

Create Streets Briefing Paper

May 2022

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Restitching our social fabric

How we can create new places, save money on road-building and steward existing places to tie us together, not rip us apart.

Executive summary

This briefing paper sets out new research showing that the least prosperous neighbourhoods tend to be bifurcated by fast and busy roads. Among the bottom dozen urban neighbourhoods in the Legatum Institute's UK Prosperity Index:

- Five have fast wide roads or dual carriageways through their town centres (Middlesbrough, Oldham, Grimsby, Doncaster and Wakefield);
- Three have fast wide roads or dual carriageways encircling their town centres (Manchester, Dundee and Glasgow); and
- Two have busy roads, though not dual carriageways, near the town centre (Blackpool and Great Yarmouth).

The paper then sets out six specific ideas to help restitch our society and neighbourhoods. They are based on the insight that no one actively wants to create places which are less connected or attractive but that too frequently 'hidden wiring' stops us: official procurement policy, highways guidance, planning norms or budget-setting tends to make our places less sociable and happy by accident. This paper shows how to re-order some of this wiring to everyone's benefit.

Our policy proposals are:

- Policy proposal one: change the existing road budget's objectives to include improving places
- Policy proposal two: change Homes England and others' funding programmes so that public money can only be used to support housing schemes using 'vision and validate' models
- Policy proposal three: update the methodology of the official Transport Analysis Guidance to value the school run as much as the drive to work and wellbeing as much as time
- Policy proposal four: update VAT to treat existing places fairly
- Policy proposal five: update DCMS and Historic England guidance to align with changes in the NPPF and place more focus on pride in place, on local distinctiveness and townscape merit
- Policy proposal six: extend and simplify the Urban Tree Challenge Fund to be easier for neighbourhood groups to apply for

Thanks

This paper draws upon the wider work of the Create Streets team and fellowship and the No Place Left Behind Commission. Specifically, it makes use of policy ideas and analysis worked up by David Milner, Dr Samuel Hughes, Toby Lloyd and Rose Grayson. Proposal five would have been impossible without the kind and expert advice of Christopher Boyle QC.

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Introduction

Social fabric matters. The places we inhabit, the people we share them with, the institutions and networks that foster shared norms and values between us all – these are the building blocks of democratic societies and prosperous economies.

Human beings, simply put, demand to belong. And the last two years of social distancing and enforced isolation have only served to remind us of this basic fact that we have known instinctively for millennia.

This is not a controversial or novel principle but it has too often been forgotten in practice. In Western countries around the world, including the United Kingdom, we have inadvertently let the threads of the social fabric fray. Pastimes that in the past brought us together – volunteering, group membership, church-going, even marriage – have gone out of fashion, while those that separate us have gone mainstream. Places of congregation, from libraries and pubs to youth clubs and parks, have shuttered and too many of the places and buildings we have created are lacking in beauty, character or local support.

It's time to change this. In the shadow of the pandemic, we must restitch the social fabric of our communities and breathe new life into the places we call home. Not by clutching at the fragments of the past and trying to recreate what has gone before but by re-imagining new forms for community which learn from our forebears but that can persist today and also withstand the vicissitudes of modern, digital, global life. And not through top-down policy or by bottom-up organising on their own, but through the intelligent union of both.

Create Streets' urban design and regeneration teams work all round the country, from Scotland to the South West and from Wales to London. We support councils, landowners, developers and, above all, neighbourhood and community groups. Throughout our mission



is to help develop and steward beautiful and popular places which residents and neighbours can love for generations for the good of neighbourly wellbeing, connectedness and prosperity.

What we find, time after time, is that no one actively wants to create places which are less connected or attractive; few are actively trying to undermine our society. However, too frequently, the consequences of official procurement policy, highways guidance, planning norms or budget-setting is to make our places less sociable and less connecting, more polluted and less welcoming. This needs to change and this paper sets out practical ideas for how to achieve it. The six proposals have emerged over the last 18 months from the work of the Create Streets Foundation's No Place Left Behind Commission, from our research and from our work with councils, developers and neighbourhood groups.

1. Change the existing road budget's objectives to include improving places

Problem one: too many places are made less sociable and less healthy by fast roads cutting through their heart – particularly less prosperous places. The quality of life and air quality in many left behind places, has suffered from the twentieth century habit of carving fast, wide and heavily engineered roads through them. Motorways and dual carriageways within towns and neighbourhoods sever communities, ruin air quality, take away alternative transport choices, and ultimately deter residents and 'fine grained' local investment alike. They tend instead to attract big box commercial buildings and surface carparks into the heart of towns, which reduce local prosperity and tax take.¹ No town centre should be despoiled in this way. It is striking that this is most true of the least prosperous places. Among the bottom dozen urban neighbourhoods in the Legatum Institute's UK Prosperity Index;²

- Five have fast wide roads or dual carriage ways through their town centres (Middlesbrough , Oldham, Grimsby, Doncaster and Wakefield);
- Three have fast wide roads or dual carriage ways encircling their town centres (Manchester, Dundee and Glasgow); and
- Two have busy roads, though not dual carriageways, near the town centre (Blackpool and Great Yarmouth).

