



A futuristic reimagining
of the urban economy
and built environment



ECONOMICS



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**ABOUT
KEY
CITIES**

KEY
CITY
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About Key Cities

With 25 cities of all shapes and sizes across the country, Key Cities is the non-partisan network that represents urban living in the UK. The Key Cities members have a combined population of over 5.5 million people and contribute to around 7% of UK economic output. The membership covers north and south, inland, port and coastal, and areas with differing levels of prosperity.

Key Cities members represent all of the major political parties and places across England and Wales. It is a united voice for urban Britain, working with other cities, towns and organisations across local government and beyond to deliver prosperity and a good standard of living and environment for all.

The members of Key Cities are:

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH & POOLE	LINCOLN
BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET	MEDWAY
BLACKPOOL	NEWPORT
BRADFORD	NORWICH
CARLISLE	PLYMOUTH
COVENTRY	PORTSMOUTH
DONCASTER	PRESTON
EXETER	SALFORD
GLOUCESTER	SOUTHAMPTON
HULL	SOUTHEND
KIRKLEES	SUNDERLAND
LANCASTER	WOLVERHAMPTON
	WREXHAM



**ABOUT
THIS
REPORT**

KEY
FACTS
DON'T
LOOK
DOWN
DOTTEN

About this report

Key Cities produce ideas, research and engagement, both with experts and with ordinary people.

Key Cities commissioned this series of reports to help build an evidence base, clear practical policy and action steps as well as a compelling vision for the future of our cities. We, and our member cities, intend to use this work to support wider engagement on the future of our cities both with communities and businesses, and also with national policy makers. There are clear connections to localism, levelling up and devolution agenda's and local action is imperative for our health, social care and climate change ambitions. Bringing an inspiring vision of the future of our cities to the table we believe will help to achieve an inclusive renewal deal for cities with health at the centre.

The report focused on the short-term future, arguing that cities are resilient and that there is a significant opportunity for them to drive an inclusive post-pandemic economic recovery with an “inclusive renewal deal”. This would see cities tackle the urgent



crises of job losses, economic inequality and climate emergency; facilitate a new model for hybrid office working; consolidate an improved retail offer; double down on their cultural and creative strengths and pivot towards future sources of inclusive growth driven by innovation. The alternative would result in long term scarring that could drag cities back decades.

This [report](#) looks at the long-term future of cities, presenting a vision for what the urban economy and urban built environment would look like if they could be reimagined with few constraints. The research was undertaken by Nexus Planning, Resilience Brokers and WPI Economics bringing together a wide variety of expertise in planning, climate resilience and economics. The work was further informed by consulting experts from government, academia, think tanks and industry.

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INTRO - FUTURE CITIES AND CURRENT CHALLENGES

Intro - Future Cities and Current Challenges



This report reimagines the urban economy and built environment, setting out what our future experience of a city would be if we were able to radically transform it.

This does not mean looking at how cities could change in the next decade (plenty of other studies do this well). Instead, it means forming a vision for what cities should look like in 30 years' time, and then setting out a potential path to turning this vision into a future reality.

The context is that our cities currently face four major (and interlinked) challenges:

Climate change

Cities are hugely important in the fight against climate change. They produce more than 60% of global greenhouse gas emissions, while accounting for less than 2% of the Earth's surface.¹ Cities are also more likely to suffer from the consequences of climate change. They are more likely to get warmer (due to the urban heat island effect), raising the prospect of more heat-related deaths,² and coastal cities could be affected by sea levels rising and coastal flooding.³

Economic and technological change

City economies are constantly evolving, periodically having to rapidly adapt to powerful external forces. Globalisation meant labour market change, pushing some urban jobs and industries overseas (ultimately to be replaced by others). Digital connectivity disrupted how urban centres have been used

to shop (and is continuing to do so). The pandemic has fundamentally altered many of our working patterns, albeit with the lasting effects still to be understood. There are more powerful external forces on the horizon. The rise of Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies – such as artificial intelligence, autonomous vehicles, 3D printing and biotechnology – promise to reshape every sector. As ever, this presents opportunities with new industries and new jobs, but also challenges, with some existing jobs and industries becoming increasingly irrelevant.

Inequity and social injustice

Just as cities are places of enormous opportunity, they are also places of inequity, poverty and deprivation. For instance, it has been estimated that if deprivation levels in the Key Cities and Core Cities matched the UK average, 3.3 million fewer people would be living in deprived neighbourhoods.⁴ All of the other major challenges listed here are significantly amplified for the poor and for many groups and minorities.

Health

The risk of developing depression is 20% higher among those who live in urban areas than those who live outside the city.⁵ Air pollution kills tens of thousands of people each year, with 40 UK towns or cities exceeding World Health Organisation air pollution limits.⁶ People's self-reported loneliness increases by 2.8% for every additional 1000 housing units within 1km of their home, while their self-reported social isolation increased by 11.4%.⁷ More generally, the population is ageing which presents major challenges for health and social care provision. Health inequity is one of the biggest challenges cities face. The Marmot Review (2010), and subsequent work by other experts, highlights the growing evidence that the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age and the inequities in power, money and resources that influence these conditions, impact their health massively. This is leading to growing health inequalities.⁸

A New Framework for Cities

The report argues that to overcome all of these challenges and to reach their potential, cities should have a laser-like focus on this last point – improving the mental, physical and social health of their residents. We have called this the **'Health First' principle**. Supporting a healthier population requires cities being **Attractive, Accessible, Adaptable** and **For All** who live within or use them.

Ultimately, a healthier population will inspire innovation, closer communities and better economic outcomes.

The following pages present a framework for cities to make this happen. Thinking around our cities is evolving very quickly and every idea or proposal contained within this report has a basis in the real world. Changes to legislation and / or increased resources may be required to be able to implement some ideas, but none of them are impossible given what we know today about technological trends and what works, or is best practice, in terms of city design.

The following sections present a framework for cities to realise the vision for our cities in 2050 - to make them Healthy, Attractive, Accessible, Adaptive and For All. Thinking around our cities is evolving very quickly and every idea or proposal contained within this report has a basis in the real world. Changes to legislation and / or increased resources may be required to be able to implement some ideas, but none of them are impossible given what we know today about technological trends and what works, or is best practice, in terms of city design and management. Short case studies highlight where some of our ideas for the city of the future are already partially and sporadically being implemented today. Finally, we set out why planning is fundamentally important to the vision and how it needs to be remade.

The members of Key Cities are ideally placed to lead the transformation set out across the following pages – they are compact enough to be agile, but large enough to be able to make a difference

A VISION OF THE CITY IN 2050

UNLOCK
THE
FUTURE
OF
OUR
CITY

A vision of the city in 2050

The city of the future is transformed. It has a new purpose and, for the first time, it is firmly based around the needs of people, while also proactively and dynamically preserving our planet. People are no longer second to infrastructure, buildings or land use, and a more ‘regenerative’ standpoint is now taken, acknowledging that the city’s key role is also to foster healthier mindsets and behaviours. This required bold and visionary planning and leadership.

This change in focus, away from buildings and infrastructure and towards people, arose as we acknowledged the true scale of the challenges facing humankind and our planet in the early part of the 21st century. It was clear only ‘people’ could solve the challenges facing humankind and the planet and that, on many levels, cities were key. People are shaped by their environment and, therefore, if cities could be transformed, they could actively foster the levels of innovation, productivity and social consciousness needed to address the climate and ecological crises. A new urban economy and built environment emerged, one

which embraced ‘green technologies’ and the growing ‘purpose revolution’.

