

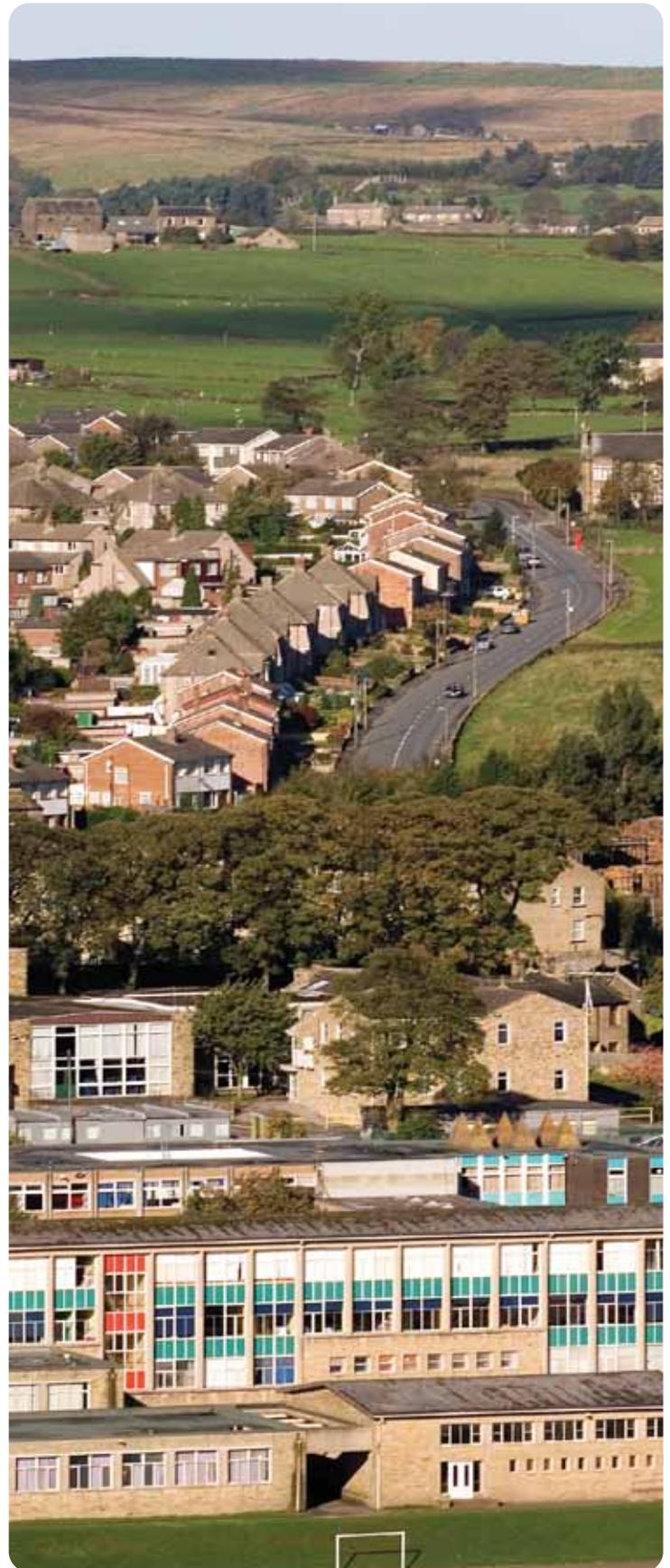
An economic, social and environmental analysis of the English suburbs

State of the suburbs



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Preface

More than 80 per cent of us live in areas that can be classified as suburban and yet 'suburbs' have played a secondary role in regeneration and urban policy. In this publication, we have deliberately set out to contend that 'city-suburbs' – to give them a label that more accurately reflects their economic, social and environmental impact today – are an organic and correlative part of inner urban centres and the vitality of the city-region. As such the suburban agenda needs to be defined clearly by those that lead suburban boroughs, their city-region counterparts, their city-region partners and central government policy makers. The London Borough of Barnet – itself a suburb - together with the Leadership Centre for Local Government and partners the New Local Government Network and the Academy for Sustainable Communities have commissioned this publication – an analysis of our suburbs today – in order to start the debate.

Leo Boland,
London Borough of Barnet, chief executive

Joe Simpson,
Leadership Centre for Local Government, director of relationships and partnerships

Executive summary



England is a heavily urbanised country, and suburbs are home to over 80 per cent of its population. Given the importance of cities to Britain's future economic prosperity, suburbs would logically figure as a key priority for Government policy. However, many now recognise suburbs are the **'forgotten dimension'** within urban policy.

This report attempts to address this omission and encourages a new understanding of the role of suburbs, reflecting the important contribution they make to the economic prosperity of cities and their city-regions. *State of the suburbs* is designed to provide a thought-provoking analysis of modern suburbs in England, and is aimed at all those with an interest in sustainable cities and city-regions.



The evidence in this report, accompanied by a range of charts and case studies, provides a snapshot of the current state of suburban England, taken at a local authority area level using 30 example councils deemed to be predominantly suburban in nature. The report assesses suburbs in the context of the '**urban renaissance**' and the knowledge economy. The urban renaissance has been the driving principle behind the Government's regeneration and renewal agenda for our towns and cities. A strong '**knowledge economy**' (one that is defined by innovative organisations that create products, processes and services based around knowledge) is the Government's economic and industrial vision for the UK, spreading growth throughout the country. Together, these ambitions form the backdrop of recent urban policy, set here within the national framework of sustainable development.

The report is presented in six chapters.

The introduction clarifies the **policy context** for the report, reviewing existing thinking on the place of suburbs within urban policy and regeneration. The timeliness of this report, and its proposals to clarify and strengthen the vision for suburban Britain is emphasised by recent policy initiatives such as the place shaping agenda proposed in the Lyons Inquiry and the HM Treasury's sub-national review of economic development and regeneration, which supports the strengthening of policy and partnerships at more localised levels.

Chapter 2 examines **suburbs as communities**, and looks at how the demographic profile of suburban England has changed in recent years. It demonstrates how suburbs have grown and developed: with an emerging profile of diverse, relatively prosperous, 'knowledge workers' forming a typical community in English suburbs. Nevertheless, the analysis shows significant variation within this profile, as well as emerging problems of social inequality.

Chapter 3 looks at **suburbs as places to live**, and explains the features of the suburban environment which attract their growing populations. The evidence reveals that suburbs are well-connected and provide a good environment for communities in terms of good quality housing, healthy lifestyles and low levels of crime. Further, they are less dependent on urban centres for services and amenities than might be expected.

Chapter 4 discusses the development of **suburbs as economies**. The growth of suburbs as homes to some of Britain's key knowledge workers has been accompanied by economic development, with many suburbs now functioning as powerful economies in their own right. The skills, or 'human capital' that are key assets in a modern economy have, in many suburbs, become a magnet to businesses and jobs.

From our analysis we have identified, in **Chapter 5**, a number of **key challenges** faced by suburbs. These include affordable housing in the face of increased demand, particularly for those working in suburbs; maintaining the suburban offer under pressures of growth and diversity; providing high quality transport and infrastructure as suburbs expand; and ensuring that new communities and minority groups are offered adequate services in order to encourage integration and social cohesion. Given the accepted importance of sustainability in local areas, these challenges provide key headlines for future policy development.

Finally, the report draws together our **summary findings**, and concerns for developing and promoting successful suburbs in the future. This analysis demonstrates that no two suburbs are the same, and indicates a better understanding of suburban 'types' is needed to create relevant visions for suburban futures. Moreover, the preceding chapters suggest a case for harnessing the strength of suburbs within the urban policy agenda, rather than continuing with the 'centre-first' approach which has characterised urban policy to date.

The knowledge economy is seen as a key driver for prosperity and a good quality of life; within this, cities and city-regions are increasingly seen as the key component for encouraging future competitiveness in Britain. Consequently, shaping a framework for national and local urban policy that treats suburbs and their urban centres as a functional whole - as a **city-suburb** - will be critical to ensuring and spreading economic prosperity across Britain. In doing so, the Government and local policy makers will be better placed to ensure the sustainable future for local areas.



1 Introduction

1.1 The 'urban renaissance'

Britain has a highly urbanised population: in 2001, nearly 80 per cent of the population lived on less than 10 per cent of its land area, and the ten most populated urban areas were home to nearly a third of the total population (*Focus on people and migration*, ONS, 2005). The pace of urbanisation, intensified by immigration, has placed new pressures on the socio-economic and environmental landscape of urban Britain. These pressures have resulted in a decline in social cohesion in many inner cities. Together with the need for cities to accommodate new housing provision, the pressures have led to a national policy focus on an urban renaissance, aimed at creating sustainable towns and cities.

Current policy for urban Britain is largely shaped by the Urban Task Force report *Towards an urban renaissance* (1999), which identified the causes of urban decline, set out a practical vision for urban Britain, and put the need for regeneration firmly on the government agenda. The Urban Task Force defined this vision for urban Britain as: *"Well designed, compact and connected cities supporting a diverse range of uses – where people live, work and enjoy leisure time at close quarters – in a sustainable urban environment well integrated with public transport and adaptable to change"* (*Towards a stronger urban renaissance*, Urban Task Force, 2005).

Richard Rogers, Chair of the Urban Task Force, recently acknowledged the commitment shown by both central and local government to the urban renaissance. He notes that: *"There has been a measurable cultural shift – to an understanding that we need to use land better, and plan better, to sustain our cities"* (R Rogers, *'How to build intelligent suburbs'*, The Guardian, 2nd December 2006). This is reflected in the considerable funding for towns and cities, made available through the Single Regeneration Budget and other sources. Agencies like the urban regeneration companies have provided the vehicles and leadership to drive forward the implementation of urban renewal policies. These developments have helped to create and sustain more prosperous and cohesive towns and cities, as well as some of the most competitive urban economies in the world.

1.2 Sustainable urban communities

The urban renaissance is also part of the wider Government agenda for sustainable development. In 1999, the Government set out its strategy for sustainable development and in the 2005 update, *Securing the future*, laid out five 'guiding principles' (see box).



The sustainability of towns and cities is central to the wider sustainable development agenda, with much of the related research emphasising the need for a holistic approach to future development, across the spectrum of social, economic, and environmental issues. However, most of the policy, research and practice has focused exclusively on a 'centre-first' approach, rather than treating the urban area as a whole. This has increasingly led to fears that suburbs have become **'the forgotten dimension of urban policy'** [*In suburbia*, The Civic Trust, 2002].

The pressing need for reversing decline in inner cities is clear. However, over the past few years, there has been an emerging consensus that consideration of the wider urban area can help in creating the conditions for urban well-being. The effects of urbanisation are arguably felt more in suburbs than in inner cities. An estimated 84 per cent of England's population lives in suburban areas; in contrast, central urban areas account for about 8 per cent of the population (*The Future of Suburbs and Exurbs*, Independent Transport Commission, 2004).

Government policies for sustainable development and, crucially, for sustainable communities, could be seriously compromised if the role of suburbs continues to be overlooked. As Richard Rogers argues: *"Urban renaissance needs to spread out beyond our city centres...Architects and planners have often neglected, or even derided, suburbs,"* (R Rogers, 2006). An attitudinal shift was needed to promote an urban renaissance: away from regarding cities as problem areas to be avoided, and towards viewing them as vital engines for a sustainable society and economy. Similarly, we need a cultural shift away from regarding suburbs as isolated and self-sufficient entities. Instead, we should see them as organic extensions of the urban system, deserving as much attention as their inner urban centres.

1.3 City-suburbs, city-regions

The fundamental role of suburbs still appears to rest on the notion that suburbs serve nearby town and city centres. Consequently, they continue to be seen – and funded – as homogenous areas, with no **'champion'** or institutional framework to underpin the valuable role they play in urban renewal and the creation of prosperity.

In 2006, the Government released its *Framework for city-regions*. Since then, Government interest in city-regions has escalated, signalling a more wide-ranging approach to urban renewal. In particular, it notes that cities stretch beyond their urban centres, with the logical implication that cities and suburbs are interdependent: **'city-suburbs'** should be considered alongside urban centres, in delivering cohesion and prosperity, within a broader urban area.

Other reports have reinforced this shift in policy. *The Lyons Inquiry* (2007) highlighted the importance of incentivising local growth. *The Barker Review* (2007) suggests expansion across the green belt and modifying the **'town centre first'** approach to development in order to ease planning and infrastructure pressures. *The Eddington Review* (2007) stresses the need to **'invest in success'** to ensure areas performing well maintain their competitive edge. The overriding theme running through these, and other major policy reviews, is the need to reverse the over-centralisation that has characterised many aspects of policy. Ensuring the success of suburbs – or city-suburbs – will play a major role in achieving this goal.

1.4 The state of the suburbs

The *State of the suburbs* report was commissioned as part of the background research to the successful city-suburbs project, led by the London Borough of Barnet, in partnership with the Leadership Centre for Local Government, New Local Government Network and the Academy for Sustainable Communities. The project aims to address this identifiable gap in urban policy, raising the profile of city-suburbs and developing an agenda for policy makers. It aims to promote the case that, for cities to be successful, their suburbs also need to prosper.

This report complements an interim report, *Successful city-suburbs for successful city-regions*, which reviewed key policy and research literature and presented the findings of a programme of primary research conducted with a range of stakeholder organisations. The interim report underlines the disparate institutional framework around suburbs – with policy fragmented and underdeveloped. As a result, partnership-working across authorities and layers of government is poor and, in relation to funding, there is an over-emphasis on resource equalisation. The report urges the implementation of an enhanced localism, to support the infrastructure and economy of suburbs, and reward success accordingly. Critical to this will be **'suburb-shaping strategies'** – models which serve the city-suburb as a whole, and which help to reclaim the suburbs as places with **'enduring appeal'**; the **'home of aspirational Britain'**.

This publication builds on this research, assessing the social, economic and environmental conditions of a cross section of English suburbs. It highlights some of the key challenges of sustainability that suburbs are likely to face, given these patterns of development. Ultimately, it demonstrates the artificial distinction between the inner and outer urban areas, highlighting the unique contribution that suburbs make to the success of Britain's city-regions. As such, it adds to other literature that evaluates the state of suburban Britain and the need to revitalise these areas.

The report analyses the profile of the English suburbs in the context of a 21st century knowledge economy. Throughout the report we aim to demonstrate the important role played by suburbs – and their communities – in delivering this vision and the key contributions they make to successful city-region economies.

