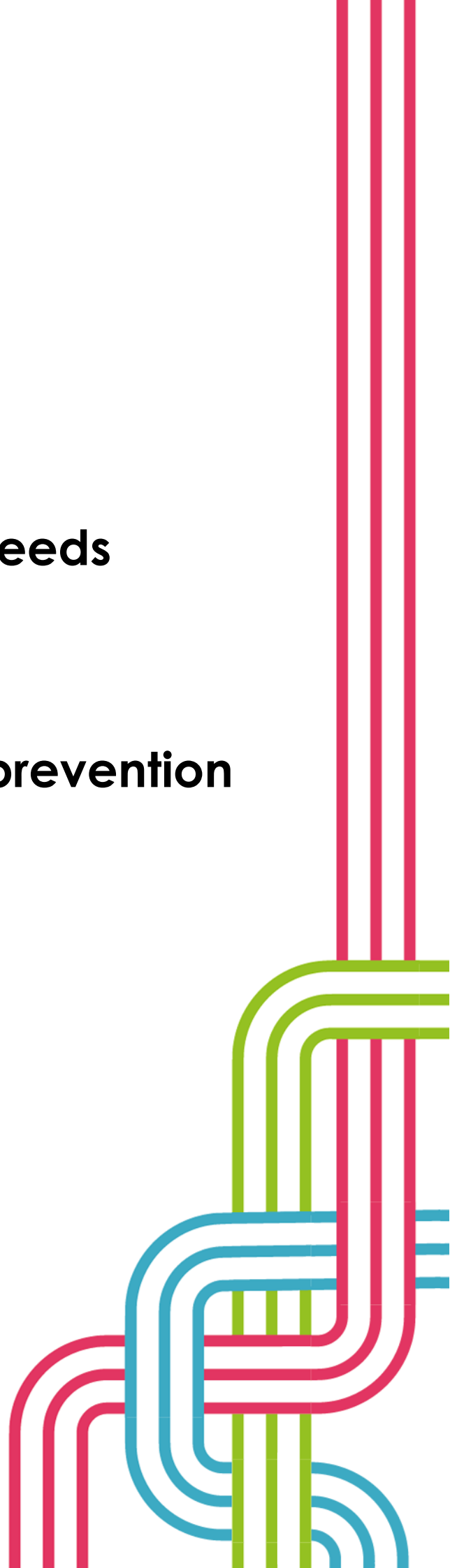


Housing and Health Needs Assessment

Unsafe housing (and prevention and planning)

Suffolk 2024



What does the H&HNA tell us about unsafe housing in Suffolk?

<p>Key section information:</p> <p>The English Housing Survey measures housing conditions against the Decent Homes Standard in England. Private rented properties are more likely to be non-decent compared to other tenures. Dampness and overcrowding also disproportionately affect private rentals and contribute to poor conditions.</p> <p>There is a link between poor energy efficiency and non-decent homes, with over half of the least efficient homes failing to meet the standard.</p> <p>Poor quality housing ultimately costs the NHS - building hazards alone account for £1.4 billion per year in treatment costs nationally. Tackling these issues through refurbishment could generate significant savings for health services and wider economic benefits.</p>	<p>Key section statistics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is estimated that around 48,700 households in Suffolk (14.6%) fail to meet the Decent Homes Standard. • Issues are more prevalent in the private rented sector, where around 21% of homes are non-decent, compared to 10-14% in other tenures. • In Suffolk, 161 private rented sector and 87 local authority homes were classified as non-decent in 2022/23.
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Unsafe housing

English Housing Survey/Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

The English Housing Survey is a national survey of the condition and energy efficiency of housing in England. The survey determines how many homes meet the Decent Homes Standard, have HHSRS Category 1 hazards, or have problems with damp. The system contributes to the 'Decent Home Standard' – to be considered 'decent' under the standard, a home must:

- meet the statutory minimum standard for housing (HHSRS) – homes with a Category 1 hazard (excess cold, falls hazards) are considered non-decent
- provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort
- be in a reasonable state of repair
- have reasonably modern facilities and services²⁹

29 total hazards fall into three categories:

1. physiological requirements (hygrothermal conditions): ranging from damp and mould, excess cold/heat, asbestos, lead, radiation, carbon monoxide etc
2. physiological requirements (space, security, light, and noise): crowding and space, entry by intruders, lighting, noise
3. protection against accidents: falls associated with baths, on level surfaces and stairs, electrical hazards, fire, collision and entrapment, structural collapse etc

More information on the hazards included in the HHSRS and their health effects, causes, preventative measures and hazard assessment are available from the [Housing Health and Safety Rating System: Guidance for Landlords and Property Related Professionals](#).

