

PARKS, PROXIMITY AND PEOPLE

A Flourishing Future For Towns



Commissioned by
Argent Related 2020

INTRODUCTION

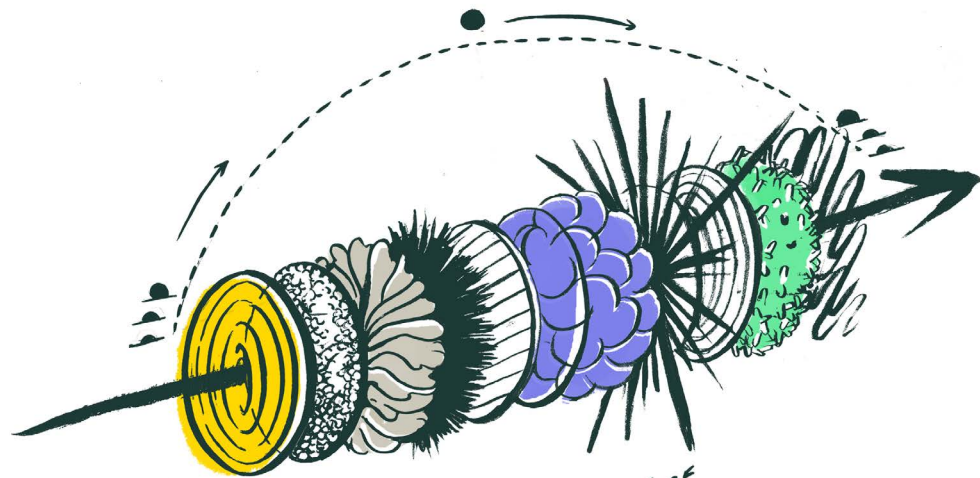
FIFTEEN-MINUTE TOWN

A DESIRE TO FLOURISH

RETHINKING WORK AND PLACE

360° ENVIRONMENTAL LIVES

CONCLUSION



PEOPLE HAVE THE SENSE OF
MOVING THROUGH THOUSANDS
OF EMOTIONS IN A SINGLE DAY.

2020 has been a disruptor.

As the pandemic has impacted every part of our lives, thousands of epiphanies, large and small, have occurred in its wake.

As a result, trends in living and working which we have watched slowly gain traction over years have suddenly accelerated, and are leading to long term change and a generation of new behaviours.

At Argent Related, we are driven by a belief in putting people first. We focus not just on the buildings, but the spaces between them, and the communities, relationships, activities and events which grow around and from those buildings and spaces.

Part of putting people first is about listening, about keeping in touch with how people feel, what they want, what they need, how they behave and how their behaviour is changing.

FOREWORD

We believe in development that can respond to shifts in people's attitudes and behaviours and urban design that reflects how society works and what communities need from their built environments.

Together with Barnet Council, we are currently creating one of the UK's largest development schemes at Brent Cross Town. Much of our planning strategy is driven by societal trends.

Society is currently undergoing huge changes, and we wanted to get a better understanding of where we are now and consider what we expect the next few years to look like.

As a forward-thinking developer, we are looking to the future to identify the long-term changes that influence how people want to live, work and flourish, to understand how we can best support them.

“We were thinking of moving to Cornwall already. First day after lockdown we headed down to Falmouth to start looking in earnest.”

An interviewee from qualitative research

The momentous events of 2020 have given us cause to review societal trends, think about the changes we are seeing and identify how our strategy needs to adapt.

We commissioned the independent research and trends agency Copa to help with this. Copa has been listening, reading and thinking, interviewing experts and consumers and carrying out primary research with 3,000 UK residents to corroborate and test their thinking. This report is a summary of their findings and our reflections on how what's happening impacts our work at Argent Related.

All research took place between July and August 2020.

From the very start of the pandemic, it became clear that predicting the post-Covid-19 future would be difficult.

The sense of a world in flux has been born out in Copa's research: we see a mix of uncertainty and change. People are trying to get to grips with what's happening and trying to make plans for the future while knowing that everything might change at any time.

All this is happening against a backdrop of both intense pessimism and optimism. People have the sense of moving through thousands of emotions in a single day.

78% of the people we spoke with agreed that "The future has never been so uncertain", while only 31% feel that "Covid-19 is just a blip".

"THE FUTURE FEELS A LOT LESS CERTAIN THAN IT DID BEFORE"

**78%
AGREE**

"THIS IS A BLIP, THINGS WILL GET BACK TO NORMAL SOON"

**31%
AGREE**

With a life-threatening virus at large, one might expect people's concerns to focus on their own health and wellbeing. We were surprised to find that this wasn't the case.

While people reported an initial concern around their own health, for the most part this quickly morphed into a more general altruistic concern about the broader health of our nation. Copa's research shows that while 60% of people are worried about their personal health and well-being, 80% of people are concerned about problems in society as a whole.

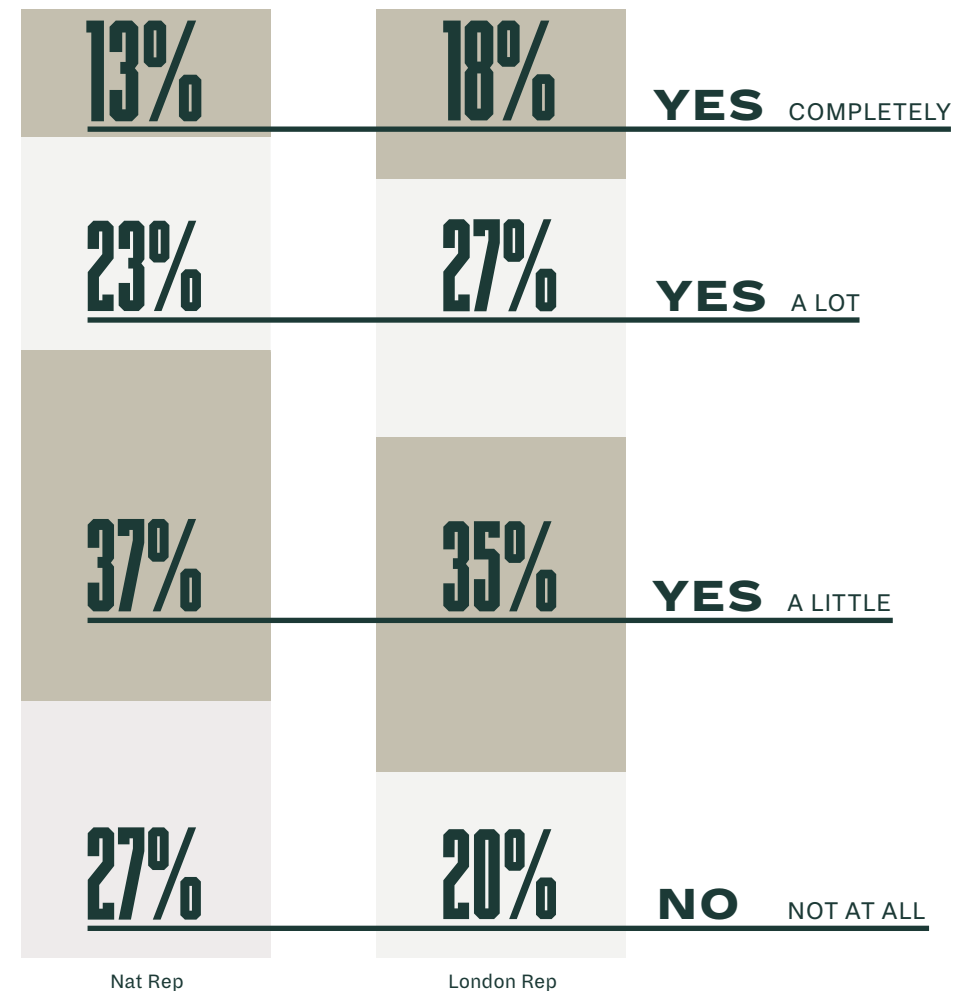
Similarly, the research picked up how important issues of social justice and fairness have become during the pandemic: people are thinking about keyworker pay, housing equality, structural racism and educational inequality like never before.

While these issues weren't caused by Covid-19, the pandemic has put them in the spotlight and we expect them to stay there for some time.

The research canvassed a number of people who reported that they themselves suffered from Covid-19. (In line with the national average, 6% of Copa's UK sample and 9% of the London sample claimed to have had the virus.) In the overall sample, only 43% of people agree that they are 'positive about the future'; this jumps to 68% for those who have suffered and recovered from Covid-19. Is increased optimism an unreported side effect of the virus?

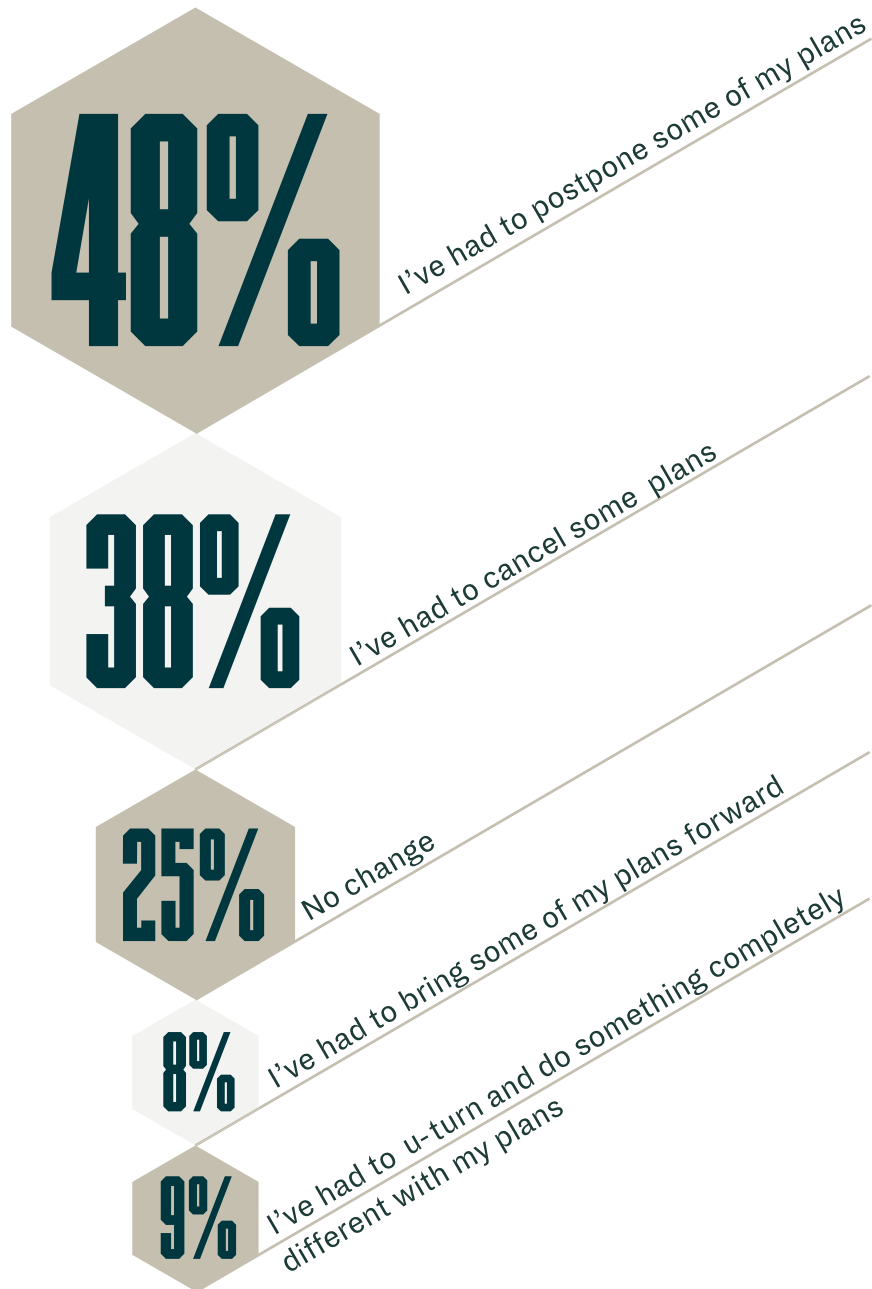
Covid-19 has changed people's future plans. For some, it's forced a re-evaluation of their priorities and for others, it's led to them bringing their plans forward: 36% of people canvassed in the research say they have had to change their plans a lot or completely, rising to 45% in London.

Have you had to change your plans because of Covid-19?



Base: UK Nat Rep (2002), London Rep (1006)

How people have changed their plans



A large proportion of people are thinking about where to live. 39% of Londoners agree that their experience of lockdown has made them want to move homes and close to a third of people are actively looking for a new place to live. It's no wonder we have seen a late summer housing boom.