In Grimsby, for instance, an arterial road, much of it dualled or elevated separates the town from the coast and left behind neighbourhoods from the town centre. In Morecombe, a dual carriageway and around 15 surface carparks dominate the town centre between the station, the sea front and the new Eden Project site.

Policy proposal one: repurpose the existing roads budget to include reducing or removing urban motorways and dual carriageways, to create boulevards, linear parks and public spaces

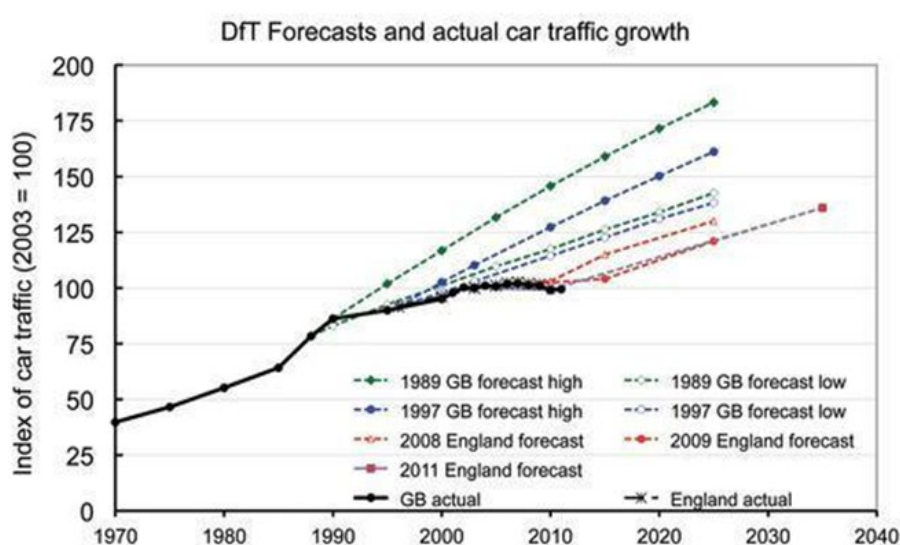
- The government should change the objectives of the existing £24.7bn roads budget to enable place-transformative change by reducing urban motorways and dual carriageways to more suitable widths, turning arterial roads into boulevards,³ or removing them entirely to create new linear parks and public spaces – as has been done to great effect in cities around the world.
- The hypothecation of Vehicle Excise Duty in Budget 2018 created a National Roads Fund of £28.8 billion for 2020-25.⁴ These funding streams do now include wider objectives than

just journey speeds such as supporting economic rebalancing and 'non-motorised users'.⁵ However, they still do not include recognition of the importance of road design in placemaking and local prosperity. This needs to change, both to prevent out-dated highways objectives blocking vital place improvements to left behind places and to allow road-humanising schemes to be funded directly from the roads budget.

Humanising over-engineered roads will also create opportunities to reclaim urban space from 'boxland' development and surface carparking in towns – freeing up well located brownfield land for better, denser and more economically diverse uses.

2. Change Homes England and others' funding programmes so that public money can only be used to support housing schemes using 'vision and validate' models

Problem two: existing traffic modelling, so called 'Predict and Provide', is outdated and based on flawed, oversimplified solutions. We have outsourced the responsibility for this crucial area of designing and planning our cities to spreadsheets. It's right to prioritise infrastructure but we are too focussed on a single solution that is not extracting value for money. Decisions are made by outdated models based on old data and even older human assumptions rather than by designers and engineers planning for the health, happiness and environmental outcomes we want from new developments. These models rely on compound assumptions, such as predictions on how we will move around for decades into the future. They assume growth in car use, growth in car ownership and poor network



Time and time again we make poor forecasts. This DfT chart shows a constant overestimate of car traffic through the years⁶

conditions. These models, compounding many assumptions over multiple decades, have repeatedly proved inaccurate, as can be seen by comparing the Department for Transport's own forecasts with the actual results.

The government's decarbonising transport plan acknowledges this issue stating 'we need to move away from transport planning based on predicting future demand to provide capacity ('predict and provide') to planning that sets an outcome communities want to achieve and provides the transport solutions to deliver those outcomes'.⁷

When you dig into the main types of transport modelling available the first question asked is 'Are you modelling for vehicles or pedestrians?' instead of considering all types of transport holistically. Despite the rhetoric around sustainable transport we still think about walking, cycling and car transport as separate silos. Many planners will never touch a pedestrian transport model.

