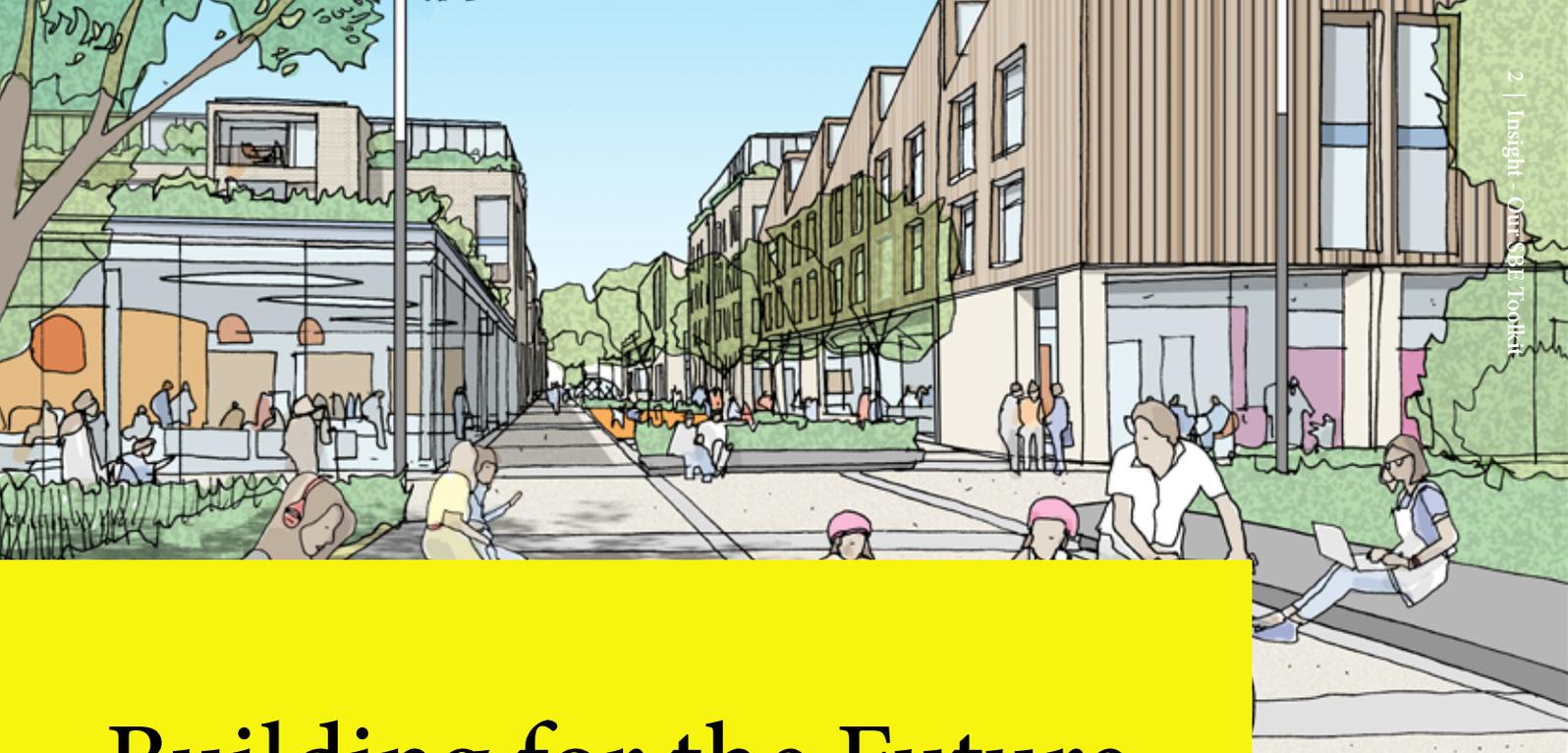


ADP's SBE Toolkit

Our *sustainability, belonging* and *engagement* toolkit is our new way of measuring the positive social and environmental impact of every project we do – ultimately helping us to bring more joy to our world.