When we look at reasons for wanting to move, most appear to stem from people's experiences of lockdown and spending more time in their houses. People cite wanting more outdoor space and wanting more space generally as the top reasons for wanting to move house.

Copa's research highlights four key themes which will be critical to urbanism, development and property in the immediate aftermath of Covid-19 but also far into the future.

The first of these The Fifteen-Minute Town, is an idea familiar to those working in development, but less well known amongst the general public. A Desire to Flourish looks at how priorities have changed during the pandemic. Rethinking Work and Place explores our changing relationship with the office. Finally, 360° Environmental Lives looks at shifts in attitudes to the environment and what people expect from brands.

Argent Related's thinking and future developments are already tapped into these trends. However the speed at which these have been accelerated by Covid-19 could not have been predicted.

These trends will be used to plan and deliver our portfolio of urban place projects, enabling a user-centred approach. While it is impossible to guarantee future-proofing, this approach is a roadmap for the uncertain times to come.

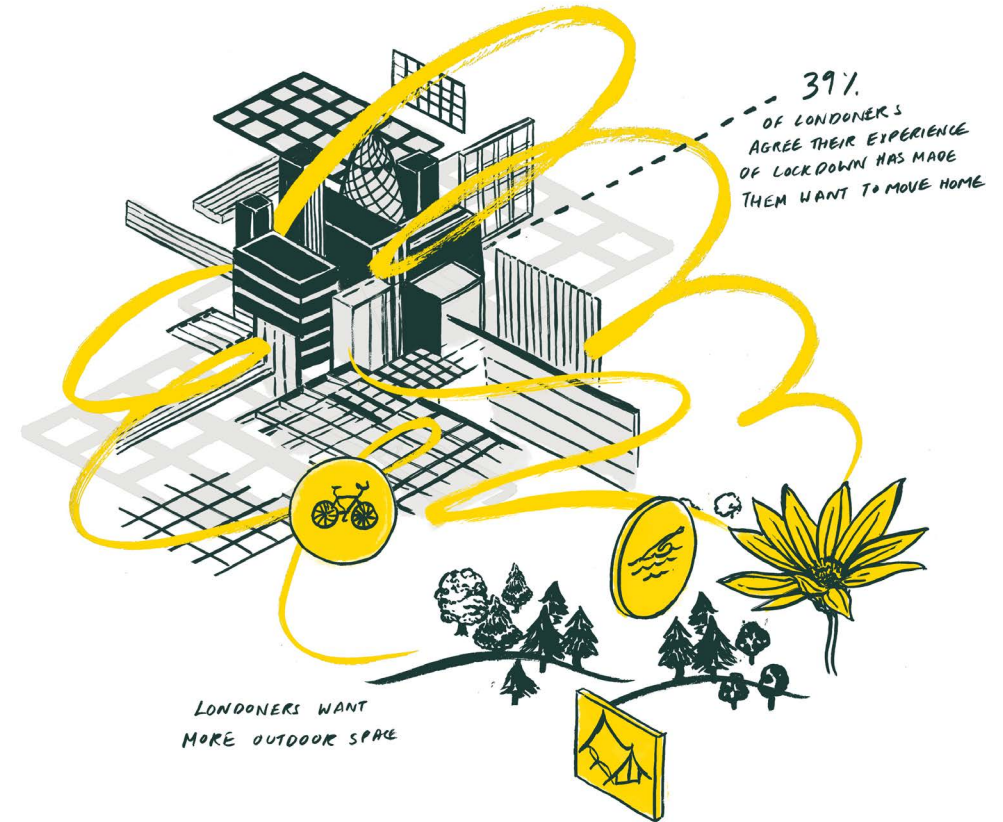
The Fifteen-Minute Town is a trend to live more locally, to engage more with local communities, support local businesses and reduce travel. It has been hugely accelerated by the pandemic and by lockdown. A taste of hyper-local life has given people the appetite for more.

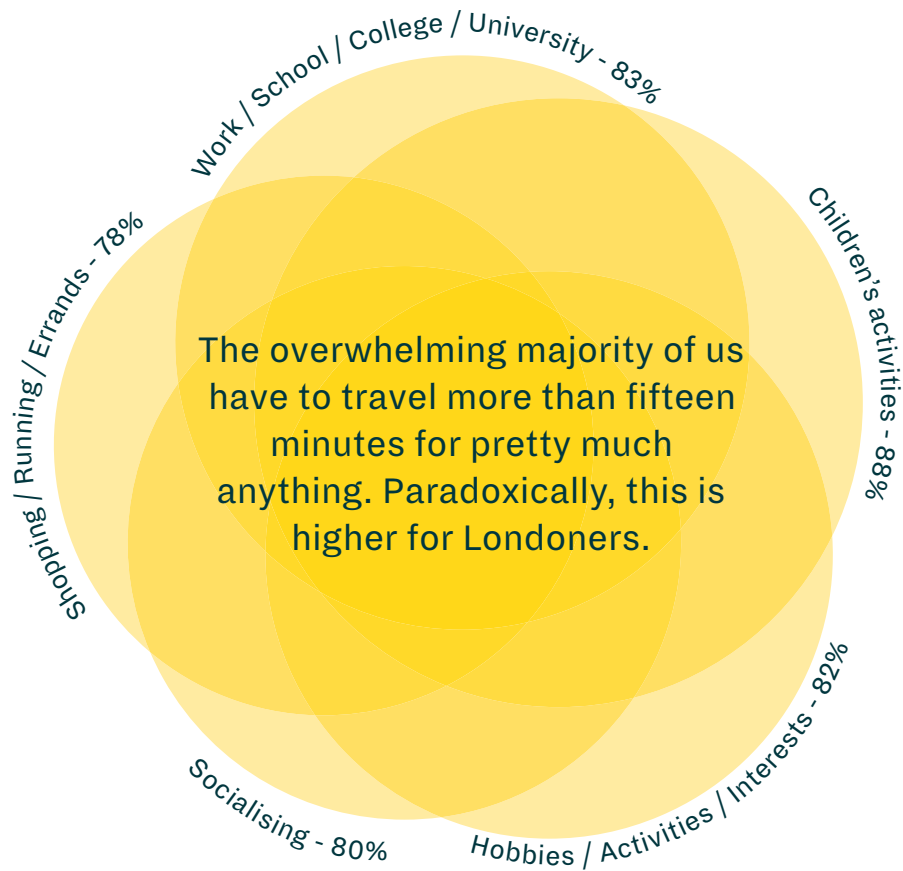
The concept of the Fifteen-Minute Town has been circulating for some time in development circles, but in the light of the pandemic, its time has truly come. Since the emergence of Covid-19, the Fifteen-Minute Town has become more relevant and more urgent and is a term starting to appear in popular culture.

This approach is a move away from the traditional radial model of cities and towns, where commerce and business are concentrated in a centre surrounded by rings of suburbs. It draws inspiration from the Garden City Movement, placing it within a twenty-first century context.

Based on the simple principle that the places you work, shop, play and learn should all be within a fifteen-minute walk, cycle or trip on public transport from where you live, the Fifteen-Minute Town is rapidly gaining traction in places as different as Paris and Bradford.

This approach represents a departure from the current way of living, where many people's working weeks are structured by the daily commute and weekends are spent jumping in cars to visit friends, run errands or ferry children between activities.





The majority of people travel for longer than fifteen minutes wherever they live, even for basic amenities, with children's activities, work, school and university being the most common activities that require people to travel the extra miles. While this might be expected in more rural and suburban locations, the research shows that reported journey times are higher in London than elsewhere.

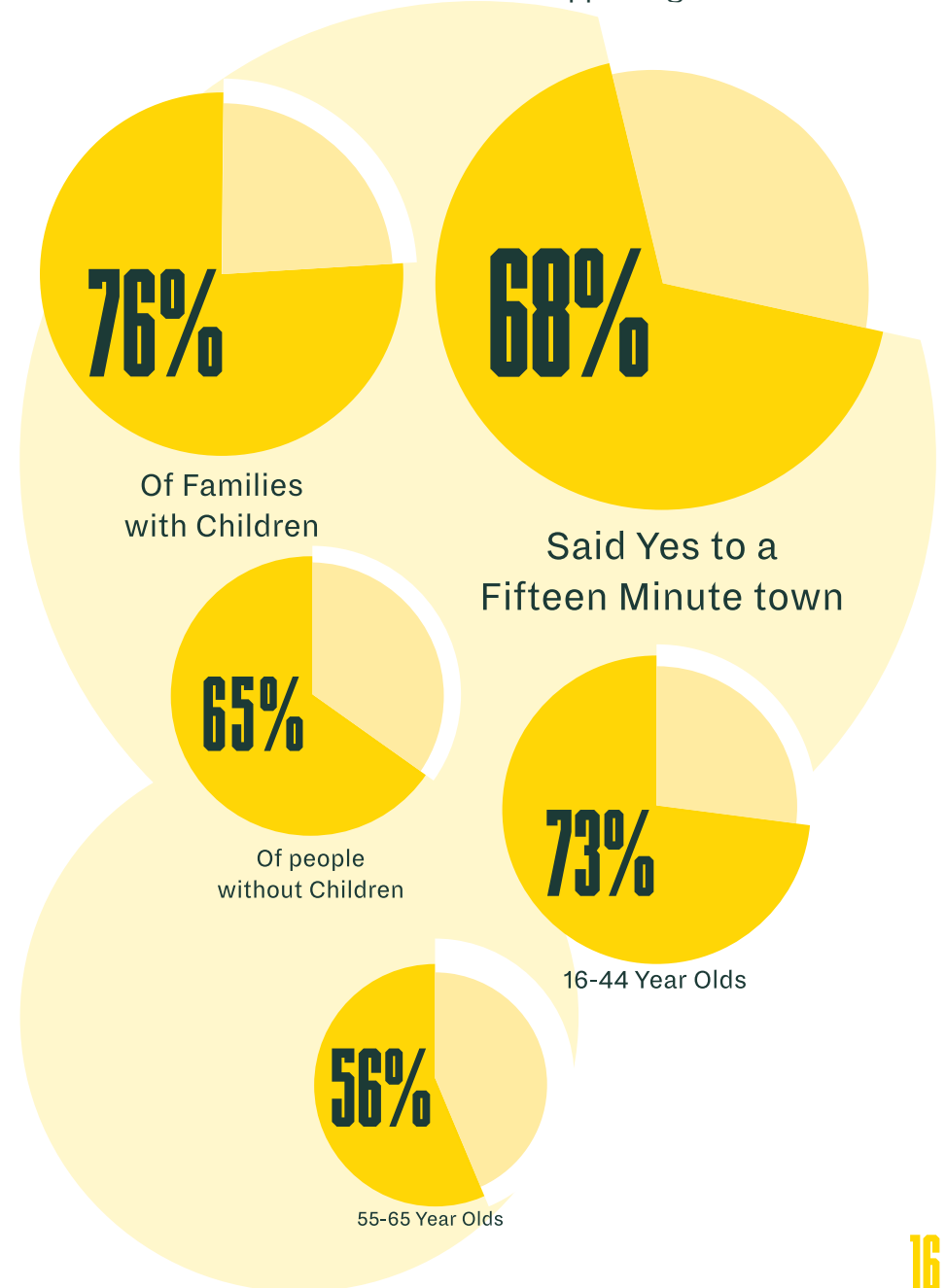
Proportion of people travelling more than fifteen minutes broken down by activity

While the notion of the Fifteen-Minute Town is well known amongst developers, for the general public it's a new and yet strangely familiar idea.

In their research, Copa found that people haven't heard the expression 'Fifteen-Minute Town' yet, but that it made intuitive sense and felt innovative, compelling and exciting. This is despite aspects of the concept feeling reminiscent of a by-gone era of tight communities, local businesses and the village green.

The research shows that nearly 70% of people are enthusiastic about the idea of the Fifteen-Minute Town. Perhaps surprisingly, given that one might assume Londoners have unparalleled access to local amenities, this is consistent in London.

