

Design for Life

The smart regeneration journey to 2030

Case study appendix

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Introduction

This document brings together some of the underlying case studies for the Localis report *Design for Life*, organised by report chapter. Downloads of the full report, summary documents and individual chapters are available [here](#).

1. Place leadership

1.1 North Essex Economic Board

In 2019, seven North Essex local authorities – Braintree, Chelmsford, Colchester, Essex, Maldon, Tendring, and Uttlesford – created a partnership with the goal of moving beyond existing governance and institutional frameworks to improve the life chances of residents across the North Essex economic corridor, focussing on outcomes for businesses through a joined-up approach to governance. The inception of the North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) grew from a need for collaboration when engaging in strategic, regional oversight for economic growth and understanding the individual strengths of places across the region. Since NEEB’s creation, Epping Forest District Council has also entered the strategic collaboration.

Following the UK’s departure from the EU in 2020, which brought its own challenges to economic development across the country, the Covid-19 pandemic illustrated the beneficial and catalysing properties of having an established, large-scale and cross-regional partnership. The seven authorities pooled together their business support grant funds, taking a collaborative, co-ordinated approach to provide local SMEs support during the upheaval caused by the pandemic, providing fully funded support from industry specialists and unlocking opportunities for businesses to build skills and expertise. Then, from 2021, each authority devoted funding towards a pot that grew to £1.6mn for the project. In the following

years, NEEB has built strong networks for business support and skills development and seen Braintree, Colchester, Tendring, Chelmsford, and Maldon councils commit 10% each of years 2 and 3 of their UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation towards NEEB's work¹.

A careful procurement process led to the commissioning of Henham Strategy Ltd, a strategic consultancy with extensive experience in working with local authorities, in order to deliver a plan for economic growth in the region, released at the end of 2023. Henham introduced an approach that distilled the place context and all the opportunities and challenges that align with the characteristics of North Essex's constituent parts into the strategic plan for regional delivery². The strategy will very soon be joined with the associated action plan, "Delivering for North Essex".

The Strategic Priorities set out in the "Delivering for North Essex" two-year plan - with delivery for 2023/24 and 24/25 - are:

- Innovative Businesses and Skilled Residents
- A Green and High Growth Economy
- A Dynamic and Connected Region
- Prosperous and Inclusive Communities

These priorities tie into one overarching vision for place, "A proactive, productive and progressive North Essex that advances its economic potential through inward and outward-facing partnerships, with all residents, businesses and visitors benefitting from the region's economic prosperity."³ NEEB and Henham Strategy have produced a strong place vision and linked to the priorities are measurable targets that include improving public service access, engaging communities in development, and aligning green infrastructure delivery with the existing characteristics of North Essex's rural and coastal areas.

In terms of best practice in place leadership, the real successes of NEEB are exemplified by the pooling of resources across public sector agents, the collaboration between the public and private sectors, and the strong use of place vision and clear outcomes. The involved local authorities all experience different levels of deprivation and their residents experience deprivation differently - according to the 2021 census, only 38.3% of households in Tendring were not deprived, compared to 58% in Uttlesford⁴ - and each has different requirements for and from economic and social transformation. But these differences have fashioned opportunities for change that are tailored to the individual strengths of each district. Braintree, for instance, opened the £2.5mn, BREEAM Excellent hub for construction innovation "I-Construct", next to the existing Braintree Enterprise Centre, to support businesses, launch new products and services, and create local jobs.^{5,6}

Colchester and Tendring, on the other hand, have been able to secure millions in funding from the Levelling Up Fund, while Harwich will benefit from Freeport East and its 112-hectare green energy hub, making use of existing infrastructure and transport links combined with its proximity to the offshore North Sea windfarms⁷. Additional development projects include Longfield Solar Farm across Chelmsford and Braintree⁸ and Chesterford Research Park in Uttlesford, which benefits from proximity to Cambridge and

¹ North Essex Economic Board (2023) – [About us](#)

² Henham Strategy Ltd (2023) – [Our work](#)

³ North Essex Economic Board (2023) – [Delivering for North Essex](#)

⁴ Office for National Statistics (2021) – [Household deprivation: Census Maps, ONS](#)

