



North Birmingham Decent Neighbourhood Standard: Erdington High Street

Full Report
June 2026

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Foreword



Afzal Hussain, Chief Officer

Witton Lodge Community Association

“At Witton Lodge Community Association (WLCA), we know that neighbourhoods matter.

This report marks an important step forward in the development of a Decent Neighbourhood Standard. Building on the first WLCA Demonstrator Report, which established the case for a neighbourhood standard and sets out its core dimensions, this report moves the agenda from concept to implementation.

Using Erdington High Street as a practical test case, it shows how the Standard can be translated into evidence, action and indicators. The findings highlight significant strengths, including strong community spirit, an active high street and valued local institutions, but also an area facing serious and persistent pressures - concerns about safety and crime, health and economic inequalities, gaps in social infrastructure and weak accountability.

The importance of this report lies not only in what it identifies, but importantly in what it now makes possible.

The North Birmingham Economic Recovery Board provides the governance structure to oversee this next phase - moving into implementation: turning evidence into action, embedding the framework in local decision-making, and delivering visible improvements for residents through sustained partnership and follow-through.”

1 Introduction

1.1 Why a Decent Neighbourhood Standard?

Britain has had a Decent Homes Standard since 2001- a clear, enforceable, minimum standard for the quality of the home. It has no equivalent for the neighbourhood, the unit of place that connects homes, everyday life and communities. There is no standard that says what level of safety, social infrastructure, economic opportunity, or community life a neighbourhood must provide; no framework that identifies who is accountable when those things fall short; no shared measure of what decency means at the scale of a neighbourhood. These questions - what neighbourhood decency means, what it requires and by who - are precisely what the Decent Neighbourhood Standard (DNS) is being developed to answer.

Neighbourhoods matter profoundly to the quality of people's lives, and while there are a myriad of aspirational frameworks and guidelines about what exemplar neighbourhoods could and should be, the fundamental question remains: how do we create a practical, place-based standard to measure, improve and create accountability for the quality of neighbourhoods across the UK?

Working with Witton Lodge Community Association (WLCA) and their stakeholders, communities and residents in Perry Common and Erdington in early 2025, the Centre for the New Midlands (CNM) and Social Life published the first [WLCA DNS Demonstrator Report in May 2025](#)¹.

Since that first report, CNM, Social Life and WLCA have continued the conversation and thinking around the DNS at several events to engage organisations, policymakers and communities, thinking about what and how a DNS needs to be developed, tested and enacted. Our discussions have explored:

1. Neighbourhoods are dynamic and overlapping systems - socially, spatially, economically and politically. How and where do we adopt the DNS in neighbourhoods without oversimplifying their complexity and neglecting what is particular to each place? What are the practical enablers and barriers to implementing a shared standard across diverse neighbourhoods, local complexities and the experience of local communities?
2. Who holds the power and the responsibility and who should be in delivering a 'decent' neighbourhood? How do we embed collective accountability and responsibility, and ensure that the right linkages are made between different levels of governance, investment and community action?
3. How can we develop measures and metrics that are clear, actionable and widely adopted? For the DNS to drive change and improve the quality of neighbourhoods and the quality of life for its residents, DNS indicators must be trusted by policymakers, grounded in community priorities, and practical to apply, balancing rigour, relevance, data and lived experience.

This report continues to respond to these questions and those challenges.

¹ https://www.thenewmidlands.org.uk/our-research/housing-and-communities/#flipbook-df_42666/1/

1.2 Project Brief, Aims and Objectives

This report presents the findings and outputs of Dimension 1, focusing on neighbourhood quality. It is the second phase of a long-term research collaboration between WLCA, CNM and Social Life following the initial WLCA DNS demonstrator report published in May 2025. The first project established the conceptual framework and four universal dimensions of a Decent Neighbourhood Standard. This report begins to operationalise that framework for the first time, applying it to Erdington in North Birmingham, a key neighbourhood in which WLCA is increasingly active.

Dimension 1 is the foundation and the entry point for developing a local DNS. The aims of this Dimension 1 phase of the WLCA DNS Demonstrator were to:

- Conduct a systematic baseline assessment of neighbourhood quality in Erdington, drawing on external datasets as well as some primary and secondary data gathering, through a short survey, and ongoing engagement with WLCA and local stakeholders to understand local priorities.
- Develop a set of DNS neighbourhood quality indicators, benchmarked against relevant local, city-region and national comparators where possible.
- Build a neighbourhood quality data dashboard that provides WLCA with a practical, accessible monitoring tool that can be deliberated with local community and stakeholders to test the findings and the resonance of the neighbourhood quality priorities identified.
- Identify data gaps and limitations in the current evidence base and set out priorities for filling those gaps in subsequent phases of the research whether those are conducted through practical fieldwork or by further quantitative analysis.
- Deploy the DNS dashboard to generate insights about Erdington as a neighbourhood to inform WLCA's strategic planning and its continued engagement with local and regional partners, community organisations and residents.

It is important to note that all four Decent Neighbourhoods Standards dimensions are critical to developing an understanding of what makes a neighbourhood decent, grounded in community insights and lived experience, mapping accountability and community stewardship and working towards a sustainable decent neighbourhood, both environmentally and economically.

1.3 Methodology and Report Outline

DNS Dimension 1 is primarily a desk-based research phase, focused on gathering, analysing and presenting secondary data. However, as the research programme is intrinsically collaborative, all four dimensions will inevitably include some aspects of organisational, local stakeholder and community engagement. In this stage this was through documentation review, attending forum meetings and workshops and designing and running a short Erdington neighbourhood quality survey with stakeholders and residents. This engagement has provided a critical lens through which we refine the choice of neighbourhood quality themes and derive the suite of indicators presented in the dashboard.

The research methodology for this phase included four main activities:

- **Organisational engagement:** Alongside the desk-based data work, the research team engaged with WLCA management and programme staff, attended meetings of the North Birmingham

Economic Recovery Board (NBERB)², and reviewed key documents including Birmingham City Council's Liveable Neighbourhoods Erdington case study and West Midlands Police Operation Fearless Erdington report. This grounded the data analysis in the organisational and local stakeholder context within which WLCA is working.

- **Stakeholder and Resident Survey:** Engagement with WLCA, the West Midlands Combined Authority, Birmingham City Council, Erdington BID among other members of the NBERB, confirmed that a short stakeholder and resident survey exploring perceptions of Erdington neighbourhood quality would be useful. Analysis from the survey findings helped identify three thematic priorities around which the Erdington DNS was structured.
- **Site visit:** Social Life conducted a walkabout and observations of the Erdington high street on the 3rd of March 2026 to understand the local area. All photos in the report were taken by Social Life.
- **Indicator development:** Drawing on the analysis undertaken in the initial WLCA DNS demonstrator project, as well as engagement, document review and the survey, DNS indicators were developed to fit broadly within the themes of 'Crime and Safety', 'Sense of Belonging' and 'Opportunity and Economy'.
- **Data mining and mapping:** A review of available datasets at hyper-local, ward and constituency level was conducted, drawing on national sources (including the Office for National Statistics, Public Health England, and the Index of Multiple Deprivation), city-region sources (West Midlands Combined Authority and Birmingham City Council Observatory), and Social Life's Community Dynamics data. This audit identified both the indicators for which data is available and the gaps where data is absent or insufficiently granular.
- **Comparative analysis:** Where data permitted, Erdington's performance against each indicator was benchmarked against Birmingham city-wide averages and national averages and statutory or advisory standards. This comparative framing allows the dashboard to function as a data decency proxy: identifying where Erdington meets, approaches or falls short of comparative standards of neighbourhood quality. This 'data decency benchmarking' and benchmarking of the measurement of neighbourhood decency aligns with the DNS Dimension 1, and 'decency' in Erdington neighbourhood quality will be further explored and refined in Dimensions 2-4.

Report structure:

- Section 2 sets out the Decent Neighbourhood Standard framework, summarises the initial WLCA demonstrator project, and situates this work within the current policy context.
- Section 3 sets out the rationale behind the Erdington neighbourhood demonstrator, covering the development of the dashboard and the critical lenses that frame the data collection and analysis.
- Section 4 presents the DNS Erdington data dashboard itself, discusses what the indicators reveal about neighbourhood quality in Erdington, and considers the implications for ongoing monitoring.
- Section 5 sets out recommendations and next steps, both for WLCA and for the wider DNS programme across all four dimensions.

² The North Birmingham Economic Recovery Board (NB:ER) is a partnership initiative established in 2020 in response to the economic impact of COVID-19. Administered by 25 organisations, it aims to tackle unemployment, deprivation, and skills shortages across Erdington, Kingstanding, Castle Vale, and South Oscott. Chaired by Erdington MP Paul Blain, it has secured over £10m in investment and helped over 1,000 residents into work. For more information visit www.northbirminghameconomicrecovery.co.uk.

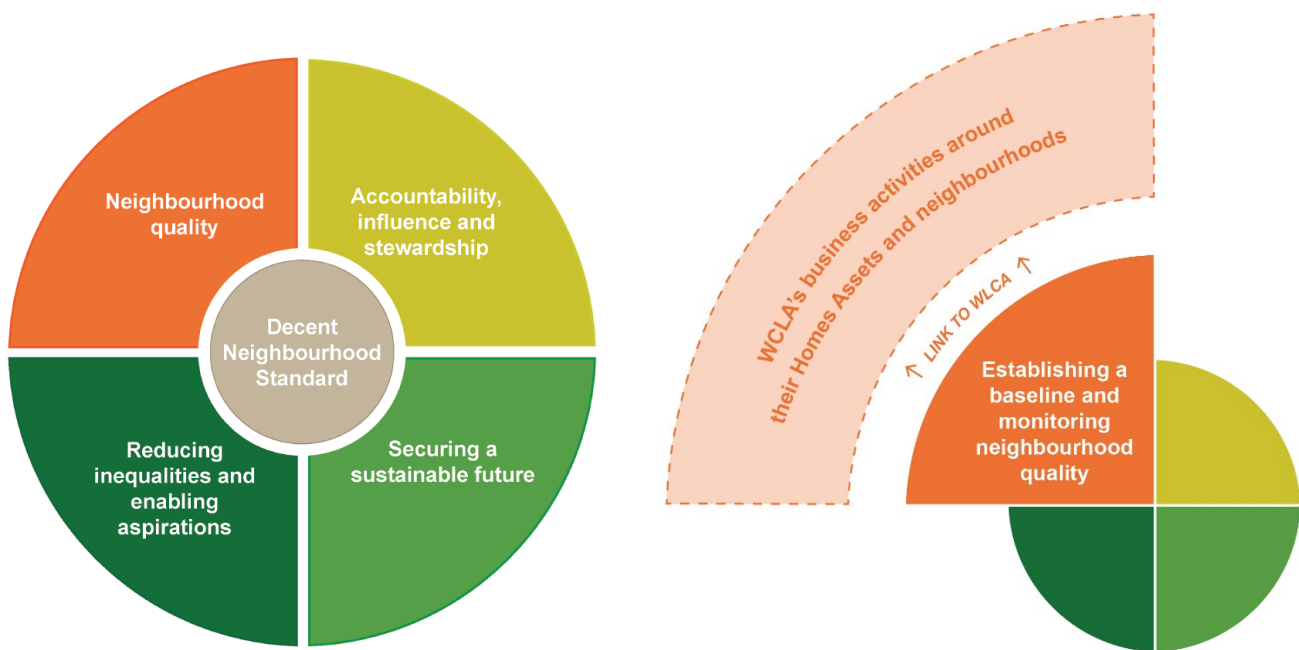
2 The Decent Neighbourhood Standard Framework

2.1 Background

The Decent Neighbourhood Standard is a delivery, monitoring and evaluative framework designed to translate the core principles and spirit of the Decent Homes Standard (introduced in 2000 to improve housing conditions) to the broader neighbourhood scale. While a home functions arguably as a closed system, a neighbourhood operates as a complex, open system interconnected with broader economic, social, and environmental networks. The Standard seeks to address the accountability vacuum regarding who is responsible for the places outside our homes, underpinned by principles of social justice and an asset-based approach.

The conceptual model is built upon four universal dimensions:

- 1) Neighbourhood Quality Standards,
- 2) Reducing Inequalities and Enabling Aspirations
- 3) Accountability, Influence and Stewardship
- 4) Securing a Sustainable Future.



Emerging Universal DNS Framework and Dimension 1 (Centre for the New Midlands, Social Life, WLCA, 2025)

We evolved the standard through a demonstrator partnership between Witton Lodge Community Association (WLCA), the Centre for the New Midlands (CNM), and Social Life in 2025.

The initial pilot engaged WLCA frontline staff, volunteers, leaders, and local residents to map neighbourhood features and define community priorities. A major learning from the pilot was the emergence of two contrasting themes: residents expressed strong positive perceptions regarding community connections, green spaces, and local amenities, but these were offset by severe negative concerns regarding safety, crime, neglect, and environmental maintenance. The pilot identified Erdington High Street as a core asset catering to residents of all ages. However, it also highlighted specific challenges for Erdington, including declining public perceptions of the area, major concerns over anti-

social behaviour, drug-related activity, and a need to improve the urban realm, such as walkability and cycling networks. Ultimately, the pilot established that WLCA's different zones of influence (such as Perry Common versus Erdington High Street) possess distinct drivers of change, meaning hyper-local baselines are required.

2.2 Unpacking 'Decency'

In the pilot project with WLCA, we conceptualised decency as a baseline standard and evaluative framework that translates the core principles of the Decent Homes Standard to the wider neighbourhood level. We aimed to address accountability gaps, tackle place-based social inequalities, and ensure communities are free from hazards and equipped with the necessary infrastructure to thrive.

To this purpose, our core question is:

“Are we acting in a way that delivers a decent quality of life for residents in a neighbourhood?”

This underpins our ambitions to deliver a universal standard that could serve as a tool for design, delivery, monitoring and stewardship of neighbourhoods. We have explored further the notion of 'decency' in politics, philosophy and ethics literature, from where it's origin stems, to examine how it applies to a spatially bounded practice.

In the context of the Decent Neighbourhood Standard, decency aims to translate the regulatory spirit of the Decent Homes Standard, which mandates minimum requirements for safe, warm, and well-maintained housing, to the wider community and neighbourhood scale.

The literature conceptualises decency not as a rigid rulebook, but as a negotiated, humane, and social practice. Probably the most widely quoted author, Avishai Margalit³ defines a decent society as a 'moral minimum', one in which institutions do not humiliate people, arguing that decency acts as a 'shield' protecting human dignity. Similarly, John Rawls⁴ positions decency as the floor for international legitimacy and a threshold for tolerance, decency is a pre-requisite for international relationships. In Western philosophical tradition, the notion of *epieikeia* (reasonableness) described by Aristotle⁵ informs decency as the correction of legal justice, representing a humane flexibility that prioritises the spirit of the law over the cold, rigid letter of justice. For the Decent Neighbourhood Standard, 'decency' could provide a framework for the relationship between institutions and residents free of humiliation, allowing the ability to bridge cultural backgrounds and a flexibility of application that allows for contextual differences.

Decency is also viewed as the social glue of everyday life. Cheshire Calhoun⁶ describes it as a 'moral gift economy' that sits between justice and charity. It involves the small acts of kindness and politeness that signal that we view others as humans worthy of respect. Cross-cultural perspectives reinforce this: the sub-Saharan concept of 'ubuntu' views decency as interconnectedness and a responsibility to the

³ Murmann, S. Avishai Margalit: The Decent Society. *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 2, 183-184 (1999). <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1009939431261>

⁴ Rawls, J. (2001). *The law of peoples*. Harvard University Press.

⁵ Aristotle. (2014). *Cambridge texts in the history of philosophy: Aristotle: Nicomachean ethics* (R. Crisp, Ed.; 2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

⁶ Calhoun, Cheshire, 'Common Decency', *Moral Aims: Essays on the Importance of Getting It Right and Practicing Morality with Others* (New York, 2016; online edn, Oxford Academic, 19 Nov. 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199328796.003.0005>, accessed March 2026.

community ("*I am because we are*"); Confucianism (*Li*) sees it as propriety and the outer manifestation of inner benevolence to ensure harmony and in Islam (*Haya*), it is tied to modesty and curbing the ego. Ultimately, decency involves treating one another with respect, exercising agency, and empowering participatory decision making. The qualities of decency span high-level moral values, such as justice, equality, compassion and integrity in practical everyday actions⁷. Decency emerges as the 'ethic of everyday life' characterised by consideration, fairness and reasonable restraint for the benefit of the collective.

An interesting strand emerges in the literature on the physical properties of decency. Exploring Black political leader's actions to address inner city crime in Atlanta, Wiggins⁸ argues that if decency is seen as abiding by societal norms, it means that it can be obtained through proper policing and legislation. Visually and practically, this approach meant that in place characteristics such as cleanliness, orderliness, a welcoming atmosphere, and the appearance of prosperity need to be mandated in order to achieve a decent place.

There is a warning, however, as with any standardisation of societal expressions that under-represented and vulnerable people might fall outside the norm. There are negative qualities of decency - it can be weaponised by the powerful as a tool for social exclusion to enforce normativity, marginalise 'others', or displace 'undesirables'. For example, while decency can be a survival strategy and badge of respectability, it often adheres to strict middle-class values that can perpetuate inequality⁹. Behaviourally, decency is pro-social and co-constructed, it involves behavioural consistency¹⁰, meaning people act pro-socially even when no one is watching to maintain their self-image.

This means that the practice of applying the Decent Neighbourhood Standard is as important as the framework it sets out. As a co-constructed notion, decency will evolve with the evolution of the make-up of a neighbourhood.

Decency in the context of a neighbourhood

A neighbourhood is an open system where decency acts as a 'collective resource'¹¹. The neighbourhood is the essential arena for practicing respect, our sense of citizenship is profoundly shaped by our encounters in shared spaces, implying a shared ownership and responsibility over the environment. In practice, this means taking pride in place, sometimes visible through well-kept gardens and renovated facades¹² but ultimately underpinned by trust in institutions and the opportunity and ability for residents to achieve a good standard of life. The WLCA pilot project reflected this, showing that residents associate decent neighbourhoods heavily with strong social connections, community spaces, and feelings of safety, while linking indecency to neglect, anti-social behaviour, and crime.

However, there needs to be flexibility built into the standard. A high preoccupation with 'neighbourhood decency'¹³ as an abstract, not locally practiced and negotiated practice, and fear of day-to-day incivilities can decrease community cohesion, driving residents to withdraw into gated enclaves and become suspicious of their neighbours. Richard Sennet¹⁴ warns that the desire for a perfectly orderly neighbourhood is often a retreat from the complexities of adult life, enforcing strict order by removing diverse street life that risks the creation of 'dead' urban spaces, whereas a truly vital neighbourhood

⁷ Garthoff, J. (2025). Decency. *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjp.70002>.

⁸ Wiggins, D. (2020). "Order as well as Decency": The Development of Order Maintenance Policing in Black Atlanta. *Journal of Urban History*, 46(4), 711-727.