Health First

Innovation, productivity and social consciousness, cannot, however, be manufactured. It is something that happens under the right conditions, with the most important being good mental, physical and social health – something that cities can powerfully influence, both positively and negatively. Our cities now apply everything we know about health and embed it within their plans, strategies, governance and decision-making through what we now refer to as the **‘Health First’ principle**. This includes the fundamental truth that our future health is reliant on the health of others and the health of our local and wider natural world and its ecosystems.

This principle is the first and most important agenda item for organisations involved in developing and running our cities, deeply re-energising and renewing urban planning. It has led us to make huge strides forward by making

our urban environments zero pollution, fully integrated with nature, bursting with biodiversity and dynamic in promoting physical activity and wellbeing.

Healthy, Attractive, Accessible, Adaptive, For All.

There is also a deep understanding that good health is underpinned by a wide variety of factors, many of which are related to the urban economy and our built environment. This led to a new approach to city transformation and became known as: **Healthy, Attractive, Accessible, Adaptive, For All.**

There is a logical sequence to this approach. Firstly, cities are the most sustainable form of habitation available to effectively accommodate humankind. They are also our first line of defence against the climate and ecological crises. Go back 20 or 30 years however, and greenhouse gas emissions in our cities were one of our biggest problems. This needed to change, and quickly, as we needed people to ‘want’ to be in cities, especially following the Covid-19 pandemic.

Cities therefore needed to be **attractive** to people in the widest sense, ensuring the offer of economic opportunity worked alongside the offer of a unique cultural and entertainment experience. This started with looking carefully at the unique and special characteristics of a place. Vital ingredients needed to be attractive include good work, life-long learning, engaging natural environments, good design, safe streets, and, of course, having fun. Continuous investment is critical to delivering these ingredients and to enable local economies to grow via innovation and technological advancement, evolving existing industries and fostering the development of new ones. Cities have worked hard to be attractive to the young and the old alike, not just the middle section of society. Work is now governed by the 'how' not the 'where' and long and frequent commutes have significantly diminished. **Attractive smaller cities have been revived by providing more intimate opportunities for interaction.**

Accessible

Next in this logical sequence was the need to make cities much more **accessible**, again in the widest sense. Where appropriate, a polycentric and compact/dense city model

was adopted that allowed for concepts like the 30-45 minute city and 15-20 minute neighbourhoods. This allows for well-connected neighbourhoods or places set around a range of urban centres where special uses, activities and spaces draw people in. This, in turn, made it possible to transform how we move around our city, following a hierarchy that starts with active travel and then public transport and mobility on demand, ending our century-long love affair with the private car and reducing congestion to near zero. Reduced private traffic allowed for road space to be requisitioned for more sustainable forms of intra-urban public transport and green infrastructure.

Accessibility also means essential services like social security, education, skills development, waste collection and the 15-20 minute neighbourhood model allows most main or important services to be provided in a much more effective and accessible way. Blending these services with shared working, intergenerational living and local restaurants and shops was the catalyst for reinvention of our neighbourhood high streets and centres.

Resilient and adaptive

The world, however, continues to be uncertain, so cities also had to become more resilient and **adaptive**, moving beyond just building to compliance to more aspirational standards right across the built environment. Cities are now much better able to cope with extreme weather events and are now carbon 'net negative' with plans for zero carbon. Advanced building technologies and materials enable significant new buildings to capture more carbon than they use through, for example, biofuel generation through direct air capture. Whole life carbon is carefully assessed and building reuse and renewal is now prioritised where feasible. Urban agriculture is successful, reducing food miles significantly. The circular and sharing economy is now the most developed economic system in cities, relegating the old, unending 'consume-dispose-consume' patterns to the past. It is a place where public, private and civil society work better together and whole systems thinking is deployed, adapting to economic and social change as it continues at pace.

City regions, with wide ranging devolved powers and fiscal freedoms, are co-designed and managed through citizen assemblies', representative of the place and with participatory budgeting. City custodians advocate for future generations. Citizen health and wellbeing is closely monitored and acts as certification for investors. Effective collaboration and partnerships exist to share challenges and opportunities and collective and cooperative ownership and investment models are in place. People have a real stake in their city and local neighbourhoods. Cities now have plans and strategies that are much more agile and updated in 'real time' using the best data available but within a democratically agreed framework, and created around the **'Health First' principle**. The power of data and technology is harnessed to allow for fairer and more effective management. 'Digital twins' or 'City Sims' have been created to iterate ideas and where future scenarios and major projects can be more accurately and

transparently tested and city-life enriched. Gone are the plans that tried to predict several decades into the future using data from the past and which were often out of date even before they were passed.

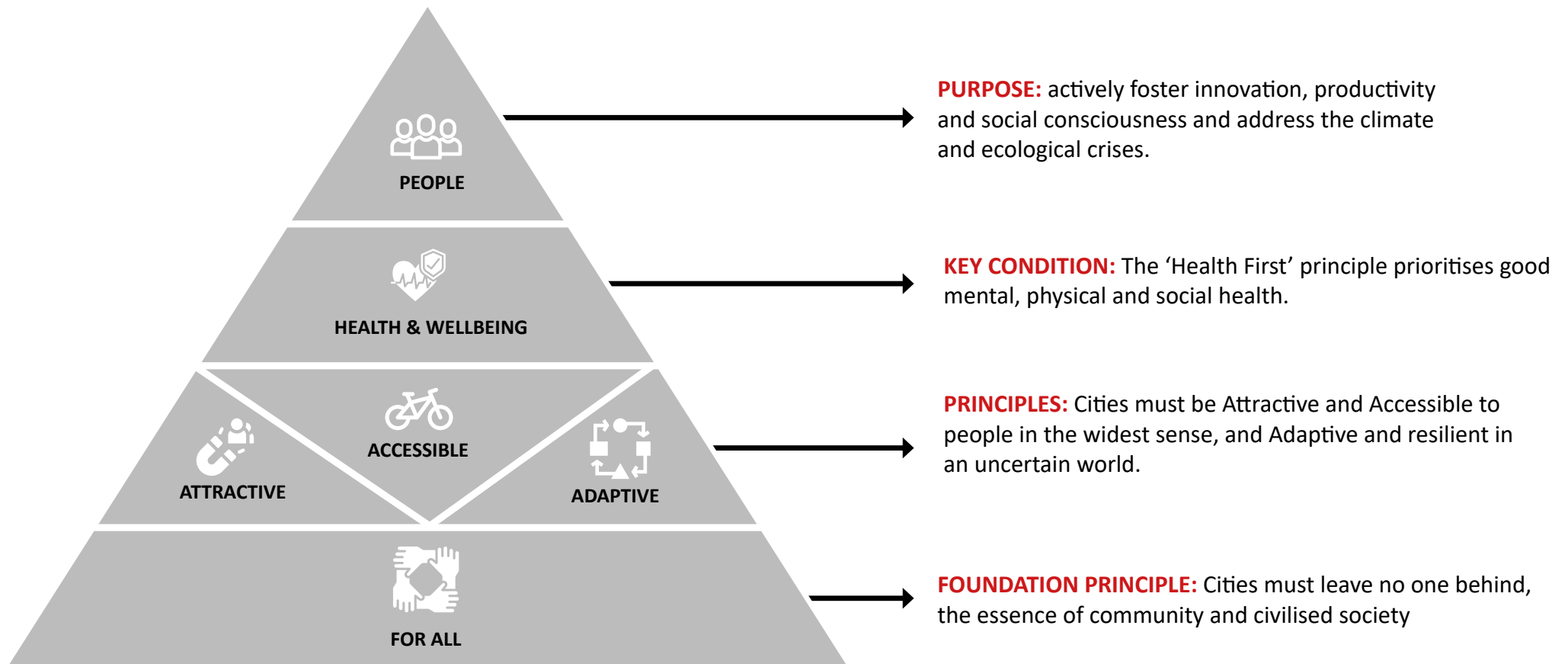
A city 'for all'

Finally, and most importantly, as this transformation would not have been possible otherwise, cities are now **for all**. The diversity and complexity of a city's people is its single greatest asset and the Covid-19 pandemic brutally exposed its deepest inequities. Understanding people's lived experience is essential to sustained improvement. A city is now judged on, and significant central government funding is calibrated to, the improvements to the lives of the most marginalised, disadvantaged and vulnerable. The biggest change in our cities came when it was understood that poverty is the most significant determinant of health and that the city's role in this is enormous. When people are lifted out

of poverty, the benefits transcend the individual to everyone in the city and beyond. Policies, plans and strategies are now tested rigorously so that outcomes are economically, socially and environmentally just and do not lead to inequity. A city 'for all' also means that it is not only shaped by and for majority groups, but that empowers groups that have been underrepresented before. Cities aim to leave no one behind, which is the essence of community and of civilised society.