⁵ Braintree District Council (2022) – [I-Construct, a centre of excellence for construction innovation, was officially opened in Braintree](#)

⁶ Beardwell Construction (2021) – [Braintree I-Construct completion](#)

⁷ Department for Business & Trade (2024) – [Freeport East \(Felixstowe and Harwich\)](#)

⁸ Longfield Solar Farm (2024) – [A new solar energy & battery storage farm](#)

the Life Sciences “Golden Triangle”⁹¹⁰. These cases make clear that good governance and cross-regional work accounts for place contexts, builds wealth and financial durability through collaboration and resource sharing, and makes use of partnership networks to deliver best value for residents and local businesses.

1.2 Roubaix, France

Roubaix is one of many European towns impacted by the collapse of industry in the late 20th century. In the 1970s, it fell from the great heights of global predominance in the textile industry and saw almost 50,000 jobs lost by 2000¹¹, housing market collapse, urban decay, and social deprivation¹². The transformation of the region over the decades has been immense. It remains that Roubaix has not seen unqualified success in terms of urban regeneration: still considered the poorest town in France, 46% of residents live below the poverty line and the unemployment rate stands at 30%¹³¹⁴. However, it is worth considering how the rigorous measures taken to pull Roubaix out of the wreck of a sinking local economy have held up into the 21st century.

Above all, city authorities recognised that collaboration across the region was vital to successful development – Roubaix does not exist in its own dimension, but is defined socially and economically by its close neighbours, its connections to the rest of France and Western Europe, and its historical status as a centre for textile production. The strategic vision for regeneration grew from the intercommunal authority *Lille Métropole Communauté Urbaine* (LMCU), led by an assembly representing its 85 elected municipal councils¹⁵, and an accord reached in 1989 between the four mayors of the constituent cities of the conurbation – Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing, and Villeneuve d’Ascq – that included the pooling of funds for the necessary urban regeneration. The political strategy involved has been termed ‘metropolitan compromise’, with the more successful Lille recognising the importance of shoring up the economic strength of its closest partners and Roubaix recognising Lille’s political and economic advantage as a core city. Economic growth in the area was galvanised by the construction of the Channel Tunnel and the assignment of Lille as the interchange station for North-West European high-speed trainlines, with local transport connections accentuated to create a truly polycentric city-region¹⁶. The LMCU also introduced projects across all the metropolitan centres to enhance competitiveness for international investment. For Roubaix, this included a technological park and *L’Union*, a centre for textile innovation shared with Toucoing rejuvenating existing industrial sites by developing on 70 ha of brownfield land, connected with high-speed trainlines¹⁷.

What the LMCU aimed to achieve was strategic development that was equitable across the entire region, requiring detailed spatial planning and high levels of collaboration. Planning occurred collaboratively between the Municipality of Roubaix and LMCU in order to spark economic recovery for the city; promote cultural heritage; recover the retail sector – including two factory outlet centres that drew millions of visitors by the early 2000s; introduce designated ‘Enterprise Zones’, such as a Textile Cluster to host textile firms, connect them with local higher education institutions, and provide space for SMEs in the textile sector; driving forward housing renewal programmes across deprived neighbourhoods; and invest in a cultural strategy to improve tourism in the city utilising two major flagship cultural venues, with

⁹ Chesterford Research Park (2024) – [Where Life Meets Science](#)

¹⁰ North Essex Economic Board (2023) – [Delivering for North Essex](#)

¹¹ Claire Colomb (2006) – [Making Connections: Transforming People and Places in Europe: Case Study of Roubaix, Lille \(France\)](#)

¹² EBRD Green Cities Policy Tool (2022) – [Urban regeneration and renewal: Roubaix, France](#)

¹³ Zero Waste Europe (2019) – [The story of Roubaix](#)

¹⁴ Financial Times (2018) – [Can France revive its industrial heartland?](#)

¹⁵ Christopher Cadell et al. (2008) – [Regeneration in European cities: making connections](#)

¹⁶ Claire Colomb (2006) – [Making Connections: Transforming People and Places in Europe: Case Study of Roubaix, Lille \(France\)](#)

¹⁷ Ville Renouvelee (2022) – [L’Union: Roubaix – Tourcoing - Wattrelos](#)

proactive support from local leaders¹⁸. A number of organisations have been involved across the board to support each stage of development, requiring strong leadership and clarity in the sharing of roles, responsibilities, and resources.

