



Measuring the social impacts of regeneration on the Aylesbury Estate

Results of the third social sustainability assessment
Summary report

June 2025



About this report

This report brings together the findings of a research project commissioned by Notting Hill Genesis into the social impacts of regeneration on the Aylesbury Estate in Southwark. An initial study was conducted in 2014-15. A second round of research took place between August 2020 and June 2021. This third round of research took place between August and October 2024, with some additional interviews in early 2025.

More about the 2020 research is on our website:
http://www.social-life.co/project/aylesbury_estate_2020/

We would like to thank the local residents, stakeholders and traders who shared their knowledge, hopes and fears with us.

We appreciate their expertise and the time they put into this work and hope the report will help bring about the changes they would like to see in their local areas.

The report was written by Joel Simpson and Larissa Begault.

Research team: Colin Campbell, Imogen Bullen-Smith, Joe Gumbrell, Joel Simpson, Larissa Begault, Lucia Caistor-Arendar, Max Cargill-Thompson, Natasha Shah and Suraya Miah.

All photos and illustrations are by Social Life.

About Social Life

Social Life was created by the Young Foundation in 2012, to become a specialist centre of research and innovation about the social life of communities. All our work is about the relationship between people and the places they live and understanding how change, through regeneration, new development or small improvements to public spaces, affects the social fabric, opportunities and wellbeing of local areas. We work in the UK and internationally.

www.social-life.co

Introduction

This report describes the findings of a research project exploring how the Aylesbury Estate regeneration programme in Southwark, south London, is currently affecting people living in the area.



Figure 1: Community gardens

Social Life was initially commissioned by the housing association Notting Hill Genesis in 2014 with the aim of exploring the social impacts of regeneration over the next two decades.

Since then, we have carried out follow-up studies every four or five years to understand how evolving local priorities and needs can inform future phases of planning, design, and management.

A first benchmark study was carried out in 2014-15 and a second round of research took place between August 2020 and June 2021. This last round of research took place between August and October 2024, with some additional interviews in early 2025.

The research findings are a snapshot of how residents are experiencing regeneration. Some of the new blocks in the First Development Site, Plot 18 and L&Q 1A and 7 are now occupied. However, large areas of the older estate remain lived in by residents, whilst there are also many vacant properties. Our current research compares how residents are faring now in comparison to 2020-21 and 2014-15.

The research captured the experience of an estate in transition. There are visible changes taking place in the form of new buildings, but there also have been extensive delays in the other phases.

