

# Resident Review

Closing the feedback loop in UK housing



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# Introduction



## **At the Quality of Life Foundation, we want a housing system that improves people's quality of life in their homes and neighbourhoods over the long term.**

We do this by fostering greater accountability and encouraging more sustainable models of development. Most crucial to our work, however, is giving residents and communities a greater sense of control over what they value and need in their local area. This has the potential to affect the way government and industry approach housing, leading to more socially, environmentally and economically sustainable neighbourhoods.

For organisations who want to understand the impact of the built environment on residents' quality of life, our Resident Review provides resident-led feedback that yields insights into people's lived

experience – what they think and feel about where they live. This post-occupancy evaluation, as it is sometimes called:

- **weaves accountability into the house-building process,**
- **demonstrates social impact,**
- **provides the evidence to justify past and encourage future investment,**
- **and improves trust with key stakeholders, especially residents, both as citizens and consumers.**

This report marks the launch of our Resident Review service, detailing why gaining this feedback is important and how we go about doing it. This is just the start, and we hope many of you will join us in the years ahead.



**Sadie Morgan**  
Chair of Trustees

## 5 things we've learned about post-occupancy evaluation:

### 1. It's good to talk

The people who really know what it's like to live somewhere are the residents themselves. Yes, there is a honeymoon period to living in a new home, especially if you've just invested your life savings in it. Yes, it's true that some people just want to have a moan. But, if you combine what people say (the qualitative data) with what people do (the quantitative data) then you can get a pretty accurate picture of what a place is like to live in. And this matters, because places that are good for people also tend to be good for the planet – which is good for all of us.

### 2. You can't beat face-to-face engagement

The reality is that many people are too busy, tired and stressed out to fill out online surveys, and many of those that do have the time or the inclination are from a self-selecting group. That's why some form of face-to-face engagement is so important, and why we will be doing more, not less, of it, through both interviews and focus groups.

### 3. When it comes to data, more is more

Although the Resident Review survey is resident-led, we don't rely solely on the information provided by them. Sometimes, simply looking at a master plan of a site or layout of an apartment can help explain why people are feeling how they are. And examining baseline data for an area can help pinpoint those elements affecting people that are attributable to their homes and those that are attributable to other factors.

### 4. Not all communities are the same

Context matters, so if a scheme is built in an existing community, often with a long and challenging history, then of course the story is going to be different for new residents than if they were moving to a greenfield site, which brings its own challenges. So, while benchmarking is good and right and absolutely what we must do to raise standards, we always need to remember that each place is different, and in each place, not all people are the same.

### 5. Knowledge is power

We believe that it is only those housebuilders who can demonstrate the value of their product in ways that can be understood by residents, financiers and government (both local and national) on a social, environmental and financial basis, that will be fit for purpose in the years to come.



**Matthew Morgan**  
Director



## 5 things we've learned about new developments:

### 1. Active travel and public transport

Across all developments, residents raised issues around car dependency and associated issues (e.g. pavement parking and inadequate parking in certain areas). Tackling car dependency is a key part of addressing the climate crisis, reducing air pollution and promoting physical activity. In the UK, transport has been the largest emitting sector since 2016,<sup>1</sup> responsible for 27% of all greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>2</sup> Between 2017 and 2025, the health impacts of particulates and nitrous dioxide from traffic-related air pollution are estimated to cost the NHS and social care system a total of £1.69 billion.<sup>3</sup> As such, we strongly recommend that new developments minimise car dependency and related problems, such as air pollution, increased risk of road injuries or collisions, and physical inactivity.

### 2. The maintenance of green spaces

For the most part, residents across the seven sites we surveyed enjoyed good access to nature and green spaces, but had concerns around the maintenance of local green spaces, including the estate management charge for these areas. Residents' concerns about the rising cost of the estate management charge could partially reflect increased overall concerns about the cost of living and rising inflation, which has increased in the UK since early 2021.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, it is clear that residents valued nature, appreciated

living in close proximity to many beautiful green spaces, and were invested in looking after them. This underscores the need to ensure that local green spaces are well maintained and enriched with biodiversity.

### 3. Intergenerational facilities

There is a need for more intergenerational provision of indoor and outdoor spaces, facilities, services and activities at many sites surveyed. Older children and teenagers, as well as the elderly, are groups whose needs felt particularly overlooked, which could lead to negative consequences. For example, the lack of parks and facilities for teenagers means that the only places for them to meet friends near their homes are parking lots and the parks and play spaces that are designed for young children. This, in turn, could cause intergenerational tensions, as evidenced by residents' comments associating teenagers with anti-social behaviour and vandalism.

Meanwhile, insufficient or inadequate benches in parks, green spaces and other public areas could be exclusionary for older people. This could particularly affect those with health problems or disabilities, who are less mobile and need more places to stop and rest. As a result, older people may be more sedentary and stay at home more. This, in turn, can increase their risk of social isolation and health problems associated with physical inactivity. Having adequate spaces that encourage playfulness

and recreation can be particularly important for healthy ageing, given that engaging in recreational activities can improve cognitive, emotional and psychological functions in older adults.<sup>5</sup>

### 4. Residents' awareness of opportunities to influence local decisions

At many sites, the survey results identified a clear need to tackle the gap in residents' knowledge of opportunities to engage in local decision-making processes. This could mean improving communication around existing engagement opportunities or creating new opportunities for residents to participate. Across England and Wales, people agreed that it would be easier for them to influence decisions in their local area if they knew what issues were being considered.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, 54% of people in England and Wales said it was important for them to be able to influence local decisions.<sup>7</sup> Given the strong sense of community and neighbourliness exhibited across many sites, it is likely that more residents would participate in community projects and decision-making if they were aware of how they could do so.

### 5. Cohousing

We wonder whether there is scope for more developers to consider cohousing schemes, which have been adopted by numerous developers across the UK. Cohousing encourages

neighbours to enjoy a real sense of community and manage their living environment together.<sup>8</sup> Each household has a self-contained home as well as shared community space and facilities. Cohousing is a great way to balance privacy and highly sociable neighbourhood life that can enrich residents' experiences of living in the local area while encouraging a more social and environmentally sustainable way of life. Emerging evidence from the US and UK indicates that residents in cohousing communities are more likely to engage in neighbourhood social life and the local community.<sup>9</sup> Building cohousing schemes as part of a wider development offer could be a way for developers to: 1) demonstrate a commitment to reducing car dependency (e.g. by sharing cars and/or e-bikes between members of the cohousing group); 2) maintain communal green spaces; 3) enhance sustainability outcomes; 4) encourage a diverse and intergenerational community; and 5) empower residents to play more of a part in decision-making processes in their area.



**Hani Salih**  
Researcher

<sup>1</sup> Department for Transport. (2021). Transport and Environment Statistics. 2021 Annual report.

<sup>2</sup> Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. (2021). 2019 UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Final Figures.

<sup>3</sup> Public Health England. (2018). Health Matters: Air Pollution.

<sup>4</sup> Harari, D., Francis-Devine, B., Bolton, P. and Keep, M. (2022). Rising cost of living in the UK. House of Commons Library.

<sup>5</sup> Yarnal, C. and Qian, X. (2011). Older adult playfulness: An innovative construct and measurement for healthy ageing research. *American Journal of Play*, 4(1), 52-79.

<sup>6</sup> Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport. (2021). Community Life Survey 2020/21.

<sup>7</sup> Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport. (2021). Community Life Survey 2020/21.

<sup>8</sup> Wang, J. and Hadjri, K. (2018). The role of cohousing in building sustainable communities: Case studies from the UK. *Asian Journal of Quality of Life*, 3(13), 187-197.

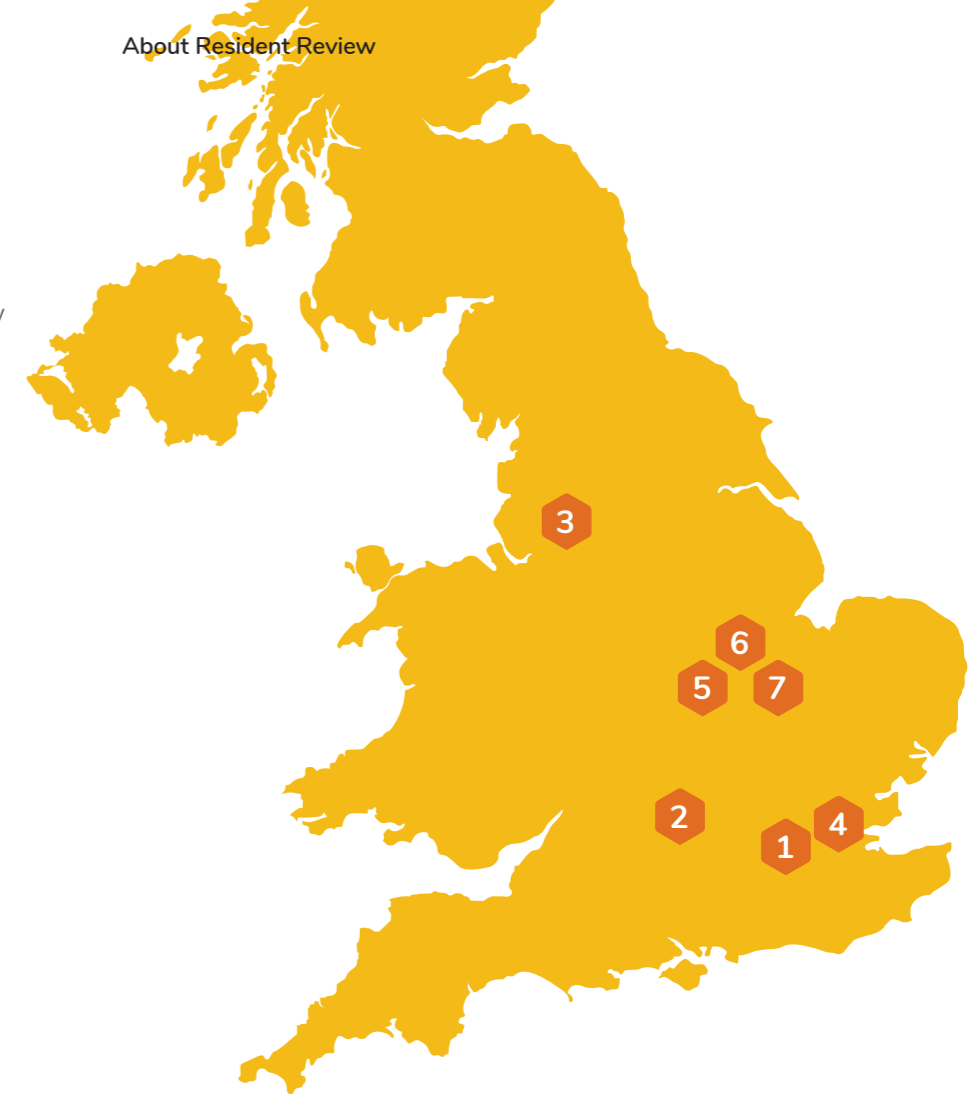
<sup>9</sup> Hudson, J., Scanlon, K. and Arrigoitia, M.F. with Saeed, S. (2019). The wider benefits of cohousing: The case for Bridport. LSE London report for Bridport Cohousing.

# About Resident Review

Resident Review is a post-occupancy evaluation survey that provides a comprehensive view of the success of a neighbourhood or development. This includes:

- An independent site review;
- A survey containing both quantitative and qualitative measures, which can be benchmarked across a portfolio and against both national statistics and other providers working in the same context;
- Analysis and recommendations for improvements on both an existing site and future developments.

We have been piloting the survey across seven sites in England over the past year and are already at work on more.



1	<b>Alma Road</b> , Enfield, London		
2	<b>Barton Park</b> , Oxford		
3	<b>West Gorton</b> , Manchester		
4	<b>Beaulieu</b> , Chelmsford, Essex		
5	<b>Houlton</b> , Rugby	Urban&Civic	
6	<b>Alconbury Weald</b> , Cambridgeshire	Urban&Civic	
7	<b>Priors Hall Walk</b> , Corby	Urban&Civic	

Figure 1.1: Map of pilot sites

## The process

We begin by carrying out site visits to gain a sense of the local context, to interview residents and to encourage more residents to complete the online survey via a specially designed Commonplace digital platform. We typically recruit residents to participate in Resident Review through a mixture of physical and digital communication. For instance, we have done door drop campaigns, distributing flyers with QR codes that direct residents to the online survey. We have also mobilised existing social

networks (such as residents' Facebook groups) to increase engagement numbers. After the online survey period closes, we analyse all the data and produce a report for the commissioning organisation, the key findings of which can be shared with residents and stakeholders. To establish the service, we incurred the costs for the first four projects (Alma Road, Barton Park, West Gorton and Beaulieu) but received funding from Urban&Civic for Houlton, Priors Hall Park and Alconbury Weald.

## The survey

The Resident Review survey contains a set of standard questions, developed around the Quality of Life framework, along with context-specific questions designed in collaboration with the developer involved. To allow for benchmarking with ONS

(Office of National Statistics) averages for England and Wales, the survey includes questions from two ONS surveys: the Personal (Subjective) Wellbeing questions and the National Social Capital Indicators.

The screenshot displays two columns of survey questions. The left column contains questions 1 through 13, and the right column contains questions 14 through 23. Questions include satisfaction levels, safety, transport, and community engagement. Response options are provided for many questions, such as smiley faces for satisfaction and dropdown menus for safety and transport.