There is no clear consensus as to how a suburb should be defined. In order to identify a representative sample, we consulted the main partner organisations and also undertook a short study to identify some of the common characteristics of those areas generally identified as suburbs. These included, for example, relatively high proportions of professional and managerial workers, of whom a high proportion commute out each day to work in city and town centres. On the basis of our findings, together with further consultations, we identified the following 30 authorities as predominantly suburban in character and drawn from across England as our sample.

Barnet	Croydon	Merton
Bexley	Ealing	Redbridge
Brentwood	East Hertfordshire	Richmond upon Thames
Bromsgrove	Epping Forest	Rushcliffe
Bromley	Epsom and Ewell	Solihull
Broxtowe	Harborough	South Buckinghamshire
Bury	Harrow	Stockport
Castle Morpeth	Havering	Sutton
Chester-le-Street	Hertsmere	Trafford
Chiltern	Kingston upon Thames	Vale Royal

The ***State of the suburbs*** report assesses the role of the English suburbs in relation to the wider urban environment, and in the context of the Government's ambitions for sustainable development in our towns and cities.

Our findings draw on a wide-ranging statistical analysis of the state of the English suburbs, with summary indicators included in the Appendix to this report.



2 Suburbs as communities



2.1 Introduction

Despite being viewed as the **'forgotten dimension of urban policy'**, it is clear from our analysis that suburbs are not the detached enclaves that they are often perceived to be. Suburbs today are home to a diverse range of communities with many and varied characteristics. Some continue to grow rapidly, while others are more stable if not in decline. Some are home to a predominantly white population while others are remarkably diverse. Some are home to Britain's youngest populations while others have ageing populations.

Notwithstanding these differences, however, a number of features have emerged from our analysis that are common to most suburbs:

- A growing but changing population
- Ethnically diverse
- A home for 'knowledge workers'
- Relatively high levels of prosperity
- Family-friendly



2.2 Suburban growth

Population growth within our group of suburbs has been well above the national average between 1991 and 2005. Patterns of growth vary, however, with suburbs in London and the South East experiencing rapid growth while some suburban districts, particularly those in the north of England, have seen low growth and even population decline.

Merton, Redbridge and The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames have seen growth rates over twice the national average. These results reflect the strength of the London and the South East economy, which attracts skilled workers from across the country. By contrast several suburbs, including Trafford and Stockport, have actually lost population, although this is in the broader context of population decline in many parts of Greater Manchester.

Population 'churn' within our group of suburbs is also above the national average, contradicting the common perception of suburbs as relatively stable, static communities. Many of today's suburbs experience above average rates of net migration, and are characterised by high proportions of population moving into the area and equally high proportions moving out. Amongst our comparator group, The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and Bury recorded the highest levels of 'churn': both had high proportions of residents moving into the area (both from elsewhere in the UK and from abroad) and also experienced high proportions of residents moving out. By contrast, levels of churn were much lower in Trafford, Stockport and Havering.

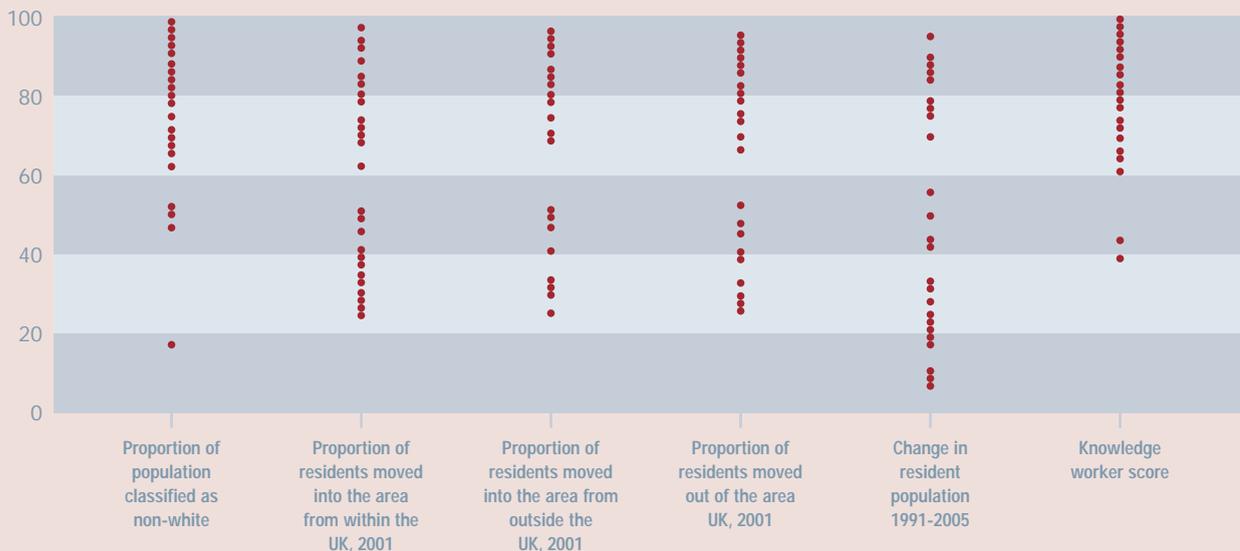
2.3 Diverse communities

Suburbs attract a higher than average proportion of residents from outside the UK. This trend varies across England with no obvious geographic pattern, and the high and low extremes of foreign immigrants are covered within the sample of suburbs analysed.

The relatively diverse profile of England's suburbs is emphasised more strongly by ethnicity. On average, more than one in seven suburban residents is classified as non-White, compared with a national average of less than one in twelve. Again, there is some variation within the suburbs, with London's suburbs having much higher shares of BME residents. **Figure 1 below**, showing the national percentile ranking of each suburb, gives an indication of the diversity of suburban England. The selected suburbs are generally concentrated in the top 30 to 40 per cent of districts nationally, in terms of population classified as non-White (ie more diverse).

The London suburbs of Ealing and Harrow top the league table, with over 40 per cent of residents classified as non White. Within these boroughs over a quarter of the resident population is Asian or British Asian, while Croydon has by far the highest proportion of Black and British Black population. In Chester-le-Street, by comparison, less than one per cent of the total population is classified as non-White.

Figure 1: Population change, ethnicity and occupation indicators



Source: Local Futures, Local knowledge

Note: The chart shows the performance of the individual suburbs, converted to a percentile score. The highest scoring districts scores 100% and the lowest 1%

2.4 A home for 'knowledge workers'

Suburbs have traditionally been associated with middle class families, offering 'quality of life' to well paid professionals working in accessible city centres.

Our analysis to some degree supports this perception. As shown by **Figure 2**, virtually all of our suburbs have high proportions of knowledge workers (professional, managerial and technical workers) and low shares in less skilled and elementary occupations. Thus, the typical suburban community appears to be more skilled and generally in higher earning employment than the national average. This reflects the increasing importance of cities as centres of Britain's modern knowledge economy and the important role played by suburbs as homes to many of the cities' knowledge workers.

Our findings also reflect the economic pull of Greater London. Twelve of the thirty suburbs analysed fall into the top 1 per cent of local authorities nationally on their knowledge worker 'score' and, of these, all but one are within London and the South East.

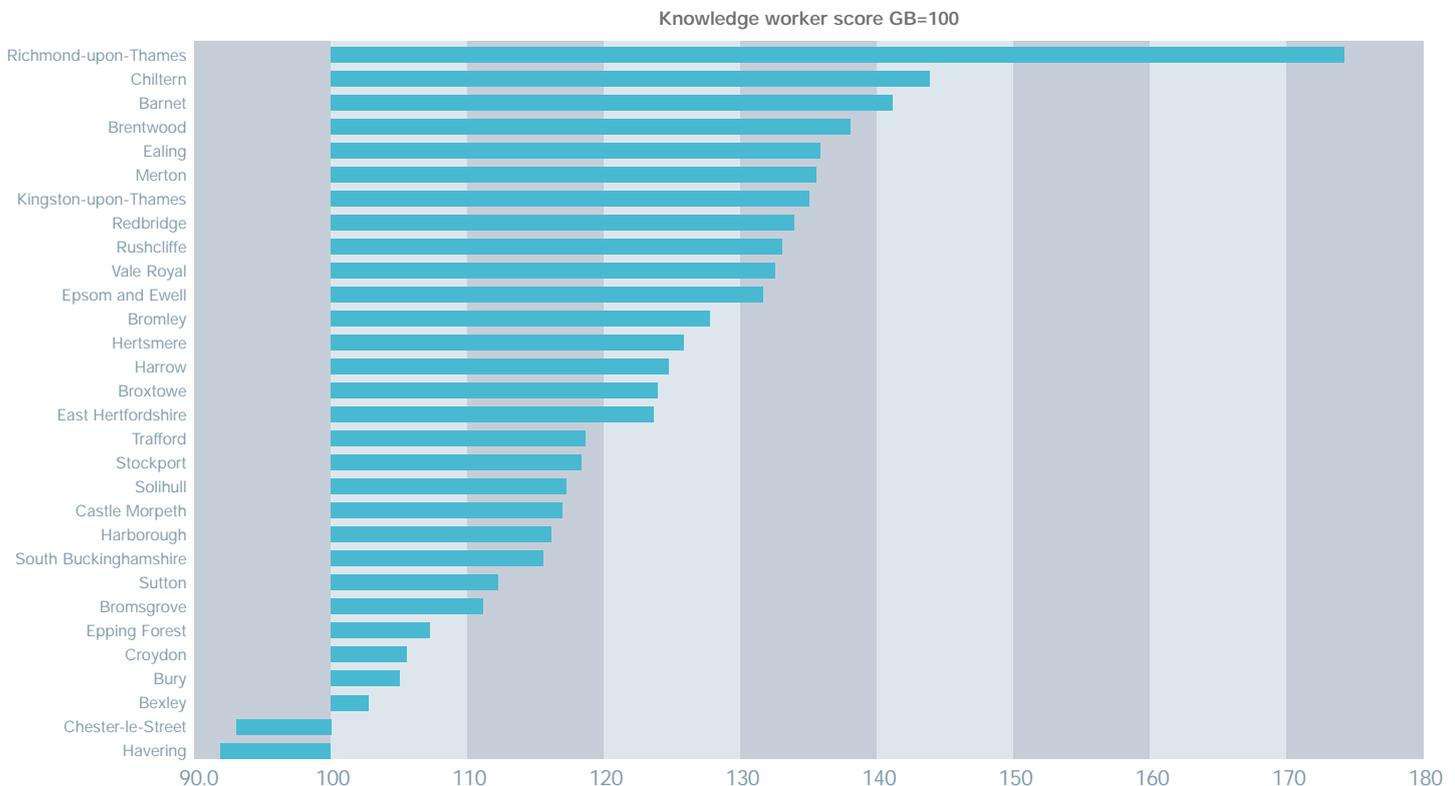
Nevertheless, some suburbs do have a high share of residents in low skilled employment compared to the suburban average. These suburbs tend to be in the North East and the Midlands, reflecting the more industrialised nature of the local economy. Here the suburban community is more mixed, in terms of class and occupation.

2.5 Prosperous communities

As home to England's middle classes, the perception is that suburban communities are relatively prosperous. However, our findings show that, while they do comprise some extremely affluent areas, overall they are not significantly wealthier than the average.

This modest performance in part reflects the wide range of income levels found within the suburbs. As suggested earlier, the powerful economic performance of the London and South East economies have resulted in relatively high levels of wealth seen in many of their respective suburbs (**Map 1**). However, a number of suburbs in England fall below the British median for prosperity; they are principally located in north of England and Midlands areas.

Figure 2: Knowledge worker score



Source: Local Futures, Local knowledge

The pattern of wealth and prosperity does not necessarily follow a radial route, with deprived inner city communities and wealthy outer urban communities. Instead, suburbs should be considered in conjunction with their urban centres when conceptualising communities, as they are shaped by the same socioeconomic forces and follow similar patterns of wealth.

Nevertheless, the English suburbs are not, on the whole, deprived. The average suburban deprivation score of the suburbs is well below the average for Great Britain. Those districts that do have relatively high levels of deprivation seem to be located close to larger economic hubs, such as Manchester and London. Other indicators of wealth suggest that suburbs still enjoy the benefits of their urban location, with higher than average incomes, high house prices, larger houses, and large shares of households with at least two cars (relative to the national averages). House prices are particularly notable, with suburbs such as Bromsgrove and Epping Forest recording house values significantly higher than the national average, despite having low average incomes.

Low overall deprivation, though, can mask pockets of deprivation. Inequality in suburbs, overall, is higher than found in Britain as a whole. What is somewhat surprising is that the suburbs with the highest levels of inequality are found in the Midlands and North (e.g. Stockport, Solihull and Vale Royal), and not London.

Map 1: Average total income 2004-05

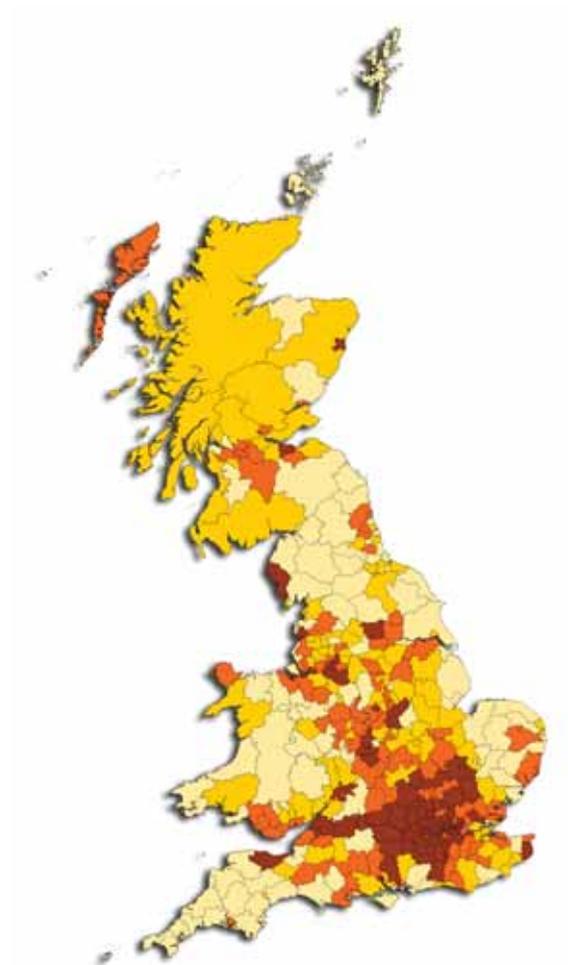


Figure 3: Prosperity, deprivation and household indicators



Source: Local Futures, Local knowledge

Note: The chart shows the performance of the individual suburbs, converted to a percentile score. The highest scoring districts scores 100% and the lowest 1%



2.6 Family-friendly communities

Suburbs appear to be family-friendly. On the whole, they have above average proportions of married couples and, in particular, more married couples with dependent children. This trend is reflected in the larger average household size found in the suburbs.