⁹ Anderson, E. (1999). *Code of the street: Decency, violence, and the moral life of the inner city*. W.W. Norton & Company.

¹⁰ Ellingsen, Tore & Mohlin, Erik, 2019. "**Decency**," *Working Papers* 2019:3, Lund University, Department of Economics.

¹¹ Harris, Kevin. (2007). Respect in the neighbourhood: Neighbourliness and narratives of decline. *Safer Communities*. 6. 34-41. 10.1108/17578043200700030.

¹² Bulle, N. (2009). Under What Conditions Can Formal Models of Social Action Claim Explanatory Power? *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, 23(1), 47-64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02698590902843385>

¹³ Atkinson, Rowland, and Sarah Blandy. *Domestic Fortress: Fear and the New Home Front*. 1st ed., Manchester University Press, 2017. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvn96j96>. Accessed 27 Mar. 2026.

¹⁴ Sennett, R. (1970). *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life*. New York: Knopf

requires a degree of ‘creative disorder’. The application of the ‘Secure by Design’ police guidance often has proven the point above. The task for the Decent Neighbourhood Standard will be to allow for the flexibility at the local level to protect the spirit and pride of local areas.

Decency as accountability and minimum standard for neighbourhood quality

Decency is a flexible standard informed by a local baseline and applying a universal ‘moral minimum’ to ensure neighbourhoods are free from hazards and humiliation and equipped with sufficient facilities and services for a good quality of life for all.

Crucially, decency addresses an accountability vacuum. Eva Nilsen¹⁵ argues that decency is a ‘barometer’ that measures a society’s level of civilisation by how it treats people. However, if standards of ‘decency’ are imposed by institutions (e.g. councils or police) without the democratic input and co-design by the residents, the process can become humiliating rather than empowering. Therefore, true decency requires accountability structures that give community anchor organisations and residents agency to influence and maintain their own spaces.



Polish and international food shop, Erdington High Street (Social Life, 2026)

2.3 The Policy Context

2.2.1. The growing importance of neighbourhoods in national policy

Since March 2025, the UK’s policy landscape has undergone a significant shift toward place-based governance and systemic planning reform. Central to this shift is the continuous push for reforms in planning and local government, including the publication of consultations in December 2025 of a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹⁶ and updated Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance¹⁷ consultations. This regulatory push is anchored by the English Devolution and Community

¹⁵ Eva Nilsen, Decency, Dignity, and Desert: Restoring Ideals of Humane Punishment to Constitutional Discourse , 41 U.C. Davis Law Review 111 (2007).

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-proposed-reforms-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system>

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/design-and-placemaking-planning-practice-guidance/design-and-placemaking-planning-practice-guidance>

Empowerment Bill, a landmark piece of legislation designed to transfer strategic powers to local authorities and grassroots organisations. By also establishing a renewed focus on building standards, publishing the Future Homes Standard¹⁸ in March 2026, the government has sought to bridge the gap between national housing targets and high-quality local delivery.

A signature policy in the last year has been the announcement of the Pride in Place¹⁹ programme, a £5.8 billion, 10-year initiative revitalising 284 UK neighbourhoods. Directed by local Neighbourhood Boards, it provides up to £20 million per area over 10 years, to transform high streets, safety, and social infrastructure. It originally empowered ‘doubly disadvantaged’ communities, focusing on 169 localities to restore local pride and drive long-term, resident-led regeneration. It has incorporated the government’s Plan for Neighbourhoods which focuses on 75 towns and incoming proposals under devolution and local government re-organisation have identified a focus on the concept of neighbourhoods as a governance unit. Birmingham has eight local areas identified in the programme, including Kingstanding South East, in which the North Birmingham Economic Recovery Board is involved.

The Decent Neighbourhood Standard can become an essential framework for Pride in Place by addressing the ‘accountability gap’ in community quality and providing Neighbourhood Boards with a clear and consistent approach to developing and designing their long-term plans. By focusing on standards, stewardship, and sustainability, it ensures regeneration is not superficial, but creates healthier, safer, and inclusive environments where residents feel genuine ownership and lasting local pride. In the incoming decade of Pride in Place delivery, a framework that can flex and serve changing neighbourhood conditions as design, delivery and stewardship of local assets progress will be key. Research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation²⁰ (2026) highlights that Pride in Place cannot succeed without addressing capacity challenges and funding gaps beyond simple deprivation metrics. The Decent Neighbourhood Standard can bridge this divide by providing a framework for understanding and actioning local need. It also can provide a way for the many areas experiencing significant challenges that are not receiving Pride in Place funding to approach strategic improvement without the benefit of substantial external resources.

In parallel to these reforms, there has been a notable resurgence in the importance of the neighbourhood as the primary unit for social and health intervention. The NHS’s *Neighbourhood Health Framework* (2025) exemplifies this shift, pivoting healthcare toward localised, community-led prevention, although focusing on large geographies and lacking detail on implementation²¹.

One of the more significant publications in the past year, the Independent Commission on Neighbourhoods final report, *No Short Cuts*²², provides a comprehensive national strategy and pipeline to target long-term investment into England’s most disadvantaged areas by rebuilding their social infrastructure. It advocates a ‘staircase model’ where building social capital acts as the essential foundation for public service reform and subsequent economic growth. To achieve this, it proposes a £2-2.5bn annual investment over 20 years, focusing on a neighbourhood recovery pipeline of 424 priority areas to deliver community-led transformation across eight foundational, transformational, and sustainable pillars.

Reports such as *Locality’s Community Powered Neighbourhoods*²³ and *We’re Right Here*²⁴ argue for formalising community control to ensure long-term resilience. Responding to the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, the We’re Right Campaign outlines six principles for community-powered governance, including ‘real place’-based boundaries, equal-basis decision-making, and independent accountability mechanisms like a Commissioner for Neighbourhoods. It champions collaborative models like the Community Covenant, which gives local people shared responsibility over funding and services

¹⁸ <https://ukgbc.org/policy-advocacy/new-build-standards/future-homes-standard/>

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/pride-in-place>

²⁰ <https://www.jrf.org.uk/neighbourhoods-and-communities/pride-in-place-funding-gaps-and-capacity-challenges>

²¹ <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/blogs/neighbourhood-health-service-agree-what-that-means>

²² <https://www.neighbourhoodscommission.org.uk/report/no-shorts-cuts-towards-a-national-strategy-for-neighbourhood-recovery/>

²³ <https://locality.org.uk/reports/community-powered-neighbourhoods>

²⁴ <https://www.right-here.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Were-Right-Here-A-Blueprint-for-Community-Powered-Neighbourhood-Governance.pdf>

rather than treating them merely as consultees. We believe the Decent Neighbourhood Standard ultimately can serve as this local covenant.

The updated Decent Homes Standard

At national level, the debate on decency has been re-asserted with the announcement of the updated Decent Homes Standard²⁵, the biggest overhaul of the Standard since 2006. The update sets out mandatory quality and safety standards for both social and, importantly, private rented homes, ensuring foundational living conditions are improved across local communities. A dedicated damp and mould criterion (linked to Awaab's Law) replaces broader hazard assessments. Repairs are now condition-based rather than age-dependent, focusing on actual functionality. Energy requirements mandate EPC C by 2030, while new safety rules include mandatory window restrictors. Enforcement is significantly tougher, with local authorities able to issue £40,000 fines and tenants eligible for two-year rent repayment orders, marking a transition from guidance to strict, universal regulation.

The new standard aligns with the direction of development of the **Decent Neighbourhood Standards** as it focuses on diverse housing needs and links repairs directly to the home's condition. This supports our belief that understanding local needs is the essential first step.

By aligning these requirements across sectors with an implementation date of 2035, the government aims to eradicate sub-standard housing and improve the foundational health and safety of neighbourhoods. However, the implementation date is arguably insufficiently ambitious and, thus creates uncertainty for tenants and residents over the incoming decade.

High Streets

The 2026 National High Street Strategy²⁶, launched by the MHCLG, focuses on long-term sustainability through financial injection and policy shifts. The government committed £150 million for immediate aesthetic restoration and £301 million for 'Innovation Partnerships' to integrate housing, healthcare, and green spaces into traditional retail cores. To balance the scales against e-commerce, the strategy introduced permanently lower business rates for physical storefronts, offset by a new online delivery tax.

The strategy is backed by the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, which provides communities with a 'Right to Buy' at-risk local assets. It addresses the empty shops crisis by banning upwards-only rent reviews and streamlining planning laws to convert vacant units into residential spaces.

2.2.2. Local policy in the West Midlands and Birmingham

Throughout Birmingham and the West Midlands, we (WLCA, CNM and Social Life) have continued to engage with and promote the approach of the Decent Neighbourhood Standard as the programme evolves. Since 2025, the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) has led the West Midlands Growth Plan²⁷, which set aside a £232 million regeneration fund from the region's landmark integrated settlement to regenerate high streets and town centres. CNM hosted a roundtable in partnership with SL and WLCA in June 2025 at which we engaged with the WMCA, and other national and regional stakeholders.

West Midlands Creating Truly Inclusive Communities approach

In March 2026, the WMCA and the Young Foundation launched the Creating Truly Inclusive Communities report²⁸, designed as a practical framework to unite the West Midlands region around a shared ambition to improve the quality of life for all residents. The ambition of the framework is to be used by the

²⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-a-reformed-decent-homes-standard-for-social-and-privately-rented-homes/outcome/the-new-decent-homes-standard-policy-statement>

²⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/high-streets-to-receive-150-million-to-restore-community-pride>

²⁷ <https://growth.wmca.org.uk/>

²⁸ <https://www.youngfoundation.org/our-work/publications/creating-truly-inclusive-communities/>

combined authority, local authorities, funding organisations, and community groups as a tool to guide investment and policy decisions by focusing on what residents think, feel, and do. Ultimately, it will be used to establish a baseline and measure regional progress in strengthening social capital, social infrastructure, social inclusion, and social mobility.

The report advocated to make resident-centred decisions the norm; direct funding to support positive outcomes for communities, not just short-term projects, adjust procurement so it works for communities; create a culture of collaboration, learning, and innovation and build stronger local leadership.

We welcome the framework and see a direct alignment with the Decent Neighbourhood Standard a hyper-local implementation of the ambitions which currently are presented at local authority level.

Birmingham City Council’s Our Future City Delivery: A Liveable Neighbourhoods Approach

The Decent Neighbourhood Standard pilot project, delivered in 2025, has served as an opportunity to engage with local policy making. WLCA and the project team have engaged with Birmingham City Council around the programme of Liveable Neighbourhoods.

The core aim of the Liveable Neighbourhoods²⁹ programme is to enact a modal shift away from the use of the private car to encourage more people to access the essential services and facilities they need locally. It aims to providing essential services and facilities within a 15-minute journey of a resident’s home by sustainable modes of travel (walking, cycling, public transport). The ambition is to integrate planning and regeneration policies, effective partnerships, meaningful public engagement, and a change in how teams and funding models operate within Birmingham.

A Liveable Neighbourhoods Framework Birmingham City Council

Local Jobs, Local Food, Green Space, Schools, Streets, Homes, Inequality, Community

Local Delivery Mechanism: Decent Neighborhood's Approach

To establish the local neighbourhood issues, the necessary local delivery mechanisms and robust and realistic key performance indicators a thorough baselining of the state of the chosen neighbourhood should place in the context of the 11 liveable neighbourhood principles, where within each principle the WLCA Decent Neighbourhoods Delivery Steps will be systematically be applied to frame the structure of the project and set up and identify the mechanisms required for change

- 1. Access & Quality of Homes**
 - Mapping, Data Collection, evaluating, and monitoring hazards
 - Fitness for habitation, modern facilities, and services
 - Decent Homes
 - Affordable homes
 - Energy Efficient Homes
 - Homes meet identified local need
- 2. Access & Quality of all other services and facilities**
 - Mapping, evaluating, and monitoring hazards
 - Data Collection
 - Fitness for habitation, modern facilities, and services
 - The right services and facilities are available to meet local daily needs
 - Satisfaction with facilities and services as well as the neighbourhoods social activity
- 3. Reducing Inequalities**
 - Mapping of localised inequalities and negative correlation:
 - Social sustainability and perceptions
- 4. Accountability, Influence and Stewardship**
 - Identify component parts at the local and strategic levels to establish accountability
 - Improve meaningful community engagement
- 5. Securing a Sustainable Future**
 - Green Infrastructure
 - Sustainability
 - Net Zero

Key Actions

1. Establish systematic baseline & monitoring framework across neighbourhood to monitor Access & Quality in the context of each of the 11 principles
2. Map Community anchors and explore how to leverage their impact
3. Align community anchors against net zero goals
4. Establish a long term resident focus group to have a role in data interpretation and sense checking
5. Mapping of key zones of influence, accountability, and stewardship
6. Social Impact Assessment using "Community Dynamics" Model

Sustainable Future: RESET, RESHAP, RESTORE

Extract from the Liveable Neighbourhoods draft Framework, exploring the interplay with DNS

The aim of the work of BCC has been to establish an operational framework for liveable neighbourhoods. Activities began in 2023 with a primary pilot in Bordesley Green to develop a ‘liveable neighbourhood toolkit’. Since 2024, the focus has shifted to the Tyseley and Hay Mills pilot³⁰, funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The project has focused on East Birmingham including extensive community engagement

²⁹ <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/resources/birminghams-vision-for-liveable-neighbourhoods/>

³⁰ https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20008/planning_and_development/2948/tyseley_and_hay_mills_liveable_neighbourhoods_project

(ending March 2025) involving deep-dive surveys, school workshops, and resident events to identify local gaps in accessibility and housing. As of March 2026, the council is working on finalising the draft Liveable Neighbourhood Change Strategy and Action Plan and future engagement with stakeholders.

Ultimately, the project seeks to establish a multi-year delivery framework and a scalable toolkit to roll out the model across the city, integrating these principles into the wider Birmingham Local Plan to foster long-term urban resilience. The Decent Neighbourhood's standard is seen as a delivery framework of the Liveable Neighbourhoods approach and the universal dimensions have been incorporated as a local delivery framework for the overall Liveable Neighbourhoods programme of the Council.

Birmingham Draft Local Plan 2044

At the outset of this project, in December 2025, the Birmingham draft Local Plan Focused Preferred Option³¹ document was published for consultation. In the Draft Local Plan, Erdington is designated as a **Centre for Change** (rather than a Growth Zone, due to a low number of known development opportunity sites).

The vision is for Erdington Town Centre to be rejuvenated as a unique, thriving, mixed-use centre. Policy priorities are:

- Delivery of a new public square (via demolition of 154-156 High Street, currently Poundland) to enhance the setting of St Barnabas Church.
- Better shop and active frontages, with further pedestrianisation of the High Street.
- Supporting independent retail, restaurants, cafés, and cultural/wellbeing/leisure uses to support a strong day and night-time economy, aligned with liveable neighbourhood principles.
- The policy therefore aims to address current declines, a lack of identity, and issues with anti-social behaviour, particularly in the 6 Ways area, with a need for more residential aspects to provide natural surveillance.

The Birmingham Local Plan will be the framework that will decide how the city will develop and provide policies to guide decisions on development proposals and planning applications up to 2044. As part of this project, we submitted a response to the consultation, promoting the integration of Decent Neighbourhood Standard as a local delivery framework, able to span spatial, social, economic and environmental objectives of planning policy.

Erdington Ward Action Plan

The Erdington Ward Action Plan (2022-2026)³² outlines a comprehensive strategy to improve the local area across three core priorities. It is in this context that our work is operating at a local level.

First, it aims to create a "Thriving and Vibrant Erdington" by securing investment to regenerate the High Street and repurposing heritage assets like the Erdington Swimming Baths and Library. It also focuses on providing skills and opportunities for young people through new facilities and support for local youth providers.

Second, the plan envisions a "Cleaner and Greener Erdington". This involves tackling litter, graffiti, and fly-tipping by supporting community groups like Erdington Litter Busters and pushing for stronger

³¹ <https://www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/bcc/local-plan-fpod-consultation-2025/>

³² <https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/erdingtonplan>

environmental enforcement. It also seeks to protect and invest in local parks, such as Rookery Park and Spring Lane Playing Fields, while developing new pocket parks.

Finally, it prioritises a "Safer and Welcoming Erdington". Key actions include enforcing Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, improving road safety through traffic calming measures, and actively tackling the growth of badly run Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and exempt accommodation through new licensing and legislation.



Erdington High Street (Social Life, 2026)

3 Neighbourhood Demonstrator - Erdington

3.1 The Context of the High Street

The project focuses on Erdington High Street, a partially pedestrianised commercial thoroughfare in North Birmingham that serves as a local retail hub. It contains a combination of independent traders, national retail chains, and the Grade II listed St Barnabas Church. The high street is based in the Erdington Ward³³. Erdington is a suburban ward situated in the north of Birmingham.

Demographic Profile

Erdington Ward has a total population of 21,552, making it the 19th most populous ward of Birmingham's 69 wards. The ward has a slightly older age profile compared to the city as a whole. While 23% of the population is under 18, 16% are over 65, which is higher than the Birmingham average of 13%.

The ward has a lower BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) population share (34%) than the city average (51%). The largest ethnic group is White at 66%. Other significant groups include Pakistani (6%), Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups (6%), Black African (6%), and Black Caribbean (5%). Most residents (87%) speak English as their main language. Approximately 17% of the working-age population is classified as disabled.



Erdington High Street (Social Life, 2026)

³³ https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/15468/erdington_factsheet

Socioeconomic Context

Erdington is mid-ranking for deprivation levels, placed 38th out of the city's 69 wards. About 27% of children (1,429) live in low-income households, ranking the ward 51st in the city for child poverty. The resident employment rate is 66%, which is above the city average. The occupational breakdown is split between higher-skilled (42%), intermediate (18%), and lower-skilled (40%) roles. Approximately 24% of residents have no qualifications, while 30% have Level 4 or higher qualifications.

The High Street

Erdington High Street is home to around 300 local businesses, providing a wide range of goods and services to an immediate local population. A unique feature is the restored parish church of St Barnabas, which serves as a central focus point. Other essential local services, including the Erdington library, swimming pool, fire station, and police station are all within walking distance. The area is managed by the Erdington Business Improvement District (BID)³⁴. Their mission is to ensure the town centre is a safe, welcoming, and clean environment.

WLCA's involvement

WLCA's involvement in Erdington High Street is centred on two primary physical sites and a broad network of stakeholder collaborations.

WLCA maintains a significant operational footprint on Erdington High Street through the Erdington Health and Wellbeing Hub³⁵, providing a range of community support services, including health and wellbeing services, social prescribing and a befriending service as well as running local events. The Erdington Enterprise Hub (Former Erdington Baths) is a regeneration Project led by WLCA, which once complete, will provide affordable office spaces, hot-desking facilities, a community café, a crèche, and an outdoor area for events and markets.