The narrative of urban regeneration in Roubaix has, by necessity, continued into the present day, and new initiatives for growth, including the transformation of Roubaix's former textile factories into large data centres, textile industries converting into thriving e-commerce brands, and a new urban development plan¹⁹. It remains to be seen whether these new initiatives will spur Roubaix into a new era of growth, particularly following the challenges wrought in recent years by the pandemic and civil unrest across France. However, the decisive changes wrought by Roubaix's leaders and the LMCU in the 20th century worked to stall spiralling decline and initiated positive cultural and commercial transformation stemming from Roubaix's existing identity as a textile centre. Collaboration on a regional basis that made use of local contexts and the pooling of resources across authorities was vital for the relative success of Roubaix's regeneration.

2. Financial capability

2.1 Gloucester Quays

As a port town that benefitted immensely from rail transport links and close proximity to the larger cities of Bristol and Birmingham, Gloucester flourished in the early 20th century as an industrial town, its manufacturing prowess exemplified by extensive engineering works and timber mills. Like many English towns, Gloucester was hit by the decline of industry and left by the closure of its docks in the 1980s mired in an abundance of brownfield sites ripe for development. Significantly, Peel Holdings – the development company behind the extensive Media City and Trafford Centre developments in Manchester – have had stake in the regeneration of Gloucester since the 1980s, so when the Gloucester Heritage Urban Regeneration Company (GHURC) was established in 2004, the private developers were at the centre of the dialogue about unlocking finances for the ambitious proposed waterside development at Gloucester Quays. Focal points of the regeneration initiative included opportunities for mixed-use development – 1,000 homes, a superstore, hotel, designer factory outlet centre, and the relocation of Gloucestershire College's Gloucester campus – with targeted outcomes including local employment, the protection of Gloucester's historic heritage assets and recognition of their economic importance, new retail development, and new businesses attracted to the area.

In 2002, Peel Holdings and British Waterways instituted a joint venture board – a public-private partnership – each collating their land holdings within an agreement that held an associated payment from both organisations in order to equalise the respective values of their holdings²⁰. British Waterways owned the majority of the land on the west of the dock, while Peel were the majority owner on the east. The same year that the PPP came into being, the two organisations submitted planning permission for development of the site. However, the complexities of the site and the web of stakeholders involved meant that planning permission was granted only in 2003 – when all parties met at Westminster to eliminate blockages under the supervision of local MP, Parmjit Dhanda²¹. Such a large project would obviously require extensive financial support. Peel Holdings, as a capital-rich private agent, had the existing assets and associated long-term stability to support such an ambitious venture, and came into the Gloucester

¹⁸ Claire Colomb (2006) – [Making Connections: Transforming People and Places in Europe: Case Study of Roubaix, Lille \(France\)](#)

¹⁹ Financial Times (2018) – [Can France revive its industrial heartland?](#)

²⁰ Rob Atkinson et al. (2019) – [Governing urban regeneration in the UK: a case of 'variegated neoliberalism' in action?](#)

²¹ David G. Williams (2023) – [Enabling the practices in an urban regeneration system of provision](#)

Quays initiative with the goal of maximising the value of their existing shopping development asset via improved footfall figures²².