Figure 1.2: Resident Review survey

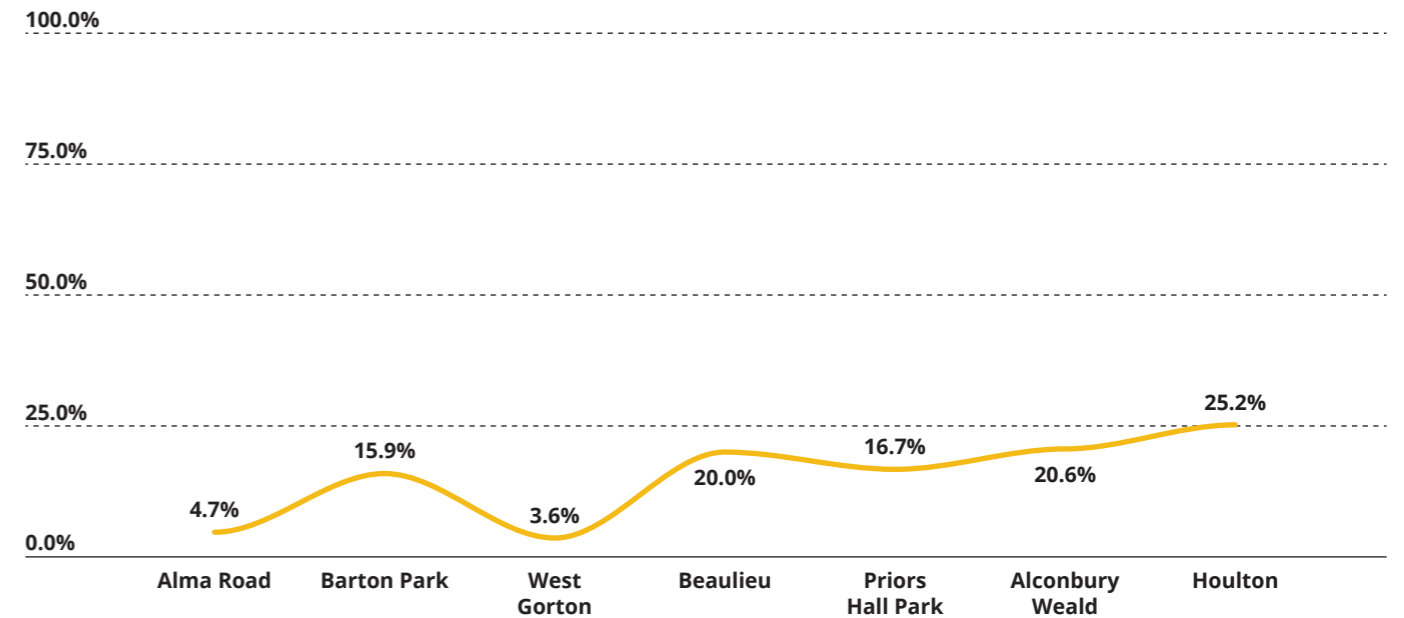


Figure 1.3: Survey uptake across sites

## The framework

The Resident Review survey is based on both quantitative and qualitative data gathered in support of the Quality of Life framework, which was created in collaboration with URBED. It has six themes and several associated sub-themes.



Figure 1.4: Quality of Life Framework

## 1. Control

The **CONTROL** theme refers to whether people feel that they have control over their situation and, if so, to what extent. The sub-themes here are influence, safety and permanence.

- **Influence** is about feeling like you have a say in the decision-making processes in your local area.
- **Safety** is about having a sense of security and not being too worried about crime in your local area or walking around alone after dark.

- **Permanence** relates to both affordability and “churn”, or how long someone thinks they will stay in an area.



## 3. Nature

The **NATURE** theme addresses our ability to connect with nature, which is central to our wellbeing. The sub-themes here are green space, interaction and green homes.

- **Green space** is about our access to local green spaces, be that public, like local parks, or private, like gardens.
- **Interaction** relates to the biodiversity in our local area.
- **Green homes** refers to energy efficiency in the home.



## 2. Health

The **HEALTH** theme explores the ways in which our homes and local areas affect our health and wellbeing. The sub-themes here are housing, air quality and recreation.

- **Housing**, together with our home environment, has an impact on our health.
- **Air quality** is a key component of environmental and public health.
- **Recreation** refers to places near our homes that are available for physical activity and exercise, like cycling, walking and playing sport.



## 4. Wonder

The **WONDER** theme is about the sense of fascination, delight and fun that we experience in our homes and local areas. The sub-themes here are culture, the distinctiveness of a place and playfulness.

- **Culture** refers to our ability to access artistic and cultural opportunities in our local area. This not only includes museums, art galleries and libraries, but also community art and other spaces for creativity and expression.
- **Distinctiveness** is about how special or unique places feel. Examples of distinctive characteristics could be well-designed homes and nicely landscaped green spaces.

- **Recreation** is the extent to which people of all ages can freely move around and have fun in their local area.





## 5. Movement

The **MOVEMENT** theme looks at how we get around and what our local transport options are. The sub-themes here are walking and cycling, public transport and cars.

- **Walking and cycling** refers to the walking and cycling infrastructure in the local area and how safe people feel when moving around on foot or by cycle.
- **Public transport** is about the quality and quantity of local public transport services.

- **Cars** refers to how car-dominated a place is, which can be attributed to street design and high levels of car dependence.



**NOTE:** This framework is currently being reviewed and refined in light of evidence that has emerged and/or gained prominence since the COVID-19 pandemic. This evidence is centred on issues relating to housing, access to green spaces and health inequalities. An updated version of the framework will be launched in the autumn of 2022.

## 6. Community/Belonging

The **COMMUNITY** theme explores whether and to what degree people feel a sense of belonging to their local community. The sub-themes here are diversity, community and neighbourhood.

- **Diversity** is about how well a community accommodates people from all different backgrounds.
- **Community** refers to the strength of social connections and sense of neighbourliness in a particular place.

- **Neighbourhood** is about how the neighbourhood is designed, what services and amenities people can easily access, and how people feel about their immediate area.



## This report

The first section of this report provides a snapshot of the four pilot sites: Alma Road, Barton Park, West Gorton and Beaulieu. The second section provides a snapshot of the three Urban&Civic sites: Houlton, Alconbury Weald and Priors Hall Park. For each of these seven sites, we discuss the site context, survey process and methodology, along with a snapshot of key findings, focused around how the site performed against two themes of the Quality of Life framework. To conclude, we share key learning and reflections from these seven projects and how they have shaped the development of our Resident Review offer.

# Resident Review Pilots



We carried out a series of Resident Review pilots across England from 2020 to 2021 to test our resident engagement methodology.

The first two pilots used a survey with questions taken from national data sets and was undertaken solely online:

- Alma Road in Enfield, London
- Barton Park, to the northeast of Oxford

The survey questions were clunky and uptake was low, so before embarking on the next two pilots, we worked with the social value company, RealWorth. In this process, we came up with a new set of questions that were truer to our framework, and decided to implement face-to-face engagement to complement the online platform.

- West Gorton in southeast Manchester
- Beaulieu at the edge of Chelmsford, Essex

Response rates were significantly higher for Beaulieu than the other pilots. More confident of our methodology, we then looked at three large-scale, strategic developments with Urban&Civic:

- Houlton
- Alconbury Weald
- Priors Hall Park

Taking the lessons from the pilots and our first commercial client, Urban&Civic, we have continually refined our methodology and analysis. Our aim to build a robust and thorough research methodology that foregrounds residents' lived experiences is central to our approach to every workstream and every project at the Quality of Life Foundation.



Figure 2.1.1: Visualisation of the development

## Alma Road

### Site description

Elements/Alma Road is a residential scheme based in Enfield, London. The scheme is a partnership between Countryside Developments and Enfield Council, as part of a £310 million

regeneration of the old Alma Road Estate in Ponders End. The Elements' new development will deliver 993 new homes, including 200 council rented homes and 199 shared ownership properties.

### Survey process and methodology

Resident Review ran at Elements from 2nd November to 21st December 2020. We set up the Commonplace website, then posted flyers through people's letterboxes and posters in internal hallways, using an inducement (win £50 Tesco vouchers) to encourage participation. We initially set

the survey for a month but then extended the deadline. There was no face-to-face contact. Out of the 193 households we approached (97 social + 96 private) 71 people visited the site during its operation. There were 9 respondents in total to the survey (2 anonymously).

### Key findings

With such a low response rate, it is very difficult to draw conclusions. However, respondents were largely neutral about living in Elements/Alma Road, with 3 people selecting neutral, 2 positive and 1 negative. It was felt that the best

things about Elements/Alma Road were the public transport connections and social diversity of the neighbourhood. The worst things were the lack of child-friendly facilities and health services.

### Movement

Most respondents were positive about public transport for the area with 2 very satisfied and 3 satisfied with local bus services. However, responses about cycling provision were more mixed, with most respondents noting that they were taking short car trips 2 to 5 days a week. There was also a high level of dissatisfaction with poor access to parking spaces, reported in additional comments made by respondents, as well as one longer comment.

“  
There is a lack of parking in the area.”

“  
The parking situation is a serious issue where we live and I don't believe any of the buildings have been allocated a fair amount of parking spaces at all. On street parking is even worse with limited parking signs which make it very unclear where you can and can't park, this has led to various residents receiving parking fines.”

### Community/Belonging

There was an equal split between respondents that felt a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood and those that didn't. There were 2 who agreed that it gave them regular opportunities to stop and talk to people. Another 3 respondents also strongly agreed that the area supported their daily needs, such as shops and healthcare.

“  
I really like the way Countryside have built these homes and I love living here but we are still waiting for the gym that was going to be on level one.”

“  
I want to see more black people at the top of your organisations – not just in the adverts for homes.”



Figure 2.2.1: Barton Park is an edge of town development with a focus on health and wellbeing

## Barton Park

### Site description

Barton Park is a 94-acre residential-led scheme to the north east of Oxford. It is a partnership project between Grosvenor Britain & Ireland and Oxford City Council to deliver 885 new homes, a primary school, a food store, a community hub and a new linear park. The scheme aims to integrate Barton Park with surrounding neighbourhoods by establishing social and physical connections and promoting social cohesion.

In March 2016, Barton Park was awarded the NHS England's Healthy New Town

status with the emphasis on reducing local health inequalities, as well as strengthening community cohesion for the new and existing neighbourhoods. Since 2015, Hill have been on site delivering the first phase of 237 homes. They were joined, in 2018, by Redrow as the second housebuilder who will be delivering 207 homes. Social rent will make up 40% of the entire development, with a total of 354 homes. The first residents moved in early 2018 and at the time of this survey 176 homes were in occupation.

### Survey process and methodology

The survey was carried out online and ran from 27th August to 30th September 2020. Over the course of this period, we set up a website hosted by our partners Commonplace. Next, we posted flyers through residents' letterboxes and put up posters in internal hallways, directing

### Key findings

Of the residents surveyed, 68% reported that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with Barton Park as a place to live. When asked about the positive aspects of living in Barton Park, the top two things that residents mentioned were the energy efficiency of their homes and the local biodiversity. Residents also noted the shared community spaces

residents to the website. To encourage participation, we used an incentive of a £50 Tesco voucher draw. The survey was meant to run for two weeks but we extended it to a full month to increase the response rate. During this period, we received 28 responses from Barton Park residents.

and child friendliness of the area as two more positive aspects. However, when asked what they disliked about Barton Park, the overwhelming majority of residents said public transport. Residents also mentioned the lack of health services, shared community assets and job opportunities in the area.

### Control

Residents' survey responses overall indicate that Barton Park performed well in terms of the Control theme of the framework. While most residents reported feeling a lack of influence over decisions affecting Barton Park (see Figure 2.4.2), most also agreed that Barton Park was a safe and affordable place to live (see Figures 2.4.3 and 2.4.4).

While residents felt generally safe in their neighbourhood (see Figure 2.4.3), some comments highlighted concerns around anti-social behaviour and crime. For example, one resident said, "We are paying for the areas to be maintained but people are regularly destroying them with graffiti, and drug use makes the place unsafe."

Most residents felt that the costs of living in Barton Park did not jeopardise their long-term tenure in their homes and the neighbourhood (see Figure 2.4.4).



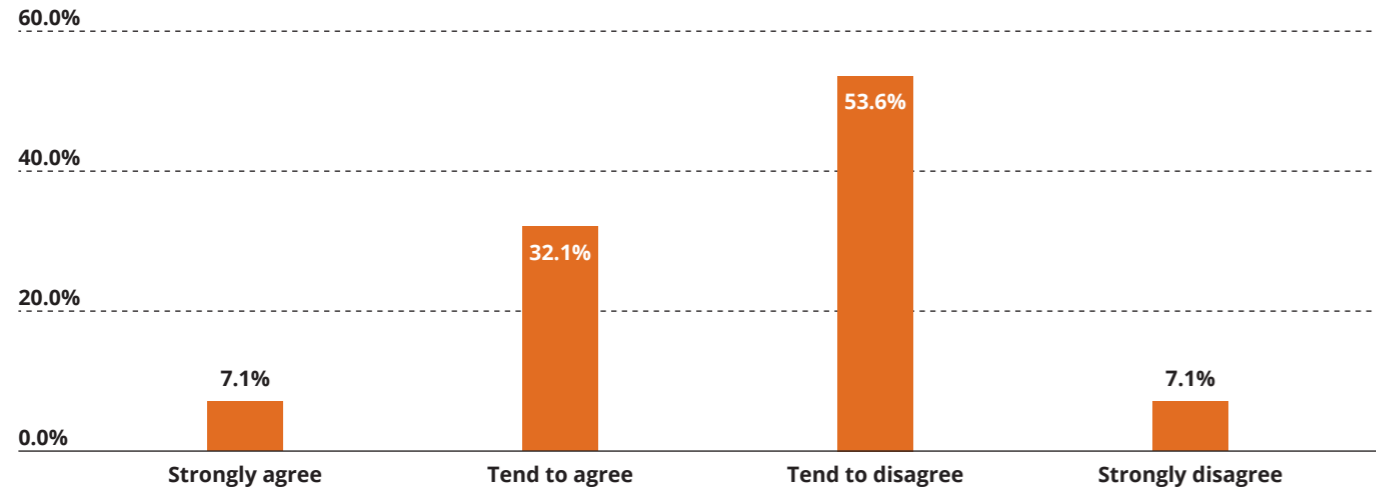


Figure 2.2.3: “To what extent do you agree or disagree that you can personally influence decisions affecting your local area?”