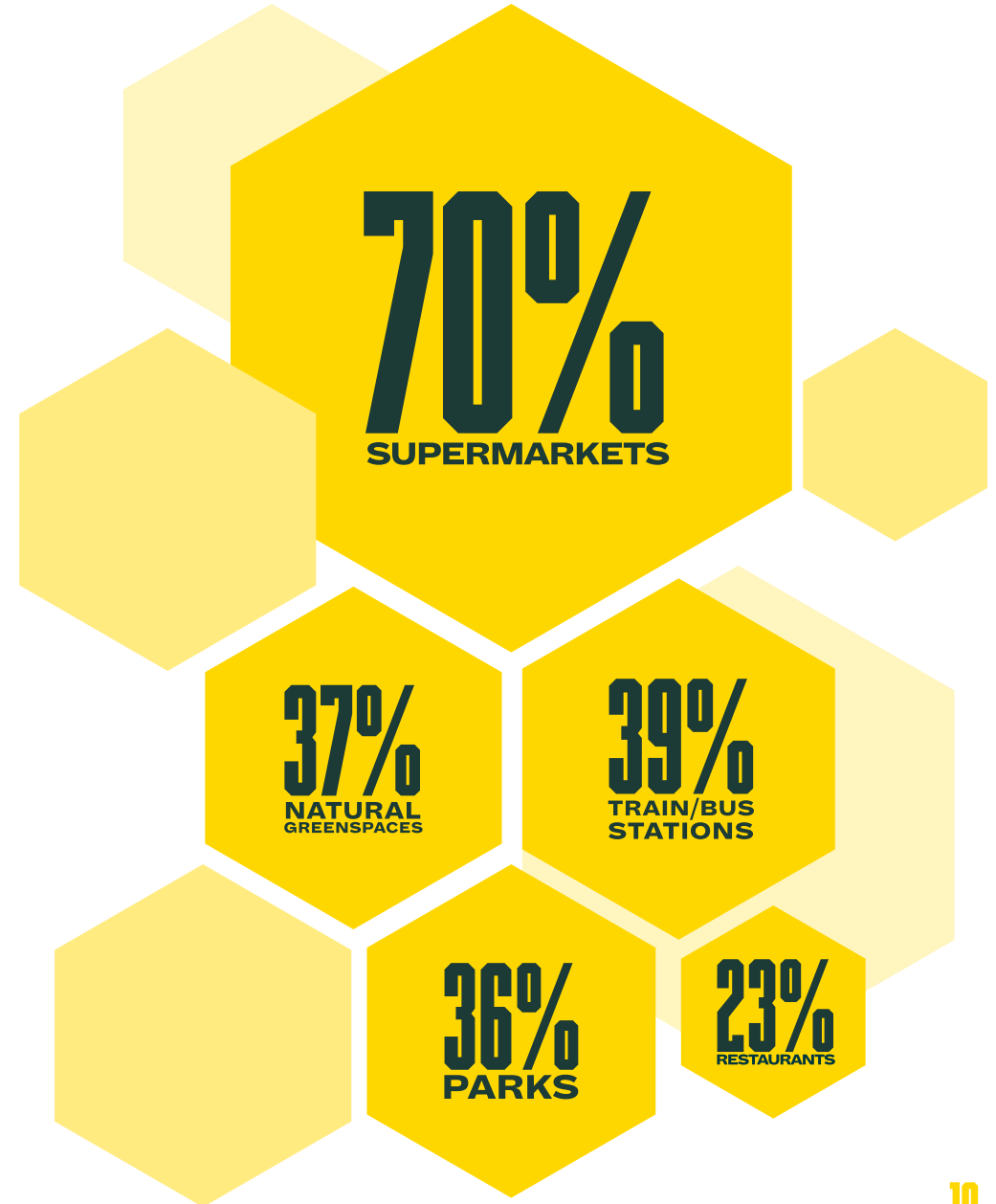
Proportion of people who find the idea of the Fifteen Minute Town appealing



The Fifteen-Minute Town is about more than just convenience. When travelling time is reduced, people have more time to engage in hobbies, connect with their communities and spend time with loved ones. This in turn allows them to connect more meaningfully to their local area.

People love the idea of the Fifteen-Minute Town for two primary reasons. First, it helps them to reduce their impact on the environment and second it allows them to support local businesses.

What amenities do people value most in a Fifteen Minute Town?



For many people, lockdown has resulted in the re-evaluation of their relationships with their local areas. Unable to go further afield, people have reconnected with their neighbourhoods, have become indebted to the local businesses which have supported them through these troubled times, and engaged more with their communities: 56% of people surveyed agreed that lockdown had helped them to love their local area more.

And as a model that encourages smaller shops, the Fifteen-Minute Town also feels safer: it's just more comfortable to pop into the local butchers than it is to drive for half an hour to out-of-town retail parks and queue with tens or hundreds of other people and navigate social distancing in the store.¹

42%

say there's a stronger sense of community now than pre-lockdown

61%

agree we spend too much time in our cars

Reflections on the Fifteen-Minute Town*

88%

believe that consumer confidence in visiting local business is important to reviving the economy

38%

had shopped more at local businesses during lockdown

23%

now know the names of more people in their local area

88%

agree they would be more likely to choose to shop locally in the future

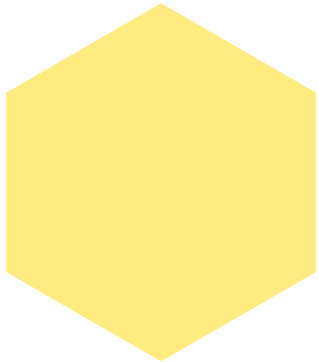
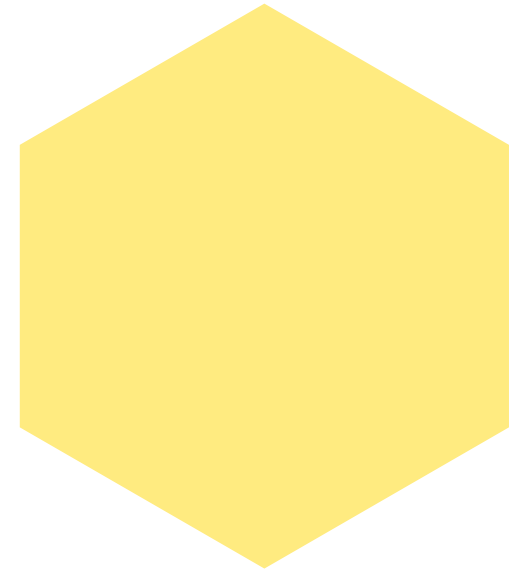
*data from: Briggs, Fiona. 'Lockdown feeds local love but venturing out confidently is key to recovery, Google research shows' Retail Times, 25 August 2020.

As the balance of where we work changes, and homes and third spaces become more significant, people will become more reliant on their local areas.

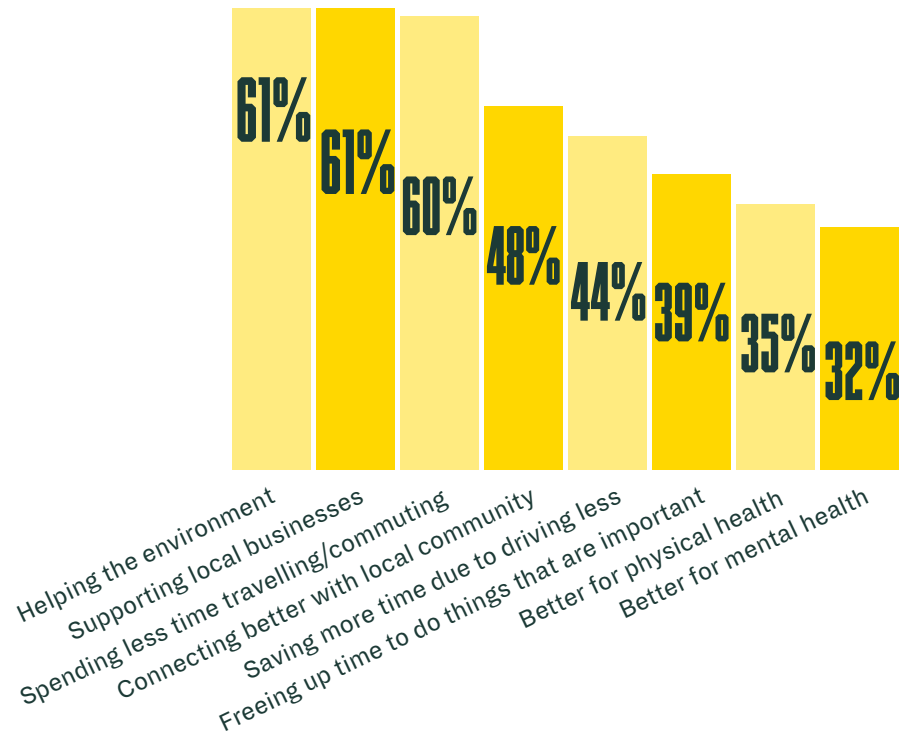
Bricks and mortar retail will thrive and new businesses will pop up to satisfy demand. We predict that the Fifteen-Minute Town will become an attractive proposition for companies looking to provide more convenient and less commuting-intense office space for employees.

While people are still overwhelmingly positive about the idea of a Fifteen-Minute Town, it needs to be approached with caution: 52% of people are concerned that living in such a place might feel claustrophobic, while 51% think the town would feel artificial or contrived. This attitude is born out in qualitative interviews: when pressed, some people feared that the model could rapidly become a kind of *'Truman Show'*, over-managed and artificial.

It is therefore important as developers to provide the building blocks for people to create and meaningfully contribute to the development of their own Fifteen-Minute Town, ensuring it is not imposed top-down by an unwavering and inflexible masterplan and ensuring it is connected to other areas, offering choice.



What people like about the Fifteen-Minute Town



Brent Cross Town is well placed to respond to the trend of the Fifteen-Minute Town.

From the early stages of our partnership with Barnet Council, we have been committed to creating more than just a dormitory area of London.

We were excited to be asked to build a park town complete with fifty acres of green parks and playing fields, three million sq. ft. of commercial office space, 6,700 new homes, as well as student housing, retail, leisure and hospitality offerings, creating a place where people can live, work, visit and play without travelling further than fifteen minutes.

For developments to feel 'real' and authentically urban, they need a chance to grow organically. Planning and order are important, but not so much that a development becomes stifling for the communities using it.

With over 30 years experience, we understand how to manage development with a light touch, building the infrastructure for people, businesses and communities to flourish on their terms. Development is about working with the communities who use places, not imposing a top-down strategy and expecting people to follow it.

Despite concerns that the Fifteen-Minute town might be claustrophobic, there's no such risk at Brent Cross Town. While we've focused on the connections within the development, ensuring everything people need is within easy reach, Brent Cross Town will be intrinsically linked to its neighbours and also to a global city. Brent Cross Town is directly connected to central London in twelve minutes via the new Brent Cross West station. It has immediate access to the national motorway network via the M1 and connects to five airports within one hour.

Developers have a huge responsibility to the people who will eventually live, work and visit the places we build. It is up to us to create places that do more than satisfy people's basic needs; places need to allow people to flourish, both as individuals and communities.

As a nation, the UK has become more emotionally literate. People are more able to talk about how they are feeling. Mental health has lost some of its stigma, and mood and mental wellbeing are increasingly part of the national discourse.

Developers have been slow to catch up with this change. We haven't talked enough about how our developments make people feel, how we influence their mood, their self-esteem and their happiness. It's time this changed.