A framework for the healthy city in 2050



**THE CITY OF
THE FUTURE
SHOULD BE...**

HEALTHY

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The city of the future should be Healthy

A place that supports good mental, physical and social health – the ‘Health First’ principle.

- Cities can harm **mental health**.
For example, by causing more acute levels of stress.
- Cities can harm **physical health**.
For example, by exposing residents to air and noise pollution.
- Cities can harm **social health** (our ability to interact and form meaningful relationships with others) by, for example, causing loneliness.

As well as the impacts on the individual, there are economic consequences to poor mental, physical and social health – cost to health services and lost productivity, absenteeism, and high staff turnover are just some of the impacts on the economy.

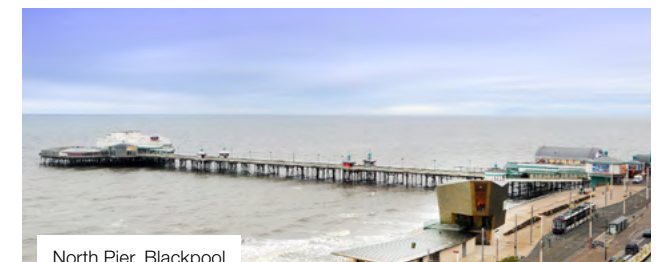
Considering that mental, physical and social health are interlinked and directly impacted by a variety of policy fields, health considerations should be taken into account in all policies ([following the HiAP approach](#)).

Integration of “Health in All Policies” (HiAP).

This approach to public policy relates to the range of potential direct and indirect effects for health that a public policy can have ([WHO](#)). Health considerations are brought to all public policies. For example, as councils set out to tackle their decarbonisation challenges through Net Zero Action Plans, by following a Health First Principle that integrates HiAP considerations into such plans, councils would link emissions reductions (coming from interventions like tree planting) to the public-health benefits derived from improved air quality. This HiAP approach is a way to address the social determinants of health – social, physical and economic environments and conditions that collectively affect one’s health. This HiAP is a major step toward the ‘Health First’ principle.

A planning system rebuilt on the ‘Health First’ principle.

A new ‘National Vision and Planning Strategy’ would require city authorities to embed everything known about health, both generally and locally in its strategies. New streamlined and agile ‘Place Frameworks’ that echo the ‘Health First’ principle would replace existing Local Plans. These Frameworks would include plans, policies and strategies to create places that, for example, are zero pollution, that are integrated with nature and highly biodiverse, that positively encourage physical activity and that foster community and target zero loneliness. In short, it would support many of the following ideas (a full description of how planning would be remade is included in the final chapter).



Integration of the built environment with nature using urban greening and biophilic design by default.

Urban greening is the inclusion of features such as street trees, roof gardens and wetlands in developments. Biophilic design is better connecting people with nature in the built environment. City planning departments would insist on urban greening and biophilia in design. Exposure to natural spaces or even greenery have been shown to promote calmness and lift moods, according to several studies.

At least 9 sq.m of green surface area per resident.

This would meet the recommended green surface area set by the World Health Organisation. Cities should strive to be greener and wilder, where nature is a part of everyday life, from woodland, cemeteries, formal parks, playing fields, wetlands, rivers, lakes and parklets, all green (and blue) outdoor spaces to be cherished. Boosting our natural capital is also of critical importance and a significant net gain of biodiversity must be achieved at the point when buildings or land use change.

Zero pollution.

Clean water, land and air, as well as minimised light and noise pollution. Low emissions zones and “no car days” in city centres. The reduce, reuse and recycle approach to waste would be implemented, with effective energy from waste infrastructure.

Encouraged physical activity.

Walking and cycling would be a feature of everyday life in the city of the future. This requires the right enabling infrastructure (discussed under the section on Accessibility).

Zero loneliness.

Many of the ways to address loneliness are described in the following sections of this report – deploying underutilised public space, having a transport network that encourages social interaction, rethinking our high streets and town centres, having community as a key consideration in design and planning, and maximising the use of digital tools to connect people and provide help to those who need it.



Community support for resilience to shocks.

Greater social health and community support has proven to be effective to increase resilience to shocks arising from extreme weather events, but also to economic stresses. Neighbourhood links have to be fostered, i.e. through the organisation of social events to encourage community building.

Communities are free and enabled to implement their own nature-based solutions.

For example, allowing food to be grown in public spaces and space for community gardens. Provision and access to education and literacy on nature-based solutions, including partnerships with local schools.

Case Studies

Plymouth

Run by Plymouth City Council and Devon Wildlife Trust, Active Neighbourhoods was a three-year project supporting people in five areas of Plymouth to improve their local natural spaces both for wildlife and people. As the project wrapped up, a combined evaluation package was produced, consisting of a written report, short film and a portrait commission focused on the project volunteers. Since the end of the project, Plymouth has scaled its ambition for nature recovery as a critical pathway for a healthy city.



This has led to securing funding to deliver new, innovative projects including Plymouth's Natural Grid, Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest, Plymouth Sound National Marine Park and Green Minds which all aim to take a 'Health First' approach ([More information](#)).

Singapore

Rolled out plans to become a greener and more sustainable city by 2030; plans include a new district with green architecture, solar-powered air conditioning and a 100m-wide, 5km-long corridor of trees running through it ([More information](#)).

Zealandia

A 560-acre native forest, bounded by an 8.6-kilometer fence, in Wellington, New Zealand. More than a dozen native wildlife species have returned to Zealandia since the rewilding initiative was completed in 1999 ([More information](#)).

Community support

Chicago, Heatwave, 1995 (Klinenberg, "Adaptation", 2013). Social scientists have shown that community support was a pattern, a factor behind death during extreme weather events. Demographically similar neighbourhoods had different death rates depending on how strong was the sense of belonging in the community, the places that bring people together (i.e. restaurants, stores, community organisations). Community support, by preventing loneliness and isolation, can directly create a support and communication system around the neighbourhood and save lives during extreme weather events ([More information](#)).

**THE CITY OF
THE FUTURE
SHOULD BE...**

ATTRACTIVE

**KEEP
CITY
LOOK
DON'T**

The city of the future should be Attractive

Attractive as a place to work, live and visit.

Cities have dynamic labour markets that offer opportunity, but can be characterised by insecurity and poor working conditions.

Beyond work, too often “the spectacle of the city” is absent. Empty spaces are often not well used, and have been made soulless by identikit high streets populated by national retailers. This can make cities less attractive to live and to visit.

Better work, living and visiting environments contribute to better mental, physical and social health.



Every job meets the definition of “quality work”.

All forms of employment have a fair balance of rights and responsibilities, all workers have a baseline of protection and all workers are able to progress at work. This applies to all current and future forms of employment, with the nature of work constantly changing as new technologies alter existing industries and create new ones. More generally, pay levels should be such that a decent standard of living can be achieved.

