

**Are you a secret NIMBY?  
This is for you**



***A NIMBY's guide  
to new  
development:  
what to support,  
why and when***



# Why do people oppose new homes?

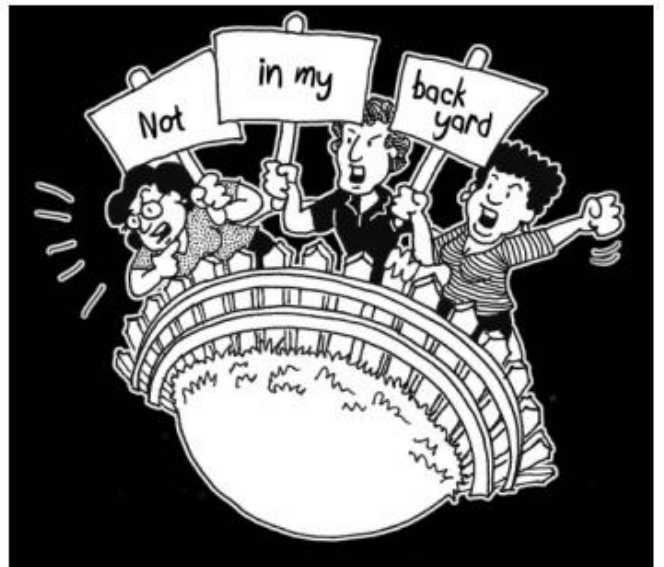


**No one wants to be a NIMBY any more.**

Many community groups we are aware of (and, if we're honest some we've worked with) who are worried about development in their neighbourhood start at least one of their speeches, letter or tweets with the phrase "We're not NIMBYs but...."

## **Why the 'but'? Why are there so many secret NIMBYs?**

Our recent book, [\*From NIMBY to YIMBY\*](#) – how to build homes and win votes, examined the evidence on why people oppose new development. Of course, everywhere and everyone is different. There is no one answer. However important themes do emerge. NIMBYism is best understood as a rational response to the risk of uncontrollable change to one's neighbourhood.



This can have both economic and emotional consequences and if the *status quo* is not too bad it might be far more reasonable to oppose development than people publicly like to admit.

# Why do people oppose new homes?



- *Will I lose money?* Homeowners might worry that new development will reduce the value of their home by making the area less attractive, by destroying green spaces or by making the area too crowded and overburdening local roads and infrastructure.
- *Will development price me out?* On the other hand renters might worry that new development will make the area too 'nice' and will increase their rent forcing them to move out of their homes and neighbourhoods. There is growing evidence that this is happening – above all in prosperous US cities.
- *Is this still home?* Changes to a neighbourhood can also have an important emotional impact on memories of home and a sense of place. We have met many good people (typically but not always older) who like where they live, have chosen to live there, may have fond memories over many years and simply want it to stay the same. It is easy to scoff about this (and in our experience far too many do) but growing understanding of the neuroscience of place implies that this is a normal reaction to places we are used to.
- *Will life be the same? Will things still work?* Development brings more people, more stuff, more buildings and normally more traffic. Will existing roads, schools, council budgets and infrastructure be able to cope? If it is not certain, why take the risk?



# *Why do people oppose new homes?*



Different issues are more or less prominent at different times and places. Renters and the young typically have different priorities to owner-occupiers and the older. But the key thing to understand, the key connecting thread is *risk*. If change is uncertain, then no change is often more certain and more controllable.

If risk is reduced, and there is increased clarity about what will change, and how and when it will change, then you can increase support for new development.

Our research has allowed us to work up a list of five key actions for developers and planning authorities to encourage maximum support for new development. They are:





# Why do people oppose new homes?



- *Make it popular and beautiful.* Give people certainty about the design popularity of the place and homes that will be built;
- *People like me.* Ensure people feel they (or people they trust) have meaningfully fed into the overall design and development process;
- *Linking in services and infrastructure.* Give people confidence that infrastructure and services will accompany development;
- *Benefit existing residents as well as new.* Where relevant, ensure that existing residents will benefit as well as new residents (often through ensuring that a regenerated area will not price out existing residents, through increased rents or, conversely, decreasing the value for home owners); and
- *Look after greenery.* Give people confidence that local greenery will be preserved or enhanced.

