



Tackling Root causes Upstream of Unhealthy Urban Development

# How to create healthier places: a multi-disciplinary qualitative study exploring the complex system of urban development decision-making

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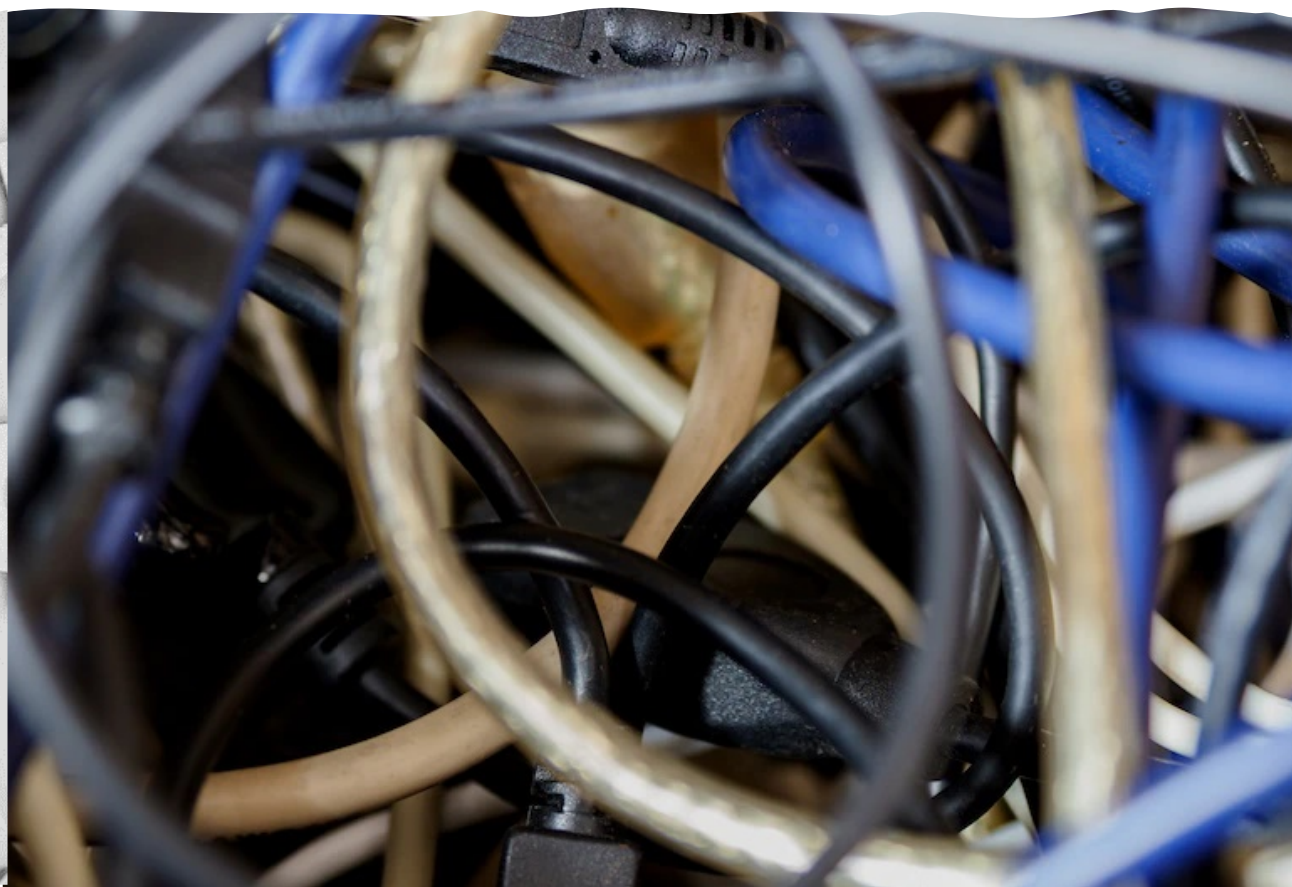
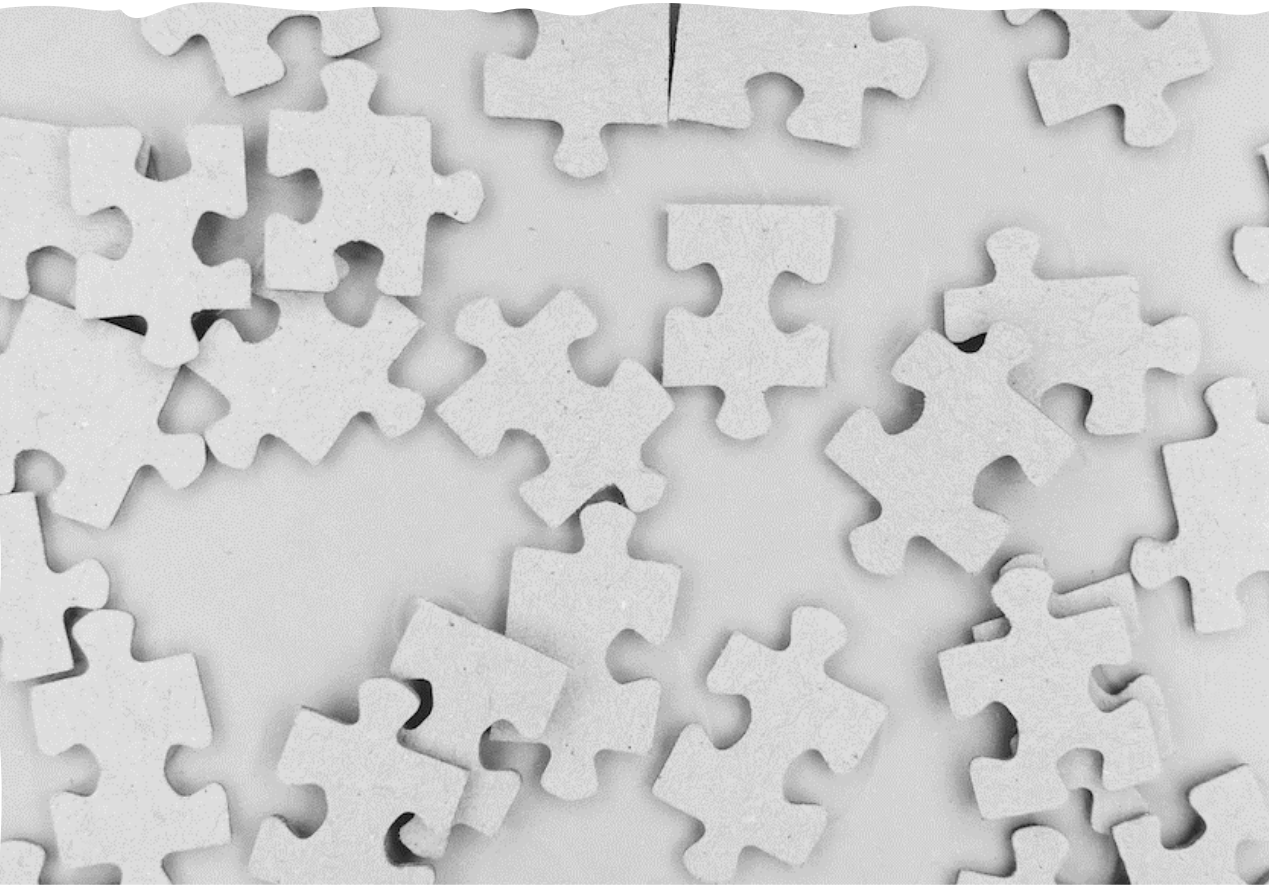