The English Housing Survey 2022/23 explores the variation of each of these measures by different household characteristics: the presence of dependent children, older people, and someone with a long-term illness or disability in the household, the ethnicity and employment status, whether the household is in receipt of housing support, and if the household is overcrowded.

To conduct this analysis, national estimates from the English Housing Survey have been applied to Suffolk's housing stock to provide modelled estimates of the number of affected properties in Suffolk.

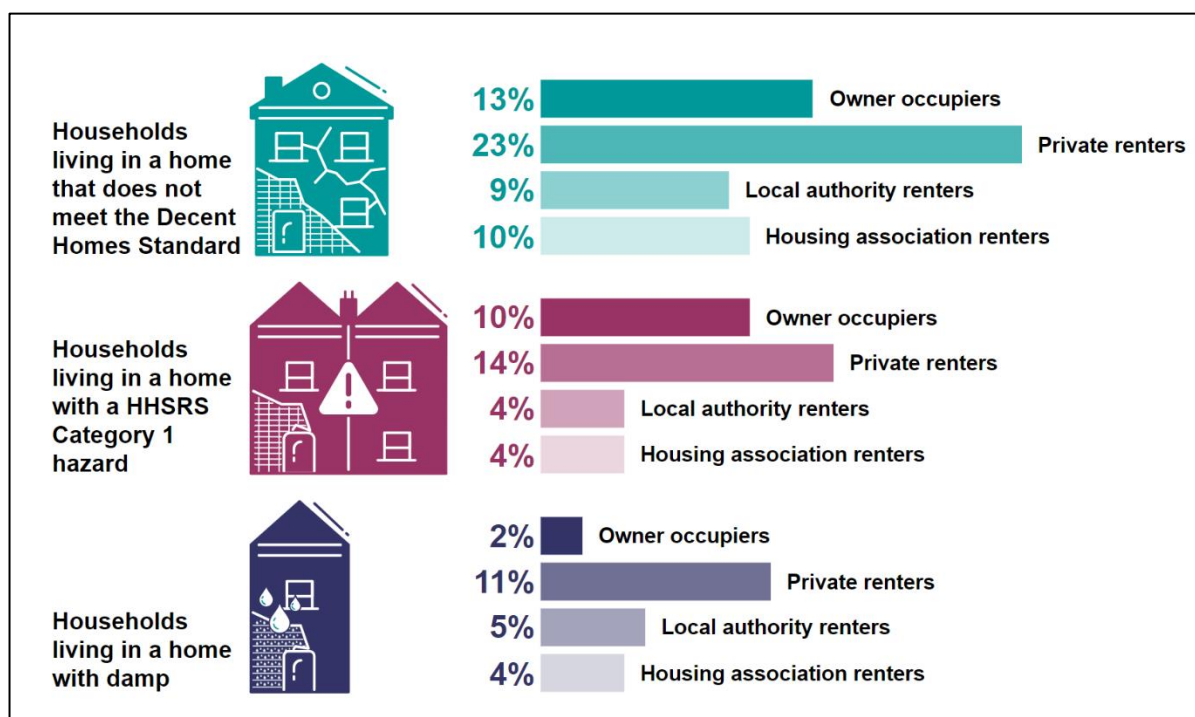
- 14.6% of households in England live in a home that fails the Decent Homes Standard. This roughly equates to 48,700 households in Suffolk.

This varies significantly by tenure, with over 1 in 5 of private rented households (21.1%) living in a home that fails to meet the Decent Homes Standard, higher than owner occupiers (13.7%), local authority renters (11.3%), and housing association renters (9.9%)¹⁸³. Applied to Suffolk, this many households can be estimated to be non-decent:

- 29,865 owner occupied households (13.7% of 217,975)
- 13,255 private rented households (21.1% of 62,816)
- 2,650 housing association rented households (9.9% of 26,744)
- 2,610 local authority rented households (11.3% of 23,100)

Dampness disproportionately impacts private rented homes, where 9.0% of households experience damp - significantly higher than other tenure types. In comparison, only 2.3% of owner-occupied properties deal with damp. Social sector households also have higher rates of damp than owner occupied households, though lower than private rentals, with 7.0% for local authority renters and 4.3% for housing association renters¹⁸⁴.