That's the advice for the professionals. However, this note is not written for professionals. It is written for *secret NIMBYs*.

The good news is that we have also examined (at, some might say tedious, length) the relationship between urban form and architecture with popularity, happiness and value. So if you want new development to make your home *more valuable* or help make *your or your neighbours happier and healthier*, here's what to do.....



# ***What should you do?***



## **How do you make your home more valuable and you and your neighbours happy and healthier?**

Here are ten top tips based on our reviews of the existing academic research and our own primary research into every single property sale in six British cities and the relationship between value sold with urban design, presence of greenery, transport and building style (among many others).

If you want new development to increase your home value or to make you and your new neighbours more likely to be happier and healthier, the following pages explain what you should support.





# *What should you be looking for?*



## **Greenery**

- Are there frequent green spaces inter-woven into the city either as private gardens, communal gardens or well-overlooked public spaces between blocks?
- Is new greenery where people really need it?
- Is it somewhere people will pass by often? Green space that people never see is not much use!
- Does new development plant lots of street trees?



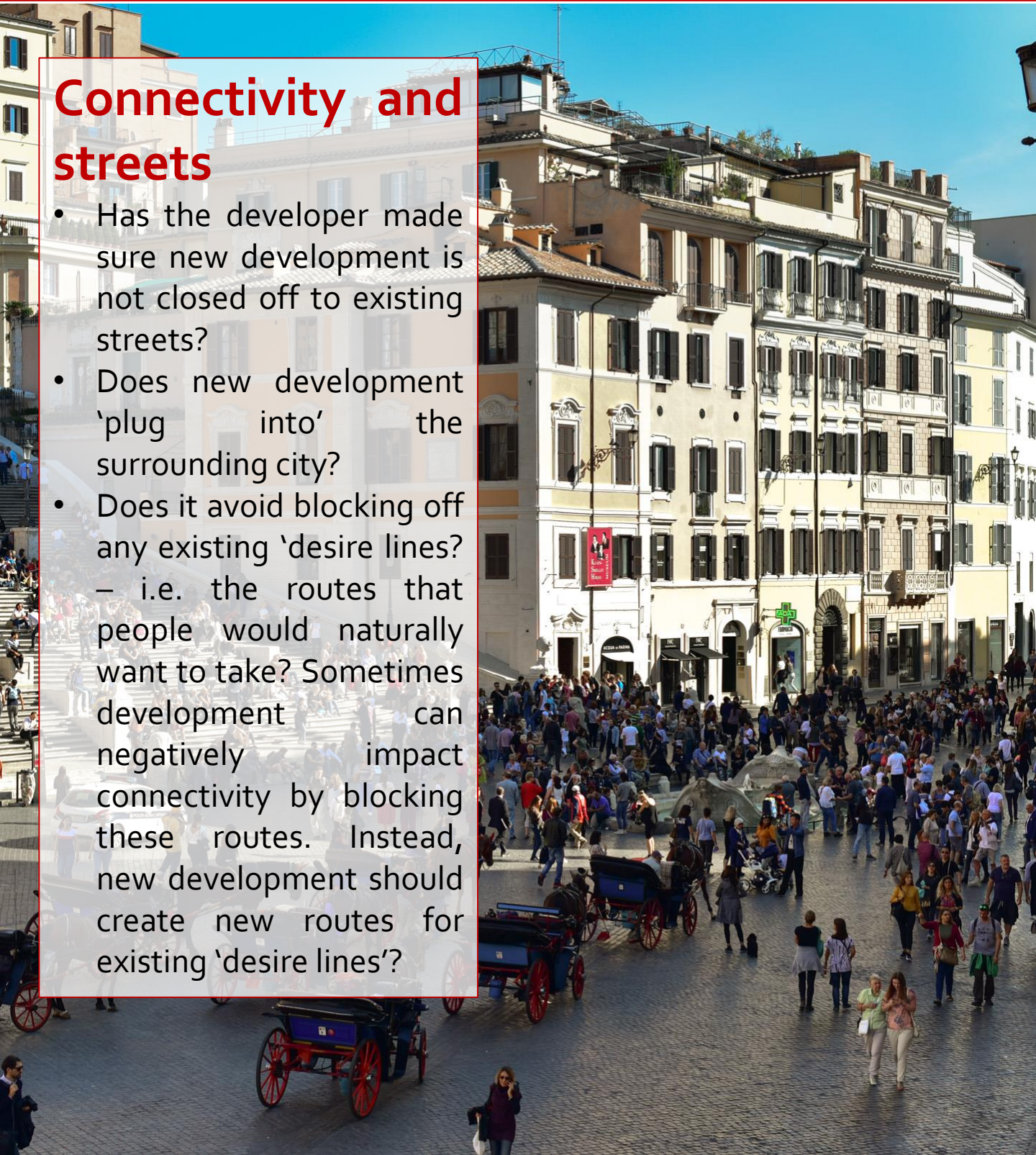


# *What should you be looking for?*



## **Connectivity and streets**

- Has the developer made sure new development is not closed off to existing streets?
- Does new development 'plug into' the surrounding city?
- Does it avoid blocking off any existing 'desire lines'? – i.e. the routes that people would naturally want to take? Sometimes development can negatively impact connectivity by blocking these routes. Instead, new development should create new routes for existing 'desire lines'?





# *What should you be looking for?*



## **Land use.**

- Are there a mixture of different 'uses'?
- i.e. some residential, some commercial and some retail space?
- Are these different interspersed with each other rather than being clustered together?
- Essentially, is it never that far to the nearest residential, commercial or retail space?



# *What should you be looking for?*



## **Blocks.**

- Are blocks neither too big nor too long?
- Do the Buildings appear to be buildings not entire blocks? (i.e. not just huge long slabs, but separate buildings.)
- Are there narrow fronts with many doors and strong 'sense of the vertical' to break up the scale of terraced blocks?