WLCA acts as a 'community anchor', facilitating collaboration between local residents, government bodies, and private organisations. In partnership with Compass Support, WLCA leads Erdington Neighbourhood Network Scheme (ENNS)³⁶ to support older adults and people with disabilities. WLCA leads a Social Enterprise Cluster supported by the WMCA to stimulate the local social economy. The association also engages with West Midlands Police to support the promotion of safety in the area.

3.2 Dashboard Development: Understanding the local context and WLCA spheres of influence

3.2.1. North Birmingham Economic Recovery Board

The North Birmingham Economic Recovery (NBER) Board is an action-focused partnership. The Board's mission is to maximise inclusive economic activity by creating effective pathways into skills training and sustainable employment. It specifically targets priority groups—including young people, ethnic minorities, and residents with disabilities—while supporting local SMEs and social enterprises to access business opportunities. The Board represents a robust cross-sector coalition, chaired by Paulette Hamilton MP. Its membership includes WLCA, Birmingham City Council, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the WMCA, and educational institutions like BMET and South & City College. Major regional stakeholders and developers, including HS2, IM Properties, and the Aston Villa Foundation, also sit on the Board to connect local communities with large-scale economic opportunities.

³⁴ <https://erdingtonhighstreet.co.uk/about-us/>

³⁵ <https://www.erdingtonlocal.com/tag/erdington-health-and-wellbeing-hub/>

³⁶ <https://wittonlodge.org.uk/health-and-wellbeing/erdington-neighbourhood-network-scheme/>

We continued our engagement with the board, presenting interim findings of this project at their meeting in February 2026, gathering views and co-launching the survey. The Board's work is focused on the topics of opportunity, belonging and safety, which have guided the work in this report.

WLCA is a foundational partner and pivotal driver within the NBER Board, utilising its influence to support local regeneration, housing initiatives, and community-led employment programmes. WLCA frequently hosts NBER business and employment workshops at its facilities, such as the Perry Common Community Hall.

In Erdington, the Board focuses on tangible economic and social interventions. Key aims include developing the Erdington Enterprise Hub at the former Erdington Baths site to house start-ups and growing SMEs. It has spearheaded cost-of-living initiatives, such as distributing energy vouchers, and manages the Ladders of Opportunity Bursary, which raises funds to help Erdington's young people achieve their potential.

3.2.2. Focus on Safety - Evaluation of Operation Fearless

Operation Fearless is a key programme and part of the practical interventions implemented by West Midlands Police to enhance public safety. Formally launched in Erdington in January 2025, the initiative was bolstered by £880,000 in funding provided by the Police and Crime Commissioner. A significant portion of this investment was strategically sourced from assets seized from criminals under the Proceeds of Crime Act, effectively repurposing criminal gains to transform and protect the local community. The core objective of the operation is centred on a high-visibility policing model, characterised by increased patrols and robust enforcement activities designed to tackle the specific crimes that most impact residents.

Operational Performance and Impact

The initial phases of the operation yielded substantial results in terms of both crime suppression and public reassurance. Throughout its first year, officers conducted over 500 stop and searches and successfully executed more than 300 arrests. The impact on violent crime has been particularly noteworthy; in Erdington, knife crime reduced by 80% while serious youth violence decreased by 60%. Beyond street-level enforcement, Operation Fearless has significantly disrupted organized crime networks. These efforts resulted in the seizure of over £300,000 in cash and the recovery of hundreds of thousands of pounds' worth of illegal goods through successful collaboration with partner agencies.

Q1 2025 Outcomes in Erdington

Detailed data captured between January 1st and April 23rd, 2025, further illustrates the efficacy of the programme. During this period, 141 arrests were recorded, with over 60% resulting in a positive outcome, primarily targeting shoplifting and drug supply chains. General violent offenses saw a 16% decrease, while public order offenses and anti-social behaviour dropped by 27%. Furthermore, there was a 14.3% reduction in harm during response calls. From a fiscal perspective, the total estimated reduction in the cost of crime compared to the previous year was calculated at £795,696, representing a 24% saving.

The operation has been highly successful in removing dangerous items and illicit substances from the streets. Significant recoveries include approximately £2 million worth of counterfeit goods and the seizure of a live, viable firearm with ammunition. Targeted investigations led to 22 arrests for drug supply and the execution of 12 warrants, notably resulting in a four-year custodial sentence for KenyJah James. High-profile successes also include the closure of the 'WeaponsRus' online retail platform and the conviction of an individual operating illegal brothels. Due to these demonstrable successes in Erdington, Operation Fearless is now proposed as a blueprint for other city sectors, with a scheduled expansion into Birmingham's Southside throughout 2026.



Erdington High Street (Social Life, 2026)

3.3 Erdington Community Dynamics

Community Dynamics³⁷ is a methodology developed by Social Life that maps data that predicts how people are likely to feel about where they live. It complements the data commonly used by local agencies - information about deprivation, crime, public health - with data that tells us how people experience everyday life in local neighbourhoods. By incorporating Community Dynamics Data, resident surveys, and long-term, co-designed qualitative research, this dimension embeds people-centred perspective on neighbourhood quality. A key component of this process is benchmarking findings against national perceptual surveys (such as Community Life Survey and Understanding Society Survey), such as those measuring community cohesion, safety, and participation levels. This allows for a comparative analysis between different neighbourhoods and ensures that local insights align with broader regional and national trends.

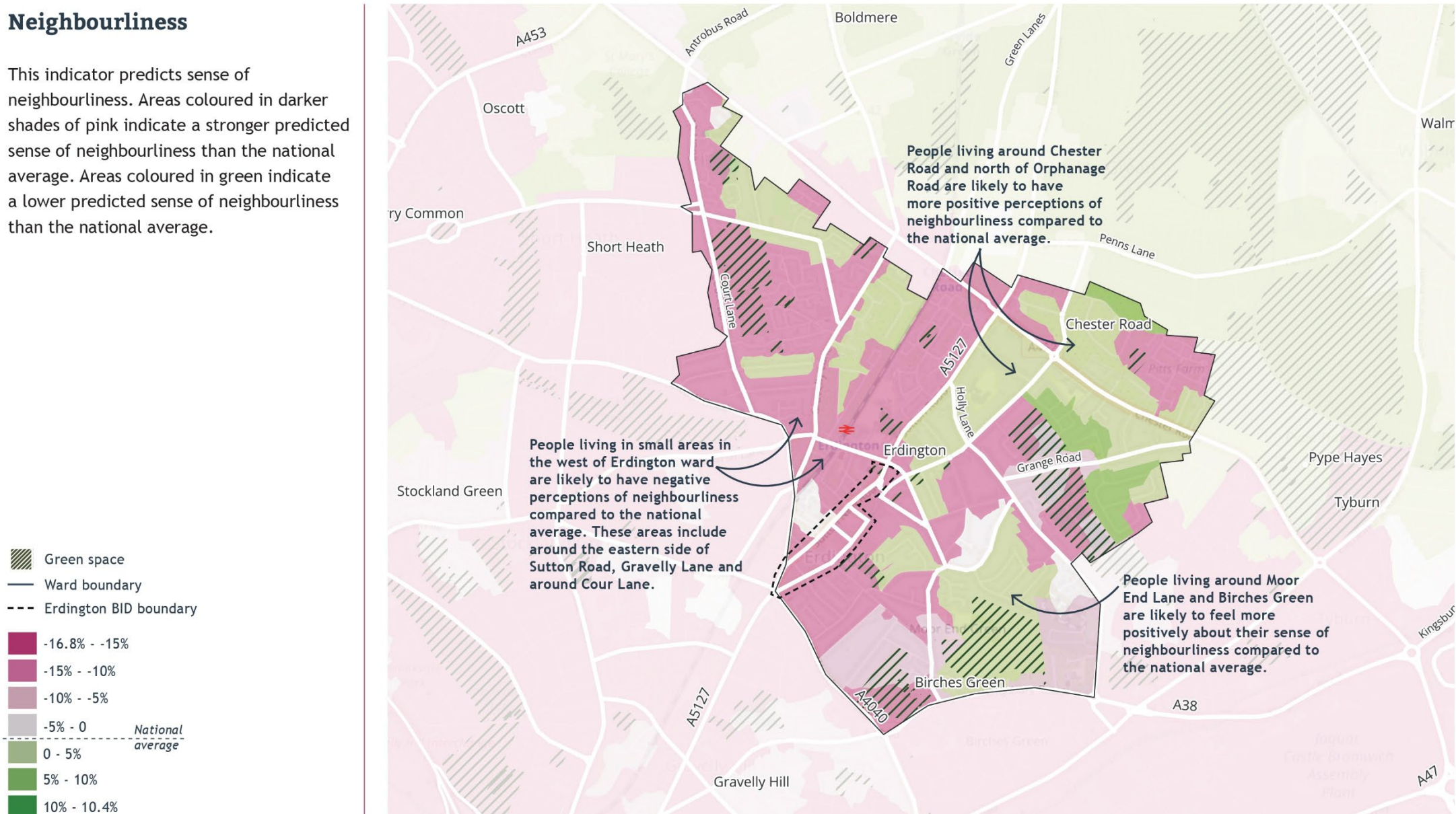
By establishing longitudinal benchmarks, this framework enables continuous monitoring of satisfaction, trust, and civic engagement, ensuring that interventions are both effective and responsive to evolving community needs. Our Community Dynamics methodology works at the Output Area level. In Erdington we mapped Erdington ward using Community Dynamics methodology.

³⁷ https://www.social-life.co/publication/understanding_local_areas/

Erdington ward

Neighbourliness

This indicator predicts sense of neighbourliness. Areas coloured in darker shades of pink indicate a stronger predicted sense of neighbourliness than the national average. Areas coloured in green indicate a lower predicted sense of neighbourliness than the national average.



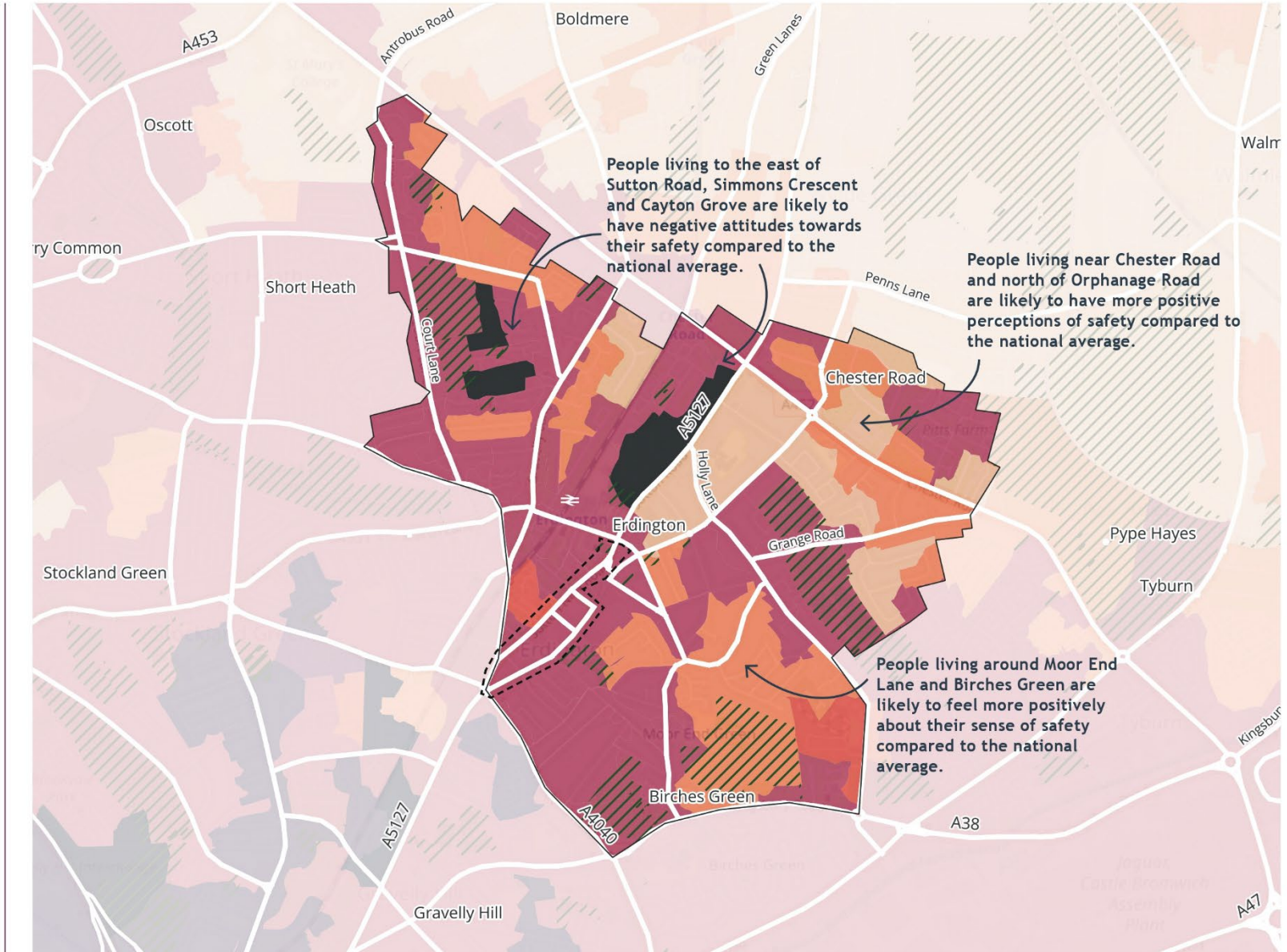
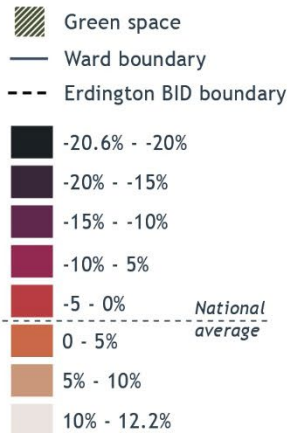
CDRC 2011 OAC Geodata Pack by the ESRC Consumer Data Research Centre' Contains National Statistics data Crown copyright and database right 2015; Contains Ordnance Survey data Crown copyright and database right 2015



Erdington ward

Safety

This indicator predicts sense of safety. Areas coloured in darker shades of purple indicate a lower predicted sense of safety compared to the national average. Areas coloured in maroon, orange and beige indicate a higher predicted sense safety than the national average.

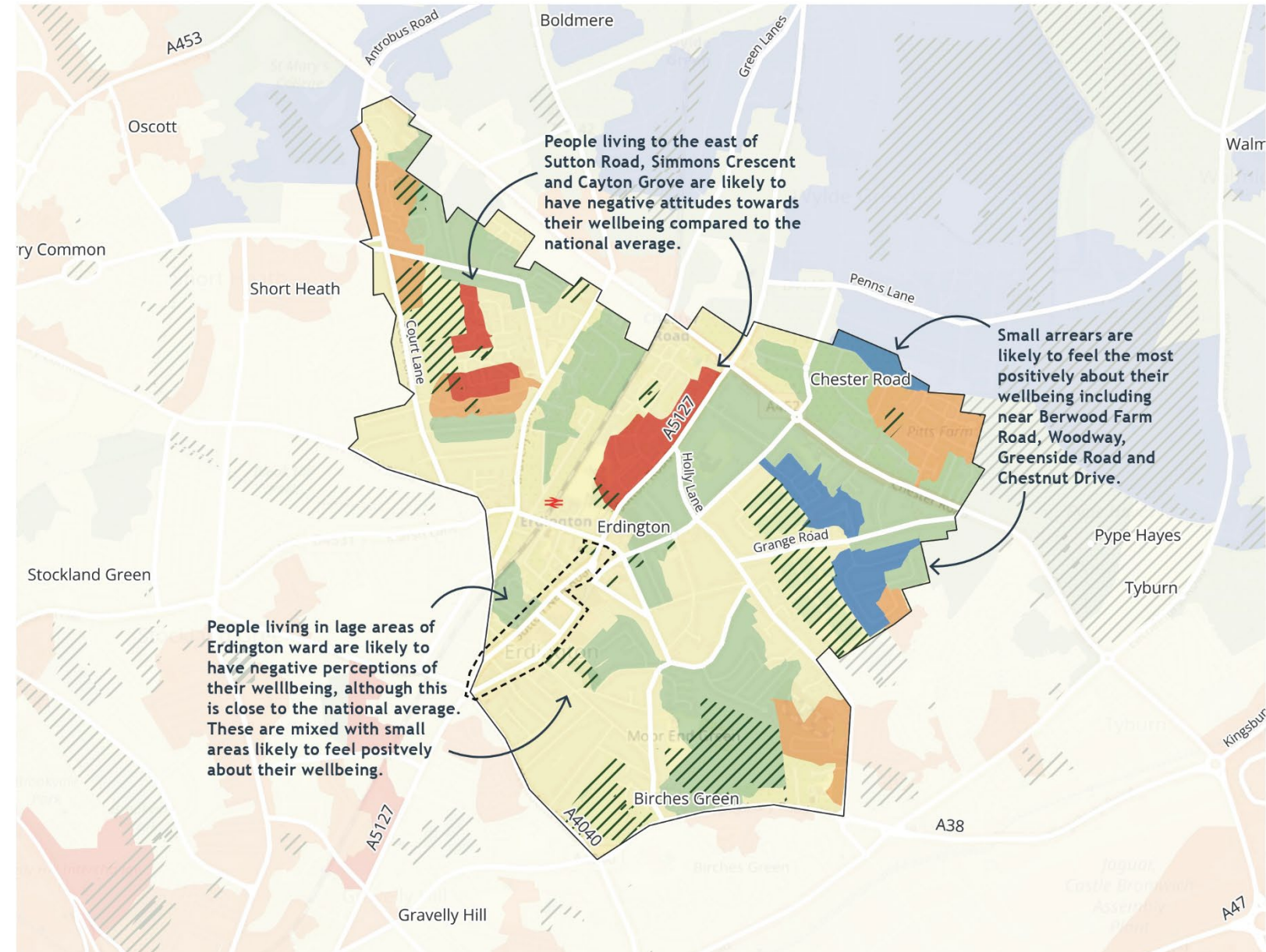


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Erdington ward

Wellbeing

This map shows perceptions of wellbeing. Red, orange and yellow indicates lower perceptions of quality of life compared to the national average. Green and blue areas indicate higher perceptions of quality of life compared to the national average.