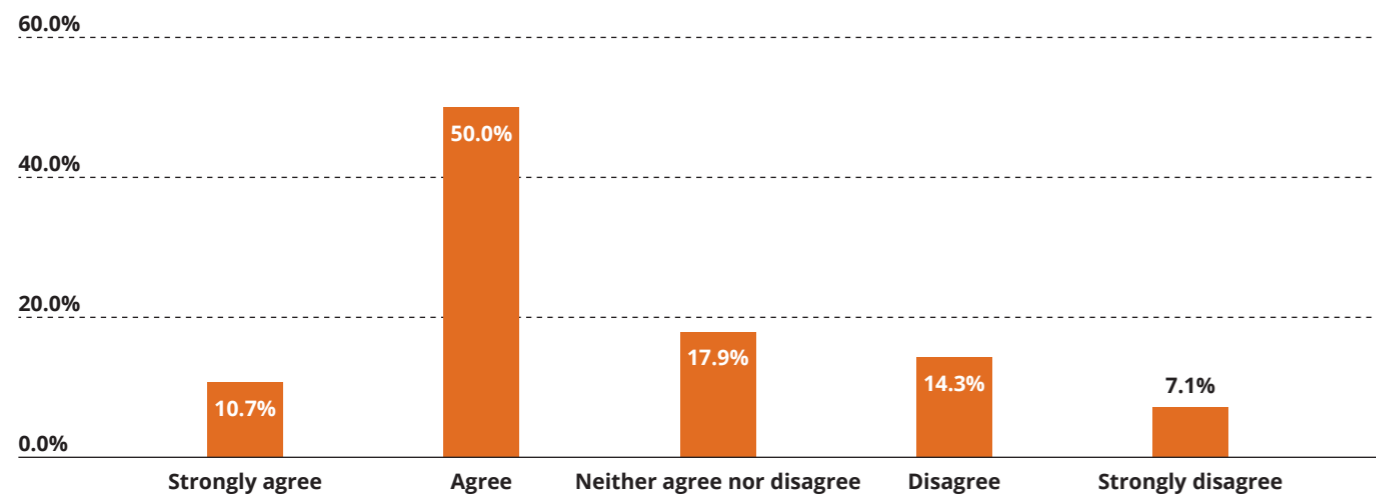


Figure 2.2.4: “I feel safe in my neighbourhood.”

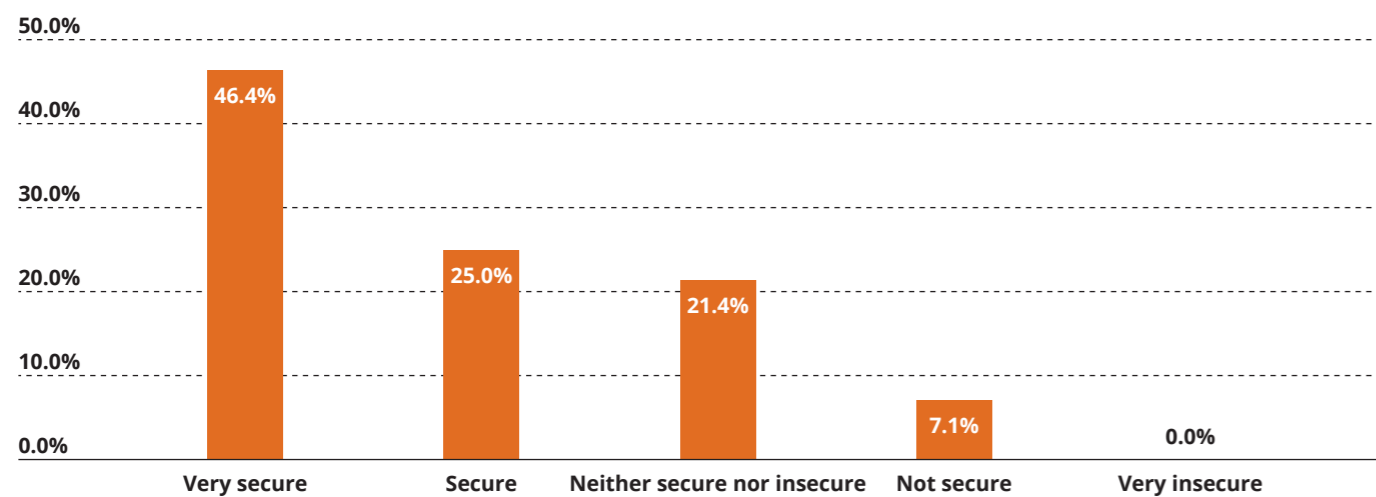


Figure 2.2.5: “How secure do you feel in your ability to pay your rent or mortgage?”

### Community/Belonging

Residents’ survey responses indicate that Barton Park could benefit from a stronger sense of community and neighbourhood belonging (see Figure 2.4.5). The lower levels of belonging that were reported could reflect concerns raised about the absence of shops and other local amenities, as well as concerns about the perceived level of criminal activity.

Residents largely disagreed with the idea that Barton Park gave them access to everything to support their daily needs (see Figure 2.4.6).

Residents also expressed concerns about the inadequate provision of community spaces and local amenities, as well as public transport links. Improvement in these areas could help enhance residents’ sense of community, by enabling them to more easily get around and meet up with people in their local area.

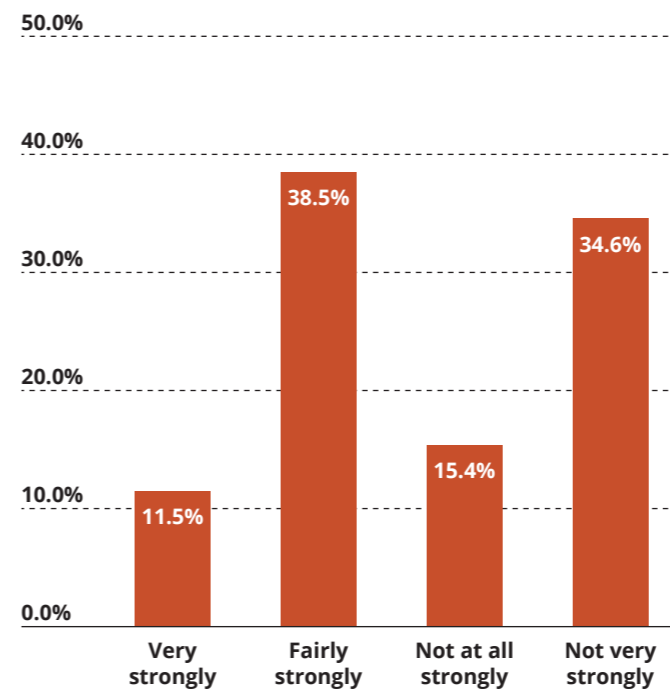


Figure 2.2.6: “How strongly do you feel you belong to your immediate neighbourhood?”

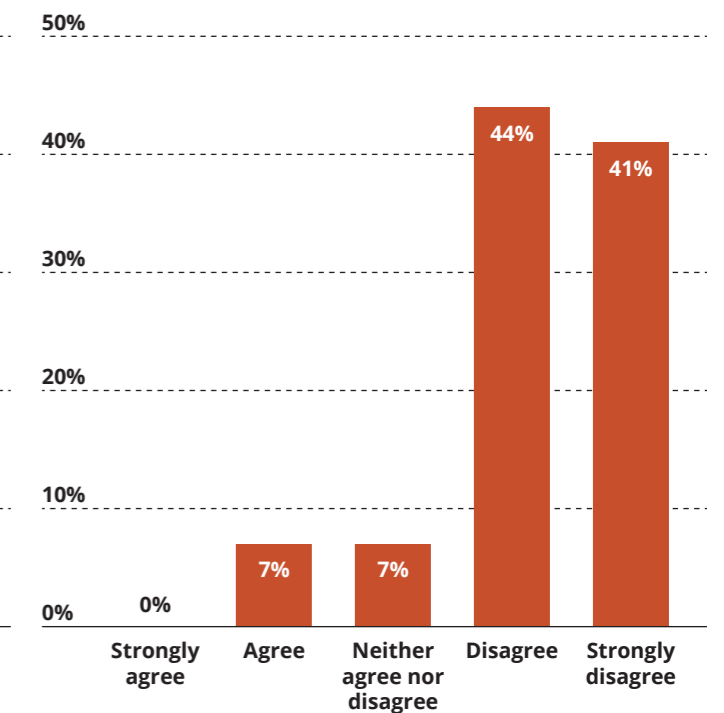


Figure 2.2.7: “My local area has everything I need to support my daily needs, including shops, schools and healthcare.”



Figure 2.3.1: West Gorton's development is centred on a new park with a focus on sustainable urban drainage systems

## West Gorton

### Site description

West Gorton is a residential scheme based in South East Manchester. The development is led by a consortium of key institutions and organisations in the city, including Manchester City Council,

University of Manchester, Guinness Partnership Groundwork and the Manchester Climate Change Agency, with funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme.

### Survey process and methodology

We ran an online survey for 8 months, starting on 21st March 2021. In October, we went to West Gorton and surveyed two residents face to face. To improve survey

uptake, we scheduled our visit in line with the existing community calendar provided by Groundwork and set up a small table at a community presentation run by them.

### Key findings

Residents surveyed at West Gorton frequently cited the park, the presence of a multilingual community and the good sense of community as key benefits of living in the area. At the same time, residents commented on the lack of social spaces and amenities in the area, such as pubs or clubs. One resident said, "We have one shop for the whole estate. We had a chip shop on the old estate. We are desperate for more shops, especially a takeaway or chippy. The elderly don't have access to apps to order delivery. It would also bring the community together and have somewhere to meet. At one point we had four pubs and a social club on the estate, now there's nothing, nowhere for anyone to socialise."

### Nature

Residents in West Gorton felt that they could connect with nature in their local area, with 100% of respondents strongly agreeing with the statement: "My home provides me with my own place to enjoy being outdoors (for example a balcony or a garden)". A further 70% of respondents agreed that they had access to an adequate amount of public or shared green space close to their homes.

However, residents had mixed feelings about the diversity of green spaces available in West Gorton (Figure 2.1.2). One resident commented: "there's green spaces but they're being built on." Many other residents commented on the "bad smell" produced by the Redgate Materials Recovery and Recycling site downwind of West Gorton, south of the A57.



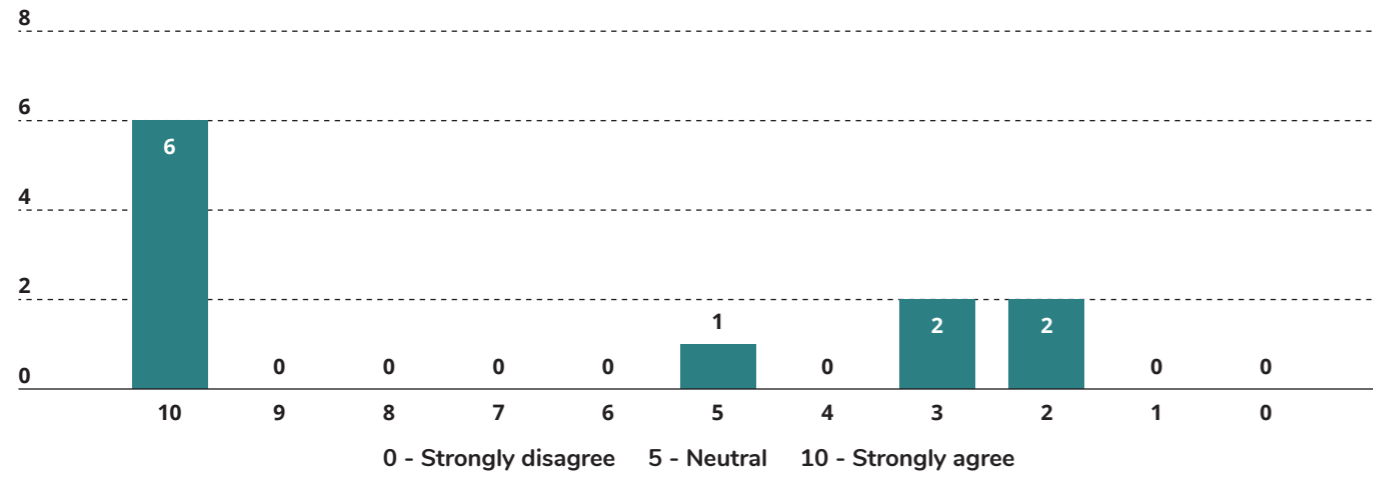


Figure 2.3.2: "There is a good mix of different kinds of green space close to my home"

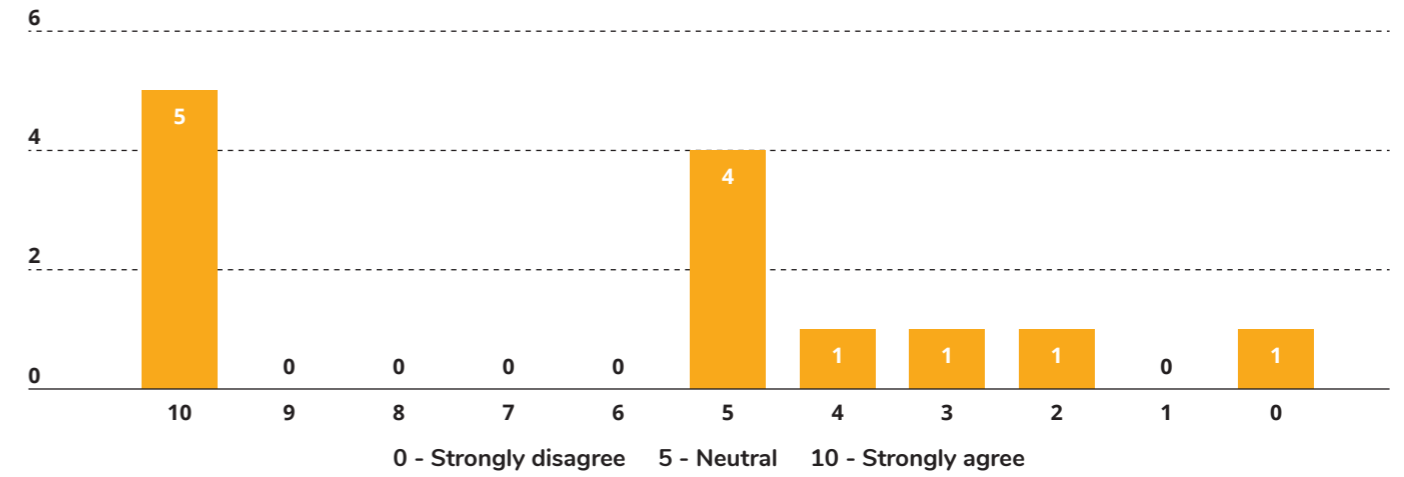


Figure 2.3.3: "I can walk and cycle safely in West Gorton."

