

# **Developing a Decent Neighbourhoods Standard**

**The Witton Lodge Community  
Association Demonstrator**

**Appendix B: Community Collaborative  
Workshop Insights on WLCA Decent  
Neighbourhood Standard**



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# Appendix B: Community Collaborative Workshop Insights on WLCA Decent Neighbourhood Standard

## B1: Community collaboration workshop

To test and refine the desk-based analysis of five seminal frameworks and Witton Lodge Community Association (WLCA) organisational documents, CNM and Social Life conducted an interactive community workshop and launched an online and physical ‘Neighbourhood Diagnostics’ survey to capture residents’ perspectives on their neighbourhoods. The workshop took place on the 26.02.2025 and was widely advertised across social media and local connections that WLCA had. Overall, we collected feedback from 25+ people on the neighbourhoods diagnostic questions at the event and in further engagement at Perry Common Library. This collaborative workshop was intended to test the method with a view that this will be the first of series of workshops in the next phase of the future development of the standard.

### Demographics

We collected demographic data of people attending where people consented to. Overall, 6 forms were completed at the event and a further 9 forms at the library consultations. The data presented below indicated the broader demographic of respondents who consented to provide demographic information.

On *gender*, we collected data from 9 females and 6 males. On *employment* 8 of the respondents were in full-time or part-time employment, 3 were looking for work, 1 person indicated they are self-employed, 1 indicated they are on zero-hour contract, 1 indicated they are retired and 1 was unable to work. *Household composition* was as following - 4 people indicated having 2 children in their household, 3 indicated having three children or more, 3 lived with their partner or spouse, 2 lived alone, 2 lived with other family and 1 preferred not to say.



Figure B1: Poster and promotional materials for workshop

Out of everyone who completed the forms 12 people indicated no *disability*, 1 indicated disability and 2 preferred not to say.

On *ethnic groups*, 7 people indicated they are White - English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British, 2 indicated they are Indian, and 1 each in Irish, Caribbean, Other Black, Pakistani, Afghanistan and Mixed (English-Portuguese).

The demographics of respondents resonate with some of the information presented in Appendix A on the type of people that Witton Lodge engages with. It should be noted that there was no sampling strategy, however, in any future development of the standard we will aim to collect responses closely matching the wider neighbourhood demographics.

### Have you engaged with Witton Lodge Community Association?

We asked each participant if they have engaged with WLCA in the past. Out of all completed form, disregarding the ones where no answer to this question was provided 13 participants said yes and 4 said no.

From the reason why they have engaged included: engagement with various activities in Erdington; a rich history of staff and venues was indicated; through the scout group; occasional participant in community activities; through the Perry Common library; through community voice forum WLCA runs.

Some attendees lived in Sycamore court and others currently work for WLCA but also have known the organisation beforehand, were a service user or live locally, demonstrating the link between the WLCA and local communities.

Reasons why they haven’t engaged with WLCA included: not being aware of the organisation; no idea about this community or that they have just moved into the area.



Figure B2: Image from the workshop



Neighbourhood diagnostics

This phase of the research used ‘neighbourhood diagnostics’ questions as a core element of the Decent Neighbourhood Standard methodology. These questions focused on community and organisational co-design, allowing residents to identify priorities, define minimum quality standards for their neighbourhood, and highlight existing or potential hazards. This section provides an analytical overview of each of the diagnostic questions based on our consultation.

How would you define your neighbourhood?

The responses to this question revealed two distinct and contrasting themes: a positive perception rooted in community and local amenities, and a negative one focused on safety concerns and environmental maintenance. While many respondents expressed pride in their local spaces and the sense of community fostered through events and shared facilities, others highlighted issues related to crime, neglect, and a lack of investment.

Positively, residents valued green spaces, local services, and community connections. Parks, nurseries, and local amenities were frequently mentioned as points of pride, with several respondents describing the neighbourhood as “quiet,” “clean,” and home to “like-minded people who help each other.” Events and community activities were seen as key to fostering a sense of belonging and improving the social fabric.

One respondent described their neighbourhood as having “infinite possibilities,” suggesting optimism about its potential for growth and change.