Building for the Future

Architects keep looking at the future and the bigger picture. There aren't many professions which literally design the world around us – let alone the world of twenty, fifty, or even a hundred years from now. But in designing buildings and skylines, cities and communities, architects do just that. This means that our responsibility isn't just to clients: it's to the communities and individuals who will use our projects, now and into the future.

This creates an exciting challenge for a practice like ADP. How can we ensure that we're fulfilling that responsibility? How can we actually measure the impact that we're having – from sustainable design to that spark of joy a person feels when they walk into a well-designed space? We're not alone in facing that challenge: many businesses, architectural or otherwise, have grappled with the idea of measuring social value. But when we decided to develop our own way of doing this, we wanted to come at it from a distinctly "ADP" angle.

The key, then, was getting a handle on what real value actually means for us. Our experience suggested three core benefits that a good architectural project should achieve: sustainability, belonging and engagement. Done well, these three principles form the building blocks of that elusive "spark of joy".

We knew that if we could design to those principles, we'd ensure that our buildings had a long-term benefit not only financially, but for people and the environment – the so-called "triple bottom line".



Images: Emerging Residential-Led Mixed-Use Regeneration project, Oxford, Stansfeld Park,



Measuring What Matters

Once we were clear on what we wanted to measure, the next step was to create a tangible way of doing that. We needed an easy-to-use tool: one that could apply to any project, from laboratory fit-outs to large housing developments, and that could meaningfully compare these. We also needed to use the tool throughout the course of a project, so that we could assess our progress and react accordingly as the design developed. Finally, it needed to be rooted in reality and not shy away from addressing difficult truths – including the twin climate and ecological crises.



Image: Braywick Court School

With this in mind, we broke down each core principle – sustainability, belonging and engagement – into a wide range of factors, each of which could be easily and meaningfully measured. For instance:

<h2>Sustainability</h2>	<p>Does the project’s energy use support a zero-carbon strategy? Does the project support local wildlife? Does it encourage sustainable travel?</p>
<h2>Belonging</h2>	<p>Does the project give opportunities for people to connect and interact? Is it integrated with the local economy?</p>
<h2>Engagement</h2>	<p>Is this a safe environment? Does it foster people’s health – both physical and mental? How about their positive emotions?</p>

In order to create a standardised approach, we pored over a range of research – including case studies and industry insights showing up-to-date best practice. We also brought our own research to the table, such as a recent study into wellbeing in design. This attention to detail paid off, and the result is a toolkit which is robust, realistic, and highly relevant. Named the SBE Toolkit (after those core principles of sustainability, belonging and engagement), it’s applicable to every sector we work in – and we’ve already tried it out on a few projects.

Introducing Our Toolkit

SUSTAINABILITY

Resource efficient, low impact buildings that rejuvenate the natural environment

BELONGING

Forming connections through community, place, identity and being part of the fabric

ENGAGEMENT

Forging the personal aspect, creating healthy and nurturing environments to enhance the everyday



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“Our core values are captured within our SBE toolkit, putting sustainability at the heart of everything we do while ensuring people and place are essential components to foster healthy, uplifting and enriching environments. We use the toolkit to help set the brief, to measure and learn how our buildings impact on those that use them, understanding the personal relationship, the sense of belonging and the enhancement of the everyday.”

Karen Turnbull, ADP's Sustainability Lead



A Process of Reflection

For the tool to work, it needs to be used properly. For instance, it's important that everyone agrees priority areas at the beginning of a project, so both client and architect know what to focus on. It's also essential to measure progress regularly, and we chose four key work stages where the tool is most relevant: feasibility, planning, completion, and POE (post-occupancy evaluation).