### Movement

Residents' perceptions of cycling and walking around West Gorton were mixed (Figure 2.1.3), with some feeling very safe walking and cycling around the area and others less so. Some residents raised concerns around road and pavement conditions, as well as anti-social behaviour in the local park, as reasons why they felt unsafe walking and cycling. Residents also cited the prevalence of illegal racing taking place on Wenlock Way, a straight stretch of road to the north of the site.

Despite its proximity to Manchester's city centre, residents felt ambivalent about the public transport connections to and from West Gorton (Figure 2.1.4), perhaps because the area is connected only by bus and the nearby Ardwick train station. Of those surveyed, only 17.6% said they used public transport, whereas 47% reported using a car to get around.

Although the majority of respondents felt neutral about whether or not cars dominated West Gorton (Figure 2.1.5), the dominance of cars was notable on our visit to the site. We routinely saw cars parked on the pavement and obstructing pedestrians' right of way throughout the

development. In particular, this seemed to be a problem in front of the medical centre, despite its dedicated parking space.

Our resident engagement levels were lower than expected in West Gorton, leading us to refine our engagement strategy further. In order to ensure we could capture a greater proportion of residents' views in the future, we decided to include repeated face-to-face visits during the engagement period, with visits planned according to local community events. Going forwards, we also increased our focus on establishing a clearer line of communication with residents to better promote our face-to-face visits.

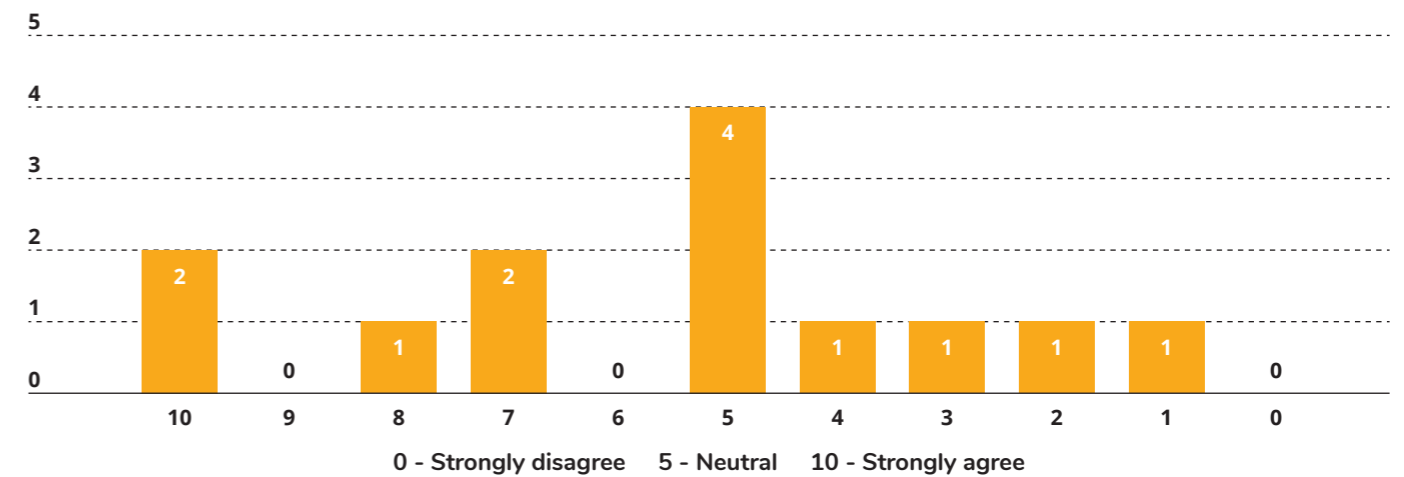


Figure 2.3.4: "West Gorton is served by frequent high-quality public transport."

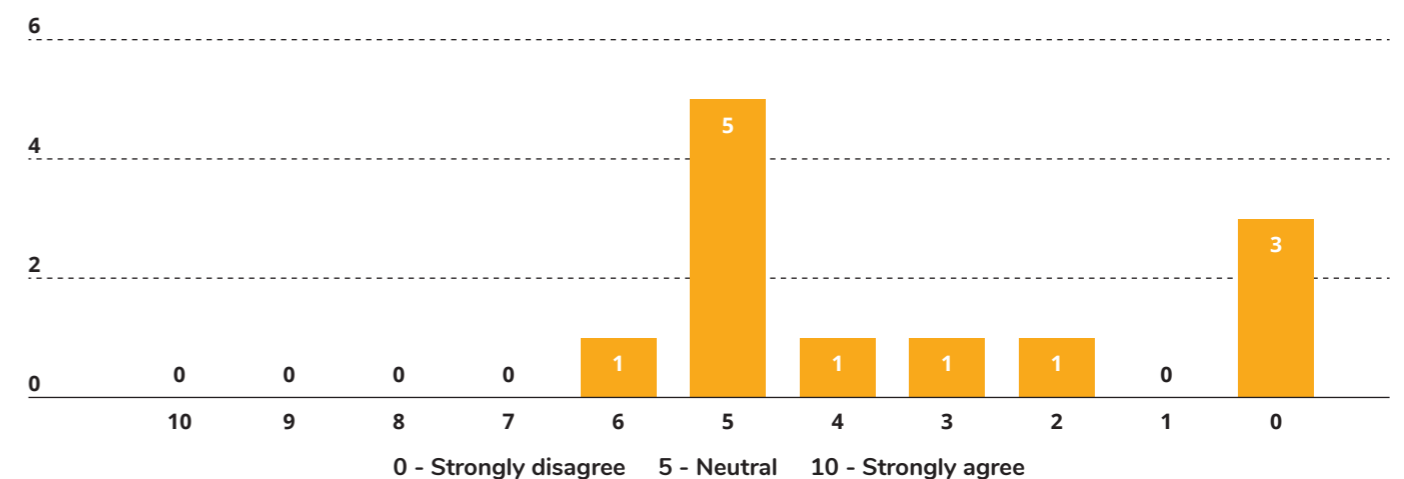


Figure 2.3.5: "Cars do not dominate West Gorton."



Figure 2.4.1: Beaulieu is characterised by wide green spaces and a mix of different housing styles

## Beaulieu

### Site description

Beaulieu is a new development by Countryside and L&Q, situated on the north-eastern edge of Chelmsford, Essex. It is located within the parkland of King Henry VIII's former Tudor palace, only three miles from Chelmsford city centre. It will deliver 3,600 new homes across a 604-acre

site, including a new community hub called Beaulieu Square, two new schools, as well as 176 acres of green space, with allotments, sports grounds and parklands. There is a dedicated route for Beaulieu residents to go to and from Chelmsford and a new train station due to open in 2026.

### Survey process and methodology

Between the summer and autumn of 2021, the Quality of Life Foundation conducted a Resident Review survey in Beaulieu, as part of a national Resident Review pilot programme. A site visit was carried out in October 2021 to get a sense of the local area, interview residents and encourage them to complete the online survey. This was carried out using the Commonplace

digital engagement platform, which ran from 9th June to 1st November 2021. We interviewed 8 residents in-person at the community centre and outside the local Sainsbury's. We also mobilised existing social networks via the residents' website and Facebook groups to continue to drive online engagement.

### Key findings

The survey showed that 67% of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with Beaulieu as a place to live. Residents noted the abundant green spaces and the variety of walking and running routes within Beaulieu as things they especially liked. They also felt that Beaulieu gave them good access to everything they needed. In terms of dislikes, residents mentioned speeding vehicles, the lack of a gym and recreational facilities, as well as anti-social behaviour.

As shown in Figure 2.3.1 below, Beaulieu performed well against the Quality of Life framework, particularly on the Health theme. Where there is room for improvement is on the Control theme. In the following section, we will highlight the positive ways in which Beaulieu contributes to residents' health before discussing how residents' sense of control could be improved.

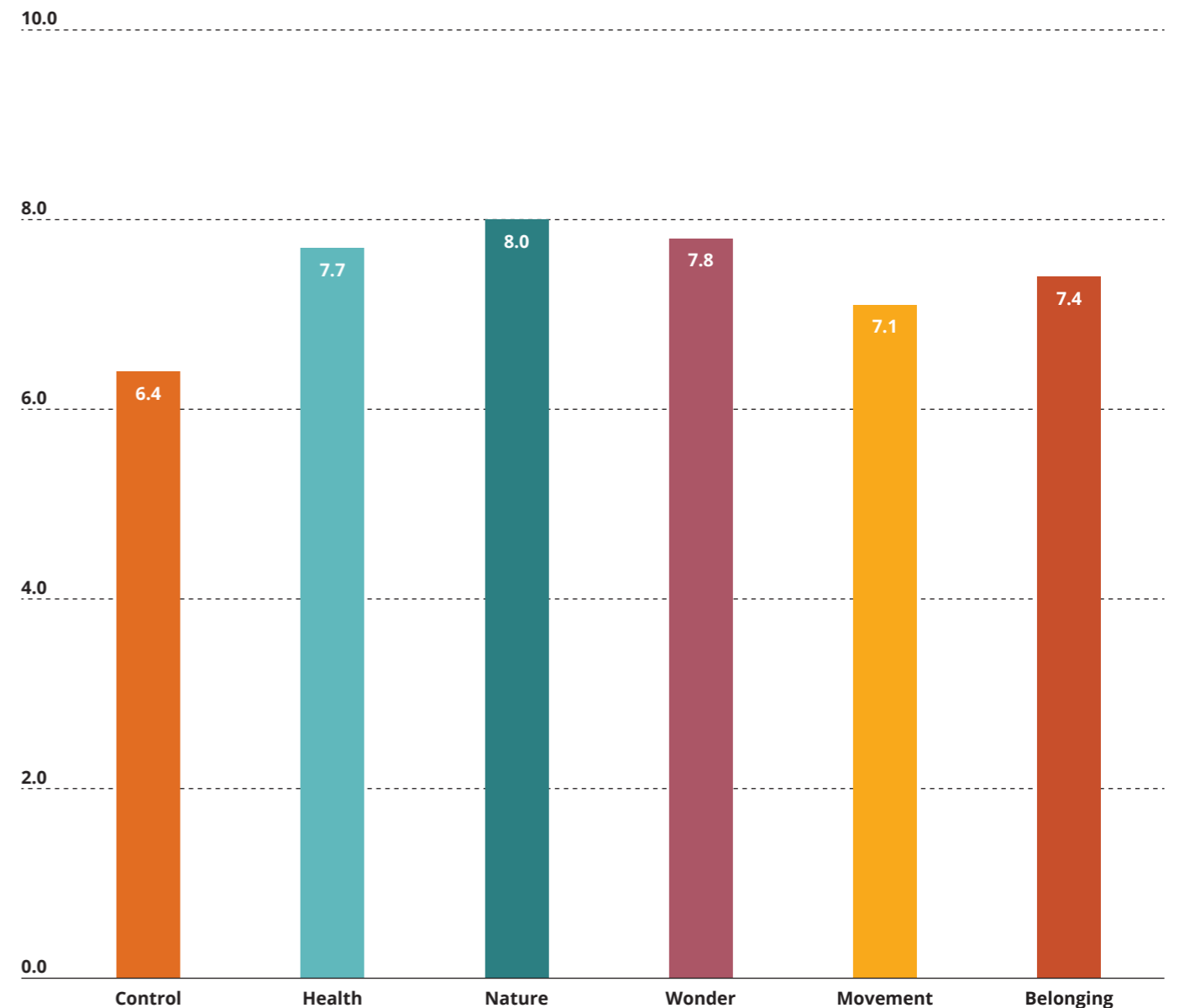


Figure 2.4.2: Beaulieu's Quality of Life performance



### Health

Around a third of survey respondents expressed satisfaction with the layout of their homes, or its size and spaciousness. A quarter of respondents also praised the design or decoration of their homes, particularly the light and floor-to-ceiling windows in some properties. A fifth of respondents highlighted aspects of the local environment that they liked – the greenery, landscaping, open spaces and the character of the streets. As one resident said: “I love the layout and clear quality in the materials used to build. In addition to this, I think the amount of greenery and nature amalgamated within the whole of Beaulieu is a fantastic touch.”

A significant majority of respondents also felt the air was clean in Beaulieu (see Figure 2.3.3). Only a small number disagreed and this may be linked to issues around high traffic circulation, as a high proportion of respondents felt that cars dominated Beaulieu. According to one resident: “Parking is a real issue on Beaulieu. People do not use their garages which means that they park on the road which is not geared up for parked cars.”

Residents also reported high levels of satisfaction with the provision of leisure, relaxation and exercise facilities in Beaulieu (Figure 2.3.4).