However, safety and cleanliness emerged as consistent concerns across responses. Some participants described the area as “crime-ridden” and “unmanaged”, with visible signs of neglect such as abandoned buildings. One respondent specifically cited the decaying Old Plaza cinema in Stockland Green as a symbol of disrepair. Drug-related activity and antisocial behaviour were

also mentioned, particularly in more deprived areas. Several respondents called for increased investment and better management to address these ongoing challenges.

What makes you want to move to a neighbourhood?

Responses revealed a balance between necessity and preference in decisions to move. Many participants cited economic factors—such as housing affordability, job opportunities, and family connections—as primary motivation for moving to a neighbourhood, often leaving them with limited choice. For these respondents, moving was described as a matter of “mostly necessity”, reflecting the reality that many accept neighbourhood conditions out of practical need.

When describing desirable neighbourhoods, respondents prioritised safety, clean streets, and the ability to walk without fear, especially at night. Access to local amenities—including shops, schools, healthcare, and community spaces—was also highly valued. Social factors, such as inclusive, caring communities, further shaped perceptions of an ideal place to live.

This tension between economic necessity and quality-of-life preferences highlights the need for a Decent Neighbourhood Standard, ensuring all neighbourhoods provide safety, essential services, and community resources, regardless of residents’ reasons for moving.

What makes you want to stay in a neighbourhood?

Social connections emerged as the strongest factor influencing residents’ desire to stay in a neighbourhood. Respondents consistently highlighted the importance of friendly, inclusive neighbours, strong community bonds, and positive relationships as key reasons for remaining in a place. This reflects a broader understanding that social inclusion and connectedness build a sense of belonging and place attachment.

Beyond social ties, safety was a major priority. Participants emphasised the need for low crime rates, clean streets, and secure environments suitable for people of all ages. Access to essential services including local shops, public transportation, green spaces, and community facilities was also a recurring theme.

What makes you want to leave a neighbourhood?

Crime and safety concerns emerged as the most significant factors prompting residents to consider leaving a neighbourhood. Respondents highlighted issues such as drug-related activity, violence, anti-social behaviour, and a general lack of security.

Maintenance and cleanliness were also key concerns. Participants mentioned littering, fly-tipping, and run-down environments as contributing to potential dissatisfaction. Neglect of local amenities, including the decline of high streets and the misuse of green spaces, would contribute to an individual’s decision to leave a neighbourhood.

Other motivators included lack of facilities for children and teenagers, specifically the absence of youth centres or play areas. Racism and other forms of discrimination were also cited as reasons to consider leaving, particularly when combined with feelings of social isolation and poor community cohesion.



Figure B3: Image from the workshop



When asked about key places, spaces and activities, participants highlighted the importance of green spaces, public areas, and community facilities in enhancing local well-being and social cohesion. Parks such as Witton Lakes, Brookvale Park, and Sutton Park are highly valued, alongside well-maintained streets and public spaces. Key public services, including GPs, NHS facilities, schools, libraries, and leisure centres, play a crucial role, with community hubs like Witton Lodge Eco Hub, YOLTA, and Sycamore Court recognised for their support and engagement.

The high street, local shops, supermarkets, cafes, and essential services such as dentists and vets were mentioned. Mobility is a priority with specific mention of the number 7 bus route as an important transport link.

However, concerns were raised regarding crime, fly-tipping, and safety, with issues around alleyways and declining perceptions of Erdington. Some residents expressed hope for change, while others stressed their appreciation for the community volunteers and local engagement initiatives, particularly at Perry Common Library.

