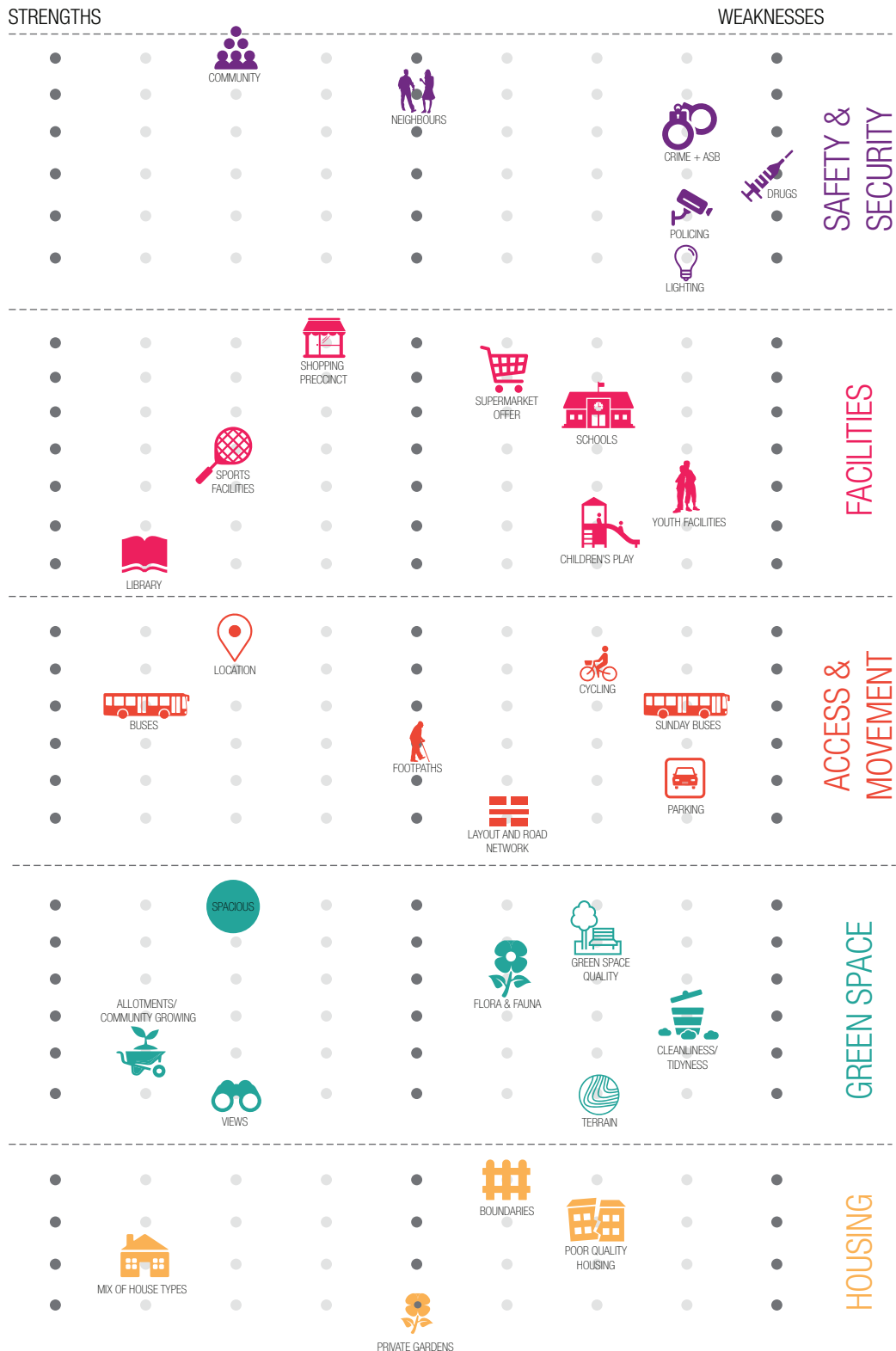


# 5 ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

## 5.1 Strengths & Weaknesses

Based on baseline research and the results of the consultation process we have started to outline Brandon's strengths, weakness and opportunities. This diagram splits facilities and features of Brandon into five key areas identified as safety & security, facilities, access & movement, green space and housing. Points are ranked from strength to weakness, with weaker areas being recognised as opportunities for improvement and areas of focus.



## 5.1 Strengths & Weaknesses

The report so far has delved deep into both the baseline analysis undertaken by URBED as well as the learning about Brandon through the consultation conversations and workshops with local residents as well as local stakeholders.

Through reading what has been learnt about the area, it is clear that Brandon has a lot of historic character and countryside appeal. Many people have never lived elsewhere and are proud of where they live, aware of what works well and what / where the issues lie. Others are less positive about Brandon, identifying anti-social behaviour as a regular occurrence, which impacts upon an otherwise quiet, rural settlement.

The diagram on the left visualises in a more creative way a traditional SWOT analysis. URBED, through years of experience, prefers to refer to the SWOT as a SWOC analysis where Threats are replaced with Challenges, this is because through engagement with local stakeholders, partners and local residents challenges can be pinpointed and then overcome when strong, positive strategies of change are put in place and then implemented.

Some aspects and assets of Brandon were highlighted as real strengths, such as the library and the services it offers; as well as the expanse of green and the views that the local topography offers. For many older residents, community is viewed as an asset - with much of the original mining community remaining within Brandon. The majority of people also spoke positively of weekday bus services.

Residents also felt that Brandon offers a very good mix of housing types and that the offer mix should be retained in any future plans. Surplus housing should

include bungalows and family homes.