New style Place Frameworks to foster urban industry.

These should, amongst other things, include a strategy for sustainable urban industry growth that generates quality work for all (with a particular focus on green industries). Thinking around industry growth should give attention to ‘purpose’ at work – with people increasingly looking for employment that is fulfilling and with a sense of purpose in a wider context.



Formal cultural partnerships between influential local bodies.

Bringing together city authorities, business, education providers, cultural and community leaders, to co-design and deliver a locally-tailored vision for culture in the city. For example, a cultural partnership could install prominent public art, community scale pop-up museums, galleries and exhibitions to bring wonder and raise conversations in different ways.

A diverse and unique leisure and retail offer.

Incorporating independent / experiential retail and leisure, where people can experience exciting new things. Corporate retail faces competition that will force it to diversify its offer, including the promotion of “meanwhile spaces”, where temporary contracts allow community groups, small businesses or individuals to utilise commercial space for a defined time period.

Localised approaches to target zero crime and zero violence.

Early intervention initiatives aimed at crime prevention, with the promotion of community policing. This involves all relevant local partners to assess, measure and understand safety and security issues at the neighbourhood and city level. This involves formulating and developing a local crime prevention/urban safety strategy.

Case Studies

Coventry

The Historic Coventry Trust, “aims to bring new life to the city’s heritage, finding innovative ways to sustain historic places and to inspire, involve and connect people with the city’s history.” ([More information](#)).

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

Strategic partnerships which champions culture through a whole place approach. Communities are engaged in this process through extensive consultations. This Cultural Compact links the cultural sector with others like business, healthcare and education. This project will be a catalyst for investment, creating a cohesive vision and delivery plan for culture that will have a greater impact across the region. ([More information](#)).



The Salford Way, Paul Dennett, Mayor of the City of Salford

Salford

The Salford Way – a range of initiatives aimed at creating a fairer, greener and healthier Salford for a more inclusive and green local economy. This goes through local companies committed to the real living wage, employing local people and working for the local communities. Apprenticeships are also crucial, so that the companies can train their own engineers for example, and ensure more gender diversity in the field. ([More information](#)).

Attractive as a place for inclusive growth to occur.

Cities need a combination of household, public, private and third sector investment to provide the conditions for inclusive growth.

It is this investment that supports cities to be better places to work, live and visit, which itself supports the 'Health First' principle.

Anchor institutions committed to local procurement and employment.

This fosters the development of local supply chains (with relationships underpinned by fairness, such as paying suppliers on time and quickly). It offers employment opportunities to graduates from local universities and colleges, as well as engages the local business community to provide work experience placements for school-age children.

Free lifelong learning provision available to every resident.

This embeds a culture of continuous development, with unlimited and free access to accredited training, tailored to the local economies of each place. This helps to provide access to emerging industries, such as those in the green economy. It is an investment in the human capital of the city to drive future growth. Continuous learning processes will also prevent the aging population from getting excluded from the digital transformation.

Financial freedoms to encourage investment.

The power to design local tax systems allows cities to incentivise and disincentivise certain activities. One example is scrapping or lowering taxes to encourage investment in more independent retail. Another example is increased taxes on landlords for holding empty property, encouraging its use. Moreover, powers to implement new revenue sources such as tourist levies, workplace parking levies, payroll taxes and congestion charging can provide locally generated revenues to reinvest into growth-generating infrastructure.

Investment readiness

To improve access to loans and investment opportunities, trust has to be built among donors, ratings agencies, investors and lenders. Strong institutions and fiscal management is key to this, with established technical capability to plan and prepare projects. In doing this, access to long-term finance in the form of green bonds, social impact bonds and municipal bonds is possible.

Premises to support every business need

Businesses need to have access to suitable commercial space if they are to start, succeed and expand. This means providing low-cost co-working space for entrepreneurs with new ideas, as well as providing space suitable for the SME manufacturer of say 100 employees. Without the right premises, businesses will either not meet their potential or move elsewhere.

Established innovation ecosystems

These ecosystems encourage social innovation (such as employment programmes for disadvantaged groups), technological innovation (such as app-based ride services and shared mobility) and public sector innovation (such as financial products and valuation practices). Innovation districts are a fundamental part of this, tailored to local economic strengths.

Strong business support networks

Providing advice on tech adoption, accessing international markets, the right finance options and investor options.



Nissan Leaf electric car, Sunderland Nissan plant

Case studies

Preston

Community Wealth Building Initiative aiming at returning more economic power to local people and institutions. Based on the findings that half of anchor institution's spendings are leaking out of the Lancashire economy, anchor institutions from Preston explored from 2013 how to increase the local economic and social benefits generated by their supply chains. Within 5 years, locally retained spend had increased within Preston from 5% to 18.2%. This initiative have strong socio-economic benefits i.e. reduction of unemployment, reduced levels of in-work poverty, development of the Real Living Wage commitment. ([More information](#)).

Alexandria, Virginia

The city of Alexandria has a "transient occupancy tax" which funds economic sustainability initiatives such as the launch of the King Street Trolley service (a free bus service in a historic part of the city), other transportation projects, and land use and transportation planning staff resources. ([More information](#)).



Leisure and Wellbeing Facility, Newport

Newport, Wales

Newport City Council is developing a new £20m leisure and well-being in the heart of the city centre on a vacant brownfield site. The new purpose-built centre will provide state-of-the-art facilities for residents and visitors and will provide both internal and external fitness and wellness facilities. The new building is being designed to meet BREEAM Excellent standards and will incorporate energy efficient and sustainable features which will help the City Council fulfil its commitment to be net zero by 2030. ([More information](#)).

Glasgow

In response to Covid related shutdowns of education and arts institutions, the city of Glasgow, in collaboration with the University of Glasgow, launched free short art courses. ([More information](#)).

**THE CITY OF
THE FUTURE
SHOULD BE...**

ACCESSIBLE

**KEEP
CITY
LOOK
DON'T**

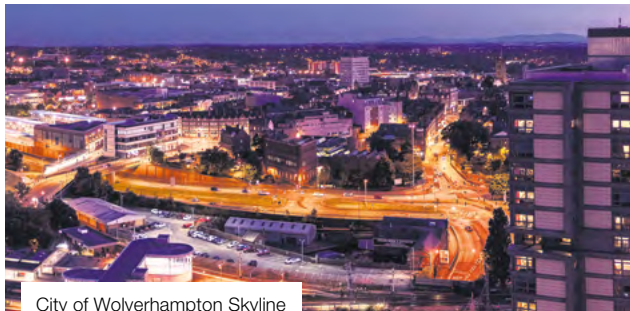
The city of the future should be Accessible

A place where every person and community is sustainably connected.

The city model of an employment centre surrounded by commuter suburbs is outdated. The rapid and accelerated change in how people work creates the possibility of city centres being “hollowed out” (as demonstrated by ‘hyperlocalism’ during the Covid pandemic).

Cities and urban services are not always shaped for the specific needs of disabled people, which is symptomatic of a difficulty of our cities to fully understand diversity.

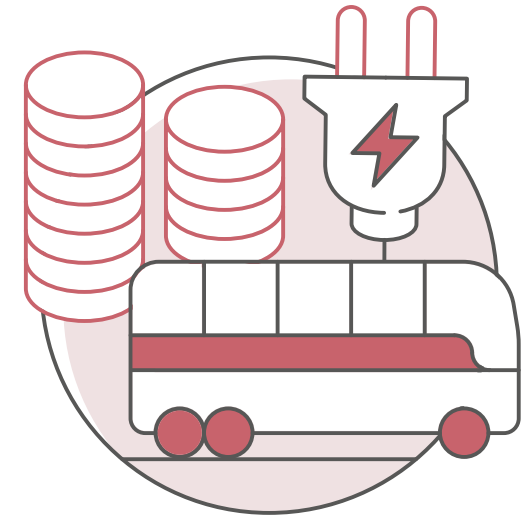
More emphasis is needed on city centres being places of collaboration and social interaction (which in turn supports social health under the ‘Health First’ principle).



