

# **Developing a Decent Neighbourhoods Standard**

**The Witton Lodge Community  
Association Demonstrator**

**Appendix C: Analysis of key frameworks  
concerned with neighbourhood quality**



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# Appendix C: Analysis of key frameworks concerned with neighbourhood quality

## C1: Key frameworks

To inform the development of the WLCA Decent Neighbourhood demonstrator we examined five key frameworks which are often applied at neighbourhood level as either strategic, monitoring or evaluation tools. The frameworks vary in their focus, organisation and application but all have in common an aspirational model - from developing a set of criteria to evaluate the social sustainability of a place to focusing on mobility or inclusive growth.

We have presented a short summary of the framework and a synthesis of the analysis of how the different elements have informed our own thinking about a WLCA Decent Neighbourhood Standard.

### 1. Design for Social Sustainability<sup>1</sup>

**Summary:** A framework focusing on creating socially sustainable communities by integrating primarily social alongside economic and environmental factors. It aims to link the social dimensions of a place with its built environment. It emphasises long-term community well-being, resilience, and inclusivity. It addresses the social sustainability requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework.

**Focus:** Prioritises social cohesion and community resilience in urban development, and has four main dimensions: Voice and Influence, Amenities and Infrastructure, Social and Cultural Life and Adaptability and Resilience.



Figure C1: Design for Social Sustainability

<sup>1</sup> Social Life (2011) Design for Social Sustainability: A framework for creating thriving new communities. London: Social Life. Available at: [https://www.social-life.co/publication/design\\_for\\_social\\_sustainability/](https://www.social-life.co/publication/design_for_social_sustainability/)

**Established:** Developed in 2011 by Social Life for the Young Foundation and Homes England, the original study was based on learning from 20th century New Towns and large-scale regenerations. (Refreshed 2024)

**Used:** Applied in the UK and internationally for urban planning, new towns, regeneration and evaluation.

**Scope:** Supports community-led and policy-driven urban planning, social impact assessments and strategies such as theories of change.

**Users:** Housing associations, local authorities, developers, planners, policymakers, and community organisations.

**Case Study:** In Grahame Park<sup>2</sup>, Social Life was commissioned by the housing association Notting Hill Genesis to carry out an assessment of the social impacts of regeneration, and to understand how local priorities and needs can inform future phases of planning, design and management. The Design for Social Sustainability framework underpinned the data collection and informed the refresh of the Grahame Park Theory of Change.

**The framework’s relevance to the Witton Lodge Decent Neighbourhood:**

— **Establishing a baseline and monitoring neighbourhood quality:** The Design for Social Sustainability framework refers to and uses many external measures which provide background data such as IMD, ONS demographic statistic, definition of natural neighbourhoods and asset audit. For WLCA this can provide a clear methodology and sample data sources.

— **Supporting flourishing communities, local insights and participation:** The design for Social Sustainability frameworks uses Social Life’s Community Dynamics methodology to collect, benchmark and monitor perceptual data. For the Witton Lodge Decent Neighbourhood demonstrator, this means that the key dimensions of the framework and data collection methods are transferable and local baseline minimum requirements can be set-up in a co-design manner. There will need to be an exercise in defining minimum need by involving residents and establishing what key elements are the baseline for the neighbourhoods in question. Dimensions relevant here will be voice and influence, social and cultural life and amenities and social infrastructure.

— **Strengthening influence, accountability and stewardship across North Birmingham:** Understanding neighbourhoods beyond the immediate boundary. The Design for Social Sustainability framework looks to evaluating an area beyond its defined boundaries on elements such as participation, built environment quality, governance and adaptability. The framework is underpinned by adapted methods such as the Homes England, Building for a Healthy Life framework, which can provide an exemplar.

— **Achieving sustainable and inclusive development:** The Design for Social Sustainability framework presents a methodology for evaluating the adaptability and resilience of a local area. For the WLCA Decent Neighbourhood Standard this can be adapted to focus on the key requirements such as capacity to react to crisis and identifying plan to discharge future needs and aspirations.