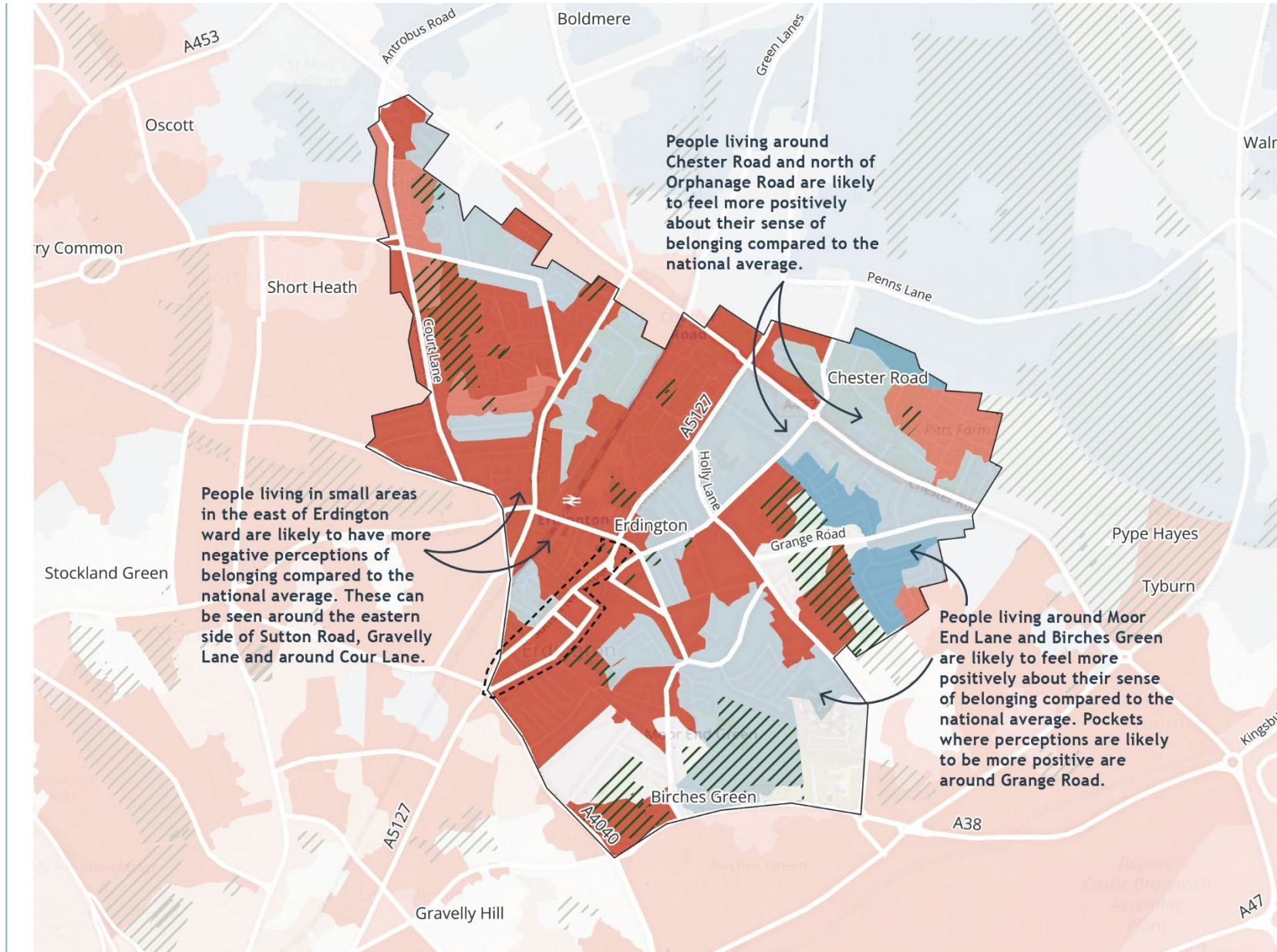
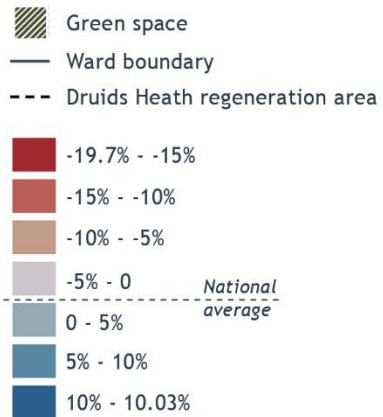
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Erdington ward

Belonging

This indicator predicts sense of belonging. Areas coloured in shades of blue indicate a stronger predicted sense of neighbourliness than the national average. Areas coloured in red indicate a lower predicted sense of belonging than the national average.

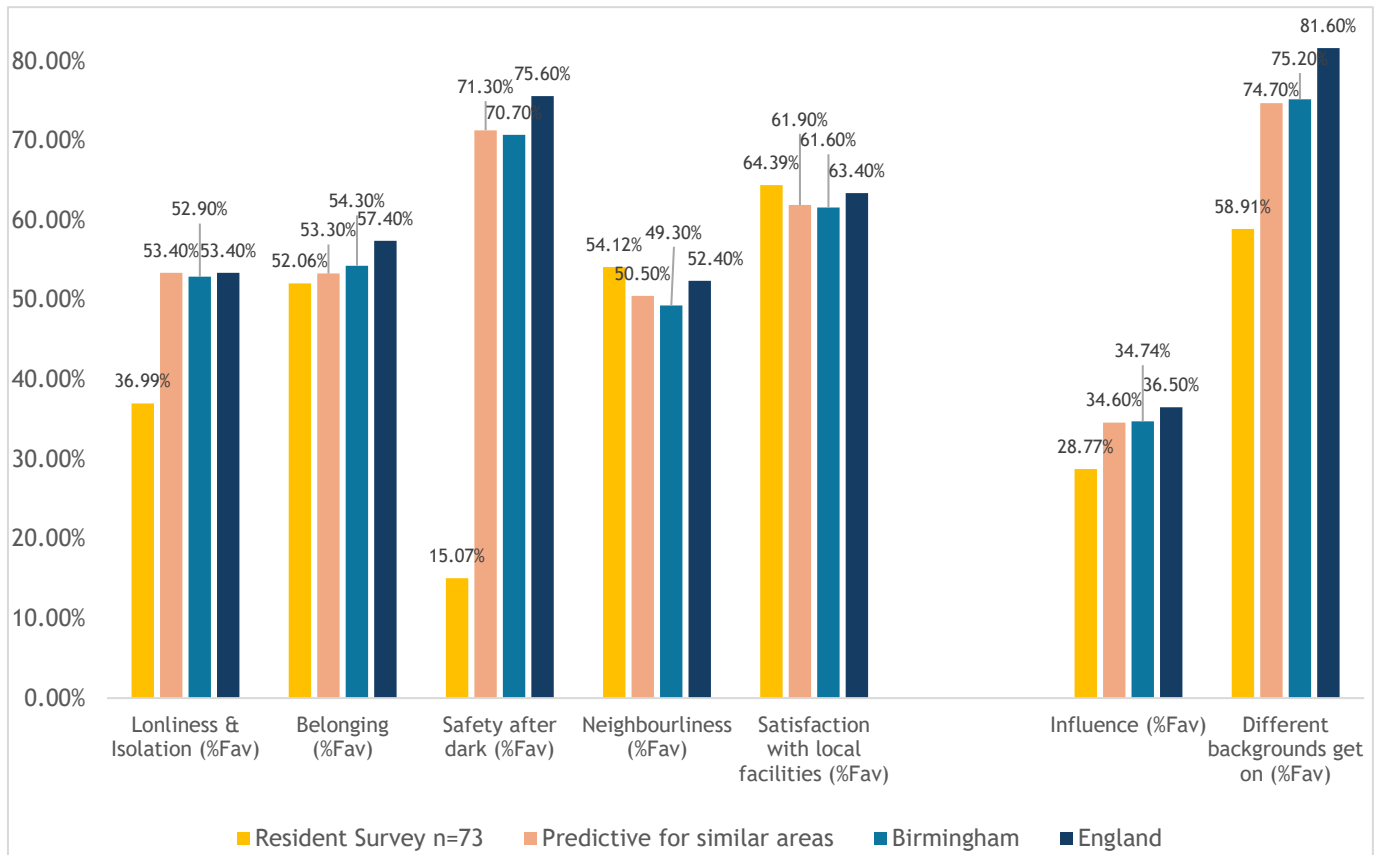


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3.4 Primary data collection

As part of this project, we ran two online surveys to understand the baseline needs of local organisations and residents living around and engaging with Erdington High Street. The survey was developed to focus on the three overarching NBERB priorities of opportunity, safety and neighbourliness and incorporated questions from the Community Dynamics, allowing for a benchmark exercise to take place.

The survey was open for two weeks in the end of the February 2026, distributed by WLCA and the office of Erdington MP Paulette Hamilton.



Comparison between survey responses and predictive data using Community Dynamics

Organisational responses

A total of 14 responses were recorded for the organisational survey. Half of the respondents represented public sector organisations, while a third represented voluntary or community organisations. All the organisations were established in the area, with more than 80 percent having been active in Erdington for over 5 years. When asked about the people they work with, 45% mainly work with older adults, 27% with working-age adults, and 27% with mixed age groups. A significant majority (82%) noted that disabled people or individuals with long-term health conditions make up a significant group in their work.

Resident responses

The resident survey received a total of 78 responses. All respondents lived in North Birmingham, with the vast majority citing Erdington postcodes (B23 and B24) or specific local streets such as Orchard Road, Edwards Road, and Foxglove Way. The respondents were all deeply rooted in the community. An overwhelming 86% have lived in Erdington for over 11 years, while 8% have lived there for 5 to 11 years.

The sample was heavily skewed towards female, with 70% identifying as female and 25% identifying as male (6% preferred not to say). The respondents were generally an older demographic. The largest group was aged 45-54 (35%), followed by those 65+ (25%) and 55-64 (22%). Only about 13% of respondents were between the ages of 25 and 44.

The highest proportion of respondents are in full-time or part-time work (42%), closely followed by retired individuals (30%). Smaller percentages are self-employed (9%), looking after home/family (5.80%), or unable to work (5.80%). Most respondents (74%) identified as English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British, which reflects the demographics of the wider ward. Minorities included Irish (6%), Other White background (6%), White and Asian (3%), and Black Caribbean (3%), with 9% preferring not to answer.

Views of Erdington High Street

When asked to describe the High Street in three words, residents frequently used terms like *'diverse, multicultural and bustling,'* but overwhelmingly focused on negative descriptors such as *'dirty, rundown, unsafe, depressing, intimidating and dilapidated.'* When asked about its biggest strength, residents highlighted the area's diversity, community spirit, public transport links and local amenities like St Barnabas Church and greengrocers. However, a significant portion of residents simply answered nothing or none.

The residents highlighted the diversity of shops and the multicultural mix of the street, noting the range of retail options and food establishments. Some value the presence of local independent businesses and the area's historic character. Others mentioned the local community spirit, accessibility via public transport, and specific amenities like the library. A few responses referenced the street's potential or its convenient location. The answers reflect a mix of appreciation for diversity, local character and practical amenities, focusing on the untapped potential of the high street.

Organisations described the area, similarly, using words like *'busy, vibrant and community,'* alongside *'rundown, scary, unsafe and declining.'* For organisational respondents the High Street's biggest strengths is its diversity, great public transport links, location and strong community feel.

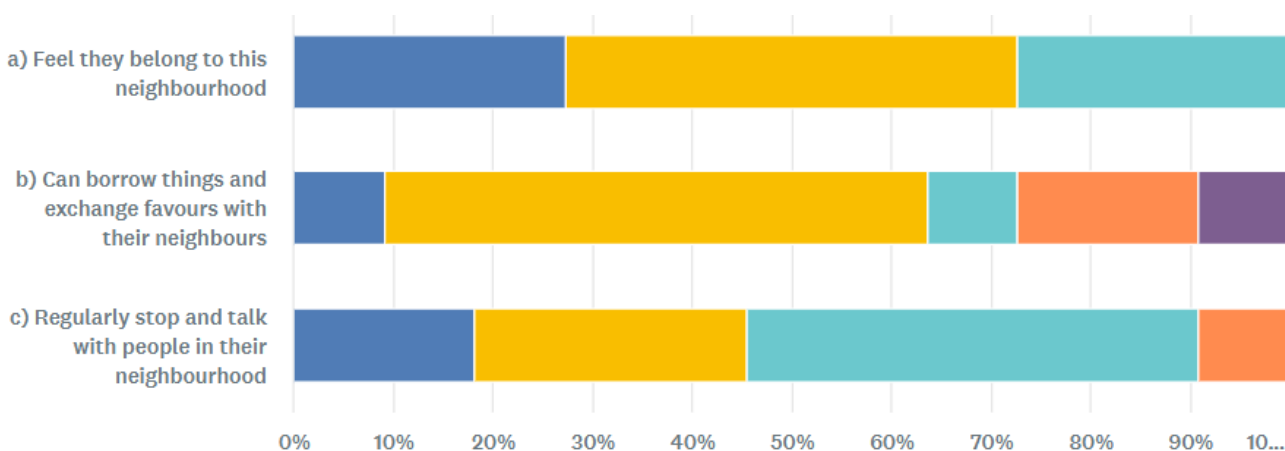
Many organisational respondents highlighted social inclusivity, noting the diversity of people and services as a core asset. Public transportation was also frequently mentioned, with several pointing to the area's strong transport links and accessibility. Some respondents emphasised the sense of community engagement, describing a welcoming community feel.

Both residents and organisations recognised the strong community spirit, cultural diversity, and excellent transport accessibility as the High Street's greatest assets. However, both groups share a negative view of its physical environment, viewing it as a rundown, dirty, and intimidating place, with safety emerging as a key issue.

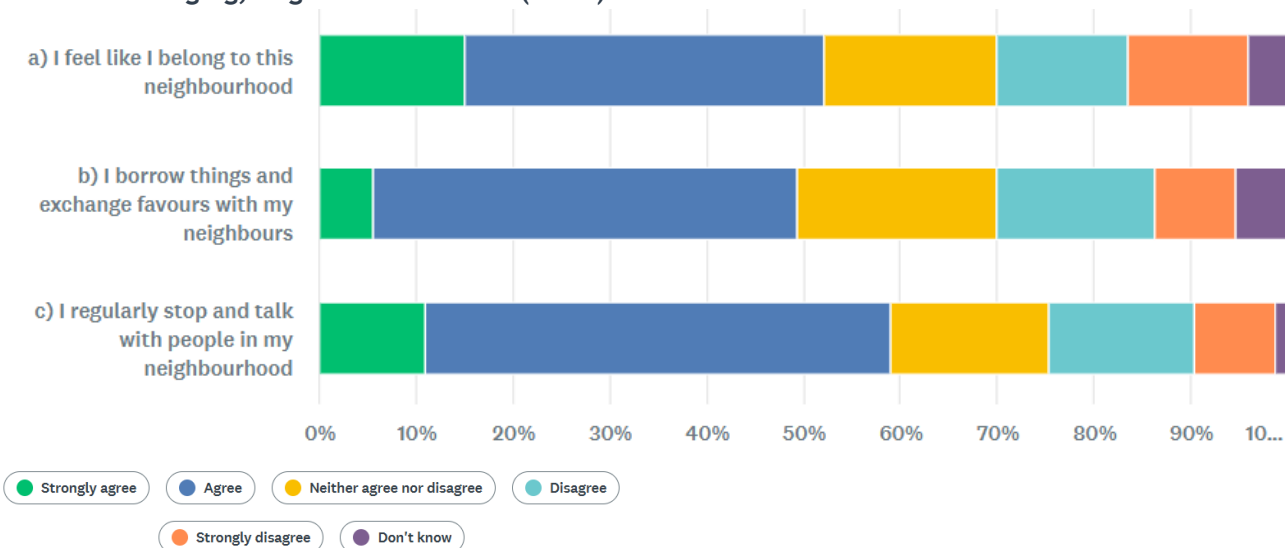
Community cohesion and belonging

There is a notable disconnect between lived experience and organisational perception from the survey responses. This could be due to the different demographics that the two surveys engage with or a difference in perceptions between residents and organisations. Residents report much higher levels of personal belonging, interpersonal interaction, and intercultural cohesion than organisations observe, which could to a degree be explained with the self-selecting sample of residents who responded to the survey, largely representing an older while female section of society. However, both groups agree that residents are rooted in the area and plan to stay long-term.

Residents who responded reported stronger community ties than organisations. Overall, 52% agree or strongly agree that they feel they belong, 49% borrow things or exchange favours with neighbours and nearly 59% regularly stop and talk with people in their neighbourhood. Those values were broadly in line with the predictive values for similar areas and broadly in line with the Birmingham and national averages. Furthermore, 59% of residents plan to remain in the area for a number of years.



Sense of Belonging, Organisation's Views (n=11)



Sense of Belonging, Residents' Views (n=73)

More than half (57%) of respondents agree that people from different backgrounds get on well together, this is lower than the predictive value for similar areas (75%), Birmingham (75%) and England (82%). This might point to a more fragmented and less inclusive environment, where diverse communities lead parallel lives, or alternatively demonstrate a view held by the predominantly white, female and older sample of the survey.

Organisations perceive the community as much more fragmented. Only 27% agree that residents feel they belong and 45% actively disagree that residents regularly stop and talk with one another, which might reflect a perception of the type of demographics organisations support. Furthermore, nearly 55% of organisations disagree that people from different backgrounds get along well. They do agree, however, that residents plan to remain in the area.



Community Health and Wellbeing Hub, WLCA, Erdington High Street (Social Life, 2026)

Influence and volunteering

Both cohorts of respondents strongly agree that residents feel powerless to influence local decision-making. While there is a dedicated core of local volunteers, financial instability, full-time employment and caring responsibilities severely limit broader community participation.

28% of residents agree that they can personally influence decisions affecting their local area, this is lower than predicted values for similar areas (35%), Birmingham (35%) and England (36%). Despite this, 46% have volunteered in the last 12 months which is most likely reflects the engaged population who responded to the survey. In open-ended responses, residents who do not volunteer cited working full-time, childcare, or caring for elderly relatives as the main barriers. Those who do volunteer are highly active in local groups like Erdington Litter Busters, Witton Lakes Eco Hub and local churches.

A significant number of organisations (70%) agree that residents lack the ability to influence local decisions. When asked if it is easy to engage volunteers, responses were split (45% yes, 36% no). Open-ended responses noted that financial insecurity is a major barrier, residents dealing with poverty or health issues view volunteering as a 'luxury' when they are struggling to survive.