City of Wolverhampton Skyline

Everywhere in the city region is accessible by everyone within 30-45 minutes, all major needs are accessible within a 15-20 minute neighbourhood area (the ‘Proximity City’).

The 30-45 minute city better supports those accessing low paid jobs, so long as transport is frequent and affordable. Neighbourhoods and centres need to be networked and suburbs where social / economic segregation exists should be avoided. The 15-20 minute (walk/cycle) neighbourhood ensures that all important and frequent services and facilities are locally available. The ability to move to locations outside of your local neighbourhood is, however, integral to what we need as humans, amongst other things it encourages good brain health (neuro-plasticity). However, in seeking to achieve these principles it is crucial to address the intense disparities of race, wealth and disability and make the investments in accessibility that are already needed, and also it is important to be cautious when linking accessibility with time as this very



clearly varies between people and groups. Priorities are likely to include reliable fixed-route transport services including within and through less dense neighbourhoods and also through providing safe and accessible pedestrian infrastructure ([Source](#)). For some people, the lack of access to transportation remains a barrier to employment and education. Some cities in the US are piloting “universal basic mobility” programs that subsidise bus rides and shared bike and scooter services for low-income residents and the vulnerable ([Source](#)).

Planned around a polycentric model where appropriate.

All cities are a collection of places. These places can often be enhanced by adopting the hub and spoke model – a strong core centre with surrounding neighbourhoods and smaller complimentary centres / high streets. This can be thought of as a ‘necklace’ of well connected places around a ‘jewel’ centre or centres that serve a special purpose for major uses, gatherings and events, fostering community, belonging and identity. Polycentric places can be more balanced and more sustainable.

Built to be organised, compact and dense.

If cities do not densify, they just spread. In dense cities, it is easier to move away from the car as journeys can often be walked or cycled and public transport tends to be better. Dense environments facilitate new ideas and innovation, as well as having lower carbon footprints. They can create social capital with co-located uses, such as libraries near to care homes. This will help to ensure that every person has access to the essential services and life support they need.

Case studies



Riverside, Sunderland (photo credit: Sunderland City Council)

Sunderland

Riverside Sunderland is a sustainable new urban regeneration project. The Masterplan for the project states that new Sunderland housing types will be assembled in a variety of ways to respond to the local context and to deliver different densities, urban forms and characters. Throughout the site the developers aim to achieve, “...a harmonious connection between built form and public realm, and to promote sociability and neighbourly interaction”. [\(More information\)](#).

Portland, Oregon

The ‘15 minute city’ phrase has its roots in Portland’s ‘20-minute neighbourhood,’ where the ‘proximity city’ has been a planning concept since 2010. Portland’s Climate Action Plan set 2030 as a target for which 90% of Portland’s residents could easily walk or cycle for all basic, daily, needs. Such core services and amenities are often disproportionately concentrated in cities’ central business districts and wealthier neighbourhoods, but Portland’s pioneering 20-minute neighbourhood concept emphasises equal access for all citizens to services, amenities and green space. The Portland Plan’s mapping analysis informs Portland’s 20-minute neighbourhood strategy, promoting on an ongoing basis a compact urban form and mixed-use buildings and neighbourhoods. [\(More information\)](#).



A place where mobility is fluid with zero regular congestion.

Many cities have been designed around the car and the resulting hard infrastructure should, wherever possible, be repurposed over time.

Fluid mobility enables economic activity to happen more easily, and the health benefits associated with active travel support the 'Health First' principle.

Active travel is the prime mode of mobility in neighbourhoods.

Democratising our space, reducing, or costing appropriately, spaces for people to store their private vehicles, making more provision for storing bikes, being tougher on people who park cars and vans across pedestrian or cycle areas, creating 'parklets' (places on streets where people can stop and enjoy) from retired parking spaces.

Low traffic neighbourhoods.

This means traffic calming interventions, shared surfaces, speed humps and raised crosswalks. Neighbourhood hubs would be the place to get packages, rather than home delivery to the door. Where deliveries are necessary cargo bikes using larger cycle lanes could be implemented.

Encouraged micro-mobility and mobility on demand.

Hire bikes and scooters should be made available at low cost, using existing road infrastructure, facilitating agile journeys.



Repurposed highways and reutilised existing hard infrastructure.

Roadways should be reimagined so as to provide routes for new public / shared movement options, including autonomous / semi-autonomous.

Case study

Newport, Wales

Several projects have been implemented across Newport to increase accessibility and active travel (e.g., providing better access to the town paths for wheelchair users). The improvement of these active travel routes have been based on feedback from users. An Active Travel map has also been developed. ([More information](#)).

Every person has the opportunity of a safe and healthy home.

Housing supply, affordability and quality is a real problem in many cities, particularly for the worse-off.

Poor availability and quality of housing can have significant implications for the health of the population, acting against the 'Health First' principle.



Zero homelessness and rough sleeping.

Quality affordable housing is available. Relief accommodation aimed at crisis homelessness is available and used short-term, before moving on to permanent tenancies. The 'Housing First' model of addressing homelessness is implemented. Moreover, social housing is of significant quality and availability for those people and families that would otherwise be priced out of the city.

Housing stock suitable across different generations.

For instance, specially designed housing which is efficient, affordable, and exciting for younger and older people in urban centres. Then housing in neighbourhoods to provide for starting and growing families, before downsizing later in life and returning to the centre and its amenities.



Good standards achieved across the whole housing stock.

In particular, these standards will have a focus on ensuring that homes are energy efficient (contributing to net zero) and have adequate space.

Local Authority led housing delivery.

Additional government funding and support for Local Authorities to self deliver many more new homes, on its own land and in partnership with the other landowners and the private sector.

Case studies

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole

FuturePlaces is a regeneration company launched by Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole to adopt a stewardship approach, a model identified in the Government's Building Better Building Beautiful Commission – an independent body that advised the government on how to promote and increase the use of high-quality design for new build homes and neighbourhoods. The stewardship approach has been shown to deliver high quality, residentially led urban development at scale via long-term landowner involvement, and a patient approach to financial returns. ([More information](#)).



Holes Bay, Poole

Newcastle

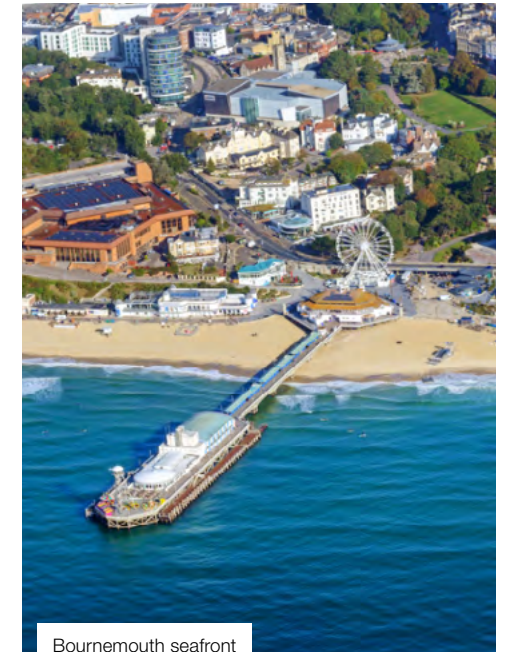
Newcastle City Council has entered into partnership with Crisis to end homelessness in the city. This means additional capacity to unite the city to make responding to homelessness everyone's business. In turn, the hope is that this will enable the city to better align resources to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring in Newcastle. ([More information](#)).

