

FLOURISHING INDEX

Putting science behind health & wellbeing

In north London, a new neighbourhood is being designed from the ground up.

Brent Cross Town is a public private partnership between Barnet Council and Related Argent. A visionary urban regeneration built around the core values of:

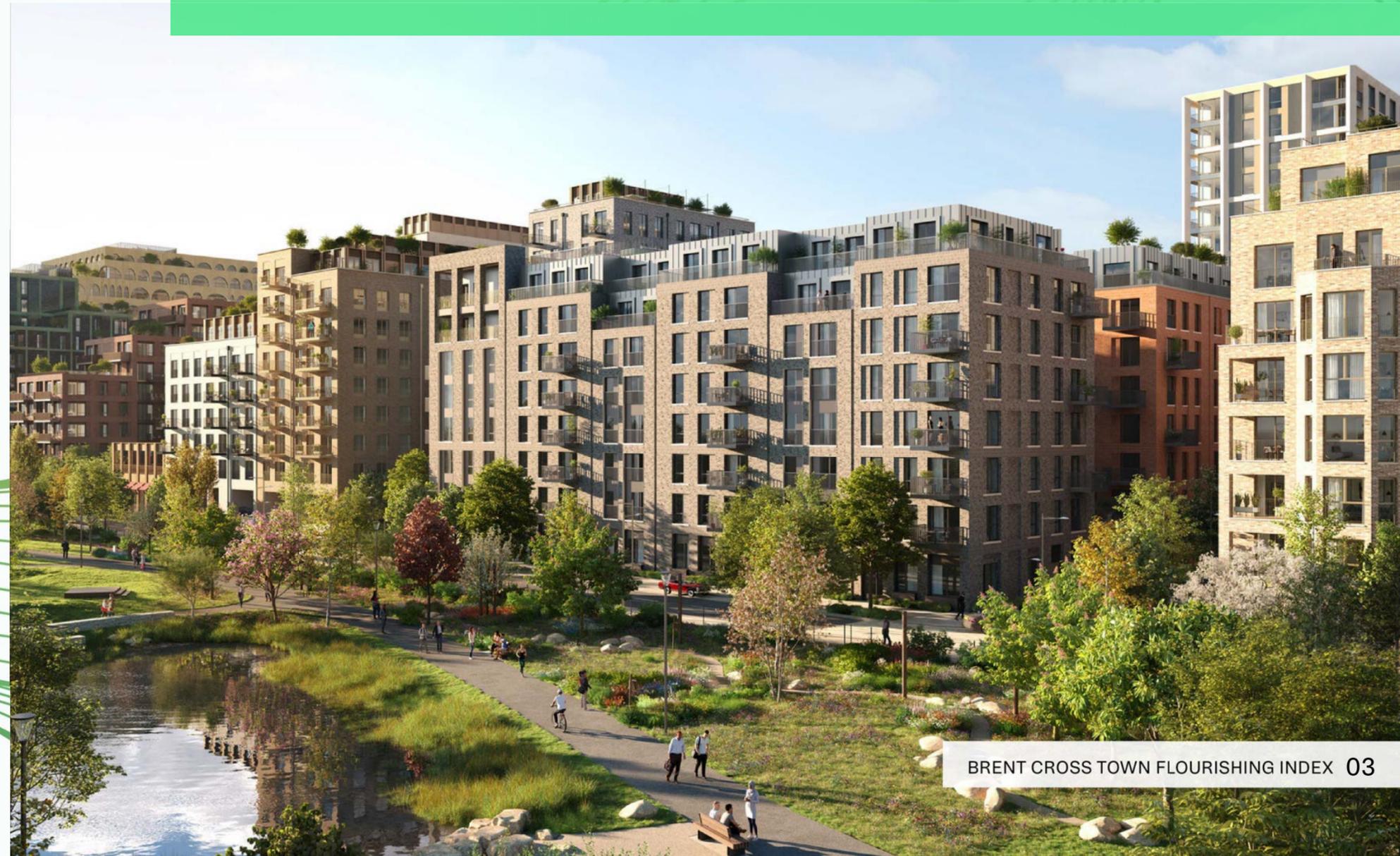
- **Social connectivity**
- **Environmental sustainability**
- **Health and wellbeing**



Over the coming two decades, £8bn of urban regeneration is planned.

So far, we have delivered two new parks - Claremont Park and Exploratory Park, new shops and eateries, and a new station has opened. Brent Cross Town will be truly inter-generational with a mix of student, later living, affordable, rental and market sale alongside commercial office space.