Taken together, satisfaction with their home and local environment, clean air and adequate spaces for recreation and exercise all seemed to enhance residents’ health in Beaulieu.

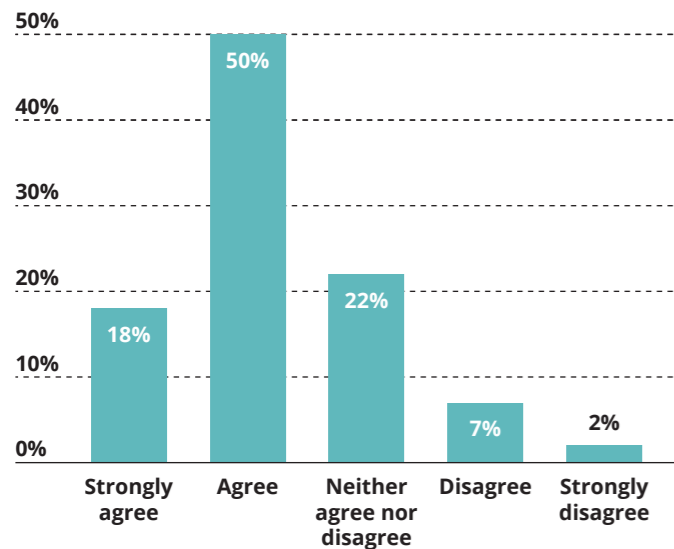


Figure 2.4.3: “The air is clean in Beaulieu.”

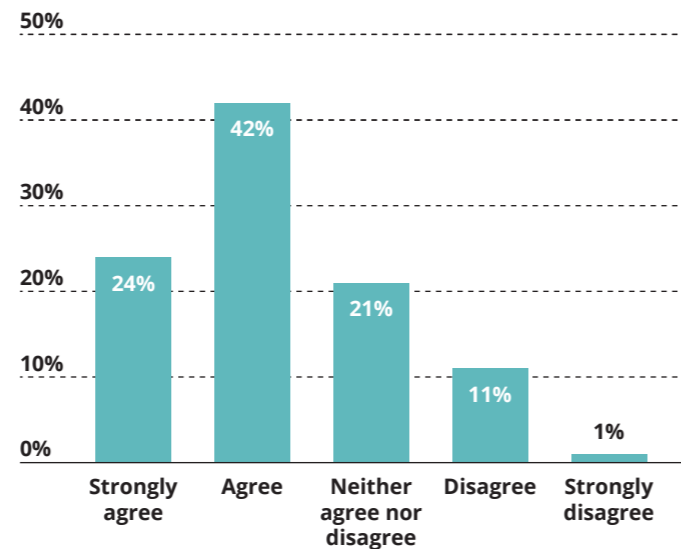


Figure 2.4.4: “There are plenty of places for recreation in Beaulieu.”

### Control

Among survey respondents, 13% agreed they were able to influence decisions affecting the area, while 46% disagreed. This points to a sense of disempowerment among many residents, chiming with national data which finds that three in four people do not feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area (Figure 2.3.4).

The survey showed that 43% of respondents said they were not aware of opportunities to influence decisions in Beaulieu, whereas 18% agreed and 39% neither agreed nor disagreed. These figures suggest a low sense of agency among residents over decision-making processes in their neighbourhood and little knowledge or availability of forums where they can exercise influence.

Encouragingly, a significant majority of respondents felt that their homes and household costs were well within their budget (Figure 2.3.5). What is also encouraging is that 66% of respondents agreed that their homes were easy to heat, whereas just 10% disagreed. This

suggests that rising energy costs may be having less impact on residents of Beaulieu than elsewhere.

Our survey data and analysis indicate that a key way to improve residents’ sense of control in Beaulieu would be to create a residents’ forum and advertise it widely, so they know there is a space for them to get together, discuss and try to take action on local issues.

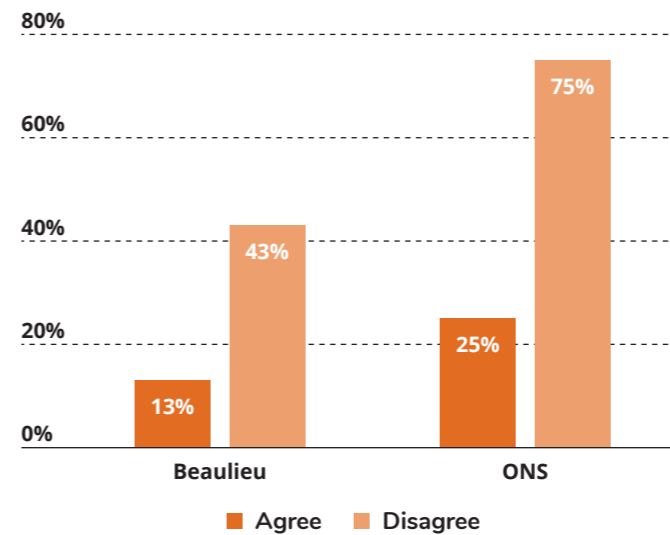


Figure 2.4.5: “I feel I can influence decisions affecting my local area.”

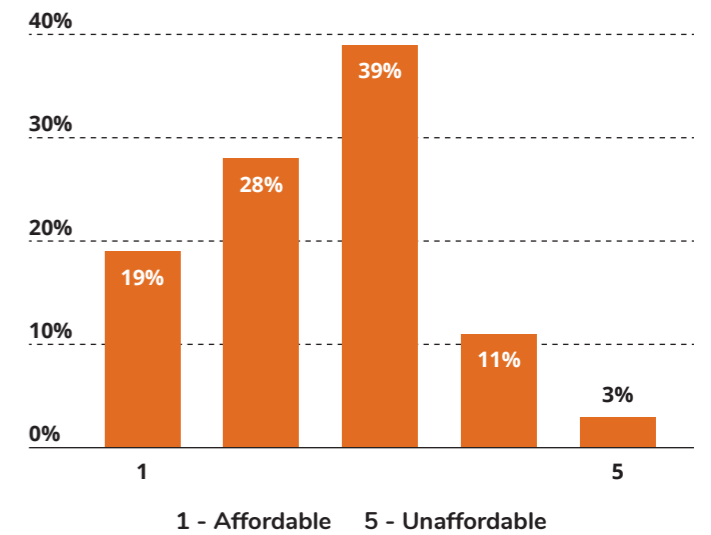


Figure 2.4.6: Affordability of housing costs (average)

# Urban&Civic

In the autumn of 2021, the Quality of Life Foundation conducted Resident Review surveys across three Urban&Civic sites: Houlton, Alconbury Weald and Priors Hill Park. Figure 3.1.1 below illustrates how each site performed (on a scale of 0–10, with 10 indicating best performance) against the six themes of the Quality of Life framework. All three sites scored well in terms of health, nature and belonging. Given the relatively nascent state of all three developments, their performance against the framework was strong from the outset, and we would expect the scores to rise as future phases of development continue.

The relatively high scores in health, nature and belonging all bode well for residents' health and wellbeing in the long term. Low scores in wonder and movement across the board reflect the early provision of social amenities and public transport infrastructure, which both residents and Urban&Civic expect to improve as each site builds on existing services and offers.

**What residents valued:** In all three sites, residents consistently praised the abundant green spaces and strong community spirit as aspects they particularly liked about their local area.

**What residents needed:** Across sites, residents identified five key areas for improvement:

- Public transport and active travel
- The maintenance of local green spaces
- Intergenerational provision, especially for teenagers and older people
- Opportunities for residents to influence decisions in the local area
- Increased provision of shops and services, which residents acknowledged would come in future phases of the development.

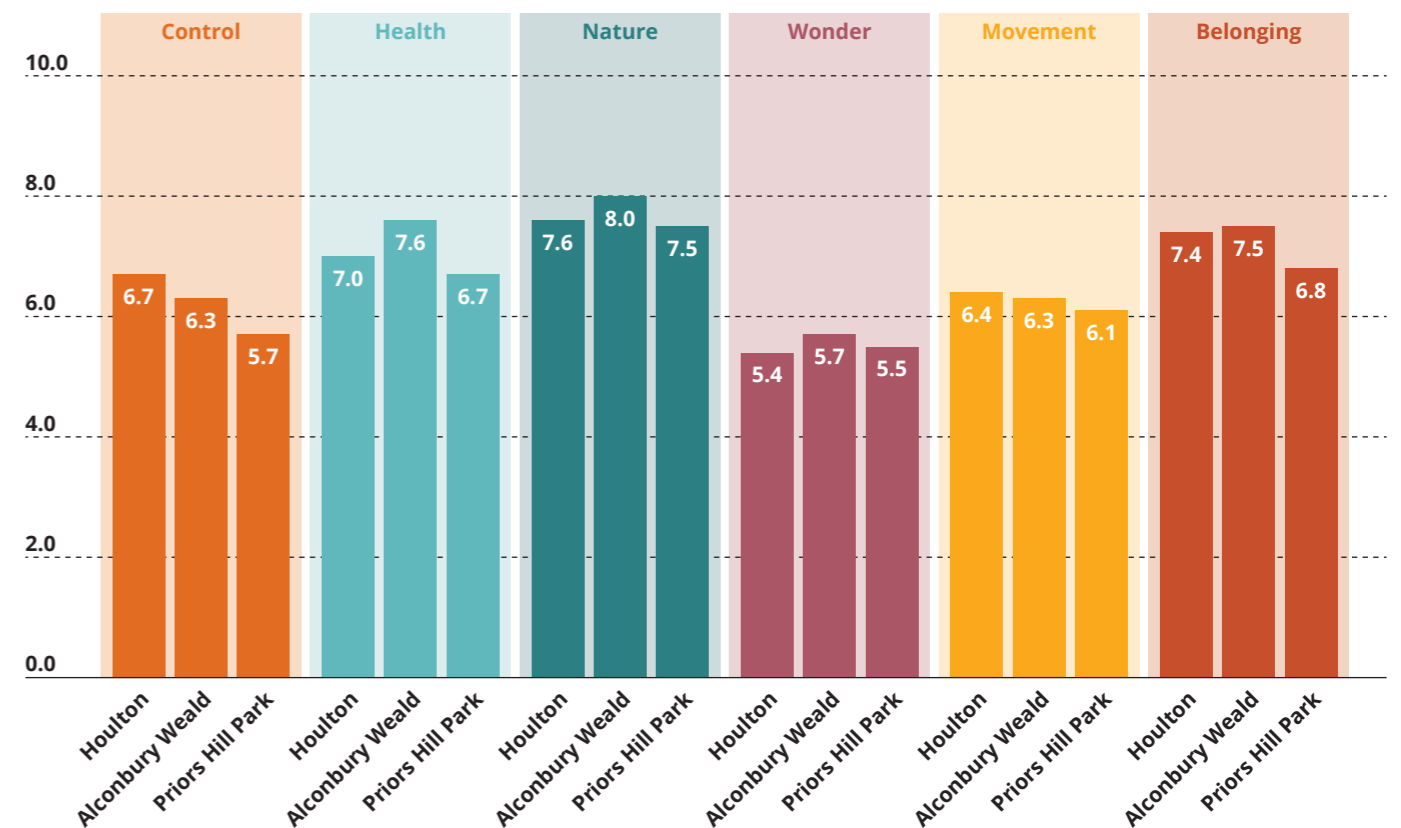


Figure 3.1.1: Urban&Civic sites' Quality of Life performance



Figure 3.2.1: Houlton delivers a mix of housing types, with some units delivered by Urban&Civic using recycled and prefabricated materials

## Houlton

### Site description

Houlton is a new out-of-town development built on the south-eastern edge of Rugby, Warwickshire. With an estimated total of 6,200 homes to be delivered at completion, this site presents a strong image of

aspirational living, with striking branding deployed in and around Rugby and on its website. The first residents moved into Houlton at the end of 2017, and its community has been growing ever since.

### Survey process and methodology

To begin, we carried out desk research to map Houlton and understand its social and geographical context. We then visited Houlton in November 2021 and interviewed three local residents. The online survey via the Commonplace platform launched the week of 7th October and ran until 17th December 2021. We used a door

drop campaign to recruit residents for the survey, distributing flyers to residents with information about the survey and a QR code to access it. In total, 25.3% of residents responded to the survey, which is the highest response rate we achieved across the three Urban&Civic sites.

### Key findings

Houlton is a place where residents enjoy a range of shared green spaces, trails and paths, and safe walking and cycling routes, and 87% of respondents said they were satisfied living there. Residents felt that Houlton had a unique character because of its layout, architecture, abundant green spaces and a strong sense of community. Moreover, 92% of survey respondents reported satisfaction with their homes, citing the interior layouts of their homes as well as the style and character of their designs as aspects they particularly liked. To improve their quality of life in Houlton, residents suggested that more leisure facilities for teenagers and young adults would be helpful, particularly as most of these were geared towards families with young children.

### Health

For the most part, residents felt that their home environments – taking into consideration factors like daylight, ventilation, indoor air quality and spaciousness – positively affected their wellbeing. Of the 55% of respondents who agreed that their home environment had an impact on their wellbeing, 79% characterised it as positive or very positive. In addition to healthy home environments, 79% of residents said Houlton had good air quality (see Figure 3.2.2).

At the same time, residents expressed dissatisfaction with the sports facilities in the local area (see Figure 3.2.3) and requested more easily accessible football pitches and outdoor gyms. Residents also felt like the area could benefit from more spaces for the currently underserved teenage and young adult population, as well as a GP and dental surgery.