Helsinki

The city's 'Housing First' offer provides support to tenants ranging from access to education, training and work placements to recreation and basic life skills. ([More information](#)).

'Five-year Metaverse Seoul Promotion Master Plan'

The plan is being promoted as a way to make public services more accessible to everyone by removing barriers like distance. Seoul plans to establish a platform for "contactless communication" by the end of 2022, by hosting a variety of public services, historic sites and cultural events that are publicly accessible via VR. The city plans to open a "Metaverse 120 Center," which will serve as a virtual city hall. ([More information](#)).



Bournemouth seafront



Satellite payload manufacturing at Airbus in Portsmouth (copyright Airbus)

**THE CITY OF
THE FUTURE
SHOULD BE...**

**ADAPTIVE
AND RESILIENT**

**KEEP
CITY
GROWING
DOTTEN**

The city of the future should be Adaptive and resilient

A place that is highly adaptive and resilient to climate change.

Flooding, water shortages, increased temperature and sea level rises have dramatic impacts on residents' health and wellbeing and on business activity.

Instead of increasing adaptability and resilience to climate change, too many places lower it. For instance, where planning decisions allow inappropriate developments on flood plains.

Failure to adapt and be resilient will harm residents' health and wellbeing as well as economic prospects.

First understand, then act to reduce local emissions.

Cities can only allocate resources effectively to reduce their emissions and decarbonise if the source of the emissions are known. This includes direct greenhouse gas emissions from households and businesses, as well as those created indirectly through consumption and supply chains. Integral to understanding is Whole

Life Carbon Assessments – calculating the emissions from the construction and use of a building or infrastructure over its entire life, including demolition and disposal. The emissions profiles of every place will be different, meaning the actions required to reduce them will be different too.

Rigorous City Resilience Plans.

The plan would detail how existing critical infrastructure and vulnerable residents can be protected from extreme weather events (including nature-based solutions, more energy efficient housing and community support schemes to implement during a crisis). City resilience strategies will also detail how planning decisions and infrastructure delivery – of any type – can be taken in a more integrated manner. Rather than looking at a given sector in isolation, an integrated approach sees a system linked to other systems to achieve a multitude of 'co-benefits', such as contributing to decarbonisation whilst making communities healthier and buildings and infrastructure

systems more resilient to climate change and future-proofed to other changes that may come.

Adoption of the principle of “retrofit or repurpose before redevelopment”.

This includes the conversion of historic buildings and infrastructure. Where redevelopment is necessary, the aforementioned Whole Life Carbon Assessments – which include a calculation of “embodied carbon” – should be considered, as well as appropriate standards for energy efficiency and resilience. Proactive plans and funding should be agreed to bring vacant or underutilised buildings back into viable use to ease development pressure. One area of focus should be the adaptation of existing buildings, including heritage assets, for affordables homes where there is a funding gap through government fiscal intervention.

Case studies

Norwich

Award-winning development of council-owned energy efficient homes let out for social rent. These buildings have been designed to strict Passivhaus standards, meaning that the houses are as airtight as possible and use heat from the sun, human occupants, household appliances and extract air to warm the home. Energy costs are on average 70% cheaper. ([More information](#)).

Wolverhampton

Partnership between Wolverhampton City Council and Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust to create a solar farm, which will provide energy for the New Cross Hospital and reduce reliance on fossil fuels. This solar farm has been built on publicly owned brownfield land that was previously providing no financial or tangible gain. It is now productive and fostering the reduction of emissions of the Wolverhampton NHS Trust. ([More information](#)).

Lancaster

A major flood risk management scheme has been designed to protect hundreds of properties from the risk of flooding. In partnership with the Environment Agency, Lancaster City Council has built new and improved existing flood walls. ([More information](#)).



“Urban Sequoia”

Global design firm SOM argues that it's not enough for buildings to be net-zero, they need to be net-negative. It proposes ideas for materials, technologies and strategies that enable buildings to capture more carbon than they emit, e.g. high rises and skyscrapers that absorb atmospheric carbon and generate biofuels using new technologies like direct air capture. ([More information](#)).



China

A landscape architecture firm called Turenscape has been constructing stormwater friendly urban parks for more than a decade, many using soils and plants to act like a sponge. Its “Stormwater Park” in a developing area on the edge of Harbin, for example, is designed so that mounds and ponds in the area's degraded natural wetlands guide stormwater into a nearby aquifer. ([More information](#)).

A place that is adaptive and resilient to economic and social change.

Structural economic change can dislocate labour markets, driving up unemployment and economic inactivity.

Social change can exacerbate societal problems. For example, older people are more at risk from loneliness and social isolation (the incidence of which could increase with an ageing population).

Both economic change and social change can decrease health and wellbeing, but also act to increase it. Key to this is the alleviation of poverty, which is strongly linked to poorer health outcomes.

An embedded circular economy culture.

In order to eliminate or repurpose unnecessary waste and help decarbonise industry as well as consumer supply chains, the circular economy transforms how we use materials and products across value chains. The circular economy involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling materials and products for as long as possible to extend their life cycle. Amongst other activities, this

requires city authorities to apply circular economy criteria to procurement processes and to provide training on how to adopt circular economy processes among local supply chains.

Digital transformation to encourage peer-to-peer / sharing economies.

An innovative solution to over-consumption and over-exploitation of resources. It opens new opportunities to make better use of materials and resources and often leads to closer social ties between residents. The shared product is more often cars / vans / bikes, houses, but also household items or even food and clothes. The affordability of this makes it attractive for a great number of people – and thus makes it inclusive as well.

Digital and social innovation for a smarter city.

Academic research centres, private R&D and public decision-makers work together to create demand and supply for a smarter city while making sure that these transformations are not leaving anyone behind. Through their collaboration, private and public stakeholders in the fields of research, policy making and investment

Case studies

Nuneaton

Footfall and foot-flow monitoring is a key indicator used to guide and monitor the impact of proposed major investments. ([More information](#)).

Amsterdam

Sharing Economy Action Plan – linking and supporting local sharing economy platforms that allow Amsterdam's residents to get access to e.g. fashion libraries ([LENA](#)) or car/motorbike sharing platform ([MotoShare](#)). This proactive approach to the sharing economy is designed to enable the city, businesses and residents to reap the benefits from sharing platforms and to make better use of materials and resources. ([More information](#)).

can innovate for a city that is in line with the digital transformation and that is exploring every possibility that this opens, while making sure that these innovations are not worsening the social digital gap.



A place where public, private and civil society work together for a durable change.

Reforms and policies are too often received differently than the way that is intended.

For the reforms and changes that this report advocates to be effective and durable, both a collaboration working with the local community and a thorough study of what works and what does not in a specific socio-economic context are needed.

Whole systems thinking.

A working collaboration between public, private and civil societies builds an understanding of the interconnectedness of people and environment. Involving all stakeholders in the discussion and adopting a system change approach is creating durable change in itself. It is making the city and its residents more resilient, more connected and better able to deal with shocks and stresses. Using Systems Convening, or Systems Leadership approaches helps to overcome complex challenges that could not be solved by one organisation or one sector on its own.

Smart city policy evaluation methods for tailor-made solutions.

For a city to be adaptive, a more holistic understanding of what works and what does not in the journey toward the future city is necessary. Innovation in policy evaluation methods goes beyond the traditional quantitative analysis and takes into consideration residents' feedback (lived experience) and other qualitative data. Before adoption, policies must be rigorously

assessed to ensure they do not lead to inequity and are socially and environmentally just. Digital tools are enabling the collection of more informed data on how residents conceive and interact with their city.