Figure 37. Infographic of poor-quality housing by tenure in England, 2021/22

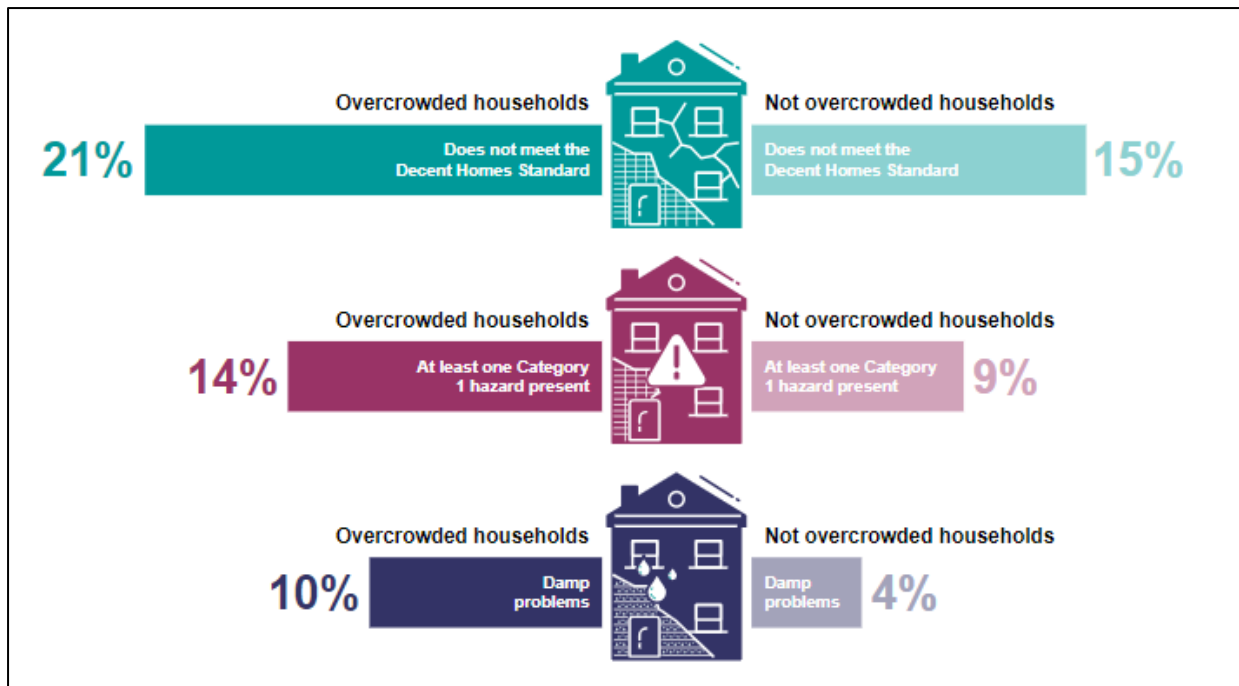


Source: [English Housing Survey 2021 to 2022 \(July 2023 release\)](#)

Overcrowded households in England face greater housing quality issues compared to non-overcrowded households. 21% of overcrowded homes fail to meet the Decent Homes Standard, versus only 15% of non-overcrowded households. Data from the 2021 census states that 2.1% (6,888) of Suffolk residents in Suffolk households live in overcrowded housing. We can therefore estimate that 1,445 Suffolk residents are living in overcrowded, non-decent homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard.

Overcrowded homes are more likely to have Category 1 hazards as rated by the HHSRS, occurring in 9% of these households, compared to just 4% of non-overcrowded households. Dampness is also more prevalent in crowded living spaces, affecting 10% of overcrowded properties compared to only 4% of those not overcrowded¹⁸⁴.

