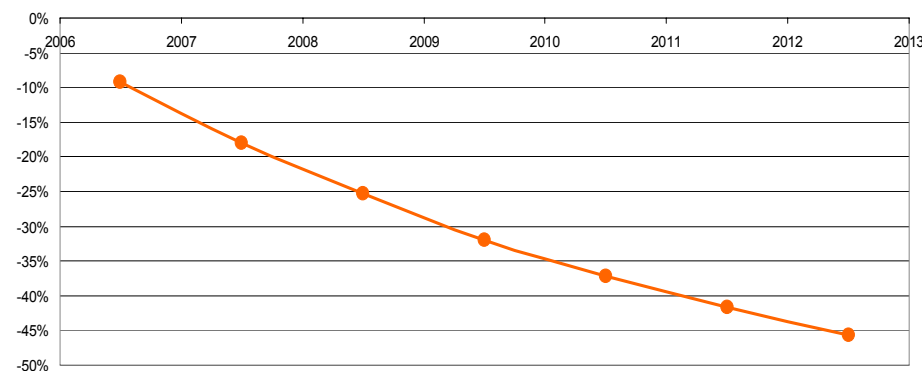
One complaint you hear from designers again and again is that highways officials come in and insist on roads and signage out of keeping with a development

Planning expert, SU Seminar

There remains a shortage of public sector planners – though the downturn should make this less of an issue in the short-term

- Research from early 2008 found that the total number of qualified planners is rising – from 14,000 in 2001 to 21,000 in 2007 - but not fast enough to keep up with increasing demand¹
- Before the downturn, the Environment Agency reported that 13.5% of its planning posts were vacant, while some 66% of local authorities across the country (and 93% of London boroughs) reported difficulty recruiting planning staff¹
- As a result, many local authorities employ relatively inexperienced and temporary planners
- Joint-working or shared services between planning authorities are also not well developed
- However, current economic conditions make the supply of planners less of an issue than it was in 2007, but “much work is required on the development of planning policy” and, in any case, “the supply issue is likely to re-emerge as the economy returns to growth”²

Forecast gap in supply of planners 2005-2012



Source: Arup's forecasting model from *Mind the Skills Gap*, Academy for Sustainable Communities, Sept 2007. Note that, with the change in economic conditions, this graph is not necessarily up to date.

There has also been a shortage of other quality of place skills in the public sector, including design, conservation and green space skills

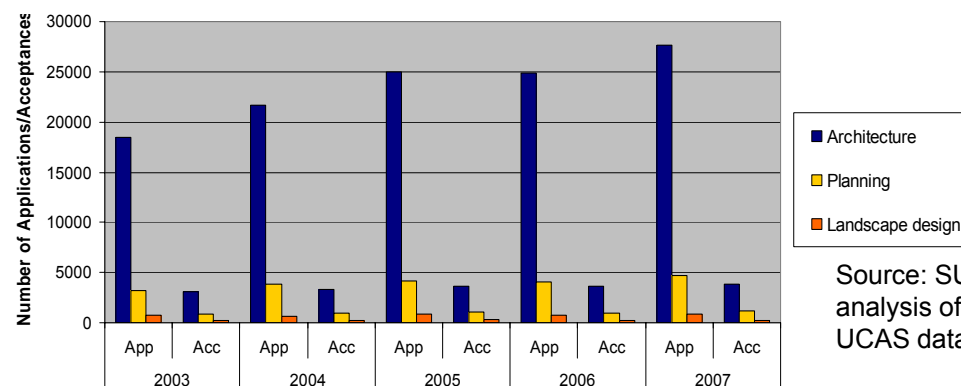
Architecture and conservation skills

- 86% of local authorities say they need further design skills¹
- Although the total supply and retention levels of architects is good, “the number of public sector architects has declined significantly from 1980, from 43% of the total to 9% in 2003”²
- Local authority built environment professionals report that they lack confidence in working with heritage
 - 65% of professionals working within the built heritage sector felt that their formal education in their original discipline did not adequately prepare them for working on pre-1919 buildings, and 68% believe that much of their knowledge is self-taught³

Green space and landscape design skills

- A survey of local authority green space skills⁴ identified deficiencies in design (29%), as well as in horticulture (51%) and conservation (34%)
- There is a lack of local authority managers with green space expertise, especially landscape design expertise.⁴
- While there have been increases in students applying to study architecture and planning, there has been a smaller increase in those wanting to study landscape design. And there has been very little increase in numbers being accepted to study landscape design

Applications and Acceptances for Architecture, Planning and Landscape Design Undergraduate Courses - 2003 to 2007



Despite progress, urban design skills still remain relatively under-developed

In continental Europe, urban design tends to be an integral part of planning and design training, but this is less so in the UK