In early 2004, Gloucester City Council, Gloucestershire County Council, English Partnerships – the predecessor of Homes England – and the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) partnered with government approval to establish GHURC. Funding for the new Gloucester Quays development was collated from numerous angles, not least the existing resources from the PPP of British Waterways and Peel Holdings. The Department of Education had awarded £35mn of time-limited funding to Gloucestershire College for its relocation; English Partnerships provided £7mn for a link road with access to the site over the dock, which later became ‘High Orchard Bridge’, connecting the site to the South West bypass, itself a £40mn project funded mostly by central government and partially by the County Council; the SWRDA held significant funds and regional power, connecting the different aspects of the site; GHURC had an annual budget of £750,000, which it used as conduit between the developers and the local planning authority; by 2007, GHURC had shifted £77mn of public sector investment across the city of Gloucester²³; the private developer Crest Nicholson also invested into residential developments in 2006 and has stayed active in Gloucester to the present day, recently having initiated an £85mn housing project at The Waterfront in Gloucester Quays²⁴. Following the dissolution of regional development agencies and consequently of GHURC in 2013 and government funding cuts – GHURC’s £20mn budget was halved in 2010, with the remaining funds funnelled into physical infrastructure at the Quays – Peel Holdings grasped onto the opportunity to take on management of the Gloucester Docks Estate Company under a ‘stewardship model’ on behalf of Gloucester City Council.

There is evidently an immensely complex picture of interactions between stakeholders, with each organisation approaching the development from a different context and with different motivations, requiring detailed and thorough strategic planning from GHURC. Peel’s interest originated in a desire to develop their existing site at the Peel Centre alongside the new retail centre at the docks; British Waterways sought to protect Gloucester’s historic integrity, while GHURC’s attention was split across the city with the aim of wider economic growth and prosperity²⁵. Gloucestershire College’s funding timeline came into conflict with British Waterways’ unwillingness to release land without planning consent for site shopping centre²⁶. The stacking of financial resource and the engagement of both private, public, and third sector resources through collaboration and negotiation has resulted in an extensive and successful modernisation of the previously derelict site. The question that remains for future regeneration projects is, however, whether development of similar scale could be achieved without the substantive central government funding that contributed to Gloucestershire College and allowed long-term strategic thinking from the SWRDA, particularly following the changes to the retail sector following the pandemic that have fundamentally transformed the opportunities for private investment into urban spaces.

3. Net zero and climate change

3.1 Manchester Climate Change Framework

The Strategy from Manchester City Council for 2016-25 outlined a commitment to limiting the impacts of climate change – in subsequent years, the council has followed this commitment by designing and implementing objectives that aim to bring Manchester in line with, and even beyond, the UK’s ambitious climate goals. In 2015, the Manchester Climate Change Agency (MCCA) was established by the City

²² David G. Williams (2023) – [Enabling the practices in an urban regeneration system of provision](#)

²³ David G. Williams (2023) – [Enabling the practices in an urban regeneration system of provision](#)

²⁴ The business magazine (2019) – [Gloucester Quays regeneration takes another step forward as £85 million resi project releases first homes](#)

²⁵ David G. Williams (2023) – [Enabling the practices in an urban regeneration system of provision](#)

²⁶ Gloucester City Council (2006) – [Regeneration Updates and Projects](#)

Council, BDP, and the Manchester: A Certain Future Steering Group. It has worked since then alongside the Manchester Climate Change Partnership (MCCP), which formed in 2018 as a collection of organisations from across the city and across all sectors engaged in mitigating and adapting to climate change in Manchester, in alignment with the Paris Agreement. The Manchester Climate Change Framework 2020-25 was published in 2020, as a joint effort between the MCCA and MCCP, returning to the City Council's climate change commitment, with an overall aim that "Manchester will play its full part in limiting the impacts of climate change and create a healthy, green, socially just city where everyone can thrive."²⁷

The objectives of the framework are as follows, highlighting the importance of an integrated approach to climate strategy that includes not only mitigation of emissions, but also social and economic stability:

- Staying within our carbon budgets
- Climate adaptation and resilience
- Health and wellbeing
- Inclusive, zero carbon and climate resilient economy.

The carbon budgets for Manchester are drawn from recommendation by the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research and cover four areas: direct CO₂ emissions, indirect CO₂ emissions, CO₂ emissions from flights from Manchester airport, and target-setting and reporting methodology for organisations and sectors²⁸. From a regeneration perspective, it is evident that every action to develop the built environment will have to thoroughly engage in the framework, which outlines "Buildings (existing and new)" alongside transport, renewable energy, green infrastructure and nature-based solutions, and "supporting and enabling residents and organisations to act" among seven areas for action to reduce carbon emissions by at least 50% by 2025, to improve climate resilience, and increase urban green infrastructure cover by 10% by 2038.