When finished, there will be 6,700 new homes, workspace for 25,000 people, a new high street, schools, parks, sport and play facilities.



Today, around 100,000 people live within a 10-minute walk of Brent Cross Town.



By 2037, an estimated 45,000 people will come to live, work, study and visit this new neighbourhood every day.

6,700

New homes

Workplace for

25k

people

**50
ACRES**

Of parks and playing fields

**NET
ZERO**

Carbon by 2030

When our work began in 2015, we made four pledges.

One was that Brent Cross Town would be a
North London Town where all can flourish.

01

THE PLACE IN LONDON
FOR PARTICIPATION
IN SPORT AND PLAY



02

A TOWN WHERE
ALL CAN FLOURISH



03

A NET ZERO
CARBON TOWN



04

STRENGTHENING
CONNECTIONS



But what does this mean, and how can we ensure it isn't just words?

We wanted to find a way to make our pledge a reality for the
people of Brent Cross Town.

This is where the Flourishing Index comes in.

Rather than assuming that things are improving we set out to find
a new way—a scientific framework—to measure flourishing.



INTRODUCING THE BRENT CROSS TOWN FLOURISHING INDEX

The Flourishing Index has been created in a partnership between



With the support of



WHAT DOES FLOURISHING MEAN?

In its most simple form – **flourishing is about human experiences of feeling good and life going well** – for both individuals and communities.

People who experience higher levels of wellbeing are flourishing and they don't just get by. They are creative, resilient, and positively contribute to their communities.



"We're creating a new way to measure how well the people at Brent Cross Town are doing, and, in turn, how well we're doing."

Nick Searl, Executive Director, Related Argent

FLOURISHING IS DEFINED AS...

Happiness

Competence

Clear thinking

Empathy

Vitality

Meaning

Autonomy

Calmness

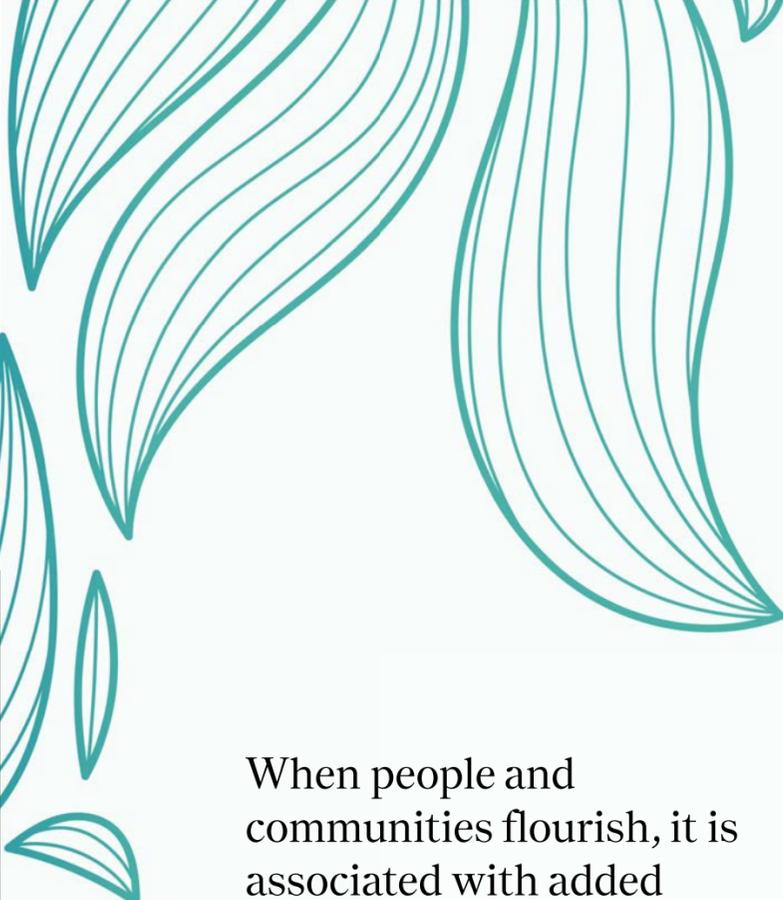
Engagement

Resilience

Giving

Optimism

Positive relations



When people and communities flourish, it is associated with added benefits such as increased immune and brain function, longer lifespan and greater tolerance of others.