How can the system of urban development decision-making  
be influenced to create healthier environments?

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Management

Public policy

Urban  
planning



Transport

Public  
health



The University of Manchester



Real  
estate

Law



Public  
involvement





# Methods: Question development

Identifying the actors  
and institutions

Identifying world views &  
perception of problem

Understanding how  
decisions are made  
within the system

Community  
involvement

Health  
economic  
valuation

Legal issues



# Methods: Sampling and interviewing

Stakeholder type	Local/ Regional government	National government	Private sector	Third sector	Total
Property development	5	2	24	0	31
Urban planning	15	3	5	3	26
Finance	0	3	18	0	21
Transport	6	3	3	1	13
Public health	7	2	0	2	11
Politician	8	1	0	0	9
Environment/ Sustainability	3	2	1	1	7
Other	5	4	2	3	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>10</b>	

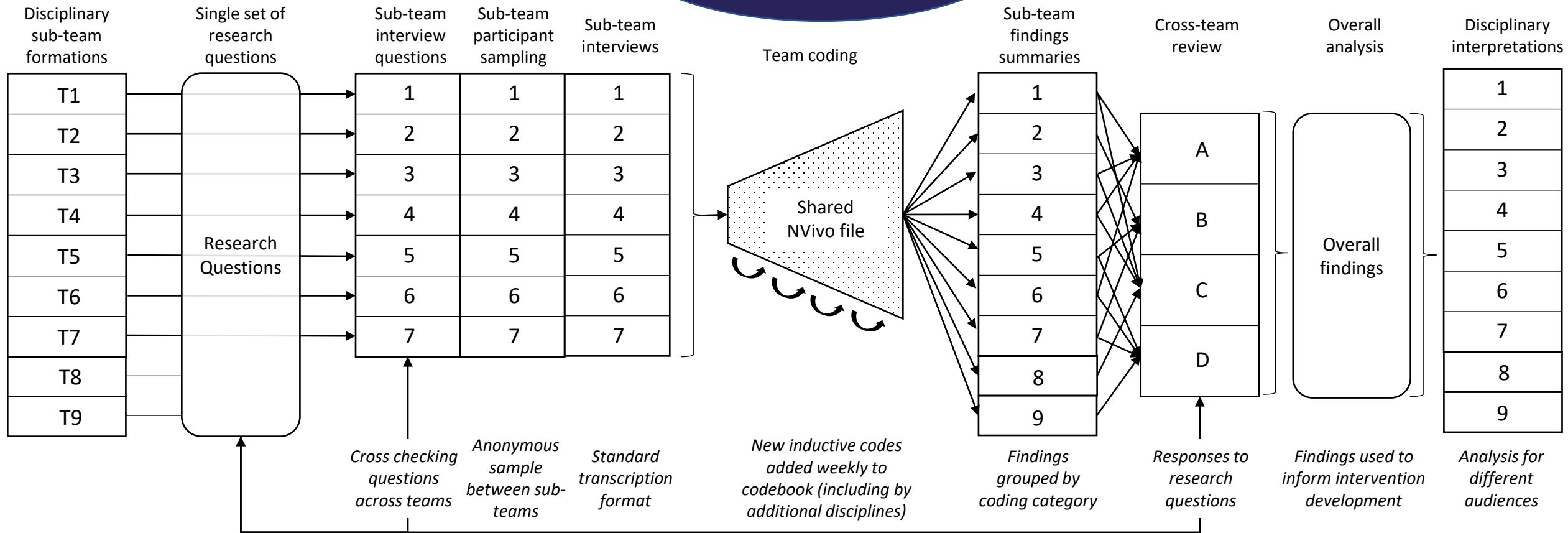
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# Methods: Team coding and analysis