The framework recognises the need for urgent action in retrofitting Manchester's housing stock. The Greater Manchester Environment Plan 2019-24 targetted more than 11,500 homes retrofitted per year alongside ambitious goals for solar PV panel installation and 6% of homes connected to a low carbon heating source every year. Ambitious targets such as these, in the best scenario, will engage sustainable urban development practices at scale, thereby introducing greater affordability into the supply chain and wider procurement process. However, obstacles to transformation include a lack of knowledge and demand among the population, little funding, poor skills and an insufficient local supply chain, and little appeal for investment into retrofitting among homeowners and landlords. The public sector, provided it has the funding and power to do so, can pioneer good practice in development, such as the council in Manchester ensuring that all new builds that it has some influence over engage in zero carbon standards.

The picture that forms is one of a comprehensive strategy for transformation, which will engage stakeholders and Manchester residents in ensuring that developments are assessed for whole-life impacts, for social value, and in alignment with organisations across the region – meeting their various motivations, needs, and standards. The framework is for every Manchester resident to use, and includes actions across organisations including, but not limited to, Manchester City Council, its strategic partners, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, and central government. This partnership-based approach embodies good practice for a climate change programme that extends across the combined authority region and that values continued monitoring of progress towards targets. Public engagement is also at the heart of the

²⁷ Manchester Climate Change Agency (2020) – [Manchester Climate Change Framework 2020-25](#)

²⁸ Tyndall Manchester Climate Change Research (2019) – [Organisation Level Contributions to Meeting Manchester's Carbon Budget](#)

strategy, targetting a goal for Manchester to become a “carbon literate city” through extensive teaching and training programmes²⁹.

Specific programmes outlined by the framework that engage sustainable regeneration practices within Manchester’s wider climate goals include the GrowGreen initiative. GrowGreen is a programme that aims to improve the resilience of cities to the impacts of climate change through nature-based solutions (NBS). In Manchester, the initiative focusses on providing solutions to the flooding exacerbated by climate change, increasingly heavy rainfall, and impermeable urban surfaces. Its primary project is located in West Gorton, stemming from the area’s ten-year regeneration programme, a ‘park that drinks water’ opened in 2020 and designed in collaboration with residents to provide flood protection, improve air and water quality, increase biodiversity, and encourage active lifestyles³⁰. GrowGreen has also granted some funding for Manchester City Council’s Green Infrastructure Strategy so that it can act upon its “River Valley Action Plans” for the city’s three major rivers.

Manchester City has seen some significant progress towards emissions and climate change targets³¹. The framework highlights not only the need for integrated work across the region, which the Manchester Climate Change Partnership exemplifies, but also the significance of empowerment to local authorities, in order that they can engage in thorough and targeted programmes for sustainable development. The Greater Manchester Combined Authority is able to extend good practice across the region and integrate approaches to climate change mitigation through the MCCP and to ensure public engagement with residents and local organisations sits centrally to regeneration. The framework also requires that joined-up action is met by joined-up funding, across levels of government and local partners in order to release the rapid transformation needed to prepare for and prevent the worst of climate change for Manchester³².

4. Role of the private and third sectors

4.1 Transforming Nuneaton

In collaboration with Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (NBBC), Warwickshire County Council in 2018 set out about articulating an extensive, 15-year programme for the regeneration of Nuneaton, aiming to utilise existing council assets to improve residents’ livelihoods and turn the centre of Nuneaton into an attractive place for business, retail, and tourism. The strategy intends to invigorate Nuneaton, bringing more than 10,000 new homes and developing more than 50 hectares of employment land, and to engage local R&D opportunities in the automotive sector. Plans for the wider programme included the use of a government loan to develop a Business Improvement District, but the primary element of the programme was to be the project “Transforming Nuneaton”, an ambitious physical regeneration of the town centre to improve economic growth, mitigate the development’s impact on climate change, and invest in new leisure and business opportunities, housing, transport infrastructure, and, in partnership with North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College (NWSLC), improve opportunities for education³³.