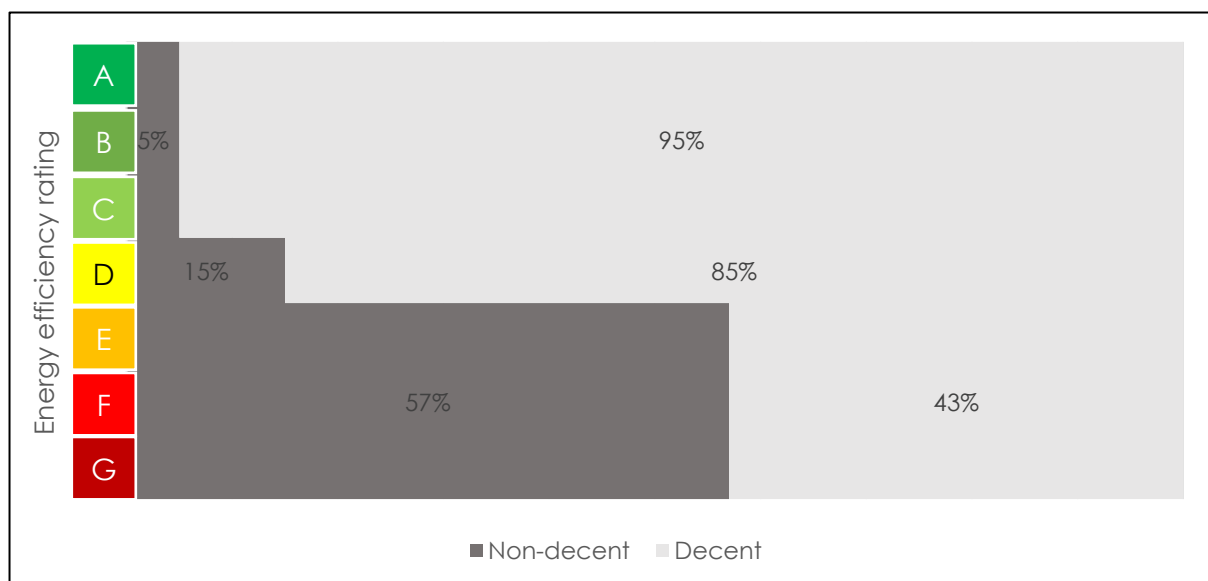
Figure 38. Infographic of poor-quality housing in England by overcrowded status, 2021/22



Source: [English Housing Survey 2021 to 2022 \(July 2023 release\)](#)

Energy efficiency and housing quality share a strong relationship. Over half of homes with poor energy efficiency in England do not meet the Decent Homes Standard. Between 2021/22, 57% of homes with an energy efficiency rating (EPC) of E to G did not meet the Decent Homes Standard. Only 5% of homes with EPC A to C did not meet the standard, and 15% with EPC D did not meet the Decent Homes Standard¹⁸⁴.

Figure 39. Proportion of decent and non-decent homes in England, based on grouped energy efficiency rating (EPC), 2021/22



Source: [English Housing Survey 2021 to 2022 \(July 2023 release\)](#)

According to the Local Authority Housing Statistics dataset for England 2022-23, in Suffolk there were 19,206 local authority owned dwellings, distributed accordingly:

- Babergh: 3,501
- East Suffolk: 4,455
- Ipswich: 7,926
- Mid Suffolk: 3,269
- West Suffolk: 55

Of those 19,206 local authority owned dwellings in 2022/23, 87 (0.5%) were non-decent on the 31st of March 2023¹⁸⁵. Compared to England, 6.0% of local authority owned dwellings are classified as non-decent in 2022/23.

While Suffolk's percentage of local authority owned, non-decent housing stock is lower than the England average, the proportion has also decreased in Suffolk since 2014/15. In 2014/15, 1.3% (252 of 19,311 local authority owned dwellings on 1st April 2015) were classified as non-decent in Suffolk¹⁸⁶, 0.8 percentage points higher than the value in 2022/23.

In 2022/23 in Suffolk, a total of 161 properties in the private rented sector were found to have one or more Category 1 hazards upon inspection¹⁸⁵.

Based on the available information on loans, grants and other assistance provided by local authorities on housing during 2022-23, in Suffolk, 321 local authority owned dwellings were improved¹⁸⁵.

Cost of poor housing

Building Research England (BRE) estimate poor housing in England costs the NHS £1.4billion a year in treatment bills alone. The research combined existing data from the 2018 English Housing Survey on health and safety hazards in the home, with NHS treatment cost figures. An estimated 2.6million homes (11% of all housing in England) contain at least one category one hazard.

Of the £1.4 billion, £857million each year can be attributed to housing defects exposing residents to excess cold. Falls on stairs, on the same level, and between stairs account for £374million annually – particularly dangerous for the most vulnerable such as older people and families with young children.