In a community, flourishing means creating an environment where everyone has the chance to be their best selves, contribute positively, and live a good life – equality and equity are really important.

The UK ranks

15th

out of 20
countries in
Europe for
flourishing

Denmark ranks

1st

In Europe for
flourishing

The Flourishing Index is built around this central question:

How can the regeneration of Brent Cross Town improve the local population's wellbeing?

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first-ever attempt to systematically measure the concepts of flourishing within the context of urban regeneration. How well people are feeling and functioning in their local area has rarely, if ever, been captured at this scale.

In addition to individual wellbeing, this new index also looks at how the community is doing as a whole.

"Wellbeing is more complex than quantum physics, and the questions are twice as interesting."

Johannes Eichstaedt, Stanford University, Director of the Computational Psychology and Well-being Lab.

The Flourishing Index began in 2021, just as COVID restrictions were lifting, and the project will continue for at least ten years.

Crucially, we started before anything was built. This means we have a reliable baseline from which we can track flourishing as the new town takes shape.

The goal is to take regular snapshots of the community and build a body of data that will help guide our decision-making as the development progresses.

The work is led by The University of Manchester and consultancy firm Buro Happold. Their research team designed the index with the local community, through a series of focus group sessions. It is based on the latest science, but it is also representative of local voices and circumstances. Local communities are a critical stakeholder in this project.



"If you treasure it, measure it."

Lord Gus O'Donnell, Former Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service. Member of the House of Lords

Dr Julia Jones aka Dr Rock

Neuroscientist and founder of Holidity



As part of the Flourishing Index work, we designed a holistic sound and music strategy for Brent Cross Town.

Sound is such an important part of how we perceive and experience our surroundings. Your subconscious brain is always processing sound, even if you're not consciously aware of it.

You're missing a massive opportunity if you don't embrace the positive effects that sound has on the brain. As a sensory input it's extremely powerful. It can help us feel safe and calm, and according to the World Health Organisation, it can reduce stress, improve mood and help us learn new things.

Music also has the ability to bring joy and to bring people together. It can be such a powerful tool for building community and helping people to connect.

And it's not just music, the sounds might be white noise, birdsong, a sweeping soundscape or a deep listening experience. It may also be the sound of silence, such as a secluded area of the park where you can't hear the traffic due to clever construction and acoustic masking.

We now have the technology to be much more sophisticated about the use of sound and music – how we can zone sounds to complement and enhance our surroundings.



THE APPROACH

WHAT MAKES IT UNIQUE?

01 **The Index goes beyond the typical measures of wellbeing.**

GDP, employment indicators and living standards don't always correspond with how people are actually doing, so the team is also collecting local 'experiential' wellbeing data alongside the more traditional measures.

02 **Detailed research of this nature is rare at the outset of an urban regeneration project.**

More typically, evaluations are carried out after regeneration has been completed, if at all. In this sense, we are breaking new ground by creating feedback loops over the next 10 years.

03 **The index measures flourishing at a community level as well as at an individual level.**

As well as individual flourishing, we will also look at collective feelings of safety, trust and participation. Where existing wellbeing measures fixate on the individual, the Flourishing Index will systematically examine how communities feel socially and realise their potential collectively.



04 **The work is a collaboration between local government, the private sector, the community, and academia.**

This is a complex and nuanced topic, and we want the project to help empower local voices. To this end, we worked with the local communities and stakeholders to shape the Index, what we are measuring, and how we are measuring it.

05 **Not just measuring whether wellbeing has been increased but why.**

We will examine how lived experiences - both good and bad - are affecting people's wellbeing, and cross reference it against specific interventions such as employment opportunities, housing provision, community resources, environmental conditions, public transport and active travel to see how those are affecting local levels of wellbeing.

06 **A mix of research methods were used in the baseline to collect data.**

Local communities participated in face-to-face and online surveys, the research team performed local observations and the latest sensor technology was used to monitor movement. These methods were tested with the local communities and approved by The University of Manchester's Ethics Committee to provide a holistic picture of our local communities.

"So often in these spaces, measurements tend to focus on the number of people reached. This study really delves deeper into cause-and-effect relationships impacting wellbeing, considering not only individuals but also the community as a whole."

