

Our Vibrant Places



What qualities of place and planet do we need to achieve the quality of life we wish to see in the UK in the next thirty years?

Introduction

The question of place, where we live, work, and gather, lies at the very heart of what makes life meaningful, and is the focus of this Accord. It not only connects as a fundamental part of our quality of life question, it also asks us to consider not only the physical spaces that surround us, but also the spirit and connections that bring them to life.

Defining the places we want for ourselves and future generations requires us to think beyond short-term developments or narrow planning decisions. It challenges us to imagine communities that are not just functional but vibrant and where the built and natural environments co-exist in harmony. It suggests to us places where culture and creativity are celebrated, and where people feel both a sense of opportunity as well as pride and agency in shaping their surroundings.

The findings from Anthropy25 reveal a mixed picture. Across the UK, the erosion of community infrastructure, underinvestment in public services and a growing disconnect from nature are leaving many people feeling that their towns and neighbourhoods are less resilient,

and less connected. At the same time, cultural activities, local traditions, and examples of thoughtful design show what is possible when vision and collaboration come together. A strong sentiment was that unless the decline of ‘third spaces’ and weaknesses in civic belief and trust are addressed, the fabric that holds communities together risks further unravelling.

However, alongside these challenges lies a strong sense of optimism. The conversations at Anthropy25 demonstrated that leaders, businesses, and communities are united by a belief that places can once again become engines of belonging, wellbeing, and prosperity. Various insights point to a determination to look beyond immediate fixes and to champion longer-term thinking, to design places not only for efficiency, but for identity, connection and pride.

This Accord is structured to begin by examining [the current reality](#), before confronting the [uncomfortable truths](#) that often go unspoken. From there, we identify the [key principles for the path ahead](#) and make the economic case, before concluding with a [summary](#) that distils the shared ambitions and insights captured throughout.

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The Vision: Harmony, Identity and Agency

Anthropy25 revealed a simple but powerful truth: places become vibrant when people are not merely residents, but active shapers of their surroundings. A vibrant place is one where natural and built environments are held in balance, where design enables connection, and where culture and creativity are woven into the everyday. We saw striking examples of what happens when these factors come together, where traditional knowledge works alongside modern innovation and where communities are given genuine influence. Such places show that pride, resilience and opportunity can grow when people feel both rooted in their heritage and confident about their future.

This vision challenges us to think of place not as background, but as a living system, capable of nurturing wellbeing, strengthening identity, and sustaining prosperity for generations to come.

The current reality

■ An evidence-led view of where we stand today, grounded in the conversations held at Anthropy25 and supporting research:

We are witnessing a change, and in some cases an erosion, of the foundations that have historically ensured that places can thrive:



Vanishing community infrastructure

Libraries have declined by 28% since 2005 and there has been a 26% fall in the number of pubs since 2001¹ (2023). 793 playgrounds have closed over the last 10 years² (2023). Funding for youth work has decreased by 60% over the last decade³ (2024). These all represent examples of the loss of ‘third spaces’ and reflect a steady erosion of the places and services that have the capacity to knit communities together.



Ageing national infrastructure

A significant number of people are dissatisfied with national infrastructure, and our conversations show why. Participants described infrastructure as the ‘essential prerequisite’ for prosperity and pointed to inadequate links. Specific examples cited include areas where there was a reduction of public transport, road and rail services, which become a key reason why communities are unable to realise their full economic potential.

👁️ IPSOS INSIGHT

79% of Anthropists and **53%** of the public are dissatisfied with the state of our national infrastructure, such as water and electricity, and road, rail and air networks.



Nature deficit

18% of children in deprived areas never visit natural environments⁴ (2019), limiting their ability to connect with and understand the places they will one day steward. This disconnect harms our mental and physical health and reduces our collective capacity care for our planet.

Although support for protecting nature is broad, our research shows it is strongest among Anthropists. Public opinion is more divided on the cost of climate change and where it falls.

👁️ IPSOS INSIGHT

58% of Anthropists, and **29%** of the general public, cite pollution, the environment and climate change are some of the top priority issues facing the UK.

Bridging this gap in access and understanding may encourage broader support for measures many Anthropists see as essential.



Lost agency

Only 23% of adults believe they can personally influence local decisions - the lowest ever recorded⁵ (2024). When people feel powerless, communities cannot flourish.

👁️ IPSOS INSIGHT

In March of 2025, **62%** of Anthropists and **48%** of the public expected opportunities for young people to get worse over the next few years. (Among Anthropists, this has risen from **56%** in 2023; public opinion remains at **48%**).

Such pessimism may be self-fulfilling, discouraging young people from envisioning a positive role in shaping the places they will inherit.

Uncomfortable truths

Reflections on the barriers and risks which may be relevant to consider when striving for authentic and lasting change:



Working with people

At Anthropy25 it was noted that those who push against the grain can often be perceived as difficult, yet it is often their persistence that succeeds in bringing about systemic shifts and making lasting change possible.



Listening to the disengaged

Two key questions raised at Anthropy25 were: how can marginalised voices be heard, and what happens when communities feel disconnected from the places they live? These concerns about inclusion and engagement are echoed among young people: in a 2025 Youth Poll, 60% of 16–19-year-olds said they would consider voting for an independent, reflecting widespread dissatisfaction with traditional party politics ⁶ (2025). This points to a broader sense of disconnection from existing political structures among younger groups, highlighting a wider challenge in ensuring

that all voices are represented and heard in decision-making. Examples of this disconnect can be seen in the differing priorities around immigration and law and order:

 IPSOS INSIGHT

Immigration is cited as a priority issue by **47%** of the general public, but only **12%** of Anthropists agree.

This gap reminds us that leaders must not only bring their own perspectives to the table, but also listen deeply to the priorities and anxieties of the wider public. If Anthropists are to be part of a persuasive solution, they must acknowledge these differences, engage with them seriously, and show that leadership is not about being apart from society’s concerns, but responsive to them.

 IPSOS INSIGHT

Crime, law and order is of significant concern for **36%** of the general public.

When safety becomes a day-to-day worry, communities may feel that their lived experiences are not fully reflected in wider debates. Addressing these concerns directly may help build trust and demonstrate that the realities people face in their neighbourhoods are being recognised and acted upon.



Exclusion hurts everyone

When people lack social capital, what we think of as the networks and relationships that open doors, they encounter greater barriers to employment and may feel more disconnected from those in positions of influence. This disconnect can make it harder to build mutual understanding, and when basic needs such as secure housing go unmet, trust in public systems may weaken, leading to disengagement.

 IPSOS INSIGHT

65% of Anthropists see poverty and inequality as a top issue, and **36%** of the general public agree. Furthermore, **53%** of the public prioritise inflation and rising cost of living as one of the most important issues facing Britain today.

Key principles for the path ahead

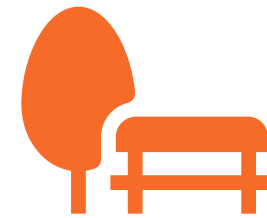
Certain principles emerged as relevant to bear in mind when shaping decisions to ensure that any progress achieved is equitable and sustainable:



Designing the built environment for pride, safety and belonging

A vibrant place is not only defined by its economy or social networks, but also by the quality of its built environment. At Anthropy25 discussions highlighted, the design of our streets, homes, and public spaces plays a decisive role in shaping how people feel about where they live and work. Well-designed environments foster pride of place, encourage respectful interaction, and create opportunities for communities to flourish.

Design matters because it translates shared values into lived experience. Safe walkways, accessible transport links, and things such as green corridors give residents confidence in their surroundings. Playgrounds, youth centres, and multi-use community halls offer places where children and adults alike can gather, socialise and build trust. When spaces are functional, attractive and inclusive, they do more than meet physical needs - they generate belonging and connection.



Nature-integrated design

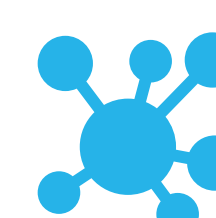
Increasing opportunities for a connection with nature and the environment to be central to how we design and maintain places can enhance its chances of success.

Reconnecting people, particularly children, with nature in an age of digital immersion was repeatedly noted as very important for the future at Anthropy25. Successful models like outdoor learning demonstrate how nature-based learning can be integrated into everyday life.



Community ownership and control

Communities owning and controlling key infrastructure can create lasting, positive change. Examples discussed at Anthropy25 demonstrated the benefits of community ownership and involvement with the assets in their own localities, creating genuine agency and remarkable resilience.



Multi-use spaces

Libraries, faith spaces, community halls and schools are being increasingly used as multi-use spaces, meeting multiple needs and recognising that vibrant places serve multiple functions and bring diverse groups together.

Key principles for the path ahead continued

Certain principles emerged as relevant to bear in mind when shaping decisions to ensure that any progress achieved is equitable and sustainable:



Long-term thinking

Long-term thinking and planning are key to regenerating places and building vibrant communities.

 IPSOS INSIGHT

81% of Anthropists say the UK government focuses too much on short-term planning



Digital enhancement, not replacement

Using digital tools can be useful to help neighbours connect and promote local events, while maintaining physical spaces for in-person gatherings can strengthen community life.



Protecting culture, creativity and celebration - the spirit of vibrant places

At Anthropy25, many discussions turned to the role of culture and creativity in shaping the vibrancy of place. From food festivals to music gatherings, from grassroots community arts projects to professional sport, these activities do more than entertain, they forge identity, nurture pride and create shared memories that bind communities together.

Sessions at Anthropy25 illustrated how cultural expression, in all its forms, can transform both perception and reality. A vibrant food scene can attract visitors and investment, a festival can breathe life into a struggling high street, and participation in arts or sport can open doors to confidence, skills and connection. These diverse cultural activities remind us that vibrancy is not simply about the physical landscape, but also about the spirit that animates it. Supporting such expressions of community life is vital to sustaining identity, resilience and pride of place.

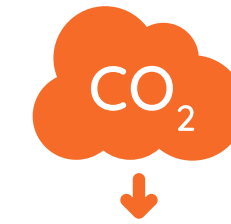
The economic case

Highlighting the business and economic benefits that can emerge when we take a broader view of people, value, and impact:



Vibrant communities contribute to a vibrant economy

The economic case for vibrant places is clear. Disconnected individuals affect social cohesion which impacts social resilience and reduces economic contribution. Lower tax receipts from economic inactivity mean less money in the public purse, and rising demand for health and mental health treatment increases costs. This is illustrated in the fact that 3 in 4 GPs see 1-5 patients a day for non-medical needs such as loneliness⁷ (2018) and reduced youth services worsen school results and increase youth crime⁸ (2025).



The net zero opportunity

The UK's net zero economy grew by 10% last year, adding £83.1 billion in Gross Value Added⁹ (2025). This is evidence that a net zero economy can drive new opportunities and prosperity. The challenge is ensuring this transition is accessible and inclusive. Upskilling and reskilling workforces and inspiring the next generation with clear career pathways in the green economy can support vibrant places. Additionally, discussion at Anthropy25 acknowledged how wealthier households and communities are better positioned to make sustainable choices and investments, illustrating how inequality can undermine both social and environmental progress.

A call to action

What steps can leaders, organisations and communities take to improve the future quality of our places in the UK? Creating harmony between our natural and built environments is not just about better planning or more funding. It also requires:

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Sharing influence and power

Focusing on community strengths and building on local assets.

Champion transparent communication

Communicate the full story of progress on net zero and innovation. Leaders can be relentless in sharing what is working, and what is not, and why. By openly communicating everything from innovation in new technologies to the successes, and challenges, of adoption, we can build trust in leaders, in organisations and in the solutions to climate change.

Treating connection as infrastructure

Highlighting how community connections can be as important as essential infrastructure points towards investing in community spaces and activity as vital investment. Funding social spaces and programs can pay dividends through healthier communities, reduced crime, and more people able to contribute economically. Creating connections and mutual understanding between expertise and lived experience, between different communities, between human needs and natural systems.

Summary

Vibrant places can emerge when people have the power to shape them, when natural and built environments work in harmony, and when no one is excluded from the process of creating the future.

The question is not whether we can create such places, there are plenty of examples showing that we can.

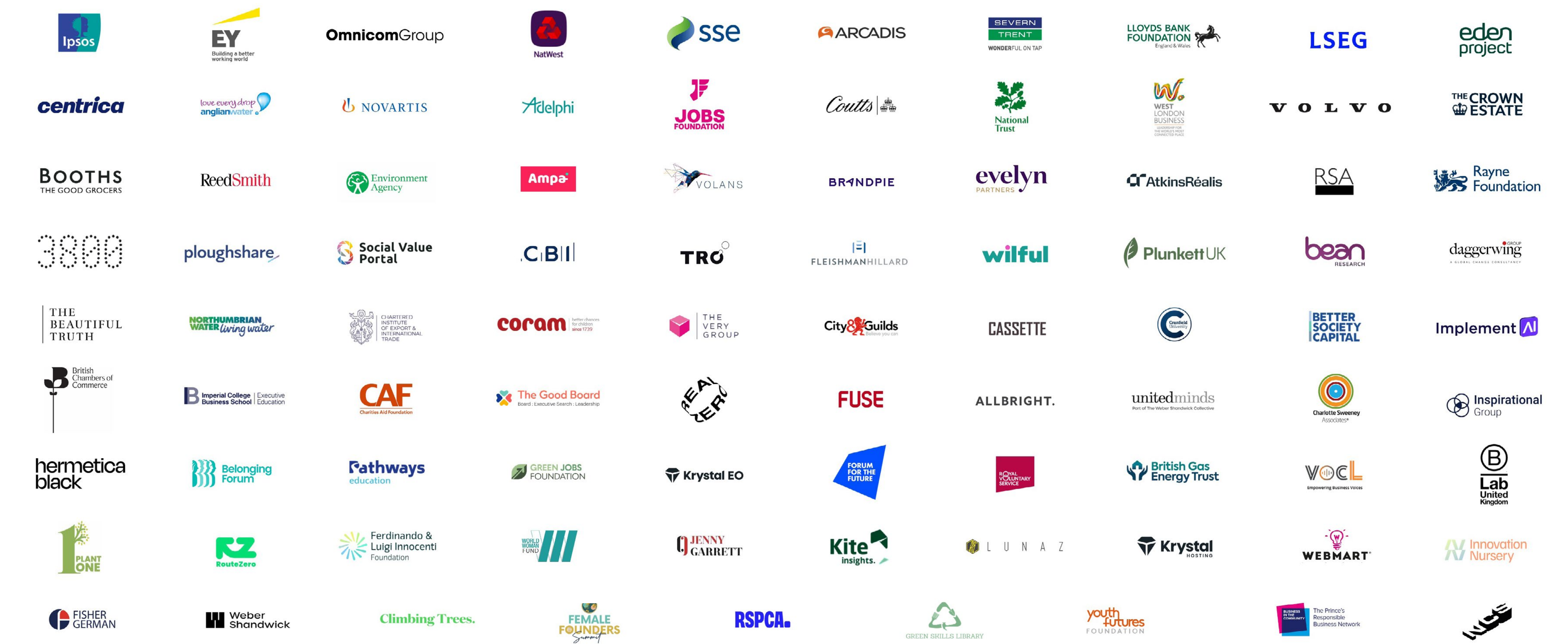
A bigger question is whether we are ready to share power, listen to uncomfortable truths, and recognise that excluding groups holds back progress and diminishes us all.

As several voices at Anthropy25 reminded us, the built environment is never just 'background'. It is the stage upon which community life unfolds. Thoughtful design has the power to reduce loneliness, encourage healthy activity, and bring diverse groups together. If we are to create places that people are proud to call home, the task is to view every new housing scheme, transport link, or urban renewal not simply as an infrastructure project, but as an investment in the social fabric of Britain.

The arts and cultural life of a community can act as both a mirror and a beacon. They reflect the stories, traditions and character of a place, while at the same time projecting ambition and confidence. A local theatre performance, a carnival, or a football match can be as significant for wellbeing and belonging as a new school or road. When people see their heritage expressed in public celebrations or experience the thrill of shared achievement in sport, they gain a stronger sense of where they belong and why it matters.

With thanks to our members

We extend thanks to the following members who contributed to Anthropy25, and those who have joined us since: Your support is vital to the continuing Anthropy mission of inspiring a better Britain.



Further information

At the Anthropy national gathering, we also asked three further questions, each with their own summary:

What is the quality of life we want in the UK for the next thirty years?

What qualities do we wish to see in a good economy and in the best of businesses and public sector organisations?

What qualities do we want to express to the world, to help solve shared issues such as poverty, climate change, and human rights?

Keen to explore any of this in more detail? Remember, if you were an Anthropy25 ticket holder, you can still open the Anthropy App, navigate to any session and listen back to the session recording, just like a podcast.

We have also taken this incredible volume of insights a step further – from these Accords, 10 overlapping ‘intersections’ are born. These intersections represent a new perspective on overlapping challenges, and tangible routes forward.

We welcome your contribution to inspiring a better Britain, and to Anthropy26. There are several ways to be involved in our next national gathering:

- [Corporate Membership](#). Our corporate members guide our national agenda, involve their networks and inspire impact.
- [Individual Membership](#). Our individual members attend our national gathering and support a variety of activities.
- Participate. Join us at the [national gathering](#).
- Become an Anthropist. Even if you are unable to make the next gathering, at no cost anyone can [sign up to the Anthropy Charter](#) and become an Anthropist by applying these principles, and following the Anthropy Pathway to identify and create impact within their own area of influence.

Methodology

Anthropist survey: Ipsos interviews took place online from 26 March to 9 May 2025. A total of 504 adults aged 16+ completed the survey.

Citizen survey: Ipsos interviewed a Nationally Representative quota sample of 731 – 1,176 (depending on the question) adults aged 16+ in the UK. Interviews took place online using the Ipsos i:omnibus solution from 14 – 17 March 2025. Minimum quotas on the UK Omnibus are age, gender, region and working status. Data has been weighted to the known offline population proportions.

These Accords have been shaped by the contribution of our c.2,000 participants at Anthropy25, as well as the public who responded to the Ipsos surveys.

Our heartfelt thanks goes out to everyone who has contributed, and although we cannot possibly hope to include every opinion, every solution and every idea, we can confirm that every conversation was transcribed and reviewed and has contributed in some way to these summaries. AI tools were used to assist in transcribing, analysing and drafting portions of these Accords. All information, analysis, and conclusions remain subject to human editorial oversight and approval.

These Accords reflect not consensus, but the commitment of so many to engage in open, sometimes uncomfortable but always constructive dialogue. The courage to collaborate is the spirit of Anthropy.

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