Another problem is that humans are truly terrible at making predictions. Take the late 19th century transport crisis, not a crisis of congestion, but of overwhelming horse manure. Tens of thousands of horses in London and New York were used in transport, each producing around 20 pounds of manure per day. Headlines at the time warned that 'In 50 years, every street in London will be buried under nine feet of manure.'⁸

Planners demanded more stables and increased street cleaning. No doubt horse transport modellers would also have called for wider roads, space to parallel park your horse and service stations to top them up with hay. But the predicted crisis never materialised. Less than 20 years later the car would outnumber horses in New York, rendering proposed solutions to the manure problem redundant.

When we act on these predictions, like spending on big expensive bits of infrastructure, we are left with these changes for dozens if not hundreds of years. To counter this we must accept we're bad at predictions and create places that can adapt to challenges and solutions we haven't even thought of yet.

Predicting the future based on previous experience will, by definition, lead to the same conclusions and, therefore, the same very expensive outcomes. One example being the planned Black Cat roundabout expansion near Bedford at a cost of £1.4bn for one roundabout and 10 miles of new road.⁹ That is over a third of the £3.7bn budget for 40 new hospitals.¹⁰ Could we solve congestion in a cheaper, more effective way than spending the equivalent of 14

new hospitals on a single roundabout?

These huge costs often result in road schemes requiring large housing developments to pay for them. (A developer will contribute thousands of pounds per house sold to fund a new road). This is money that could have otherwise been spent on improved local facilities. It's difficult to find a new housing development that isn't linked in some way to a major new road or widened junction. You'd be forgiven for wondering if the new homes are being built to serve the roads rather than the roads serving the new homes.



The £1.4bn three tier Black Cat roundabout plans. We can deliver wider social, ecological and economic value, whilst keeping the roads running smoothly by spending on many holistic projects that reduce traffic generated by new housing developments.¹¹

There is hope however. A few planners, engineers and designers are challenging the post-war default to traffic prediction based on simple assumptions of endless traffic and car ownership growth. Instead they are working bottom up, with residents, local authorities and developers to set a vision for how we want to move around and how we want our towns and cities to look and be. And then design the streets and places to help us achieve this vision. This approach is known as 'Vision and Validate'. There are also other terms such as 'Decide and Provide' and 'Monitor and Manage' representing the same method.

An example of 'Vision and Validate' can be found at a business park in Silverstone where the original 'Predict and Provide' led designs for new offices included a roundabout and road expansion, based on predicting an increase in traffic, at the cost of a cool £25m.

But here the story took a different turn. The eye-watering cost led to a rethink. New designs adopted a 'Vision and Validate' approach and, while there were some smaller, necessary road improvements, the revised proposal went beyond road building. Better pedestrian crossings, pavements and cycle paths were added. Changing in the speed limit increased road capacity and £1m went to improving bus routes. Money went into subsidising on-site gyms and nurseries, meaning workers could walk or cycle there instead of driving to the gym a few miles away.

As a result of these changes the number and length of expected vehicle trips was reduced. The spend on roads was reduced from £25m to £2m with the extra £23m spent on facilities for the whole community. This is the approach we should default to.

Policy proposal two: public funding should only support housing and infrastructure schemes which use the 'Vision and Validate' methodology.

We need to start with the vision and desired outcomes.¹² What does the community want their place to look and feel like? Do they want cleaner air in the centre and around the schools? How many neighbours would you like to know? What are the climate targets in the town? Once you know the desired outcomes, work back from this by planning the travel we want and need to meet our health, happiness and environmental goals.

- Homes England and Active Travel England should only financially support housing schemes using 'Vision and Validate' transport modelling;
- DFT's Local Transport Plan guidance should call on all Local Transport Plans to mandate the use of 'Vision and Validate' for all transport modelling;
- The DFT should issue technical guidance on how to deliver 'Vision and Validate' led schemes;
- All infrastructure schemes seeking levelling up funding should use vision and validate modelling;
- All highways authorities should ask for 'Vision and Validate' modelling for all new transport and development schemes;
- The Planning Inspectorate should not give consent to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) designed using predict and provide transport modelling; and
- The sustainable transport section of the NPPF should be amended to state that planning policies and decisions should require new developments to show that their design enables the government's desired active travel modal share. (The current target is 50 per cent).

3. Update the methodology of the official Transport Analysis Guidance to value the school run as much as the drive to work and wellbeing as much as time

Problem three: Government guidance values traffic congestion over everything else. The Department for Transport's cost-benefit analysis tool known as 'Transport Analysis Guidance' (TAG) fails to value social and environmental benefits and costs, and overvalues travel time. The TAG cost-benefit analysis, which gives highways authorities a costed appraisal for proposed transport schemes, needs to be dragged kicking and screaming into the 21st century. It fails to properly capture non-travel-time benefits, such as health, wellbeing and the environment, in proposed schemes, so the answer will always be to build more or bigger roads. Whilst TAG seeks to monetise the benefits and costs of new projects, it claims that it is 'currently not feasible' to monetise almost any environmental or social costs or benefits to new projects.