# *What should you be looking for?*

  
**CREATE**  
streets

## **Beauty and Design**

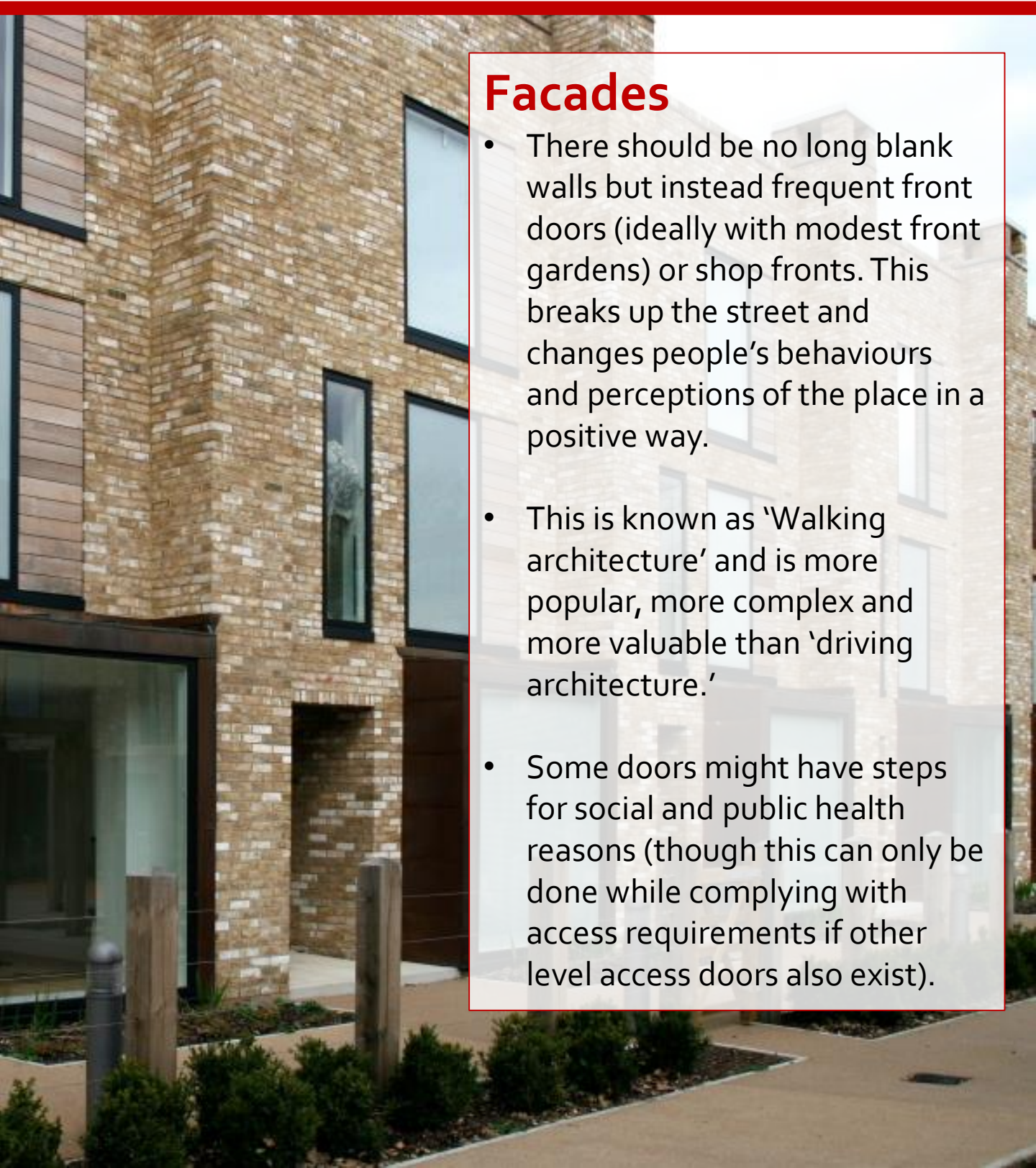
- Would you like to look at it every day?
- Does it have a strong sense of place?
- Does it reference your neighbourhood's history through materials or style?
- Is there variety? In street types, design, and green spaces.
- Are there surprises?

If you can answer all these questions with 'yes' then things are probably looking good – if there are some 'no's then you might want to try and change that.





# *What should you be looking for?*



## **Facades**

- There should be no long blank walls but instead frequent front doors (ideally with modest front gardens) or shop fronts. This breaks up the street and changes people's behaviours and perceptions of the place in a positive way.
- This is known as 'Walking architecture' and is more popular, more complex and more valuable than 'driving architecture.'
- Some doors might have steps for social and public health reasons (though this can only be done while complying with access requirements if other level access doors also exist).