To some extent, this fits the stereotypical view of suburbs as areas that attract city workers in search of a better quality of life – especially married couples with young families. Nevertheless, this pattern is not universal. Over a third of the 30 suburbs analysed had an average household size smaller than the national baseline; three of these were in the smallest quartile of local authorities nationally. Once again, there is no universal dynamic within the suburbs: Chester-le-Street and Sutton have the same low average household size, but Chester-le-Street has a high share of married couples without children whereas Sutton's household size is influenced by a high share of one person households. By contrast, in Harrow and Redbridge more than one in five households are classified as married couples with dependent children, while one person households and lone parents households are both well below the national average.

2.7 Summary – challenging suburban stereotypes

Past research on suburbs has demonstrated the changing nature of suburbs. Our analysis of the communities that have been attracted to the English suburbs confirms their changing identity.

Suburbs are by no means stable communities; on the whole, they have been growing in population terms, and experiencing a significant population turnover. Suburbs are constantly changing and have become more diverse over the years, in terms of ethnicity, adding to the complexity of servicing local needs.

Suburbs have attracted a considerable number of knowledge workers – the professional, managerial and technical workers so important to the success of Britain's modern economy. As a result suburbs are more prosperous, in terms of average incomes, but not significantly more so than the national average. This is because suburbs also have pockets of deprivation and many experience high levels of social inequality. Despite this, they have attracted relatively high shares of married couples, particularly with children, implying that the suburbs have managed to maintain their family-friendly identity.

This picture of 21st century suburban England is different from the stereotypical picture of wealthy, white, middle-class and stable communities. Moreover, although there are reasonable levels of prosperity, relatively low deprivation, and family-oriented households, which chime with the traditional suburban image, the suburbs analysed here are far more diverse than the traditional notion of a single suburban 'type' suggests.



Case study: Rushcliffe

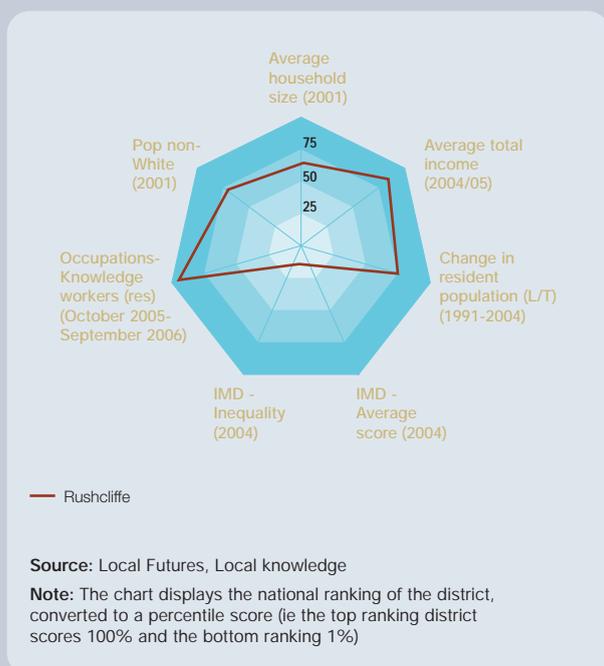
Rushcliffe is home to many of Nottingham City's affluent knowledge workers. As a result incomes are within the top quartile of authorities in the country and the very low level of inequality within Rushcliffe suggests an attractive and affluent suburban location close to the traditional stereotype. Its population has grown by almost 10 per cent over the 1991-2005 period, in part reflecting the growth of Nottingham itself. The borough is clearly a family-friendly place, with an above average proportion of married couples (both with and without children) and fewer one parent households.

Case study: Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames

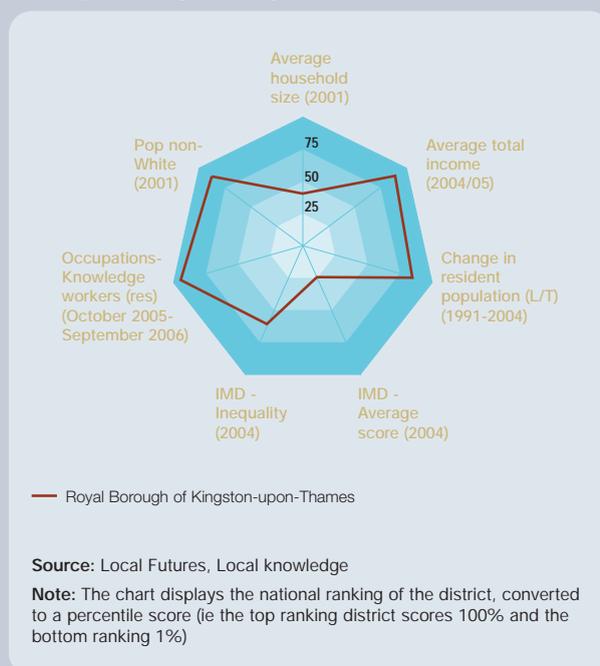
The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames in outer London is part of a band of south London boroughs that form a desirable and leafy base for the city's knowledge workers. Diversity and inequality in London result in boroughs that are far from socially homogenous, including the more affluent suburbs. The Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames is a borough with a large BME population, reflecting the cosmopolitan nature of many London city-suburbs. The high proportion of BME groups in areas of need, such as housing, are given priority within the borough's *Community Plan*. The higher than average level of inequality in The Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames reflects the growing wealth gap within the capital and co-existence in the suburbs of prosperous and deprived communities.

The borough has a growing population, ranking in the top quartile of authorities nationally. This pattern reflects the attractions of suburbs that can offer a high quality of life. Whilst suburbs are stereotypically family-driven, The Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames has a modest household size, with high proportions of one person households and cohabiting couples. Nevertheless, there is still a shortage of affordable family homes and the borough council operates an 'incentive to move' scheme on large council properties to facilitate down-sizing and to free up space for families.

Rushcliffe spider chart



The Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames spider chart



3 Suburbs as places to live



3.1 Introduction

In this chapter we highlight some of the key features of a suburban quality of life, exploring the common perception that suburbs offer a better quality of life and hold many inherent advantages over inner urban areas, therefore not meriting special attention. Our analysis shows that, while the story is mixed, suburbs do provide a range of quality of life assets, including:

- Healthier lifestyles
- Lower crime rates
- Good and accessible local services/amenities
- Decent although unaffordable housing
- Good transport and connectivity



3.2 Healthier lifestyles

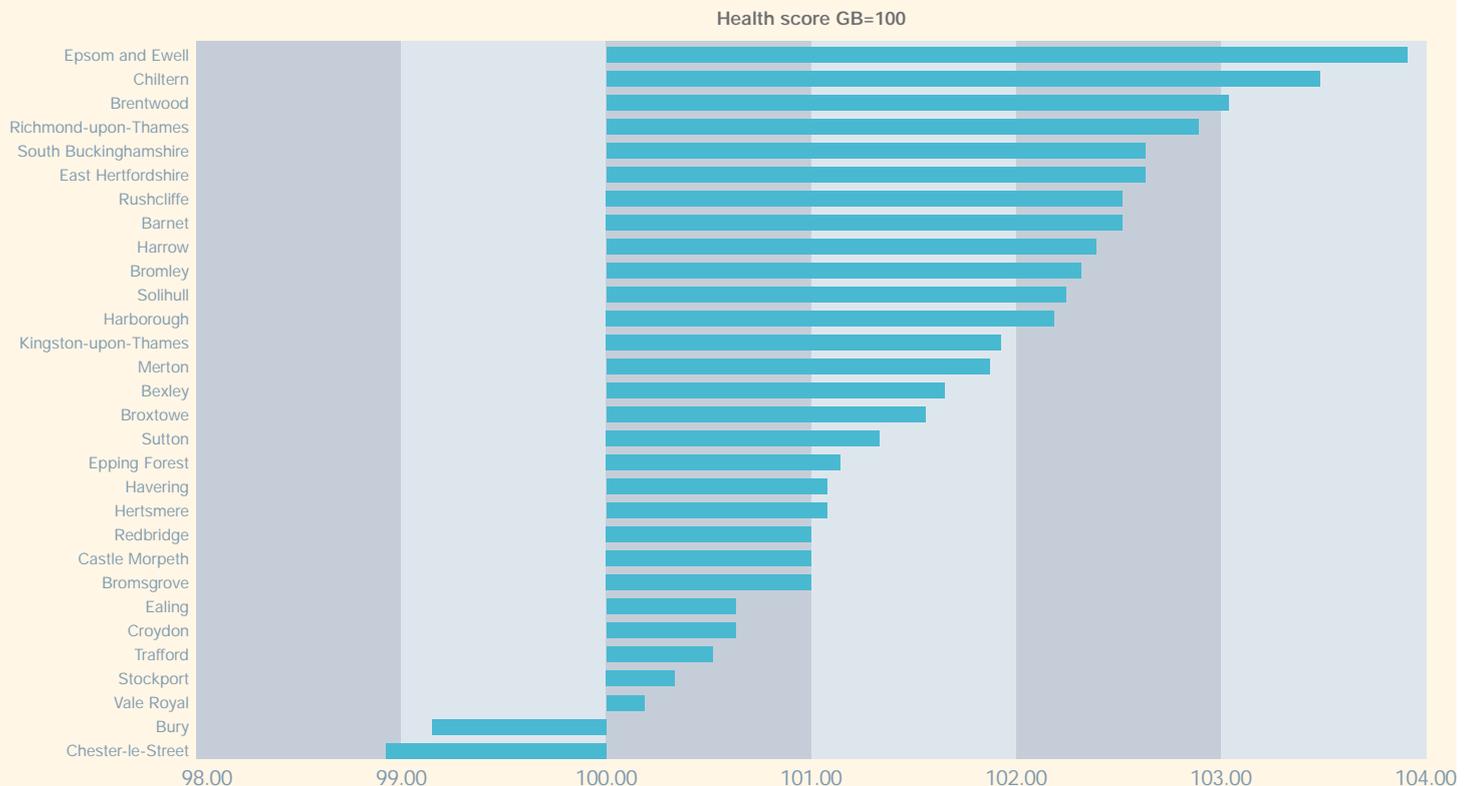
Health in Britain has improved dramatically over the last century. Nevertheless, life expectancy still varies widely according to where you live and health inequalities, even within an area, can be extreme. Policy makers have recognised that poor health is the result of factors ranging from lifestyles to the quality of the physical environment.

The health of suburban residents is generally good. Life expectancy within suburbs is above the British average, and infant mortality is below average. Suburban residents generally have healthy lifestyles, with lower than average rates of smoking and obesity. This healthy lifestyle translates into low levels of unemployment, as measured by the rate of incapacity benefits claimants within the working age population.

However, a closer look at the statistics reveals a more complex picture. The smaller towns, particularly in the Midlands and North of England, have poorer health on some measures than other suburbs. For instance, the few suburbs that are ranked below the British median – Bury and Chester-le-Street – have above average standardised mortality rates and cancer mortality rates. They also have high levels of incapacity benefit claimants.

The healthiest suburbs appear to be those in the Home Counties of the South East, with Epsom and Ewell, Chiltern and South Buckinghamshire recording rates of life expectancy amongst the highest in the country.

Figure 4: Life expectancy score, 2003-2005



Source: Local Futures, Local knowledge

3.3 Lower crime rates

Crime is another important aspect of an area's quality of life offer. Crime (and the fear of crime) is strongly associated with deprivation; in this case, we would expect suburbs to record relatively low crime rates. This would fit with the traditional image of the suburb as a safe and stable environment in which to live.

While the overall crime rate (measured by total offences per 1,000 population) recorded by suburbs is below the national average, a breakdown of the types of crime shows some worrying trends. Vehicle crime in suburbs approaches the national rate, while the level of burglaries is above the British average. Higher levels of burglaries and vehicle crime are often associated with areas of greater inequality, a trend which is supported by the preceding analysis.

Overall, suburbs have low rates of violent crime in comparison to the national average. However, London suburbs do not strictly follow this pattern, with many recording higher than average violent crime rates. In contrast, suburbs with significant rural areas, such as Harborough and Castle Morpeth, record rates of violent crime far below the national average. Thus, there is a different dynamic between suburbs within more developed urban areas – such as those in and around London – and more stable and rural suburbs. This highlights the diversity within the suburban 'offer' and suggests that different 'types' of suburb may attract residents for different reasons.

Figure 5: Health, crime education, services and amenities indicators



Source: Local Futures, Local knowledge

Note: The chart shows the performance of the individual suburbs, converted to a percentile score. The highest scoring districts scores 100% and the lowest 1%

3.4 Good services and amenities

Part of the traditional perception of suburbs is their dependence on urban centres for their services and amenities; residents enjoy the tranquil and less crowded space of the suburbs but travel to the town and city centres for their shopping, entertainment and access to other services.

Our findings question this perception. The average local services score for suburbs is well above the national average, indicating that suburban services are of a relatively high standard. This is supported by a good performance by the average suburban local authority, with high CPA scores and good schools performances.

Furthermore, access to local services is good. The average score for suburbs as a whole is a result of good access within the more urbanised suburbs – particularly in outer London – and poorer access within some of the more rural suburbs.

Good schools tend to be a key asset of suburbs. The average pupil performance in suburban schools is well above the national average, when measured by the share of pupils achieving at least five GCSEs at grades A* to C. However, overall suburban school results are skewed slightly by the ‘**London effect**’ – of the five suburban districts whose schools performed below the national average, four were from outer London.

Access to a variety of local amenities is another aspect of suburban quality of life. Overall, suburbs record an above average score for amenities, particularly with respect to cultural amenities (eg access to cinemas, theatres, museums etc). The suburbs record a higher concentration of cultural amenities than the national average, and this is also reflected in an above average score on our ‘**café culture**’ indicator. A large concentration of national heritage sites also contributes to the suburban sense of ‘**place**’.

