





2 The role of urban design

Urban design can improve walkability access to positive social contact

But air quality, stressful, unsafe, noisy and littered environment will shape wellbeing

We can predict these spatial patterns accessibility, land use diversity and population density

We can seek to ameliorate this unevenness by increasing connectivity + other interventions

But interventions themselves should be focused



Map of social isolation in Coventry. The 'aggregated isolation indices' were divided into quartiles and mapped to identify hot spots. Red indicates the most vulnerable ISOs and yellow the least vulnerable.

© Coventry District Council (https://www.coventry.gov.uk/media/777333/Appendix1_Social_Isolation_in_Coventry_16.pdf)

2 The role of urban design in limiting spatial isolation and in shaping opportunities for walkability

One of the key messages is the need to take account of the wider spatial context of an intervention. We can after all predict



What questions remain unanswered?

How do we create the sociability and intimacy in public space that welcomes others?

Latest loneliness research emphasises social connection and social support: What interventions work?

Confounding factors

Lack of contact more likely in certain circumstances e.g. depression, poor health, physical immobility, older age
Impact of deprivation on social isolation and mental poor health



Suburban High Street
© Iain Vajoczki and the Adaptive Streets project

Once we start to design interventions, it is important also to take account of the finer scale design of the setting within which they take place. So for example, we have to consider the context within which that intervention is



Government data that provides contextual measures of the environment

Systematic observations Physical decay; Measures of physical or spatial aspects of the public realm

Objective or self-reported amounts of physical or social activities such as walking cycling active travel, recreation walking leisure activities playing or park use

The urban or building characteristics

**as walking cycling active travel, recreation walking leisure activities
playing or park use**

**The urban or building characteristics (eg the project will focus on
local libraries that open onto a high street; or a set of rural villages
with a one way bus route; or blocks of flats of 5 storeys or more)**

**Lastly don't forget the environmental context of your participants
what sort of housing do they live in? How far do they walk every day
and does this involve opportunities to meet people?**

**We'd also like you to review what existing evidence you're building on,
and if you're incorporating other disciplines, how you intend to
integrate the approaches (so for example, if the principal method
studies individuals, how will you take account of differences across
settings, if your intervention involves more than one place)**

How best to capture evidence on the built environment when undertaking social research?

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