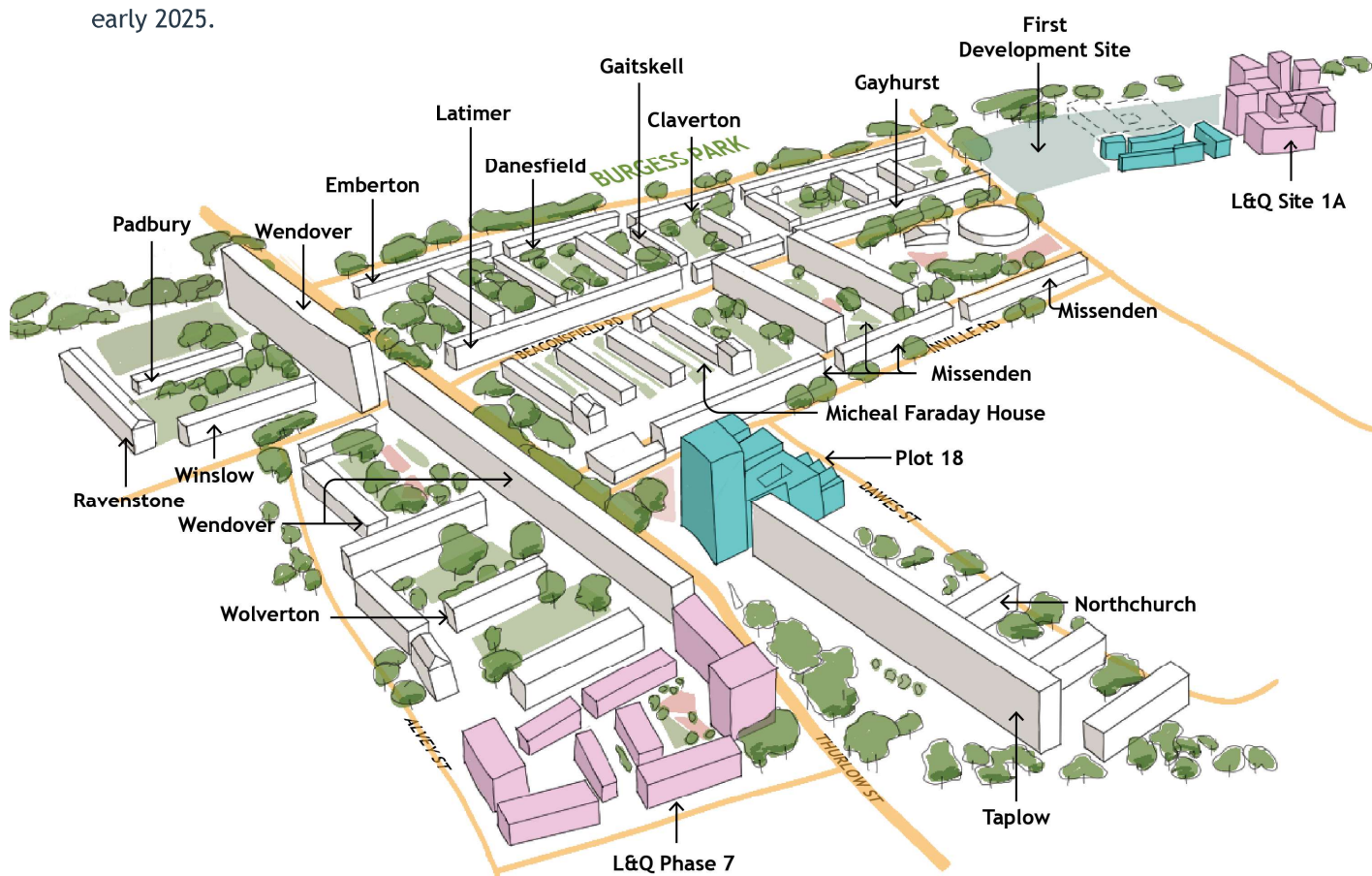


Figure 2: Aylesbury Estate block names and new phases



Figure 3: View of completed Phase 1a from Westmoreland Road

There is uncertainty on the timing and future of the redevelopment of the older blocks. Large sections of the estate are vacant, giving a sense of abandonment to these areas and aggravating safety concerns.

The research took place shortly after the peak of the cost-of-living crisis, which intensified existing social pressures and economic instability within the estate. These contextual factors are crucial for understanding the research findings.

Southwark Council and Notting Hill Genesis intend to continue to repeat this assessment every three years throughout the regeneration programme. This report sets out the findings of the 2024-25 research presented to Notting Hill Genesis.

Thank you to all the residents, former residents, traders and local stakeholders who contributed to this research.

The social sustainability assessment

Everyday life on the Aylesbury Estate has continued to change between 2020-21 and 2024-25. Increasing numbers of vacancies, disrepair, population churn, the replacement of longer-standing residents with more vulnerable people on temporary tenancies have all impacted community life and a sense of safety.

The cost-of-living crisis and ongoing impacts of the pandemic still significantly impact the quality of life of residents on the estate. In spite of this, some key assets remain: neighbourliness and sense of belonging remain high and voluntary and community organisations operating in the area are providing valued and important services to residents. We have revisited the assessment summary of 2020-21 and updated the assessment wheel with the data collected in this round of the research.



Amenities & Social Infrastructure

While the provision of services remains a strength of the estate, many of the valued organisations have closed down or been relocated in the last five years, those remaining are oversubscribed, and some remaining services are precarious.

The assessment of this category has **remained weak**.



Social & Cultural Life

This **remains weak** as while belonging and social cohesion is high, issues of safety have a significant impact on public life but also on the way organisations are able to outreach and run their programmes.



Voice & Influence

This is **unchanged, remaining weak**. Residents continued to report feeling powerless and unsure of the process of regeneration.



Adaptability & Resilience

This has been **downgraded to weak** as the residents are still greatly impacted by the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis.