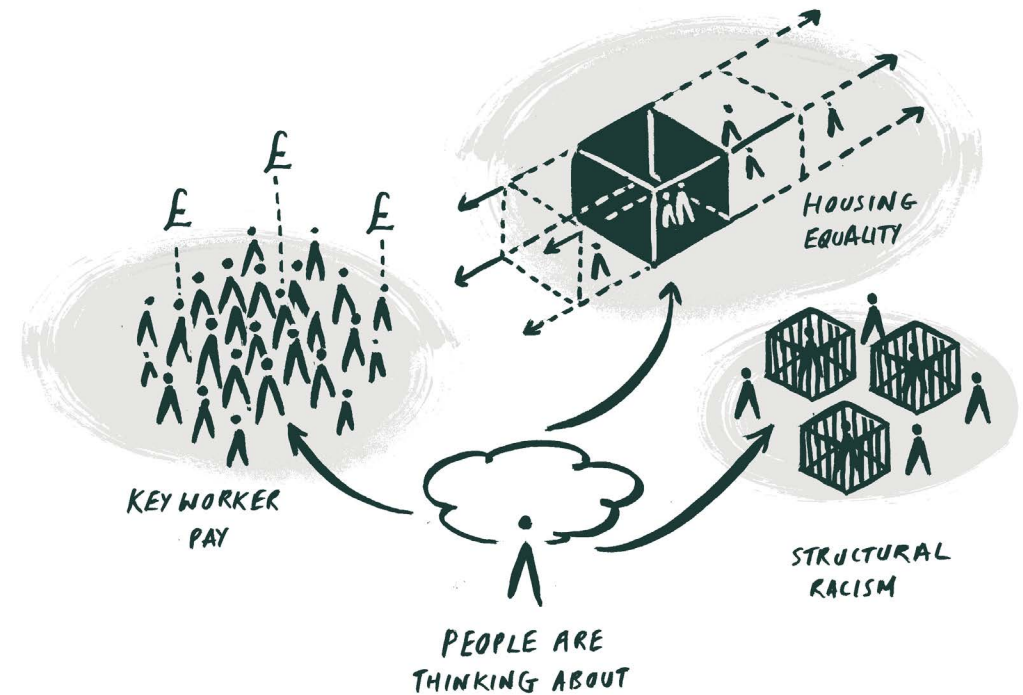
JUSTICE ISSUES

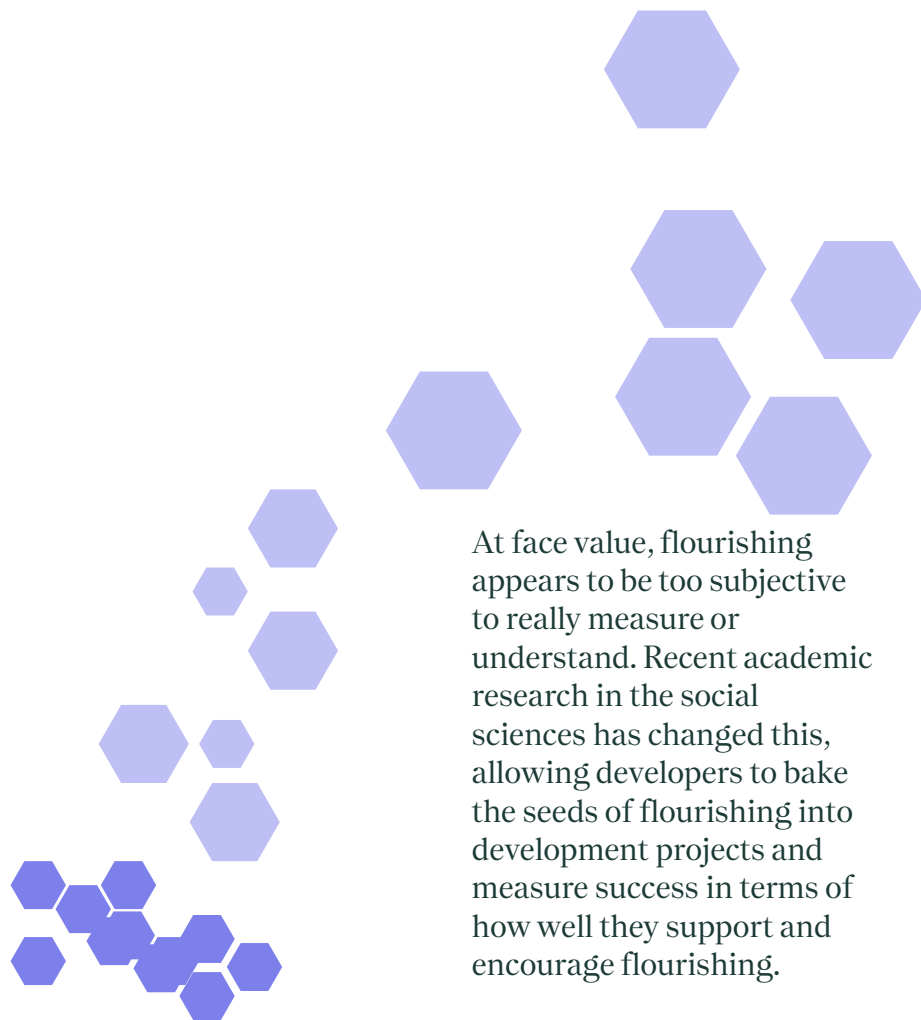
Ranked in importance by the UK public:

1. Poverty and wealth inequality
2. The situation of low paid key workers
3. Health inequality
4. Racism
5. The housing crisis
6. Global inequality and third world poverty
7. Intergenerational inequality
8. Gender inequality

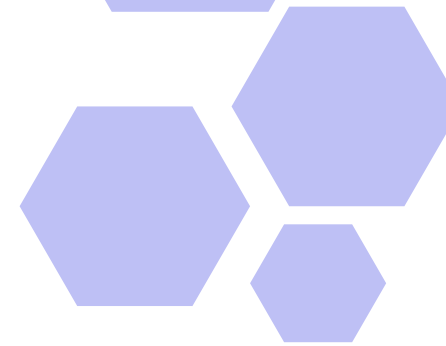
"I think the 12 weeks of lockdown have purified our sense of justice. They have given us time to think."

Ben Okri, Financial Times,
12th June 2020





At face value, flourishing appears to be too subjective to really measure or understand. Recent academic research in the social sciences has changed this, allowing developers to bake the seeds of flourishing into development projects and measure success in terms of how well they support and encourage flourishing.



The history of trying to measure happiness is recent but rich. In 2011, American psychologist Dr Martin Seligman identified five pillars of flourishing, comprising Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment (PERMA).

At the same time, here in the UK at the University of Cambridge, Professor Felicia Huppert established eleven key measures of health and wellbeing in her paper 'Flourishing across Europe' (2011).

In 2010, the Measuring National Wellbeing Programme was established in the UK. The aim was to monitor and report 'how the UK is doing'. Twice a year, the Office for National Statistics shines a light on different areas of UK citizens' lives including health, natural environment, personal finances and crime.

Meanwhile, the New Economics Foundation has developed 'Five Ways to Wellbeing', a set of evidence-based public mental health messages aimed at improving the mental health and wellbeing of the whole UK population.

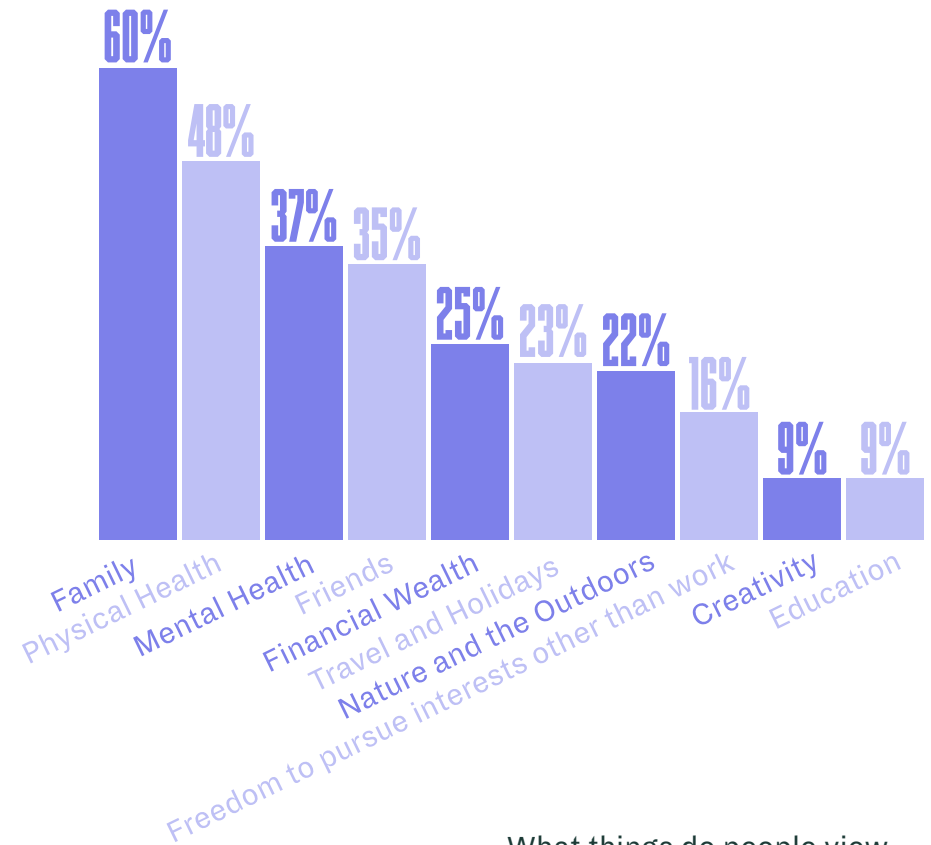
These are: connect with other people; be physically active; learn new skills; give to others; and pay attention to the present.

Economists have started to question the conventional view that the amount of money made should be the key metric of success in any endeavour.

It turns out that measuring profitability or productivity isn't the best way of assessing the happiness and health of a society or an individual.

People agree with this: 73% of people surveyed by Copa agreed that 'Money isn't everything: it's not right to constantly judge success according to economic measures'.

The development of a social scientific discipline for measuring happiness and wellbeing runs in parallel with a trend in economics, to measure more than just financial metrics of GDP or economic growth to define the success of a country or institution.



What things do people view as most important to help them live their lives as fully as possible?

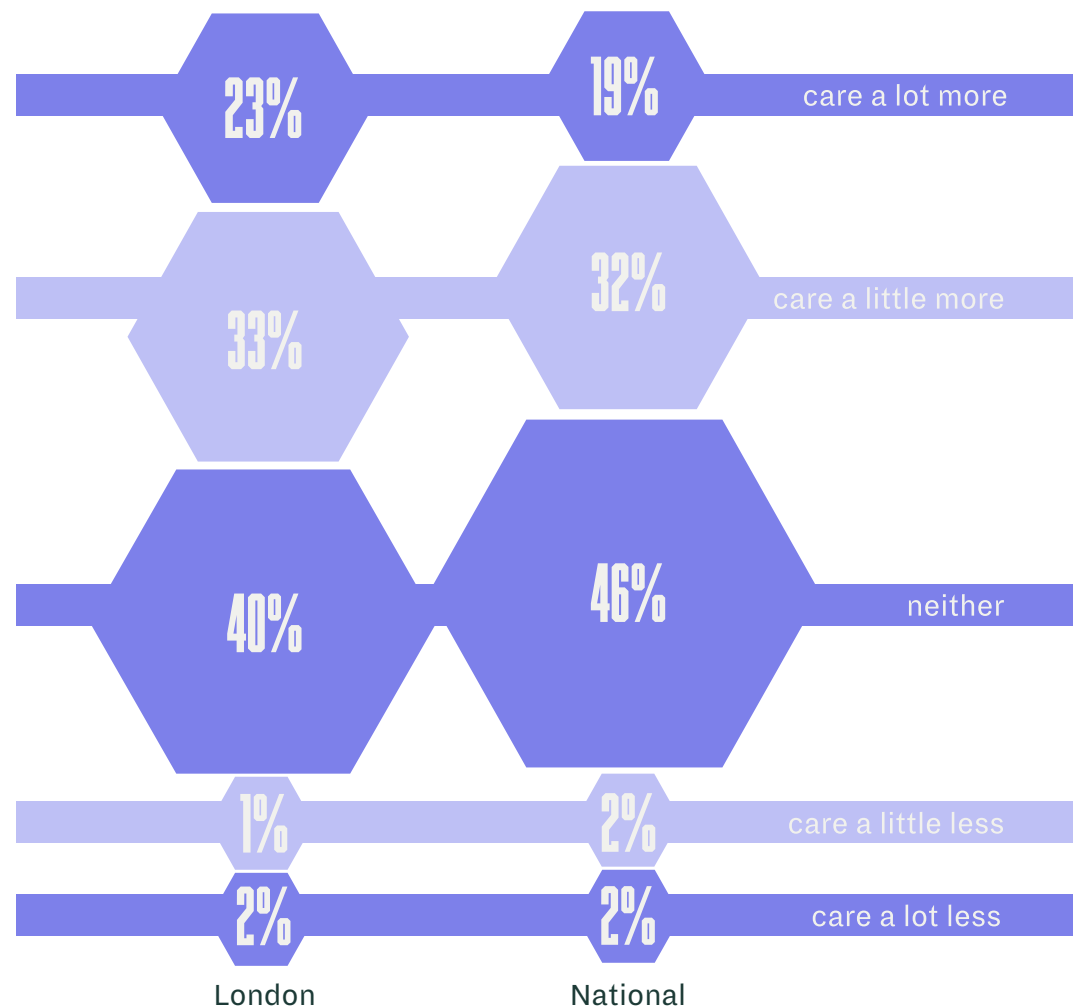
People make the link between where they live and their health and wellbeing.

Even before the pandemic, we had recognised the important role developers play in setting the stage for people to flourish. The experience of Covid-19 has exposed some of the long-term inequalities in our society.

Anecdotally, Covid-19 has led to a plethora of small epiphanies in people's lives, and this is backed up by independent research. For example, 48% of people have spent more time talking with family, 36% are starting to take their physical health more seriously, and 30% are talking more with friends.