Despite the positive picture overall, there is variation across the suburbs. Access to good amenities is generally skewed in favour of larger cities, and this pattern is replicated within suburban districts. The more rural areas, such as Harborough, Vale Royal, Rushcliffe, and Castle Morpeth, all have lower scores on this measure, with a low rate of local cultural and historical sites in their respective areas. In contrast, the outer London suburbs score very highly on amenity provision, all ranking within the top 20 per cent of districts nationally.



3.5 Housing and affordability

Suburbs, on average, enjoy good quality housing. The overall proportion of suburban housing stock which is classified as unfit is relatively low; many of these suburbs, from Chester-le-Street to South Buckinghamshire, have extremely small shares of poor quality housing in comparison to the average district in Britain. Admittedly, there are some suburbs which do see above-average shares in poor housing. These are generally confined to the London suburbs and some Manchester suburbs, suggesting that the more urbanised suburbs have experienced some stagnation – or even decline – in their physical environment.

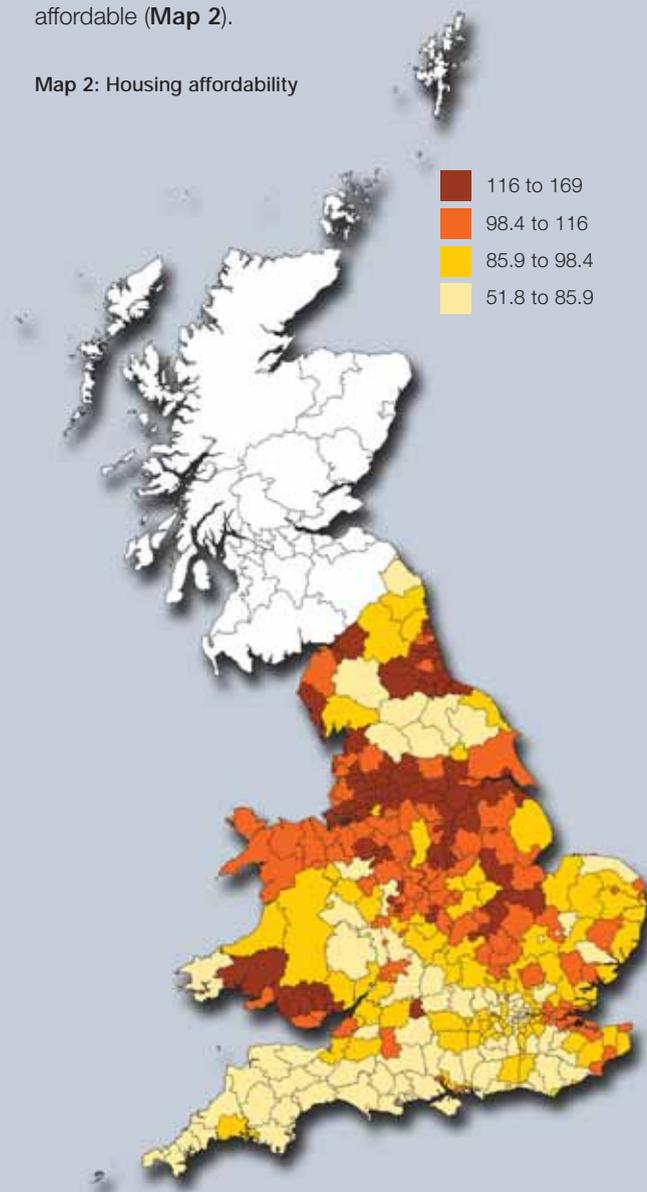
Suburban houses are also large in comparison to the national average (estimated by the average number of rooms per household), consistent with the semi-detached image of suburban areas. This supply of large, good quality housing indicates that suburban planning is generally family-friendly. This supports earlier analysis revealing relatively large average households in suburban districts. The data also shows the more developed environment of London suburbs, which almost all record smaller house sizes than the national average. This indicates that a different, higher density physical environment is to be found in London suburbs, relative to the rest of suburban England.

A look at house prices also demonstrates the desirability of suburban housing. On average, house prices are around 46 per cent higher in suburbs than in Great Britain as a whole. Coupled with the fact that suburban homes are significantly more likely to be owner-occupied than housing in the average British district, this suggests that suburbs cater not just for families, but generally for more prosperous households.

Although this pattern holds for almost all the suburban districts, it should be noted that Ealing and Barnet have a more balanced tenure mix, with higher shares of rented housing than the national average, demonstrating the relative income diversity within London suburbs. In addition, a few suburban districts in the North of England have house prices below the national average, reflecting the north-south divide in the housing market.

Finally, despite the high level of owner-occupancy in suburbs, housing affordability (based on workplace earnings and house prices) in suburbs is lower than the national average. The pattern of affordability varies greatly within the sample of suburbs. To a large extent, affordability mirrors prosperity; the most prosperous suburbs such as South Buckinghamshire are also the least affordable, whereas less prosperous areas such as Chester-le-Street and Vale Royal are among the most affordable (**Map 2**).

Map 2: Housing affordability



Source: Local Futures, Local knowledge

3.6 Transport and connectivity

One of the key assets of suburbs is their 'connectivity', ensuring easy access for commuters to their urban centres. Our overall connectivity score shows that suburbs are, on average, very well connected, with easy access to road and rail infrastructure.

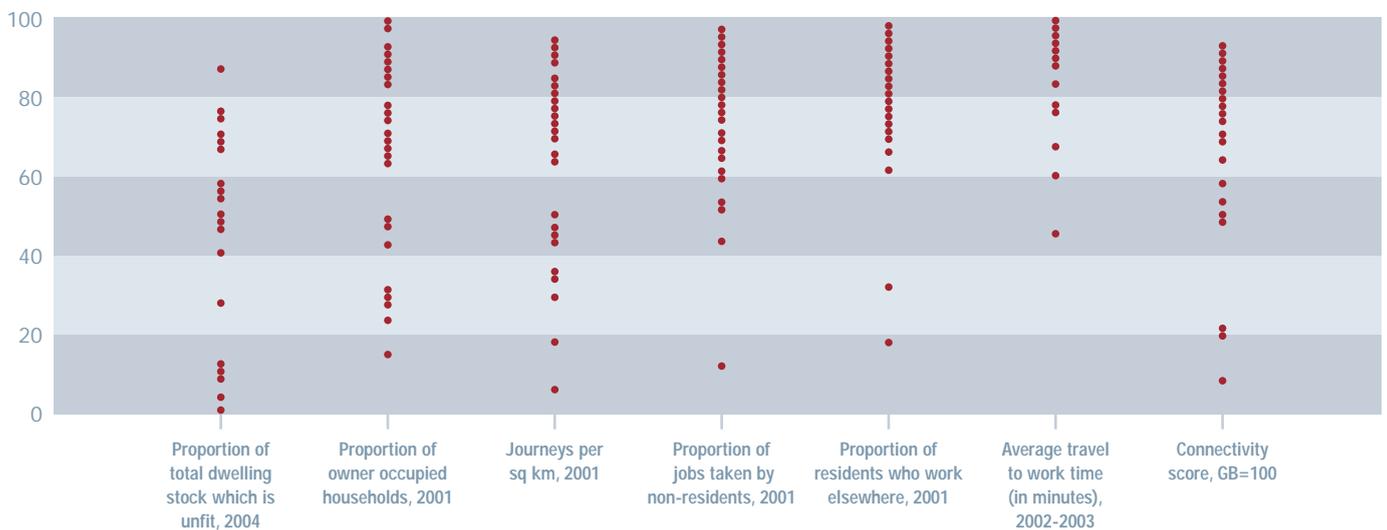
Not surprisingly, a high proportion of residents commute out each day to work. A high proportion of suburban residents also use public transport but, because of the distances involved, few travel to work by foot or bicycle. Perhaps worryingly, suburban commuters experience some of the longest travel-to-work times in Britain, although this appears to be the price that families are prepared to pay for a suburban lifestyle.

However, levels of in-commuting are also high, with suburban economies offering a range of job opportunities for residents of neighbouring areas. As a result congestion levels are also high.

In Merton over two thirds of the resident working population commute out each day, while over half of local jobs are taken by non residents. In Epsom and Ewell over 60 per cent commute out and over 50 per cent of jobs are taken by in-commuters. Authorities with some of the longest travel-to-work times include Bromley, Bexley and Croydon.

Nevertheless, there are exceptions to this pattern. Suburbs with more rural profiles, such as Richmond-upon-Thames, Vale Royal and Harborough have very low shares of jobs taken by non residents, while travel-to-work times are much lower in Rushcliffe, Harborough and Trafford.

Figure 6: Housing, transport and commuting indicators



Source: Local Futures, Local knowledge

Note: the chart shows the performance of the individual suburbs, converted to a percentile score. The highest scoring districts scores 100% and the lowest 1%



3.7 Summary – suburban quality of life

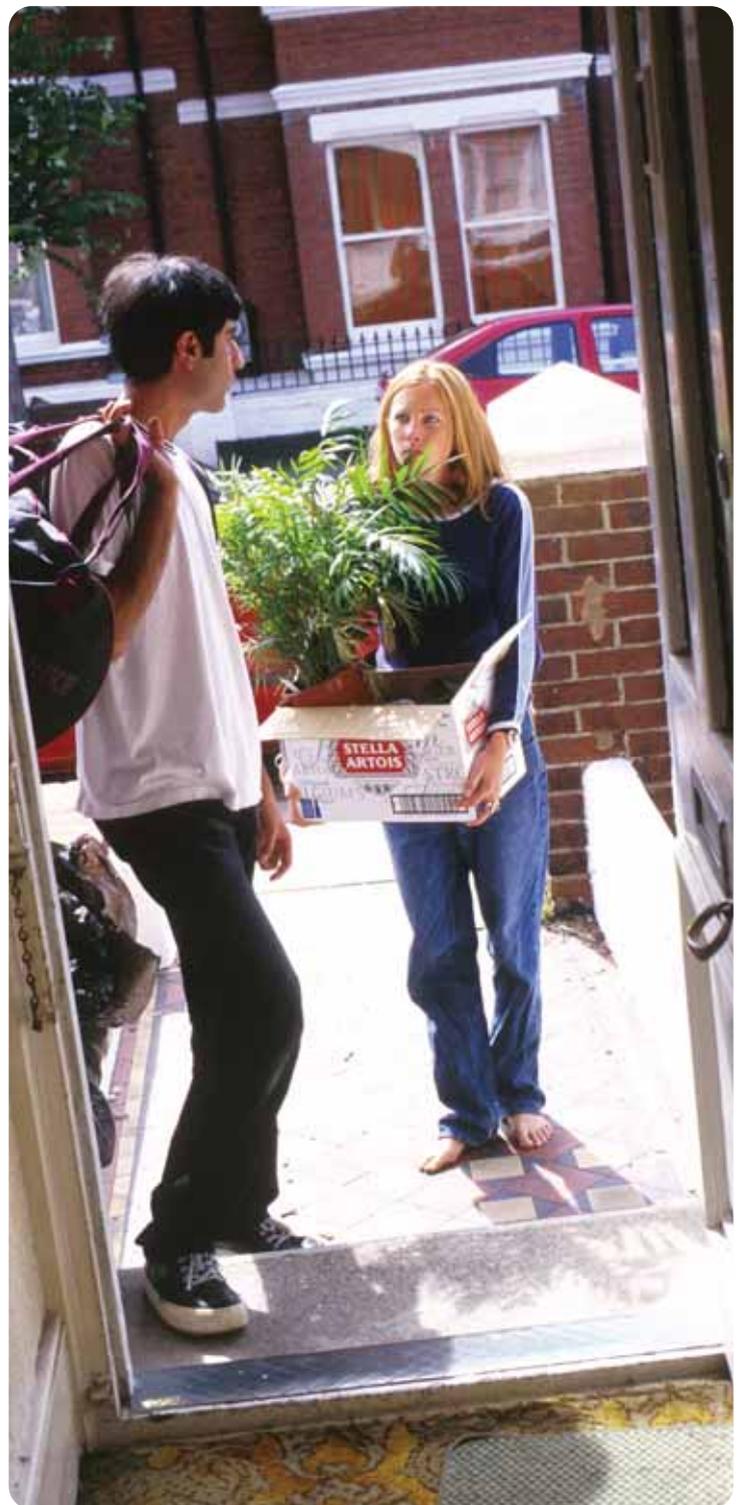
Suburbs have many attractions as places to live. To some extent our analysis confirms the traditional image of suburbs, with its residents experiencing healthy lifestyles and relatively low crime rates. However, averages hide a varied performance across the English suburbs. Some of the northern and Midlands suburbs perform less well in terms of health, while in other suburbs there are significant health inequalities. While overall crime rates are below the national average, rates of vehicle crime and burglaries are relatively high.

Suburbs are not the low density, closed communities they are commonly thought to be. Population growth and strong consumer demand have produced a relatively high standard of local services and amenities. Suburbs today appear to be offering residents a high quality of life, as well as providing access to facilities and services in urban centres.

The overall quality of housing on offer in suburbs appears to be relatively good, with a low proportion of unfit housing. Home ownership is high, but so too are house prices, leading to increasing problems of housing affordability.

One of the key attractions of suburbs is their accessibility to city centre jobs and careers. As a result, a high proportion of the resident workforce commute out every day, with some of the longest travel-to-work times in Britain. Levels of traffic congestion are high, not least because of the equally high level of in-commuters travelling each day to work within suburbs.

The relatively high quality of life offered by suburbs has attracted the human capital that is so important to the country's economic prosperity. In the next chapter we see how this, in turn, has transformed many suburbs into significant economies in their own right.