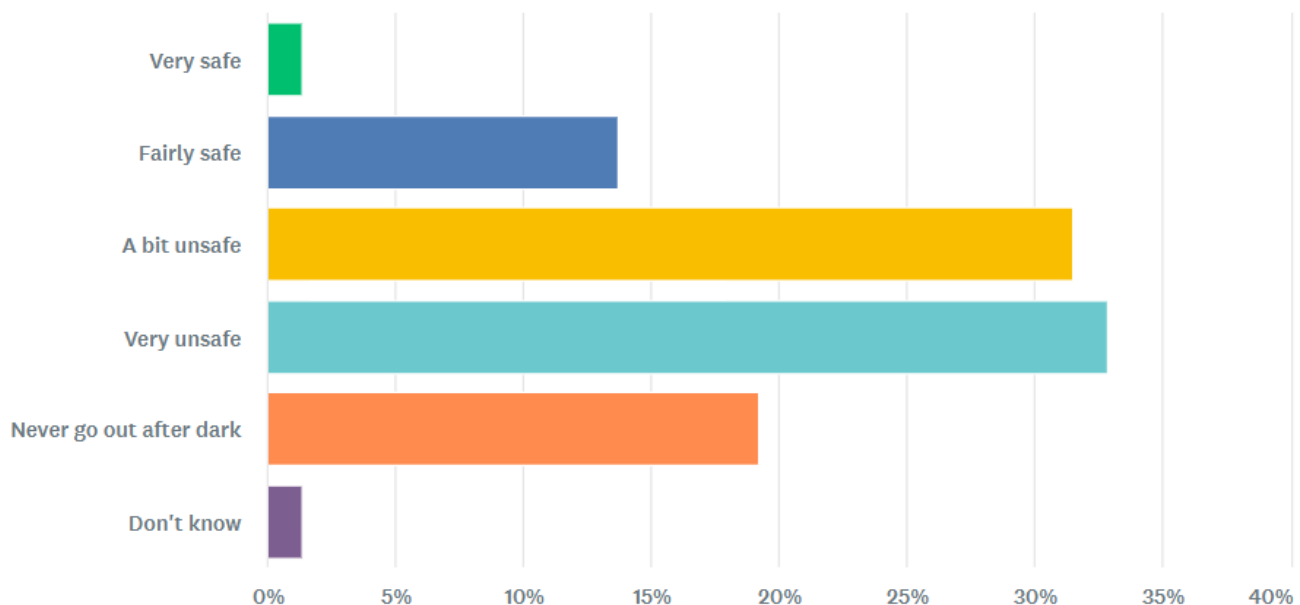
Safety and Crime

Safety is acknowledged by both cohorts of respondents as severely compromised. Open drug activity, anti-social behaviour, the proliferation of HMOs (Houses in Multiple Occupation) without adequate support services, poor lighting, and invisible policing are the primary drivers of extreme fear, particularly after dark. Both environmental and physical factors and social factors play a role in this perception.

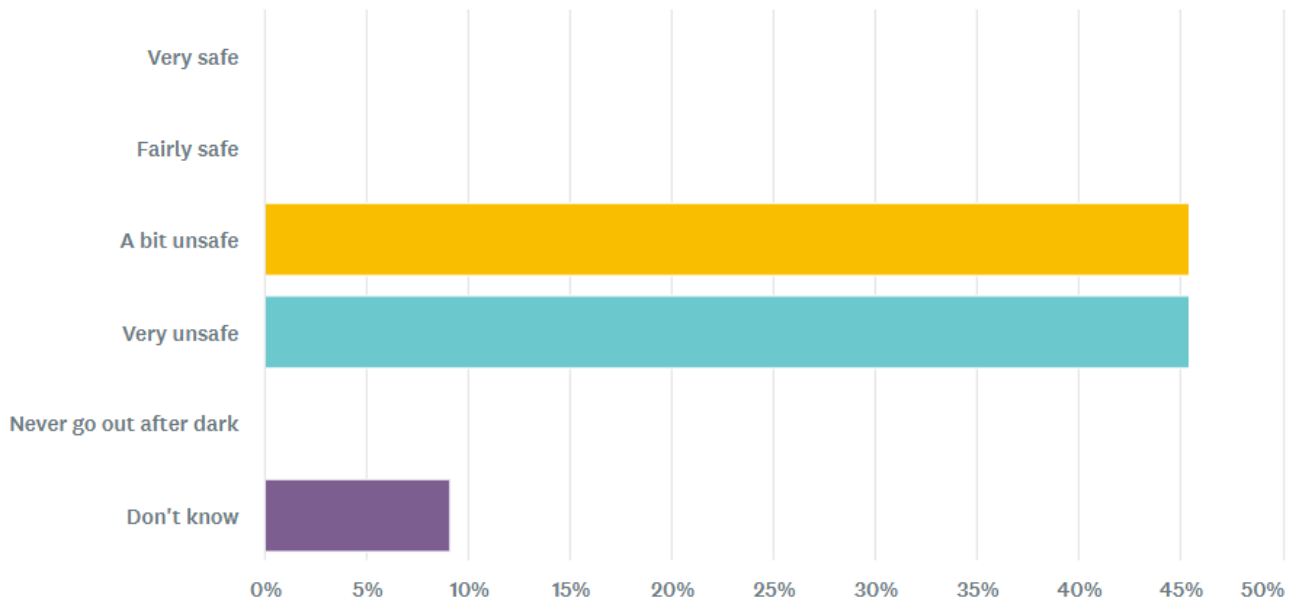
For residents, safety is a critical issue, expressing concerns about safety with an overall tone of worry and frustration. Over 64% of residents feel unsafe or very unsafe walking alone after dark, and an additional 19% never go out after dark. Only 15% of residents agree or strongly agree that it is safe to walk after dark, severely under the predicted value for similar areas (71%), Birmingham (71%) and England (76%). Compounded by the sample's bias towards older white female, this demonstrated that safety is an endemic issue on the high street, requiring a gender-sensitive approach to solving.

Out of all residents, 83.5% worry about being a victim of crime. In open-ended answers, residents highlighted poorly lit streets and parks as a key issue, making public spaces feel unsafe, especially at night. Many mentioned visible drug activity, theft and groups loitering or drinking in public, contributing to a sense of vulnerability. Some also raised concerns about car crime, property break-ins and a lack of police presence. A few noted worries specific to women and young people, as well as issues linked to HMOs and neighbourhood decline. Overall, residents feel safety has deteriorated.

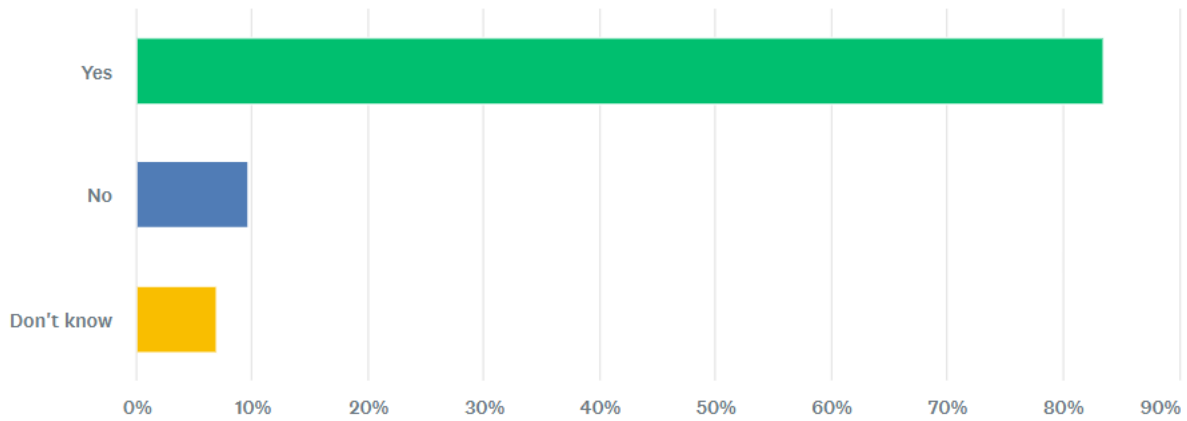
Organisations share this concern, with 90% stating residents feel unsafe after dark, and 82% agreeing residents worry about crime. They attribute this fear primarily to anti-social behaviour, theft or burglary and violent crime. Many associate this fear with persistent nuisance activities, limited police patrols, and areas with high concentrations of pubs or groups loitering. Some also highlight the influence of socioeconomic challenges, such as poverty and overcrowding, as well as the presence of individuals with mental health issues. Poor street lighting and infrastructure, along with knowledge of local crimes, further contribute to concerns.



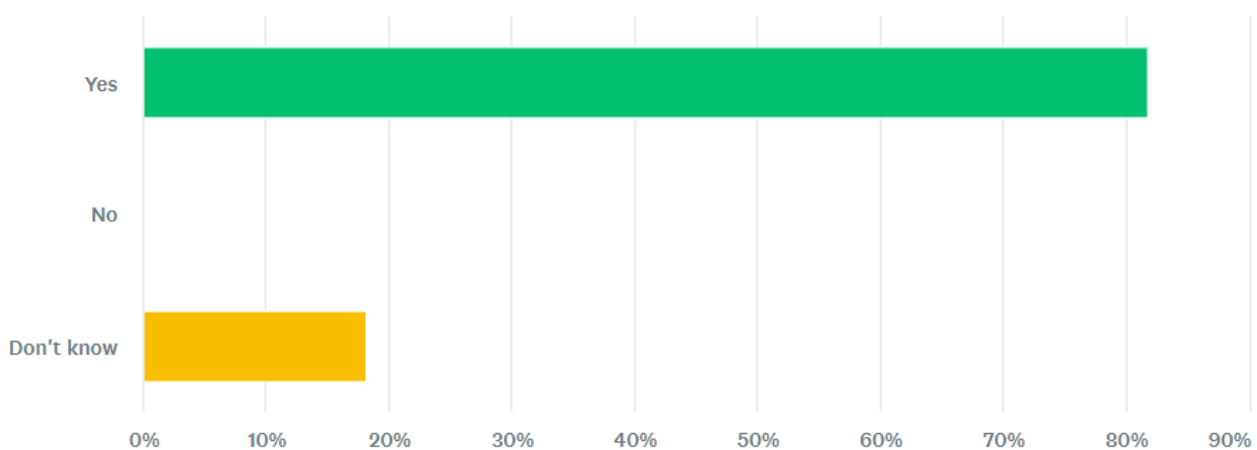
How safe do you feel walking alone in your neighbourhood after dark?, Residents' View (n=73)



How safe do residents feel walking alone in this area after dark?, Organisation's View (n=11)



Do you worry about the possibility that you, or anyone else who lives with you, might be the victim of crime?, Residents' Views (n=73)



Do residents ever worry about the possibility that they, or anyone else who lives with them, might be the victim of crime?, Organisations' Views (n=11)



Mural, Erdington High Street (Social Life, 2026)

Financial management, isolation and support needs

Organisations perceive vastly higher rates of financial hardship, food bank reliance, and mental health crises than the general resident sample reported. This discrepancy is likely because community organisations are on the front lines directly serving the most vulnerable and left behind populations in the neighbourhood in contrast to the self-selected sample.

Around 67% of residents report they are living comfortably or doing alright, while 23% are just getting by or finding it difficult. Nearly 88% have not used a food bank in the last 12 months. Regarding isolation, 37% feel isolated often or some of the time, which is a lower value than predictive values for similar areas and nationally.

Organisations perceive a much higher level of community distress. Over 63% believe residents are finding it quite or very difficult financially. Over 81% report that food bank or emergency support use is common or very common. Similarly, 81.8% state that mental health issues are common or very common among the people they work with.

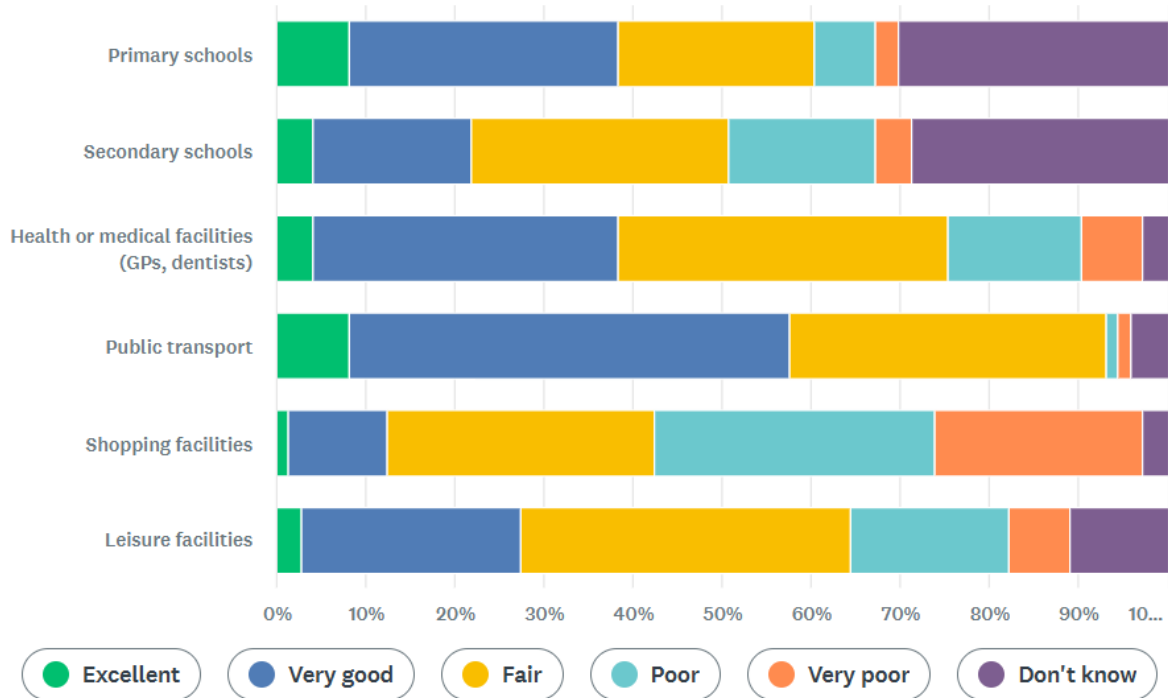
Satisfaction with local services and overall environment

The physical environment and retail offering of Erdington High Street are viewed negatively. The proliferation of low-quality shops such as betting or vape shops, combined with severe litter, neglect and the loss of key community assets like the local library, has created a deeply unsatisfactory environment.

Residents rated primary schools and public transport the best but gave poor ratings to shopping and leisure facilities. Over 72% described the overall quality of the High Street environment as unsatisfactory or poor. Open-ended explanations cited endless litter, fly-tipping, the temporary closure of the library for

repairs, lack of quality supermarkets, and the High Street being overrun by betting shops, pawn brokers, and vape shops. Respondents noted the area feels ‘lawless’ and ‘depressing’.

Organisations also rated shopping and leisure facilities poorly. Over 54% rated the overall environment as unsatisfactory or poor. Open-ended comments described the environment as scruffy, neglected, and unwelcoming, noting that visible poverty, tired public spaces, and ASB drastically impact local pride.



Satisfaction with Services, Resident’s Views (n=73)

Priorities for Improvement and Future Changes

There is a consensus on the roadmap for improvement. Both residents and organisations prioritise urgent action on crime and safety, stricter regulation of HMOs, physical cleaning and betterment of the urban realm and the reopening or protection of crucial social infrastructure like the library. Both groups stress the need for investment to diversify the High Street retail offering and the necessity of truly empowering residents in future decision-making.

In open-ended questions regarding priorities, residents demanded a visible police presence on the beat to tackle drugs and ASB, a halt to the approval of new HMOs, and a massive clean-up of streets and pavements. Residents want the library reopened, cheaper rents to attract quality independent businesses and supermarkets and dedicated spaces and activities for youth. Residents also commented on the need for authentic consultation that accommodates working people, rather than daytime meetings.

Residents’ feedback on improving Erdington’s neighbourhood quality centres on a desire for greater retail diversity and higher-quality shops, alongside a strong call for increased police presence and more effective crime prevention. Many also highlight the need for a cleaner, better-maintained high street. Some respondents mention concerns about the regulation and impact of HMOs, as well as the value of community events, youth activities, and improved food options. A few suggest enhancements to public spaces and traffic management. Overall, the sentiment reflects a wish for increased investment and the creation of a safer, more vibrant, and welcoming community.

Organisational priorities mirrored those of the residents: making the high street safer via lighting and patrols; revitalising empty retail units; taking firmer action on ASB; and creating warm, accessible spaces for community connection. For future planning, they emphasised the need to safeguard the library, properly regulate HMOs, and ensure changes are driven ‘bottom-up’ by residents’ lived experiences.

Organisational respondents focused on improving neighbourhood quality in Erdington, with an overall constructive tone. Many highlighted the need for more and better-maintained community spaces, increased public safety and improved access to community services as top priorities. Some also emphasised the importance of residential and economic development, cleaner public spaces, and enhanced transport and parking infrastructure. A few mentioned regenerating the high street and general improvements. While priorities varied, there was broad agreement on the need for safer, more inclusive environments and better amenities to support residents and attract people to the area.



Erdington High Street (Social Life, 2026)

4 DNS Dashboard for Erdington

4.1 Thematic Priorities, Indicators and Comparative Mapping

This section presents the DNS data dashboard for Erdington to gain a baseline understanding of neighbourhood quality, exploring what decency means in data terms for each theme, drawing out the implications for ongoing monitoring and the next phases of the DNS programme.

The Erdington DNS dashboard focuses on three thematic priorities: Sense of Belonging, Crime and Safety, and Opportunity and Local Economy. Drawing on secondary data, Community Dynamics predictive benchmarks and the resident and organisational survey findings, it offers an initial analysis of neighbourhood quality in Erdington to date. The picture it shows is of a neighbourhood with strong social assets and community resilience operating in an area of persistent deprivation, compromised safety, and underperforming public infrastructure.

Before interpreting individual themes and indicators, it is important to be clear about what a dashboard of this kind can and cannot tell us. The data assembled here is comparative by design, with each Erdington value placed against Birmingham and England national benchmarks where available.

The dashboard includes 'hard' data alongside data that predicts perceptions of key indicators of community life. The survey data we gathered is not incorporated into the dashboard as was gathered through a different methodology. Although limited in scope and with sample cohort bias, the survey results do however provide an insightful comparative perspective to the secondary data showing lived realities versus predictive values.

We have compared data about the Erdington area with city wide and national data however, 'comparison' alone cannot of itself fully qualify what 'decency' means in Erdington. A neighbourhood that performs slightly above the Birmingham average on a particular crime metric is not necessarily a decent one if crime is already elevated across the whole city. Equally, some indicators have no external benchmarks, because no national standard or statutory minimum exists yet at the neighbourhood scale. The dashboard therefore functions as a 'data decency proxy', a starting point for the developing conversation and mapping of what a decent neighbourhood means in Erdington. Ultimately defining what decency means for Erdington residents and communities will be through co-production of decency thresholds to give each indicator real accountability, a key task within Dimensions 2 to 4 of the WLCA DNS Demonstrator programme.

Table 1 below sets out the list of indicators derived, and Table 2, the neighbourhood and comparative data gathered on those indicators and respective metrics.

