



# Creating socially sustainable places

We believe creating places that are socially sustainable is critical for people and planet. All of Social Life's work is about the relationship between people and places.

# Who we work with

## Private sector

Acton Gardens LLP  
British Land  
Berkeley Homes  
Cisco  
Countryside  
Design District  
Gardiner & Theobald  
General Projects  
Grainger PLC  
Grosvenor  
Hawkins\Brown  
igloo regeneration  
Ikea Centres  
Kaizen  
Matter Architecture  
Metropolitan Workshop  
Oxford University  
Developments  
Railpen Investments  
ZCD Architects

## Public sector

Barking Council  
Brent Council  
British Council  
Cheltenham Borough  
Council

Croydon Council  
Dagenham Council  
Design Council  
Greater London Authority  
Hackney Council  
Hounslow Council  
Homes England  
Lambeth Council  
Lewisham Council  
OPDC  
South Cambridgeshire Council  
Sevenfields PCT  
Southwark Council  
Sutton Council  
Waltham Forest Council

## Third sector organisations

Age UK  
Barnwood Trust  
Battersea Power  
Station Foundation  
Blackwall Reach Trust  
Castle Vale Community  
Housing  
Grow London CIC  
Guy's & St Thomas' Charity  
Forest CLT  
Lejerbo

## Locality

A New Direction  
New Economics Foundation  
People's Health Trust  
Pembroke House  
Power to Change  
Quality of Life Foundation  
Realdania Foundation  
Really Local Group  
Social Innovation Exchange  
Team London Bridge  
Thames Chase Trust  
Wandsworth Arts  
What Works Centre  
for Wellbeing

## Housing associations

L&Q  
Notting Hill Genesis  
Peabody  
Pioneer Group  
Swan Housing Group

## Universities & Academics

Leeds Beckett University  
LSE Cities  
University of Ljubljana  
UCL

*"Your Design for Social Sustainability is one of the very few reports which I think has currency beyond its immediate context. For me it was ground-breaking because of the clarity with which it connected hard, physical infrastructure with social infrastructure and community development."*

(Nick Wright, Principal, Nick Wright Planning)

*"Their research is thorough and offers a range of methods adapted to the specific needs and circumstances at hand. Social Life's researchers are engaging and have a wide breadth of knowledge for both residents and stakeholders, gauging the full scope of the challenges and opportunities of each scheme."*

(Sherine McFarlane, Head of Social & Economic Investment, Notting Hill Genesis)

*"Social Life are pioneers of social value in place, working tirelessly with and for communities to ensure that local need and resilient community infrastructure is a fundamental part of every development plan. Social Life informed our own understanding of what makes a good place to live, and we would recommend them to anyone interested in finding out the opportunities and challenges for people in place."*

(Matthew Morgan, Director and Co-founder, Quality of Life Foundation)

# What we do

Social Life works with built environment professionals, including architects, planners, regeneration teams, designers and investors, to put social value and sustainability at the heart of what we do.

Since 2011, Social Life's work has been underpinned by our Social Sustainability Framework, which includes four key dimensions. This framework was developed in 2011 for Homes England - then the Homes and Communities Agency.

At the core of Social Life's approach is understanding how people's day-to-day experience of local places is shaped by the built environment - housing, public spaces, parks and local high streets - and how change, through regeneration, new development or small improvements to public spaces, impacts the social fabric, opportunities and wellbeing of local areas.

We bring this understanding to the process of planning, designing and stewardship of place.



# Our impact

Social Life's Social Sustainability Framework has been tried and tested for over a decade. Our impact is demonstrated through the plans and strategies that our work has shaped. We achieve this by giving regeneration teams, planners, developers, architects and designers, community organisations and engagement teams insight into the detail of the impact of change on daily life and what needs to be done to improve wellbeing.

The demand for Social Life's expertise and our body of knowledge has increased alongside increased demand for social value and social infrastructure expertise. We offer our clients a pathway towards meaningfully achieving ESG requirements and delivering place-based social value.

# A research-led approach based on core values

Social Life works in a range of ways, tailoring our offer depending on each project's goals, needs and requirements.

## Practical projects



### Social sustainability assessments

Our post occupancy assessments track the long-term social impact of new urban development, regeneration programmes and neighbourhood initiatives. We work with planners, architects, housing providers and local authorities to measure the social sustainability of large-scale developments using Social Life's Social Sustainability Framework.

Social Life also works with delivery partners to ensure that the recommendations of each project shape future phasing, design, social infrastructure and site development.



### Social infrastructure strategy

Social Life has developed expertise in understanding how social infrastructure supports thriving neighbourhoods. We advise our partners on social infrastructure needs and provision in areas undergoing change and develop plans that include partnerships, governance and financing strategies.





## Place-based social value delivery

Social Life works closely with designers to deliver place-based social value. Using local research, we devise a local social value agenda that new proposals must align to, with specific spatial, operational and governance recommendations.



## Policy and influence

Social Life is more than the sum of its parts. We use our research to work with public sector bodies to shape local policy, including creating best practice toolkits to support them to put policy into practice.

# Engagement & participation



## Theory of change development

Social Life works with clients to codesign theories of change, discussing shared goals and identifying pathways to achieve social impacts.



## Community engagement

We carry out intensive community based engagement to involve local people in the decisions affecting their neighbourhood. Our approach goes beyond the traditional consulting that merely confirms decisions already made. Rather, we enable participants to imagine together what a thriving and sustainable neighbourhood can look like.

Social Life also brings this process to the design development stages and works with architects and planners to deliver meaningful engagement.



# Projects

## **South Acton social sustainability Commissioned by Acton Gardens LLP (L&Q & Countryside joint venture).**

Social Sustainability Assessments were carried out in 2014, 2017, 2021 and 2023, focusing on wellbeing, community strength and attitudes towards regeneration. Each report includes recommendations for design, management and social infrastructure, which have been implemented by the development team, directly influencing the phasing of work, the provision of new facilities and the deepening of community engagement.



## **Beehive retail park redevelopment social infrastructure strategy, Cambridge**

**Commissioned by Railpen, 2022.**

Social Life conducted a comprehensive assessment of existing community assets, amenities, and local perceptions in the vicinity of a retail site planned to become a mixed-use technology and life science development. From this research, Social Life crafted a place-based set of values for the public areas of the development, and an approach to tackle local challenges. These parameters served as the foundation for a social infrastructure strategy, facilitating the project's integration into the surrounding neighbourhood and community.

## Kings Park council-owned assets strategy

Commissioned by Hackney Council, 2023 in partnership with Matter Architecture.

Social Life evaluated six council-owned buildings and one public space in the King's Park ward, assessing their social value, management structure, and physical condition. Recommendations were developed and a collaborative process with Hackney Council culminated in a ward-wide social infrastructure strategy, outlining a series of phased place-shaping projects.



## Brent youth anchor social value framework

Commissioned by Brent Council, 2022 in partnership with ZCD Architects.

Social Life engaged young people in co-designing a new youth space in Church End. A team of trained young researchers gathered insights from their peers, leading to a co-designed brief with core values and spatial, programmatic and governance strategies for the space.





Social Life is based in Elephant & Castle in south London but we work across the UK and internationally. We work with the private, public and third sectors, as well as community and neighbourhood groups, on research, advisory, strategy, engagement and practical projects. Our team brings together sociologists, ethnographers, architects and urban planners with engagement and policy specialists.

**If you'd like to collaborate or find out more, we'd love to hear from you!**

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SL\_Cities

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