There remains a shortage of qualified urban designers

- Fewer than half of all local authorities have a qualified urban designer in their planning departments¹
- There are 47 schools of architecture and 29 of planning in the UK. Whilst a number of these offer urban design courses, there is only one centre specifically dedicated to urban design – Oxford Brookes²
- While architecture, planning and landscape design are taught at undergraduate level, urban design is only taught as postgraduate level

... and basic urban design skills among those working in the built environment sector

- Many experts argue that all quality of place professionals would benefit from training in core 'urban design skills'. Yet this training is still not mainstreamed into the planning, architectural and landscape design curricula at undergraduate or graduate level, or continuing professional development programmes, encouraging professionals to work in isolation from each other.
- Only 2 out of 11 Transport Planning Masters courses in Britain currently offer specific modules in urban design³
- And some regions, like the East of England, still have no urban design courses, limiting training opportunities of quality of place professionals working in these areas²

1 CLG, 2008, Select Committee Report

2 SU research, March 2009

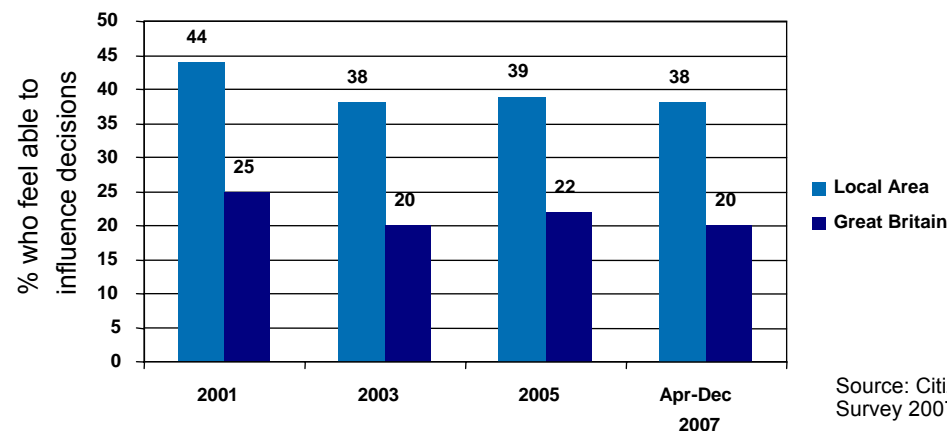
3 SU research, March 2009. Note that two universities are currently developing related courses, some to start in 2009/10

The quality of public engagement is often poor and does not inform place shaping effectively

Despite widespread recognition of the importance of public involvement, this engagement is often formulaic

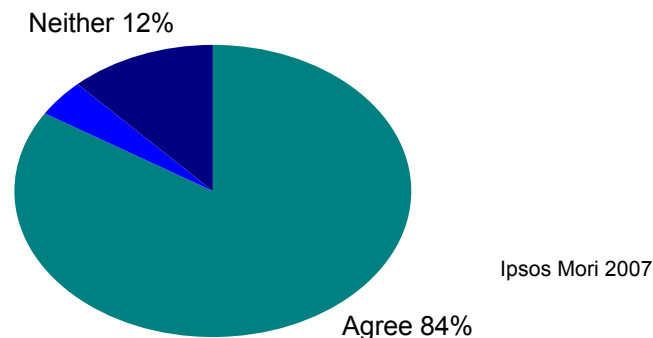
- ‘Statements of community involvement’, which all planning authorities have to produce, were meant to be clear statements of how they proposed to engage with the community and other stakeholders. But they ‘are often vague when describing the purposes and approaches to stakeholder involvement at different stages of the planmaking process’¹
- While some local planning authorities have been adventurous in the use of more innovative methods, traditional consultative techniques remain dominant¹
- Public involvement in the early, strategic stages of planning and place shaping ‘remains disappointing’¹

The proportion of people who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area has declined.....



...but the desire for influence remains strong²

‘Local communities should have more say over decisions that affect them’ (%)



The majority of new homes in this country are delivered through commercial 'volume' house builders. Encouraging longer term, partnership investment models could bring benefits

- While analysis shows that investing in high quality mixed use schemes can be very profitable, this approach is far from the norm.¹
- Many 'volume' house builders work with a short term investment model, aiming to construct and sell homes and then move on.
 - It is estimated that only a minority of new homes built over last decade have had any input from architects or other designers – most are rolled out on mass from 'volume' house builders²
 - Even where qualified designers are engaged, it is rare for them to be engaged through the construction process. Yet this is vital to quality assurance
- The most successful and admired residential developments in Europe generally take the form of a partnership between commercial providers and local government, with private providers taking a long term stake – through service charges and rental income.
- Even in UK, the most high quality and successful schemes tend to be led by a non-commercial land-owner (e.g, Poundbury Dorset, Crown Street, Glasgow or Fairford Leys, Aylsbury).¹
- There is a strong case for Government and local government exploring how best to encourage greater commercial investment in quality, perhaps through promoting long term partnership models⁴