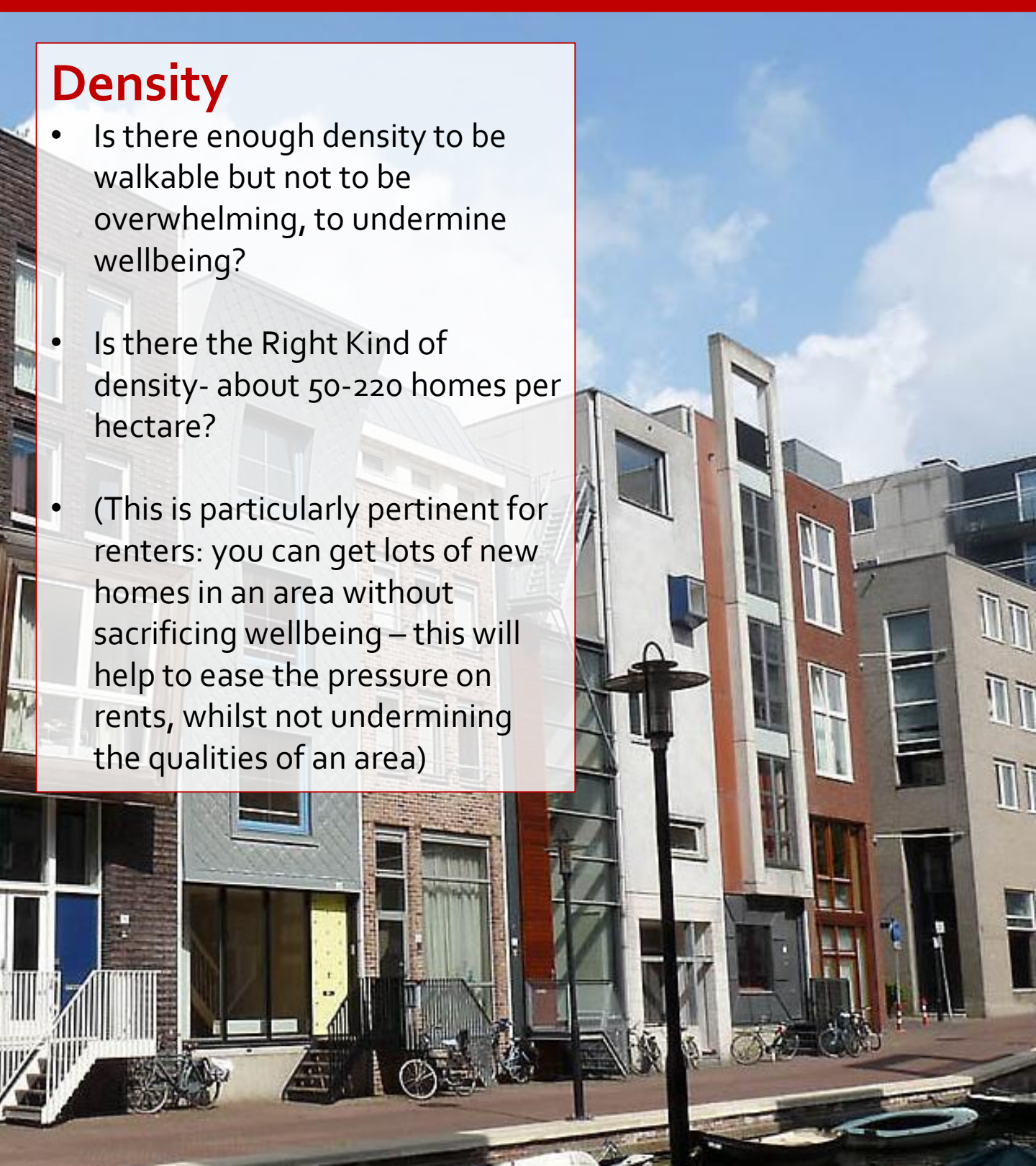


# *What should you be looking for?*



## **Density**

- Is there enough density to be walkable but not to be overwhelming, to undermine wellbeing?
- Is there the Right Kind of density- about 50-220 homes per hectare?
- (This is particularly pertinent for renters: you can get lots of new homes in an area without sacrificing wellbeing – this will help to ease the pressure on rents, whilst not undermining the qualities of an area)





# *What should you be looking for?*



## **What do you need to be wary of? Things which negatively impact value**

- Bluntly, anything which goes against the principles laid out in this leaflet should be avoided.
- Furthermore, Create Streets have researched the relationship between value and numerous elements of the built environment.
- Our research shows that being very close to bus stops, railway station or rec ground can negatively impact value (though you don't want to be too far away from transport links either)



# *What should renters support?*



As we have seen, in prosperous cities, renters are increasingly opposing new development – worried that new development will price them out of their homes and neighbourhood. There is evidence that these worries are well-founded. What should they try to achieve from new development?

It seems a bit perverse (and certainly the logic of despair) to encourage renters to support the opposite of the list above, i.e. bad value and wellbeing-minimising development in order to reduce prices. So we won't do that. But here is a key rational strategy renting secret NIMBYs *can* take in order to support their own best interests and keep rental prices down.

For all the complexities of the land market, as our and many other studies have shown, there is **a reliable and largely predictable relationship between lack of a supply of new homes and higher prices.**

Renters should support the delivery of new homes to keep prices down. High quality new development will be good for wellbeing and can help maintain the existing qualities of an area for those who live there. The more high quality places there are, the more people can have access to them and the lower prices will be!