That last one is the most important. After all, it's impossible to be completely sure of how a building will impact people until you put those people into it. Unexpected interactions between people and their environments is one of the great risks of architecture – but much more than this, it's one of the great rewards. Students, office workers, residents, doctors – all of these can find exciting ways of getting the best possible use out of a space, ways which could never be readily apparent on the drawing board. The overwhelming response to our restoration of Spanish City in Whitley Bay is the perfect example of this: nothing in the architectural drawings could truly capture the emotion locals felt for this building, which in many cases held a special place in their childhoods. That emotion goes some way to explaining the 16,000 visitors who queued for the opening in July 2018, and the wealth of positive coverage the project has had since then.



Images from top: *Braywick Court School, Spanish City*



We've honed our approach to POEs over the past few years, and the SBE Toolkit fits neatly into this shift in focus. It's all about the questions you ask as an architect. What's worked on a day-to-day basis? What hasn't worked? What sort of activities can people carry out here? What role does the landscape play? How does the energy use measure up against our targets? By shining a light on the way the building is used – and being honest about how our design has shaped that – these questions allow us to learn valuable lessons that we can bring to bear on future projects.

For instance, we recently revisited Braywick Court School, a new primary school that we designed on the outskirts of Maidenhead. We made a point of speaking directly not only to staff but to pupils. How did they find the experience of learning there? What was their experience of the space? (It's worth remembering that children quite literally have a different perspective on architecture from adults – it's usually from a lot lower down!)



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“We would like to thank you for building our school. I love this school all thanks to you and your helpers. I am in Year 3 and I think the view is stunning! The best bit is the school in the nature reserve.”
Pupil at Braywick Court School



Images from top: *Emerging Residential-Led Mixed-Use Regeneration project*
Braywick Court School



The Toolkit in Action

We've now successfully trialled the toolkit on a number of projects within different sectors – from healthcare to residential, schools to higher education. We've also been using the toolkit to drive the development of future design concepts, such as our recent Third Space concept.

The feedback on the SBE Toolkit has been nothing but positive, which more than anything is a sign of how keen most clients are to engage with this sort of approach.

That flies in the face of accepted wisdom: that many clients are concerned first and foremost with profits, budgets and cost savings. But one of the intriguing things about working on construction projects is that – more often than not – the opposite turns out to be true. Almost everyone involved tends to see real social value as the goal, and finance as a means to achieving that. Add the fact that social and environmental value supports other aims – for instance, sustainable buildings cost less to run, and happier workers tend to be more productive – and a practical, meaningful tool to measure real value starts to look very important indeed.

What We Measure

SUSTAINABILITY

- 1 Operational Energy
- 2 Material Impact
- 3 Biodiversity Value
- 4 Sustainable Transport
- 5 Water Use

BELONGING

- 6 Placemaking and Value
- 7 Productivity + Economy
- 8 Community
- 9 Connectivity to Nature
- 10 Connection + Collaboration

ENGAGEMENT

- 11 Safety
- 12 Health Outcomes
- 13 Indoor Environment
- 14 Emotional Value
- 15 Lifestyle

Residential Development



Option 1 - Do Nothing



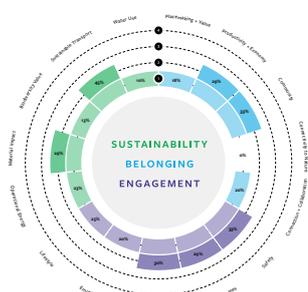
Option 2 - Retained Leisure Centre and Student Accommodation