While NBBC successfully sourced a £7.5mn grant from the Government’s Local Growth Fund for Transforming Nuneaton³⁴, partnership with the private sector has been key to unlocking the full opportunities of the central 1.4ha site in the retail corridor of Abbey Street. Previously a car park for shoppers owned by NBBC, the council intended to pull investment into the town centre and build upon existing links between the site and the nearby retail area. Partnership with private developers the

²⁹ Manchester Climate Change Agency (2020) – [Manchester Climate Change Framework 2020-25](#)

³⁰ GrowGreen (2022) - [Manchester](#)

³¹ Manchester City Council (2024) – [Zero Carbon Manchester](#)

³² Manchester Climate Change Agency (2020) – [Manchester Climate Change Framework 2020-25](#)

³³ Warwickshire County Council (2016) – [Nuneaton Investment Prospectus](#)

³⁴ Warwickshire County Council (2019) – [Transforming Nuneaton brochure](#)

Queensberry Group has enlarged this plan into a expansive, multifaceted project entitled “Grayson Place”. Queensberry has helped to grow the council’s vision for retail growth into a £65mn vision for an urban area defined by extensive public green space; leisure facilities including a cinema, bars and restaurants; a new Hampton by Hilton; affordable homes; new retail space; a multi-storey car-park; workspaces; and a new building for NWSLC³⁵³⁶.

Planning permission for Grayson Place was granted in 2021 for the initial hotel site, and development is currently underway, with opening of the Abbey Street project planned for 2024. Local transport links into Nuneaton town centre and beyond, into the highly populated region of 3 million people within 20 miles of Nuneaton, mean that the potential leisure spend from the population at Grayson Place is estimated as up to £150mn from visitors within only 30 minutes of the new development³⁷. Beyond financial considerations, however, Queensberry and NBBC have held community at the heart of the development. Queensberry have celebrated the project as “A genuine community focused urban transformation”³⁸, while NBBC invited the local community and key local stakeholders to have input in the planning process before finalisation of the proposals for the Abbey Street transformation³⁹. The programme of Transforming Nuneaton exemplifies the benefits of a successful PPP, namely in the leadership and collaboration of the local authorities involved, setting out the overarching plan for growth, and the innovation and ambition brought from the incorporation of Queensberry Group. Additionally, the value of the project will ideally be guided by the level of community engagement throughout the stages of regeneration, ensuring that Nuneaton sees economic growth encompassed by wider social value.

4.2 Community activism in Toronto

Looking further afield, Toronto is a city which has in recent years seen increasing disparities between its neighbourhoods. Some communities, particularly since the pandemic, have experienced much higher rates of deprivation and poverty, with environmental and health factors influencing immense variability in mortality across the city’s neighbourhoods.⁴⁰ Racial segregation is very prevalent, and visible minorities remain generally concentrated in low-income neighbourhoods⁴¹⁴². While the City of Toronto has previously established an action plan, entitled the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy (TSNS) to “achieve equitable opportunities across all Toronto neighbourhoods”, namely instigating the creation of Neighbourhood Improvement Areas⁴³, which benefit from an extensive community engagement plan and community workshop sessions, there are still many areas across Toronto where low-income, marginalised, and vulnerable populations are struggling to remain afloat in a city with skyrocketing rents and high rates of gentrification⁴⁴.

To combat transformation that negatively impacts local residents, the city has experienced rising levels of community activism where diverse, grassroots organisations respond to the spatial and social contexts of their environments in order to encourage sustainable development practices. In the neighbourhood of Parkdale, for instance, local activism has grown since the 1990s, fighting against gentrification and social

³⁵ Queensberry (2023) – [Grayson Place](#)

³⁶ Warwickshire County Council (2024) – [Abbey Street](#)

³⁷ Grayson Place (2024) – [About Grayson Place](#)

³⁸ Queensberry (2023) – [Grayson Place](#)

³⁹ Warwickshire County Council (2024) – [Abbey Street](#)

⁴⁰ Luckrezia Awuor and Stephanie Melles (2019) – [The influence of environmental and health indicators on premature mortality: An empirical analysis of the City of Toronto’s 140 neighbourhoods](#)

⁴¹ Elena Ostanel (2020) – [Community-based responses to exclusionary processes of neighbourhood change in Parkdale, Toronto](#)