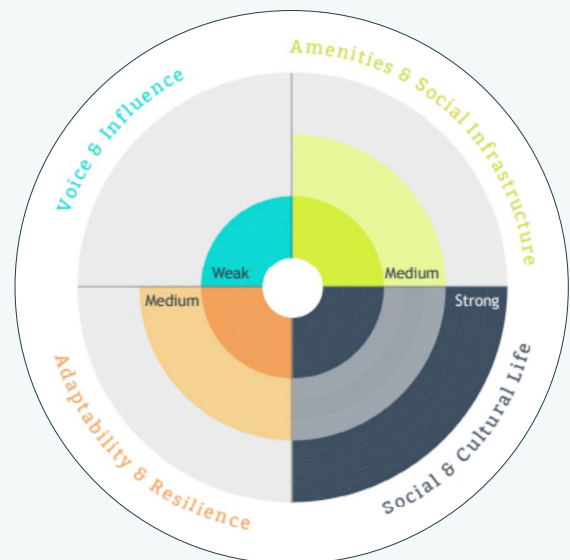
Aylesbury Estate social sustainability 2014-15

Voice & Influence: Low sense of influence, control and involvement in actions to shape environment.

Amenities & Social Infrastructure: Good schools, health services, transport, green spaces. Poor quality environment.

Social & Cultural Life: Good neighbourliness, sense of belonging, community cohesion.

Adaptability & Resilience: Adaptable population, good social supports. High poverty and vulnerability.



Aylesbury Estate social sustainability 2020-21

Voice & Influence: Low sense of influence, control and involvement in actions to shape environment.

Amenities & Social Infrastructure: Good schools, health services, transport, green spaces. Poor quality environment, lack of community spaces.

Social & Cultural Life: Good neighbourliness, decrease in sense of belonging and community cohesion.

Adaptability & Resilience: Adaptable population, good social supports. High poverty and vulnerability.



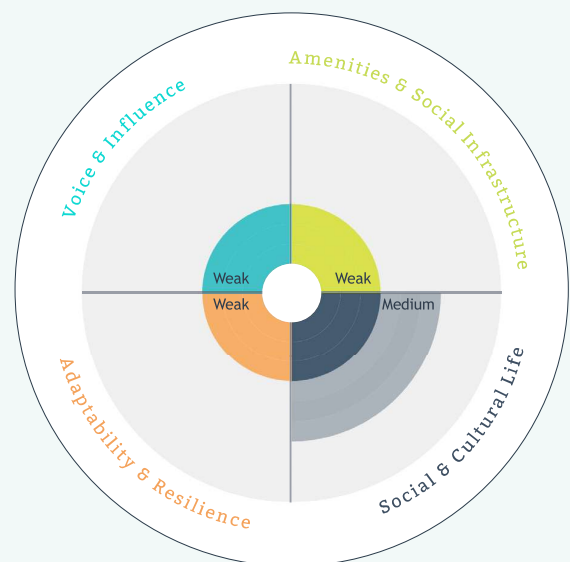
Aylesbury Estate social sustainability 2024-25

Voice & Influence: Low sense of influence, control and involvement in actions to shape environment.

Amenities & Social Infrastructure: Good schools, health services, transport, green spaces. Poor quality environment and increase in closures or relocation of community spaces and programmes.

Social & Cultural Life: High neighbourliness and sense of belonging but significant decrease in perception of safety.

Adaptability & Resilience: Adaptable population with some good social supports. High poverty and vulnerability, compounded by COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis.



Research methods

The aim of the research was to understand the everyday experience of people living and working in the Aylesbury Estate regeneration area and how this has changed over time. It explores how residents feel about their lives on the estate, what people feel about the neighbourhood and their neighbours, and about their situation at a time of significant change.

People living on the estate come from a very diverse range of nationalities, ethnicities and backgrounds which reflects the superdiversity of this part of Southwark. There are long-standing residents remaining on the estate but at the same time the population churn noted in 2014-15 and 2020-21 has continued.

Residents living in different blocks face very different housing circumstances, and the changes that are taking place are being experienced in many different ways. New residents from outside the estate have moved into Plot 18 and the First Development Site, alongside Aylesbury residents rehoused from blocks to be demolished.

Some secure tenants and leaseholders have been rehoused while others have moved away. Packages A and B of the First Development Site have delivered 581 new homes for secure council tenancy. In the estate as a whole, there continues to be a high number of residents on temporary tenancies.

In the blocks of Phases 3 and 4, in the later stages of the redevelopment programme, the resident population has been more stable as demolition is not imminent and secure tenants have not yet been encouraged to move. However even in these blocks some secure tenants and leaseholders are choosing to move away to manage disruption and uncertainty.