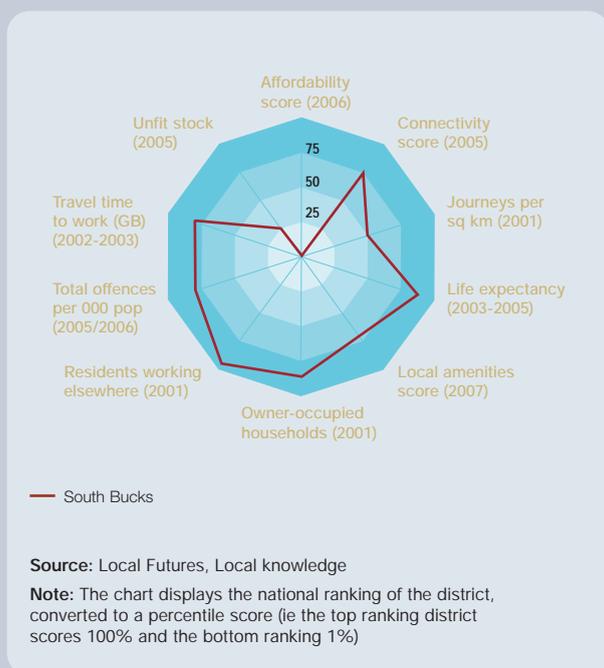
Case study: South Buckinghamshire

When the image of an affluent, well-serviced and partly-rural suburb comes to mind, South Buckinghamshire fits the popular stereotype perfectly. Its profile reflects that of the affluent professionals that make up most of its local community. South Buckinghamshire is the least affordable place to live in the country and the high levels of owner-occupation reinforces its prosperous image. Residents can expect to live longer and enjoy a high quality of local services and amenities, in part reflecting their high purchasing power.

However, crime is high by national standards, especially vehicle crime and burglaries. A vision for South Bucks by the South Bucks Partnership places crime and fear of crime high on its list of priorities. Burglaries and car theft are particularly of concern as is the desire for more visible policing.

The high proportion of residents working elsewhere results in a high travel to work time and higher than average levels of congestion. *The Community Plan (2006)* highlights the problem of traffic congestion on local roads and country lanes, with this set to increase with the expected arrival of 19,000 new homes and the expansion of Heathrow. South Buckinghamshire is a good example of the trade-off families make, between quality of life and access to jobs and careers. In the case of South Buckinghamshire it results in a prosperous community with a high quality of life, yet high levels of congestion and unaffordable housing.

South Buckinghamshire spider chart



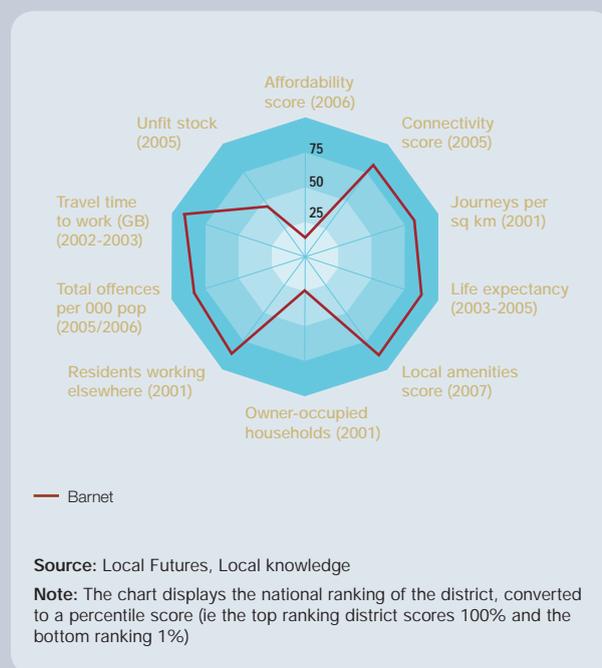
Case study: Barnet

Barnet is a north London borough that closely identifies with its city-suburb profile. In fact, its *sustainable community strategy and long-term vision (2006)* is entitled *Barnet: a first class suburb* and is a strategy that reflects the relationship it has with the capital and the issues that can arise out of an area in demand by inner London professionals. For a London borough, Barnet offers a relatively good quality of life, with long life expectancy alongside a high level of connectivity and good amenities. One of the downsides is the high level of out-commuting, as many of the borough's residents travel daily to their highly paid jobs in central London.

Barnet is typical of many suburbs, where a high proportion of professionals commute out each day to work. This is made possible by a relatively efficient transport system and generally good connectivity. However, many commuters also use their cars and, consequently, we see above average levels of traffic congestion. Commuters also experience long travel-to-work times – in Barnet's case, amongst the longest in the country.

Preserving a high quality of life offer, while dealing with the impact of commuting – both for families and the environment – is one of the biggest challenges for ensuring sustainable suburban community strategies.

Barnet spider chart



4 Suburbs as economies



4.1 Introduction

So far we have focused on suburbs as communities and places to live. We now turn our attention to suburbs as economies and examine the role they play as places of work. Suburbs have developed, in part, as a response to the urbanisation of modern Britain, attracting highly skilled workers who commute each day to work in neighbouring towns and cities. Mobile city workers, especially those with families, have sought 'social well-being' in the suburbs, whilst remaining dependent on towns and cities for 'economic well-being'.



However, the preceding analysis has shown how suburbs have developed beyond this stereotype. As they have grown, their educated communities have demanded a high standard of local services and amenities. Their prosperous consumers have themselves helped to create demand, through their spending power, in local service industries. But more importantly, their highly skilled workers – a key resource in a modern **'knowledge economy'** – have helped to attract new businesses, resulting in many suburbs developing, themselves, into significant local economies.

Our analysis has shown that many suburban economies have the following features:

- Large and productive
- High levels of economic activity
- Highly-skilled workforces
- Knowledge-driven businesses
- A culture of enterprise

4.2 Large and productive economies

Contrary to the common perception, many suburban economies are relatively large and, overall, are close to the national average in terms of scale. However, there is considerable variation across the suburbs. In terms of scale, there is a marked difference between outer London boroughs and suburbs around smaller urban centres: at one extreme, Croydon's economy is twice the national average; at the other, Chester-le-Street is ranked as one of the smallest. The extent to which suburbs have grown and developed as economies is inevitably linked to the fortunes of the cities and towns they serve, with suburbs of London becoming significant economies as the city has grown.

On average, suburbs are reasonably productive, as measured by a combination of average weekly earnings and Gross Value Added (GVA) per head (by place of work). The variation within this indicator is not as great as that for economic scale, showing the general economic success of suburbs. In addition, London suburbs do not perform significantly better than suburbs elsewhere, demonstrating the strong economic performance of suburbs as a whole.

Figure 7: Scale, productivity and labour market indicators



Source: Local Futures, Local knowledge

Note: the chart shows the performance of the individual suburbs, converted to a percentile score. The highest scoring districts scores 100% and the lowest 1%

4.3 High levels of economic activity

High productivity is reflected in high employment rates, which are generally above the national average and well above the EU target of 70 per cent. This is combined with low unemployment rates and low levels of long-term unemployment due to long-term sickness.

Suburban economies are also growing, but at a slower rate than the national average. The geography of suburban economic change is mixed. A number of districts have grown substantially, showing some of the highest rates of growth in the country. These vary from suburbs in the north of England, such as Trafford - with its famous Trafford Centre shopping mall including the Selfridges brand's first outing from London - and Rushcliffe, to those in the south such as Epping Forest and Brentwood. On the other hand, a number of suburbs have experienced decline, particularly some London and South East suburbs. This may in part reflect the maturity of some of the suburban economies, especially those that are already large in scale.



4.4 A highly skilled workforce

National policy is geared towards both improving basic skills and encouraging high-level skills, to ensure that Britain continues to compete within a global ‘**knowledge economy**’. This reflects the profound change seen in Britain and elsewhere, with a marked decline in manufacturing and a growth in the service sector. Part of this trend has been the rise in ‘**knowledge-driven**’ sectors of the economy, measured here by European Commission and OECD definitions.

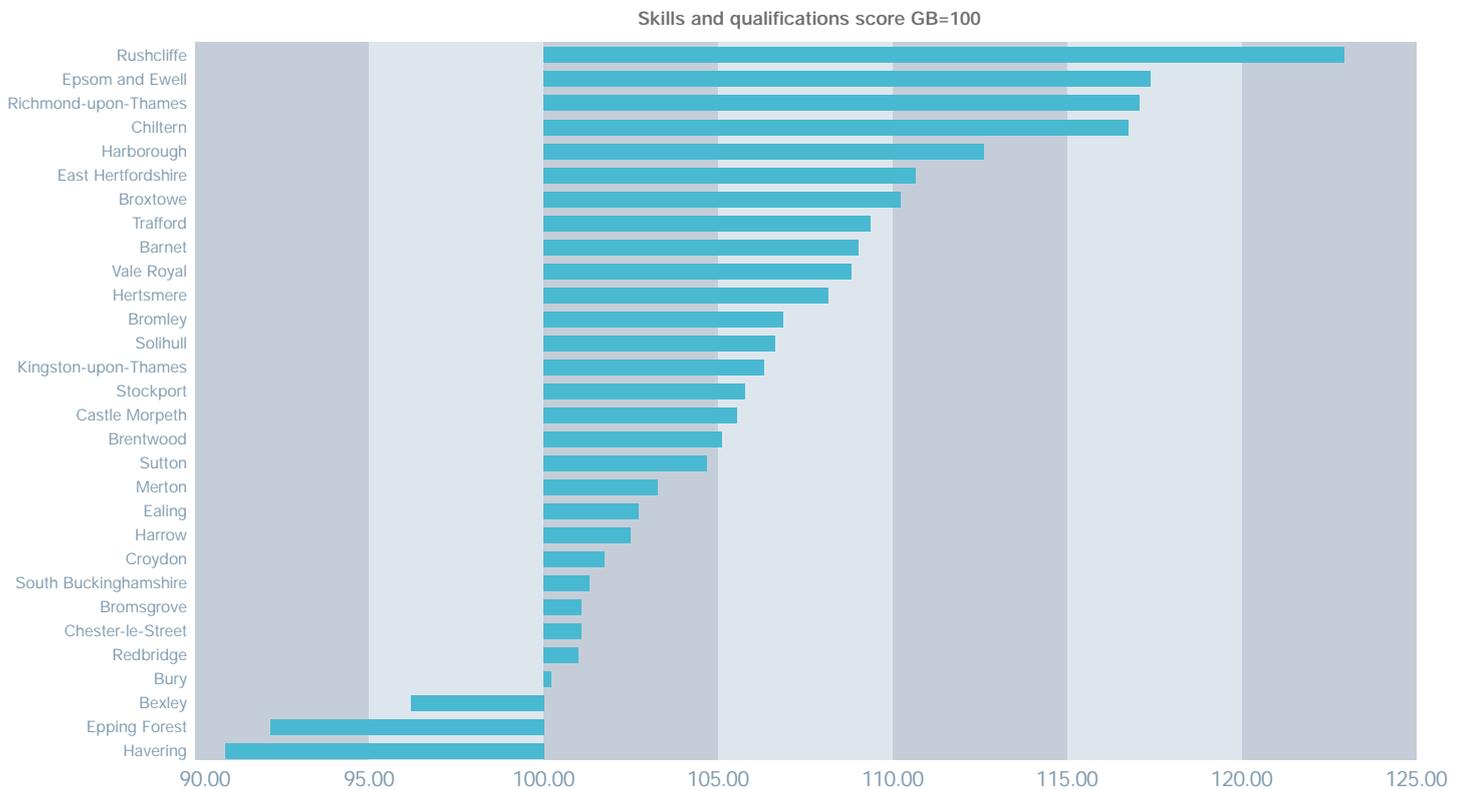
Earlier in this report we noted the high proportion of knowledge workers (professional, managerial and technical workers) living in suburbs. Not surprisingly, therefore, we find the resident workforce is highly skilled, supplying much of the human capital necessary for their neighbouring city economies.

Suburbs appear to be making an important contribution to meeting the challenges facing the UK, both in terms of basic skills and high-level skills. Suburbs have a high proportion of residents with at least an NVQ4 – well over the national average share. Thus, suburbs have a strong foundation of skills from which to drive forward the Government’s vision of a competitive knowledge economy.

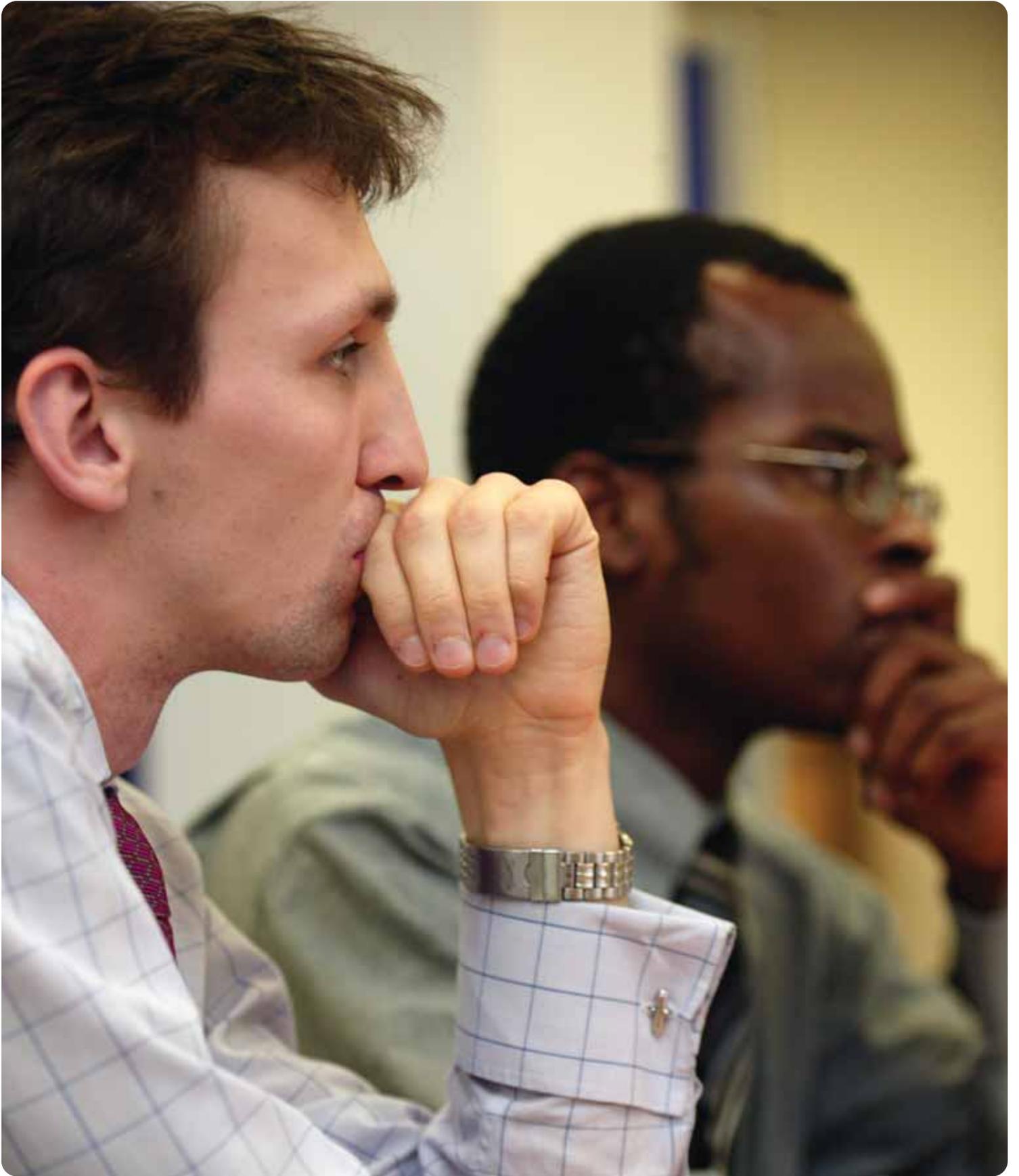
Of our comparators, Rushcliffe, Epsom and Ewell and Richmond upon Thames top the table, with the proportion of residents qualified to NVQ4 and above, comfortably exceeding the national average. In Havering, Epping Forest and Bexley, by contrast, the figures are below the national average.