<sup>2</sup> More information available at: [https://www.social-life.co/publication/living\\_in\\_grahame\\_park/](https://www.social-life.co/publication/living_in_grahame_park/)

- **Community reflections on Design for Social Sustainability Framework:** The Design for Social Sustainability is a non-prescriptive framework, and as such provides an example of what outcomes should be encouraged in an area - the so-called 'building blocks'. The community mapping of the Design for Social Sustainability building blocks indicated what WLCA representatives considered a wide-range of activities that already happen within the work of the Association.
- In Adaptability and Resilience: Meanwhile spaces and temporary use of green space; non-prescriptive master planning.
- In Amenities and social infrastructure: Early provision of school, nursery and childcare; Good accessible public transport and low carbon infrastructure; mutual support initiatives.
- In Social and Cultural life: projects that promote mutual exchange; well managed public spaces and inclusive third places that meet everyone's needs.

Missing from the blocks were, however:

- In the dimension of voice and Influence: online spaces and forms for exchange; devolved or delegated neighbourhood budgets.

A common thread emerged from these discussions which was around devolving power to the individual or establishing mutual support initiatives.

Witton Lodge Community Association  
Pilot Decent Neighbourhood Standard

Design for Social Sustainability  
Social Life

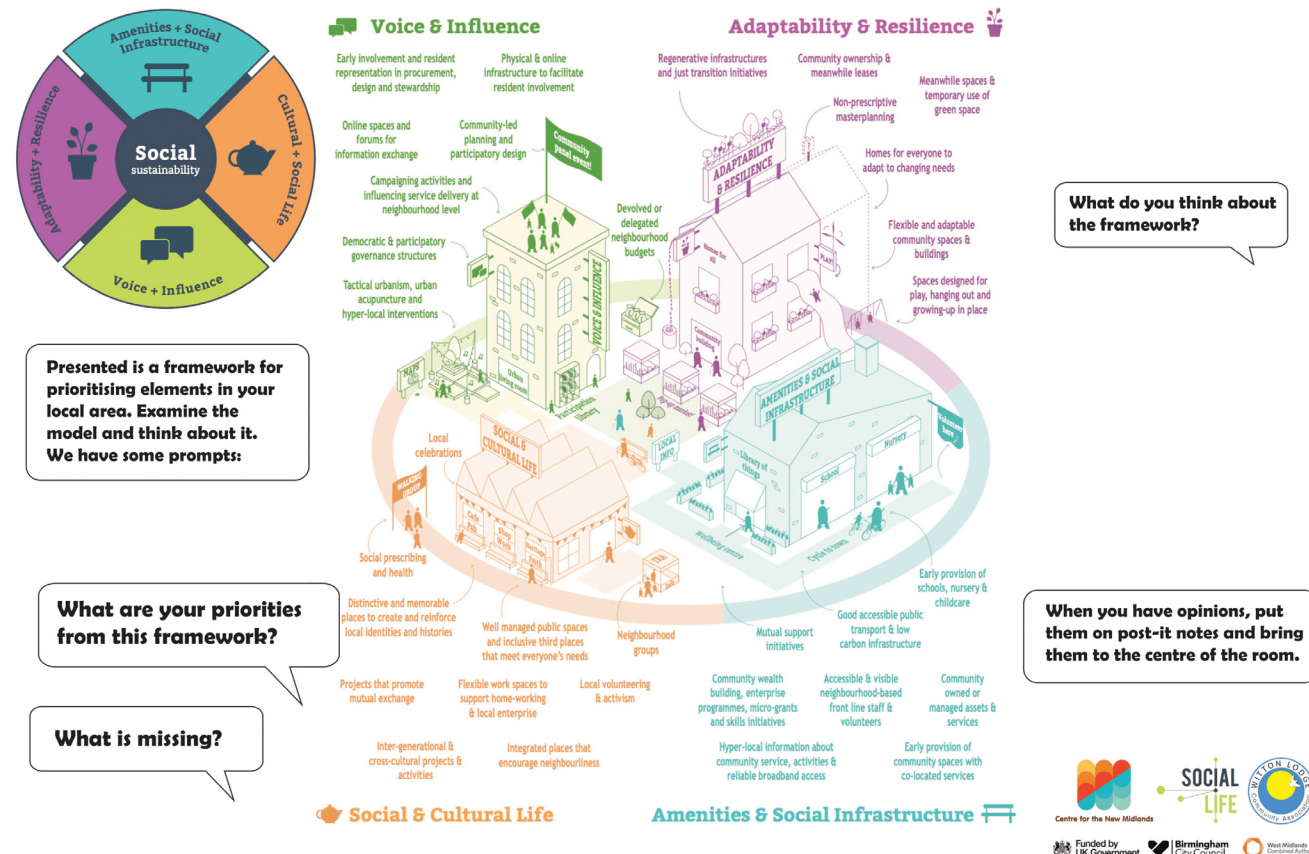


Figure C2: Design for Social Sustainability worksheet

## 2. WMCA (West Midlands Combined Authority) Inclusive Growth Framework<sup>3</sup>

**Summary:** A framework developed to enhance well-being and prosperity across the West Midlands region, integrating economic growth with social and environmental priorities. The framework is based on Doughnut Economics theory developed by Kate Raworth re-thinking economies to fit within ecological ceilings while supporting social foundations. The aim of the framework is to promote inclusive growth in the West Midlands region by focusing on providing social foundations and not overshooting on emissions, biodiversity, energy use and waste.

**Focus:** A regional approach to inclusive growth and well-being focusing on 8 fundamentals - equality, inclusive economy, power and participation, affordable and safe places, connected communities, education and learning, health and wellbeing and climate.