Figure 4: Bird's eye view from Burgess Park of the regeneration area and wider context. Source: Google Earth.

To try and capture the breadth of experiences on the estate, the research strategy was mixed in approach, as no one single research method would reveal enough to build an understanding of the lives of Aylesbury's residents. This research mimics the last round in 2020-21 which put a greater emphasis on qualitative data gathered through a smaller number of more intensive and in-depth interviews.

A snapshot of everyday life and feelings about the regeneration has been built through a collection of primary data gathered from stakeholder interviews, street interviews with residents, interviews with traders, walks and ethnographic observations. Secondary statistical data has been collected from various government agencies and the local authority, Southwark Council.



Figure 5: Aylesbury Community Garden mural

Research themes

Social Life uses four key domains to assess the social sustainability of an area:

 Amenities & Social Infrastructure	Facilities & support services for individuals & communities: schools, social spaces, transport & community workers; spaces and places that allow people to meet and develop their social relationships.
 Social & Cultural Life	Sense of belonging, wellbeing, community cohesion, safety, relationships with neighbours, relationships between people from different backgrounds & local social networks.
 Voice & Influence	Residents' ability & willingness to take action to shape the local environment; structures to represent residents & engage them in shaping local decisions; residents' sense of agency and control over their daily life in the neighbourhood.
 Adaptability & Resilience	Flexible planning; housing, services & infrastructure that can adapt over time; adaptable use of buildings & public space; ability to withstand future economic and social shocks.

For the initial research in 2014, the household survey results were benchmarked against what would be expected in comparable areas. This assessment of the estate in comparison to other similar areas across the UK gives an initial overview of how the area is faring as a whole.¹

The 2020 research increased the use of qualitative methods to gain more in-depth data. This round of research mimics the survey questions carried out in the last round. As such, a robust comparison can be made to help understand the changes that have occurred since then.

1. This approach has been developed by Social Life to help understand how areas are faring. It enables a prediction to be made of how residents are likely to feel about their neighbourhoods, their sense of belonging, their fear of crime, their wellbeing, and their relationships with their neighbours and between different groups living in an area.

For more information see:
http://www.social-life.co/publication/understanding_local_areas/

Who we spoke to

In total, 110 different residents and former residents, and 27 stakeholders, were interviewed for this research, and 47 young people were engaged through workshops.

The main research findings were taken from in-depth street interviews, walking interviews and in-depth interviews with local agencies, traders and stakeholders.

100

street interviews
with residents



22

in-depth interviews
with agencies and
local stakeholders

5

trader
interviews

47

young people
engaged



10

walking
ethnographies with
residents and ex-
residents



Key findings

Amenities & Social Infrastructure



The research highlights that resident concerns about conditions of the estate have intensified since the last round of research in 2020. This is partly driven by the neglect of the blocks that have been decanted and left empty. While overall dissatisfaction with housing has slightly decreased since 2020, just under half of all residents remain negative about their current situation. This dissatisfaction is notably higher among residents in temporary accommodation and Phase 4 of the development.

In addition, the survey highlights that there is a noticeable increase in feelings that local amenities have closed or left the estate. Mapping the past and present social infrastructure of the area reveals that there are more amenities that have closed than newly opened. Some of the valued places such as Giraffe House and Creation CIC have remained closed. During the time of this research, the office housing NHG's social and economic investment programme moved off the estate because of safety concerns.

Conversely, local Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations that are still operating are highly valued by residents but are struggling to meet the increased demand for their services. Despite these challenges, green spaces and outdoor areas have emerged as important for building local support networks, with Burgess Park specifically cited as a highly successful and valued space by residents.



Figure 6: Aylesbury Estate outdoor gym

Social & Cultural Life



The perception of belonging to the area remains high, and is significantly higher than in other comparable areas. Social cohesion has increased - now 84% up from 69% - for the first time since we started research on the Aylesbury, this is very similar to comparable areas.

However, perception of safety is weaker in street interviews, and is a significant concern reported in walking and stakeholder interviews. These concerns have a direct impact on how services are able to conduct outreach and deliver their services. Young people also shared major concerns about their safety, with young women specifically describing the need for increased provision of indoor youth spaces, as it was felt they lacked the same level of access to safe outdoor space as their male peers.