However, this does not necessarily mean that the entire working population of a suburb is highly skilled. In five of our suburbs, including the relatively prosperous South Buckinghamshire, the proportion of the working population qualified to below NVQ2, is above the national average. On this measure, over 40 per cent of the resident working population of Epping Forest and Havering are deemed to be significantly underachieving in formal qualifications.

Figure 8: Skills and qualifications score



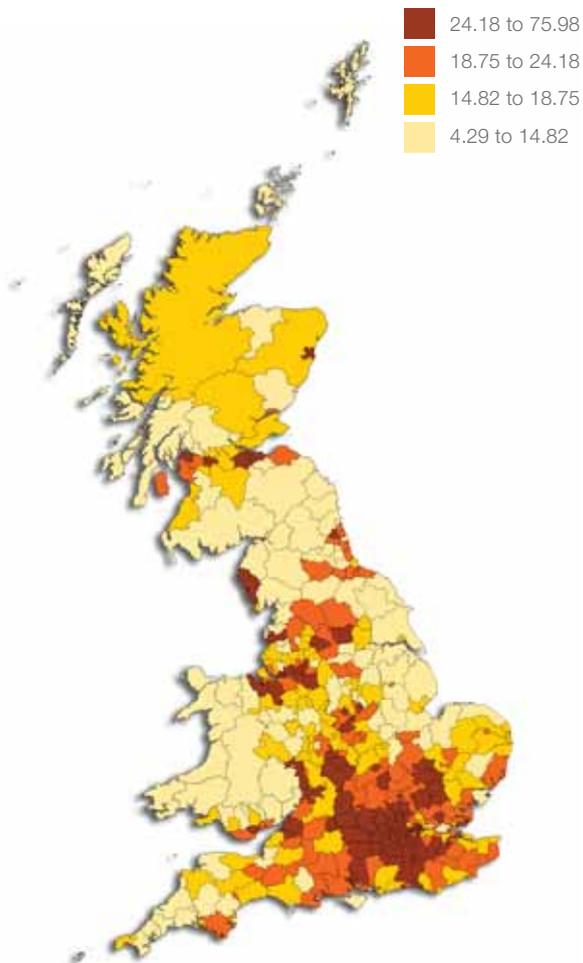
Source: Local Futures, Local knowledge



4.5 'Knowledge-driven' economies

As suburbs have attracted the human capital that is so important to a modern economy, it is hardly surprising that, over time, they have also attracted some of the businesses that drive the knowledge economy. The overall industrial structure of suburbs shows that they have relatively high proportions of employment in knowledge-driven sectors of the economy. Specifically, there is a relatively high share of employment in the fast growing knowledge-driven service sectors (as opposed to production), when compared to the national average. Many of the suburbs in London and the South East do particularly well on this count, reflecting the London-centric nature of Britain's knowledge economy (South Buckinghamshire, Richmond upon Thames and Merton are ranked in the top 10 per cent of authorities nationally on this measure).

Map 3: Industrial structure score



Source: Local Futures, Local knowledge



4.6 A culture of enterprise

With a highly skilled workforce and high proportions of knowledge-intensive jobs it is not surprising to find that suburban economies are, on the whole, relatively enterprising. The average suburb has a high density of businesses, when compared to the national average. These businesses are generally larger than average, which suggests that suburbs are successful in attracting major employers. The suburbs also record a high level of business activity, with business formation and closure rates both above the national average. Together, these indicators give a positive impression of the enterprise culture of suburban economies. This healthy picture is reinforced by a significant share – over 10 per cent – of the workforce classified as self-employed.

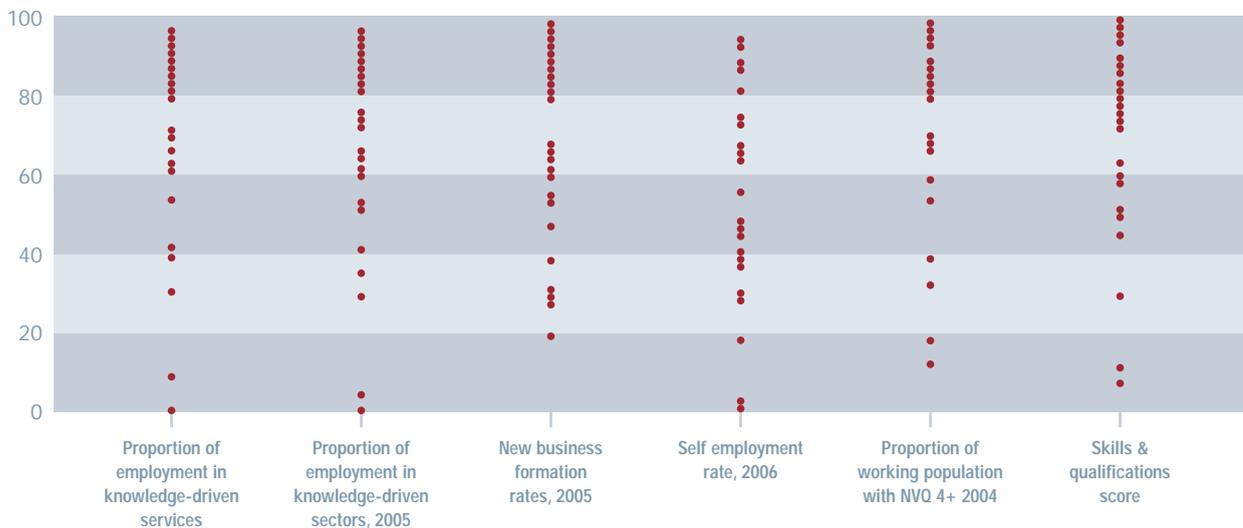
However, as with employment change, growth in business stock has been relatively low over recent years. This may in part be due to the slow rate of growth in the supply of commercial and industrial property. Over recent years suburbs have experienced below average growth in office and industrial floor space and an actual decline in retail floor space.

4.7 Summary – suburban knowledge economies

Suburbs have shown that they are beginning to punch their weight as economies. They are not simply ‘dormitories’ for their town and city centres, on which suburban economic prosperity depends. Instead, English suburbs have developed, in many cases, as drivers of city-regional economies in their own right and on a scale to match their urban centres.

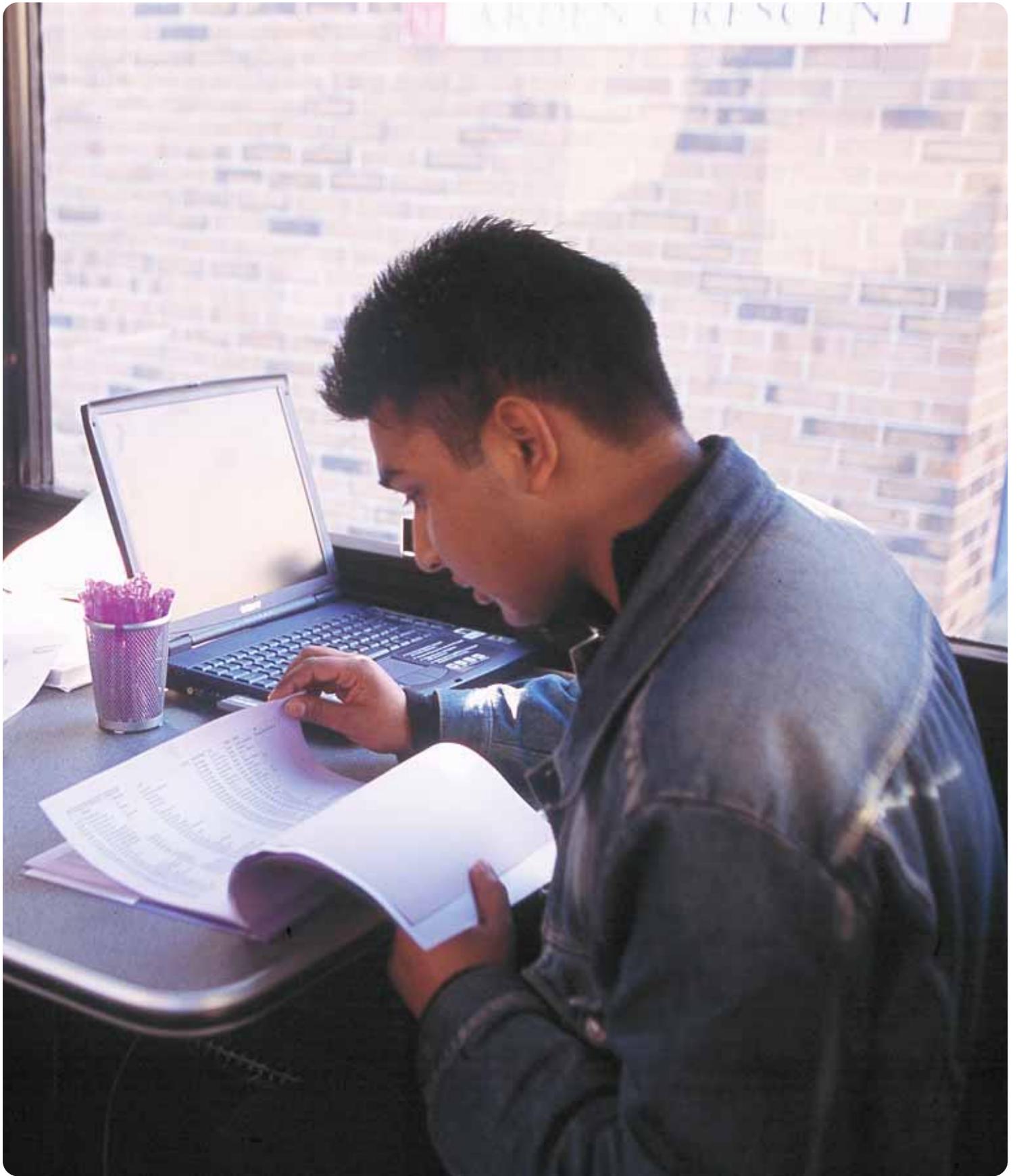
Importantly, many suburbs reveal characteristics of knowledge-driven economies, with both high levels of skills and high shares of knowledge-driven employment pushing up economic productivity. Finding a sustainable match between local skill levels and local employment will be a key challenge for suburbs and their long term sustainability. The generally good employment rates suggest that many suburbs are finding this balance.

Figure 9: Industrial structure, business & enterprise and skills indicators



Source: Local Futures, Local knowledge

Note: The chart shows the performance of the individual suburbs, converted to a percentile score. The highest scoring districts scores 100% and the lowest 1%





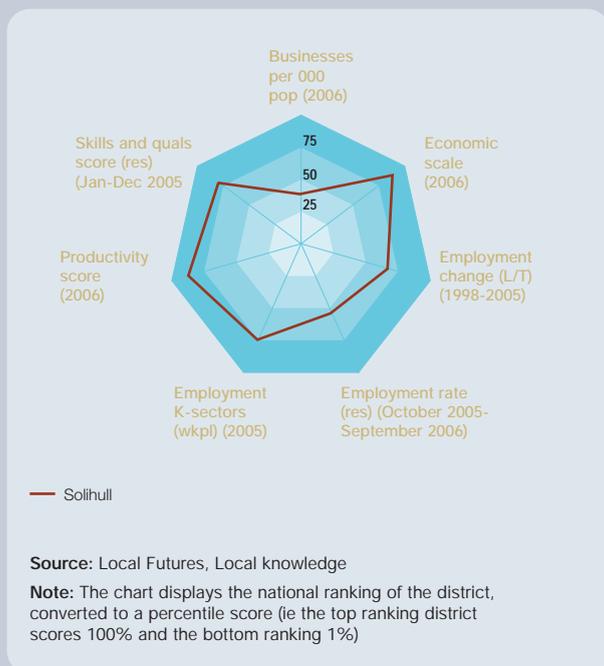
Case study: Solihull

The strength of Solihull's economic profile lies in its human capital. The borough is a base for many of the knowledge workers and highly skilled professionals who work each day in Birmingham. However, the borough also has economic assets in its own right, including Birmingham International Airport, Land Rover, Birmingham Business Parks and the NEC arena. In this context we can see the strength of Solihull as a competitive economy.

Considering its strengths, Solihull has a below average business density. *The Economic Development Strategy (2003-2008)* for Solihull highlights the need to increase business start-ups and in particular puts emphasis on increasing high-tech sector activities to 'promote Solihull as a world class location for high tech investment'. There is also a realisation of the need to stimulate business and enterprise in the north, to bring it in line with the successes of the rest of the borough.

Though suburbs are renowned for their quality of life offer, in the case of Solihull this is also matched by a formidable economy and growth potential that now rivals its sub-regional city partner.

Solihull spider chart



Case study: Trafford

Trafford is a suburb within the thriving Manchester city-region. Skills are a strong asset of the borough, placing its GCSE results in the top ten nationally, supported by two colleges of national excellence. The Trafford Economic Alliance, a wing of the Trafford Partnership, also recognise their borough as a potential enterprise capital of the north west, with over twice the VAT registrations of the Greater Manchester average, and a high concentration of businesses in knowledge-driven sectors. The good economic performance of Trafford can also be explained by the presence of Trafford Park, the largest industrial park in Europe, supporting over 1,400 companies and 40,000 workers (Trafford Economic Alliance, 2007).