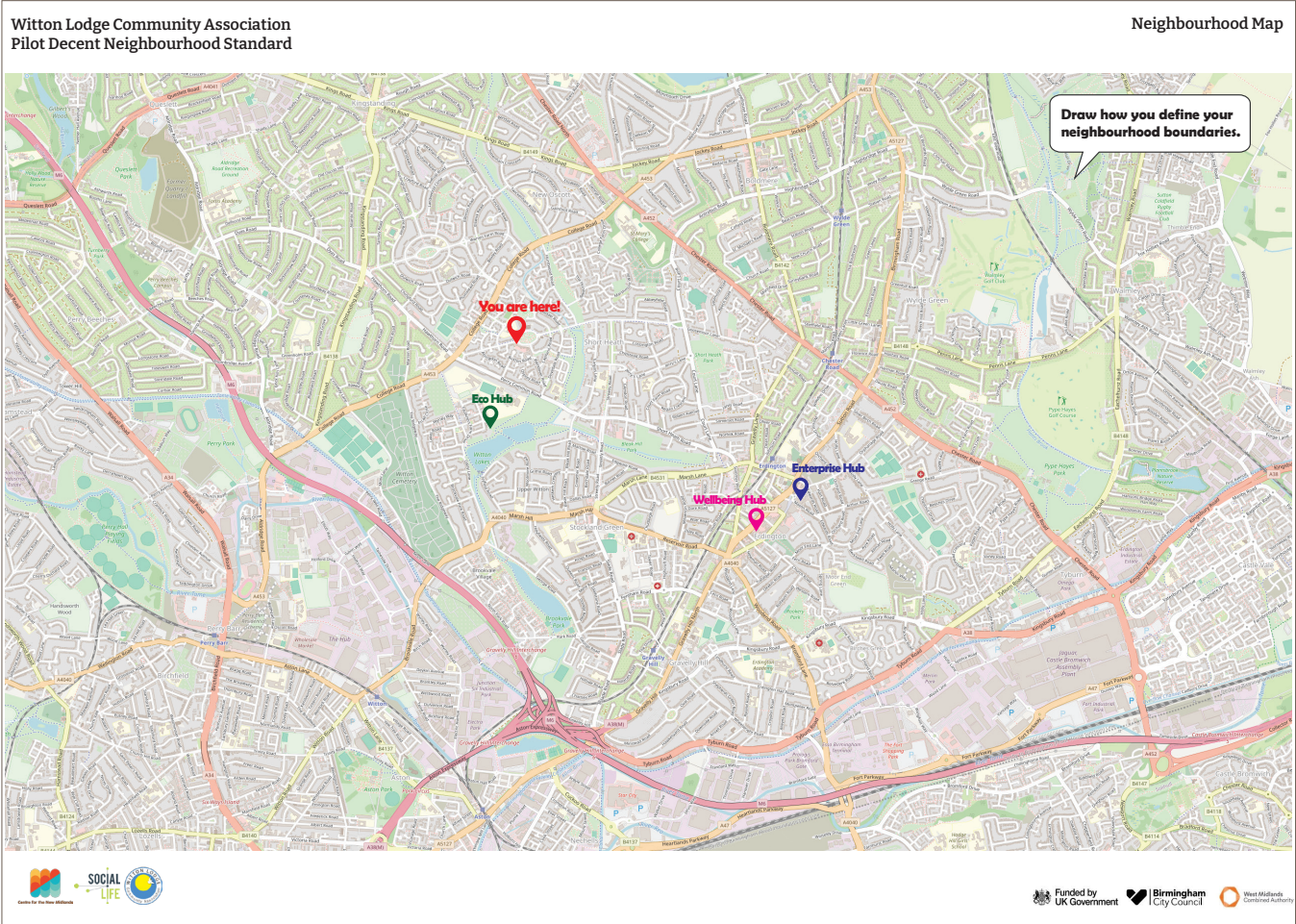


Figure B4: Workshop map with assets

What is your neighbourhood?

In the areas where WLCA has influence over, green and blue spaces emerged as key, with participants valuing them as much as defined residential areas. The natural corridors serve as connectors between communities, particularly the route from Brookvale Park to Witton Lakes, extending north to Witton Meadows and Kingstanding, as well as Bleak Hill Park linking to Erdington.

Other significant spaces include Rookery Park, which supports Erdington High Street, and Pype Hayes Park, serving both Erdington and Wylde Green. Perry Common was closely associated with the WLCA hub, while Erdington High Street and Brookvale Village were also mentioned. Additional locations noted included Perry Barr, Sutton Coldfield, Castle Vale, Aston, and Kingstanding. The WLCA influence primarily covers the Erdington Constituency, though it does not extend into Castle Vale, with its boundary defined as reaching only up to Tyburn Road by a few participants.