	Theme	Indicator	Measure Type
1	SENSE OF BELONGING	INDICATOR 1.1. NEIGHBOURLINESS	<i>metric measure: % agreeing, predictive</i>
2	CRIME & SAFETY	INDICATOR 2.1: SAFETY	<i>metric measure: % feeling unsafe, predictive</i>
3	CRIME & SAFETY	INDICATOR 2.2: HIGH STREET CRIME	<i>metric: incidents per 1,000 residents; date: March 2024/25</i>
4	CRIME & SAFETY	INDICATOR 2.3: COMMUNITY CRIME	<i>metric measure: incidents per 1,000 residents</i>
5	CRIME & SAFETY	INDICATOR 2.4: SERIOUS CRIME	<i>metric measure: incidents per 1,000 residents</i>
6	OPPORTUNITY	INDICATOR 3.1: JOBS & EMPLOYMENT	<i>metric measure: %; *count; date: 2024/25</i>
7	OPPORTUNITY	INDICATOR 3.2: OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE	<i>metric measure: %; date: 2025</i>
8	OPPORTUNITY	INDICATOR 3.3: POVERTY PREVENTION	<i>metric measure: score</i>
9	OPPORTUNITY	INDICATOR 3.4: SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION	<i>metric measure: various</i>
10	OPPORTUNITY	INDICATOR 3.5: SATISFACTION WITH SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE	<i>metric measure: % satisfied</i>
11	OPPORTUNITY	INDICATOR 3.6: TRANSPORT & ACCESSIBILITY	<i>metric measure: %; *index</i>
12	OPPORTUNITY	INDICATOR 3.8: HIGH STREET HEALTH	<i>metric measure: various</i>
13	OPPORTUNITY	INDICATOR 3.9: PUBLIC HEALTH	<i>metric measure: various</i>
14	OPPORTUNITY	INDICATOR 3.10: WELLBEING	<i>metric measure: %</i>

TABLE 1: Decent Neighbourhood Standard, Erdington Indicators

THEME 1: SENSE OF BELONGING (1 indicator · 5 metrics)					
INDICATOR 1.1: NEIGHBOURLINESS (metric measure: % agreeing, *predictive values for similar areas to Erdington)					
Metric	Measure	Erdington*	Birmingham	England	Notes
Neighbourliness	%	50.50%	49.30%	52.40%	Community Dynamics
Neighbour relationships between diff backgrounds	%	74.70%	75.20%	81.60%	Community Dynamics
Belonging	%	53.30%	54.30%	57.40%	Community Dynamics
Influence	%	34.60%	34.74%	36.50%	Community Dynamics
Loneliness & Isolation	%	53.40%	52.90%	53.40%	Community Dynamics
THEME 2: CRIME & SAFETY (4 indicators · 13 metrics)					
INDICATOR 2.1: SAFETY (metric measure: % feeling unsafe, predictive)					
Metric	Measure	Erdington*	Birmingham	England	Notes
Feel safe after dark	%	71.30%	70.70%	75.60%	Community Dynamics
INDICATOR 2.2: HIGH STREET CRIME (metric: incidents per 1,000 residents; date: March 2024/25)					
Metric	Measure	Erdington	Birmingham	England	Notes
Vehicle crime	per 1,000	7.28	9.44	N/A	March 24/25
Shoplifting	per 1,000	11.28	11.32	9.39	March 24/25
Bicycle crime	per 1,000	0.60	0.69	1.06	March 24/25
Fly tipping *	per capita	N/A	20.80	18.70	March 24/25
INDICATOR 2.3: COMMUNITY CRIME (metric measure: incidents per 1,000 residents)					
Metric	Measure	Erdington	Birmingham	England	Notes
Anti-social behaviour	per 1,000	9.42	8.10	16.88 *	* Incl. Wales
Theft from person	per 1,000	1.39	1.24	2.68	March 24/25
Other theft	per 1,000	7.19	8.56	5.61	March 24/25
Burglary	per 1,000	5.66	6.63	4.34	March 24/25
Robbery	per 1,000	3.16	3.18	1.40	March 24/25
INDICATOR 2.4: SERIOUS CRIME (metric measure: incidents per 1,000 residents)					
Metric	Measure	Erdington	Birmingham	England	Notes

Drugs offences	per 1,000	4.87	3.68	3.61	March 24/25
Criminal damage & arson	per 1,000	9.70	9.44	8.20	March 24/25
Violent crime	per 1,000	50.81	52.67	35.85	March 24/25
THEME 3: OPPORTUNITY (10 indicators · 32 metrics)					
INDICATOR 3.1: JOBS & EMPLOYMENT (metric measure: %; *count; date: 2024/25)					
Metric	Measure	Erdington	Birmingham	England	Date
IMD - Employment - score	%	21.50%	21.40%	12.60%	2025* High percentages indicate greater deprivation
Claimant count (Universal Credit)	%	30.60%	33.70%	38.60%	2025
ESA claimants *	Count	2,380 30%	111,822 10%	4,671,963 8%	* Count May 24 to Feb 25, Covering 5 LSOAs around the high street
INDICATOR 3.2: OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (metric measure: %; date: 2025)					
Metric	Measure	Erdington	Birmingham	England	Date
% 16-17 NEET	%	TBC	3.20%	3.40%	2025
INDICATOR 3.3: POVERTY PREVENTION (metric measure: score)					
Metric	Measure	Erdington	Birmingham	England	Date
IMD score (2025)	Score	37.66	38.12	Benchmarked	Higher score more deprived
INDICATOR 3.4: SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION (metric measure: various)					
Metric	Measure	Erdington	Birmingham	England	Date
Libraries	%	75%	41%	41%	2024
Community facilities	Count per capita	TBC	40.05	68.89	2024
Childcare providers	Count	TBC	N/A	53,600	2025
Faith buildings	Count per capita	TBC	47	72.12	Jul 2024
Voluntary/community orgs	Count	TBC	1,783	132,030	2021/22
Pubs	Count per capita	TBC	32.76	65.54	Oct 2024
ATMs & cashpoints	Count per capita	11	60.29	55.48	2024/25
Post offices	Count per capita	TBC	9.35	14.45	Jul 2024
Leisure facilities	%	--	45%	41%	2024
INDICATOR 3.5: SATISFACTION WITH SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE (metric measure: % satisfied)					
Metric	Measure	Erdington*	Birmingham	England	Date

Satisfaction with local services	%	61.90%	61.60%	63.40%	Community Dynamics
INDICATOR 3.6: TRANSPORT & ACCESSIBILITY (metric measure: %; *index)					
Metric	Measure	Erdington	Birmingham	England	Date
Travel to work on foot	%	6.40%	7.10%	7.70%	
Connectivity Score (PT Access) *	Index	82-85	29-90	100	Point-based assessment, given as range
INDICATOR 3.8: HIGH STREET HEALTH (metric measure: various)					
Metric	Measure	Erdington	Birmingham	England	Date
Business diversity index	--	TBC	--	--	Data requires commissioning
Vacancy rates	%	TBC	--	--	Data requires commissioning
Footfall	Count	TBC	--	--	Data requires commissioning
Independent vs chain	%	TBC	--	--	Data requires commissioning
Fast food outlets	Count per capita	TBC	136	115.9	
Living environment IMD	Decile	2.26	--	--	2019
INDICATOR 3.9: PUBLIC HEALTH (metric measure: various)					
Metric	Measure	Erdington	Birmingham	England	Date
Healthy Life expectancy at 65 (female)	Years	9.96	9.31	11.2	2022- 24 2021-23 *England
Healthy Life expectancy at 65 (male)	Years	8.51	8.84	10.1	2022- 24 2021-23 *England
Long-term illness and disability prevalence	Percentage Count	19.49% (4,202)	17.3% (198,064)	17.7% (9.8 million)	Census 2021
GP surgeries	Count	0.088	0.197	0.165	March 2026
Dentists	Count	0.004	0.193	0.215	March 2026
INDICATOR 3.10: WELLBEING (metric measure: %)					
Metric	Measure	Erdington*	Birmingham	England	Date
Wellbeing: quality of life	%	65.00%	63.10%	66.10%	Community Dynamics
Wellbeing: satisfaction with area	%	62.00%	63.10%	73.80%	Community Dynamics

TABLE 2: Erdington High Street Data Decent Neighbourhood Standard Dashboard

4.2 Theme 1: Sense of Belonging

What the DNS data dashboard shows.

Erdington's Community Dynamics predictive benchmark for neighbourliness sits at 50%, marginally above Birmingham's 49% and slightly below the England average of 52%. Scores for belonging (53%), influence over local decisions (35%), and loneliness and isolation (53%) all track close to, but below, Birmingham and national comparators.

The survey data gathered for this project shows a divergence to these trends. Residents who responded reported a neighbourliness score of 54.1%, slightly above the predictive benchmark, reflecting the core survey sample of strongly rooted, long-established residents (85.9% have lived in Erdington for over 11 years). Yet this relational warmth sits alongside a severe safety crisis and weakened cross-community cohesion: only 15.1% feel safe after dark (against a benchmark of 71.3%), and 58.9% agree that people from different backgrounds get on well (against 74.7% nationally)."

The gap between resident and organisational perception: A notable feature of the survey findings is the consistent divergence between how residents and local organisations perceive community cohesion. Residents (primarily an older, established, predominantly White British population) report stronger belonging and higher satisfaction with interpersonal relationships than organisational respondents. Local organisations, who directly serve the most marginalised and economically precarious residents, observe much higher levels of social isolation and financial hardship. This divergence reflects the nuanced reality of a neighbourhood with pockets of strong community capital alongside populations whose experiences of Erdington are defined by vulnerability and exclusion. Both realities need to be represented in a DNS.

	Resident Survey n=73	Community dynamics benchmark for comparable area	Birmingham	NATIONAL AVERAGE
<i>Loneliness & Isolation (%Fav)</i>	36.99%*	53.40%	52.90%	53.40%
<i>Belonging (%Fav)</i>	52.06%	53.30%	54.30%	57.40%
<i>Safety after dark (%Fav)</i>	15.07%	71.30%	70.70%	75.60%
<i>Neighbourliness (%Fav)</i>	54.12%*	50.50%	49.30%	52.40%
<i>Satisfaction with local facilities (%Fav)</i>	64.39%	61.90%	61.60%	63.40%
<i>Influence (%Fav)</i>	28.77%	34.60%	34.74%	36.50%
<i>Different backgrounds get on (%Fav)</i>	58.91%	74.70%	75.20%	81.60%

TABLE 3: COMPARATIVE SURVEY, PREDICTIVE, CITY AND NATIONAL DATA

What does "decency" look like in data terms for Belonging?

Belonging indicators are predictive, and there is no official threshold for 'sufficient neighbourliness'. This means decency, in this thematic area, is best understood as a relative benchmark. Erdington should, as a minimum, reach comparator levels for similar areas and approach national averages. The weakness in the influence indicator (35% predictive score; 29% in the resident survey) is particularly important - feeling able to shape decisions in your neighbourhood is not simply a 'nice to have'. It is a precondition for the kind of co-produced, community-led decency that the DNS framework seeks to embed.

“There are many positive aspects to Erdington including a great community spirit, and the local BID and voluntary groups are doing a great job. The old baths development will help a lot. Oikos café is an asset. Some issues are nationwide and not particularly to Erdington and our High Street has relatively few empty/boarded up outlets, but the old precinct is very jaded, and needs to be kept clean, safe, with regular activities to keep people interested in visiting.” (65+, white female)

Indicator	Decency type	What decency looks like in data
<p>Indicator 1.1: Neighbourliness</p> <p><i>Erdington broadly tracks national and city averages on belonging metrics, masking significant variation across demographic groups and concealing a severe safety-driven withdrawal from public life.</i></p>	<p>Relative benchmark</p>	<p>No statutory floor. Decency threshold = reaching the Birmingham average (49%) as a minimum, with an aspirational target of exceeding national (52) and closing the gap with national community cohesion data. The weakness of the 'influence' sub-metric is the most critical for DNS accountability.</p>

4.3 Theme 2: Crime and Safety

Crime and safety most starkly illustrate the gap between secondary 'hard' data and lived experience. The aggregated crime figures, taken in isolation, are not immediately alarming: Erdington's violent crime rate (50.81 per 1,000 residents) is slightly below Birmingham's (52.67) and considerably above the England average (35.85); anti-social behaviour (9.42 per 1,000) sits above Birmingham's rate (8.10) but well below the England average (16.88, which includes Wales). Burglary (5.66) is above the national rate (4.34). Drugs offences (4.87) significantly exceed both the Birmingham (3.68) and national (3.61) rates.

However, Community Dynamics data reveals a gap between survey respondents and what would be expected in comparable areas. Only 15% of resident survey respondents feel safe after dark, against a Community Dynamics predictive benchmark for small comparable areas of 71% and a Birmingham figure of 71%. The substantial gap between predicted and actual percentages is the larger than for any other indicator.

High Street crime context

The Indicator 2.2 data on High Street crime presents a more granular picture of the commercial environment's safety dynamics. Shoplifting (11.28 per 1,000) is very similar to the Birmingham rate (11.32), suggesting this is a city-wide pattern. Vehicle crime (7.28 per 1,000) is below the Birmingham comparator (9.44). Bicycle crime (0.60) is below both city and national rates. These figures, if read in isolation, might suggest a reasonably performing retail environment, yet they are contradicted by the survey evidence (from open-ended questions). The proliferation of HMOs without adequate support services, visible drug activity, and low visibility of policing were consistently identified as the primary drivers of fear of crime.

This underscores an important methodological point to consider when qualifying decency, that quantitative crime counts measure the incidents reported, but they do not measure the pervasive sense of vulnerability and fear that erodes daily quality of life. They also do not capture under-reporting of crime, something that can be prevalent in low trust areas with higher levels of deprivation.

“Give Erdington the same respect, funding and opportunities that Sutton Coldfield gets in investment, HMO decisions, planning applications for unsavoury establishments etc. 40 years ago Erdington was a destination for people to come to. It was a healthy, bustling high street with full units and healthy engagement. The people of Erdington didn't all of a sudden become a deprived area this is a decades long drip feed of bad decisions, planning and funding cuts. It's time for change.” (45-50, Female White/other background)

What does "decency" look like in data terms for Crime and Safety?

Crime indicators sit at the intersection of two different decency logics, and it is important to distinguish between them.

Trajectory-to-zero indicators.

Certain crime categories (violent crime, robbery, drugs offences, criminal damage) have a decency threshold best described as 'as low as reasonably achievable'. There is no comfortable or acceptable level of violent crime in a neighbourhood, however this is also something which is impossible to completely eradicate. For these indicators, 'decency' means consistent year-on-year reduction toward the lowest rates achievable in comparable urban areas, with community and policing accountability for any deterioration. The current violent crime rate in Erdington (50.81 per 1,000) is above the England average (35.85) highlighting a failure against this standard.

Statutory and regulatory indicators.

Anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping are subject to partial statutory frameworks. Local authorities have legal duties and powers under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (including the ASB Case Review mechanism) which gives residents the right to demand a formal review where reports have not been adequately addressed – and duties to keep land clear of refuse under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. 'Decency' here means both low counts and having functioning accountability and response systems so that residents' reports are acted on and enforcement is visible and transparent.

Perception as a key indicator.

The severe gap between the predicted safety benchmark and the survey data reality establishes the case for treating perception of safety (not just crime counts) as a key DNS indicator.

The proposed methodology for the ongoing monitoring of this indicator draws on Community Dynamics benchmarks and regular resident and stakeholder surveys. The decency benchmark for perception of safety in Erdington should be set at the current Birmingham average (71% feeling safe after dark), with a national comparator (76%) as an aspirational target.

Indicator	Decency type	What decency looks like in data
Indicator 2.1: Safety (Perception) <i>Perception of safety is weak. This is the largest deficit in the dataset and should be the primary accountability metric for policing and BID partners.</i>	Relative benchmark	Decency threshold: reaching the Birmingham average as a minimum (71% feeling safe after dark) Perception is the primary lived-experience indicator for this theme and should be tracked at minimum annually via a resident survey.

Indicator	Decency type	What decency looks like in data
Indicator 2.4: Serious Crime (Violent crime, Drugs) <i>Erdington performs similarly to Birmingham for violent crime but above the England figure. Drugs offences significantly are higher both comparators which is consistent with evidence of open drug activity on the Erdington High Street.</i>	Trajectory to zero	No 'acceptable' level. Decency = year-on-year reduction toward or below the England average (35.85 per 1,000 for violent crime; 3.61 for drugs). Current Erdington rate for violent crime and drugs offences (4.87) are substantially above national levels. Both require urgent accountability from West Midlands Police.

4.4 Theme 3: Opportunity and Local Economy

What the data shows.

The Opportunity theme encompasses the broadest range of indicators and captures an underlying tension in Erdington's character: it is a place with real economic activity and community assets - a functioning High Street with approximately 300 businesses, a library (prior to its temporary closure), a health and wellbeing hub and strong public transport connectivity - while at the same time experiencing significant labour market disadvantage, health inequalities, and weak social infrastructure.

Employment and labour market.

On employment, the picture is mixed. Erdington's mean employment rate (21.5% of working-age population in the most deprived cohorts) is comparable to Birmingham (21.4%) but above the England average (12.6%), suggesting the ward has a higher concentration of economically inactive residents relative to the national norm. Universal Credit (UC) claimant count (30.6%) is below Birmingham (33.7%) and the national rate (38.6%). The Employment Support Allowance (ESA) figure (2,380 ESA claimants in Erdington High Street 5 LSOAs, a 30% of the population, against 111,822 citywide, 10% of Birmingham's population) reflects the significant burden of health-related worklessness in the area. The

IMD score of 37.66 (Birmingham: 38.12) shows Erdington to be slightly more deprived than the city average, in the most deprived third of small areas nationally.

Social infrastructure.

The social infrastructure data is among the most revealing in the dashboard. The Birmingham comparator figures indicate significant under-provision relative to national norms: community facilities per capita (40.05 Birmingham vs 68.89 England), faith buildings per capita (47 Birmingham vs 72.12 England), pubs per capita (32.76 Birmingham vs 65.54 England), and post offices (9.35 Birmingham vs 14.45 England) all show the city performing below the national averages. Erdington has weaker provision than most of the city, suggesting intense under-provision. Libraries are the critical exception: 75% of Erdington residents are within 15 minutes of their nearest library, this is above Birmingham (41%) and England (41%) averages. The temporary closure of Erdington library for repairs (a flagship asset by this metric) has impacted this metric negatively.

Public health.

Health inequality in Erdington is stark. In Erdington Ward close to 20% of residents report long-term illness, compared to 17% for Birmingham, points to a significant burden of chronic ill-health. GP surgery density (0.088 per capita) is almost half the Birmingham average (0.165). Dental provision (0.004 per capita) is negligible compared to Birmingham (0.215). These figures reflect a poor access to health infrastructure that is fundamental to a decent quality of life.

What does "decency" look like in data terms for Opportunity?

The Opportunity theme spans indicators with very different decency logics, from the regulatory to the aspirational. Three examples are explained below:

Indicator	Decency type	What decency looks like in data
Indicator 3.4: Social Infrastructure (Libraries) <i>Erdington currently exceeds city and national benchmarks on library access (75% vs 41%). This is a critical asset to be protected.</i>	Statutory / regulatory	The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 places a duty on local authorities to provide a "comprehensive and efficient" library service. 75% of Erdington residents are within 15 minutes of a library -above both Birmingham (41%) and national (41%) benchmarks, making this a point of genuine DNS strength.