European models of residential development

A recent review of high quality European residential developments concluded that one of the key determinants of their success was the leading role played by the local authority '*in setting the project on the right course and in making sure that quality was maintained to the end The process of getting all the public stakeholders to work together seems much easier, in part because more decisions over resourcing are taken at a local or sub-regional level, rather than relying on uncertain national funding programmes.*

Often, the project had been started by one more more visionary leaders, but even more importantly, the local authority had some financial capacity and had the skills to manage and directly the project itself. The private sector was invariably involved, but within a frame work that was strongly controlled and directed towards the vision that had been set. Many of the builders and investors are relatively local³

Introduction and executive summary

The elements of *quality of place*

The place-making process

The role and importance of quality of place

Recent progress

Challenges and opportunities

A policy framework for quality of place

- Central government only has limited powers and capacity to influence quality of place, which is largely shaped at local level
- While top-down performance management and direct intervention have a role in government's 'quality of place policy', these need to be complemented by other 'softer' approaches
- The analysis in this paper has informed the Government's Strategy on Quality of Place

Central government only has limited powers and capacity to influence quality of place, which is largely shaped at local level

There are 3 broad ways in which central government can shape quality of place

Directly

– as a funder, developer and owner of the Government estate

- Government spends £12 billion annually, directly or through centrally funded services, on new construction – e.g. NHS, Criminal Justice System, roads and rail.
- The public sector also ‘disposes’ of up to £6 billion pounds of public land and buildings every years – a large share of this is owned by central government. Central Government can, when disposing of this property, influence place its through choice of developers and conditions it attaches to development.

Indirectly

– through local government policy

- Local government is responsible for spatial planning and master planning
- Local government and other local services are responsible for the design and upkeep of most of our streets, squares, parks and other public places – they spend around £23 billion on new construction and more on upkeep of public buildings and public realm
- Vast majority of planning decisions are made locally

Contextually

– through skills policy, cultural policy, support for prizes, political leadership and narrative

- skills policy, e.g. funding for bursaries in urban landscape design
- education policy, e.g. funding for programmes to interest children in historical environment and architecture
- Cultural policy, e.g. support for heritage and architectural centres and design museums
- Awards, e.g. support for architectural prizes or green flag awards
- Political narrative, e.g. national leaders championing quality of place through speeches, attendance at events and site visits

While top-down performance management and direct intervention have a role in government's 'quality of place policy', these need to be complemented by other , 'softer' approaches

Framework

While quality of place metrics and targets can be developed, quality of place is not easy to 'measure' objectively

Government policy is to devolve more power to local government & other bodies (e.g., NHS trusts) so giving central government less 'direct' leverage

Quality of place policy needs to respond with 'softer' approaches, including

- Doing more to persuade local leaders, developers and public services the case for investing in quality of place
- Encouraging local agencies to adopt quality of place objectives
- Improving centrally funded support, i.e. 'enabling' services and Design Review, training and guidance
- Supporting accreditation and prizes that encourage investment in quality of place
- Funding good practice – e.g. learning sets, beacons
- Increasing public demand for high quality places

More 'quality of place' indicators would certainly help. The planning system measures processes but not outcomes. But real transformation will come if we can persuade leaders and managers and those building new buildings that investment in quality of place will help them achieve their objectives and save them money in the longer run

Planning expert, SU seminar

As local government gets more freedoms, central government needs to find different ways of promoting its objectives. It has to be better at engaging, persuading and inspiring. Often showing people how it is done elsewhere is incredibly effective

Local government expert, SU seminar

The analysis in this paper has informed the Government's Strategy on Quality of Place

- This strategy lays out the following vision for quality of place: that ***all places are planned, designed and developed to provide everyone, including future generations, with a decent quality of life and fair chances.***
- It identifies these 7 strategic objectives that the Government needs to achieve if it is to realise its vision.

The Government's strategic objectives for quality of place

1. Strengthen leadership on quality of place at the national and regional level
2. Encourage local civic leaders and local government to prioritise quality of place
3. Ensure relevant government policy, guidance and standards consistently promote quality of place and are user-friendly
4. Put the public and community at the centre of place-shaping
5. Ensure all development for which central government is directly responsible is built to high design and sustainability standards and promotes quality of place
6. Encourage higher standards of market-led development
7. Strengthen quality of place skills, knowledge and capacity