Hannah Beecham, founder of RED January, a nationwide movement that promotes the impact of movement and physical activity on mental health

WHAT WE
MEASURED
AND CAPTURED IN THE BASELINE

**HOW PEOPLE
USE PUBLIC
SPACE**

Via activity observations

**EXPERIENCED
INDIVIDUAL AND
COMMUNITY WELLBEING**

Via interviews and survey

**COMMUNITY
PRIORITIES**

Via workshops

**INDOOR AND
OUTDOOR
AIR QUALITY**

Via sensors

**HOW PEOPLE ARE
MOVING AROUND THE
NEIGHBOURHOOD**

Rates of active travel – via sensors

The baseline data was collected during 2021, just as restrictions were lifted and life was returning to normal after the pandemic. “COVID bounce back” may have skewed some of the findings, in both positive and negative ways.

We will naturally uncover learnings about our approach as we go, and we expect to refine and evolve our methods with each new round of data collection.

1,500

People surveyed
about their wellbeing

330,000

Vivacity sensor
observations
measuring rates of
walking and cycling

4,500

Observations
using the MOHAWk*
observation method in
**Clitterhouse
Playing Fields**

12 MONTHS

Timeframe for baseline
data collection

**Method for Observing pHysical Activity and Wellbeing*



THE MAIN TAKEAWAYS

The baseline research offered an array of important insights. It identified positives about life in the Brent Cross area that we need to preserve, as well as issues that we want to help to address.

Over the next 10 years, these insights will change - some may go up or down - firstly because human nature is not linear and predictable but also because external factors, such as the cost-of-living crisis or the global geopolitical situation, can influence people's wellbeing.

We will continue publishing all insights from our community, and reflect on how we can action positive change.

**It is important that we learn
from the data and use what we
find to help guide our actions
and decisions.**



THINGS TO ADDRESS

JOB SATISFACTION RATES WERE LOWER

than across England.

People had
**A LOWER SENSE
OF WORTH OR
PURPOSE**

than the average across
the country.

NEIGHBOURHOOD SATISFACTION WAS 12% LOWER

than across England.

LONELINESS WAS 10% HIGHER

than those in our comparison
groups, particularly among
24-35-year-olds.

People were
**LESS LIKELY TO
BE INVOLVED**

in groups, clubs, and
organisations than across the
country as a whole.

What's promising about this project is its focus on tackling loneliness and wellbeing not just at an individual level, but at a community and structural level."

Professor Pamela Qualter, the UK's leading scientific expert on child and adolescent loneliness (Professor of Psychology for Education at The University of Manchester)