The research clearly demonstrates how people are thinking more about injustices since the pandemic. In-depth interviews tell a similar story: participants report noticing and caring more about the injustices they see around them. While the nation still feels divided, there is a common belief that injustice is widespread and needs to be addressed, especially in London.

Londoners are more likely to feel that they care more about social injustices since Covid-19



62%

agree: "I'd like to live in a town where everyone prioritises health and wellbeing over financial success"

72%

agree: "New towns should be built with a view to making their inhabitants flourish"

73%

agree: "Money isn't everything: it's not right to constantly judge success according to economic measures"

79%

agree: "Where you live is really important for your health and wellbeing"

We predict a future where these conversations become more explicit, where not only are individuals looking to live in places that help them to flourish, but where they expect developers to put flourishing at the heart of places they create.

63%

agree: "Individuals can't flourish without the support of others"

Recognising that Argent Related has a role to play in changing the way we measure the success of development, and in helping our residents to lead lives with greater opportunities to flourish, we have been working with a leading expert in positive psychology, sustainable development and urban design, Dr Jamie Anderson of the University of Manchester and Buro Happold. We are developing new ways of tracking and measuring health and wellbeing that not only take account of individual's understanding of how they are flourishing, but also track and measure the flourishing of a community and a neighbourhood.

We call it the Flourishing Index.

While the UK currently has a low ranking for flourishing, at Brent Cross Town we aim to double the UK flourishing score and surpass Denmark, who leads the field in this respect.

Furthermore, we're building the foundations of flourishing into the bedrock Brent Cross Town, with a focus on sport, play, recreation, green space and the environment.

To ensure our developments enable people to flourish, we're embedding features that have a demonstrable positive impact on wellbeing.

These range from our focus on sport and play and our commitment to creating green and natural spaces, to a sound strategy based on the positive effect of noise and public realm designed to encourage serendipitous encounters.



This year has been a huge experiment in how we work.

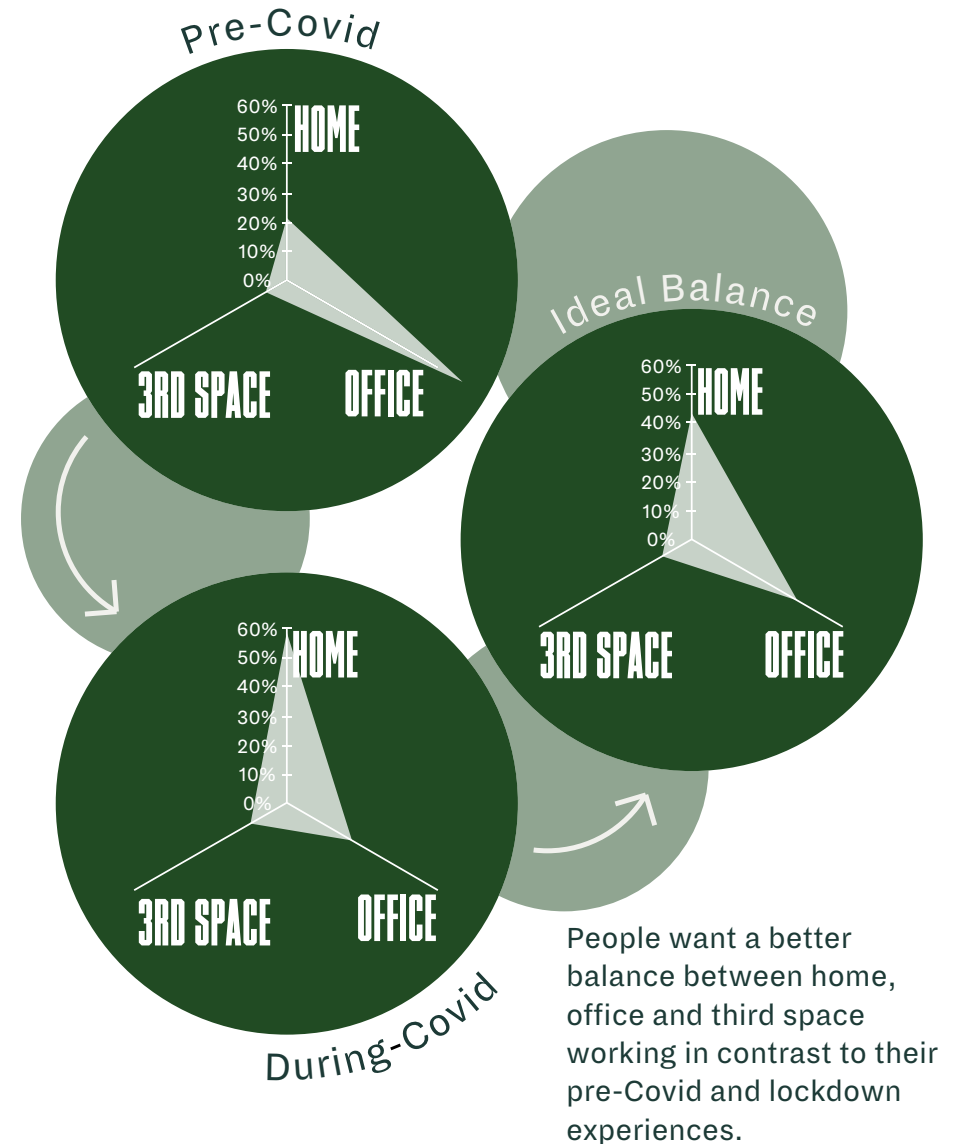
While the technology to work away from the office has been with us for many years, analogue work culture has remained curiously entrenched. However, under a lockdown which saw offices close, we have been forced to embrace the digital and design new ways of working remotely.

Trends we have seen developing over the last twenty years have suddenly accelerated, as businesses and organisations have been forced to accept and embrace home-working. Employees have enjoyed greater flexibility and control over when and how they work.

We have been anticipating these changes and planning for them for some time. Now more than ever the long-term dream of more flexible working practices and a better work-life balance looks more set to become reality.

Copa's research shines a light on how work patterns have shifted for office workers across the country. Pre-pandemic, work was predominantly office-based. Now we are seeing almost the polar opposite, as people worked almost exclusively from home during the lockdown.

When we asked people what they wanted and expected from their work life post-pandemic, we found they wanted something more in the middle of these extremes: a more balanced split between working at home and in the office, enabling a better work-life balance.

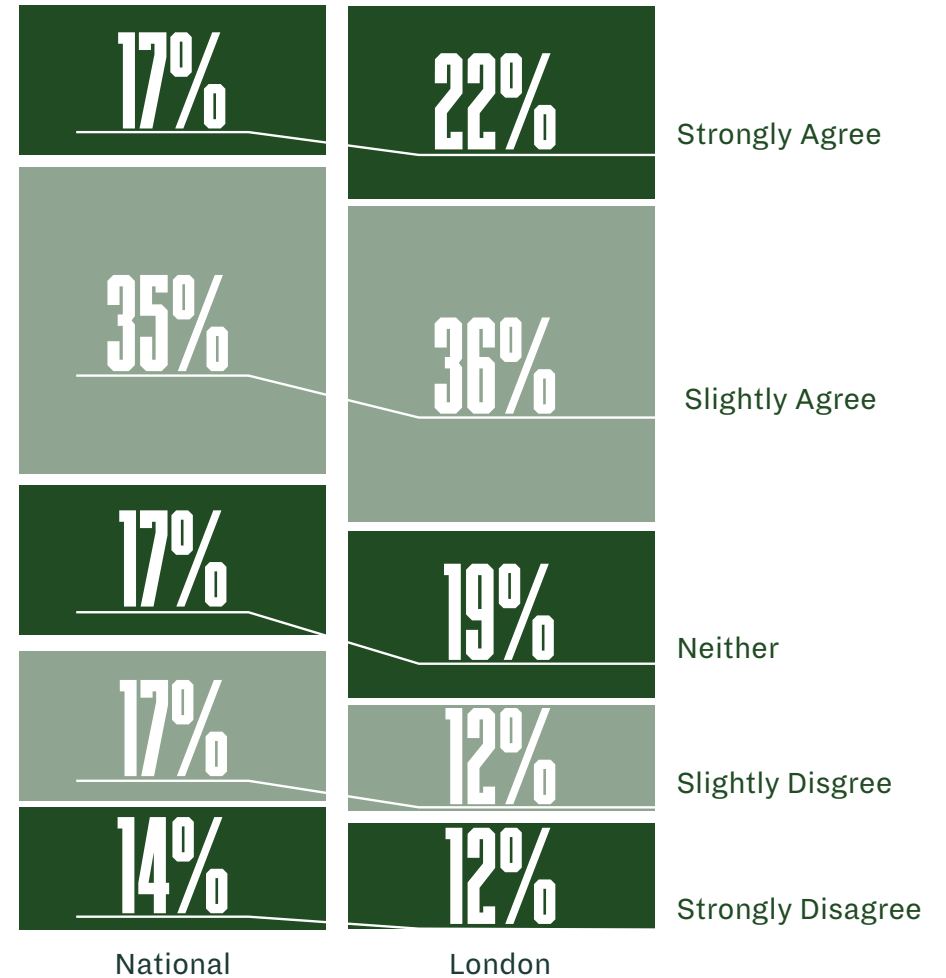


The move to home-working has opened our eyes to new possibilities and new futures: it feels inconceivable that we'll go back to old models of working.

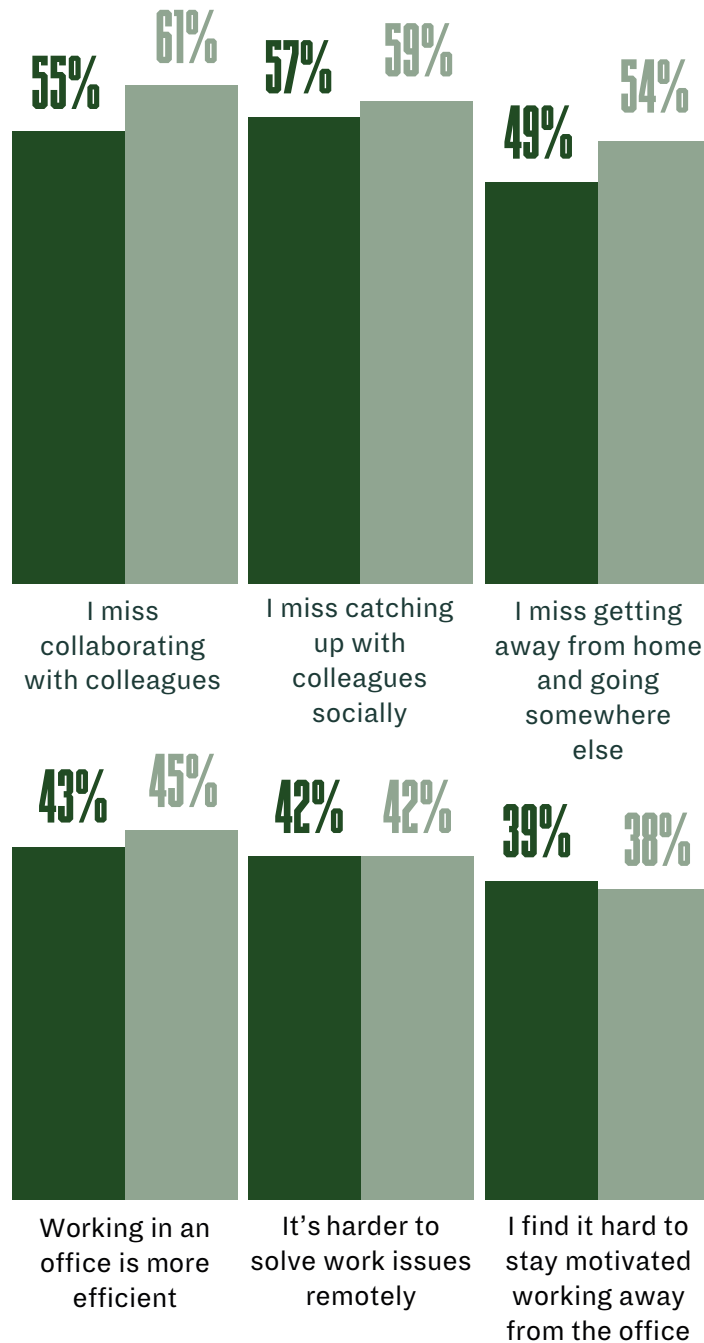
That said, people do recognise the benefits of the office. The research indicates myriad reasons why people miss the office. These are predominantly social: people miss their colleagues.

While 71% of people agree that 'Now I have had a taste of homeworking I want to do it in the future', 52% agree that they have missed going to the office and are looking forward to going back. This rises to 58% agreement amongst people in London, and 58% amongst the professional classes (ABs).