Voice & Influence



Residents' sense of voice and influence remains very low. The majority of street interviewees did not feel like they had a say over what happens in the local area (65.3%). This is lower than what is expected in comparable areas.

The research shows that residents not involved in formal networks, like Tenants and Residents Associations, are often unaware of the regeneration's status, process, or how to engage with its different phases. Those already engaged report feeling a lack of clarity on the demolition timeline and future phases. The need to diversify engagement channels and methods to reach the breadth of resident groups was frequently highlighted.

In addition, there were concerns raised over transparency, the actioning of resident feedback into decision-making around the regeneration, and the lack of clarity on planning processes and the purpose of consultations.



Figure 7: Aylesbury Estate, view from Dawes Street

Adaptability & Resilience



The impacts of COVID-19 and the more recent cost-of-living crisis are still widely felt, with 80% of street interviewees feeling this is negatively impacting their daily lives. This is echoed by a majority of walking interviews. 50% of the street interviewees feel the financial burden of the cost of living, 17% are experiencing financial distress and reporting that they are unable to meet their own basic needs such as food, shelter and heating. These are significant impacts that are negatively affecting the wellbeing and mental health of residents.

Stakeholders described several innovative and successful community projects that were responding to issues relating to COVID-19. However, in each case organisations were working with groups who were already engaged with them before the pandemic and are now facing challenges to meet wider demand.

In spite of these vulnerabilities, residents report that social networks are relatively strong and have remained stable since the last assessment. Stakeholders raised more concerns that social supports have weakened.



Figure 8: Aylesbury Estate, Wendover

Feelings about the regeneration:

Overall, perceptions of the regeneration have improved since the last round of research; 55% respondents now feel positive about the changes taking place, the equivalent figure in 2021 was 33%.

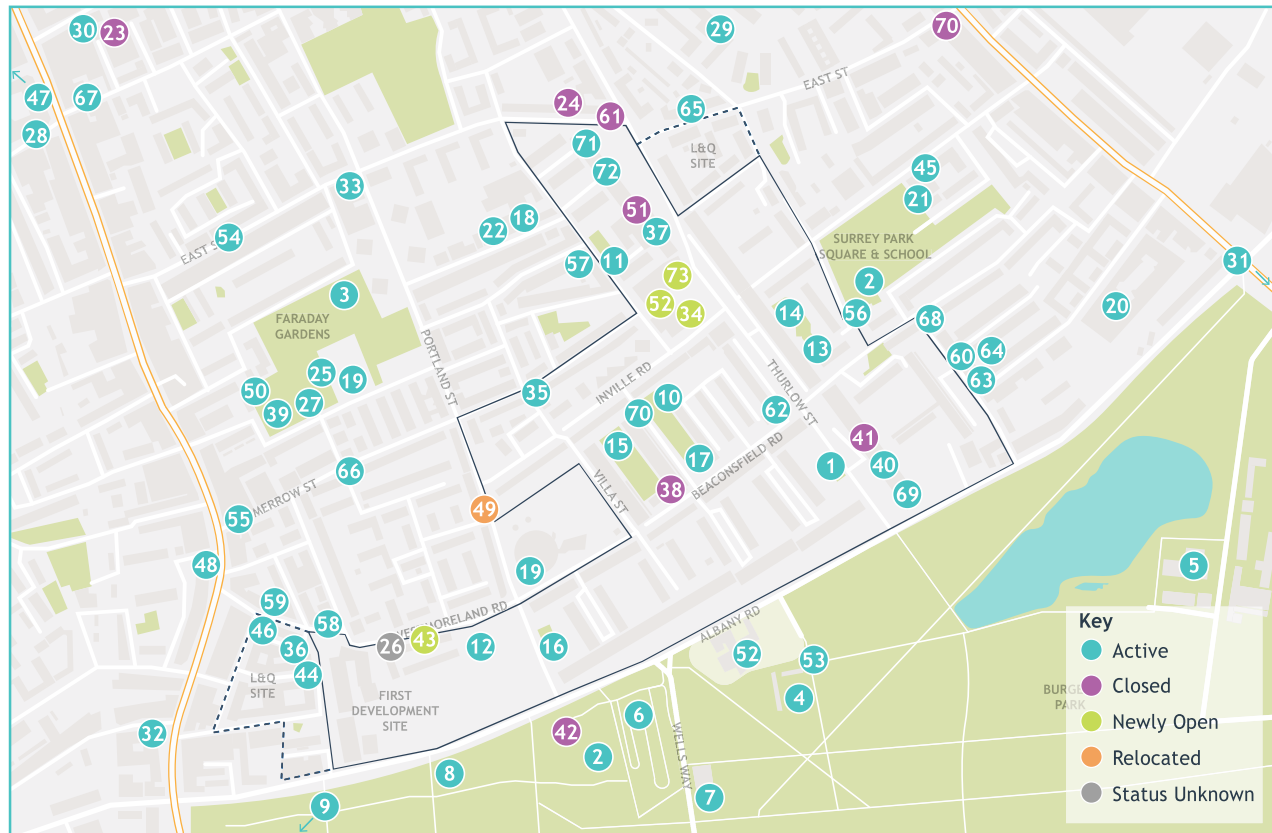
In the majority of cases, positive sentiments were framed by the regeneration having already started, and seeing the new buildings constructed and used.