**Established:** 2018

**Used:** Primarily in the West Midlands, UK.

**Scope:** Regional economic and social development.

**Users:** Local government, businesses, and community groups.

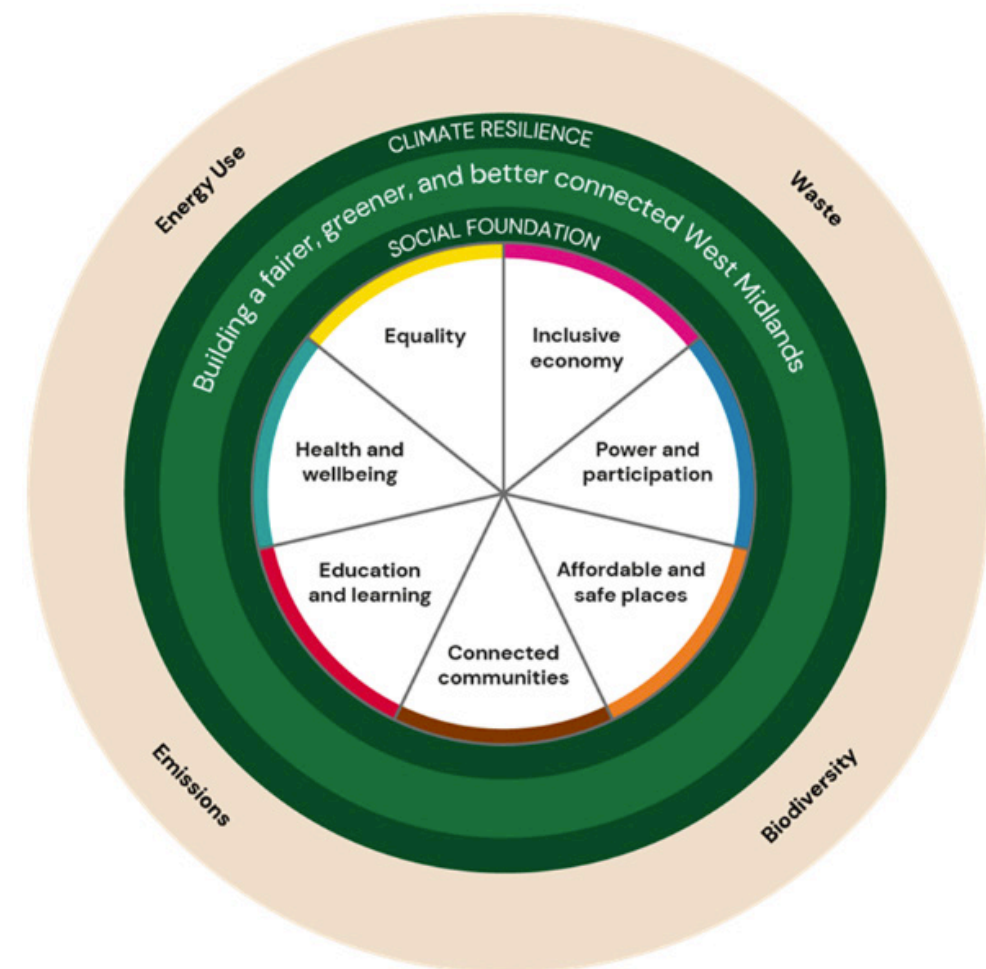


Figure C3: WMCA Inclusive Growth Framework

<sup>3</sup> West Midlands Combined Authority (2020) Inclusive Growth Framework: Making inclusive growth real in the West Midlands. Birmingham: WMCA. Available at: <https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/4052/inclusive-growth-framework.pdf>



**Metrics:** The framework doesn't provide many case studies, although it underpins the strategic and policy work of the West Midlands Combined Authority. A detailed overview of the different metrics under each of the key 8 fundamentals can be found on their website<sup>4</sup> - the measures are reliant usually on data sources collecting as part of the operation of the West Midlands Combined Authority.

**The framework's relevance to the Witton Lodge Decent Neighbourhood:**

- **Establishing a baseline and monitoring neighbourhood quality:** Witton Lodge Decent Neighbourhood demonstrator can align to WMCA framework by collecting hyper-local data on neighbourhood data on connected communities, affordable and safe places, inclusive economy and employment informed by the WMCA Inclusive Growth framework.
- **Supporting flourishing communities, local insights and participation:** The WMCA Inclusive Growth Framework can inform the collection of community insights around equality and participation, health and wellbeing, and connected communities.
- **Strengthening influence, accountability and stewardship across North Birmingham:** The WLCA Decent Neighbourhood can align with collecting data such as civic participation and trust in local authorities under the Power and Participation. Neighbourhood wide systems around energy use, waste, biodiversity and emissions can be drawn on.

- **Achieving sustainable and inclusive development:** The framework defines climate resilience metrics which can be defined and evaluated at neighbourhood level.
- **Collaborative workshop comments on the WMCA Inclusive Growth:** Participants specifically supported or advocated for people with disabilities - hidden and visible, highlighting the need to focus on that sense of "connectedness" and to engage with further demographics. It was suggested that WLCA should enable people 'to be able to make a difference' while recruiting activities to opportunities, volunteering and staff should aim to include the community fully.

**3. Place Standard<sup>5</sup>**

**Summary:** A tool that assesses the quality of places by evaluating physical and social factors that influence well-being. It helps communities and planners improve environments. The tool has suggested metrics from the standard which are scored from 1 to 7, based on key evaluation questions. This allows a spider diagram representation to be developed and for different gaps in provision and quality to be identified.

The tool is evaluative and doesn't include strategic issues such as governance and participation in the process or monitoring but has extensive case studies and further guidance for effective engagement. The full list of evaluation questions can be found online.<sup>6</sup>

**Focus:** Encourages participatory place-making with a holistic approach to urban design organised around 14 themes to assess place. Aims to improve quality of places, tackle inequalities, identify strengths and needed improvements, create sustainable environments, and inform resource allocation.