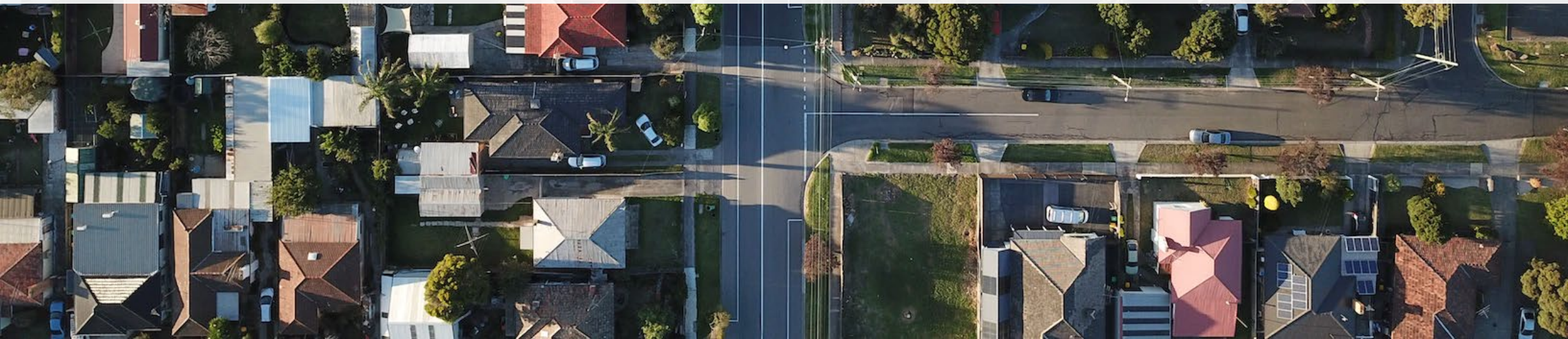
16 weekly team coding meetings







# Findings





# Competing priorities

## Government priorities

*“...there’s a tension there in terms of as a local authority you want to be **supportive of development** ...but often in practice those do come at a cost and **the more constraints you put on development, sometimes the harder it is to get things developed, ...** there’s a balance between what you would maybe want to do in an ideal world and what you can do whilst still allowing development to progress.” **(Local government, property development)***

## Private sector priorities

*“...it is an industry that goes, ‘We’re functioning perfectly well, just **making lots of money** carrying on like this, so why would we change?’” **(Private sector, property development and investment)***

*“...when your shareholders and your bond holders are asking you, ‘What are you doing about **wellness and sustainability?**’, it quickly jumps up the agenda!” **(Private sector, real estate finance)***



# Getting around the rules

## Rules: policies and legislation designed to control development

*“... the property sector from which I come is **untrustworthy** basically. We’ll leg over communities and places in order to make a **fast buck** and, I’m sorry, that’s how it is. You know, it’s what happens and so therefore the planning system and any government support to get anything off and away is beset with **safeguarding** so there’s an awful lot of **tick boxing** that goes on” (Private sector, property development)*

## Community engagement challenges

*“...it’s a really **biased industry**. You need to be a white middle-aged man to be listened to. If you’re an immigrant, if you’re a female, if you’re young then you know nothing.” – (Private sector, property development consultancy)*

*“...all of these familiar **commercial pressures** which will work directly against what you fear local people will, quite rightly, demand. There’s both an unjustified and an entirely justified **fear of engaging local people more.**” (Third sector, property finance)*





# Justifying a focus on health

## Lack of clear definitions and evidence of 'healthy' urban development

*"...you've got this horrendous policy in the [National Planning Policy Framework] which says we can only refuse things if the impact is severe. Now **define severe**, you know, I was asked this in a public inquiry... people living in high buildings, mental health issues associated with that, isolation, that's **very hard to quantify.**" (Local government, transport)*

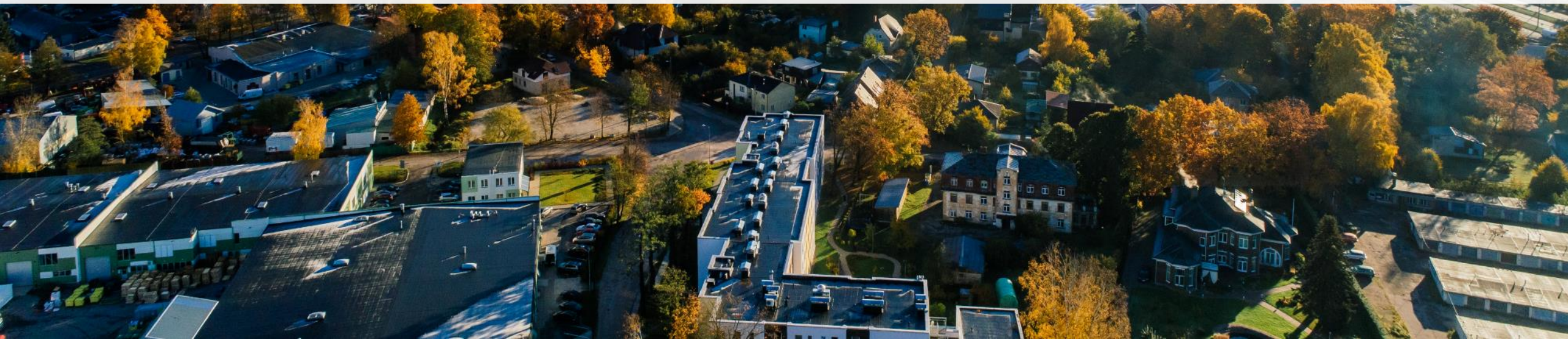
## Obtaining resources to focus on health

*"Politicians want sustainability and to spend less money on things, but then **don't actually invest in prevention** and the things that will lead to that. Housing being one of them that could save NHS money". (National government, health)*





# Implications for creating healthier places





# Identifying leverage points in a complex system



**Influencing urban planning decision-making through demonstrating health impacts of changes to the built environment: a co-designed intervention**

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**The problem:** The built environment shapes the health and well-being of the population. However, the current planning system is often seen as a barrier to the development of a more health-promoting built environment. Our design-led research seeks to address this by demonstrating the health impacts of different planning interventions and influencing decision-making.