Table 7. Top 5 'category one hazards' found in homes in England

'Category 1' Hazard	Number recorded	Annual cost to NHS	Total cost to mitigate hazard	Payback (years)	Annual savings to society if hazard mitigated
Excess cold	836,000	£857 million	£6 billion	7	£15.3 billion
Falls on stairs	1,048,000	£219 million	£1.3 billion	6	£1.7 billion
Falls on the level	410,000	£104 million	£350 million	3	£258 million
Falls between stairs	181,000	£51 million	£229 million	4	£280 million

Dampness	75,000	£38 million	£269 million	7	£96 million
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Source: [BRE report finds poor housing is costing NHS £1.4bn a year](#)

Prevention and planning

The connection between the environment and health is well known, however current systems still permit the environment to be developed in ways likely to harm health¹⁸⁷, for example, polluting industrial facilities constructed close to residential areas which can directly expose residents to harmful air and noise pollution.

Planning in local governments can help to shape the natural and built environment which can contribute to positive health outcomes through green spaces, housing, transport, and town centres¹⁸⁸. Improving health and wellbeing is a requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the UK government's policies for planning in England. Point 8 focuses on promoting healthy and safe communities. It states that planning policies and decisions should help create inclusive, healthy, and safe places. This includes enabling social interaction through mixed-use developments, neighbourhood centres, and pedestrian/cycling routes.

Places should be safe and accessible, so crime does not undermine quality of life. This can be achieved through attractive, clear pedestrian/cycling routes and quality public spaces. Planning should also enable and support healthy lifestyles by providing green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthy food, allotments and layouts for walking and cycling. The framework aims to use planning to create communities that are socially connected, safe, and promote health and wellbeing¹⁸⁹.

Within the Building Regulations 2010, Volume 1: Dwellings – clause M4(2) refers to accessible and adaptable dwellings. This section is an optional requirement for access and use of buildings. This requirement states:

- (1) reasonable provision must be made for people to –
 - (a) gain access to; and
 - (b) use, the dwelling and its facilities
- (2) the provision must be sufficient to –
 - (a) meet the needs of occupants with differing needs, including some older or disabled people; and
 - (b) to allow adaptation of the dwelling to meet the changing needs of occupants over time¹⁹⁰

Town and Country Planning Association – Healthy Homes Principles

The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) have produced a set of principles and evidence for producing healthy homes, building on BRE research on the annual cost of unhealthy housing to the NHS. The TCPA has identified 11 Healthy Homes principles that all new homes must provide¹⁹¹:

1. fire safety: homes must be built to be fire safe and exceed Building Safety Regulations to avoid tragedies like the Grenfell Tower fire

2. liveable space: almost 1 in 3 adults nationally have experienced mental or physical health problems due to the condition or lack of space in their home during the Covid-19 pandemic¹⁹²
3. inclusive, accessible, and adaptable: accessible homes are required to ensure the housing stock is sustainable and meets the needs of residents
4. access to natural light: there is a body of evidence that natural light has a positive impact on mental health and circadian sleep cycles
5. cut carbon emissions: with household energy use accounting for 14% of total carbon emissions nationally¹⁹³, homes with poor energy efficiency and insulation contribute to energy insecurity and fuel poverty
6. access to amenities and transport: homes should be designed with access to public transport, schools, local shops, and parks, as well as GPs to support health and wellbeing¹⁹⁴
7. safe from crime
8. climate resilient: homes need to be resilient to heatwaves and flooding and storms, where the vulnerable are worst affected
9. prevent air pollution: impacts of indoor and outdoor air pollution are well known; new homes must minimise air pollution and not contribute to unsafe levels
10. limit light and noise pollution: light and noise pollution can result in an increased risk for cardiovascular disease, sleep disturbance, cognitive impairment, and permanent hearing impairment¹⁹⁵
11. ensure thermal comfort: poor thermal comfort worsens sleep quality and exacerbates cardiac, pulmonary, and respiratory conditions. Poor insulation and limited ventilation mean many homes also overheat in the summer^{196,197}

Suffolk Public Health resource – advice on planning and well-being

Public Health and Communities Suffolk seeks to promote a 'health in all policies' approach to planning policy across Suffolk. The resource recommends the use of a Healthy Urban Planning checklist or Health Impact Assessment to identify key health issues and impacts specific to an area or development, helping developers to maximise the health benefits of a development at an early stage¹⁹⁸. The resource advocates that housing developments can support the health of new residents and existing communities in these ways:

1. active travel
2. air quality
3. housing development and design
4. food and healthy choices
5. quality open space, play and recreation
6. local economy and employment
7. neighbourhood and community spaces

More information is available from [advice on planning and well-being – Suffolk Public Health and Communities \(2022\)](#).