**Established:** 2015 by the Scottish Government, NHS Scotland, and A&DS.

**Used:** Widely used in Scotland and adopted internationally.

**Scope:** Community and urban planning - used at the neighbourhood, city, and regional levels.

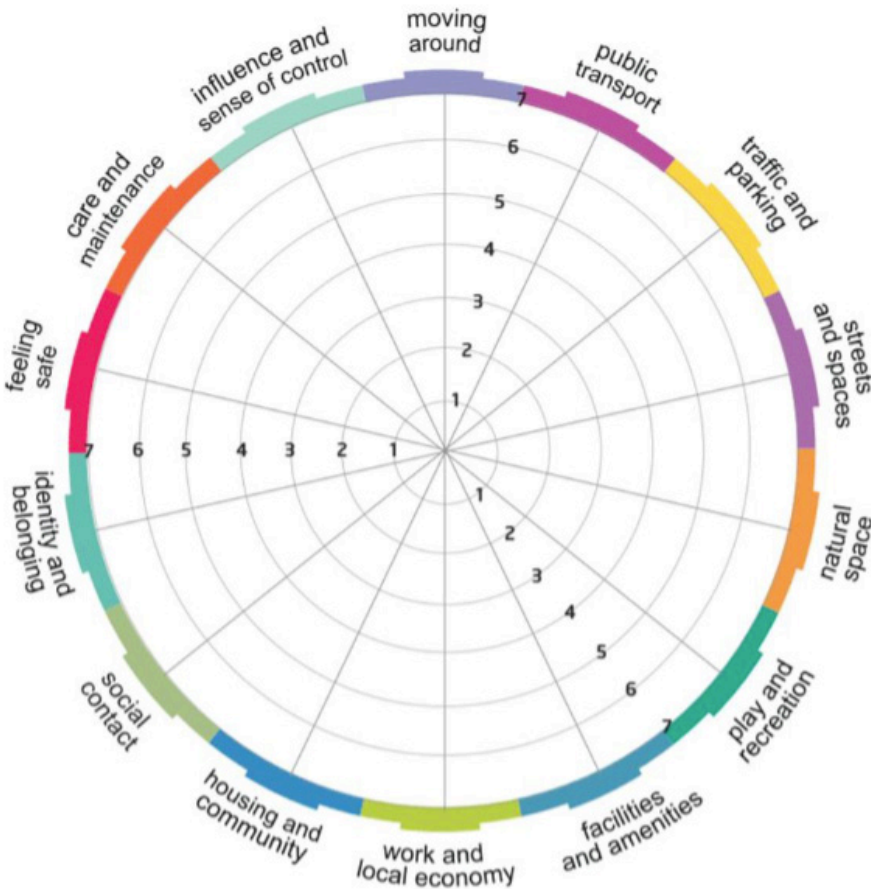


Figure C4: Place Standard

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/inclusive-growth/framework/metrics/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ourplace.scot/tool>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ourplace.scot/sites/default/files/2022-11/Our%20Place%20Place%20Standard%20Tool%20final%20version%20-%20Print%20Interactive%20and%20booklet%20details%20-%20Oct2022.pdf>

**Users:** Governments, planners, and communities.

**Case Study:** Calton Barras Action Plan<sup>7</sup>

**The framework’s relevance to the Witton Lodge Decent Neighbourhood:**

- **Establishing a baseline and monitoring neighbourhood quality:** For the WLCA Decent Neighbourhood Standard the place tool can inform the evaluation of mobility (streets, traffic and parking) as well as work and local economy metrics.
- **Supporting flourishing communities, local insights and participation:** Perceptual metrics around social contact, identity and belonging, feeling safe, play and recreation, housing and community are relevant to WLCA. This tool can enable sample questionnaires to be quickly compiled when diagnostics are to be deployed.
- **Strengthening influence, accountability and stewardship across North Birmingham:** This standard most closely aligns with the care, maintenance, influence and sense of control metrics.
- **Achieving sustainable and inclusive development:** The Place Standard provides relevant questions under the dimensions of facilities and amenities and natural space.

**4. Quality of Life Framework (QoLF)<sup>7</sup>**

**Summary:** A framework measuring various aspects of well-being, including economic stability, health, education, environment, and social connections.

**Focus:** Focuses on subjective well-being and broader life satisfaction.

**Established:** 2021, refreshed in 2024.

**Used:** Applied in the UK across research and development projects, as well as internationally.

**Scope:** Social policy and urban wellbeing. Used at city, regional, and national levels.

**Users:** Governments, NGOs, and research institutions.

**Case Study:** The Quality of Life Foundation has extensive case studies available on their website.<sup>8</sup>

**The framework’s relevance to the Witton Lodge Decent Neighbourhood**

This framework can inform the questionnaires around establishing an understanding of quality of life. It defines broadly that quality of life may be understood in terms of:

- health and its social determinants
- an individual’s physical, social and psychological wellbeing
- social impact, which refers to the effect that an individual, organisation or project has on the long-term health and wellbeing outcomes of individuals and communities.