"I've missed working in the office and am looking forward to being there again"



People have good reasons for missing the office



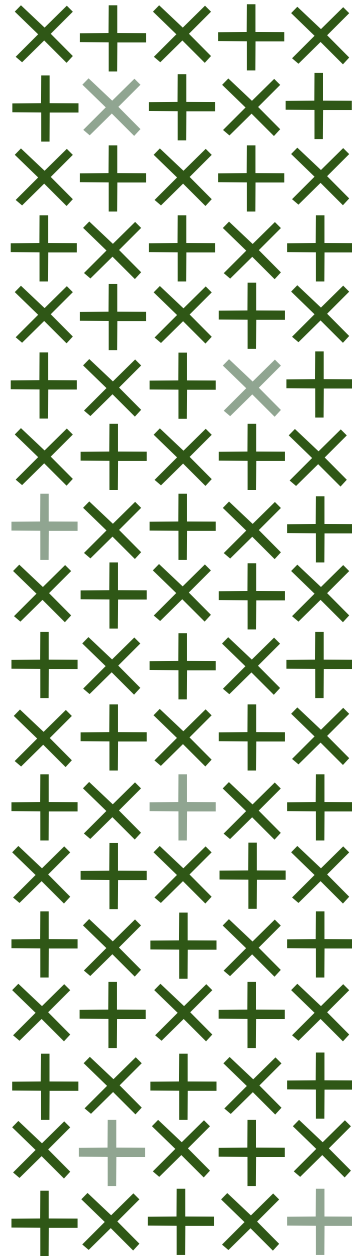
Developers will need to think hard about the future role of the home, the office and third spaces in the context of work and new working practices, to ensure employees are well-supported, happy and productive. Employers understand the significance of supporting employees' physical, mental and emotional well-being not just as an act of altruism, but as the key to ensuring safe and sustained employee performance.

Developers need to design for this. We need to make sure that employees' wellbeing doesn't stop at someone's desk. We need to think not just about the buildings people work in but also about the locations of these buildings and how place can support work-wellness more broadly.

People have had a mixed experience of working from home. Mostly it's been positive, with people enjoying more control over their working lives both in terms of managing their workflows and schedules to being in charge of their environment. Working from home has also significantly reduced both the time and money spent commuting, and people have also saved money by skipping on lunchtime sandwiches and the daily latte.

But there are downsides to working from home. Shared spaces aren't always ideal for productivity. Young people in shared rental accommodation have found it particularly difficult to find the mental and physical space to get work done.

Gender inequalities in terms of which parent is expected to look after the children and clean the house, have become starker during lockdown. As parents struggle to manage workload alongside domestic responsibility, women have been disproportionately affected.²



Working from home has proved a drain on our national psyche. Being stuck in the same place, often alone, can be disastrous for mental health and detrimental to productivity.

The home needs to be a relaxing environment but it can only do so much. People working from home need to be able to get out easily, to have a change of scene, see other people, connect with nature and be inspired.³

At Brent Cross Town all residential property will be designed to support working from home. People will be factoring in home working when choosing where to live. They will be looking for inspiring spaces, quiet places where they can work undisturbed and which have strong digital connectivity.

“I’ve loved working from home, being somewhere comfortable, not commuting, being able to be more in control of my own time, but at the same time it can be quite lonely and claustrophobic. I’m looking forward to getting back to the buzz of the office”
(Quote from our in-depth interviews)

“We know what offices are for: to join, collaborate, train, mentor, socialise, to build teams and culture.”

John Forrester, President of Cushman & Wakefield

The areas surrounding homes need attention too.

People who expect to spend as much time working from home as from the office will look to live in places that support homeworkers.

The coffee shops, sandwich bars, gyms and pubs which office workers frequently rely on will start popping up in what were once considered strictly residential areas.

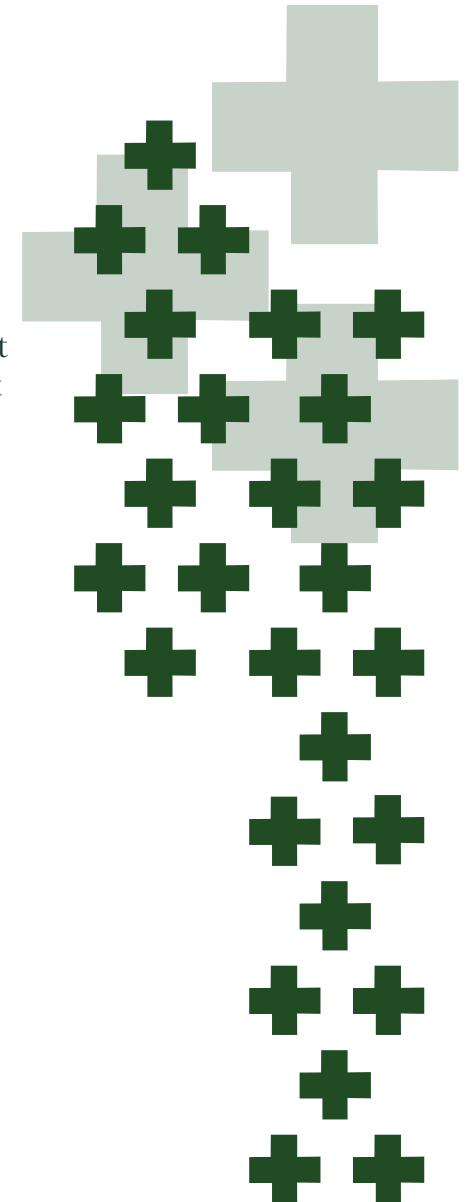
Workers will look to have it all, and whether they are working from home or the office will want opportunities for socialising, enjoying nature, or simply taking a break and unwinding on their doorstep.

Quality of life is the future of work, and both commercial and residential developers need to understand and support this.

A more even division between working from home and working in an office will change the understanding of what an office is for. In the past offices accommodated all roles and modes of work, social and individual, creative and administrative.

If more people are working at home, we need to think about what the office is for and what roles and modes of working it will support.

We predict that offices will increasingly be used for tasks that require people to get together, to learn, to develop, to network, to brainstorm, to innovate, to build teams and forge stronger links amongst themselves.





This prediction points towards a future where offices are designed to inspire creativity and to encourage people to socialise and collaborate.

While an office that looks like one massive break-out room might be a step too far, we predict more office spaces where employees can connect in new and different ways.

Offices will start to look more like town squares, universities, art galleries and social clubs as they recalibrate to encourage inspiration, learning and social connection.



63%

“I want to minimise my commute and my place of work should be near where I live”

“I want to work somewhere that feels like a proper town with shops and parks, not just a business park or campus”

57%

57%

“Office location is an important part of a job offer: I wouldn't take a job if the office was in a bad place”

“I've missed working in the office and I'm looking forward to being there again”

55%

52%

“In the future, work hours will be more blurred and we'll have more say over when we work, perhaps even working weekends in return for more time off during the week”

We have seen a trend in companies thinking more deeply about how office location can be part of the overall employment package used to attract talent and then boost productivity.

This represents a move away from the CEO being responsible for choosing office location to the HR and talent acquisition functions having more of a say.

In these situations, we know that companies aren't just looking for an office: they're looking for a location, an office in a place which will boost employee happiness and wellbeing and provide opportunities for inspiration.

The office of the future is in a place surrounded by beautiful public spaces, with pockets of tranquil nature, dotted with innovative retail, food & beverage, opportunities to participate in sport and play, and public art. It's a place which feels buzzing and alive.

With more employees looking to live closer to work, we also predict companies will look closely at the local residential offering.

With the increase in build-to-rent homes in London, companies may be the capital's largest tenants where they offer a job and a flat as part of the standard employee package.



The recent worldwide events show that employers need to provide a greater reason and purpose for people to come to work which is focused on the office itself and importantly what surrounds it.

At Brent Cross Town, we will create a major new sustainable office destination which offers a purpose and competitive advantage for different businesses to come together in one location.

With 3million sq. ft. of Grade A office space, and an investment of £1.25bn, we will build a new business ecosystem for 25,000 workers, supported by unrivalled staff amenities including technologies that support working in the office, home and third space.

2020 has shown how quickly what is expected of a workplace can change. To ensure commercial property can rise to the challenge as the very purpose of offices changes, we are committed to delivering adaptable and flexible workplaces - the office isn't a white box anymore.

We anticipate that dynamic, creative and knowledge-based organisations will converge in this uniquely positioned location, to work with mutual benefit and common purpose to create better products and services. The new cluster of companies will achieve more as a result of their co-location.

Brent Cross Town sits at the perfect intersection to attract these future office tenants, with direct connections into central London to both the Knowledge Quarter in King's Cross Euston and Tech City in Old Street; and outward-looking connections to the Oxford-Cambridge Knowledge Arc consisting of universities, research institutions and leading knowledge-based businesses.

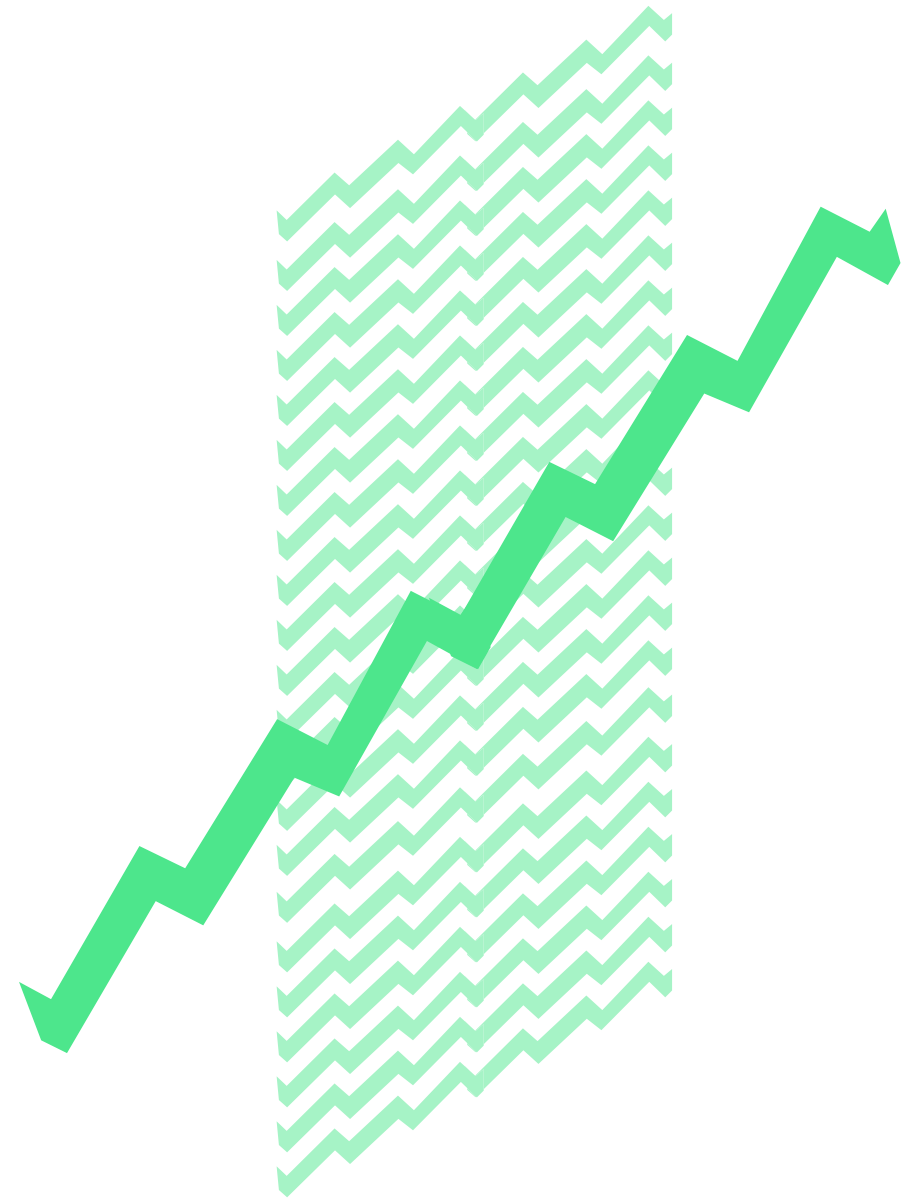
Our health and wellbeing facilities and residential offer could be the two major reasons businesses set up shop at Brent Cross Town. We understand that creating residential and commercial environments which support employees and contribute to their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing is a win-win game, improving the lives of workers, increasing productivity and helping our commercial tenants' businesses to flourish.