Indicator	Decency type	What decency looks like in data
Indicator 3.9: Public Health (GP and Dental Access) <i>GP density in Erdington is half the Birmingham average. Dental access is negligible. Both represent serious failures against NHS access entitlements and constitute a primary care infrastructure deficit.</i>	Statutory / regulatory	NHS Constitutional Standards set access entitlements for GP registration and primary care. Erdington's GP density (0.088 per capita, vs 0.165 Birmingham) suggests significant under-provision of primary care infrastructure relative to population need. Dental access (0.004 vs 0.215 Birmingham) is a critical gap. Decency threshold: reaching Birmingham average as a minimum; national NHS access standards as the statutory minimum benchmark.

Indicator	Decency type	What decency looks like in data
<p>Indicator 3.8: High Street Health (Vacancy, Mix, Fast Food)</p> <p><i>TBC data on vacancy, footfall and mix means this indicator requires priority local data collection.</i></p> <p><i>The living environment IMD decile (2.26) is a significant proxy for environmental decency deficit.</i></p> <p><i>Fast food density (TBC vs 136 per capita) and the national rate (115.9).</i></p>	Advisory / best-practice	<p>There is no official benchmark for retail mix or high street composition. The High Street Taskforce and the government's Levelling Up agenda provide advisory benchmarks on vacancy rates (national average around 14%; high streets in distress typically above 20%) and fast-food outlet density. Erdington's living environment IMD decile of 2.26 places it in the second-lowest decile nationally. Defining decency is aspirational: it would be represented by a diverse, low-vacancy high street with sufficient quality independent retail and fewer predatory financial or poor-nutrition outlets.</p>

4.5. Towards a Typology of Decency for the DNS Dashboard

The dashboard analysis above allows us to develop a preliminary working typology of what 'data decency' looks like across the DNS indicators. This will be refined and co-produced with residents and community groups in Dimension 2, but it provides an initial framework for how different indicators should be read, monitored and held to account:

Decency Type	Indicators	Implication for accountability
Trajectory to zero	<i>Violent crime, robbery, drugs offences, criminal damage</i>	No comfortable resting point; decency = year-on-year reduction; accountability falls primarily to public sector bodies West Midlands Police, BCC, and WMCA strategic crime partnerships.
Statutory / regulatory	<i>GP and dental access; library provision; anti-social behaviour response</i>	Legal duties exist. Decency = meeting statutory entitlements. Failure constitutes a breach of duty, not just an aspiration gap.
Advisory / best-practice	<i>High street vacancy; retail mix; fast food density; transport connectivity</i>	No legal floor, but national guidance (High Street Taskforce; NHS planning standards; 15-minute city) provides reference points. Decency = approaching advisory norms over a defined period.
Relative benchmark (reach comparators)	<i>Safety perception; belonging; influence; wellbeing satisfaction</i>	Decency = reaching Birmingham average as minimum benchmark and England average as aspirational target. Requires regular resident survey to track.
Composite / contextual	<i>IMD score; living environment IMD; ESA claimants; long-term illness</i>	No single threshold; decency = reduction in relative deprivation rank over time and sustained improvement in metric scores.

TABLE 4: MAPPING A DECENCY TYPOLOGY

4.6. Implications for Monitoring and Long-term DNS Development

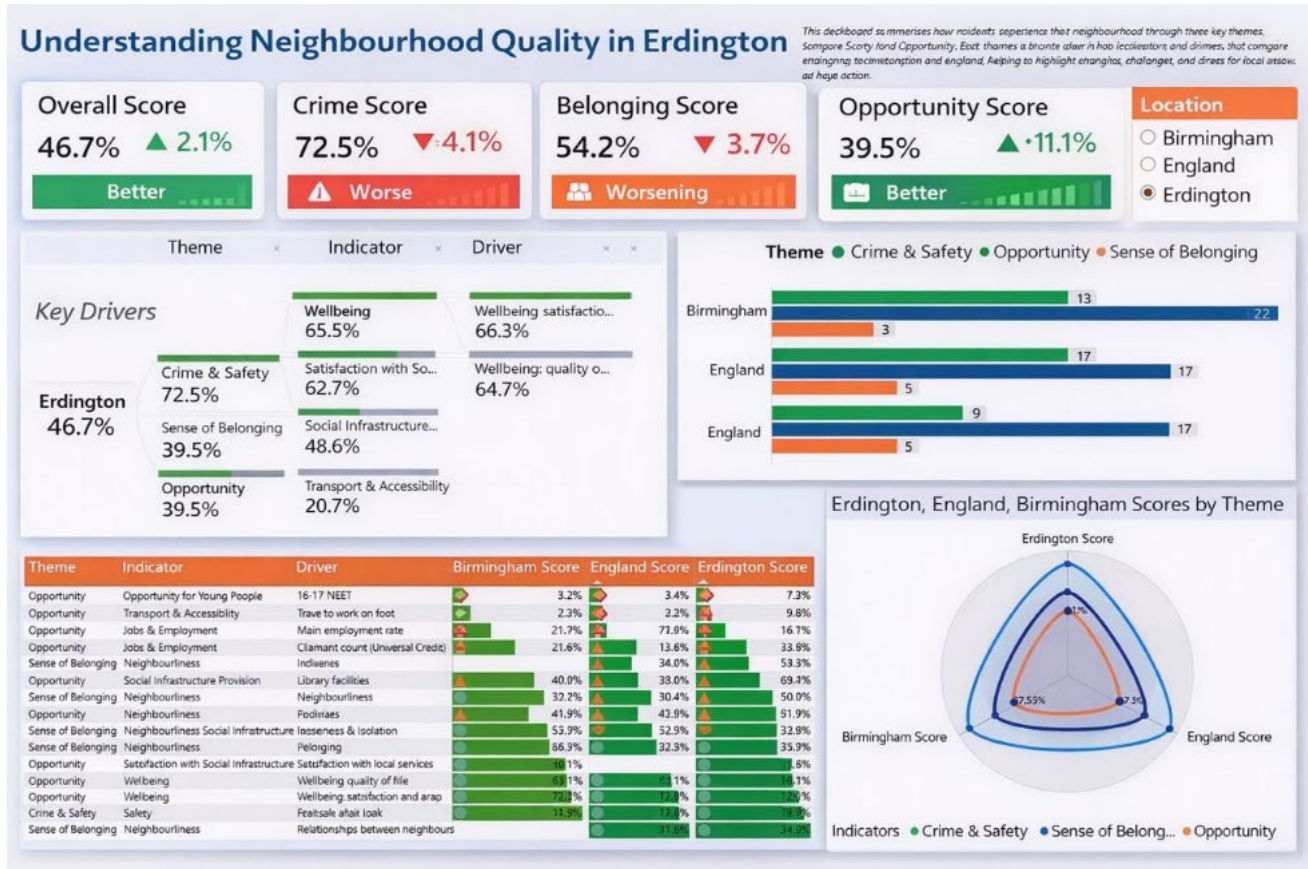
The DNS data dashboard provides a practical baseline that WLCA and its partners can begin to use immediately. It is, however, a first iteration and carries important caveats about data granularity, TBC gaps, and the absence of community-validated benchmarks for what constitutes 'decency' at the hyper-local level. The implications for monitoring and future dashboard development are:

- **Granularity:** Many of the most critical indicators (particularly in the High Street Health and Social Infrastructure Provision clusters) currently carry TBC values for Erdington, because the required data either does not exist at ward or High Street level in existing public datasets, or has not yet been systematically collected. A priority for Dimension 2 and beyond is to fill these gaps through hyper-local data collection: footfall counting, vacancy surveys, and asset mapping.
- **Decency benchmarks:** The dashboard currently uses Birmingham and England as comparators. These are necessary but insufficient for a genuine decency standard. Future iterations should develop Erdington-specific decency thresholds that are co-produced with residents and informed by what similar areas have achieved under active regeneration programmes and not simply working towards averages.
- **Perception data and survey validity:** The Community Dynamics predictive benchmarks used in this dashboard are powerful and well-validated, but they are modelled estimates, not live survey data. The resident survey conducted for this phase provides some valuable real insights, but is unreliable because of low response rate (78 respondents) and because there was no systemic sample. Establishing a regular, systematic, resident survey panel (possibly delivered through WLCA's existing resident engagement infrastructure) is an important monitoring priority for the DNS programme.
- **Potential dashboard technology:** The Power BI dashboard prototype developed for this phase demonstrates the feasibility of a live, dynamic neighbourhood quality monitoring tool. The next research phase could formalise this into a maintained dashboard with clear data update schedules, visible to WLCA staff, partners, and in an appropriate public-facing format to Erdington residents themselves.



Erdington High Street (Social Life, 2026)

Illustrative Dashboard on Power BI (values are not finalised)



4.5 What Decency means for Erdington

In the context of Erdington High Street, decency represents a baseline standard that ensures the physical and social environment is free from hazards, crime and neglect. Currently, both residents and local organisations highlight a stark failure of decency, frequently describing the High Street as dirty, rundown and intimidating because of pervasive fears about open drug use, anti-social behaviour, and the proliferation of unmanaged Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

To become a decent neighbourhood, Erdington must achieve practical cleanliness and orderliness through rigorous environmental maintenance - such as tackling persistent litter and fly-tipping and by improving the retail provision to serve local needs. Litter, fly-tipping, unkempt public spaces, and a High Street dominated by betting shops, fast-food outlets and vape shops are signals of neglect that corrode collective pride and ownership.

Because decency in a shared space is an active, pro-social practice and a collective resource, a decent Erdington requires strong accountability structures and community stewardship that are cross-cutting across resident and business interests, empowering residents to influence local decisions, demand visible policing, and protect vital social infrastructure like the local library.

However, this pursuit of order must be carefully balanced, true decency must be democratically co-designed with Erdington's residents rather than institutionally impose. Efforts to improve the area must not weaponise decency and marginalise vulnerable populations or erode the neighbourhood's highly valued multicultural community spirit.

5 Recommendations and Next steps

5.1 Recommendations:

The following recommendations are addressed to specific stakeholders and are grounded directly in the dashboard data and evidence gathered for this report.

5.1.1. Residents and Community Groups

Residents are not passive recipients of the DNS programme but should be its active co-producers. The lived experience of neighbourhood quality in Erdington, what is working, what is not, and what decency means in practice on a day-to-day basis, is evidence that secondary data alone cannot provide.

The most immediate ask of residents is to **participate in the DNS Dimension 2 community insights phase** when it launches. This will test the DNS dashboard against lived experience, create community-defined thresholds for decency, and explore divergences between the resident survey finding, official data/ and organisational perceptions (particularly on belonging and safety) will be explored in depth. **Sustained engagement with WLCA's resident surveys and community workshops as they develop is also important.** A regular, robust resident voice on safety, belonging, and local services will give the DNS indicators real meaning.

For community groups and anchor organisations specifically a crucial next step would be to:

Collectively map Erdington's social infrastructure. Anchor organisations, faith groups, and voluntary sector bodies working across the ward hold knowledge about informal and formal provision that public datasets do not capture. A community asset register, collating what exists, who it serves, and where gaps fall, would fill critical gaps in the DNS dashboard's Social Infrastructure Provision indicator and provide a powerful advocacy tool for investment decisions by BCC, WMCA and MHCLG.

5.1.2. Witton Lodge Community Association (WLCA)

WLCA occupies a unique position in the Erdington neighbourhood as a community anchor, service provider, regeneration developer, and strategic convener. The DNS programme has been built around WLCA's presence in the neighbourhood, and the recommendations for WLCA reflect the breadth of its role.

WLCA can **deploy the DNS dashboard immediately** for internal strategic planning and external advocacy. The dashboard is already a practical tool: it provides the evidence base for prioritising programme investment (particularly around safety, social infrastructure, and health access), for making the case to local and regional authorities for resources, and for holding partners to account.

A priority for ongoing DNS monitoring is to **establish a regular resident survey panel**. This would validate indicators from modelled Community Dynamics estimates with live resident data, making the dashboard's key indicators (perception of safety, belonging, satisfaction) better reflect lived experience and community insights.

The **Erdington Enterprise Hub development** (the former Erdington Baths) is simultaneously a regeneration project and a DNS intervention. Affordable workspace, a community café, crèche provision, and market activation directly address multiple dashboard gaps (social infrastructure provision, high street health, childcare) within a single investment. WLCA should ensure that use and footfall data from the Hub is systematically collected from the outset, feeding directly into future dashboard iterations.

Alongside this, BCC with support from WLCA should **commission hyper-local data collection** to fill the priority TBC gaps in the dashboard: High Street vacancy rates, footfall counts, business mix data (independent vs chain, fast food density), and the community asset register described above. Partnership with Erdington BID on data collection could be an efficient way to do this and could be formalised as part of WLCA's ongoing collaboration with the BID.

Finally, WLCA should **continue to develop the North Birmingham Economic Recovery Board (NBERB)** as a multi-stakeholder accountability forum anchored in the DNS evidence base. The dashboard provides a shared set of indicators aligned to the three priority themes of safety, opportunity, and sense of belonging. Using it to set measurable improvement targets, with named accountability leads for each thematic area at every Board meeting, would embed the DNS standard at the heart of how North Birmingham's recovery is governed and evaluated.

5.1.3. Anchor Institutions and Local Businesses

The institutions and businesses that operate on and around Erdington High Street are part of the neighbourhood's social fabric and have a direct stake in, and responsibility for, the quality of the public environment.

Erdington BID. The dashboard evidence points to three areas where BID coordination and investment can have the most direct impact on neighbourhood quality: safety perception, environmental quality, and high street retail mix. A targeted programme on improved lighting, more frequent street cleaning, and visible day-to-day management of anti-social behaviour in the public realm would begin to address the 56 % gap between the predicted safety benchmark and the surveyed reality. The BID can be a commercial data partner for the DNS programme, providing vacancy, footfall, and business mix data to WLCA for integration into the dashboard.

Local businesses. Local businesses on Erdington High Street have access to real-time intelligence about the street's vitality (footfall patterns, vacancy trends, changing retail mix) that public datasets do not capture. Participation in the DNS indicator data collection process, specifically for High Street Health metrics, is both a contribution to the evidence base and civic investment in the neighbourhood. The BID could be the natural conduit for this engagement.

St Barnabas Church and faith institutions. Faith buildings are social infrastructure within the DNS framework: accessible, often daily-opening, welcoming spaces that reduce isolation and support intergenerational mixing between people from different social and economic backgrounds. Faith building density per capita in Birmingham is already below the national rate, which means preserving what exists is as important as adding new provision. St Barnabas, in particular, is identified by both residents and organisational respondents as one of the High Street's most valued assets, and its role as community infrastructure should be explicitly recognised and supported within the DNS framework.

5.1.4. Birmingham City Council (BCC)

Birmingham City Council is the primary statutory authority for the conditions that the DNS dashboard measures, and several of the most pressing dashboard findings carry clear implications for BCC's duties and decisions.

The most urgent is the planned repairs for the **Erdington Library**. Library access is the most positive indicator within the dashboard's - significantly above the Birmingham and the national average. An ongoing or extended closure would actively worsen a neighbourhood quality baseline already under severe pressure.

BCC should **align its ward-level monitoring frameworks with the DNS dashboard**. The DNS provides a more granular, resident-centred lens on neighbourhood quality than official performance monitoring and has real value as a complement to BCC's own data infrastructure. Formal engagement with the NBERB and WLCA DNS programme, including BCC commissioning the NBERB to support the collection of data, would strengthen both the dashboard and BCC's own evidence base for investment decisions in Erdington. BCC's funding to the NBERB is a welcome step in supporting this work.

The **Local Outcomes Framework (LOF)** is a performance system designed to track how English councils and their partners deliver on 16 national priorities. It focuses on measurable results in areas like housing supply, social care, and economic growth, many of which we have picked up in this report. Birmingham City Council can develop a neighbourhood-level breakdown of the values and look to incorporate those in future iterations of delivery frameworks such as the Decent Neighbourhood Standard.

By consolidating data into a single, transparent lens, the LOF framework and DNS can enable local leaders to benchmark progress and identifies where support or intervention is needed.

For **BCC Planning**, the dashboard data and qualitative evidence together make a clear case for a more proactive stance on HMO concentration and planning applications for betting shops, pawn brokers, vape shops, and fast-food outlets on the Erdington High Street. The overconcentration of low-quality retail and poorly managed HMOs is consistently cited by residents and local organisations as a primary driver of neighbourhood decline. Existing planning levers and licensing conditions should be applied more actively and transparently.

5.1.5. North Birmingham Economic Recovery Board (NBERB)

NBERB is the strategic forum through which the DNS programme's accountability ambitions can be most directly operationalised.

We recommend NBERB formally **adopt the DNS data dashboard as its shared evidence base**, establishing a standing agenda item at each Board meeting to review progress against dashboard indicators. Named accountability leads for each thematic area, drawn from the relevant NBERB member organisations, would give the dashboard operational traction rather than leaving it as a reference document. Where indicators are deteriorating or stagnant, the Board should have a clear escalation process

NBERB is also the appropriate body to **facilitate the priority data collection** needed to fill gaps in the dashboard, particularly for High Street Health and Social Infrastructure Provision metrics. Pooling resources across NBERB members to leverage funding from statutory and grant funders for a shared neighbourhood data platform would be more efficient than each organisation collecting separately and would produce a more coherent evidence base.

Finally, the DNS findings give NBERB a powerful advocacy brief. The combination of pockets of deprivation (IMD score 37.66), low perceptions of safety, and strong community capital (above-benchmark wellbeing scores, a long-established resident base, active voluntary sector) makes a compelling case for Erdington as a priority neighbourhood for targeted place-based investment. NBERB should use this evidence actively in its engagement with WMCA and MHCLG.

5.1.6. West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)

The WMCA has both the strategic convening role and the data infrastructure to take the DNS methodology beyond Erdington and into a regional framework for neighbourhood quality monitoring to complement and work alongside their Inclusive Growth Framework. The Erdington Demonstrator offers the combined authority a tested, transferable neighbourhood-level model. DNS methodology (combining secondary data, Community Dynamics benchmarks, local survey data, and community engagement) produces a hyper-local, resident-centred picture of neighbourhood quality.

The WMCA should use Erdington as a pilot for neighbourhood economy initiatives, building on the investment already committed to WLCA. Dashboard data on employment and opportunity indicators provides the evidence base for targeted economic inclusion programmes around skills, enterprise support, and social economy development in the ward.

Transport connectivity is a specific area where WMCA investment decisions directly affect the DNS dashboard. Erdington's Public Transport connectivity score suggests poor connectivity for a ward that is heavily dependent on public transport. Improvements to bus reliability and frequency on Erdington High Street routes should be considered as part of the WMCA transport investment programme.

Looking further ahead, WMCA is ideally placed to **support the development of a regional DNS programme**, with Erdington as a demonstrator pilot. The combined authority's strategic remit and data infrastructure make it a natural home for a regional neighbourhood quality monitoring framework, one that could establish baselines across the West Midlands' most deprived urban areas and provide the evidence base for sustained, targeted neighbourhood investment, and align with the WMCA's Inclusive Growth Framework.