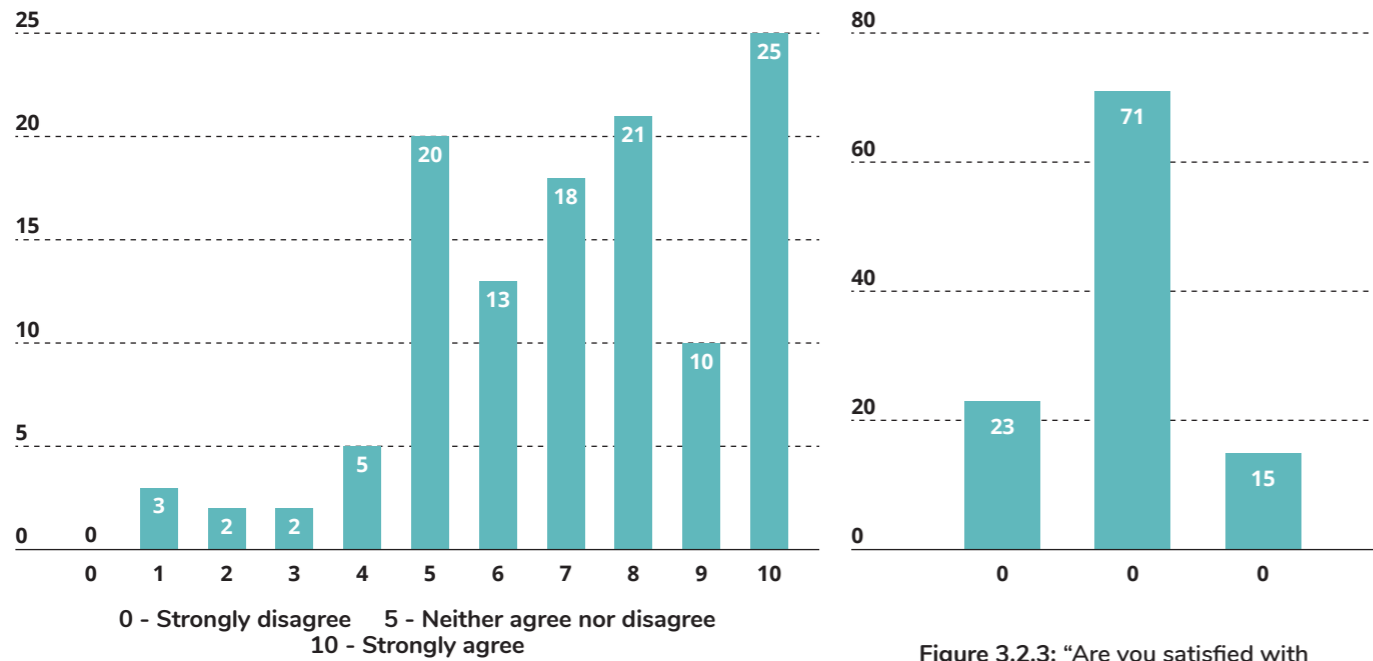


Figure 3.2.2: "The air is clean in Houlton."

Figure 3.2.3: "Are you satisfied with the quality of exercise and sports facilities in your neighbourhood?"

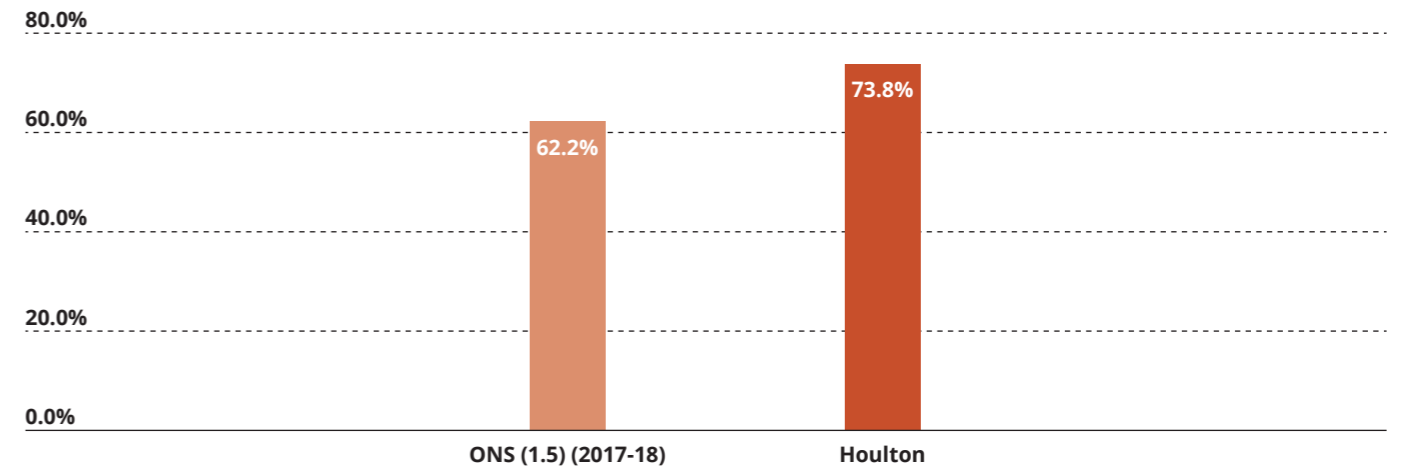


Figure 3.2.4: "Do you regularly stop and talk with people in your neighbourhood?"

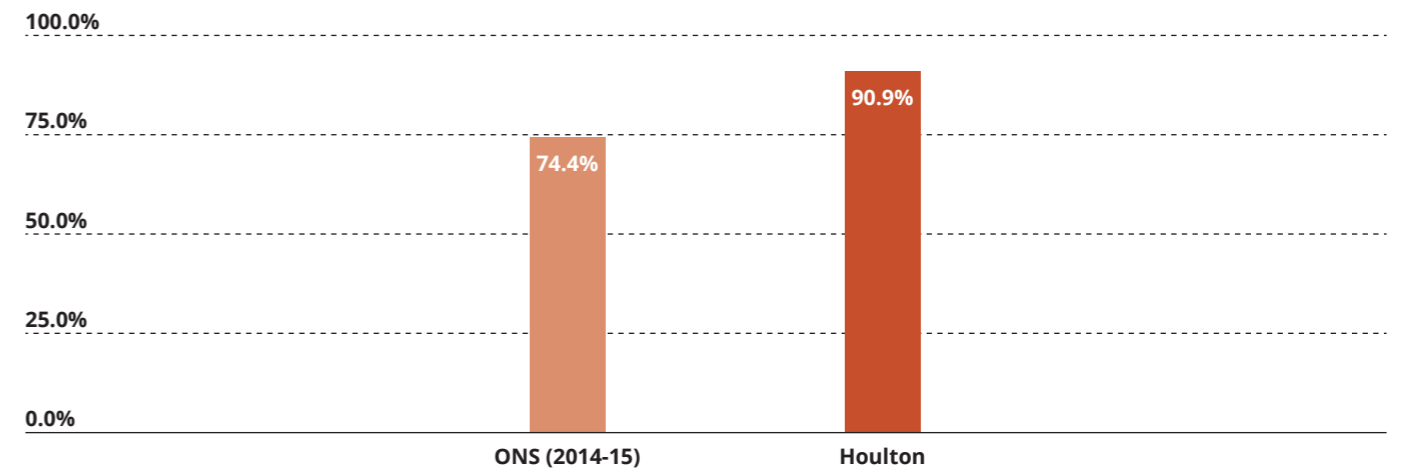


Figure 3.2.5: "People around Houlton are willing to help their neighbours."

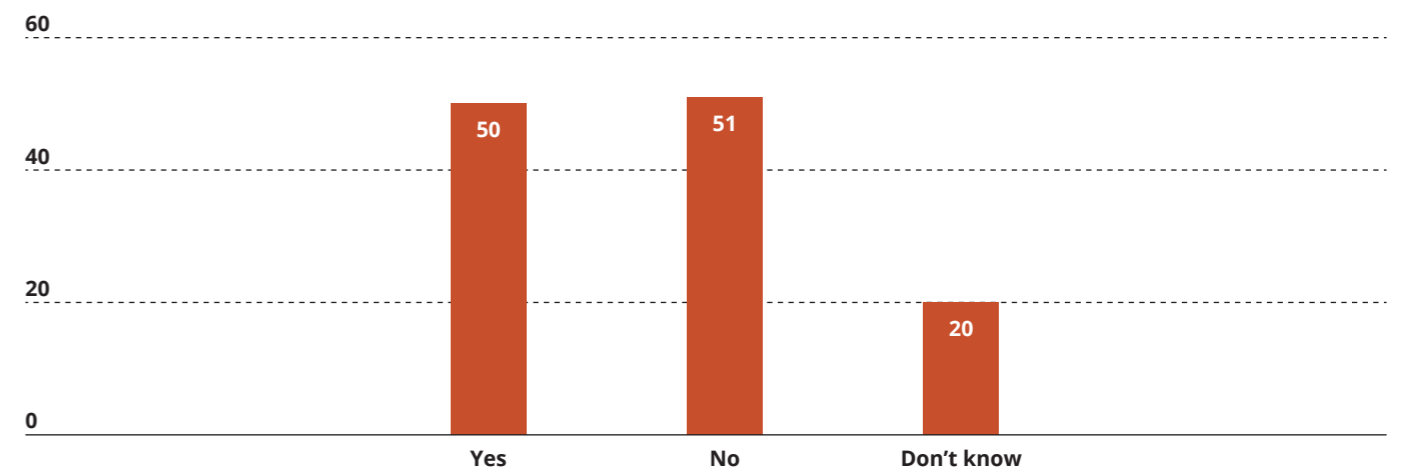


Figure 3.2.6: "Are you satisfied with the quality of community spaces and facilities in your neighbourhood?"

### Community/Belonging

Houlton performed particularly strongly when it came to a sense of community. On all national metrics, Houlton ranked higher in terms of levels of community engagement and belonging. For example, as Figure 3.2.4 shows, Houlton residents were more likely to regularly stop and talk to their neighbours compared to ONS averages for England and Wales.

Houlton residents were also more likely than others in England and Wales to say that people in the area were willing to help their neighbours (see Figure 3.2.5).

However, residents had mixed feelings about the current provision of community spaces and places to meet others in Houlton (Figure 3.2.6). They identified a need for a broader range of choices, a bigger community space, as well as additional parks to help ease the busier ones. For example, one resident said: "Need somewhere central to meet with friends/

neighbours other than The Turning Fork or Barn." Another resident said: "Bigger main park for the size of development and facilities for older children/teens."

It is clear that the existing infrastructure and services in Houlton are well used by local people, to the point where those from beyond the boundary of the development are also using the spaces. The high demand reflects both the quality and necessity of the parks and play facilities in Houlton, as well as the need for more facilities, especially as the area grows.





Figure 3.3.1: Alconbury Weald's strong focus on the history of the site as a former army base has been central in the design and marketing for the development.

## Alconbury Weald

### Site description

Alconbury Weald is a new development in Huntingdonshire that is over 1,425 acres. The closest town is Huntingdon, and Peterborough and

Cambridge are also nearby. Over the next 15 to 20 years, Alconbury Weald will deliver 5,000 new homes.

### Survey process and methodology

We started by doing desk research, including mapping Alconbury Weald to understand its context. We then visited the area in November 2021 and interviewed three local residents. The online survey via the Commonplace platform ran from the week of 18th October to the week

of 17th December 2021. We liaised with Urban&Civic to encourage residents to complete the survey by distributing flyers and social media posts with QR codes and links to the survey website. In total, 20.6% of residents responded, with 99 respondents and 103 contributions.

### Key findings

Overall, residents were satisfied with their homes and with Alconbury Weald as a place to live. Of the respondents, 89% reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their local area, citing the abundant open and green spaces, the spaciousness of the estate and homes, as well as the strong sense of community as particular aspects they liked. In addition, 93% of residents reported satisfaction with their homes and 89% reported satisfaction with the design of their neighbourhood. They felt that the site's history as a Royal Air Force base, the abundant green spaces and strong sense of neighbourliness made Alconbury Weald a special place to live. Two key ways to enhance the quality of life for Alconbury Weald residents are to tackle car dependency and address residents' concerns around green space maintenance.

### Wonder

Of the three Urban&Civic sites surveyed, Alconbury Weald performed best in the Wonder theme. Most residents tended to agree that they could easily access cultural and leisure amenities nearby (see Figure 3.3.2).

Residents were also more inclined to agree that Alconbury Weald offered people of all ages opportunities to enjoy themselves (see Figure 3.3.3). However, given that the highest number of residents (22 out of 95) responded with 5 (neutral), it is worth exploring this to further understand residents' thoughts on the intergenerational provision at Alconbury Weald.

Several residents commented on the need for more parks and facilities for older children and teenagers, as well as more adult provision, like benches and woodland walks. These suggestions can be incorporated into future phases of development.



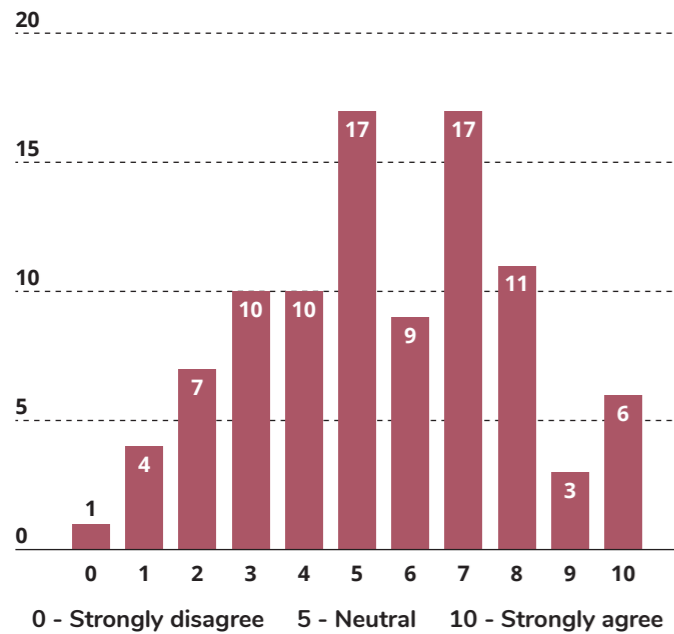


Figure 3.3.2: "I can easily visit a range of cultural and leisure amenities from home."