Average employment rates are the result of the 'city suburb' effect and the high deprivation and inequality profile of city regions. This features in Trafford Borough Council's strategies to address the areas of deprivation at smaller geographical scales, for a more equal borough.

The overall success for the borough has meant that Trafford has set ambitious targets for becoming the strongest economy in the Manchester City-Region by 2021 and the economic alliance has established an Economic Monitoring Framework to help sustain and evaluate growth in the borough.

Trafford spider chart



5 Suburban challenges



5.1 Introduction

Our analysis has shown that the average English suburb does not fit the traditional stereotype and they are certainly not staid, closed communities, solely dependent on a nearby town or city centre. Suburbs have changed and many of them today make a major contribution to the economic and social vitality of city-regions. While they have retained many of the hallmarks that made them attractive in the first place, they are also under increasing pressure.



Housing markets are under pressure to adapt to growing populations and, crucially, the need to provide affordable housing for local residents. Services and infrastructure are under pressure, to meet the needs of a growing and more demanding public. Transport infrastructure is under immense pressure as levels of inward and outward commuting are ever-increasing. As communities become more diverse, and in some cases more unequal, there is pressure to fully understand and respond to their very different needs. Not least, there is pressure to balance growth with environmental sustainability.

While suburbs are home to the majority of England's population, they appear to be little understood and seem to be low on the national priority list. Yet our research has demonstrated the crucially important role they play – as communities, economies and as places to live – and their vital contribution to the economic vitality of England's city-regions.

In the following section we draw together our key findings and highlight some of the main challenges facing the English suburbs.

5.2 Affordable lifestyles

Suburbs are pleasant places to live, and have attracted – and continue to attract – residents who believe they offer a high quality of life for them and their families. They have been especially successful in attracting mobile and relatively high earning knowledge workers, for whom the suburbs provide a quality of life for their families, yet easy access to well paid jobs in the city. As a result suburbs, in general, are relatively prosperous. An unfortunate consequence is that these more affluent residents have also inflated house prices, in some parts of the country making suburbs some of the least affordable places to live.

While housing affordability is a national problem, it is especially a problem within suburbs in London and the South East. Here the economic success of the City's economy, with its higher earnings, has driven up demand and inflated house prices disproportionately in London's suburbs.

The problem is compounded by the fact that relatively few suburban residents work locally (save a few significant exceptions). Yet suburbs, as we have shown, have grown as economies in their own right, attracting workers from outside their areas. No doubt many of these reverse commuters would like to live closer to their place of work, if it were not for the high house prices.

The Civic Trust lists 'good quality, affordable housing, with more choice in tenure and type of house for people of all ages and social groups' as a key principle for a 'sustainable suburb'. The current suburban profile questions, in many suburbs, whether this objective is achievable. Many suburbs are pricing out potential residents on lower incomes. Addressing the issue of affordability will be crucial if the English suburbs are to play their part in achieving Government's ambitious new plans for housing growth.

5.3 Maintaining the suburban offer

Diversity and change, which to some degree characterise the modern English suburb, have important implications for the suburban offer. While it will have implications for local housing markets, it will impact more widely on the local services and amenities so highly valued by suburban communities.

Schooling, healthcare, leisure services and retail facilities will need to adapt to the increasing and ever-changing nature of demand. As our analysis has shown, many suburbs are, by national standards, experiencing high population growth, combined with high levels of in and out-migration. They are also becoming increasingly diverse, both in terms of ethnicity and in social inequality. The nature of the suburban service offer will also need to adapt in response to new technology and the increasing use of the internet – with increasing demand for e-services delivery.

While many of the above issues are common to local authorities across Britain, it would appear from our research that the pace of change in suburbs is particularly high. This will put extra pressure on service providers to adapt and respond to the ever-changing needs of their communities.

5.4 Transport and commuting

One of the key attractions of suburbs is their accessibility to cities and towns centres which, for many families, ensures the best of both worlds: the social well-being offered by an attractive living environment and the economic well-being resulting from access to highly-paid jobs and careers. But at what price?

A significant proportion of suburban residents commute out each day to work – both by car and by public transport. As a result, levels of traffic congestion are high and the public transport system is placed under ever-increasing pressures. The problem is compounded by the fact that many suburbs are also employment centres in their own right, attracting large numbers of in-commuters each day. In a number of English suburbs there is a significant mismatch between local jobs and the local workforce. The consequence is very high levels of congestion (and pollution) and extremely long travel-to-work times, neither of which contribute to the concept of a sustainable community.

In the short term, this will lead to growing pressure on transport infrastructure and the need for greater capacity to deal with increasing levels of travel and congestion. In the longer term it may invite a more radical look at measures to reduce commuting levels. While these, in part, could involve developments such as increased home working through the use of new technologies, they could also include strategies that encourage a greater fit between the local economy and local workforce.

5.5 Cohesive suburbs

The rapid rate of population change within suburbs, together with the increasing diversity of their communities, will present challenges for integration and cohesion in suburban life.

A number of suburbs, particularly around London and Manchester, have large pockets of deprivation and high levels of social inequality that are easily overlooked in the context of the overall high levels of prosperity. This will require a tailoring of local services and a better targeting of resources, in order to ensure that all residents share the benefits of suburban quality of life.

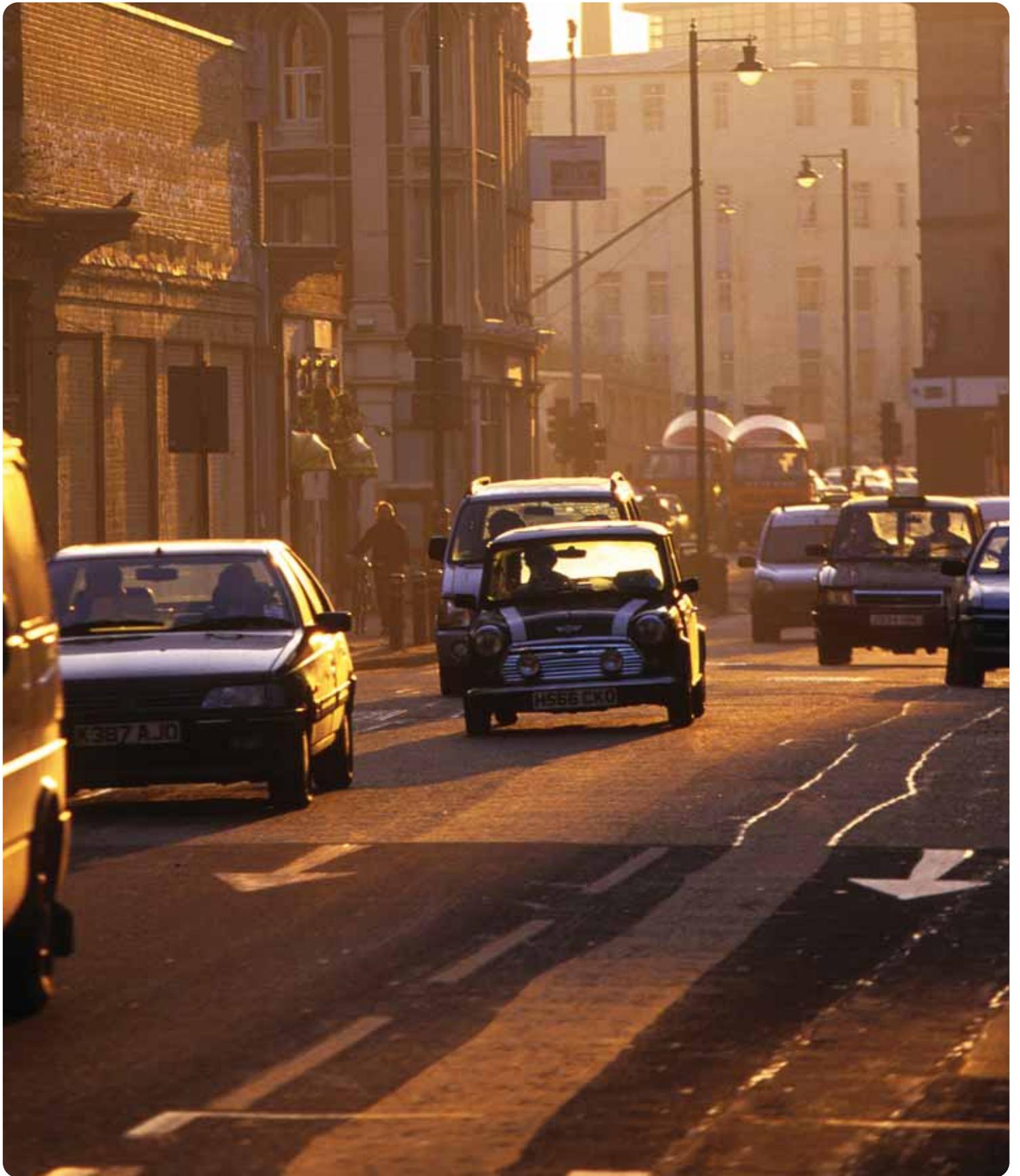
Many suburbs have a relatively diverse population in terms of ethnicity. This dynamic of migration should be recognised and understood better by national and local policy makers, in order to inform responses to the rapidly changing conditions in which local services are being provided. Otherwise, there is a danger that these changes will be treated as an infringement, rather than as a positive contribution to suburban life. In line with the final report from the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, more needs to be done to enhance the ability of suburbs to ensure that different communities integrate, rather than encourage isolation and pockets of segregation.

5.6 Sustainable suburbs

The pace of growth and change has important implications for the long-term sustainability of suburbs. As we have seen, growth within communities has been accompanied, in many suburbs, by economic growth. It is in this context that the stereotypical character of suburbs is most threatened and where the challenges are greatest.

Increasing commuting and congestion will inevitably undermine air quality and environmental sustainability. Housing growth could reduce the amount of green space and undermine the quality of the natural environment. Long travel-to-work times for local commuters must take its toll on family life and social well-being.

The challenges of sustainability are perhaps greatest for those suburbs that have grown – and continue to grow – as economies. In the ideal world, economic growth is inclusive, leading to direct benefits for local communities. However, where local residents work elsewhere and where local jobs are taken by in-commuters, there will be more likely to be a disconnect. Where there is poor fit between the economy and the local community, the challenges of sustainable development will be at their greatest.



6 Conclusions



6.1 A mixed suburban agenda

There are fundamental differences between suburbs and the centres of the city-regions they adjoin. Key assets, such as relatively healthy lifestyles, their family friendliness, reasonably low levels of crime, and high levels of connectivity, show that suburbs have their own distinctive character. Despite this, the analysis shows that there is considerable variation within suburbs, and that there is no single suburban 'type'. The pace of change, in particular, is at odds with the stereotype, demonstrating the need for a greater understanding of the social, environmental and economic dynamics within England's suburbs, if they are to develop and maintain a sustainable quality of life. More importantly, it is clear from our analysis, that suburbs make a vital contribution towards the economic vitality of city-regions, and that investing in suburbs will be important to achieving Government ambitions for urban Britain.



6.2 Suburban typologies

Suburbs are pleasant places to live, and have attracted – and continue to attract – residents who believe they offer a high quality of life for them and their families. They have been especially successful in attracting mobile and relatively high earning knowledge workers, for whom the suburbs provide a quality of life for their families, yet easy access to well paid jobs in the city. As a result suburbs, in general, are relatively prosperous. An unfortunate consequence is that these more affluent residents have also inflated house prices, in some parts of the country making suburbs some of the least affordable places to live.

While housing affordability is a national problem, it is especially a problem within suburbs in London and the South East. Here the economic success of the City's economy, with its higher earnings, has driven up demand and inflated house prices disproportionately in London's suburbs.

The problem is compounded by the fact that relatively few suburban residents work locally (save a few significant exceptions). Yet suburbs, as we have shown, have grown as economies in their own right, attracting workers from outside their areas. No doubt many of these reverse commuters would like to live closer to their place of work, if it were not for the high house prices.

6.3 The future of suburbs

More than eight in 10 people in England live in areas classified as suburban. Their future should be of as much concern to policy makers as it is to the businesses that operate in the suburbs and the communities that live in them. We believe a shift of emphasis is required in urban policy, ensuring more priority is given to the suburban agenda. This will require a change in the conception that suburbs have a one-way dependency on their urban centres. Our analysis suggests a much greater interdependence, with the city and its suburbs each contributing in different ways to the economic vitality of the city-region.

Pushing suburbs up the political and policy agenda is timely in a number of ways. The city-centric approach to urban renewal has led to significant investment and some major improvements in town and city centres. However, in many cases, a step outside specific regeneration projects still reveals many urban problems. Suburbs can play a part in achieving a more holistic approach to urban regeneration. Wider partnership-working, to include suburban policy, may help to encourage a more integrated and coherent approach to the future of city-regions.

Suburbs will become increasingly important if the government continues to promote the city-region agenda over the next few years. A successful city-region does not just focus on the needs of the inner city. Ensuring 'buy-in' from the stakeholders and communities across the city-region will require co-operation and recognition of the contribution made by each partner. A better understanding of the suburbs, and their position within the urban system, can only help in achieving this buy-in and in delivering successful city-regions.