Case study

Exeter Living Lab

Living-Lab creates a digital space where people's ideas, experience and knowledge are at the core of innovation. Living Labs are not about outcome delivery but about the process of putting together people and ideas from different socio-professional backgrounds. Exeter Living Lab has been established to create a cross-sector collaboration platform on green recovery in the area. ([More information](#)).



**THE CITY OF
THE FUTURE
SHOULD BE...**

FOR ALL

**UNIL
DON'T**

**KEEP
CITY**

The city of the future should be (For) All

A place where every citizen is aware and empowered to be an active actor of change.

Diversity and complexity is strength, a city's greatest asset is its people and its multiplicity. However, many people are marginalised and disadvantaged. As a result we need to look 'outwards', and systematically, from a person or group's perspective at the quality of their homes, streets, neighbourhoods, access and movement, good jobs, health care and education as well as culture and entertainment. We need to look at their 'lived' experience and include them in the process. Before adoption, plans and policies must be rigorously assessed to ensure they do not lead to inequity and are socially and environmentally just.



City Beach, Southend-on-Sea— a public realm regeneration in the central seafront attracting greater numbers of visitors for longer (photo credit: Southend-on-Sea Borough Council)

Citizens Assemblies are created and empowered.

Paid roles that mirror very closely a city's socio-demographic makeup. Part of its mission is to advocate for future generations.

Diversity becomes front and centre in the shaping of the city.

A city for all means for all, including those groups that are currently underrepresented. Nobody is left behind, feels unsafe, cannot follow a pavement, or access services. Bringing the full range of people's voices to the table through participatory methods is one way of making sure their aspirations are heard and represented. The changes needed for all the minority groups to feel safe and taken into account have to come from the minority groups themselves and not be assumed by others. As Jane Jacobs famously said, "Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody."

The creation of an equitable and diverse environment.

Opportunities need to present no limits. They are multigenerational. They are for all. From living on a certain street, entering a certain career or going out to eat a particular cuisine. Cities need to encourage diversity, by embracing all cultures and all walks of life.

Devolved powers and devolved budgets.

Reimagining the city will be impossible without devolution. A city needs to be co-designed and locally – with input from a wide range of stakeholders. Cities also need to be co-managed and run by society as a whole, with the aim to better it for all including the unborn generations. Civic leaders should be there to provide guidance to society, but change should be in the hands of citizens. Their voices will be empowered. Participatory Budgeting and Citizens Assemblies will be the normal, and not just a concept that needs explanation.

Participatory budgeting and participatory design is a key part of city planning / governance.

For participatory budgeting examples include: Govanhill, Glasgow; Tower Hamlets ‘You Decide’; Porty Alegria, Brazil). For Participatory Design examples include Takarstan and Kazan.

Embed the Marmot principles.

The Marmot Review, “Fair Society, Healthy Lives” aims to reduce inequality and improve health outcomes for all, and recommends embedding these objectives into the core functions of Council’s and its partners.

Apply ‘Regenerative’ thinking.

From a ‘Living Systems Perspective’ *“human society is nested within the wider natural world. Disease in your heart affects the overall health of the individual. In a social setting, poor ‘health’ of a neighbourhood, say through lack of work opportunities, poverty or inequality, can have knock-on negative effects for the socio-economic and environmental flourishing of the broader region”*. ([Source](#))

Case studies

From literature

‘The Ministry for the Future’ is a novel by American science-fiction writer Kim Stanley Robinson published in 2020. Set in the near future, the novel follows a subsidiary body, established under the Paris Agreement, whose mission is to advocate for the world’s future generations of citizens as if their rights are valid as the present generations. ([More information](#)).

Vienna, Austria

Vienna’s ‘gender mainstreaming’ strategy seeks to make the city a safer and more convenient place for women and girls. The dozens of urban design projects, informed by community surveys since the 1990s as a matter of routine, include, for example, enhanced street lighting, improved accessibility in parks for young girls and widened pavement and accommodations for strollers. ([More information](#)).

Barcelona, Spain

While Barcelona undertook administrative reforms to planning that emphasise public health, public space and sustainable mobility to encourage active lifestyles, Barcelona also introduced the ‘Urban Design Manual for Daily Life’. This guide and the subsequent ‘Plan for Gender Justice’ encourages inclusive design for a safer city that treats all citizens equally, giving special attention to the needs of vulnerable groups, including women, the elderly, and children. ([More information](#)).

Medway

Medway Council design events to foster the engagement of young people and children in the shaping of Medway’s future. These are free events that link recreational activities (including comedy performances and meals) and discussions around various topics, such as education, green spaces, community places or events planning for young people). ([More information](#)).

Coventry City Council

Improving health and reducing inequalities in the city is not just a priority for the NHS and public health – it is a priority for everyone who is working to improve the lives of people there. Coventry became a Marmot City in 2013 and illustrates how a partnership approach between the public sector, community and voluntary organisations, businesses and universities and individuals can tackle health inequalities across a city.” ([More information](#)).

Letchworth

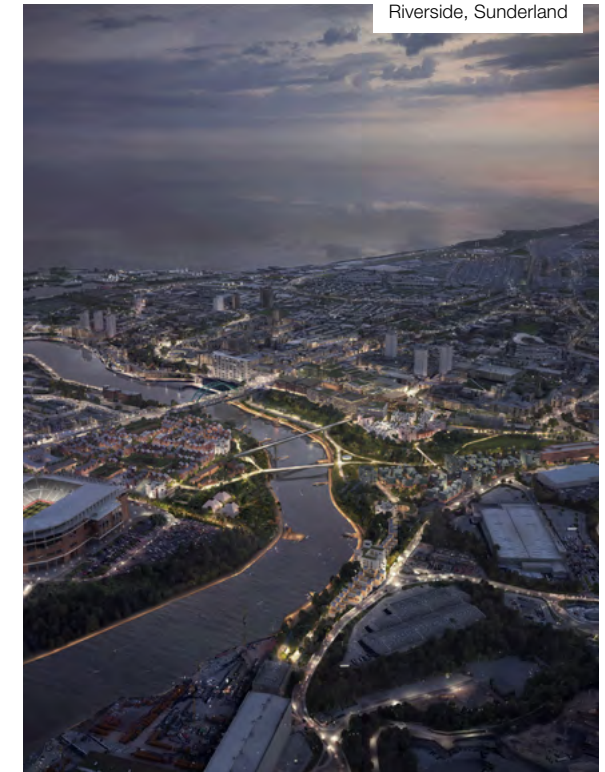
In 1962, an Act of Parliament transferred the assets, role and responsibilities of First Garden City Ltd to a public sector organisation – Letchworth Garden City Corporation. Thirty three years later, a further Act of Parliament wound up the Corporation passing the £56 million Estate to Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation. Today, the Foundation works to maintain and enhance the world’s first Garden City, managing a local property portfolio to generate income, which is then invested back into the community and landscape of Letchworth Garden City. ([More information](#)).

Paris, France

The Parisian Urbanism Plan has involved children in the evaluation of local policies to improve public policy and urban services. Some examples of activities include drawing their favourite place in the neighbourhood (with green and blue infrastructures appearing frequently) and questions on how they would like the city to be. ([More information](#)).

Maptionnaire

This is a community engagement digital app that brings data to urban planners and feedback from residents for their policy evaluation. This provides more informed data on how people behave, use and conceive their city. ([More information](#)).



Riverside, Sunderland



Media City, Salford

PLANNING REMADE

UNLOCK
DON'T

Planning remade – the key to making cities Healthy, Attractive, Accessible, Adaptive, For All

A new approach to town and country planning is required to create a pathway towards the vision set out in this document. One that moves away from having the delivery of housing numbers at its core, and replaces this with a holistic vision of health. Affordable, quality housing is still a critical issue of course, but it is one in an array of conditions necessary to support good health.