** Figures taken from the baseline report*

MORE THINGS TO ADDRESS

**WOMEN AND GIRLS USE
THE PLAYING FIELDS LESS**
than men and boys.

The main green space

**CLITTERHOUSE PLAYING
FIELDS IS NOT BEING
WELL USED**

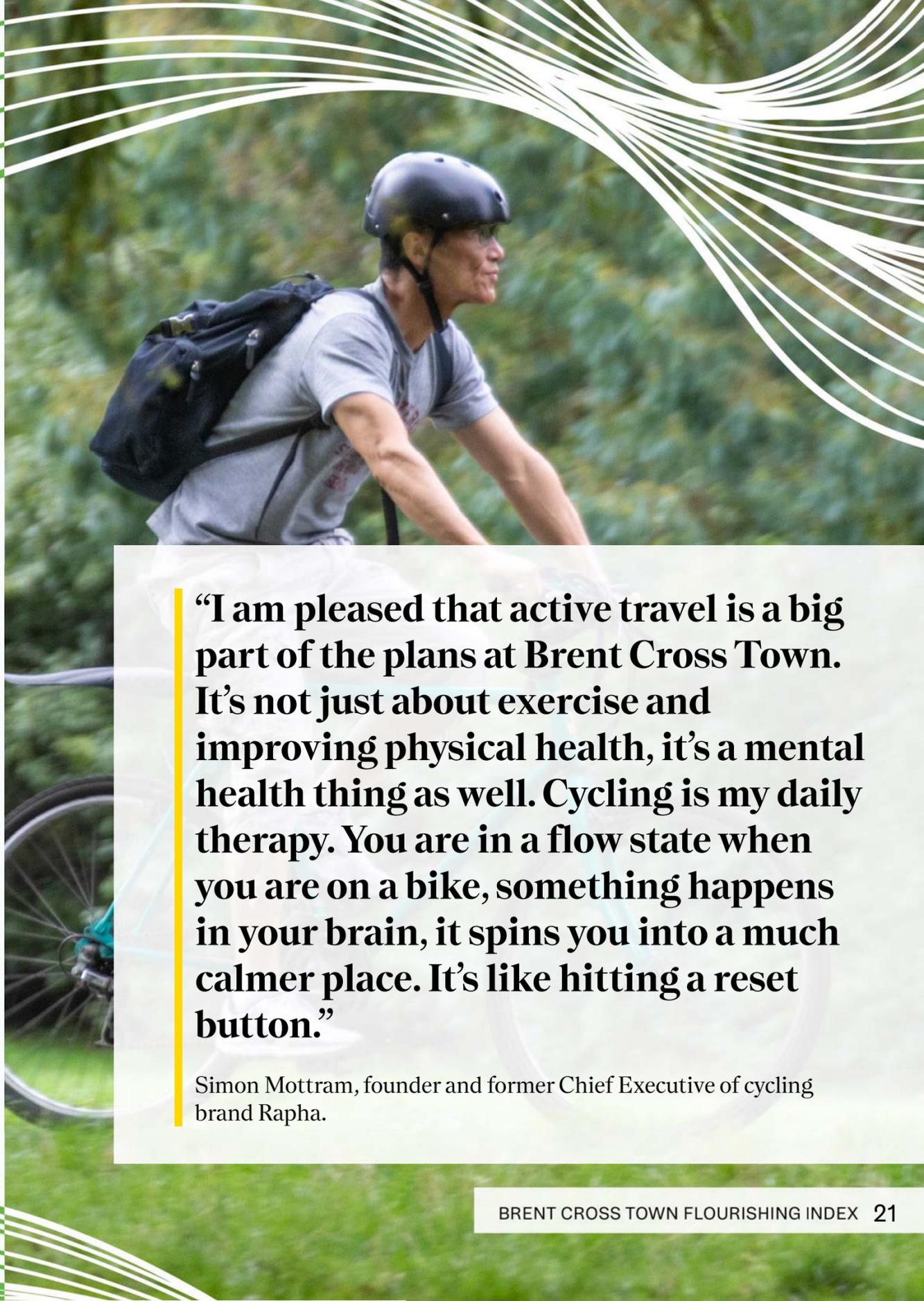
High levels of

**AIR POLLUTION OUTSIDE
CLAREMONT PRIMARY
SCHOOL***

**This was the first test location studied in the baseline.*

**NOT MANY ARE
CYCLING**
in the neighbourhood.

**HAPPINESS LEVELS
WERE LOWER**
than in the UK and most other
European countries.



“I am pleased that active travel is a big part of the plans at Brent Cross Town. It’s not just about exercise and improving physical health, it’s a mental health thing as well. Cycling is my daily therapy. You are in a flow state when you are on a bike, something happens in your brain, it spins you into a much calmer place. It’s like hitting a reset button.”

Simon Mottram, founder and former Chief Executive of cycling brand Rapha.

THINGS TO BUILD UPON

People reported

**A STRONG SENSE
OF BELONGING**

to the local area

There was a feeling that the
**LOCAL COMMUNITY
WAS FUNCTIONING
WELL**

People were much

**MUCH MORE LIKELY TO
STOP TO TALK TO
NEIGHBOURS**

compared to the country as a whole



Yesterday, Tomorrow by Steven Wilson in Claremont Park

COMMUNITY

PRIORITIES

We held five online discussion groups with representatives from the local community and community leaders. The team wanted to ensure that what local people treasure is captured and measured – before, during and after the regeneration. These community-driven themes will inform our priorities and the direction of our research in the coming years.

SOCIAL SPACES

Places for people of all ages to socialise, particularly teenagers. More support for community projects.

NEW AMENITIES

Community amenities, a large park with multiple functions, community centred high street with affordable independent shops, exercise amenities.

PUBLIC SPACE

Cleaner, tidier streets. Safer streets with improved lighting, benches, and safer cycle paths.

EMPLOYMENT

More meaningful work in a variety of sectors, including professional jobs and part-time opportunities for older people.

HOUSING

Improved housing quality and affordable homes.

INEQUALITY

The baseline found evidence of inequality in and around Brent Cross. Individual wellbeing was lowest among the unemployed, long-term sick, disabled and persons without qualifications. Ethnic minorities reported lower levels of social wellbeing.

Kunle Barker

Placemaker, Writer, Broadcaster



The concept of using a scientific dataset to gauge flourishing is absolutely brilliant. We all carry our own notions of what wellbeing looks like, but without a more objective approach, it's easy to default to personal biases.