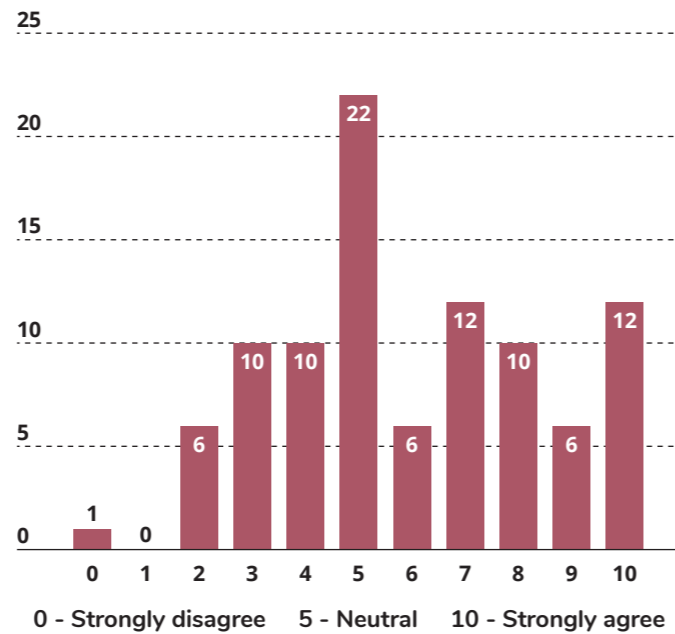


Figure 3.3.3: "Alconbury Weald offers people of all ages opportunities to enjoy themselves."

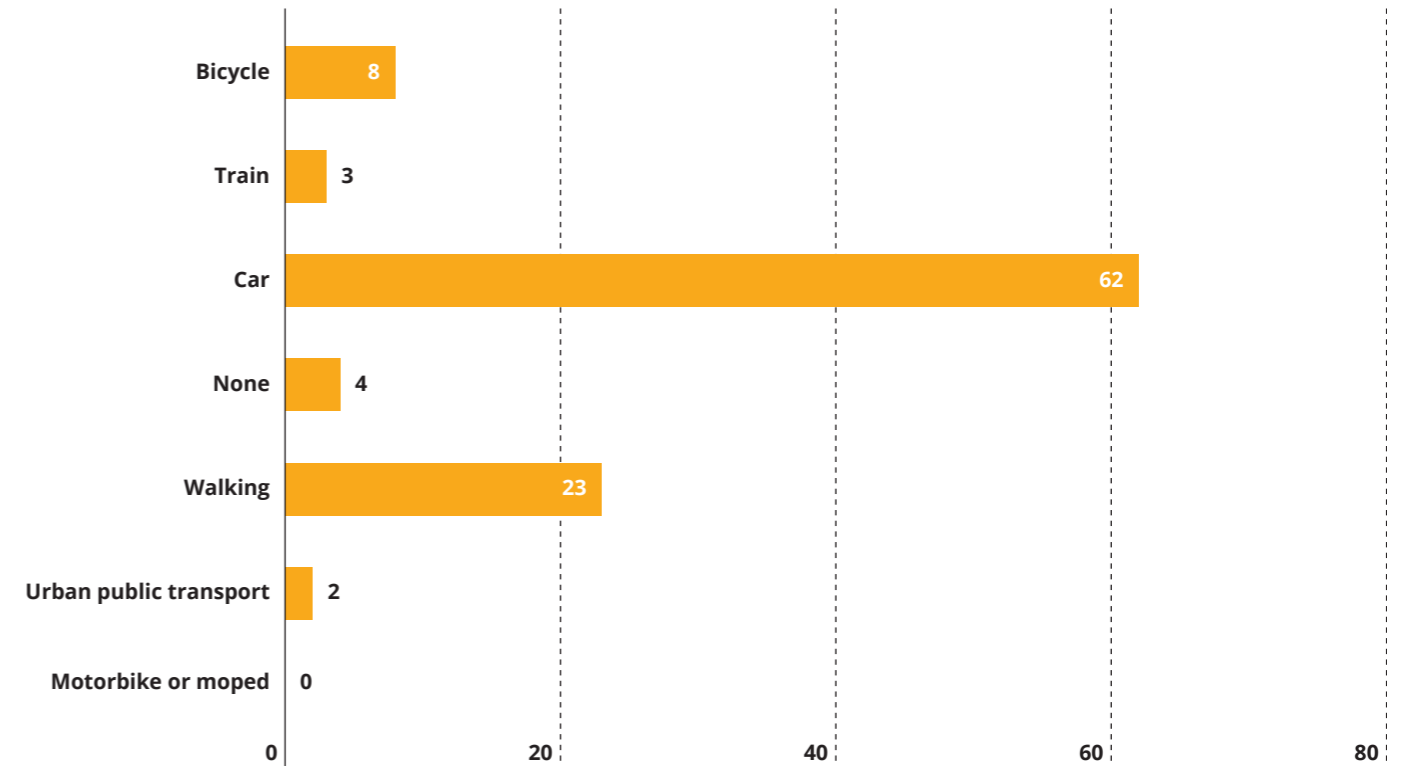


Figure 3.3.4: On a typical day, which mode of transport do you use most often?

### Movement

Most Alconbury Weald residents reported relying on driving as their main mode of transport (see Figure 3.3.4). Most residents also characterised Alconbury Weald as car-dominated and expressed demand for more public transport options. In particular, residents wanted more public transport links to Cambridge and more local bus services. Since we conducted our Resident Review in Alconbury Weald, an additional bus service has been added, in response to residents' needs.

Given residents' broad support for reducing car dependency in the local area, it is important to consider measures to promote walking and cycling in the three forthcoming commercial centres at Alconbury Weald. Fortunately, many walking, cycling and public transport measures are part of the ongoing development plans, and so sustainable and active travel options should improve as the area continues to grow.

While residents felt they could safely walk and cycle in Alconbury Weald (see Figure 3.3.5), they also felt that the area could benefit from improved walking and cycling infrastructure. For example, one resident said: "A safe cycle route to Huntingdon would make a big difference." Another said: "I would also like to see some dedicated, off-road, off-pavement cycle ways that connect to St. Ives and Peterborough."

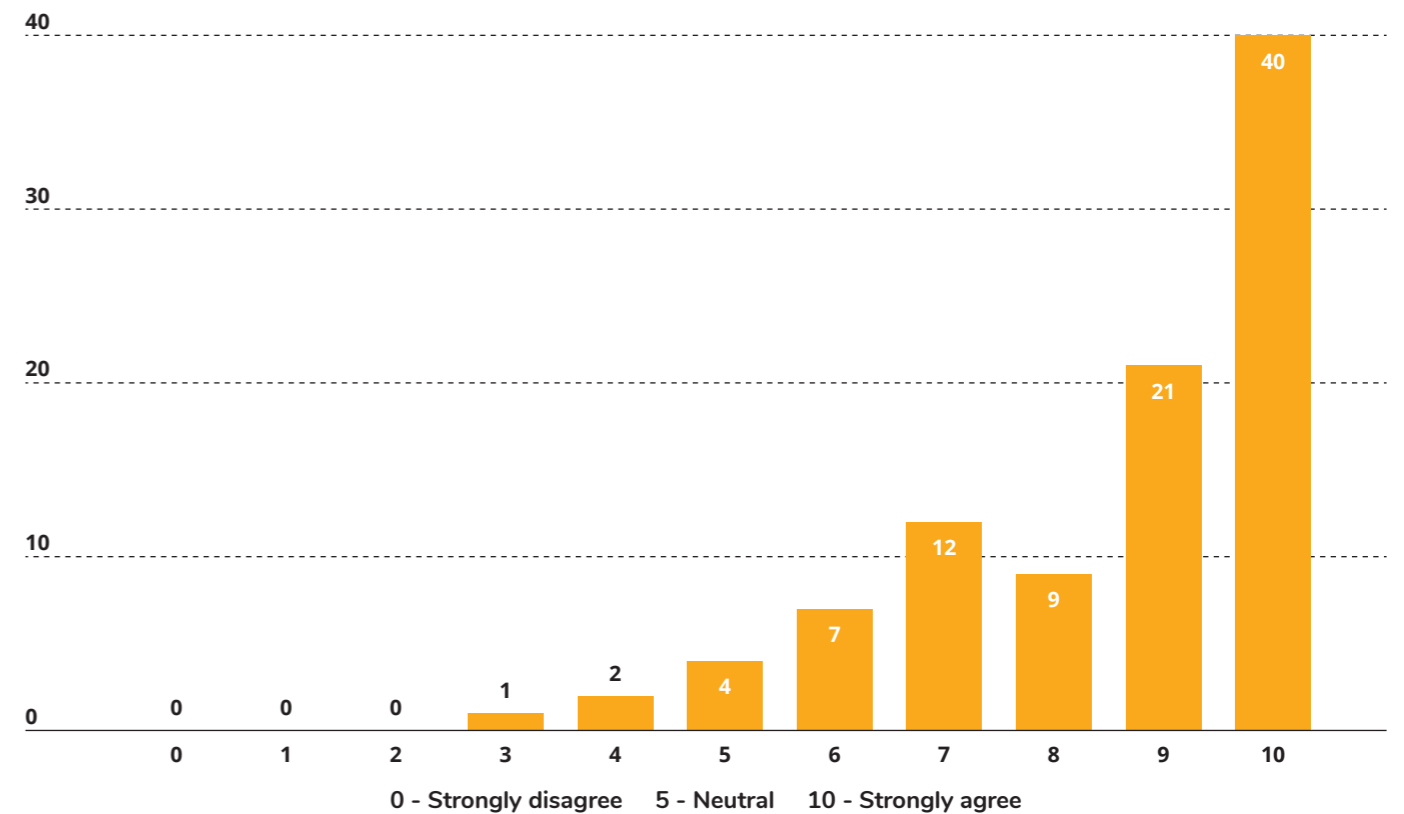


Figure 3.3.5: "I can walk and cycle safely in Alconbury Weald."



Figure 3.4.1: Priors Hall Park boasts a broad range of diverse wildlife, with streets and roads named after birds that can be found in the area

## Priors Hall Park

### Site description

Priors Hall Park is a new development in Corby, Northamptonshire, that is set within 907 acres of parkland. Over the

next 10 to 15 years, the development will deliver 5,095 new homes.

### Survey process and methodology

Our first step consisted of desk research, carefully mapping Priors Hall Park to understand its context, then researching and reaching out to community groups. We then visited the site in November 2021 and had in-depth conversations with three local residents. The online residents' survey was carried out via the Commonplace platform which ran from

the week of w/c 18th October to the week of 17th December 2021. We liaised with Urban&Civic to encourage residents to complete the survey by distributing flyers and social media posts with QR codes and links to the survey website. The survey response rate was 16.7%, with 167 respondents and 174 contributions.

### Key findings

Priors Hall Park residents were largely satisfied with their homes and local area, with 74% of survey respondents reporting satisfaction with the local area. Residents cited the green spaces and strong sense of community as two of their favourite things about living in Priors Hall Park. Moreover, 87% of residents reported satisfaction with their homes. Despite overall positive views on their homes and local area, residents did identify some areas for improvement, particularly around ongoing building work, parking issues and inadequate amenities. For example, residents said that a pub, restaurant, gym and swimming pool would be useful additions to the local area. Young people also wanted to get more involved in their local area but felt there were not enough opportunities to do so.

### Control

Most residents thought that the cost of living at Priors Hall Park was affordable (see Figure 3.4.1) and envisioned living in the area for the long term (five years or more).

Residents, especially women, experienced higher levels of safety compared to the average for England and Wales (see Figure 3.4.2). Young people also felt that Priors Hall Park was safer than other places.

However, most residents did not experience high levels of perceived influence over local decision-making. The survey showed that 57.6% of Priors Hall Park residents felt they could not influence decisions affecting the local area, while just 23% agreed and 19.4% neither agreed nor disagreed. Compared to the ONS averages for England and Wales, Priors Hall Park residents were slightly less likely to feel they could influence decisions affecting their local area (see Figure 3.4.3).

Residents expressed a need for more opportunities to get involved with local community projects and decision-making, as well as better communication of those opportunities.



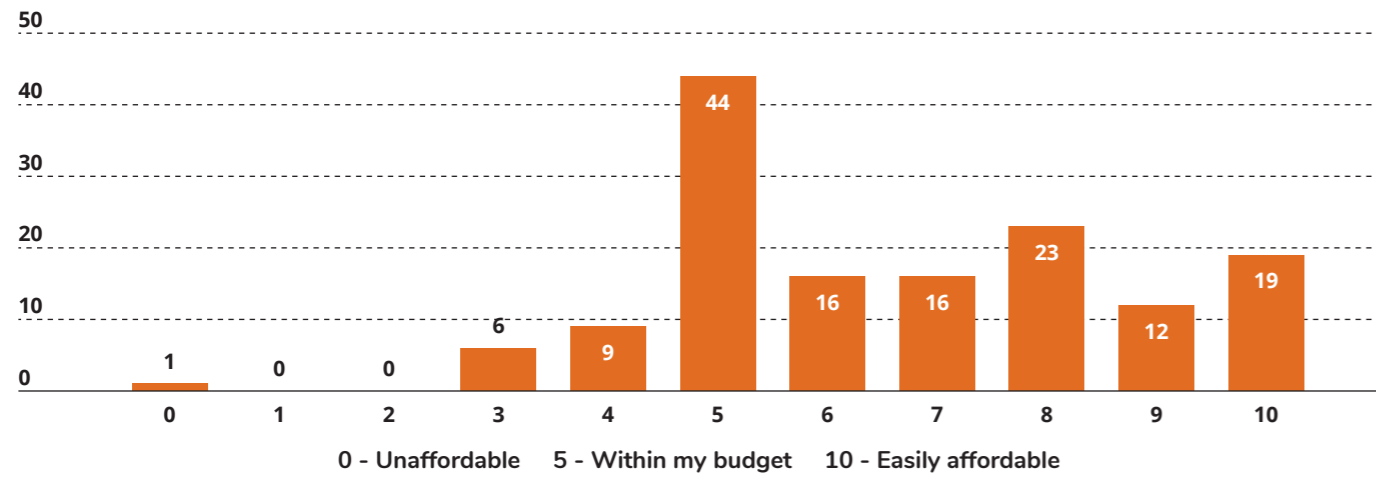


Figure 3.4.2: How affordable is the cost of living in your home?