Reflections on diagnostic questions

The responses to the neighbourhood diagnostic questions reveal a complex interplay of factors that shape residents’ experiences and decisions to stay, leave, or move to a neighbourhood. Social connections, safety, and access to amenities consistently emerge as critical factors of neighbourhood satisfaction.

While many residents value community cohesion, green spaces, and local services, concerns about crime, poor maintenance, and lack of facilities create dissatisfaction. Economic necessity often limits individual choice, reinforcing the need for a Decent Neighbourhood Standard to ensure every neighbourhood meets basic expectations for safety, cleanliness, and social connection. These insights highlight the importance of creating environments where people feel secure and supported and have access to the essential resources and relationships that enhance their quality of life.

WLCA Decent Neighbourhood Standard

In addition to the diagnostic questions we also asked attendees to review and comment on the key 5 frameworks that we had selected for our thematic analysis. The relevant comments against each of the respective frameworks are depicted in Appendix C.

Below is a summary of what participants felt would need to be included in a WLCA Decent Neighbourhood standard.

Social

The social dimension emerged as the highest priority. Safety and community cohesion were seen as the top priorities. People wanted not only crime to be tackled but also the perceptions of crime. Creating safe places for all ages was seen as a top priority. Community connections and cohesion were equally important. People wanted to belong and feel at home in their neighbourhood.

Power and participation emerged closed second. Inclusivity was key, with one participant suggesting that the high street should reflective of local demographics. Arts, culture and youth inclusion also emerged as key asks:

*“I have two teenagers and find younger children are more catered for, where are the youth clubs. Not everyone can afford membership.” - Workshop participant*





Figure B5: Image from the workshop

## Economic

People wanted to be able to make the most of present opportunities and to change things in their lives. Local jobs being open to everyone including by ethnicity, gender and sex was also a key demand linked to inclusive economies.

## Environmental and Spatial

Participants requested a focus on disabilities, including hidden disabilities. Issues around better public transport, diversity of local shops and retail provision, good quality schools, health facilities and adaptable community spaces were all raised as crucial to a successful WLCA Decent Neighbourhood Standard.

## Additional comments

Finally, some of the respondents added additional comments. One respondent indicated that there were too many alleyways in the neighbourhood they live in, pointing to the morphology of built form as an important element underpinning a decent neighbourhood. Another participant added that they hear a lot of comments that people no longer want to go to Erdington expressing hopes that perceptions will soon change.



Figure B6: Perry Chocobow Swanet and the Community Hall



Witton Lodge Community Association (WLCA) is a Community Association and Community Landlord. The organisation was established in 1994 by residents of Perry Common, and over the decades WLCA has evolved into an active resident-led organisation dedicated to improving housing, health, employment, and community life in North Birmingham. WLCA delivers practical services to the local community while aiming to create a sense of belonging and place-identity for residents.

[www.wittonlodge.org.uk](http://www.wittonlodge.org.uk)

The Centre for the New Midlands (CNM) is the only independent, not-for-profit think tank for the West Midlands. The Centre creates a space to debate and shape better region, fostering collaboration across society, industry, and academia. CNM has a strong track record in research spanning digital innovation, infrastructure, people and skills, and housing and communities. The Centre's Housing and Communities research programme seeks to create long-term and sustainable impact, contributing towards new evidence bases around core themes of housing need and affordability, housing quality, neighbourhoods and place-making, health and wellbeing, net zero transitions and tenant engagement.

[www.thenewmidlands.org.uk](http://www.thenewmidlands.org.uk)

Social Life is an independent research organisation created by the Young Foundation in 2012, to become a specialist centre of research and innovation about the social life of communities. Our work is about understanding how peoples' day-to-day experience of local places is shaped by the built environment - housing, public spaces, parks and local high streets - and how change, through regeneration, new development or small improvements to public spaces, affects the social fabric, opportunities and wellbeing of local areas.

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

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