**Co-designing the intervention:** Co-design research with a regeneration developer in local government, developing a spatial regeneration framework. The framework guides future development beyond 1000 new homes and 500 student units in an urban, mixed-use development. Participant-observations of various stakeholder meetings, focus groups to explore health and influence decision-making in the framework.

**The HAUS mice:** The HAUS tool (Health Appraisal for Urban Systems) was adapted to the co-designed intervention. It combines epidemiological evidence with economic valuation to estimate health and health economic impacts of development changes.

**Healthier health economic impacts of urban development scenarios:** A bar chart showing the health and health economic impacts of different development scenarios. The scenarios are: 1. Unimproved approach, 2. 100m² per person, 3. 100m² per person + 100m² per person, 4. 100m² per person + 100m² per person + 100m² per person, 5. 100m² per person + 100m² per person + 100m² per person + 100m² per person.

**Reflections & follow-on work:** Co-designed approach enabled timely research outputs for decision-makers. It is good to focus attention on health issues as it gives political support for new regeneration. We used the health and health economic evidence to inform a Health Impact Assessment of the spatial regeneration framework. This provides recommendations for future planning applications within the regeneration area.

# Strengths & limitations

- Many stakeholders' views but more property development than transport
- Conducted in England (discretionary planning system)
- Exploratory study, with thematic analysis by Researcher-in-Residence with Bristol City Council
- Other papers by multi-disciplinary research team focus on different issues









Health & Place

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# Understanding how to create healthier places: A qualitative study exploring the complex system of urban development decision-making

[Anna Le Gouais](#)<sup>a</sup>  , [Geoff Bates](#)<sup>b</sup>, [Rosalie Callway](#)<sup>a</sup>, [Heeseo Rain Kwon](#)<sup>c</sup>, [Lisa Montel](#)<sup>d</sup>, [Sian Peake-Jones](#)<sup>e</sup>, [Jo White](#)<sup>f</sup>, [Md Nazmul Hasan](#)<sup>g</sup>, [Caglar Koksak](#)<sup>e</sup>, [Andrew Barnfield](#)<sup>h</sup>, [Krista Bondy](#)<sup>g</sup>, [Sarah Ayres](#)<sup>h</sup>

Research Article

## What needs to happen to ‘level up’ public health?

[Sarah Ayres](#)  , [Andrew Barnfield](#) , [Geoff Bates](#) , [Anna Le Gouais](#)  & [Nick Pearce](#) 



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## What types of health evidence persuade policy actors in a complex system?

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BMC Public Health

RESEARCH

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## ‘Harnessing the power of the law’: a qualitative analysis of the legal determinants of health in English urban planning and recommendations for fairer and healthier decision-making

[Lisa Montel](#)<sup>\*</sup>





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Regular Article



## Balancing Autonomy and Collaboration in Large-Scale and Disciplinary Diverse Teams for Successful Qualitative Research

Geoff Bates <sup>1,†</sup>, Anna Le Gouais <sup>2,†</sup>, Andrew Barnfield<sup>3</sup>, Rosalie Callway<sup>2</sup>, Md Nazmul Hasan <sup>4</sup>, Caglar Koksal <sup>5</sup>, Heeseo Rain Kwon<sup>6</sup>, Lisa Montel<sup>7</sup>, Sian Peake-Jones<sup>5</sup>, Jo White<sup>8</sup>, Krista Bondy<sup>4</sup>, and Sarah Ayres<sup>3</sup>

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## Too many cooks in the kitchen? How large teams can work together effectively to deliver qualitative studies of complex policy problems

Posted in: Evidence and policymaking, Science and research policy



<https://blogs.bath.ac.uk/iprblog/2023/02/07/too-many-cooks-in-the-kitchen-how-large-teams-can-work-together-effectively-to-deliver-qualitative-studies-of-complex-policy-problems/>



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