Given the project's vast scale and extended timeline, there's a unique chance to adapt and evolve along with it. The Flourishing Index will act as a valuable feedback loop, enabling the team to assess ongoing efforts and make informed adjustments, which in turn will ensure the project's success by fine-tuning strategies and processes in response to real-time insights and emerging challenges.

When discussing Flourishing, it's essential to consider improving residents' and visitors' access to opportunities—opportunities to learn, be healthier, gain new skills, and be part of a community. These opportunities are fundamental in enabling individuals, and thus communities, to thrive and grow.

I was born just a mile from Brent Cross Town, but as a child, my parents didn't feel the local area offered the right opportunities for a young family, prompting us to move 30 miles north to a small Bedfordshire village. Imagine if we could create such compelling opportunities at Brent Cross Town that people no longer felt the need to leave London for a fulfilling life? The Flourishing Index aims to make this a reality.

We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to redefine what it means to live in an edge-of-city urban environment. Imagine a neighbourhood that's not only vibrant and exciting but also promotes health, happiness, and connection to nature and each other. This is what the Flourishing Index can help Brent Cross Town achieve.



HOW ARE WE RESPONDING?



The main aim of the Flourishing Index is to create feedback loops that will shape the development journey at Brent Cross Town so that we can create a place where people truly flourish.

By building on positive findings and addressing the negatives, we hope to move the dial on people's wellbeing over time.

Over the next 10+ years we will have the unique opportunity to use the feedback from the on-going research to guide our decisions as the new town evolves, learning from lived experiences, both good and bad, and re-directing our efforts accordingly.

Some findings, like poor outdoor air quality or low rates of active travel, will take longer to influence, but working with local communities we're already starting to take action on other fronts. You can see some examples in the following pages.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Social spaces and amenities

Building on the strong sense of belonging and neighbourliness and addressing high rates of loneliness.



Craft activities in the Events Cabin, Claremont Park

How is Brent Cross Town responding:

Claremont Park and Exploratory Park are spaces for children and adults to gather, be active, explore nature and relax. The parks host a range of events and workshops. The events programme is designed to be inclusive, with a wide range of activities for all ages, with most of the events free of charge.

We believe in the transformative impact of public art on wellbeing. We have already partnered with five exciting artists since 2021 to improve public spaces. Brent Cross West station for example is home to a huge piece of public art by celebrated Barnet-raised artist Giles Round.

The Brent Cross Town Community Fund is delivering vital resources to local grassroots organisations. Over the past five years £180k has been invested in 52 projects, with a further £50k of funding being delivered this year. The local community helps to decide how the fund is allocated.

On completion, there will be over 50 new shops, cafes and restaurants including a new, vibrant high street, Merchant Street. Brent Cross Town Visitor Pavilion and the newly opened shops, cafes and workshops on Claremont Way have created a new hub for socialising.

A new community centre is being built towards 2026 and will be the first community space in Brent Cross Town. The space will provide opportunities for local communities to engage in training, social activities, hobbies and many other programmes organised by local organisations.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Improved public spaces

Addressing the underuse of local green spaces, and the low rates of active travel.



Visualisation of Clitterhouse Playing Fields

How is Brent Cross Town responding:

At 44 acres, Clitterhouse Playing Fields is larger than Green Park. The space is being transformed with landscaping, planting and improved drainage to create much more accessible, open space for relaxing, ball games, kite flying and picnics.

New sport and play facilities will include an all-wheel park, bouldering area, boules court as well as football and hockey pitches and a mini-golf course.

The new Brent Cross West station is an award-winning visual landmark for the area, setting the tone for the future development and its green, net-zero carbon ambitions.

The station provides a crucial connection to central London, with trains taking as little as 12 minutes.

A new pedestrian footbridge, installed within Brent Cross West station, is set over the railway tracks and makes it easier for people not only to get to the newly opened train station but also creates new connections between the areas of Brent and Barnet for the first time in 150 years.

The new streets are designed to be bike-friendly with safer, segregated cycle routes along the main thoroughfares and bike parking throughout the neighbourhood including 60 spaces at the new train station and family-friendly cycle access in Claremont Park.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Providing meaningful employment

**Addressing the low rates of job satisfaction
and perceived lack of opportunity.**

How is Brent Cross Town responding:

An Employment and Skills Action Plan developed with Barnet Council connects the local community to quality jobs, training and business opportunities in Brent Cross Town. This includes a hyper-local employment programme to reach under-represented groups by giving grants to local grassroots organisations.