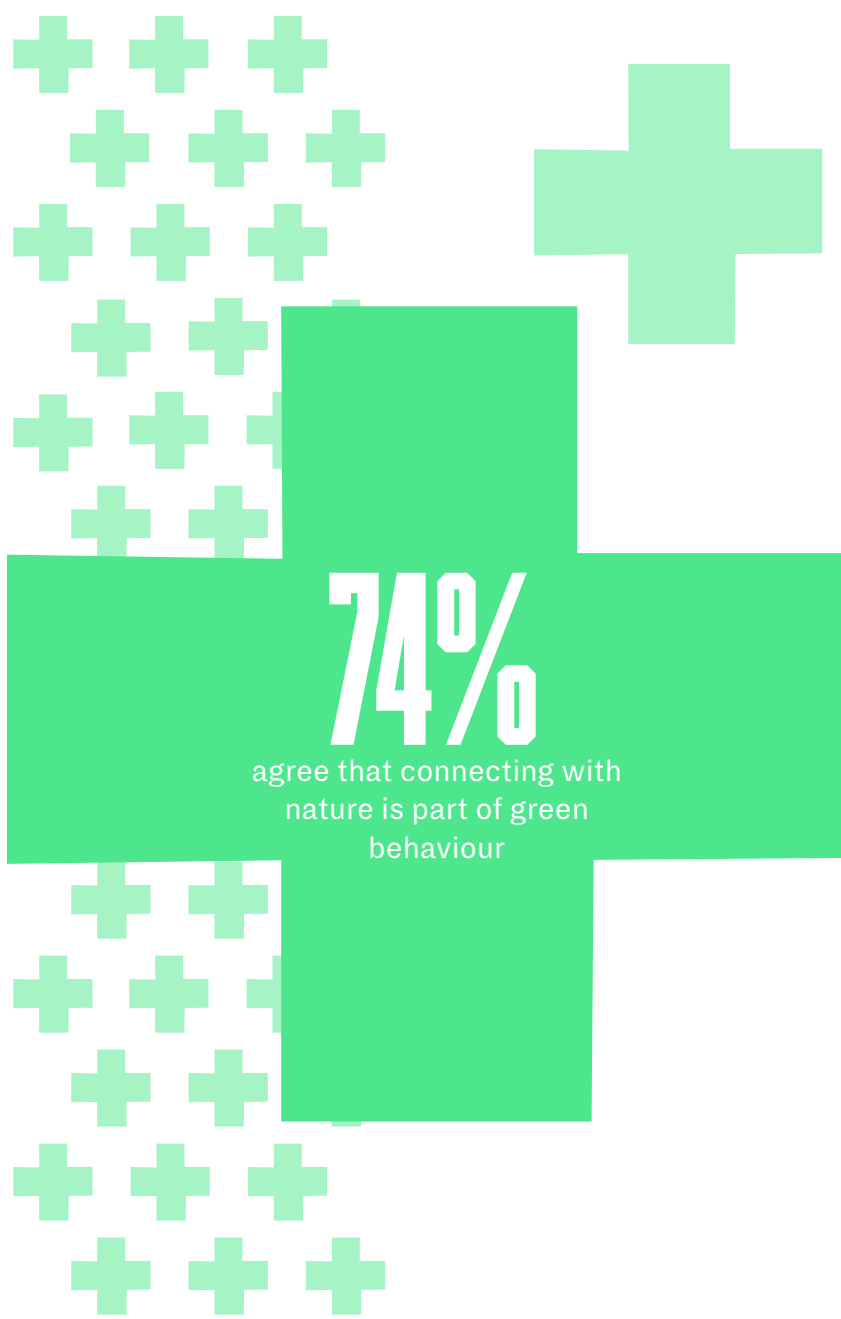
Quality of life is the future of work.

Developers have a huge role to play in tackling climate change. The past few years have seen a steadily growing awareness of the significance of climate change and an increased understanding of how the real estate sector should respond.

As an industry, we're not only responsible for the embedded carbon of our developments but also for the types of lifestyles that people lead in the places we create. We are committed to achieving net-zero carbon for our developments. But we recognise that this is not enough. Unless that place also enables people to live more sustainable lives, the impact will be limited.

“In cases of Italy and China, NASA Satellite Data illustrate significant changes in air pollution levels (NASA 2020) and a 25% drop in carbon emissions as lockdown and restrictions started to show results”
(Null & Smith, 2020)





We have seen an increase in extreme weather events over the last five years along with evermore dire predictions about our environmental future from both global and international governmental and non-governmental bodies.

At the same time, ecological activism has been on the rise, with organisations such as Extinction Rebellion engaging in radical forms of protest. These events have put concerns around the environment firmly on all of our agendas, across every aspect of our lives.

In terms of how we will come out of this pandemic, we are seeing the call across the political, economic and environmental world to #BuildBackBetter.

Covid-19 has also resulted in a multitude of small reassessments of how we feel about nature. Lockdown left us trapped inside, longing for the outdoors, and feeling a need to connect more with our natural environment.

Behaviours we previously characterised as 'green' - such as make do and mend, cooking from scratch, travelling less - have become normal.

Against this backdrop, we recognise three trends that will impact on people's attitudes and how they behave.

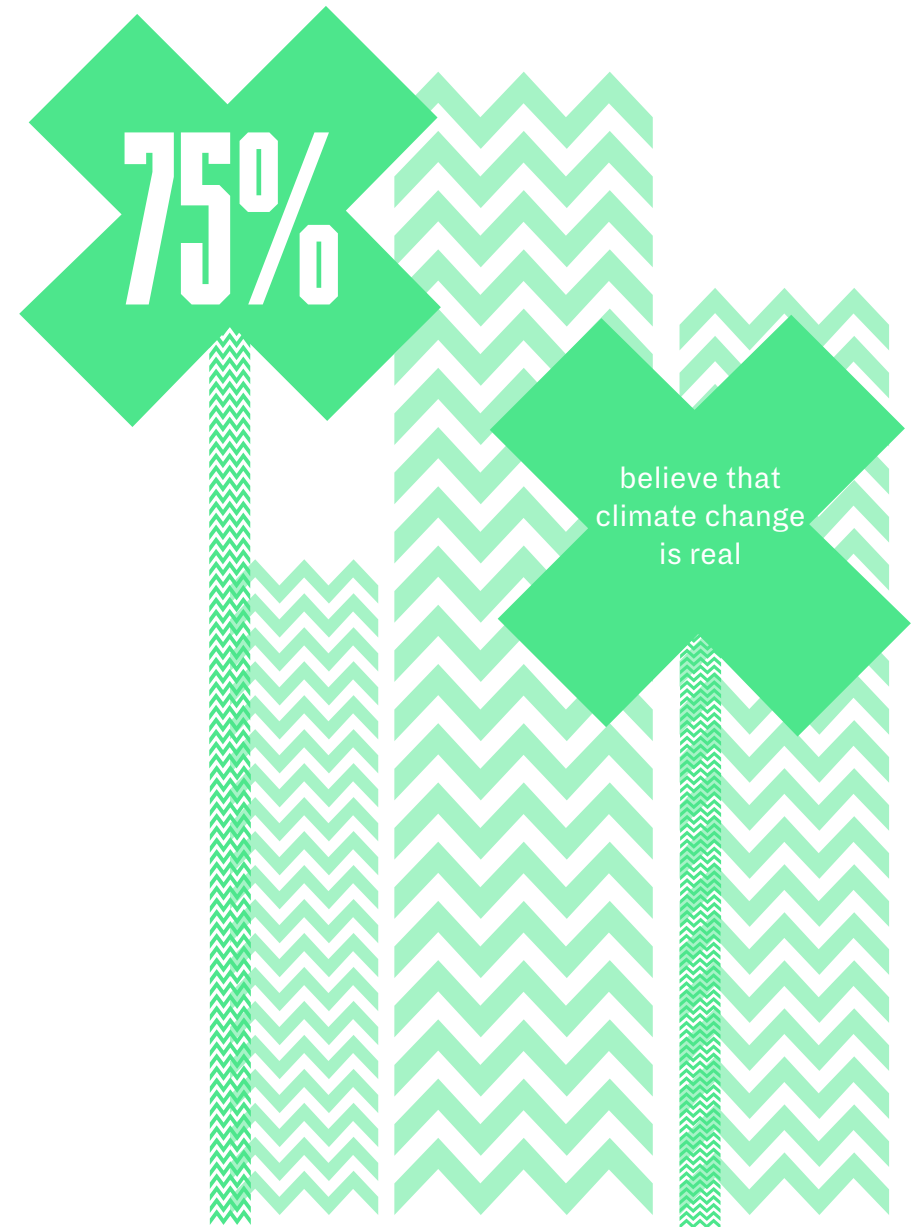
The first shift is in our perception of the reality and the inevitability of the challenge on our hands: people recognise that the problems of climate change and the environment are real.

Copa's research found 75% of people agree that climate change is real, with only 8% actively disagreeing with this statement.

“There was nothing else to do so I started going out.”

“There's a swing on top of a hill just outside Manchester. We kept seeing it on Instagram, so we decided to go and check it out ourselves.”

Two interviewees from qualitative research



As a result, people want and expect a change in corporate behaviour. 70% of people agree that they want the companies and organisations that look after local amenities to support them in leading a more environmentally-friendly life.

While some dismiss the significance of climate change, an overwhelming majority of people are looking for solutions and will embrace and support those organisations going the extra mile.

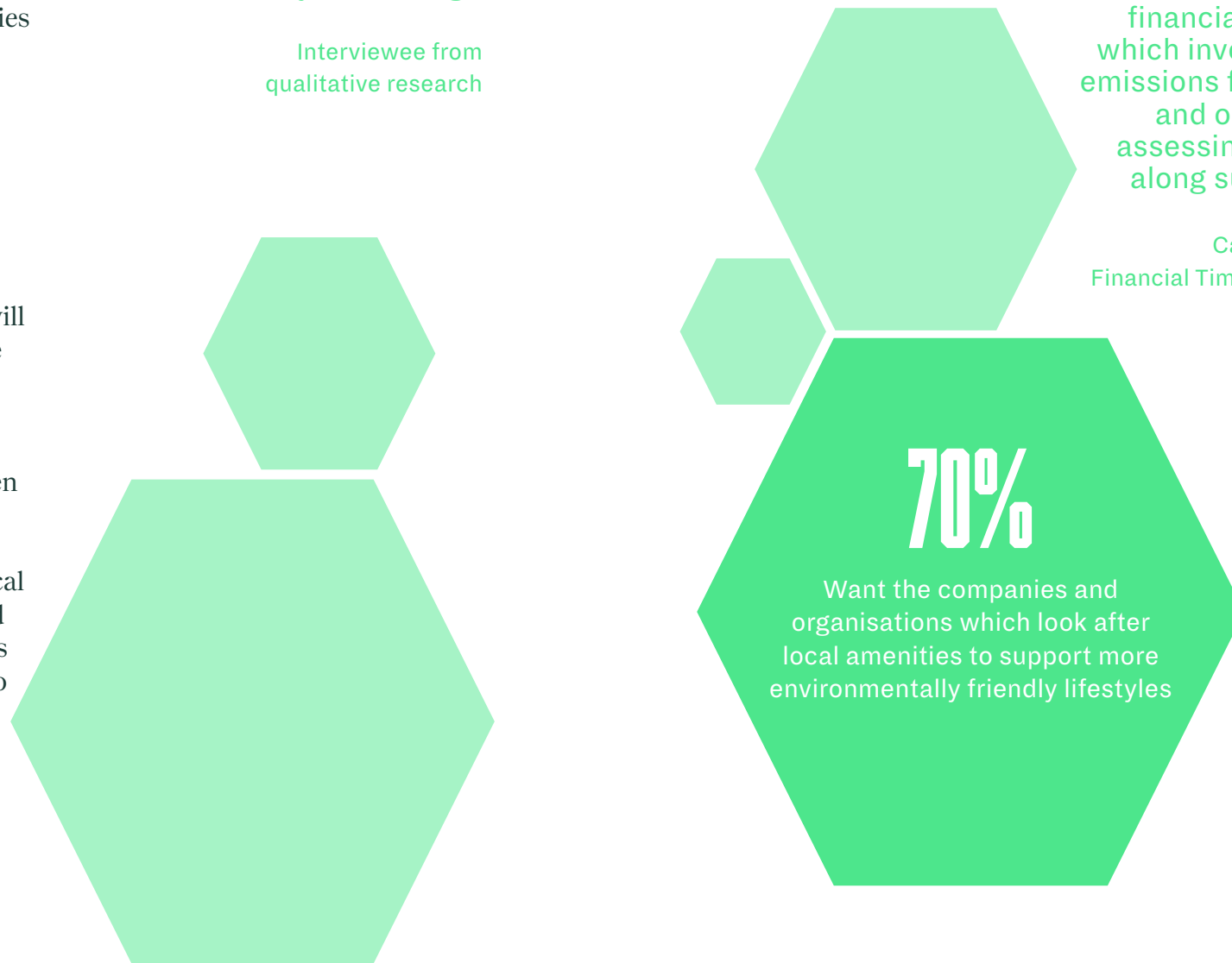
When governments are seen as slow to act, businesses have often stepped in and taken action, have been vocal in taking responsibility and in setting ambitious targets and committing to net-zero emission strategies.