This 'new' **purpose** for planning will require bold and visionary leadership. However, it is, in fact, not new, but a return to the origins of the planning system, which has always been there in spirit.



This will require the current NPPF to be replaced by a new '**National Vision and Planning Strategy**' (the 'Strategy'). A critical part of this will be to promote, in a much more muscular way, the pressing need for successful and sustainable cities and towns. This Strategy should begin with the principle that health comes first. If we focus on and achieve good health (human and planetary), then we will have been successful across a wide range of factors as set out in this report.

The Strategy will include a national spatial plan which positions cities and towns within their sub-region and establishes key health targets to drive decision-making. The Strategy will require Local Authorities to embed everything that we know, or can reasonably learn, about health, both generally and locally, within their plans, strategies, decision making and governance.

More locally, new streamlined and agile '**Place Frameworks**' should replace the current Local Plan system. These will embed the 'Health First' principle and



support this becoming the most important agenda item for the organisations involved in planning and running our cities and towns. These Frameworks would include plans, policies and strategies to create places that, for example, are zero pollution, that are integrated with the natural world and highly biodiverse, that positively encourage physical activity and that foster community and target zero loneliness.

To create the necessary conditions for health, the Framework should also promote a set of principles that have a logical sequence.

Principle 1 Remake our cities and towns 'Attractive'.

As the report sets out, much relies on places being strong people-attractors. Cities can be the most sustainable option to support modern life. We need to optimise our urban areas and make sure that they are attractive to people and investment and become more self-sustaining. Place Frameworks would, amongst other things, include plans and policies to create a strategy for sustainable urban industry that generates good work for all (with a special focus on green industries), supports lifelong learning and fosters place identity, pride and a shared and inclusive sense of purpose alongside rebooting the cultural, entertainment and retail offer. Frameworks should also target important matters like safety and pay special attention to the needs of women, children, the elderly, disabled people, the neuro-diverse, and all those with particular needs.

Principle 2 Remake our cities 'Accessible'.

A key part of the new national Strategy and local Place Frameworks envisaged, is to strongly promote active and shared travel and energy preservation. Sustainable travel is intrinsically linked to land use and built form and therefore, we should promote clusters of '15-20 minute neighbourhoods' within an encompassing 30-45 minute town or city. Within this model, people can access all regular and important services within a 15 minute walk from where they live by walking, cycling, e-scooter, mobility scooter or wheelchair. People should also be able to travel into the centre, or anywhere else in their town or city, within a defined period by affordable public transport or another shared mode or service. Private car use will be more heavily discouraged (whilst acknowledging that for some groups this is the only affordable or feasible form of transport until viable alternatives are in place) and the road space that is liberated made available for alternative forms of travel. Zero regular traffic congestion should be targeted.

Place Frameworks will also be required to make accessible for all affordable quality homes and target zero homelessness. They should also plan for polycentric places that are compact and dense (but not overcrowded) and with a hierarchy of centres. These centres or high streets should become hubs for regularly-needed services including health and education as well as shops and restaurants.

Principle 3 Remake our cities 'Adaptive' and resilient.

Cities and towns have a huge role to play in the fight against climate change and the biodiversity crisis and each Place Framework should set a route to net zero carbon and seek to manage and expand the environmental capital within a wider sub-regional context. This will include prioritising the innovative reuse and recycling of the existing built environment. New-build will need to move beyond compliant to resilient design and contribute to the delivery of town and city wide energy networks and investment in environmental capital. The lines are blurring between the way we use space

within our cities and towns, and some of the more traditional ideas around areas, districts and zones need rethinking. As such, more flexibility and innovation is required in how we approach land-use planning.

Through more effective harnessing of the power of data and technology, plans and strategies should be much more streamlined, accessible, agile and empowering (whilst addressing the digital divide). Plans should not try to predict several decades into the future using data from the past and which is often out of date, instead, digital ‘twins’ or ‘sims’ of places should be created where future scenarios and major projects can be more accurately and transparently assessed and plans can be updated in real-time. Frameworks need to provide the certainty required for long term investment. At the same time they need to be flexible and not seek to micromanage and accommodate ongoing and accelerated social and technological change. This is crucial as planners should not be regulators, they should be place makers.

Principle 4 Remake our cities for ‘All’.

Leaving no one behind is critical and as such considered the foundation principle. The process of plan making therefore needs to change so that plans are ‘co-designed’ and focused on clear and shared health targets. A key part of city planning and governance should be Citizen Assemblies and participatory budgeting and design working to establish a clear and distinctive vision.

A development management system that embodies the ‘Health First’ principle is needed, one that enables development to contribute appropriately to the goals of the national Strategy and local Place Framework. Locally specific guidelines are required that cover good design and contribute to wider and longer-term goals including, for example, the delivery of energy networks. However, the starting point for these guidelines should be a local ‘Health Strategy’ developed alongside citizens who are well informed of the holistic needs of their area.

Before adoption, plans and policies must be rigorously assessed to ensure they do not lead to inequity and are socially and

environmentally just. There is then a need to rigorously scrutinise the outcomes of policies and plans as a way of persistently challenging inequities. This is to ensure that well intended policies deliver for all people. Citizen surveys will also be necessary to ensure outcomes are as predicted. Advocacy for future generations should also be integrated into decision-making. As the Mary Robinson Foundation advocates, future generations do not yet have a voice and, as such, they cannot shape decisions nor vote for leaders that are deciding their fate. This needs to be at the front of our minds as we pioneer new pathways to more sustainable cities and towns.



What future city dwellers want

As the report recommends, in remaking our cities it will be essential to consider the needs of younger people and generations yet to come. Whilst not a formal part of this report's scope, an opportunity arose to ask a small number of children and young people what they wanted from a city in the future. Some quotes, drawings and graphics were obtained and these are below.

Moving forward and building on this, it is Key Cities' intention that the report provides the basis for further discussions with a wider range of citizens, especially the young and old and those from minority groups, to ensure their needs and ideas are not ignored.

"The earth could cross the threshold of global warming as soon as 2027 and if other cities don't put their heads together and think of innovative ideas, global warming will hit a stage of irreversible destruction. So cities need to think of new and clever ideas to keep this from happening."

12 year-old

"I want to see more animal rescue shelters and more conservation, more medical research facilities to help find treatment for long term illnesses."

9 year-old



"The future of cities in my mind should be in empowering to the world and its people. By showing the reality and changes in society we can normalise everyone no matter who you identify as or what you look like or where you are from."

12 year-old

"I want to see more swimming pools especially ones with big slides. I want to see more housing estates with trees."

5 year-old



Key Cities are a united voice representing 25 cities and towns across England and Wales.

We represent the interests of 5.5m people who live in our cities, and the 171,000 businesses who provide jobs.

We have proven our ability to deliver innovative economic and social programmes, and stand ready to work with Government to deliver a strong future for our residents.

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Footnotes

¹ [UN, Cities and Pollution](#)

² [Climate Change Committee, 2018, The Future of UK Cities](#)

³ [McKinsey, July 2020, How cities can adapt to climate change](#)

⁴ [Key Cities, May 2021, The Future of Urban Centres](#)

⁵ [The British Journal of Psychiatry, January 2018, Urbanisation and the incidence of psychosis and depression](#)

⁶ [Centre for Cities, Air Quality Briefing](#)

⁷ [New Scientist, August 2021, People living in dense UK cities are more likely to feel lonely](#)

⁸ [The Marmot Review, February 2010, Fair Society, Healthy Lives](#)