Working with Women into Construction (alongside Barnet Council and our contractors) towards targets of 20% local people into construction jobs and 6% of the workforce across the development in apprenticeships.

Starting in 2024, a free recruitment service, BX Recruit, will match local people with jobs in the neighbourhood whilst also providing CV and Employability support alongside BOOST - Barnet's employment team.

A new skills centre in Brent Cross Town will be training local people and working close with contractors. This will allow local people to have the right skills in place for the job opportunities created by the development.



Women in construction

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Providing quality homes and affordable housing.

How is Brent Cross Town responding:

In 2024, the first residents to move into Brent Cross Town will be from social housing, as part of our partnership with Barnet Council and L&Q.

The Flourishing Playbook, is a designers guide created to assist our teams to embed wellbeing in the design of homes, workplaces, public and our retail and leisure spaces.



COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Increasing female participation in sport.

Women in Sport is guiding us on best practices to ensure that women and girls feel catered for in the sport and play facilities at Brent Cross Town.

In 2023 we sponsored the Barnet Nightingales Football Club to launch London's largest girls-only coaching programme, which provides free football training to girls aged 6 to 16.

We're participating in the Big Sister programme, which helps teenage girls find and reclaim the joy of sports and exercise.

Clitterhouse Playing Fields is being designed to meet the needs of women and girls. The facilities will be programmed with activities and sports that are popular with all genders.

"Too many women and girls currently miss out due to gender stereotypes and cultural norms. Brent Cross Town is a rare example of new thinking that has the power to break that pattern."

Stephanie Hillbourne, CEO of charity, Women in Sport



THE FUTURE OF THE FLOURISHING INDEX

OUR BASELINE IS JUST THE

BEGINNING!

The Flourishing Index will run for at least 10 years. We'll capture new research every year and publish the results every 2-3 years.

We know that there is work to do to improve people's general happiness and sense of worth, and to combat loneliness. Harnessing community assets, such as a local sense of belonging, will be a key part of achieving success.

We know that there are instances where levels of wellbeing are uneven and unjust, with lower scores for several groups, including people aged between 25 and 34, ethnic minorities, those out of work, and those without qualifications.

These findings raise the importance of equitable and inclusive interventions at Brent Cross Town, targeted at those who may be disadvantaged by their social and economic circumstances.

We are not measuring our impact for the sake of it; we are measuring our impact to understand what works, what doesn't, and how we can do better.



Community interpretation

One key next step is to explore the findings of the baseline work together with the community and local stakeholders. This will allow us to combine the research team's interpretation with the community's own interpretation. This participatory process will give us crucial insights and help shape our direction and focus as we move forward.



artist Lakwena and architects IF_DO in front of 'Here we Comes, Here we Rise'