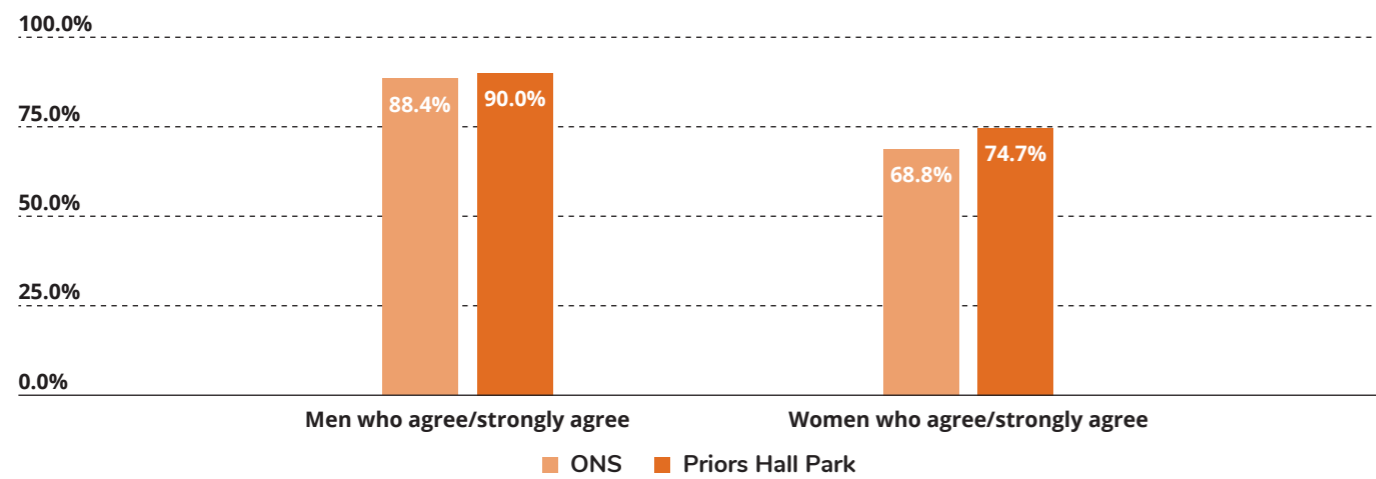


Figure 3.4.3: "I feel safe walking around my area after dark."

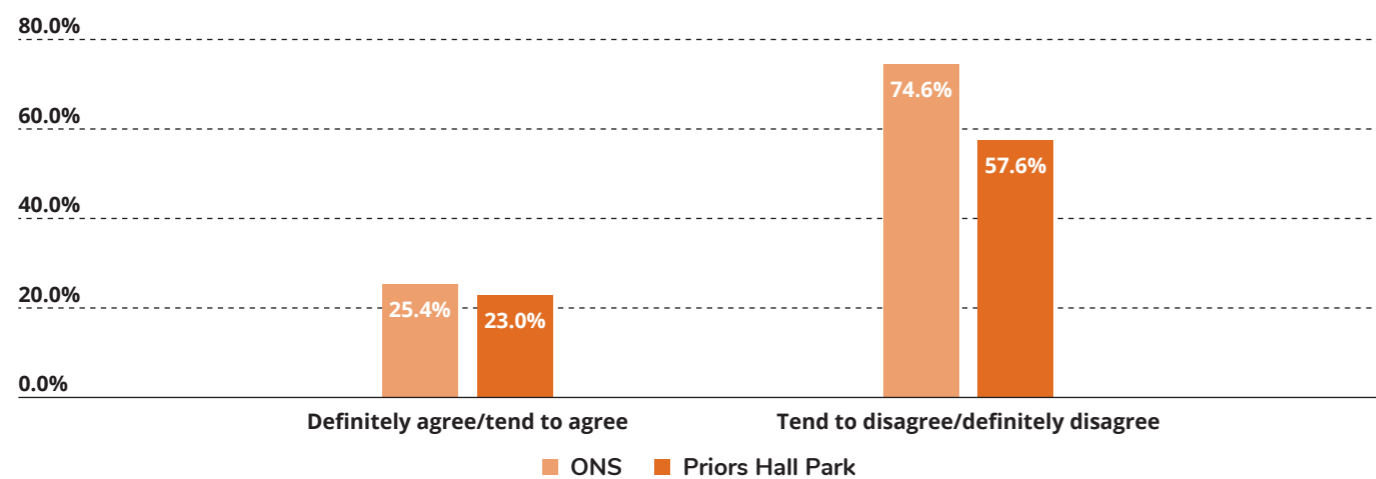


Figure 3.4.4: "I can influence decisions affecting my local area."

### Nature

According to the majority of residents, Priors Hall Park had a range of quality green spaces nearby where people could connect with nature (see Figures 3.4.4 and 3.4.5). The survey showed that 66% of residents were happy with the standard of green space in the local area, and several said they enjoyed the nice view of the valley and parks.

Most residents also enjoyed access to private outdoor space, like a garden or balcony, which they appreciated. However, they flagged up a need for better maintenance of green spaces, as well as a more even distribution of green spaces across the estate, given the north part seemed deprived of these compared to the south.

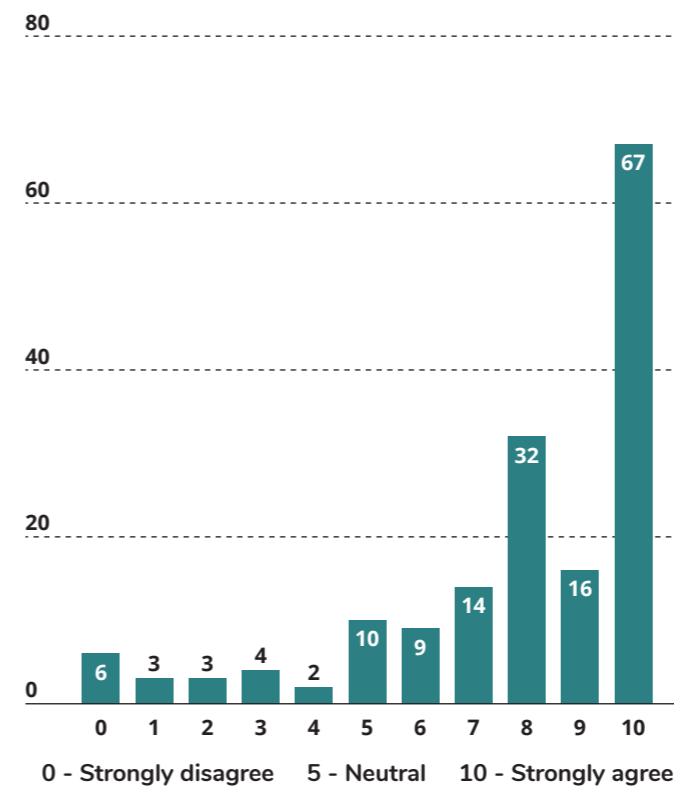


Figure 3.4.5: "I have access to an adequate amount of public or shared green space close to my home."

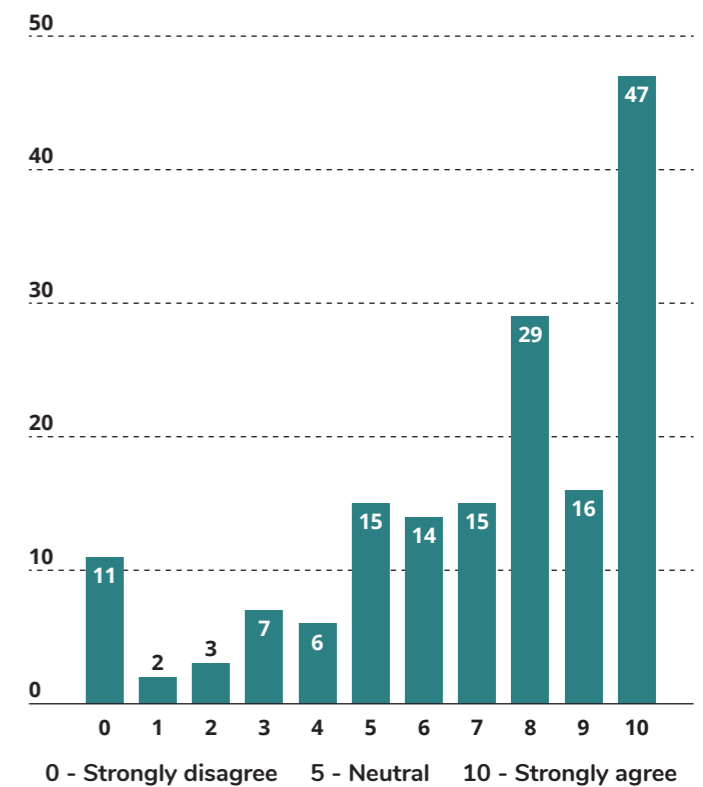


Figure 3.4.6: "I think there is a good mix of different kinds of green space close to my home."



# What's next?

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Conducting Resident Review pilots in seven sites has taught us valuable lessons on what works well and what needs improvement. For our resident engagement strategy in the future. We are:

## 1. Improving benchmarking

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We will continue to carry out Resident Review across various contexts to build a repository of case studies to support our ongoing and future benchmarking efforts, therefore continuing to improve and refine our comparative analysis. To enable benchmarking amongst developers, we will provide a sliding scale to rate each site against the average (anonymised) score for similar sites. To strengthen our

benchmarking with national averages, we will refine the survey to include more comparable data points throughout the six themes in the framework, drawing from ONS and other national surveys. In addition, we will refine our scoring methodology and gradation to better measure a site's performance against each of the six themes in the framework.

## 2. Formalising desk research and site visits

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We will further develop and refine our resident engagement methods to accommodate more in-depth data collection and analysis. This will entail more in-depth desk research prior to resident engagement, including socio-demographic profiling of sites to build a more accurate profile of residents. This will give us a more robust baseline for comparison with respondent data. Moreover, we

devote more time to masterplan analysis to gain a better sense of the site and residents' potential future needs. Finally, we envision delving deeper into resident survey responses through follow-up semi-structured interviews with residents, as well as focus groups, including those that explore specific themes (e.g. the provision of intergenerational activities and facilities).

## 3. Modifying the digital platform

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In order to improve our demographic data collection and baseline core data capture, we will amend our online survey rollout so that it takes place over an extended period of time and in stages. Benchmarking questions will come at the beginning, followed by demographic questions and

themes and subsets of the surveys will be rolled out in subsequent stages. This will help to ensure continuous engagement with residents and give them a sense that Resident Review is more of an ongoing conversation, rather than a one-off survey.

## 4. Carrying out more face-to-face interviews

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We aim to increase face-to-face engagement with residents to collect more in-depth data in future projects. This includes, for example, planning to attend community events or setting up at a community hub. Going forward, we will also adapt our engagement timelines based on the weather and time of year, as both affect participation rates. To engage

groups less likely to respond via the online survey, we will develop a tailored face-to-face engagement strategy. This will include creating a runway of promotions and updates to alert residents to our upcoming face-to-face visits and preparing a shorter version of the survey to carry out in shorter face-to-face encounters.

## 5. Reviewing the same site 2 years later

---

We will aim to carry out another round of Resident Review surveys in each site in two years to build on this research and understand changes in residents' experiences, as sites continue to develop.

We will also improve our feedback loop with communities, reporting back to local people what we have heard from them and how developers have taken their views into consideration.

## 6. Looking at smaller sites and single buildings

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We have received many enquiries from organisations that don't do masterplans but who are still interested in how their buildings affect the quality of life of their residents. That's why beginning autumn 2023, we will be piloting a

new methodology that looks at smaller sites and single buildings, talking with people who use cross-laminated timber buildings, then residents in build-to-rent accommodation and finally student accommodation. Watch this space...

## 7. Developing further services

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Resident Review is just the first of a number of services that we are developing as part of our mission to create greater accountability in the housing industry and encourage more sustainable models of development.

### Quality of Life Mapping

Quality of Life Mapping is a map-based and hybrid approach to community engagement, which takes place online and face-to-face through community spaces, pop-ups and urban rooms. Our first project is with Harlow & Gilston Garden Town and is funded through the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Proptech 2 fund. The project was born out of the CCQOL (Community Consultation for Quality of Life) project, with pilots in Reading, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast.

### Quality of Life Strategy 'Review'

The Quality of Life Strategy 'Review' embeds quality of life as a critical

objective in each project as early as possible. It provides developers and local authorities with a practical toolkit of tangible actions for wellbeing, as well as a Quality of Life statement to demonstrate their commitment to long term outcomes to both residents and the local authority planners.

### Quality of Life Training

To learn more about how to raise wellbeing and quality of life through the built environment, we are now running training sessions for local authorities. Taking an interdepartmental approach so often lacking in local authority training, we involve the politicians, as well as specialists from planning, public health, housing and transport, to give a strategic approach to health and wellbeing.

If you share our vision of a housing system that improves people's health and wellbeing over the long term, get in touch.

[mail@qolf.org](mailto:mail@qolf.org)

Let's build quality of life together.

With thanks to our funders and core partners:

