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*by Urvisha Ladwa*

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**UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON**  
**FACULTY OF THE BUILT**  
**ENVIRONMENT BARTLETT SCHOOL OF**  
**PLANNING**

Immediate Spaces and Subjective Wellbeing During  
the COVID-19 Pandemic. A New Relationship?

**Urvisha Ladwa**

**Being a dissertation submitted to the faculty of The Built Environment as part of the  
requirements for the award of the MSc Urban Regeneration at University College  
London:**

**I declare that this dissertation is entirely my own work and that ideas, data and images, as  
well as direct quotations, drawn from elsewhere are identified and referenced.**



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## 2.0 Abstract

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The emergence of COVID-19 has altered the relationship between the immediate spaces around us and the subjective wellbeing of users of these spaces. COVID-19 has emphasised the importance of microplanning in these spaces and tested the capacity, adaptability and quality of these spaces in dealing with not only COVID-19 but future pandemics. Opinions of participants interviewed in four sample areas suggest that additions and changes to certain features of immediate spaces could boost subjective wellbeing. The insights based on these interviews can assist planners with the microplanning of existing immediate spaces and post-pandemic spaces. Recommendations suggest a range of relatively simple and quick changes to immediate spaces as well as more innovative, digital solutions that aim to boost the subjective wellbeing of individuals in preparation for a post-pandemic world.

### 3.0 Introduction

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This research will explore several individual's immediate spaces across different areas in England. The term 'immediate space' has emerged from the COVID-19 context that is being researched within this study. Immediate space refers to the space that is in close proximity to an individual's home. It should be noted that the importance and subsequent definition of immediate space has been highlighted due to the restrictions enforced on the population during the lockdown in England. Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced England's COVID-19 restrictions on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020. These restrictions in England allowed people to only leave their homes for limited purposes with exceptions including one form of exercise a day, including walks. There was also a ban on more than two people from different households socialising together in public. The period that these restrictions were initially enforced across England has been referred to as 'lockdown'. Immediate spaces therefore include any outdoor space that has been able to remain open during lockdown in England. Additionally, given the exceptions to limited outdoor activity, immediate spaces are assumed to exclude any space that has indoor elements and any spaces such as supermarkets or spaces where high social interaction normally occurs.

This study will delve into the experiences of individuals using their immediate spaces during the COVID-19 pandemic, focussing on their feelings around subjective wellbeing (SWB). More broadly, wellbeing can be defined as the state of how a person feels, on a personal and social level (Michaelson, and Mahony, 2012). However, more specifically, the concept of SWB is especially relevant to understand for the purpose of this research project. SWB refers to the way in which individuals evaluate their life and current situation, this includes both positive and negative evaluations. Diener et al. (2017) explain that SWB can represent various feelings and emotions. For example, positive SWB means that an individual may feel good or happy, whereas negative SWB can imply the individual feels unhappy and bad. In more detail, within a negative state of SWB, there are feelings related to anger, worry and stress. Negative SWB can also contribute to longer-term moods such as depression (Deiner et al., 2017). For the sake of this research project, the concept of SWB will form the basis of

the interviews within each immediate space. It should be noted that SWB does extend beyond the descriptive criteria mentioned above. However, this research will be focussing on criteria of positive and negative descriptions associated with SWB. As well as this, there will be a detailed focus on SWB during my data collection stage as opposed to the broad topic of wellbeing that has been studied in most literature prior to COVID-19 and subsequently referenced within this research.

Through semi-structured interview questions, I will look at how individuals' SWB within their immediate spaces has been affected during lockdown England. Studying individuals' experiences in immediate spaces across different geographical locations will provide insight as to how planners can change, regenerate and design immediate spaces in a way that puts SWB at the forefront of planning decisions and policy. Concentrating on the immediate aspect of spaces will branch into the field of microplanning. Microplanning refers to planning and implementation that centres around people, considering their decisions and experiences in the process. Microplanning can be considered as 'bottom-up' planning, where planning is driven by process at local, micro levels (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014). This research will emphasise how microplanning has developed through the current COVID-19 pandemic, where concentration has been on the micro, immediate level.

In recent weeks there has been increasing awareness of the importance of general wellbeing in planning. A blog published by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) highlights the rising need for wellbeing as a key planning objective, explaining how many planners have put buildings and infrastructure as a priority over their inhabitants. However, with the increasing amount that the NHS are now spending in England on mental health and support services, there is a need for change in planning policy and regeneration decisions that cater towards creating spaces that improve wellbeing (Andrews, 2020).

The pandemic has meant planners are now under increasing pressure to consider immediate spaces and immediate aspect of planning. More emphasis is on how our immediate spaces can respond to changes occurring in contrast to pre-pandemic times.

COVID-19 has also started to provide lessons for planners who can now evaluate how planning and regenerating cities and neighbourhoods across the country will be different during and after the pandemic. There is a need to provide short term, incremental changes to immediate spaces in the instance of a second wave of COVID-19. However, it is also a necessity to plan for the likelihood of future pandemics, with further lockdowns and limited spatial mobility. The urgency at present is to prioritise below the local scale, concentrating on microplanning and the SWB of microlevel populations by best planning immediate spaces in the most appropriate way.

The research I am undertaking will concentrate on the relationship between immediate spaces and SWB. Despite general wellbeing already being a core component of planners' objectives when planning and regenerating spaces, the emergence of COVID-19 has further emphasised the importance of SWB focussed planning at microlevel. People could only leave the house once a day, for one hour for a walk or exercise, meaning that immediate spaces have inevitably been affected in terms of their quality, their perception and their adaptability given that more people are relying on them. This research will provide key insights not only for existing immediate spaces across the country, but also for post-pandemic cities and neighbourhoods that will be designed or regenerated in the future.

Lastly, microplanning is a recurring feature of this research. It is not a particularly broadly covered topic in literature as of now, however, the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified its significance. This research will provide insights for planners at the core of understanding microplanning and its importance in planning since the pandemic emerged at the start of the year.

The following research aim and objectives have been decided for this research.

### **3.1 Research Aim**

To explore individuals' SWB in their immediate spaces during COVID-19 and consider what this means for the microplanning of immediate spaces across England.

### **3.2 Research Objectives**

- Establish individuals SWB in their immediate spaces throughout lockdown as a result of COVID-19.
- Investigate how certain features of these immediate spaces influence participants SWB during COVID-19.
- Identify the improvements or changes that could be made in immediate spaces to boost the SWB of users.
- Provide insights for the microplanning of post-pandemic immediate spaces.



## 4.0 Literature Review

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### 4.1 Cities and Wellbeing

According to a Douglas' (2012) study, access to nature has a strong association with mental wellbeing. Historically, studies have focussed on the relationship between green spaces and physical activity (Astell-Burt et al., 2013). However, more recently, there has been a shift in awareness towards the presence of public spaces and positive associations of mental health, subsequently branching into the field of mental wellbeing (White et al., 2013). Another study mentioned by Wood et al. (2017) determined that on average, individuals had lower mental distress and better wellbeing when living in urban areas that had a greater proportion of surrounding green spaces, than those that had less.

Having studied a range of literature surrounding wellbeing in cities and other urban environments, it is clear to see that urban spaces are viewed as key social determinants in influencing wellbeing. Kleinert and Horton (2016) evidence this, explaining that urban spaces are key social determinants for health and can fuel positive and negative feelings of mental and physical wellbeing. The authors state that there is a positive effect specifically attributed to green spaces in the environment, these types of spaces are seen to be the most powerful source of better health outcomes and lower mortality rate in the long term. Within the same study, it is claimed that if feasibility, opportunity and the attractiveness of walking within public spaces is improved, that this could provide a solution to better health and wellbeing. Kleinert and Horton (2016) conclude that cities can be used as a tool by urban planners to provide health and wellbeing opportunities as they are a strong asset to use in order to achieve sustainable health and development.

Cattell et al. (2008) define wellbeing as a state of positive health and consider individual experiences in social context to determine it. The authors view wellbeing as a promoter of good health as opposed to causing negative consequence or illness. Through considering local features of public spaces, this study looks at different social groups and their collective experiences in order to reveal the context in which wellbeing is being

experienced. Concentrating on Newham, London, the study looks at the differing conceptualisations of general wellbeing that occurred as a result of interviews with residents using certain spaces across the area. The study highlights the features of space that can influence the wellbeing of users. Firstly, social interaction was considered a strong determinant in a public space to promote wellbeing of users. This contrasts to the current situation of COVID-19, where social interaction was severely restricted during lockdown. Cattell et al. (2008) also explained that some respondents found there were not enough places to sit and rest or relax, implying the importance of physical features such as park benches as a way to improve how respondents feel in public spaces. While this study identified key determinants of wellbeing in spaces, it is clear to see that the study is currently outdated given the current situation of COVID-19. This highlights the need for more research to be undertaken where social interaction is not considered a positive attribute to wellbeing, as at present, social interaction can contribute negatively to wellbeing in public spaces due to the infectious nature of COVID-19. Additionally, Cattell et al. (2008) explains that certain spaces can be 'therapeutic landscapes', this term refers to a space perceived to promote wellbeing and maintain good health. However, recently, more literature focuses on 'ordinary spaces', defined as spaces that are in the built environment and in green spaces, which can promote wellbeing directly (Gesler, 2003). Cattell et al. (2008) explains that people need to feel comfortable and at ease in their everyday local spaces, this is referred to as 'ontological security' by Giddens (1990) and Saunders (1986).

Memories are also considered a valid determinant of wellbeing, as stated by Cattell et al. (2008), a public space does not just provide a physical setting for people but also has personal meaning. Many people have memories of growing up and can identify certain parts of their close surroundings that provide them a sense of belonging when in the space when they are adults. It is therefore identified by Korpela and Ylen (2007) that memories of these spaces can instil significant effects on wellbeing.

Overall, this paper concludes that people may have more positive SWB in spaces if they can link it to a positive memory and vice versa. However, it would be interesting to see if

further research could be undertaken to investigate how memories pre-pandemic may affect the SWB of users in their immediate spaces.

SWB refers to how people experience and evaluate their lives (Diener et al., 2018), SWB is used as the term that describes how we think and feel about our lives (Diener et al., 1999). It is crucial to understand the evaluative and experienced aspects of wellbeing that are components of SWB. Stone and Mackie (2013) explain that evaluative wellbeing is based on the judgements made of how satisfying one's life may be, these judgements can be applied to any part of daily life. Experienced wellbeing focuses on emotional feeling, which can be split into positive and negative experiences. For example, positive experiences will be characterized by terms such as happiness, contentment, excitement or joy. Negative experiences will be characterised by terms such as sadness, stress, worry or fear. Many studies tend to characterise general wellbeing as happiness, this means the distinctions of different characteristics of wellbeing have become blurred, leading to muddled interpretations (Stone and Mackie, 2013).

The study above suggests that there is a need to identify a set of criteria that can be used to measure SWB in a more informal, self-assessed way, that can then be used by participants in studies to measure the ways they are feeling. This could be in the form of a list of simple positive and negative characteristics that participants can use to decide and identify from.

Mouratidis (2019) mentions that it is only in recent years that literature has started to address the relationship between SWB and the built environment. This further emphasises the need to consider this relationship with the context of COVID-19 and the effects of pandemics in general.

#### **4.2 Wellbeing in cities during the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing importance of local space**

This section will explore how the spaces mentioned in the first section have been affected during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite COVID-19 still being a developing situation, even in its early stages, it has amplified the influence of certain design concepts and urban features (Megahed and Ghoneim, 2020). The emergence of COVID-19 has created unprecedented situations in cities across the world. In England, restrictions on mobility mean that much of the population have been confined to their homes and immediate spaces, showing an increased importance placed on the concept of the microlevel scale. As mentioned previously, green spaces and wellbeing have a strong positive correlation, however, the pandemic has now altered this relationship to some extent and new studies are emerging that explore the impact of COVID-19 on these spaces. Studies should be undertaken to reflect on how immediate spaces may be used differently or perceived differently now and how this can impact SWB. This is especially crucial due to the rising importance of the micro aspect of cities and neighbourhoods during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Freeman and Eykelbosh (2020) found that parks and green spaces that have been explored by an Astell-Burt et al. (2013) study, may become highly undesirable during the COVID-19 pandemic. As many alternative public spaces have been closed, there is not only more pressure on existing green and open spaces, but also a lack of health benefits that would normally be derived by these public spaces that are now restricted and limited to the public (Freeman and Eykelbosh, 2020). The authors explain that there are worries over the state of mental health across the population, given that public, outdoor spaces are considered a public health asset. These negative feelings as a result of poorer mental health can influence SWB among individuals. Being able to spend time in outdoor spaces is crucial to avoid social isolation and means individuals can boost their wellbeing through exercise. This is especially important, particularly when much of the population have been working from the confinement of their homes. A Canadian study undertaken two weeks after social distancing measures were enforced by the Canadian government recorded more than 60% use of its parks. As the weather was very mild and people were unable

to enjoy any other recreational indoor activities, meant a higher demand and use of the parks across the country. Additionally, this has amplified the contribution of outdoor spaces to mental health and wellbeing (Freeman and Eykelbosh, 2020).

Samuelsson et al. (2020) explore how local spaces have been affected by the pandemic in a recent study, claiming that access to spaces that provide nature has become even more important, given the refuge nature can provide to those who need an escape from household confinement. The absence of stressors of physical confinement and the positive contribution of natural environments such as parks and green spaces is likely to be a source of temporary stress relief, especially relevant in the stressful situation of a pandemic (Hartig et al., 2014). Stress relief is undoubtedly positive for general wellbeing and stress is seen as a negative contribution to SWB (Stone et al., 2013). However, COVID-19 has meant that even in these outdoor spaces, people may feel anxiety and worry due to the increased uncertainty and fear of contracting the virus (Brooks et al., 2020). Samuelsson et al. (2020) present the example of New York, United States. As New York represents a highly urbanised space that is densely populated, there is scarcity in the prevalence of public space, particularly of high quality green spaces. As a result of the pandemic, temporary measures have been introduced to allow people to use spaces that were formerly busy with cars, as pedestrian only space. Cars have been banned on several streets, allowing pedestrians to use the space as public outdoor space, given the demand for outdoor spaces during the pandemic (Ly, 2020). This paper concludes that urban planners should be using the pandemic to learn and prepare to be better for future similar situations. It also emphasises how open and public spaces should be used as a tool in planning to improve wellbeing for locals who are making frequent use of open space (Samuelsson et al., 2020). This evidences the need for further research into how immediate spaces, especially urban spaces, may have become ill equipped for the pandemic and how this could be affecting SWB, but more importantly how they could be improved through microplanning.

Multiple recent reports have highlighted the temporary measures being enforced in cities across the world to adapt the use of formerly traffic heavy spaces for local people. For

example, Connolly (2020) reported that in Paris it is almost impossible for the city to go back to traffic levels pre-COVID-19. In Berlin, 14 miles of road space was repurposed into bike lanes. In Sydney, radical new efforts to reshape cities to favour cyclists and pedestrians have been implemented to boost wellbeing during periods of lockdown. The mayor of Athens also stated that the pandemic has meant infrastructure that may not have been implemented for years to come is being accelerated given the demand for more public spaces (Connolly, 2020).

This article explores how the pandemic has emphasised how important immediate spaces are at local level when residents are in a state of limited spatial mobility and unable to travel to reach spaces for their own leisure. This is a strong justification to prompt planners to consider how spaces could not only be temporarily improved to cater for further waves of COVID-19, but also in planning post-pandemic cities.

COVID-19 has not only displayed challenges for the population but has provided planners the opportunity to alter and learn more about the way in which spaces and even new developments could be planned in the future, with wellbeing at the forefront of objectives. According to Davies (2020), as city dwellers have been forced to stay in their homes, this has prompted planners to now promote more local lifestyles, where people are adapting and making more use of local spaces. Before the pandemic, there was a constant priority on creating more urban spaces in the form of buildings and areas that generate economic growth. Whereas now, there are considerations being made as to how cycling and walking can be made safer in spaces that have formerly been dominated by cars or for other non-walking purposes. An idea presented by the architect Harm Timmermans, entails an outdoor shopping market space, where people can use the outdoors simultaneously while grocery shopping, this is a new and innovative idea and suggests there is already a shift in the design and planning to create a new normal that can benefit local people. There are also now new ideas of creating a 'compact city', where amenities are all within a bubble for each local area, essentially creating a micro scale community within an urbanised city. This focusses on strengthening public spaces, making sure that the rate of infection could be contained and to ensure spaces are equally available in

each area to limit travel out of or into the city (Davies, 2020). COVID-19 has brought many limitations to our current spaces, meaning that planners must now be smarter and respond to the changes that have been seen in the use of spaces (Inside Ecology, 2020). This new focus on the local is highly relevant and adds to the increasing literature around the topic of microplanning.

Microplanning refers to the planning and implementation that is centred around people, where people's opinions, feelings and needs are considered at the forefront of planning decisions. It is a type of 'bottom-up' planning, with concentration of planning process at local, lower levels. Microplanning is small-scale area planning (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014), this is particularly vital in the presence of COVID-19, given the restrictions that are on mobility. Within microplanning there is recognition of the need to consider planning through microlevel planning process (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014). The field of microplanning aims to create spaces that local people need in order to make them feel positive thoughts in certain spaces, which can overall improve their SWB (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014). This should not necessarily mean creating more open spaces, but rather to increase the quality of existing spaces at local level. It should not always be assumed that we are challenged in the abundance of open spaces, more that the spaces that certain local populations have easy access to are not good enough or do not serve the correct purpose during lockdown. This is supported by Wood et al. (2017) and White et al. (2013), who explain that those who live closely surrounded by open, green spaces, that are of decent quality, will suffer from lower mental distress. Microplanning aims to consider what people want in their immediate, local spaces. Insights from local level individuals can then be used in planning and design in order to create and change spaces into places that will make local users feel happier and provide more positive SWB.

Accessibility is crucial in promoting wellbeing of users of green spaces, which proves that there is a positive correlation specifically between the proximity of green spaces and general wellbeing. However, there has not been enough research undertaken regarding how certain urban features in these spaces are being affected in the presence of pandemics, even less so on the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, my own research will

focus on looking at how these spaces are planned in terms of their features and how these features may have become unsuitable during the pandemic. I would like to research how the pandemic has led to a need for microlevel spaces that are adaptable in light of COVID-19 given the clear impact on SWB for those using the space.

Furthermore, Horwill (2020) explains there is now even more of a need for natural spaces to stay open as opposed to urban spaces. Natural spaces have a clear link to bettering mental health, providing a place for people to work on their physical health and ultimately bettering their wellbeing (Horwill, 2020). Social distancing must also be taken into consideration in newly planned and designed spaces. As well as this, there should be more guidance on how this can work, through working out what local populations need from the environments surrounding them. Most homes do not support prolonged periods of working from home, which is why there is a high dependence on the spaces close to us and outside of our home now more than ever. New initiatives such as microparks have emerged to respond to this demand, however, given social distancing rules, this may not instil the greatest confidence in those who are worried about using public spaces during the pandemic. Additionally, closures of streets have been positive temporary measures to allow those in the inner city to utilise spaces once congested by cars, although, these measures are only temporary. They are all very small scale interventions, which should lead to more radical, greater change and more guidance for new plans and developments (Horwill, 2020). Many new articles and studies that have introduced the temporary ways in which cities are being altered to support populations during the pandemic and these are highly useful and important to consider in the short term by planners. However, given the temporary nature of these new provisions, there is still a need to consider long term approaches as to how spaces can provide more of a boost to local people during instances of further pandemics. As well as this, more in depth studies in the field of microplanning are needed in order to work from the bottom-up and work out what local people seek from these spaces, this would ensure SWB is being addressed when planning post-pandemic spaces or adapting existing immediate spaces.

Having explored current literature, the following research questions have been identified through the gaps and further areas that I would like to research for this project.



#### **4.3 Research Questions:**

- How have lockdown measures as a result of COVID-19 altered our perception and use of our immediate spaces?
- How have our perceptions of and changes to use of our immediate spaces affected our SWB?
- How can this research aid us in the future development and design of post-pandemic cities with SWB at the core of microplanning?

## 5.0 Research Design and Methodology

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### 5.1 Data Collection

Data collection was undertaken in late May, during lockdown in England. I decided to use participants from 4 different areas in different parts of the country. Participants were recruited through personal, existing social networks, which was most appropriate given the pandemic. It was also beneficial to choose participants through a personal existing network as I knew that they would be forthcoming to take the time to participate, given the panic and stress of the pandemic.

The use of primary data collection is essential for collecting opinion regarding SWB. I directed part of my interview towards finding out how participants' feelings had changed throughout lockdown and how this affected their SWB. This type of opinion would not have been possible through secondary data collection. The data was collected at the peak of the pandemic, when feelings were likely to be the most heightened and amplified among participants.

Using a qualitative method for data collection was beneficial to my research question as using open ended questions to collect responses tends to allow for more in-depth information to be collected. Including a follow up video call allowed for face-to-face interaction and this enabled observation of body language and tone of voice, which allowed me to pick up on and prompt more detailed questions to elaborate answers further.

As the interview questions were formulated once I had completed my review of literature, I had accumulated a greater knowledge of the topic area. This allowed me to guide the questions and the conversation towards the gaps that I had identified in my literature review. It is vital in the interview process to have acquired considerable knowledge beyond the topic area in question as this ensures the interview is not merely a conversational interaction and instead possesses the right direction around the topic (Ryan et al., 2009).

Each participant was from a different part of the country and therefore I knew that

geographically, each immediate space would somewhat vary in their planned characteristics. This would enable a wider range of responses during the interview.

The following areas were chosen for the study:

### 5.1.1 Croxley Green

- Village / large suburb set in the rural county of Hertfordshire.
- Weston Woods woodland (Croxley Green Parish Council, 2018).



Figure 1. P1 Immediate Space (Croxley Green)



### 5.1.3 Neasden

- Suburban town in the London Borough of Brent (Brent Council, n.d.).



Figure 3. P3 Immediate Space (Neasden)



#### 5.1.4 Pimlico

- Residential neighbourhood in Central London (City of Westminster)
- Known to have a highly disciplined grid of residential streets known as 'Pimlico grid' (Thomas Cubitt) (SW1 London, 2016).



Figure 4. P4 Immediate Space (Pimlico)

## 5.2 Participant Profiles

I have included brief profiles of each participant for reference during later discussion.

	<b>Participant 1 (P1)</b>	<b>Participant 2 (P2)</b>	<b>Participant 3 (P3)</b>	<b>Participant 4 (P4)</b>
<b>Immediate Space</b>	Croxley Common Moor	Ruislip Lido/Northwood Golf Club Area	Gladstone Park/Randall Avenue	Bessborough Gardens/Vauxhall Bridge Road
<b>Location</b>	Croxley Green, Hertfordshire, East of England	Northwood, Hillingdon, Outer London	Neasden, Brent, Outer London	Pimlico, Westminster, Inner London
<b>Gender</b>	Female	Female	Female	Female
<b>Age</b>	22	23	23	24
<b>Summary of Space</b>	Quiet road, quiet area around common, green space, river, bridge, canal	Affluent housing, close to high street, frequent buses passing, lido is green with some blue space, trees, dirt paths	Busy road, dense housing, large park, green space, not many trees, mostly grass	Urban area, high rise buildings, surrounded by micropockets of green space, busy main road, quiet park with paved area, green space, fountain
<b>Type of Home</b>	House	Flat	House	Flat
<b>Number of People in household</b>	6	5	4	2
<b>Lockdown Routine</b>	Studying full time, leaving house for a walk once a week, using garden every few days	Working from home, going outdoors every other day after working around 6/7pm	Working from home, 40 minute local walk in afternoon, jog or exercise in garden	Working from home, leaving house once a day during afternoon for walk / leisure time / grocery shopping

Figure 5. Participant Profiles



### **5.3 Research Design**

I followed a qualitative research design which entailed creating a set of interview questions. These questions firstly involved setting the scene of the immediate space, followed by a series of questions related to participants' SWB. Participants were given a set of example descriptions of SWB, such as happiness, sadness, anger and excitement and could add further descriptions in as they felt they needed to.

The interview questions were semi-structured and the research design was case-study based. This meant it was designed to investigate real-life context of those in immediate spaces. The purpose of this type of research design was to gain a descriptive and exploratory analysis based on SWB in each immediate space. Case-study based approaches to research design are beneficial to use when information is needed in an in-depth appreciation of a certain issue, it means that subjective opinions can be derived very easily (Crowe et al., 2011).

### **5.4 Justification**

As per the locations above, the study would consider Croyley Green (suburban), Northwood (outer London), Neasden (outer London) and Pimlico (inner city). By varying the geographical locations, the data collection from each participant can be compared and linked back to the surrounding environment and how the planned area has impacted the SWB of users that experience it. Collecting data samples from a range of respondents in different areas allows for a comparison between urban features in these immediate spaces that contribute to positive or negative SWB.

### **5.5 Manual Coding**

I included the step of manual coding as analysing large sections of interview responses can become complicated and poorly structured. Using manual coding, the common themes would become apparent beforehand and lead the following discussion more clearly. Although manual coding is often considered a more tedious method in research projects (Basit, 2003), as my data set was relatively small, the method worked well. Through manual coding I was able to identify several topics of discussion that would drive

the following analysis section. Figure 6 is a screenshot showing the manual coding highlighting process.

**Codes:**

Features of immediate space

SWB feelings associated with changes in use of immediate space through lockdown

Value ascribed by individual to space during lockdown

Ease of use of immediate space during lockdown

SWB feelings in non-immediate spaces compared to immediate spaces

Improvements in your immediate space that would increase your SWB feelings in light of your experiences during covid-19

**Interview Transcripts**

1. **Could you name the immediate space that you have frequently visited during the pandemic?** (if it's a park, state the name, any main roads you walk on if they make up a large portion of your journey)

Participant 1

- Grand Union Canal, overlooking parts of Croxley Common Moor, journey to reach this space is through one short residential street, low car traffic and very quiet

Participant 2

- Ruislip Woods/Ruislip Lido – walk along the busy high street, up past the iron bridge, along a more quiet, bigger road of houses and this leads to the entrance of the Northwood golf course which consists of huge open green spaces and lovely trees too.
- Walk along the public foot path that takes you into Ruislip Woods – consisting of both wooded areas and more open spaces with cows roaming around and this eventually leads to the Lido

Participant 3

- Gladstone Park, Tanfield Avenue, Dollis Hill Lane, Neasden Lane

Participant 4

- Bessborough gardens, Pimlico

2. **Could you describe (named area) that you are in at the moment?** (is it an urban space? is it a green space? brief description of the characteristics of the immediate space (named))

Participant 1

- Green space
- Canal and river, with forest on other side of river
- Bridge and canal lock

Participant 2

- Ruislip Woods/the Lido – a very green space can take walks/jogs/runs through it. Also common area for having picnics.
- It's a mixture of green spaces – you walk through the golf course which is so lovely – huge green flat golf lawns with lovely huge trees And then you reach the Ruislip woods area which has little bridges over little streams of water and then gates to keep the cows in
- I'd rather not touch the opening gates so we usually climb over the climbable ones. Then it becomes more open spaced again with no trees overhead on the paths – just a path has been created because of how often people walk that route I think – it's not a proper footpath

Figure 6. Manual Coding Screenshot

## **5.6 Limitations**

If there were no extenuating circumstances in relation to COVID-19, then I would have opted to carry out my interviews in each area alongside each participant. However, given certain restrictions, this was not possible. Additionally, I would have opted to use participatory analysis to collect primary data, however, given the infectious nature of the current COVID-19 pandemic this was also not feasible.

The sample size I collected was small, considering COVID-19 it was not practical to reach out to more participants. Also, under the time constraints it was more realistic to consider a small sample size, as this would ensure a more detailed exploration of each participant's opinion.

However, taking the above into consideration, I believe that the data collection process that I carried out using video calling platforms provided me with a strong capability to collect the data with the same advantages as an in person interview would have had.

## **5.7 Positionality**

I chose these 4 participants through existing networks as I was aware of the local areas of each participant and considered these areas to provide a strong base for analysis. Through studying previous literature, I identified a trend of focussing on wellbeing and green spaces that were limited to usually one or two areas without direct comparison, therefore I wanted to ensure my research incorporated this.

In terms of the background of my participants, I decided to focus on similar age ranges between 22 and 24 as I believe concentrating on this age group allowed me to collect more personal thoughts from each participant, given that it is very relatable to my own experiences.

I gave interviewees the chance to complete their interview questions first in their own time without any observation on my part. I allowed them to discuss their answers face-to-face and intervened when they required explanation regarding questions. This ensured that I

was not prompting them or guiding the interview towards my own opinions. It also guaranteed that I remained as neutral as possible during the data collection stage.

This method worked well in practice as I was able to gain further detail through a video call, this was particularly insightful for me as the participants added more to their initial answers. As the video call was a more informal approach, participants opened up more. This was particularly useful considering the sensitive aspect of SWB during the pandemic. Participants also seemed to enjoy telling me about their experiences as it was a good outlet to share thoughts about and memories of their spaces, which was a particularly interesting aspect of the data collection.

### **5.8 Ethical Concerns and Mitigation**

A main concern during this research project has been the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore there were worries over the safety and risk when collecting primary data. However, this was mitigated through collecting all data virtually. Interviews were conducted via email and through video calling platforms. This eradicated the risk of contact between myself and my participants, preventing any risk of contracting the virus during primary data collection.

All participants were provided with a consent form before they were included in my research project. As well as this, they have all been anonymised and no personal addresses will be shared for their privacy. Photographs and general named areas will be the only link to the physical location of each participant; however, each participant has been made aware of this prior to the interview process. Participants were also made aware of what the interview and research would entail before agreeing to take part, in case any participant was unhappy with sharing details regarding their SWB. To further make participants comfortable with the process, I ensured that my interview was designed with a short set of instructions and prompt questions and hints underneath each question to make the process as easy as possible for them.

## 6.0 Analysis

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### 6.1 Value

The situation of the pandemic has evolved in the weeks following Boris Johnson's televised announcement of lockdown. In particular, the sense of personal value of space has been highlighted through the opinions of participants during the interview process and therefore warrants some discussion in its contribution to SWB.

The memories within immediate spaces before the pandemic when life was 'normal' have somewhat replaced memories of childhood. Across all participants it was agreed that the immediate space was valued more than it previously had been, which in turn was positive for SWB. This is supported by the previous discussion by Cattell et al. (2008), who explained that memories are a valid determinant of wellbeing. This shows that the value of space has emerged in line with COVID-19 as a result of being more reliant on our immediate spaces than we were pre-pandemic. Of the participants involved in the research, P1 and P3 agreed that the value of their immediate space had increased immensely as a result of the pandemic forcing them to make more use of them. P2 and P4 had discovered this space during lockdown, therefore found it had increased in value over the period of lockdown as opposed to comparing to feelings of nostalgia from before lockdown. The conclusion of this being that increased sense of value felt by P1, P2, P3 and P4 was associated with positive SWB. For example, according to P4, finding this immediate space during lockdown and being able to visit it was a source of tension relief,

*"It's nice that I've discovered somewhere so near me that I can enjoy as a break from the stress of my working day".*

P4 explains that their immediate space has contributed to reducing feelings of stress that are associated with working from home during the lockdown. As stress is seen to be a negative description of SWB (Stone and Mackie, 2013), P4 implies that stress is

lessened, boosting SWB towards positive feelings associated with the immediate space.

## 6.2 **Perceptions of immediate space and SWB before and throughout lockdown**

During the period of lockdown, many spaces especially in the inner city were repurposed to provide more open spaces for pedestrians and cyclists. This was common in central London during the earlier stages of the lockdown, to create outdoor spaces for residents around the city, as mentioned previously by Connolly (2020). Outside of the inner city in areas that have been represented by P1, P2 and P3, the changes seen in the use of immediate spaces during the start of lockdown had different consequences for SWB compared to that of P4. For example, according to P1,

*“I only really ever encountered this space when I would walk to the local tube station and my parents would always worry about me taking this route to get to the tube station given how quiet and remote/secluded it was... now there are many groups of families around that it is hard to find any quiet spaces to even walk ”*

P1 explains that since lockdown started, their immediate space changed its purpose immediately, from a space used only to travel through, now to a space that is used for a once-a-day walk during lockdown. Additionally, P3 supports this opinion,

*“I used to walk on the edge of the park when walking home from the station and it used to be quite a calm place, now I have been back during lockdown there are so many more people. I feel anxious as the railings surrounding the tennis courts under construction have been dismantled by people messing around trying to access the closed parts of the park in lockdown.”*

Both P1 and P3 explain that during the early stages of lockdown the use and

character of their immediate spaces had changed. P1 was concerned about groups and families using the space now and associated this with worry, a negative descriptor of SWB. Consequently, the increase in numbers of people using the immediate space caused a decrease to the SWB of P1. For P3, frustrations of those who were trying to use closed tennis courts in the park during early lockdown ultimately led to acts of vandalism. P3 associated this with a feeling of being anxious when using their immediate space. The act of other users in the park trying to disobey lockdown rules that had prohibited use of tennis courts, leading to P3 feeling anxious, a negative feeling for SWB.

Contrastingly, for P4, the changes seen in immediate space were different. P4 explains the changes seen in their immediate space from the start of lockdown to later in the lockdown,

*“During strict lockdown I noticed that people were sat together on benches... made me feel sceptical to visit too frequently as I wouldn't have expected this in other busier parks in London, but it wasn't very busy at all as I'd have thought”*

P4 then explains the changes they saw in their immediate space once lockdown had been in effect for several weeks,

*“It seems more people are maybe coming back to the city now whereas people were not really around the city before... I feel more anxious about going there now as opposed to before – as I know more people are likely breaking the rules now compared to the start of lockdown.”*

P4 highlights that initially their immediate space was very quiet and there were not many people about, a stark contrast to what P1 and P3 experienced in their immediate spaces. It should be noted that P4 noticed that more people did seem to

be out again in their immediate space a few weeks into lockdown. P4 assumed that this was due to people leaving their homes in the city for outer London locations. While this was an assumption, it does question the reason why inner city residents favoured leaving their homes during strict lockdown. This could imply that outer London locations were preferred for those who were now confined to working within their homes. It can also suggest that other locations could provide higher quality, outdoor spaces to use during lockdown. This will be discussed in further detail in the following section.

As mentioned in 4.0 Literature Review, inner city locations have been subject to temporary changes in order to repurpose formerly traffic heavy roads and areas that have seen little to no traffic during lockdown. For example, as explained by Connolly (2020), cities such as Paris and Sydney have seen small-scale changes with the aim of improving the city in favour of cyclists and pedestrians, instead of wasting unused road space. Considering the views of participants in the sample, we see that P1 and P3 had readily available green space to use in their immediate space. However, we know that feelings of negative SWB were experienced despite this, proving that it is not always about the abundance of spaces, but if they can serve the purpose they need to serve now. It was before lockdown that this space was relatively underused for the pure purpose of boosting SWB, whereas now it is easily available to use for this purpose. However, for P4, due to the urbanised setting of the surrounding space around them, the only available immediate spaces to use during lockdown are relatively small and not as fit for purpose as many immediate spaces outside of the inner city may be. Therefore, recent changes to busy roads in the city have been seen, compared to little or no changes in outer London areas that we can see are somewhat more adaptable to the situation of COVID-19. However, it should be noted that while these greener, larger spaces may be more readily available outside of the inner city, this does not mean that they are instantly more beneficial to SWB. It is about the way in which these existing spaces are now able to adapt in their purpose and use considering COVID-19, this will be discussed in the next section.



### 6.3 SWB experiences in non-immediate space compared to immediate space

As lockdown restrictions eased slightly, participants were asked about their experiences outside of their immediate spaces. These have been referred to as non-immediate spaces for the purpose of discussion.

The aim of asking this question was to consider the experiences of each participant to highlight what may be missing in their existing immediate spaces that are available in non-immediate spaces. Therefore, if certain urban features are added or changed by planners, SWB may be boosted for these individuals in their own immediate spaces.

P1 visited a local business park,

*“It’s really quiet in the business park as most people are still working from home at the moment... there are lots of wide roads and large car parks, as well as fountains and trees that were almost abandoned during the lockdown... safer option to walk here than in my immediate space and felt more comfortable using it.”*

P1 explains that they felt more comfortable in their non-immediate space. The reasons for this were that it was quieter, with less people to instil fear over COVID-19, there were also features such as car parks and areas that had lost their use since workers were no longer utilising them. Additionally, P1 mentions wide roads, as well as trees. These features therefore are those that can boost SWB, as positive descriptions of SWB were associated with the non-immediate space, specifically “safer” and “comfortable”.

P4 travelled to wards the coastline,

*“I wanted to be near blue spaces... I really felt I needed to go as it feels like I have more space there compared to here where I don’t*

*have a garden.”*

P4 states that they wanted to be close to blue spaces and mentions that there was more space in their non-immediate space as opposed to their immediate space in the inner city. This suggests that the feature of blue space and simply more space are positive attributes that can boost SWB. P4 also explains that they “needed to go”, this highlights that travelling to this non-immediate space was vital for them. This emphasises the pressing need for improvements to open spaces in the inner city, given that many residents do not have access to a private garden if living in a flat. This notion is supported by the previous discussions of Wood et al. (2017) and White et al. (2013), who agree that lower mental distress is linked with living closely surrounded by decent and adequate quality spaces. Lower mental distress provides a positive boost to SWB, showing that those in more urban, inner city environments could struggle more finding high quality areas in their immediate space during the pandemic.

Overall, P1, P2 and P3 all experienced positive feelings regarding their SWB in their non- immediate spaces, however, P4 experienced a mixed range of feelings that can contribute to both positive and negative SWB,

*“I still feel calmer in my immediate space – close to my own home, as I’ve been spending so much time there... at the beach I was worried if I was breaking any rules when I was there so it put me on edge a little as well.”*

P4 initially stated positive feelings of SWB when visiting a non-immediate space, however, that they still felt calmer in their immediate space. This suggests there is some justification for creating or implementing certain urban features into existing immediate spaces in order to prevent travel and anxiety from social mixing in non-immediate spaces. If another pandemic is to occur or a second wave of COVID-19, there is a need to provide the same elements of positive SWB experienced by most

participants in non-immediate spaces in the immediate spaces in more areas around the country. This ties in with Davies (2020) discussion, where there is a suggested idea of a compact city. This type of compact city would create the necessary amenities and leisure spaces for local people to use without having to travel. The idea of a compact city would be ideal for microplanning as it could incorporate wellbeing at the core of its design, essentially creating immediate spaces that are suitable for the post-pandemic city.

P1 explains what makes the journey to their immediate space challenging considering social distancing,

*“During lockdown it’s been quite hard as one of the main roads I use that goes in and out of my estate has only one path, so when trying to distance, I’ve had to constantly keep crossing the road, it’s scary when there is no path on the opposite side and cars are going past”*

P1 explains the fear associated with visiting their immediate space, this is due to P1 having to cross the road for their own safety with social distancing when others are using the narrow pathway that is only on one side of the road. The absence of a pathway on the other side of the road instils fear in P1, suggesting that is a contribution to negative SWB. Therefore, simply widening pathways or creating additional pathways could boost SWB. This is supported by the previously mentioned Kleinert and Horton (2016) study, that explains better and more attractive spaces for walking can improve wellbeing. This leads on to the next section that will discuss recommendations as to how these solutions may be implemented to provide SWB with a boost in more immediate spaces.

#### **6.4 Recommendations**

This section will provide recommendations based on the findings identified through this research, as well as the associated challenges. There are several realistic

recommendations that could boost SWB across existing immediate spaces and when designing post-pandemic cities in the future.

According to the views of participants, it is apparent that the presence of certain urban features can instil positive or negative feelings of SWB. However, what became evident through analysis was that it is not the absence of green, or any other immediate spaces that can lead to negative feelings of SWB, rather that during the COVID-19 pandemic there is more of an emphasis placed on the quality of immediate spaces. To increase the quality of existing immediate spaces, small scale but permanent solutions must be designed and implemented, especially before the emergence of a second wave of COVID-19.

Firstly, there should be measures in place to widen or make walking in immediate spaces safer for users. Narrow pathways and close together benches are proven to influence negative SWB. As shown by the top, middle image within Figure 3 in Neasden, there are early signs of this type of pathway modification. However, permanent and more sophisticated markings or pathways should be implemented in order to create a comfortable environment for users. It seems the source of fear and anxiety in immediate space was from other users who were either passing by or by people who were ignoring social distancing guidelines. The simplest solution would be to consider widening of pathways, also a one way system for walking could prevent having to walk with people approaching from different directions. Along with this, planners will need to take into consideration as to what extent new changes can be implemented in these immediate spaces before users begin disobeying rules due to frustration.

Secondly, accessibility to green, open spaces has been a determinant of wellbeing pre- pandemic, as discussed by Wood et al. (2017) and White et al. (2013). However, findings identified during this research highlighted that participants were not unable to find open and green areas in their immediate space. Instead, it was the physical features of the immediate spaces that affected participants' SWB during COVID-19.

Findings of this research suggest that changes urgently need to be made in public, outdoor spaces that are in the immediate spaces for individuals across England.

In recent months, there have been efforts to encourage social distancing in public parks, however, there are challenges still associated with this. According to the Greater London Authority (GLA), the guidance states that if a park or area is crowded that you should not enter. Furthermore, the GLA explains that to ensure you can socially distance, you should use all parts of the park that are open and not limit yourself to physical pathways. There is also guidance on avoiding touching gates or handrails and then your mouth and face. Lastly, there is a part that explains that temporary measures have been placed in outdoor spaces that are there to safeguard the public (GLA, 2020). This has been evidenced in Figure 3 as mentioned above, however, these markings are inadequate for long term use as they are merely low quality and temporary attempts by the local council to implement social distancing. Overall, more permanent and sophisticated changes must occur in these spaces instead of temporary measures that are of low quality.

Thirdly, spaces in the inner city must be made more fit for purpose considering the pandemic. The fact that an inner city participant felt they needed to visit another space while all others outside of the city did not, shows the potential inadequacy of inner city immediate spaces. While we have seen these being implemented in some cities (Connolly, 2020), they have since been relaxed and almost disappeared completely. Also, immediate spaces must be fit for purpose regardless of time of year or time of day, as another pandemic could occur once again. There is a need to make these places safe and easy to use throughout the entire day as participants in my study did express feelings of negative SWB associated with a fear of visiting their immediate space in the dark. A system could be introduced that ensures the immediate space is not overcrowded during certain times of the day when it is light outside, to create a fair visiting system for those within a certain radius of the immediate space. This is especially important given many will need to work from home during the lighter hours of the day. There could also be certain areas of the

immediate space that are reserved for different activities, therefore if someone wants to sit and relax, they are not in fear of many people passing at once. However, again, for this to work efficiently the space must be usable at all times of day. This may pose a challenge as it was identified in interviews that there was a fear associated with visiting the space in the night, showing there is negative SWB that could be experienced if off peak hours are late at night or when it is darker earlier during the winter months. Therefore, there are separate challenges outside of this paper associated with safety in the night that should be considered before this system can work efficiently.

There are further challenges that could occur with this, for example, the allocation of pathways or a one way system would still only be used at the discretion of the users of the immediate space. While more strict systems could be placed, most of these immediate spaces are still public, therefore there should be further microplanning based studies into what users of each space require based on their SWB. Additionally, during winter months, immediate spaces may become undesirable compared to the recent summer months that have been studied in this research.

Lastly, while standard recommendations have been provided, it is important to introduce more innovative recommendations that could be implemented in the context of more smart and advanced cities of the future. For example, inspiration can be drawn from TfL Go, the new app that allows commuters to be informed of which routes and stations will be least busy and most quiet in order to maintain social distancing when using the tube. A similar system could be implemented in immediate spaces. This would entail monitoring activity over a period and then working out when the highest footfall was occurring. There would then be levels of how crowded these spaces were, enabling those who are near these spaces to look at beforehand whether this specific immediate space was 'safe' or perhaps 'unsafe' to go to. This runs in line with the guidance issued by GLA that states if a park is too crowded then a user should not enter. However, while this would be difficult to monitor as implementing a tracking system in a public space is not straight forward, the main

issue would be that there is no official governmental guidance as to what makes a space over or under crowded. While brief guidance has been issued, there are many gaps and details are not specific enough for all users to make appropriate or consistent judgement across the population. Ultimately, the measures that are implemented overall must be supported by government guidance and robust technology, otherwise the actions of those within public spaces will continue to be at the discretion of the user. This means it remains highly challenging to control how we can boost SWB, as we cannot specifically enforce measures without some changes in policy from higher tiers of control.

Fundamentally, there must be change within central government, in order to enable a shift within the objectives of the planning system. There are elements of focus on wellbeing within the current London Plan Policy 3.11, which mentions the detailed designs of neighbourhoods as an important factor in health and wellbeing. Additionally, there is specific mention of designing places that can promote health and promote active lifestyles (GLA, 2016). There is also a focus on implementing local policies to address fast food developments around schools. While this is not specific to my research, it shows that there are early stages of incorporation of wellbeing into the London Plan. However, due to the pandemic, these need to be revised and provide more focus specifically on the microplanning of immediate spaces across the country.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), although revised continually, remains with the overarching objective that sways towards economic growth. While economic growth is and will continue to be a main government priority, this automatically lessens the priority of wellbeing and health associated with the quality of spaces across the country. Corcoran and Marshall (2016) support this, explaining that sustainable economic growth is not possible without concentrating on social sustainability beforehand. There must be more attention placed on microplanning to create social sustainability alongside governmental policies centred around economic growth. Planners must increase the quality of immediate spaces, particularly at





## 7.0 Conclusion

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This study has aimed to explore how the SWB of individuals in their immediate spaces has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic across England. Through collecting qualitative data, insights can now be offered to planners to aid in the planning and design of existing and post- pandemic immediate spaces. Current literature has evidenced the clear, positive relationship between green spaces and wellbeing. However, since the pandemic began, it has become apparent that there is a lack of research which considers the impact of COVID-19 on the use of immediate spaces for users' SWB.

My research has demonstrated that certain aspects of immediate spaces used during lockdown instilled certain positive and negative feelings within participants' SWB. Of the immediate spaces visited by each participant, each varied in their physical characteristics, however, each had an element of green space present. Most literature in recent years has focussed on the presence, accessibility and proximity of green spaces. While this remains crucial to the broad study of wellbeing, in the sample areas studied, participants had no issue of lack of green, open spaces in their immediate space. Instead, my findings suggest that due to the presence of COVID-19, it is now the quality, adaptability, capacity of these spaces that is in question in terms of their effect on SWB.

It should also be noted that out of the participants, it was P4 that lives in the inner city, that found the presence of paving to be a limitation of their immediate space. However, the rest of the participants found that it was the lack of presence of social distancing enabling measures within the spaces that they found limited the quality of their immediate spaces. The common features that were identified that participants claimed would create positive feelings in the immediate space and consequently positive SWB were the following; wider roads and spaces to walk, the presence of trees, blue spaces, separate pathways for different directions of walking, low risk areas to rest or sit within the immediate space. These suggestions are realistic and achievable in many immediate spaces. However, limitations on

space remain and the risk of spoiling parts of these spaces that contain biodiversity will be a major obstacle. Through asking participants what they found boosted their SWB in non-immediate spaces, insights were gained into what is therefore deemed missing from participants' immediate spaces. It was found that in the non-immediate spaces that it was much quieter for one participant, whereas another participant found that they preferred their immediate space due to worries over being far away from home. The overall conclusion is that there is a pressing need to create optimal environments in immediate spaces that provide positive SWB boosts for users. While immediate spaces will be unable to add or create all the features that have been identified to boost SWB, there are still ways to improve each space that is being used now. This is particularly important as spaces are being used for different purposes than they once were before the pandemic. More adequate immediate spaces must be available to those living across country in order to create safer, sustainable and positive environments for users. This is especially vital in the event of another wave of COVID-19 or another pandemic, where there will again be limitations on spatial mobility.

The digital solutions mentioned above would be sustainable in smarter and more technologically advanced areas. These could in theory work well in spaces that are well connected, particularly cities, however, would be limited to the developed world. Most open spaces across England are not privately owned which makes implementing restrictions within these spaces challenging without the support of governmental policy. Consequently, some reforms must be considered to support the changes that should be occurring within existing spaces that are used as immediate spaces during the pandemic. There are also possible implications for future developments as new residential spaces are planned and designed. There must be considerations made for the outdoor space included with homes and apartments, as we continue to prepare for future waves of COVID-19 or further pandemics. In the event of further pandemics, spaces will be more well equipped to provide the types of outdoor spaces that are sought after for positive SWB even in the inner city where space is scarcer.

Planners must now focus on reconfiguring the existing spaces around residential areas across the country. Different LPA's have different aims which inevitably means that

decisions made in local areas will be at the discretion of each separate LPA. The only solution to this would be a review of the NPPF, with more inclusions for SWB and an emphasis on the quality of immediate spaces. In addition to this, specific guidance on what would make a space crowded and unsafe to enter, with explanation of what would make these spaces fit for use considering COVID-19 is also necessary.

Furthermore, the study focussed on participants between the ages of 22 and 24, which means no other age ranges were accounted for. Also, there was no data collection undertaken in immediate spaces during the nighttime. This could have affected the SWB of users who are using immediate spaces during the dark as opposed to during the daylight.

Overall, there are several suggestions that can be considered by planners and urban designers when making changes to existing spaces that are around the country. However, there are still further questions that could develop this research further, especially due to the evolving nature of the pandemic. For example, samples could be taken from different age groups, to see if the features of immediate spaces have different impacts on SWB depending on age. As well as this, interviews could be undertaken within each wider immediate area, allowing planners to learn and validate what has already been found through my research. By using a larger sample in one, concentrated area, the most bespoke alterations could be made for the immediate spaces within them. This would effectively assist planners involved in microplanning within these areas, as the solutions for developing spaces to improve SWB would be recommended by frequent users of each immediate space. Exploring the microplanning approach would allow SWB to be considered with the highest priority, ensuring that the spaces in our immediate surroundings are fit for our futures within the post-pandemic world.

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nature\_as\_a\_source\_of\_resilience\_during\_social\_distancing\_amidst\_the\_coronavirus\_pandemic/links/5e99826292851c2f52aa20d7/Urban-nature-as-a-source-of-resilience-during-social-distancing-amidst-the-coronavirus-pandemic.pdf> [Accessed 5 August 2020].

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## 9.0 Appendices

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### 9.1 Consent Form for Participants

#### CONSENT FORM FOR ADULT PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH STUDIES

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Title of Study:

---

Department:

---

Name and Contact Details of the Researcher(s):

---

Name and Contact Details of the Principal Researcher:

---

Name and Contact Details of the UCL Data Protection Officer:

---

This study has been approved by the UCL Research Ethics Committee: Project ID number:

---

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. The person organising the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

**I confirm that I understand that by ticking/initialling each box below I am consenting to this element of the study. I understand that it will be assumed that unticked/initialled boxes mean that I DO NOT consent to that part of the study. I understand that by not giving consent for any one element that I may be deemed ineligible for the study.**

Tick  
Box

1. \*I confirm that I have read and understood the Information Sheet for the above study. I have had an opportunity to consider the information and what will be expected of me. I have also had the opportunity to ask questions which have been answered to my satisfaction and would like to take part in an individual interview
2. \*I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data up to *[insert date if stated on the Information Sheet]* OR *[insert text clearly defining time limit e.g. 4 weeks after interview]*

3. \*I consent to participate in the study. I understand that my personal information including the general name of the area I live in, age, details regarding my household type and household composition, daily routine and feelings of subjective wellbeing will be used for the purposes explained to me. I understand that according to data protection legislation, 'public task' will be the lawful basis for processing.

4. **Use of the information for this project only**

\*I understand that all personal information will remain confidential and that all efforts will be made to ensure I cannot be identified

I understand that my data gathered in this study will be stored anonymously and securely. It will not be possible to identify me in any publications.

OR

Anonymity is optional for this research. Please select from the following 3 options:

- (a) I agree for my real name and role/affiliation to be used in connection with any words I have said or information I have passed on.
- (b) I request that my comments are presented anonymously but give permission to connect my role/affiliation with my comments (but not the title of my position).
- (c) I request that my comments are presented anonymously with no mention of my role/affiliation.
5. \*I understand that my information may be subject to review by responsible individuals from the University for monitoring and audit purposes.
6. \*I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.  
I understand that if I decide to withdraw, any personal data I have provided up to that point will be deleted unless I agree otherwise.
7. I understand the potential risks of participating and the support that will be available to me should I become distressed during the course of the research.
8. No promise or guarantee of benefits have been made to encourage you to participate
9. I understand that the data will not be made available to any commercial organisations but is solely the responsibility of the researcher(s) undertaking this study.
10. I understand that I will not benefit financially from this study or from any possible outcome it may result in in the future.
11. I understand that I will be compensated for the portion of time spent in the study (if applicable) or fully compensated if I choose to withdraw.
12. I agree that my anonymised research data may be used by others for future research. [No one will be able to identify you when this data is shared.]
13. I understand that the information I have submitted will be published as a report and I wish to receive a copy of it. Yes/No

14. I understand that my interview will not be recorded.
15. I hereby confirm that I understand the inclusion criteria as detailed in the Information Sheet and explained to me by the researcher.
16. I hereby confirm that:
  - (a) I understand the exclusion criteria as detailed in the Information Sheet and explained to me by the researcher; and
  - (b) I do not fall under the exclusion criteria.
17. I agree that my GP may be contacted if any unexpected results are found in relation to my health.
18. I have informed the researcher of any other research in which I am currently involved or have been involved in during the past 12 months.
19. I am aware of who I should contact if I wish to lodge a complaint.
20. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.
21. I am happy for this information to be stored for the duration of the Researcher's dissertation.

I understand that other authenticated researchers will have access to my anonymised data.

22. **Overseas Transfer of Data** [*if applicable*]

*I understand that my personal data will be transferred .....and the following safeguards will be put in place .....*

**If you would like your contact details to be retained so that you can be contacted in the future by UCL researchers who would like to invite you to participate in follow up studies to this project, or in future studies of a similar nature, please tick the appropriate box below.**

Yes, I would be happy to be contacted in this way

No, I would not like to be contacted

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant                      Date                      Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of witness                      Date                      Signature  
(If applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher                      Date                      Signature

## 9.2 Unfilled Interview Questions

### Interview Questions

**Participant Name (for my records only)**

**Location:** *Area*

**Age Group:**

**Summary of surroundings (brief):** *urban / green / sparse / if urban – mainly single story, 2 storey, high rise, mid high rise, mixed environment, car dominated area (many roads) etc.*

**Profession:** *student / employed / retired / homemaker etc.*

**Style of home:** *flat / house etc.*

**Number of persons in household:**

**Daily routine during lockdown (brief):** *working from home / part time? full time? / typical day and when / if you go outdoors? how long for? what time of day do you go out? regular walk/outside visit or infrequent visits?*

**Questions:**

1. **Could you name the immediate space that you have frequently visited during the pandemic?** *(if it's a park, state the name, any main roads you walk on if they make up a large portion of your journey)*
2. **Could you describe the immediate space that you are in now?** *(is it an urban space? is it a green space? brief description of the characteristics of the local space (named))*
3. **Does your immediate space look any different now compared to how it did at the start of the lockdown?** *(is it busier? is it less busy? has it become too crowded?)*

4. **Building on the previous question, how have any changes you have witnessed in your immediate space make you feel about visiting it?** *(indicate which words apply and add any more descriptive thoughts below)*

Fear  
Anger  
Frustration  
Worry  
Anxiety  
Happiness  
Excitement  
Cautious

**Further thoughts:**

5. **When in your immediate space (named) now, how do you feel?** *(indicate which words apply and add any more descriptive thoughts below)*

Fear  
Anger  
Frustration  
Worry  
Anxiety  
Happiness  
Excitement  
Cautious

**Further thoughts:**

6. **How did your immediate space make you feel before the pandemic?** *(indicate which words apply and add any more descriptive thoughts below)*

Fear  
Anger  
Frustration  
Worry  
Anxiety  
Happiness

Excitement

Cautious

**Further thoughts:**

7. **Do you value your immediate space (named) more now than before the lockdown?** *(maybe you feel you are forced to use this local space as it is part of your immediate space?)*
  
8. **Do you feel less happy visiting your immediate space now?** *(perhaps you are fearful of people and crowds, explain your feelings towards it)*
  
9. **Do you think your immediate space is walkable?** *(perhaps the surroundings make it hard to use it? perhaps it is very easy to access and use?)*
  
10. **Do you think it is difficult to use your immediate space now that more people may be using it for a daily walk or with children / animals etc.?** *(difficulties social distancing with crowds and passers-by on streets?)*
  
11. **Would there be anything that could be better planned out in your immediate space to make you feel happier about using your local space?** *(think about if the pathways are narrow? are there enough places to rest e.g. benches? are there a lot of cars surrounding you? maybe this area is purpose built? on your journey to this place maybe there are main roads?)*
  
12. **Now that restrictions have been eased, have you visited any spaces that are not local to you? (non-immediate spaces)** *(maybe you visited a park you perceived as 'nicer' or 'better quality' than your local space (named))*
  - a. **If yes, did you used to visit these spaces before the pandemic, or was it a new space for you to visit?**
  
  - b. **If yes, why did you visit this space that was not in your immediate space?**

**c. How did visiting a space that was not in your immediate space make you feel during the pandemic situation?**

**d. If yes, how you have felt using other spaces that you travelled to as opposed to using your immediate space?** *(maybe you feel happier using alternative spaces as these are better than the immediate space?)*



**9.3 Risk Assessment Form**

# RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

## FIELD / LOCATION WORK



*The Approved Code of Practice - Management of Fieldwork should be referred to when completing this form*

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/estates/safetynet/guidance/fieldwork/acop.pdf>

**DEPARTMENT/SECTION**      Bartlett School of Planning  
**LOCATION(S)**              Various locations across england (outer london, inner london)  
**PERSONS COVERED BY THE RISK ASSESSMENT**      Urvisha Ladwa

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF FIELDWORK

Interview based fieldwork where participants will be required to answer a series of questions with a few prompts regarding their feelings towards their surrounding local spaces during the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants will be based in various locations across the country (exact locations TBC) and photographs will be taken by the participants of the surrounding local space that will be in question. The answers will then be used for the basis of a comparative study that will provide insight to the field of microplanning, as some local areas may be better planned than others in the situation of a pandemic.

Consider, in turn, each hazard (white on black). If **NO** hazard exists select **NO** and move to next hazard section.  
 If a hazard does exist select **YES** and assess the risks that could arise from that hazard in the risk assessment box.  
**Where risks are identified that are not adequately controlled they must be brought to the attention of your Departmental Management who should put temporary control measures in place or stop the work. Detail such risks in the final section.**

**ENVIRONMENT**      **The environment always represents a safety hazard. Use space below to identify and assess any risks associated with this hazard**

*e.g. location, climate, terrain, neighbourhood, in outside organizations, pollution, animals.*

Examples of risk: adverse weather, illness, hypothermia, assault, getting lost.  
 Is the risk high / medium / low ?

- Potential risk of warm weather at present and in the upcoming summer months when participants will be involved in data collection
- A danger of vehicles in the road in the spaces that may be used for observations, especially as the restrictions of lockdown are relaxed
- Presence of members of public in the spaces of observation that could present challenges in carrying out social distancing measures

**CONTROL MEASURES**      **Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**

work abroad incorporates Foreign Office advice

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	participants have been trained and given all necessary information
<input type="checkbox"/>	only accredited centres are used for rural field work
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	participants will wear appropriate clothing and footwear for the specified environment
<input type="checkbox"/>	trained leaders accompany the trip
<input type="checkbox"/>	refuge is available
<input type="checkbox"/>	work in outside organisations is subject to their having satisfactory H&S procedures in place
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Potential need to wear face covering or mask when data is being collected in order to ensure less risk or more confidence when being outdoors with other members of public</li> <li>- Participants will be asked to travel alone or only with members of their household, subject to government guidelines for social distancing</li> </ul>

### EMERGENCIES

Where emergencies may arise use space below to identify and assess any risks

*e.g. fire, accidents*

Examples of risk: loss of property, loss of life

LOW RISK

### CONTROL MEASURES

Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk

<input type="checkbox"/>	participants have registered with LOCATE at <a href="http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/">http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	fire fighting equipment is carried on the trip and participants know how to use it
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	contact numbers for emergency services are known to all participants
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	participants have means of contacting emergency services
<input type="checkbox"/>	participants have been trained and given all necessary information
<input type="checkbox"/>	a plan for rescue has been formulated, all parties understand the procedure
<input type="checkbox"/>	the plan for rescue /emergency has a reciprocal element
<input type="checkbox"/>	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

**EQUIPMENT**

Is equipment used?

**NO**

If 'No' move to next hazard  
 If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks

*e.g. clothing, outboard motors.*

Examples of risk: inappropriate, failure, insufficient training to use or repair, injury. Is the risk high / medium / low ?

**CONTROL MEASURES**

Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk

the departmental written Arrangement for equipment is followed  
 participants have been provided with any necessary equipment appropriate for the work  
 all equipment has been inspected, before issue, by a competent person  
 all users have been advised of correct use  
 special equipment is only issued to persons trained in its use by a competent person  
 OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

**LONE WORKING**

Is lone working a possibility?

**YES**

If 'No' move to next hazard  
 If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks

*e.g. alone or in isolation lone interviews.*

Examples of risk: difficult to summon help. Is the risk high / medium / low?  
 LOW RISK

**CONTROL MEASURES**

Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk

x	the departmental written Arrangement for lone/out of hours working for field work is followed
	lone or isolated working is not allowed
	location, route and expected time of return of lone workers is logged daily before work commences
	all workers have the means of raising an alarm in the event of an emergency, e.g. phone, flare, whistle

all workers are fully familiar with emergency procedures

OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

**ILL HEALTH**

**The possibility of ill health always represents a safety hazard. Use space below to identify and assess any risks associated with this Hazard.**

*e.g. accident, illness, personal attack, special personal considerations or vulnerabilities.*

Examples of risk: injury, asthma, allergies. Is the risk high / medium / low?

LOW – accidents, sudden illness, chronic illness such as allergies or asthma

**CONTROL MEASURES**

**Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**

<input type="checkbox"/>	an appropriate number of trained first-aiders and first aid kits are present on the field trip
<input type="checkbox"/>	all participants have had the necessary inoculations/ carry appropriate prophylactics
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	participants have been advised of the physical demands of the trip and are deemed to be physically suited
<input type="checkbox"/>	participants have been adequate advice on harmful plants, animals and substances they may encounter
<input type="checkbox"/>	participants who require medication have advised the leader of this and carry sufficient medication for their needs
<input type="checkbox"/>	OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

**TRANSPORT**

**Will transport be required**

**NO**

**X**

**Move to next hazard**

**YES**

**S**

**Use space below to identify and assess any risks**

*e.g. hired vehicles*

Examples of risk: accidents arising from lack of maintenance, suitability or training

Is the risk high / medium / low?

**CONTROL MEASURES**

**Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**

<input type="checkbox"/>	only public transport will be used
<input type="checkbox"/>	the vehicle will be hired from a reputable supplier
<input type="checkbox"/>	transport must be properly maintained in compliance with relevant national regulations
<input type="checkbox"/>	drivers comply with UCL Policy on Drivers <a href="http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/college_drivers.php">http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/college_drivers.php</a>

drivers have been trained and hold the appropriate licence  
 there will be more than one driver to prevent driver/operator fatigue, and there will be adequate rest periods  
 sufficient spare parts carried to meet foreseeable emergencies  
 OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

**DEALING WITH THE PUBLIC**

Will people be dealing with public

NO

If 'No' move to next hazard  
  
 If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks

*e.g. interviews, observing*

Examples of risk: personal attack, causing offence, being misinterpreted. Is the risk high / medium / low?

**CONTROL MEASURES**

Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk

all participants are trained in interviewing techniques  
 interviews are contracted out to a third party  
 advice and support from local groups has been sought  
 participants do not wear clothes that might cause offence or attract unwanted attention  
 interviews are conducted at neutral locations or where neither party could be at risk  
 OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

**WORKING ON OR NEAR WATER**

*e.g. rivers, marshland, sea.*

**Will people work on or near water?**

**YES**

**If 'No' move to next hazard**  
**If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks**

Examples of risk: drowning, malaria, hepatitis A, parasites. Is the risk high / medium / low?

LOW – one location that will be studied is near a canal and river, however there are railings across the edge of the water, making the risk relatively low, some moors are also in the area, however these will be avoided in the study

**CONTROL MEASURES**

**Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**

lone working on or near water will not be allowed

coastguard information is understood; all work takes place outside those times when tides could prove a threat

x all participants are competent swimmers

participants always wear adequate protective equipment, e.g. buoyancy aids, wellingtons

boat is operated by a competent person

all boats are equipped with an alternative means of propulsion e.g. oars

participants have received any appropriate inoculations

OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

**MANUAL HANDLING (MH)**

*e.g. lifting, carrying, moving large or heavy equipment, physical*

**Do MH activities take place?**

**NO**

**If 'No' move to next hazard**  
**If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks**

Examples of risk: strain, cuts, broken bones. Is the risk high / medium / low?



*unsuitability for the task.*

**CONTROL MEASURES**

**Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk**

- the departmental written Arrangement for MH is followed
- the supervisor has attended a MH risk assessment course
- all tasks are within reasonable limits, persons physically unsuited to the MH task are prohibited from such activities
- all persons performing MH tasks are adequately trained
- equipment components will be assembled on site
- any MH task outside the competence of staff will be done by contractors
- OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

<b>SUBSTANCES</b>	<b>Will participants work with substances</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>If 'No' move to next hazard</b>
			<b>If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks</b>

*e.g. plants, chemical, biohazard, waste* Examples of risk: ill health - poisoning, infection, illness, burns, cuts. Is the risk high / medium / low?

<b>CONTROL MEASURES</b>	<b>Indicate which procedures are in place to control the identified risk</b>
-------------------------	--

the departmental written Arrangements for dealing with hazardous substances and waste are followed

all participants are given information, training and protective equipment for hazardous substances they may encounter

participants who have allergies have advised the leader of this and carry sufficient medication for their needs

waste is disposed of in a responsible manner

suitable containers are provided for hazardous waste

OTHER CONTROL MEASURES: please specify any other control measures you have implemented:

<b>OTHER HAZARDS</b>	<b>Have you identified any other hazards?</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>If 'No' move to next section</b>
			<b>If 'Yes' use space below to identify and assess any risks</b>

*i.e. any other hazards must be noted and assessed here.* Hazard: COVID-19

Risk: is the risk

<b>CONTROL MEASURES</b>	<b>Give details of control measures in place to control the identified risks</b>
-------------------------	--

All data will be collected virtually from participant to myself, as a way to prevent social contact between different households. The data collection will either be recorded through a video log, or be written in a form that will be sent to the participant prior to the data collection process. The procedure for this may be subject to change given the evolving guidelines from the government regarding social contact with those outside of your own household.

<b>Have you identified any risks that are not adequately controlled?</b>	<b>NO</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Move to Declaration</b>
	<b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Use space below to identify the risk and what action was taken</b>

Is this project subject to the UCL requirements on the ethics of Non-NHS Human Research?

NO

If yes, please state your Project ID Number

N/A

For more information, please refer to: <http://ethics.grad.ucl.ac.uk/>

**DECLARATION**

The work will be reassessed whenever there is a significant change and at least annually. Those participating in the work have read the assessment.

Select the appropriate statement:

I the undersigned have assessed the activity and associated risks and declare that there is no significant residual risk

I the undersigned have assessed the activity and associated risks and declare that the risk will be controlled by the method(s) listed above

NAME OF SUPERVISOR  
DR LAUREN ANDRES

FIELDWORK 5

May 2010