Getting around and Health Equity from the Quality of Life Framework can provide quality questions.

Healthy food choices, air quality and housing standards are key elements.

- **Supporting flourishing communities, local insights and participation:** ‘Connected communities’, ‘Sense of wonder’, ‘A sense of control’ and ‘A sense of wonder are key community insight and perception themes which might reflect the work and aspirations of WLCA.
- **Strengthening influence, accountability and stewardship across North Birmingham:** The framework can help developers, housing associations, local authorities and the community to work in partnership to create stewardship plans and measures for determining success.
- **Achieving sustainable and inclusive development:** Green and blue spaces from the framework, biodiversity and climate resilience and adaptation under connection with nature were all important topics for WLCA residents.
- **Collaborative workshop comments on Quality of Life:** When reflecting on the Quality of Life framework the following issues were raised by participants: no control, no access to health care, parts of the neighbourhood unsafe due to drugs, the importance of neighbourhood conditions for physical and mental health, ‘my home is good but the area is not’ and ‘my personal transport is essential’ (car or bicycle).



C5: Quality of Life Framework

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ourplace.scot/case-study/calton-barras-action-plan>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.qolf.org/wp-content/uploads/Quality-of-Life-Framework\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.qolf.org/wp-content/uploads/Quality-of-Life-Framework_compressed.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.qolf.org/wp-content/uploads/Quality-of-Life-Foundation-Framework-Case-Studies.pdf>

5. 15 or 20-Minute City<sup>10</sup>

**Summary:** A planning concept that ensures all essential services (work, education, healthcare, leisure) are accessible within a 15-minute walk or cycle from homes.

**Focus:** Enhances local living by reducing reliance on cars and improving accessibility.

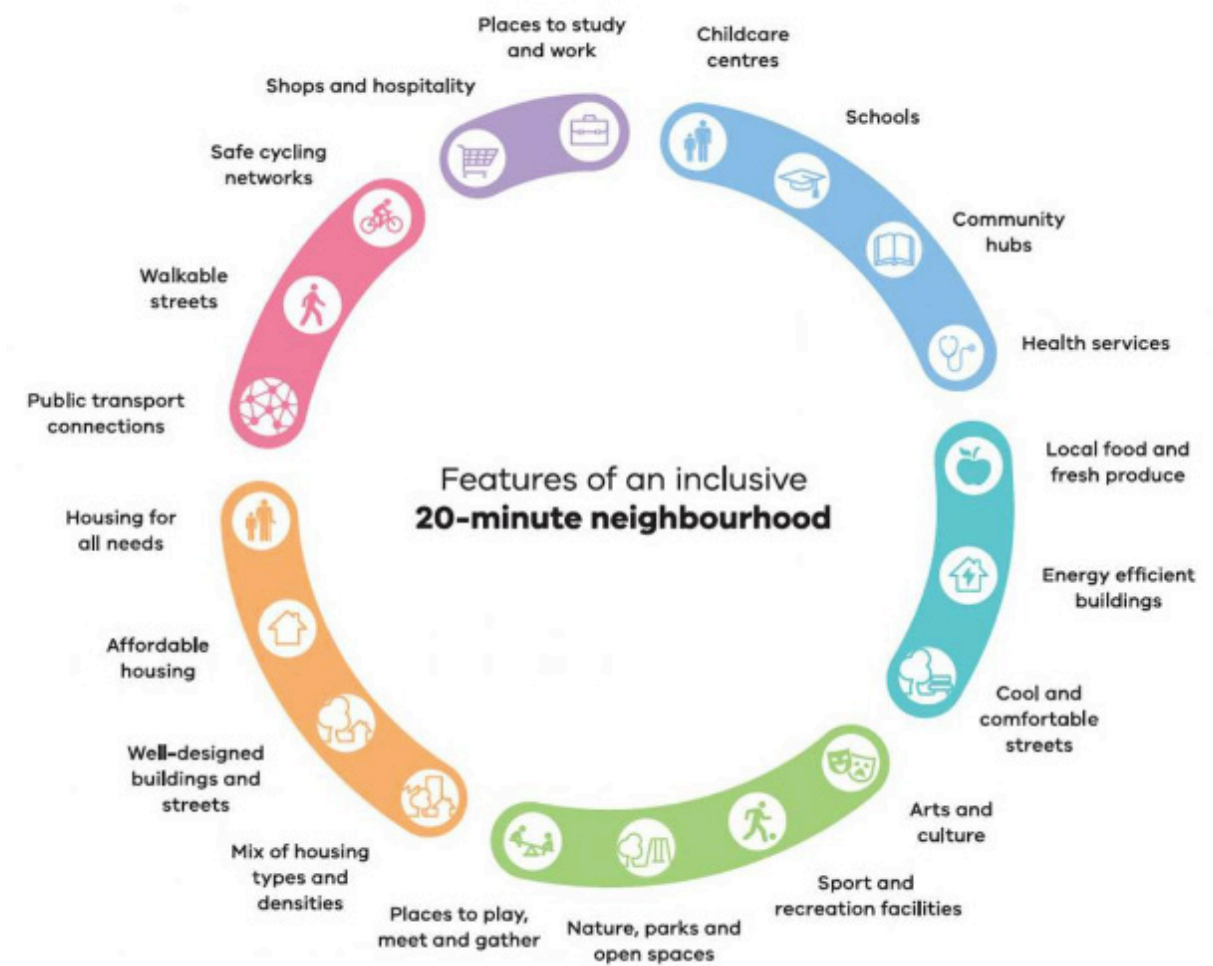
**Established:** Popularised in 2020 by Carlos Moreno but based on older planning principles.