⁴² City of Toronto (2016) – [City of Toronto: The Changing Landscape of Toronto’s Population](#)

⁴³ City of Toronto (2024) – [Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy](#)

⁴⁴ Elena Ostanel (2020) – [Community-based responses to exclusionary processes of neighbourhood change in Parkdale, Toronto](#)

displacement of existing residents. Organisations have aimed to collaborate and proactively propose solutions to existing problems associated with deprivation, where various challenges and push-and-pull between local initiatives and the City of Toronto have resulted in the formation of the Parkdale People's Economy, a tool for community wealth building and ensuring that ownership of assets belongs to the community. The People's Economy has enabled high levels of cooperation between local stakeholders and encouraged democratic decision-making to convene various organisations in terms of planning, finance, and cultural development in Parkdale to support equitable development. One result from this collaboration has been the advocacy for inclusionary zoning in Parkdale that includes a minimum of 30% permanently affordable housing⁴⁵.

Other examples of community-led initiatives in Toronto include East Scarborough's Community Design Initiative – utilising a place-based approach to engage with residents and transform an old police station into a community facility⁴⁶ – and the Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Program (SNAP), with which the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority encourages sustainable neighbourhood initiatives through planning and advisory assistance, working in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders including landowners, community groups, and the municipality in areas across Toronto. SNAP's projects include an environmentally sustainable initiative to engage in water management and renewable energy generation in Black Creek, one of Toronto's Priority Improvement Neighbourhoods⁴⁷.

Toronto, like many cities in the UK, has a deep deprivation gap between urban neighbourhoods. In the above cases, a bottom-up approach with third sector influence over the strategic planning process has enabled the consideration of vulnerable populations and the limiting of gentrification. The UK has also seen many instances of community-led initiatives and third sector interventions shaping urban areas for the better in terms of a holistic and sustainable approach to regeneration. What the Toronto case makes clear, is that such programmes require high levels of support and cooperation from local authorities, cohesion with local stakeholders and across different organisations, sectors, and scales, and that the community ownership of assets and high levels of public engagement can help to ensure that development is truly equitable or ensure that planning ensures a strategic approach to social inclusion⁴⁸.

5. Health and Wellbeing

5.1 Dorset Health Village

The immense pressure that the pandemic placed on the NHS led to a heavy backlog of screenings building up alongside the infamously long waiting lists. Dorset, in 2021, was dealing with a backlog of more than 110,000 delayed appointments due to Covid⁴⁹. In that year, University Hospitals Dorset (UHD) established the "Think Big" initiative, aimed directly at targeting waiting lists and bringing diagnostic services closer to communities. Contributing to this initiative, the Outpatient Assessment Clinic @ Dorset Health Village was established to provide efficient patient flows and a wide range of clinical screening assessments, including ophthalmology, dermatology, and breast screening, with plans for future expansion of services to include community services and social care⁵⁰. The Health Village stands out, purpose-built

⁴⁵ Elena Ostanel (2020) – [Community-based responses to exclusionary processes of neighbourhood change in Parkdale, Toronto](#)

⁴⁶ Ajeev Bhatia (2020) – [How a community-led design initiative in Toronto is redefining neighbourhood revitalisation from the bottom-up](#)

⁴⁷ Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (2024) – [Black Creek SNAP](#)

⁴⁸ Ajeev Bhatia (2020) – [How a community-led design initiative in Toronto is redefining neighbourhood revitalisation from the bottom-up](#)

⁴⁹ Health Tech Digital (2022) – [The Dorset Health Village – A blueprint for Diagnostic Community Centres nationwide](#)

⁵⁰ University Hospitals Dorset: NHS Foundation Trust (2024) - [FAQs](#)

as it is on the top floor of Beales Department Store in Poole's Dolphin Centre, as an innovative way to bring healthcare right into the heart of the community seven days a week.