“I was fairly green before lockdown, but being stuck at home you really think about all the plastic you’re using.”

Interviewee from qualitative research

“More than 1,000 companies have signed up voluntarily to the framework of the task force on climate related financial disclosures, which involves tracking emissions from products and operations and assessing climate risk along supply chains.”

Camilla Cavendish, Financial Times, 26 June 2020



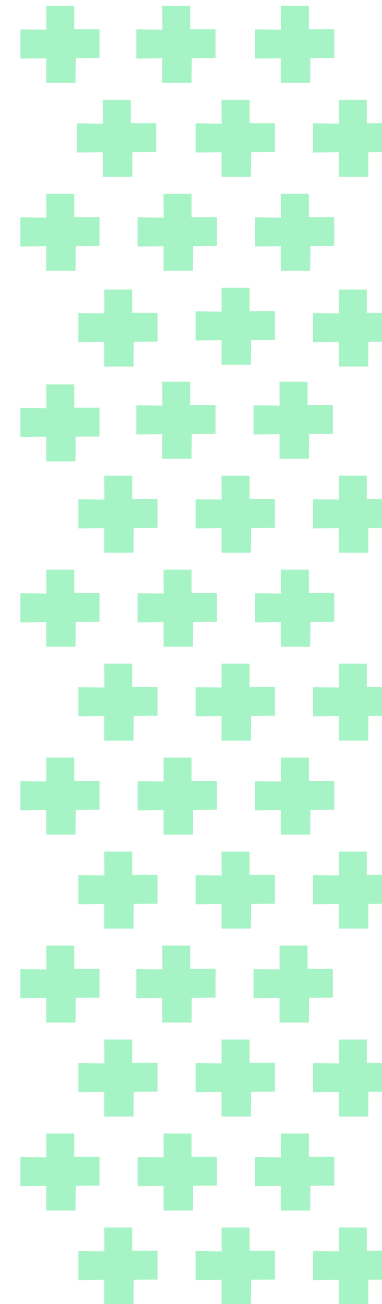
The second trend is around communication. Arguments for the environment are often fought with data, referencing quantities of carbon increases in global temperature or rising sea levels.

Alongside this data, we encounter a plethora of buzzwords around sustainability and environmentalism.

In fact, 46% of people we spoke to feel that the debate around climate change is confusing, especially numbers and statistics.

“The fires in Australia and the people talking about their experiences of having to feel their homes really brought home to me the reality of climate change.”

From Copa’s qualitative research



We predict a shift in the way that people want to talk about the environment, away from factoids and data dumps, to narrative and stories.

This move enables people to talk in more complex and nuanced ways about the environment, referencing real-life experiences, the sensuality of nature, and our complex and unavoidable relationship to ecology, not just numbers and scientific theory.

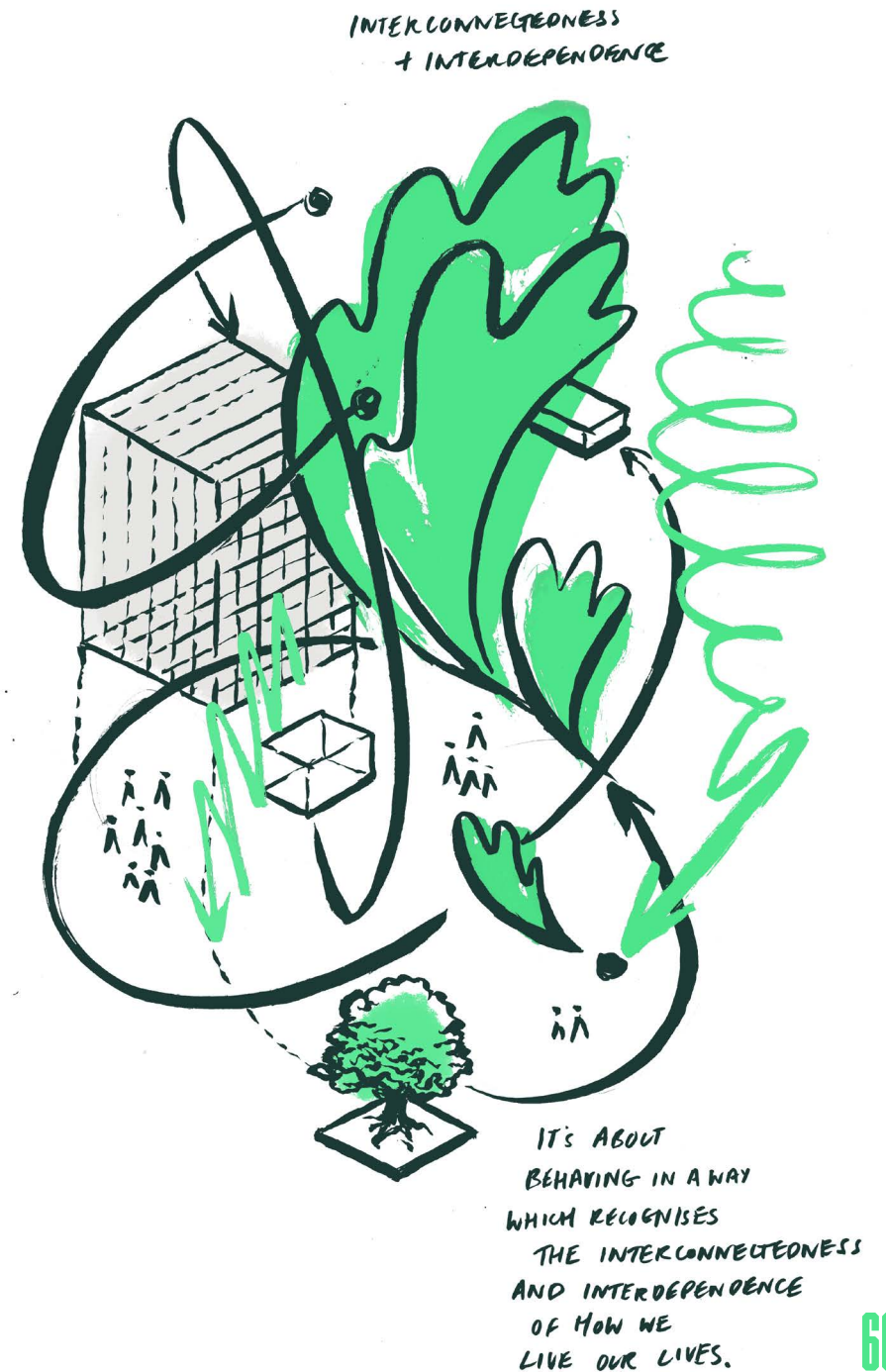
“A growing body of epidemiological evidence indicates that greater exposure to, or ‘contact with’, natural environments (such as parks, woodlands and beaches) is associated with better health and well-being, at least among populations in high income, largely urbanised, societies.

(White et al, 2019).

It is no longer enough for companies to talk about carbon reduction figures and use challengingly abstract targets.

To make positive changes which can be recognised as such, we need to talk about how we’re creating a greener planet through the way in which we design our cities, through our focus on greener, more natural spaces, and on the multitude of simple but tangible ways we support people to live more sustainably.

We recognise that it’s not as simple as reducing carbon. We need to understand the complex interconnectedness of the environment, green behaviour, people’s health and wellbeing, and the social value which development should bring.



The third trend is around how we understand environmentalism. As the conversation about the environment becomes more nuanced, so does our understanding of what we can and should do.

We know that reducing our carbon footprint is not as simple as it seems. A move away from a meat-based diet might lead to higher food miles. The batteries in our electric vehicles might themselves prove an environmental threat.

As we recognise the complexity of the problem, we realise that we need to think about the environment in a different way.

Living ecologically isn't just about fewer international flights or eating more locally produced food. It's about behaving in a way that recognises the interconnectedness and interdependence of how we live: living 360° Environmental Lives, connecting the dots of reducing carbon, sustainable lifestyles, environmental awareness and personal health and wellbeing.

And so climate change has become part of a wider discourse around ecology. As conversations around climate change become more sophisticated and begin to take account of the complexity of our natural world, conversations about all parts of our lives, social, cultural and political, are naturally turning to questions of ecology, nature-based solutions to global challenges, of how humans interact with nature and what this means for our species and the planet.

At Brent Cross Town, we are committed to delivering a net-zero carbon town. We will employ ambitious targets and reduce embedded carbon. For example, we will build with timber wherever possible and will offset emissions where necessary. Working with the Swedish energy company Vattenfall, who will supply reliable and affordable zero-carbon heating to homes, businesses and shops, we plan to beat the UK Government's pledge to deliver carbon neutrality by 2050, delivering a net-zero carbon town by 2030 at the latest.

With amazing public transport links to the rest of the UK and a focus on building a truly cyclable and walkable place, Brent Cross Town will support those visiting and living there to live more sustainable lives.

Our commitment to the environment can also be seen in our attitude to green space, with 50 acres of parks and playing fields and 700+ new, mature trees across the neighbourhood.

Parks and playing fields will become the jewels in the crown - expansive and inviting, evergreen and foliage-filled, providing ample space for people to play, or simply enjoy the benefits of living close to nature.

Forecasting trends in development during a global pandemic is no easy task. We've explored the trends which were evident before the pandemic, and looked at how people's attitudes and behaviours have changed given the impact of such a momentous period. Copa's research both backs up much of what we already know and takes us further.

The people we have spoken to play back familiar stories about the life changes they are thinking of making, the curious mix of optimism and pessimism pervading the nation, about keeping in touch with friends and family, about epiphanies they've had, about Joe Wickes and sourdough bread.

The independent research also shines a light on some of the underlying trends which have been accelerated by Covid-19.

The first trend, the Fifteen-Minute Town, gives us a blueprint for how we can design and build our developments for the future. Drawing on the Garden City Movement, Brent Cross Town will help people to live more locally, so that they can lead more environmentally-friendly lives and, by freeing up time previously spent travelling and commuting, help them to have more meaningful relationships with their family, friends and their communities.

Nearly 70% of people we spoke to found the idea of a Fifteen-Minute Town appealing, as people are realising and appreciating more and more their own local areas and the benefits of living more locally.

The second trend, A Desire to Flourish, follows on from the Fifteen-Minute Town, as a desire for a better quality of life. People know that where they live is fundamentally important for their health and wellbeing, with our research showing 72% believe that towns should be built to help their inhabitants flourish. We want to ensure that we are delivering on this aspiration and our Flourishing Index will help us to measure our success in enabling people to flourish.

Critical to how people flourish is how they work. In our third trend, Rethinking Work and Place, we learnt that while people's experience of working from home has largely been positive, they have faced significant challenges and have missed the office for its social aspects: they have missed their colleagues.

With Brent Cross Town, we will be developing a major new sustainable office destination, focusing not only on the offices themselves but on the development which surrounds them, building a new business ecosystem for 25,000 workers that offers a purpose and competitive advantage for different businesses to come together in one location.

The last trend is 360° Environmental Lives. Argent Related has a critical role to play in tackling climate change and in helping our inhabitants and visitors to lead more sustainable lives.

Building on our commitment to create a net-zero carbon development, at Brent Cross Town we will be making a truly walkable and cyclable town, maximising green space. In this way Argent Related will support those visiting, living and working there to lead more sustainable lives.

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4 In Scanlon, Blanc and Crankshaw's analysis of home working, their survey revealed that 26% of their respondents noted that wifi connectivity was a major problem in them working from home. In addition, 44% of respondents reported noise as being a difficulty in working from home, with 43% noting that privacy was also a significant problem (Scanlon, Blanc and Crankshaw, 16 July 2020).

5 See the work of Timothy Morton's *Being Ecological* (MIT Press, 2018).

6 White, M.P., Alcock, I., Grellier, J., Wheeler, B.W., Hartig, T., Warber, S.L., Bone, A., Depledge, M.H. and Fleming, L.E., 2019. 'Spending at least 120 minutes a week in nature is associated with good health and wellbeing'. *Scientific Reports*, 9(1), pp.1-11.

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