The next stage of the Index

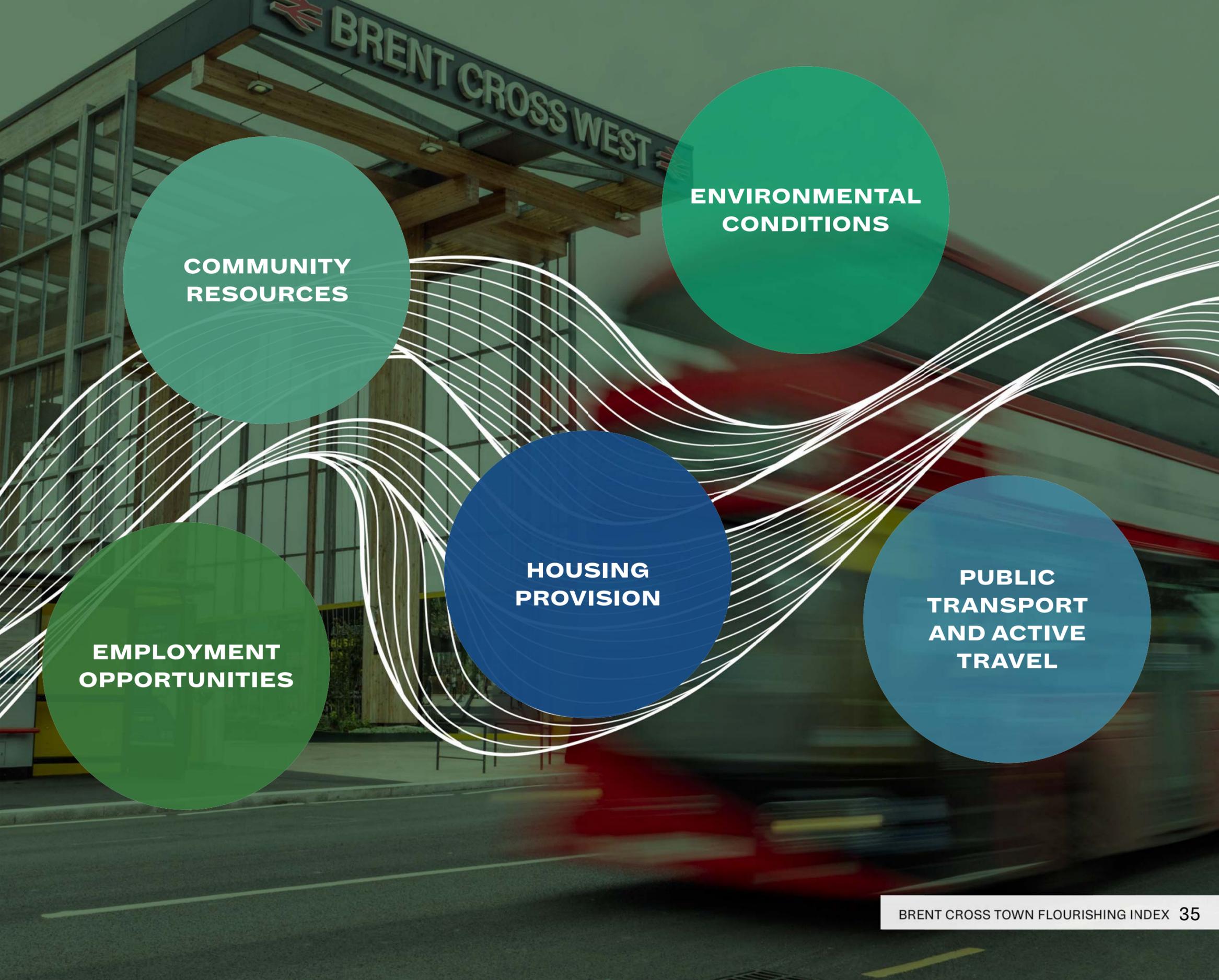
Using the baseline work, the team has started to design the next research stage. Our main question remains:

How can the regeneration of Brent Cross Town improve the local population's wellbeing?

The research team has drafted a set of research paths to explore with the community and stakeholders as we move forward. These paths were based on a combination of insights from the local community workshops (in 2021), the findings of the first round of wellbeing data collection, and the latest thinking from the wellbeing science field.

Research Pathways

These research paths will relate to specific aspects of the regeneration. For example, we'd like to look at how improvements to public transport and making the roads and pathways bike and pedestrian-friendly impacts wellbeing, air quality, and how active people are.



**COMMUNITY
RESOURCES**

**ENVIRONMENTAL
CONDITIONS**

**HOUSING
PROVISION**

**EMPLOYMENT
OPPORTUNITIES**

**PUBLIC
TRANSPORT
AND ACTIVE
TRAVEL**

We aim to expand the scope of the research with the next phase.

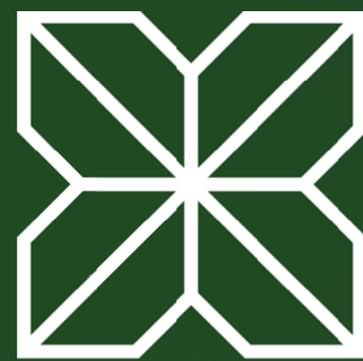
Technology will be central to our efforts, as it allows us to accelerate data collection and analysis cost-effectively.

As we move forward, we are seeking funding and new partnerships to further this groundbreaking work. We're excited to bring Sheffield Hallam University into the Flourishing Index project, as they open their London-based campus in Brent Cross Town. Alongside Barnet Council, the University of Manchester, Buro Happold and Related Argent, Sheffield Hallam will play a pivotal part in this study in the coming years.



"The Flourishing Index is a smart concept of evaluating a neighbourhood. For us at the World Urban Pavilion and the UN Quality of Life Initiative, it is very valuable to learn from Brent Cross Town and we anticipate working together in many countries across the world."

Eduardo López Moreno, co-Director of the World Urban Pavilion & UN Quality of Life initiative expert



Brent Cross Town

A partnership between