Appendix

Suburbs as communities

LAD	Change in resident population 1991-2005	Proportion of residents moved into the area from within UK, 2001	Proportion of residents moved into the area from outside the UK, 2001	Proportion of residents moved out of the area, 2001	Proportion of population classified as non-White, 2001	Knowledge worker score
Barnet	10.75	3.61	0.29	4.00	25.97	140.84
Bexley	1.01	5.61	2.14	6.95	8.61	103.40
Brentwood	0.28	3.52	0.13	3.48	3.57	138.25
Bromley	2.86	4.23	0.92	4.88	8.41	128.04
Bromsgrove	9.98	4.97	0.57	5.08	2.15	110.56
Broxtowe	0.83	4.21	0.21	4.65	4.55	124.23
Bury	2.92	6.38	1.36	5.99	6.12	105.47
Castle Morpeth	-0.20	3.97	0.26	3.70	1.88	117.14
Chester-le-Street	2.50	2.67	0.13	2.59	0.99	93.65
Chiltern	0.45	5.91	1.44	6.82	4.55	143.74
Croydon	8.48	5.57	1.96	7.03	29.84	105.79
Ealing	6.34	4.69	0.74	5.41	41.27	136.31
East Hertfordshire	12.36	5.40	0.81	5.83	2.89	123.88
Epping Forest	5.45	3.65	0.51	3.72	4.90	107.61
Epsom and Ewell	1.78	7.88	1.77	7.76	8.67	131.19
Harborough	18.41	3.57	0.31	3.79	2.14	116.40
Harrow	5.42	3.21	0.32	3.46	41.23	124.98
Havering	-2.04	5.05	0.97	5.38	4.83	91.31
Hertsmere	4.33	4.99	0.52	4.54	7.49	126.85
Kingston-upon-Thames	12.42	6.72	1.93	7.58	15.54	135.33
Merton	13.93	5.03	0.80	5.40	25.03	136.06
Redbridge	13.29	6.83	2.37	7.46	36.48	134.29
Richmond-upon-Thames	11.82	5.00	0.63	5.05	9.02	174.06
Rushcliffe	9.44	2.82	0.72	3.38	4.10	133.77
Solihull	0.25	2.34	0.22	2.91	5.41	117.33
South Buckinghamshire	5.48	4.91	0.97	5.45	6.61	115.98
Stockport	-2.43	2.52	0.19	2.67	4.32	118.44
Sutton	4.47	5.30	1.06	6.17	10.80	111.62
Trafford	-1.20	2.19	0.19	2.19	8.36	118.85
Vale Royal	9.20	2.68	0.20	2.80	1.23	132.00
Suburbs	5.82	4.50	0.82	4.85	15.44	123.94
Great Britain	4.75	3.57	0.51	3.50	8.10	100.00

Note: the table refers to the indicators used in Figures 1 and 3

The following tables provide a reference for the headline indicators used in the preceding analysis. The data in each table refers to the composite scatter plots used in each section.

This and all background data, including a London-specific analysis, can be downloaded in PDF format at: www.barnet.gov.uk/city-suburbs



Average residence based annual income, 2006	Average house price October - December 2006	Deprivation score	Inequality score	Average household size, 2001	Proportion of households comprising of married couples with dependant children, 2001
24377.60	349947	85.24	110.29	2.48	19.39
22609.60	215048	79.52	112.11	2.44	19.39
25324.00	329075	47.15	90.02	2.38	20.10
24143.60	292168	69.77	112.16	2.35	18.33
18189.60	234885	53.72	91.52	2.50	21.61
20971.60	157772	84.92	105.85	2.37	18.47
19775.60	143310	124.65	119.05	2.43	19.14
20867.60	243757	83.70	109.66	2.45	20.23
18304.00	145725	113.42	111.01	2.35	19.69
24315.20	433654	32.85	100.77	2.53	23.61
23914.80	238584	105.16	121.90	2.38	17.17
26364.00	293367	123.96	108.61	2.55	17.53
23743.20	286346	33.32	81.46	2.48	22.36
21621.60	318869	70.62	99.77	2.39	18.60
23394.80	326445	36.45	90.95	2.45	20.84
20207.20	219244	38.25	82.75	2.48	22.21
24518.00	305348	71.52	114.67	2.61	21.20
21023.60	232312	78.25	113.71	2.44	19.33
22079.20	330672	63.62	101.60	2.49	20.97
25916.80	319138	61.56	107.13	2.40	18.50
22412.00	300845	76.82	106.45	2.38	16.89
24892.40	270773	94.14	109.63	2.59	20.31
26327.60	454932	51.23	95.97	2.26	17.97
23082.80	220016	47.41	82.14	2.42	20.68
23254.40	235845	87.09	123.37	2.47	20.73
29146.00	508807	42.75	70.01	2.50	21.78
21517.60	187864	95.68	125.92	2.36	18.63
23904.40	248659	70.35	111.54	2.35	18.61
23868.00	233698	106.75	119.17	2.35	18.24
19734.00	185527	90.38	123.03	2.46	20.86
23061.28	277385	73.86	104.78	2.44	19.27
23025.60	189538	100.00	100.00	2.41	17.48

Suburbs as places to live

LAD	Average life expectancy (years) 2003-2005	Total offences per 1000 population, (2005/06)	Dwelling burglaries per 1000 population 2005/06	Percentage of pupils achieving 5+ GCSEs A*-C 2005/06	Access to services 2005	Cultural Amenities per 1000 sq km, 2002, GB=100
Barnet	80.75	52.14	8.55	64.80	117.88	188.53
Bexley	80.10	41.30	5.50	64.10	114.97	225.05
Brentwood	81.15	32.92	4.84	65.60	93.24	33.97
Bromley	80.60	45.63	7.06	67.30	112.38	111.93
Bromsgrove	79.55	26.79	3.79	61.20	91.46	41.84
Broxtowe	80.00	42.66	7.81	56.70	105.68	66.95
Bury	78.05	44.96	7.88	59.00	104.75	83.70
Castle Morpeth	79.55	17.13	1.57	76.70	74.35	8.09
Chester-le-Street	77.90	26.00	3.42	64.00	100.64	36.75
Chiltern	81.50	25.74	3.96	68.60	89.80	26.01
Croydon	79.25	49.21	6.73	56.30	118.77	196.24
Ealing	79.25	65.97	10.81	61.30	116.47	240.07
East Hertfordshire	80.80	23.38	3.05	72.60	92.95	14.73
Epping Forest	79.65	36.53	6.36	52.50	89.93	21.04
Epsom and Ewell	81.85	22.75	2.92	74.20	108.48	183.17
Harborough	80.50	19.57	3.36	66.10	84.11	5.95
Harrow	80.65	39.92	7.62	64.00	114.35	210.29
Havering	79.60	45.12	4.85	63.10	110.08	110.62
Hertsmere	79.60	37.31	6.00	63.80	99.27	57.73
Kingston-upon-Thames	80.30	37.24	4.12	67.90	109.07	206.50
Merton	80.25	40.63	5.33	48.10	120.14	263.03
Redbridge	79.55	49.32	9.05	70.90	115.40	181.89
Richmond-upon-Thames	81.00	34.31	7.61	56.10	113.11	277.63
Rushcliffe	80.75	30.51	5.98	66.30	82.49	20.37
Solihull	80.55	41.29	5.95	66.70	104.02	78.20
South Buckinghamshire	80.80	49.57	8.13	72.40	81.66	69.86
Stockport	79.05	46.22	9.31	58.50	113.03	139.86
Sutton	79.80	38.14	3.77	68.20	113.15	241.38
Trafford	79.20	41.28	7.06	70.00	110.67	86.44
Vale Royal	78.90	31.49	3.42	64.10	88.97	4.38
Suburbs	80.03	37.58	5.90	64.41	102.80	114.54
Great Britain	78.75	41.83	5.67	58.50	100.00	100.00

Note: the table refers to the indicators used in Figures 5 and 6



Local amenities score	Proportion of total dwelling stock which is unfit, 2004	Proportion of owner occupied households, 2001	Connectivity score, GB=100	Proportion of residents who work elsewhere, 2001	Proportion of jobs taken by non-residents, 2001	Journeys per sq km, 2001	Average travel to work (in minutes), 2002-2003
124.04	5.00	66.58	150.85	59.20	44.29	1227.93	30.00
103.11	5.50	78.92	182.55	60.19	38.94	1106.61	31.00
51.45	1.80	79.25	72.78	54.83	54.62	213.43	31.00
80.68	4.30	76.12	120.63	54.82	37.67	683.87	34.00
59.46	0.10	83.36	34.82	58.54	45.93	152.96	20.00
56.43	3.40	76.43	74.57	64.25	48.05	440.83	26.00
55.00	5.60	75.53	88.38	48.35	31.15	634.46	25.00
40.30	0.10	75.56	2.25	54.65	56.84	35.87	24.00
56.75	1.40	72.21	26.32	32.29	40.41	179.19	21.00
51.12	3.90	79.51	52.76	51.62	35.81	165.63	23.00
108.32	7.30	68.72	159.99	49.94	38.82	1473.01	31.00
128.64	5.20	63.02	195.29	62.26	50.61	1961.77	27.00
42.11	4.30	76.75	27.99	49.20	40.06	120.20	30.00
52.12	0.00	74.80	42.23	61.90	43.00	114.14	22.00
99.29	5.50	82.83	304.12	61.37	53.37	809.74	21.00
30.20	2.70	84.10	7.05	51.01	40.29	55.23	22.00
105.01	4.40	75.17	214.75	61.77	44.56	1346.58	30.00
76.60	3.40	79.16	110.08	54.77	37.74	677.76	28.00
51.10	3.80	75.18	131.91	58.91	57.39	439.16	25.00
160.31	0.00	71.50	279.46	55.33	49.65	1794.65	25.00
130.82	0.00	68.85	272.10	67.03	52.55	1733.68	31.00
113.67	0.00	75.29	198.85	64.53	45.06	1223.38	30.00
228.71	5.10	69.30	198.85	27.04	18.18	1199.75	27.00
38.10	4.20	78.91	7.78	60.48	42.73	87.85	22.00
60.41	1.60	78.57	127.35	52.42	52.04	520.61	20.00
78.74	0.40	77.97	98.72	64.41	64.09	211.31	24.00
75.32	4.40	77.74	134.14	43.64	35.40	942.10	23.00
118.26	4.00	74.31	239.52	57.65	42.71	1516.30	24.00
66.64	0.00	72.34	97.55	45.67	52.37	1066.87	21.00
31.62	3.00	77.58	26.16	42.98	29.83	122.02	20.00
82.68	3.00	75.39	123.09	54.36	44.36	744.11	25.52
100.00	4.08	68.29	100.00	39.62	39.37	155.82	20.32

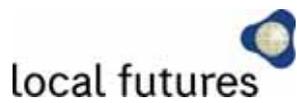
Suburbs as economies

LAD	Economic scale score	Average gross weekly earnings (workplace based), 2006	Economic productivity score	Employment rate, 2006	Unemployment rate, February 2007
Barnet	188.02	468.80	122.71	72.30	2.30
Bexley	99.72	434.80	88.31	78.60	2.20
Brentwood	47.38	487.00	109.01	74.40	1.00
Bromley	162.79	464.30	102.08	80.40	1.90
Bromsgrove	45.75	349.80	76.05	87.00	2.00
Broxtowe	53.76	403.30	85.04	75.10	1.90
Bury	84.05	380.30	75.05	77.90	2.10
Castle Morpeth	34.38	401.30	83.18	75.50	2.20
Chester-le-Street	15.48	352.00	79.43	69.20	2.10
Chiltern	53.82	467.60	119.53	75.90	1.00
Croydon	201.81	459.90	102.23	74.00	2.70
Ealing	200.56	507.00	134.77	66.30	2.90
East Hertfordshire	93.27	456.60	121.84	81.60	1.00
Epping Forest	69.16	415.80	93.44	79.50	1.90
Epsom and Ewell	52.95	449.90	129.84	82.00	0.90
Harborough	50.62	388.60	90.82	79.00	0.90
Harrow	116.16	471.50	124.93	71.90	2.20
Havering	117.35	404.30	81.82	76.20	2.00
Hertsmere	72.28	424.60	125.96	77.20	1.70
Kingston-upon-Thames	111.21	498.40	113.69	74.10	1.30
Merton	109.72	431.00	104.11	70.20	2.10
Redbridge	107.73	478.70	92.31	67.40	2.80
Richmond-upon-Thames	113.78	506.30	129.18	76.50	1.20
Rushcliffe	65.07	443.90	88.36	78.20	1.10
Solihull	164.47	447.20	118.85	76.40	2.40
South Buckinghamshire	48.87	560.50	151.04	79.30	0.80
Stockport	178.87	413.80	109.15	79.80	1.80
Sutton	101.74	459.70	100.92	80.10	1.80
Trafford	187.92	459.00	118.49	76.20	2.10
Vale Royal	71.50	379.50	95.46	71.50	2.10
Suburbs	98.05	443.49	100.15	75.27	1.81
Great Britain	100.00	442.80	100.00	74.20	2.61

Note: the table refers to the indicators used in Figures 7 and 9



Skills & qualifications score	Proportion of working population with NVQ 4+ 2004	Proportion of employment in Knowledge-driven services, 2005	Proportion of employment in Knowledge-driven sectors, 2005	New business formation rates, 2005	Self employment rate, 2006
109.06	40.13	22.40	23.92	11.02	13.60
96.43	19.22	13.54	16.14	10.47	11.20
105.10	33.17	28.66	31.45	8.53	10.90
106.87	31.87	19.97	22.05	9.41	10.80
101.10	31.94	15.31	17.10	10.03	12.20
110.17	33.79	13.11	22.09	9.76	3.70
100.20	26.84	12.16	15.23	11.24	8.00
105.76	28.87	6.93	9.30	8.65	9.10
101.10	22.71	9.44	11.35	8.72	4.40
116.68	43.84	23.75	30.63	8.72	16.30
101.47	29.67	22.49	24.79	12.09	10.20
102.77	35.66	25.66	27.80	12.46	11.30
110.63	31.52	22.50	28.22	9.00	7.70
92.41	20.30	18.18	20.92	10.32	6.60
117.27	34.80	25.90	27.07	10.47	8.40
112.63	31.30	16.71	18.72	8.13	12.70
102.60	32.07	25.39	28.79	11.76	12.00
91.03	17.73	17.12	18.97	10.15	9.40
108.13	26.07	26.64	30.74	10.90	13.90
106.50	39.75	29.00	31.69	11.61	8.90
103.23	41.24	28.05	31.69	11.71	11.30
100.95	32.71	19.56	21.19	13.05	8.60
116.82	47.59	31.45	34.01	10.87	15.80
122.72	48.12	19.82	21.83	11.84	11.00
106.75	30.03	22.27	24.40	10.16	9.20
101.24	34.60	32.73	36.76	9.69	15.30
105.99	29.92	19.12	23.37	10.36	9.20
104.64	29.71	23.57	27.03	9.96	9.30
109.31	32.53	25.30	28.30	11.60	9.10
108.88	34.46	15.34	20.02	9.93	7.20
106.46	33.15	22.09	25.07	10.43	10.42
100.00	26.39	20.30	23.72	9.82	9.20



This report was produced by the Local Futures Group for the Successful City-Suburbs Project