The Dorset Health Village exemplifies the value of integrated planning across the public sector. The clinic has opened up capacity for local hospitals, and within six months of opening saw more than 6,000 appointments through its doors. It has made use of efficient patient flow management and data integration as key priorities, while staff have benefitted from training in screening and the UHD has been able to utilise feedback for future service delivery models⁵¹. The reliability of equipment in the assessment centre compared to the previous 'screening van' tool for breast screening has led to reduced numbers of lost appointments from cancellations⁵². As an innovative, community-centred programme, the site introduces the possibility for pilots to explore its benefits for local wellbeing and lifestyles⁵³ - LiveWell, which provides free health and wellness coaching funded by the Dorset and BCP Councils, and Active Dorset, a partnership that aims to support local leaders to improve Dorset residents' access to sport and physical activity, have both offered support from a dedicated space in the Health Village⁵⁴.

But it's not just the NHS that has seen success from the new healthcare model. Locating the health centre within a shopping centre in the town centre helps to improve footfall for other high street businesses, brings a broad spectrum of people to the high street, and the introduction of healthcare into high street venues can support additional businesses associated with health services, such as pharmacies, shops with baby supplies, or shoe shops for podiatry patients⁵⁵. NHS Trusts can, furthermore, provide long-term, reliable income as tenants of the high street.

Beyond bringing economic stability to the high street, the Dorset Health Village adds social value to the community – the centre relies on volunteers, collaborating with the voluntary sector and bringing opportunities to locals of all ages to gain training and experience. This is in line with the NHS Long Term Plan (2019), which encourages well-designed volunteering initiatives, particularly in terms of providing programmes for deprived areas⁵⁶, which the clinic achieves with especial attention on drawing best practice from the Nightingale Hospitals and vaccination centres of the pandemic. As well as improving the general health and wellbeing of the area, the centre also aims to build links with education and works with community Youth Groups to provide work experience and present the NHS as a potential future employer. The centre also brings environmental value, reducing travel time for patients and increasing access to healthcare via public transport, making use of existing infrastructure links in the town centre, in comparison to traditional, non-central care units⁵⁷. Sustainable organisational change includes reducing paper-based processes, such as through the digital check-in system, and the use of materials from the Nightingale Hospital stock for the clinic's construction⁵⁸. By planning for multiple tests in one visit for patients, the clinic can reduce the number of excess patient journeys, cutting carbon emissions and air pollution in the urban environment and therefore contributing to the NHS targets for net zero⁵⁹. Further

⁵¹ Health Tech Digital (2022) – [The Dorset Health Village – A blueprint for Diagnostic Community Centres nationwide](#)

⁵² Health Tech Digital (2022) – [The Dorset Health Village – A blueprint for Diagnostic Community Centres nationwide](#)

⁵³ Our Dorset (2022) – [Outpatient Assessment Clinic @ Dorset Health Village](#)

⁵⁴ University Hospitals Dorset: NHS Foundation Trust (2021) – [Launch of outpatient assessment clinic @ Dorset Health Village](#)

⁵⁵ Our Dorset (2022) – [Outpatient Assessment Clinic @ Dorset Health Village](#)

⁵⁶ NHS (2019) – [The NHS Long Term Plan](#)

⁵⁷ University Hospitals Dorset: NHS Foundation Trust (2024) – [Planning your visit](#)

⁵⁸ University Hospitals Dorset: NHS Foundation Trust (2021) – [Launch of outpatient assessment clinic @ Dorset Health Village](#)

⁵⁹ BDP. (2021) – [NHS diagnostics centre built in Dorset department store](#)

work will be undertaken in future to ensure the best utilisation of the space in alignment with ongoing operational requirements⁶⁰.

The assessment clinic has received extremely positive feedback from patients. The cost for the project was £1.5mn, commissioned by the Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group, and best practice with knowledge taken from the Covid vaccination centres ensured that the centre was built with smooth patient flow in mind⁶¹. There are hopes that the centre represents a model with which the NHS can return testing levels to pre-pandemic standards, provide a blueprint for other centres in order to make a dent in the immense backlog of appointments⁶², and introduce the benefits of high street healthcare to many communities across the country.

⁶⁰ Our Dorset (2022) – [Outpatient Assessment Clinic @ Dorset Health Village](#)

⁶¹ BDP. (2021) – [Dorset Health Village](#)

⁶² Health Tech Digital (2022) – [The Dorset Health Village – A blueprint for Diagnostic Community Centres nationwide](#)