Some concerns were raised about the costs and the design of new social rent homes and crime was reported in the empty properties awaiting demolition. Young people see regeneration through a mixed lens. They are excited for the positive changes of renovation of spaces but worried about the potential loss of community and social infrastructure.



Figure 9: Aylesbury Estate, view from Burgess Park

Figure 10: Asset map of the Aylesbury Estate regeneration area, June 2025



Parks, gardens, playgrounds, and sport facilities

1. Thurlow Street MUGA
2. Surrey Square Park
3. Faraday Gardens
4. Chumleigh Gardens
5. Southwark Tigers Rugby Club
6. Burgess Park BMX
7. Lynn Boxing Academy
8. Burgess Park outdoor gym
9. Burgess Park Tennis Centre
10. Aylesbury Community gardens
11. Dawes Street playground & MUGA
12. FDS Outdoor Play space
13. Small MUGA
14. Young children's play space
15. Michael Faraday Green
16. Gayhurst basketball pitch
17. Aylesbury outdoor gym

Education

18. University Academy of Engineering Southbank
19. Michael Faraday Primary School
20. ARK Walworth Academy
21. Surrey Square Primary School
22. Sacred Heart RC Secondary School
23. Saint John's Walworth School
24. Dyason pre-school
25. St Peter's Primary School
26. Mother Nature Science

Faith and religious

27. Peters Church of England
28. United Pentecostal Church
29. Pembroke House
30. St Johns Walworth Church
31. Old Kent Road Mosque and Islamic Centre
32. Walworth Methodist Church
33. East Street Baptist Church

Health

34. Harold Moody Health Centre
35. Villa Medical Centre
36. Southwark Wellbeing Hub
37. Aylesbury Health Centre & Pharmacy

Community facilities and services

38. Creation Southwark CIC
39. Trampoline CIC at St Peter's
40. Thurlow Lodge Community Hall
41. Divine Rescue foodbank
42. Giraffe House
43. Mentivity Community House
44. Southwark Resource Centre
45. Walworth Living Room
46. Citizens Advice Southwark
47. 2Inspire (**Operating less frequently*)
48. Southwark Works
49. Community Cycleworks
50. Abi and Fam Creative Zone
51. NHG Social and Investment Programme

Early years

52. First Place Children's Centre

Food, shops, and markets

53. Stomping Grounds Cafe Burgess Park (**Operating less frequently*)
54. East Street Market
55. Mellow Street shops (various)
56. Grove Food and Wine
57. Chris Convenient Store
58. Westmoreland Street shops and barbers (various)
59. Arments - Pie, Mash & Eels
60. Amigos Mediterranean Restaurant (**Operating less frequently*)
61. Sussan Coin Wash & Laundrette
62. The Hour Glass pub and hotel
63. Dambuk - Afro Caribbean Grocery
64. Shanghai Surprise
65. East Street shops (various)
66. Queen Elizabeth Pub

Safety

67. Walworth Police Station
68. Londis Store - safe house

TRAs

69. Thurlow Lodge TRA
70. Aylesbury TRA

Arts and culture

71. ASC art studios
72. TURPS art school
73. Una Mason Library

Social Life is an independent research organisation created by the Young Foundation in 2012, to become a specialist centre of research and innovation about the social life of communities. Our work is about 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, affects the social fabric, opportunities and wellbeing of local areas.

www.social-life.co