**Used:** Paris, Melbourne, Portland, other global cities.

**Scope:** Urban mobility and planning. Implemented at the neighbourhood and city levels.

**Users:** City planners, policymakers, and sustainability advocates.

**Case Study:** C40 cities approaches to different 15-minute cities across the world.<sup>11</sup>



C6: Features of an inclusive 20-minute neighbourhood

<sup>10</sup> Moreno, C. (2020) The 15-Minute City: A new urban model. Paris: Mairie de Paris. Available at: <https://www.paris.fr/pages/le-paris-des-quarts-d-heure-15820>  
<sup>11</sup> [https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/article/Benchmark-15-minute-cities?language=en\\_US](https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/article/Benchmark-15-minute-cities?language=en_US)

The framework’s relevance to the Witton Lodge Decent Neighbourhood Standard

- **Establishing a baseline and monitoring neighbourhood quality:** Mobility and accessibility of services are relevant to the area with regard to establishing a minimum standard of distance or time walked. Conducting baseline social infrastructure assessment or community assets mapping can help understand proximity of different communities to key assets and identify gaps.
- **Supporting flourishing communities, local insights and participation:** This is addressed in the majority of this framework in terms of availability of social and support spaces. For Witton Lodge, this also will mean the mix of people who are accessing the available infrastructure.
- **Strengthening influence, accountability and stewardship across North Birmingham:** Coordination and stewardship between different actors on service provision within the 15-minute neighbourhood is important, especially when identifying who can deliver and maintain assets which are lacking in the area.
- **Achieving sustainable and inclusive development:** Green spaces and links were important for WLCA residents. Mapping and maximising natural assets is key. Understanding the availability of nature parks close by, as well as the assessment of sports and recreation facilities and their maintenance arrangements would be part of the DNS standard.

From the collaborative WLCA workshop there were a few comments on 15 and 20-minute neighbourhoods framework:

Participants identified what is available in the area, looking through the list of amenities that the framework provided them with. It was suggested that in close proximity to WLCA there are sufficient shops and hospitality, places to study and work, childcare centres, schools, community hubs, health services, local food and fresh produce, sports and recreation facilities, nature, parks and open space, mix of housing types and densities, public transport connectedness.

From the elements which were less well-defined energy efficient buildings emerged, some were available and the EcoHub was one, but not all buildings in the area were to that standard. Participants indicated that whereas there is some arts and culture activities there are not many venues, similarly the places to play meet and gather - there are some but maybe not sufficient for everyone. Walkability of streets was also deemed as needing improvement, as well as provision of cycling networks. Affordability of housing was also deemed insufficient.

**“In B24 we live in a 80% 20-min neighbourhood” – Workshop participant**



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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