Option 3 - Reconfigured Leisure Centre



Option 4 - New Leisure Centre



24%



70%

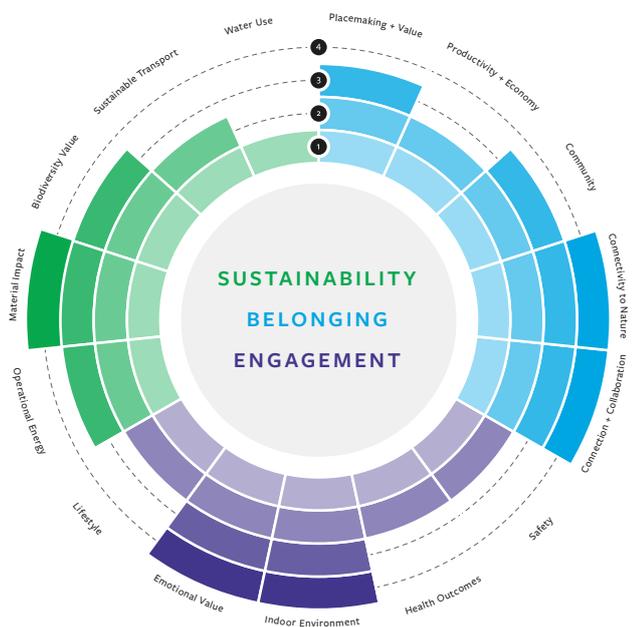


72%

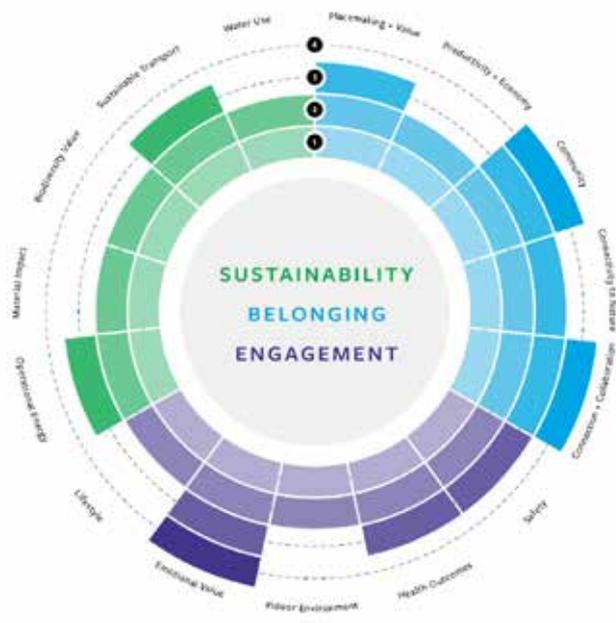


75%

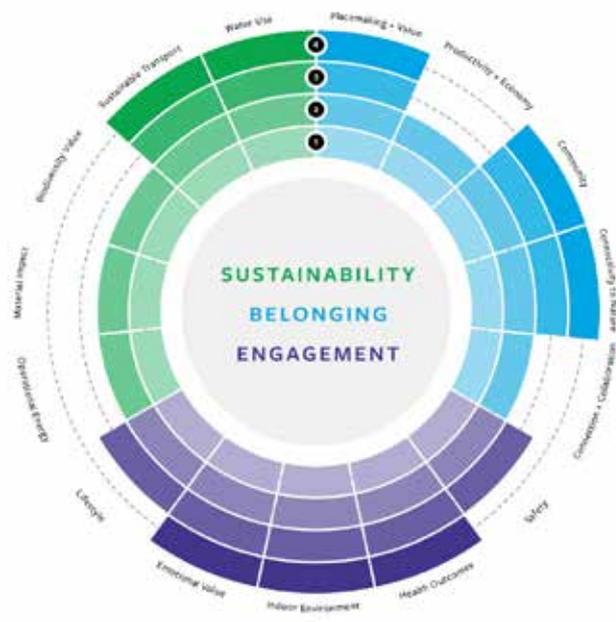
ADP's Third Space Concept



The Cove, Truro



Braywick Court School



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“We have now ‘lived’ in the building for nine months and there is not one single thing I would change about the design. The children and staff are so happy coming to school every day into such an impressive building, which is a pleasure to work and learn in.”

Gemma Donnelly, Headteacher of Braywick Court School

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