This is becoming an increasingly untenable position as the evidence on how increased prosperity, value and wellbeing metrics are influenced by place and urban design continually improves.¹³

Category of impact	Impacts that are typically monetised	Impacts that can be monetised but are not reported in the AMCB table	Impacts that it is currently not feasible or practical to monetise
Economy	Business users and private sector providers (including revenues)	Reliability impact on business users Wider Economic Impacts	
Environment	Noise Air quality Greenhouse gases	Landscape	Townscape Historic Environment Biodiversity Water environment
Social	Commuting and other users Accidents Physical activity Journey quality	Reliability impact on commuting and other users Option and non-use values	Security Access to services Affordability Severance

TAG database: Too many social and environmental impacts are left out of cost benefit calculations

The staggering value we put on improving journey times by just a slight amount versus any social or environmental impact is laid bare deep inside the TAG spreadsheet. The external cost attributed to severe road congestion is valued at 57.2 pence per km travelled, whereas excess noise is costed at a paltry 0.1 pence per km. Air

quality is valued at 0.5 pence per km and greenhouse gases, the source of worsening floods, fires and droughts, stand at 2.8 pence per km. This means all of these harms combined are given just 5 per cent of the value of congestion on our roads. This is all the more futile because we know new road building doesn't actually improve congestion.

TAG also values the commute above all else. If you are travelling for a non-work purpose such as collecting the kids from school or picking up groceries your time is worth a paltry £4.54 an hour versus £9.95 for commuters.¹⁴ As an aside cyclists will be shocked to discover that painted cycle lanes are given the same cost benefit as a fully segregated cycle lane (3 pence per minutes journey-time).

Policy proposal three: update the methodology of the official Transport Analysis Guidance to value the school run as much as the drive to work and wellbeing as much as time

- *Update the TAG database to redress the balance in favour of health, wellbeing, climate and happiness and monetise negative environmental and social costs.* Policy already supports rebalancing the benefits beyond saving a few minutes from your daily commute – but the TAG hasn't caught up yet. For example, the reviewing inspector for a housing scheme in Chester, which the council was trying to block due to claimed peak hour traffic increase, reported that "it is not the aim of policy to protect the convenience of commuting car drivers". In fact, the forecast traffic growth would have added just one minute delay to a peak-hour commute. Road schemes should be assessed with the updated government carbon values. The 2022 price was increased from £72 to £248 per tonne, which should be applied to all appraisals.¹⁵
- *Do not use TAG at the design stage of a project, instead use it to compare detailed design options at a later stage.* The design team and transport planners should decide when new road infrastructure is needed. Only then should TAG be used to compare detailed plans of road schemes.

4. Update VAT to treat existing places fairly

Problem four: VAT encourages new build in place of less disruptive investment in existing places. VAT is charged at 20 per cent on repair, maintenance and adaptation work to buildings. However, new buildings are not charged VAT. This incentivises demolishing existing buildings and starting again. It discourages regenerative development and sensitive, plot by plot investment in existing places. It encourages greenfield over brownfield development.

Government VAT rules are therefore not in alignment with their policies on planning and sustainable development, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This should change. The need for this commands increasing public recognition, having been championed by the Architects' Journal in its RetroFirst campaign. As the Northumberland and Newcastle Civic Society put it in their 2019 evidence to the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission:

It is desirable to make better use of existing buildings in city centres given not only the colossal challenges facing traditional urban based business but critically the need to better use finite natural resources... we want to dispel the perception that renovation represents poor value for money in comparison with demolition and reconstruction.¹⁶

Policy proposal four: update VAT to treat existing places fairly

The government should make bringing derelict buildings back into use VAT free, or charge at most a reduced VAT of 5 per cent. It should do the same for core improvements to existing buildings, including reroofing, extensions, conversions and renewable heating. It is not necessary that VAT be reduced for DIY or interior decoration, which do not have corresponding environmental significance. It is possible that such a move could;

- Provide a £15.1 billion stimulus to the wider UK economy and 95,480 extra jobs by 2020; and
- Lead to almost 240,000 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent savings from 92,000 homes.

Similar VAT reductions have resulted in an increase in consumer demand and employment in the Isle of Man and the Netherlands. Reducing VAT on bringing derelict buildings back into life would be particularly important in less prosperous parts of the country where land costs are lower and build costs comparatively more important to overall development economic.

5. Update DCMS and Historic England guidance to align with changes in the NPPF and place more focus on pride in place, to local distinctiveness and townscape merit

Problem five. Listed buildings are disproportionately in the south rather than the midlands and the north. For example, the South West has 90,131 listed buildings or one listed building for every 62 people living in the region. The North East has 12,464 listed buildings or one listed building for every 214 people.