5.1.7. West Midlands Police

The DNS dashboard presents West Midlands Police with both a clear challenge and an accountability instrument. The substantial gap between the predicted safety benchmark and the data from the residents' survey is the largest discrepancy in the DNS dataset. It cannot be explained by crime count data - Erdington's violent crime rate, while above the national average, is below Birmingham's city-wide figure. The gap is driven by pervasive sense of fear: open drug activity, visible anti-social behaviour, a sense of low level or invisible policing, and poorly lit environments that residents, particularly women and older residents, feel unable to use after dark.

Visibility and presence on Erdington High Street must therefore be a primary operational goal. Perception of safety is a key DNS indicator, it should be tracked through a regular resident survey and reported through WLCA DNS monitoring alongside the crime statistics. This would make policing accountable not just for what happens in a neighbourhood, but for how safe the environment feels.

On **drugs offences and anti-social behaviour**, the dashboard data provides the quantitative evidence base to strengthen the local response, this supported by community insights from WLCA's resident network. The Operation Fearless model provides further opportunity for this kind of structured, partnership-based response that the DNS programme can help sustain and evaluate.

The survey data makes a clear case for a **gender-sensitive approach** to safety improvement in Erdington. Fear of crime after dark disproportionately affects older women, who describe specific environments, times, and crime types (poorly lit streets, groups loitering, visible drug activity near the High Street) that makes the neighbourhood feel inaccessible. Any safety improvement programme should address these gendered patterns of vulnerability rather than treating safety as a single, undifferentiated issue.

5.1.8. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)

The Erdington DNS Demonstrator has national policy implications that go beyond a single neighbourhood programme. There is no neighbourhood-scale equivalent of the Decent Homes Standard, and therefore no clear minimum standard for the quality of the environment outside people's front doors - this gap could be filled by the DNS.

The **DNS programme provides an opportunity for locally grounded, place-based policy development**. The Erdington Demonstrator is an operational example of what a DNS would look like in practice, with a structured indicator framework, benchmarked data, a decency typology, and accountability recommendations.

The DNS data collection experience also points to a systemic national issue that MHCLG is best placed to address: **the gaps in neighbourhood-level data infrastructure**. The missing values across multiple dashboard indicators, such as High Street Health metrics, Social Infrastructure Provision, GP and dental access at ward level reflect the absence of nationally collected datasets at a granularity that supports hyper-local neighbourhood monitoring. A national assessment of these gaps, informed by the DNS demonstrators, would be a valuable precursor to any formal standard-setting work.

The **DNS Decency Typology** outlined in this report (trajectory-to-zero; statutory; advisory; relative benchmark; composite) offers MHCLG a practical framework for thinking through the accountability architecture of any future standard. It distinguishes between indicators where statutory duties already exist and need to be enforced, those where advisory norms should be formalised, and those where community-validated local benchmarks are the appropriate mechanism.

MHCLG should **pilot a formal Decent Neighbourhood Standard programme**, modelled on the Decent Homes Standard, in priority neighbourhoods identified through the Pride in Place programme. The Erdington DNS Demonstrator provides an operational blueprint for what such an exemplar or proof of concept case would require in terms of data, community engagement, and accountability structures.

5.2 Next Steps: DNS WLCA Erdington across All Four Dimensions

The publication of this DNS Erdington Dimension 1 report and the establishment of the DNS data dashboard for Erdington marks the transition from conceptualisation and scoping to operationalisation.



Erdington High Street (Social Life, 2026)

The programme of next steps below is structured across the DNS dimensions:

Dimension 2: Community Insights and Neighbourhood Diagnostics

Dimension 2 will add the community-grounded layer to the data baseline established in this report. The design of Dimension 2 will be informed by the DNS dashboard findings, prioritising critical research questions:

1. What does decency mean to Erdington residents? How do the dashboard's quantitative indicators resonate with the lived experience of neighbourhood quality across different demographic groups, particularly younger residents, economically precarious households, and minority or underserved communities?
3. What explains the gap between predicted and reported perceptions of safety? What specific environments, times, behaviours, and personal circumstances drive this major divergence?
4. What do residents identify as the minimum threshold for decent social infrastructure, for example the library, the Baths regeneration, GP access? What is the minimum provision below which Erdington cannot function as a decent neighbourhood?
4. What forms of community stewardship and accountability exist in Erdington, and how can the DNS framework formalise and support them without imposing institutional constraints and norms on grassroots community practice?

Dimension 2 will produce a Neighbourhood Diagnostic report to refine the DNS indicators and decency thresholds for Erdington, and a Community Insights summary for public use by WLCA.

Dimension 3: Accountability, Influence and Stewardship

Dimension 3 will map the governance landscape for neighbourhood quality in Erdington: who is accountable for what, through which mechanisms, and with what community input. Drawing on the DNS typology developed in in this report, Dimension 3 will:

5. Map accountability for each DNS indicator category: which institutions or organisations bear primary duty for statutory and trajectory-to-zero indicators; which bodies own advisory standards; and where is the accountability vacuum is most acute.
6. Develop a Stewardship Framework for Erdington: as a practical accountability mechanism, co-designed with residents and anchors, that sets out who monitors what, who escalates when standards are not met, and how residents participate in oversight.
7. Produce a basic Accountability Dashboard to complement the DNS Dashboard: these will be a simplified, public-facing version of the DNS data dashboard that enables residents to hold organisations, public bodies and local authorities to account against agreed decency thresholds.

Dimension 4: Securing a Sustainable Future

Dimension 4 will look ahead to the long-term sustainability of the DNS programme and the neighbourhood itself, addressing the structural drivers of the deprivation and disadvantage documented in the dashboard. Key areas of focus will include:

8. Economic inclusion and the future of Erdington High Street: drawing on the DNS dashboard data, developing a long-term economic regeneration strategy for the high street that addresses employment, business diversity, and the built environment.
9. Health and wellbeing infrastructure investment: using the public health data (GP access at half the Birmingham average; dental access negligible) to make the case for NHS primary care investment in Erdington as part of a place-based health equity strategy.
10. DNS sustainability and transferability: working with BCC and WMCA to develop the conditions under which the DNS methodology can be formalised, resourced, and adopted across the West Midlands.

5.3 Conclusion:

Erdington as a Decent Neighbourhood Standard Demonstrator

The May 2025 WLCA DNS demonstrator report was a conceptual and exploratory project. It established the case for a Decent Neighbourhood Standard, defined the four universal dimensions of the emerging standard, and explored them through engagement with WLCA staff, volunteers and residents. The project demonstrated that the DNS framework was coherent, community grounded, and capable of being adapted to a specific organisational and place-based context.

This new report, focusing on Dimension 1 in Erdington, marks a significant shift: from conceptualisation to operationalisation. The DNS data dashboard for Erdington is a practical output, a set of indicators, populated with real neighbourhood data, that can be used immediately by WLCA for strategic planning, external advocacy and ongoing monitoring. It can be deployed to answer the pragmatic question “what does the evidence tell us about neighbourhood quality in Erdington right now, and where are the gaps and deficits against a reasonable standard of decency?”

The DNS data dashboard for Erdington presents a neighbourhood of competing quality tensions and trade-offs: a community with a strong sense of belonging, social capital, and measurable assets operating under conditions of deprivation, a safety perception deficit, and a primary care infrastructure gap that is reinforcing prevailing health inequalities. It can be argued that these issues are the cumulative consequence of decades of under-investment, local authority financial constraints, inadequate regulation, and the absence of a meaningful accountability framework for neighbourhood quality.



(Erdington Library, Social Life, 2026)

The Decent Neighbourhood Standard is a practical tool for enabling and enacting accountable, measurable, and community-grounded neighbourhood improvements.

This report demonstrates that the data infrastructure for a DNS in Erdington can be built from existing sources, enriched by engagement and community survey, and structured into a monitoring tool that is immediately useful for strategic planning and advocacy.

It has also demonstrated that 'data decency' - the first-order question of what the evidence tells us about neighbourhood quality - is incomplete on its own. The next phase of research of DNS Dimensions 2 to 4 will develop the DNS dashboard further from a diagnostic tool to a driver of positive and accountable change in neighbourhood quality.

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Acknowledgements:

The authors would like to thank Witton Lodge Community Association for commissioning this second demonstrator project as part of our ongoing collaborative research programme to develop a Decent Neighbourhood Standard - a framework grounded in both universal principles and local priorities, designed to advance place-based equity, address inequalities, and empower communities to thrive.

In particular, we are grateful to Afzal Hussain, Chief Officer; Waheed Saleem, Head of Programmes and Partnerships; and Jo Townsend, Communications and Community Engagement Manager, for their collaboration throughout, including facilitating meetings and workshops and supporting the distribution of the resident and stakeholder survey.

We thank the residents and stakeholders of Erdington who gave their time to participate in the project survey. We are also grateful to Paulette Hamilton MP for her support for this research and for helping to reach Erdington constituents for the survey distribution.

Our thanks go to the members and partners of the North Birmingham Economic Recovery Board, and to colleagues at Birmingham City Council and the West Midlands Combined Authority, for sharing data and insights that have strengthened the Erdington DNS dashboard.

We would like to acknowledge the contribution of two University of Birmingham student placement researchers – Rowan Etheridge (BA Geography, Centre for the New Midlands) and William Atkinson (MSc Urban and Regional Planning, Social Life) – whose literature review on neighbourhood standards and the concept of decency informed the thinking around decency developed in this report.

Finally, we are grateful to Professor Guy Daly, Chair of the Housing and Communities Leadership Board at the Centre for the New Midlands, for his expert review of this report in draft.

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

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.

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

APPENDIX A: DNS Dashboard for Erdington —Data Sources

Table A1 below reproduces the full DNS Erdington Dimension 1 data dashboard (Table 2 of the main report) with data sources appended for each metric. Values marked TBC indicate data not yet available at ward or High Street level from existing public datasets; these are priorities for hyper-local data collection in subsequent phases of the DNS programme.

Predictive benchmarks in the Sense of Belonging theme are modelled estimates produced by Social Life's Community Dynamics methodology, not live survey data. All crime data is drawn from Police.uk open data. Comparator figures are for Birmingham city-wide and England national averages unless otherwise stated.

Theme	Indicator	Metric / Measure	Erdington	Birmingham	England	Source
SENSE OF BELONGING	1.1 Neighbourliness	Neighbourliness (%)	50.50%	49.30%	52.40%	Community Dynamics (Social Life)
		Neighbour relationships between different backgrounds (%)	74.70%	75.20%	81.60%	Community Dynamics (Social Life)
		Belonging (%)	53.30%	54.30%	57.40%	Community Dynamics (Social Life)
		Influence (%)	34.60%	34.74%	36.50%	Community Dynamics (Social Life)
		Loneliness & Isolation (%)	53.40%	52.90%	53.40%	Community Dynamics (Social Life)
CRIME & SAFETY	2.1 Safety (Perception)	Feel safe after dark (% predictive)	71.30%	70.70%	75.60%	Community Dynamics (Social Life)
	2.2 High Street Crime	Vehicle crime per 1,000 residents	7.28	9.44	N/A	Police.uk (March 2024/25)
		Shoplifting per 1,000 residents	11.28	11.32	9.39	Police.uk (March 2024/25)
		Bicycle crime per 1,000 residents	0.60	0.69	1.06	Police.uk (March 2024/25)

		Fly-tipping per capita	N/A	20.80	18.70	Police.uk / BCC (March 2024/25)
	2.3 Community Crime	Anti-social behaviour per 1,000	9.42	8.10	16.88*	Police.uk (*incl. Wales)
		Theft from person per 1,000	1.39	1.24	2.68	Police.uk (March 2024/25)
		Other theft per 1,000	7.19	8.56	5.61	Police.uk (March 2024/25)
		Burglary per 1,000	5.66	6.63	4.34	Police.uk (March 2024/25)
		Robbery per 1,000	3.16	3.18	1.40	Police.uk (March 2024/25)
	2.4 Serious Crime	Drugs offences per 1,000	4.87	3.68	3.61	Police.uk (March 2024/25)
	—	Criminal damage & arson per 1,000	9.70	9.44	8.20	Police.uk (March 2024/25)
	—	Violent crime per 1,000	50.81	52.67	35.85	Police.uk (March 2024/25)
OPPORTUNITY	3.1 Jobs & Employment	Mean employment rate (%)	21.50%	21.40%	12.60%	DWP / ONS (2025)
		Claimant count – Universal Credit (%)	30.60%	33.70%	38.60%	DWP (2025)
		ESA claimants (count)	2,380	111,822	4,671,963	DWP (May 2024–Feb 2025)
	3.2 Opportunity for Young People	% 16–17 NEET	TBC	3.20%	3.40%	DfE (2025)
	3.3 Poverty Prevention	IMD score (2025)	37.66	38.12	—	MHCLG IMD (2025)

	3.4 Social Infrastructure Provision	Libraries (% within 15 mins)	75%	41%	41%	CIPFA / MHCLG (2024)
		Community facilities (count per capita)	TBC	40.05	68.89	ONS / BCC (2024)
		Childcare providers (count)	TBC	N/A	53,600	Ofsted (2025)
		Faith buildings (count per capita)	TBC	47	72.12	Historic England / ONS (Jul 2024)
		Voluntary/community organisations (count)	TBC	1,783	132,030	NCVO / DCMS (2021/22)
		Pubs (count per capita)	TBC	32.76	65.54	BBPA / ONS (Oct 2024)
		ATMs & cashpoints (count per capita)	11	60.29	55.48	LINK / ONS (2024/25)
		Post offices (count per capita)	TBC	9.35	14.45	Post Office Ltd / ONS (Jul 2024)
		Leisure facilities (% within 15 mins)	—	45%	41%	Sport England / MHCLG (2024)
	3.5 Satisfaction with Social Infrastructure	Satisfaction with local services (% predictive)	61.90%	61.60%	63.40%	Community Dynamics (Social Life)
	3.6 Transport & Accessibility	Travel to work on foot (%)	6.40%	7.10%	7.70%	Census 2021 / ONS
		Connectivity Score – PT access (index range)	82–85	29–90	100	TfWM / WMCA connectivity index
	3.8 High Street Health	Business diversity index	TBC	—	—	Requires commissioning

	Vacancy rates (%)	TBC	—	—	Requires commissioning
	Footfall (count)	TBC	—	—	Requires commissioning
	Independent vs chain (%)	TBC	—	—	Requires commissioning
	Fast food outlets (count per capita)	TBC	136	115.9	Local Authority / ONS
	Living environment IMD (decile)	2.26	—	—	MHCLG IMD (2019)
3.9 Public Health	Healthy life expectancy at 65, female (years)	9.96	9.31	11.2	ONS / PHE (2022–24)
	Healthy life expectancy at 65, male (years)	8.51	8.84	10.1	ONS / PHE (2022–24)
	Long-term illness/disability prevalence (% / count)	19.49% (4,202)	17.3% (198,064)	17.7% (9.8m)	Census 2021
	GP surgeries (count per capita)	0.088	0.197	0.165	NHS Digital / CQC (March 2026)
	Dentists (count per capita)	0.004	0.193	0.215	NHS Digital / CQC (March 2026)
3.10 Wellbeing	Wellbeing: quality of life (% , predictive)	65.00%	63.10%	66.10%	Community Dynamics (Social Life)
	Wellbeing: satisfaction with area (% , predictive)	62.00%	63.10%	73.80%	Community Dynamics (Social Life)

Note: 'TBC' indicates data not yet available at the required hyper-local (ward or High Street) scale. 'N/A' indicates the metric is not collected or reported at this geography. All Community Dynamics figures are predictive benchmarks for areas similar to Erdington. Crime data relates to the period March 2024/25 unless otherwise specified.

APPENDIX B: Survey Instruments – Overview

Two surveys were designed and distributed as part of the DNS Erdington Dimension 1 research phase. Both were developed collaboratively with Witton Lodge Community Association, with questions aligned to three priority themes of Safety, Sense of Belonging, and Opportunity. Several questions were drawn from Social Life’s Community Dynamics methodology to enable benchmarking against national predictive values.

Both surveys were open for two weeks in February 2026 and distributed via WLCA and the office of Erdington MP Paulette Hamilton. The resident survey received 78 responses; the stakeholder/organisational survey received 14 responses.

The tables below summarise the sections, question focus, and response types used in each survey. Full question wording is available from the research team on request.

B1 Resident Survey

Target respondents: Residents living in Erdington and surrounding areas (B23/B24 postcodes and nearby streets). Responses: 78.

Section	Question focus	Question types / response scales	No. of Qs
1. About You	Length of residency, age, gender, employment status, ethnicity	Multiple choice (single select)	5
2. Safety and Crime	Feelings of safety after dark; worry about crime; primary drivers of unsafety	5-point Likert scale; yes/no; multi-select (up to 3)	3
3. Belonging and Community Cohesion	Sense of belonging; neighbourly exchange; regular interaction	5-point agree/disagree scale	5
4. Influence and Participation	Ability to influence local decisions; volunteering activity in past 12 months; barriers to participation	5-point agree/disagree scale; yes/no; open text	4
5. Local Services	Ratings of schools, health, transport, shopping and leisure; overall High Street	5-point quality scale; open text	4

and Environment	quality; strengths and description of High Street		
6. Financial Wellbeing	Self-reported financial situation; food bank use; frequency of loneliness or isolation	Multiple choice; yes/no	3
7. Priorities for Change	Open-ended priorities for neighbourhood improvement; any other comments	Open text	2

B2 Stakeholder and Organisational Survey

Target respondents: Businesses, organisations, community groups, and resident groups working in or with Erdington. Responses: 14.

Section	Question focus	Question types / response scales	No. of Qs
1. About Your Organisation	Organisation type; length of activity in Erdington; age groups served; disabled people / long-term conditions as a client group	Multiple choice (single select)	4
2. Safety and Crime (Perceptions)	Perceived safety of residents after dark; level of concern about crime; key drivers of fear (on behalf of residents/users)	5-point Likert scale; multi-select (up to 3)	3
3. Belonging and Community Cohesion	Perceived neighbourhood attachment; sense of belonging; frequency of neighbourly behaviours (talking, helping, trust); cross-cultural relations	5-point Likert scale; frequency scale	4

4. Influence and Participation	Perceived ability of residents to influence decisions; prevalence of volunteering in past 12 months	4-point scale; frequency scale	2
5. Local Services, Amenities and Infrastructure	Perceptions of schools, health, transport, shopping and leisure; overall environment quality; concern about local issues; access to key services; awareness of neighbours	5-point quality scale; concern scale; yes/no	5
6. Wellbeing, Trust and Belonging	Perceived feelings of safety, community, belonging, trust and overall happiness with the area; prevalence of loneliness and isolation	5-point agree/disagree scale; frequency scale	8
7. Financial Security	Perceived financial situation of residents; prevalence of food bank / emergency support use	Multiple choice	2
8. Final Questions	Greatest neighbourhood strengths; priorities for improvement; anything else for future planning and investment	Open text	3