Active Design

Places that provide opportunities for people to lead physically active lives can positively impact people's physical and mental wellbeing. The opposite can also be true, where the design of a place creates barriers making it difficult, unpleasant, or inconvenient for people to be physically active¹⁹⁹.

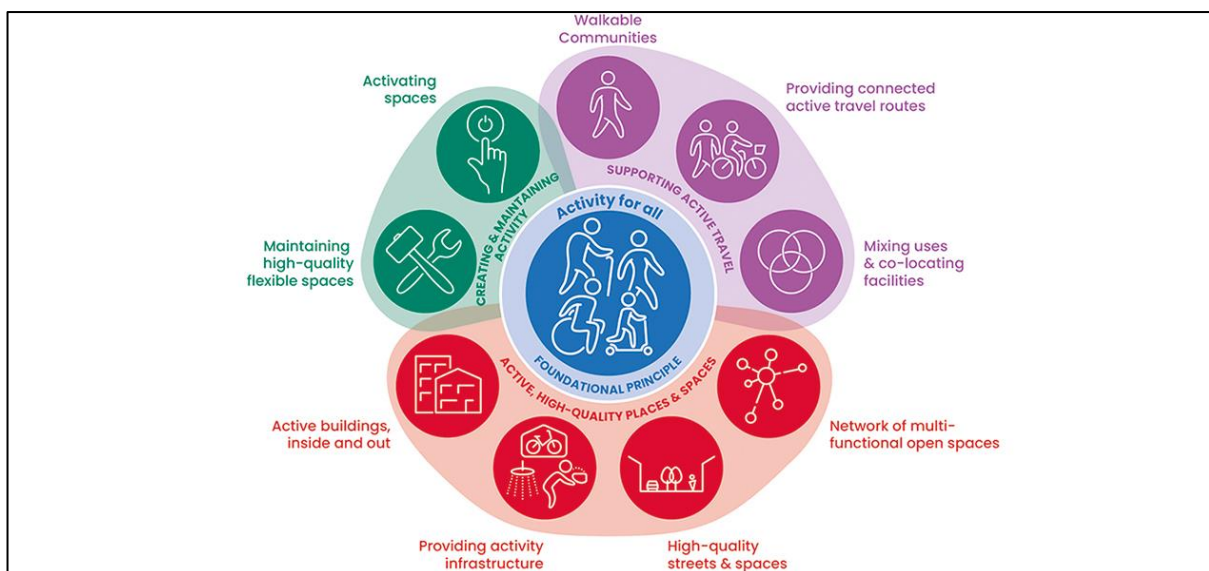
Sport England's Active Design guidance published in May 2023 sets out how the design of our environments can help people to lead more physically active and healthy lives – creating 'active environments'. The guidance has been produced by Sport England, Active Travel England, and the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities.

The guidance is for planners, designers and all involved in delivering and managing places to create and maintain active environments. The foundation principle is 'activity for all' supported by remaining principles grouped by three themes of 'supporting active travel', 'active, high-quality places and spaces', and 'creating and maintaining activity'.

The guide includes a suite of resources including:

- 'applying the principles' illustrative places and in-depth case study examples covering a variety of contexts.
- a checklist to assess development proposals against the 10 principles.
- the Designing for Physical Activity Handbook, providing specific detailed advice relating to the provision of Active Environments¹⁹⁹.

Figure 40. Sport England ten principles of Active Design



Source: [Sport England – Active Design](#)

Building Health Equity – The role of developers

Legal & General, the UCL Institute of Health Equity, and the Quality of Life Foundation have formed a partnership to advance health equity through housing developments across the UK.

The partnership aims to inspire the housing sector to commit to health equity in homes and communities via two objectives: developing practical approaches to improve health equity through housing and building leadership on connecting homes and health.

Initial activities include reviewing evidence on housing and health equity, interviewing stakeholders, and convening a roundtable to catalyse sector commitment to health equity.

Key findings, recommendations, and an action plan will be published in early 2024 to equip the housing sector to construct healthier, more equitable homes and places²⁰⁰.