This probably reflects the historic focus of conservation staff in the 1950s and 1960s in favour of 'cathedral city' rather than 'industrial town.' But it also reflects the modern guidance of the DCMS which focuses more on early Victorian or older buildings as opposed to more recent ones. The official guidance note, Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings (November 2018), advises:

- "from 1700 to 1850, most buildings that retain a significant proportion of their original fabric are likely to be regarded of special interest, though some selection is necessary;
- from 1850 to 1945, because of the greatly increased number of buildings erected and the much larger numbers that have survived, progressively greater selection is necessary;"

In a linked issue, it has also proved difficult to protect early twentieth century traditional architecture. This is because generally excellent, Historic England guidance on the listing of domestic architecture still places more focus on modernism and the 'path' to modernism than it does on the full range of competing 'styles' in early twentieth century reality. It needs to 'catch up' with more recent scholarship.

At one time, architectural study was dominated by a teleological narrative of the emergence and evolution of modernism. Recent years, however, have seen growing recognition that modern Britain has been home to a range of rich and significant architectural approaches, existing in a complex and often creative relationship with canonical modernism. There is renewed interest in architects from beyond the London mainstream like Dewi-Prys Thomas and Ian Begg, in advocates of the terraced street like Elizabeth Denby and Trystan Edwards, and in architects who creatively reinterpreted older design vocabularies like Elisabeth Scott and Albert Richardson. This approach embraces a rich variety of modern design that responded to the diverse aspirations and attachments of the British people.

Policy proposal five: update DCMS and Historic England guidance to align with changes in the NPPF and place more focus on pride in place, to local distinctiveness and townscape merit

1. Historic England should redraft their guidance Domestic 4: Modern houses and housing (2011, reissued 2017). At present the note underplays pre-war traditional architecture. For example, in the section on Architectural Styles at present there is only one paragraph on pre-war neo-Georgian architecture, one paragraph on art deco and none on post-war traditional housing. There are nearly three pages on pre-war and post-war modern buildings, although very few modernist buildings were actually built pre-war. There is

an implicit assumption throughout the narrative that architecture 'progressed' towards modernism. It shows no recognition of the actual predominance of pre-war traditional domestic architecture. The note needs redrafting for a more accurate balance.

Similar changes should be made to other guidance notes covering commercial, educational, industrial and other buildings.¹⁷

2. **DCMS should redraft their note Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings (November 2018).** Key paragraphs that need redrafting are paragraphs 18 to 21 to reflect the changes in the NPPF to focus on place-making, beauty and local distinctiveness and better to preserve the traditional urban fabric that each generation inherited until World War II. Precise wording edits are suggested in the appendix.

3. **Consider re-introducing Grade III listing.** In the context of these changes, it may be worth considering re-introducing Grade III which be normal for twentieth century listed buildings up until 1945 which are broadly beneficia to the public and which are of conservation area merit. This could be achieved though policy not legislation. This could also include locally listed buildings.

- Grade III listed buildings would be chiefly listed for their townscape and public realm contribution so internal alterations would not normally affect their special character. This would prevent the need for Listed Building Consents for internal alterations. This could be achieved, I understand, through policy not legislation.
- One option to consider would be to support changes to Grade III listed buildings if done in accordance with the original style or with a locally popular design code. This would permit them to continue to intensify whilst valuing the original townscape.

6. **Policy proposal six: extend and simplify the Urban Tree Challenge Fund to be easier for neighbourhood groups to apply for**

The lived experience of lock-down has highlighted the benefits of urban greenery for well-being, health and overall place quality and prosperity. As a Leeds resident told the No Place Left Behind Commission:

'The seating and planting that have been added here as a parklet gives a safe space for people to sit and talk in the open air at suitable distances.' Leeds resident¹⁸

A year on from the outbreak of the pandemic, data from Google showed that visits to parks in the UK were up 48 per cent on pre-pandemic levels.¹⁹ Many of No Place Left Behind Commission's case studies described a local green space as 'a lifeline' for the community during lockdowns, as a safe place to come together, exercise and play. The immediate opportunity now is to increase 'little and often' greenery, the street trees or low level planting that very often have the most measurable benefit on residential health and well-being because it is so frequently encountered. There is overwhelmingly clear evidence of the positive association of street trees on fewer accidents, cleaner air, less childhood asthma, lower anti-depressant prescription rates, reduced crime rates and higher property values.²⁰

Street trees are associated with slower cars, better air quality, moderated energy usages and happier and healthier residents. One study found that the presence of trees reduced speeds by seven to eight miles per hour... A study of five arterial roadways found that mid-block car crashes declined by five to 20 per cent in areas with features such as trees or concrete planters along the road.²¹ ... Urban trees improve air quality.²² They moderate energy use for heating and cooling.²³ People also aesthetically prefer streets with trees in them.²⁴

Problem six: when it comes to urban greenery not all neighbourhoods are equal and left behind places struggle to meet funding requirements and process. ONS data shows that there is a strong correlation between low canopy cover and social deprivation.²⁵ The direction of policy over recent months is recognising this,²⁶ with the new National Model Design Code, the upcoming release of Manual for Streets 3, the new Biodiversity Net Gain metric 3.0 and the recent changes in the national planning policy framework requiring developers to work closely with highways and tree officers, for every new street to be tree lined, and all new developments to achieve a 10 per cent net gain in biodiversity.²⁷

Recently the Urban Tree Challenge Fund has provided funding to the planting of trees in urban areas, as part of the Government's Nature for Climate Fund. The fund covers 50 per cent of the costs for communities and local authorities to retrofit trees in urban places and to maintain them for three years. Importantly, and for the first time, funding applications were scored based on socio-economic deprivation and current tree canopy cover, or lack of.²⁸

The Urban Tree Challenge Fund's positive impacts are already being seen across England, where the first two rounds have supported the planting of 134,000 new trees and the third round for 2021/2022 aims

to plant a further 44'000.²⁹ However, despite the priority for funding given to more deprived places with fewest trees, the communities who are most in need seem to be struggling to apply due to onerous application requirements – in particular section 8, which requires formal written approval from the landowner before funding can even be applied for. And the fund only covers the cost of planting in verges and other 'soft' spaces, not the higher cost of planting trees in the 'hard' surface of streets – which is precisely where greenery provides the most benefits.

In Chatham, The Arches Local hoped to apply for the Urban Tree Challenge Fund and to plant some trees to improve their neighbourhood. Their first plan was to plant trees on their local streets, but the fund would not cover the cost of installing trees in the concrete surface. Their second choice of locations was on several green verges nearby. They were able to match fund the costs in part with capital from their Big Local Funding, and in part through volunteer labour to maintain the trees. But despite having completed the application form, associated spreadsheet, and drawings and secured permission in principle from the landowner, they were unable to get the landowner to complete the relevant part of the form in time and so were unable to apply. Fortunately, they were ultimately able to partner with local organisations and volunteers to plant 31 trees in and off the streets of Luton in Chatham to mark National Tree Week in 2020. During the February 2021 half term, Arches Local also installed three cherry trees and two pear trees at a local primary school with no discernible tree canopy.

East Marsh United, a community group in Grimsby working with their local councillors, MP and council officials had hoped to plant trees along a run down street to green the heart of their community – an area which the UTCF map³⁰ identifies as a priority area with high levels of deprivation and very low canopy cover. The group were happy to match fund the application with volunteer labour to maintain and care for the trees. The local council, as the landowner, was happy in principle for trees to be planted along the street. However, additional funding was needed to pay for planting in a hard surface. East Marsh United were not able to secure this, and so council governance processes prevented them from giving formal section 8 approval for the application.

Tree planting initiatives by charities Groundwork,³¹ Save our Street Trees,³² Trees for Cities³³ and the Create Streets Foundation³⁴ have demonstrated communities' appetite for tree planting, especially

in urban areas' - and shown that local people engage particularly readily with street greening and tree planting projects. The response from local people is overwhelmingly positive, and as most expensive element of planting trees is the three years subsequent maintenance, being able to match fund in with community volunteering is also an important efficiency gain.³⁵ Initiating street and neighbourhood regeneration by adding trees and greenery can therefore be a powerful way to activate communities and kickstart positive change, and an efficient way to leverage investment.

Policy proposal six: extend and simplify the Urban Tree Challenge Fund to be easier for neighbourhood groups to apply for.

The Urban Tree Challenge Fund should be extended for another four years, with the target of increasing canopy cover in deprived areas to at least the national average of 16% by 2025.³⁶ In the longer term, the aspiration should be to increase canopy cover to at least 20%, but ideally 30% or higher where feasible.³⁷ Funding should be increased from the current level of £837.45 per tree (including three years maintenance), to cover the higher cost of planting in the hard surface of streets and to ensure that planting can include a diverse range of tree species, as called for by The State of The World's Trees Report.³⁸ The fund should pay for more of the upfront capital costs of the tree, and local authorities should be paid for each tree they adopt at the end of the initial maintenance period. The requirement to secure formal permission from landowners before applying should be relaxed, and the rules on planting in the highway should be reviewed and relaxed to reduce bureaucratic hurdles and enable more tree planting directly on streets.

Appendix: policy proposal five. Detailed suggested redrafting of paragraphs 18 to 21 of Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings (November 2018)

At present **paragraph 18** (i) focuses exclusively on architectural merit; (ii) does not consider place-making or local popularity and well-being; and (iii) needs a more fine-grained approach to pre-1914 buildings. It reads:

“Age and rarity: the older a building is, and the fewer the surviving examples of its kind, the more likely it is to have special interest. The following chronology is meant as a guide to assessment; the dates are indications of likely periods of interest and are not absolute. The relevance of age and rarity will vary according to the particular type of building because for some types, dates other than those outlined below are of significance. However, the general principles used are that:

- before 1700, all buildings that retain a significant proportion of their original fabric are likely to be regarded of special interest;
- from 1700 to 1850, most buildings that retain a significant proportion of their original fabric are likely to be regarded of special interest, though some selection is necessary;
- from 1850 to 1945, because of the greatly increased number of buildings erected and the much larger numbers that have survived, progressively greater selection is necessary;
- careful selection is required for buildings from the period after 1945, another watershed for architecture.”

Paragraph 18 should be re-drafted to read [changes highlighted]:

“Age and rarity: the older a building is, the fewer the surviving examples of its kind and the more it contributes to local pride in place, to local distinctiveness and townscape merit, the more likely it is to have special interest. The following chronology is meant as a guide to assessment; the dates are indications of likely periods of interest and are not absolute. The relevance of age and rarity will vary according to the particular type of building because for some types, dates other than those outlined below are of significance. However, the general principles used are that:

- “before 1700, all buildings that retain a significant proportion of their original fabric are likely to be regarded of special interest;
- from 1700 to 1914, most buildings that retain a significant proportion of their original fabric are likely to be regarded of special interest, though some selection is necessary;
- from 1914 to 1945, because of the greatly increased number of buildings erected and the much larger numbers that have

survived, progressively greater selection is necessary;

- careful selection is required for buildings from the period after 1945, another watershed for architecture and place-making."

At present **paragraph 19** reads:

"Buildings less than 30 years old: such buildings are not normally considered to be of special architectural or historic interest because they have yet to stand the test of time. It may nevertheless be appropriate to list some modern buildings despite their relatively recent construction – for example, if they demonstrate outstanding quality (generally interpreted as being equivalent to Grade I or II*). The Secretary of State calculates the age of a building from the point at which the ground was first broken."

Paragraph 19 should be redrafted to read [changes highlighted]:

"Buildings less than 30 years old: such buildings are not normally considered to be of special architectural or historic interest because they have yet to stand the test of time. It may nevertheless be appropriate to list some modern buildings despite their relatively recent construction – for example, if they demonstrate outstanding quality (generally interpreted as being equivalent to Grade I or II*) are locally loved or contribute to local pride in place and townscape merit. The Secretary of State calculates the age of a building from the point at which the ground was first broken."

At present **paragraph 20** reads:

"Aesthetic merits: the appearance of a building (both its intrinsic architectural merit or any group value) is often a key consideration in listing, but the special interest will not always be reflected in obvious external visual quality. Buildings that are important for reasons of technological or material innovation, engineering or as illustrating particular aspects of social or economic history, may have little external visual quality but can still be of special interest."

Paragraph 20 should be redrafted to read [changes highlighted]:

"Aesthetic merits: the appearance of a building (both its intrinsic architectural merit or any group value) is often a key consideration in listing, but the special interest will not always be reflected just in obvious external visual quality. Buildings that are locally popular, that contribute to local pride in place, to local distinctiveness and to townscape merit can also still be of special interest. Buildings that are important for reasons of technological or material innovation, engineering or as illustrating particular aspects of social or economic

history, may have little external visual quality but can still be of special interest.”

At present **paragraph 21** reads:

“Selectivity: where a building qualifies for listing primarily on the strength of its special architectural interest, the fact that there are other buildings of similar or identical quality elsewhere is not likely to be a major consideration. However, a building may be listed primarily because it represents a particular historical type to ensure that examples of such a type are preserved. Listing in these circumstances is largely a comparative exercise and needs to be selective where a substantial number of buildings of a similar type and quality survive. In such cases, the Secretary of State’s policy is generally to list only the most representative or most significant examples of the type.”

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(As an alternative approach some of the suggested new text could be added through a new paragraph.) Additional guidance, potentially created by Historic England with the Office for Place, might set out (a) how to judge ‘townscape value’ and (b) how to how to determine local popularity and pride.

Endnotes

- ¹ For example, American analysis of land values and property tax found that replacing an acre of box retail and parking with finely grained, mixed use, walkable city in Ashville would increase sales and property tax per acre from \$6,500 to \$634,000 per acre whilst also increasing residents per acre from 0 to 90 and jobs per acre from 5.9 to 73.7. Montgomery, C. (2013), *Happy City*, p.271.
- ² UK Prosperity Index 2021 | Legatum Institute (li.com)
- ³ Create Streets (2016) *Create Boulevards for London: The beautification and intensification of London's arterial roads*. Accessed online at: <https://www.createstreets.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Create-Boulevards-03-May-2016.pdf>
- ⁴ HM Treasury. (2018) *Budget 2018*.
- ⁵ Department for Transport (2018) *Major Road Network and Large Local Majors Programmes: programme investment planning*. Accessed online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/major-road-network-and-large-local-majors-programmes-investment-planning/major-road-network-and-large-local-majors-programmes-investment-planning-guidance>
- ⁶ 'Due diligence, traffic forecasts, and the pension infrastructure programme', Phil Goodwin
- ⁷ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1009448/decarbonising-transport-a-better-greener-britain.pdf
- ⁸ <https://99percentinvisible.org/article/cities-paved-dung-urban-design-great-horse-manure-crisis-1894/>
- ⁹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-47290440>
- ¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-confirms-37-billion-for-40-hospitals-in-biggest-hospital-building-programme-in-a-generation>
- ¹¹ Image: National Highways
- ¹² An outcome led approach to design is also at the heart of the national street design guide, *Manual for Streets*.
- ¹³ Boys Smith, Venerandi, Toms (2017), *Beyond Location*
- ¹⁴ 2010 prices. TAG data book July 2021 v1.15
- ¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/valuing-greenhouse-gas-emissions-in-policy-appraisal/valuation-of-greenhouse-gas-emissions-for-policy-appraisal-and-evaluation>
- ¹⁶ Evidence submitted to Building Better Building Beautiful Commission call for evidence, May 2019.
- ¹⁷ A full list of those that need examination is here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/selection-criteria/listing-selection/>
- ¹⁸ Create Communities Platform used in Leeds. (2020) *Create Streets*. Accessed online at: <https://communities.createstreets.com/LeedsLockdown>
- ¹⁹ Google (04.03.2021) *COVID-19 Community Mobility Report*. Accessed online at: <https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/>
- ²⁰ Greater Manchester Combined Authority. (2021) *The Ignition Project*. Accessed online at: <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/natural-environment/ignition/>
- ²¹ Dumbaugh, E. (2006) *Safe Streets, Liveable Streets*. Journal of the American Planning Association, Vol.71
- ²² Nowak, D. J., Crane, D. E. & Stevens, J. C. (2006) Air pollution removal by urban trees and shrubs in the United States. *Urban forestry & urban greening* 4. pp. 115–123 and Nowak, D. J., Hirabayashi, S., Bodine, A. & Greenfield, E. (2014) *Tree and forest effects on air quality and human health in the United States*. Environmental Pollution 193.
- ²³ Akbari, H., Pomerantz, M. & Taha, H. (2001) Cool surfaces and shade trees to reduce energy use and improve air quality in urban areas. *Solar Energy*. 70.

- ²⁴ Smardon, R. C. (1998) Perception and aesthetics of the urban-environment - review of the role of vegetation. *Landscape and Urban Planning*. 15.
- ²⁵ Trees for Cities. (2021) Trees for Cities Secures £1.2m in second green recovery challenge fund. Accessed online at: <https://www.treesforcities.org/stories/trees-for-cities-secures-1-2m-from-the-green-recovery-challenge-fund-1>
- ²⁶ Smith, J. (2021) #MembersHour: The Urban Tree Challenge Fund – What it can do for you'. (Webinar) The Institute of Chartered Foresters.
- ²⁷ MHCLG (2021) National Planning Policy Framework. Accessed online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005759/NPPF_July_2021.pdf
- ²⁸ Forestry Commission (2019) UTCF. Accessed online at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/urban-tree-challenge-fund>
- ²⁹ House of Commons. (2021) Tree Planting in the UK. Accessed online at: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9084/CBP-9084.pdf>
- ³⁰ See the Forestry Commission map browser: <https://www.forestergis.com/Apps/MapBrowser/>
- ³¹ Groundwork. Accessed online at: <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/about-groundwork/our-impact/>
- ³² Save our Street Trees Northampton. Accessed online at: <https://saveourstreettrees.org/aboutus/>
- ³³ Trees for Cities. (2021) Trees for Cities Secures £1.2m in second green recovery challenge fund. Accessed online at: <https://www.treesforcities.org/stories/trees-for-cities-secures-1-2m-from-the-green-recovery-challenge-fund-1>
- ³⁴ Create Streets Foundation, Place Champions programme. Accessed online at: <https://www.createstreetsfoundation.org.uk/place-champions/>
- ³⁵ Conversation with Jim Smith, the National Urban Forestry advisor at the Forestry Commission, July 2021.
- ³⁶ Doick et al (2017) The Canopy Cover of England's Towns and Cities
- ³⁷ Urban Forestry and Woodland Advisory Committee Network (2018) England's Urban Forests - Using tree canopy cover data to secure the benefits of the urban forest
- ³⁸ Botanic Gardens Conservation International (2021) State of the World's Trees. Accessed online at: <https://www.bgci.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/FINAL-GTARReportMedRes-1.pdf>



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