Main weaknesses that create challenges for the local community are aspects that affect Safety & Security: issues around crime and antisocial behaviour were repeatedly highlighted both during consultation conversations as well as completed survey questionnaires. The perception of local residents and stakeholders are backed up by census and demographic data gathered in the baseline desktop studies.

There is a direct link between Safety & Security and other aspects that are perceived and found to be a weakness, such as lack of facilities for young people and areas for safe play for younger children, as well as low quality and poor maintenance of existing green spaces.

While the mix and variety of housing types is a strength of Brandon, the poor quality of the housing is highlighted as a real weakness. This is generally due to the age of the structures, and many people noted that a retrofit / refurbishment would really help to tackle housing problems.

In reviewing the diagram as well as the above analysis of the strengths and weaknesses for the area it is evident that with some focused and clear interventions many of the area's challenges could instead be viewed as 'opportunities' and thus, by default, strengthen its assets.

# 5 ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

## 5.2 Conclusions and Recommendations

This first phase for the Brandon Masterplan project begun on 24th June and ran for 18 weeks until the end of October. believe housing and URBED were able to develop a really good understanding of the area's character, its strengths and weakness as well as its residents' needs and aspirations.

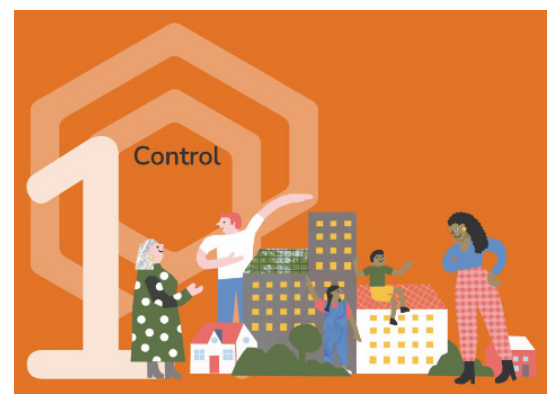
Brandon has many assets: the availability of green spaces and incredible views through its topography; equally these features also pose challenges to the everyday life of Brandon residents because of lack of facilities that make these assets accessible, usable and available in a positive manner.

URBED has extensive experience of supporting clients and communities to create regeneration projects that can bring long-lasting positive changes, through urban design and landscape strategies that address an area's needs.

Brandon is a typical urban extension of the 1950s based on low densities. Sustainable places that offer good quality of life are now instead understood as places that offer the right housing densities to bring the right amount of population to an area in order to:

- Create vibrant and mixed places for people to live in
- Support key facilities and amenities
- Offer added safety and security through passive surveillance and 'eyes on the street' principles
- Support better public transport services, like better buses timetables and services

believe housing is preparing plans for initial demolition of some of the housing units within Brandon and replacement with new, fit-for-purpose housing. URBED would recommend that an in-depth masterplan exercise is undertaken to understand the potential to, sensitively and with the participation of the local residents and stakeholders, produce a densification masterplan strategy.



URBED recommends considering the use of the Quality of Life Framework to guide Brandon's regeneration. Set around 6 principles, such as 1) Control: the ability for local stakeholders and community to influence change in their area, the framework offers practical ways that can collaboratively help create places achieving high quality of life. <https://www.qolf.org>

Chapel Rise, Peterlee - m/ne (believe housing)  
Opportunities to infill green spaces with more houses, parking and allocated gardens.



The vast amount of green space, some of which from this first analysis appears also redundant and difficult to manage, could offer the opportunity to deliver infill housing. Through the conversations with local residents and stakeholders during the ‘Dreaming’ workshop, examples of modern housing types were shared with the attendees and many responded favourably to new typologies of housing for the area.

A diversification of housing tenure could be considered, with affordable rents balanced with housing offered at market rates, helping to support the area to create a more mixed and varied community, and strengthen the local economy.

A number of approaches to improve and maximise the potential of the fantastic green spaces available in the area can also be explored in the next phase of the project. Landscape interventions can be discussed through participatory design and integrated thoughtfully throughout the masterplan, informing the densification masterplan strategy, by responding to the site’s unique natural assets and constraints.

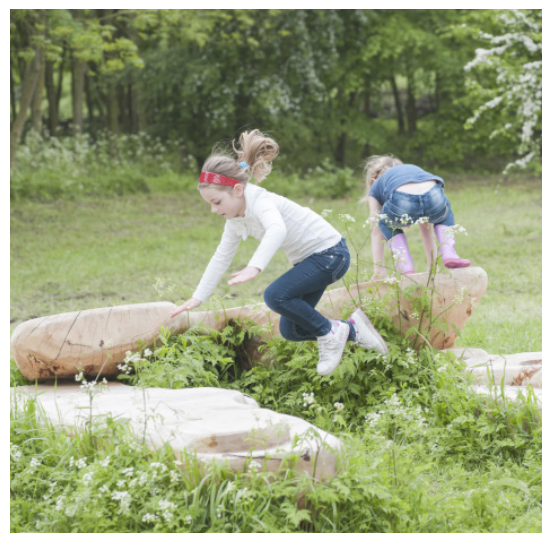
Building on positive feedback from ideas discussed so far with the local community, concepts could be developed to meet the needs of a wide range of age groups by strengthening and diversifying the current facilities offered. These landscape spaces could provide:

- A place for people to meet, practice mindfulness, enhance health and wellbeing, grow food together, hold events, combat loneliness and improve the sense of community
- An accessible environment with safe paths through well overlooked, attractive public spaces, that connect the neighbourhood and encourage active travel; also providing seating to enable the appreciation of the impressive views from the site and provide resting points across the steep topography
- Natural play opportunities that supports the development and education of children through mental and physical stimulation within a wildlife rich setting, that is also an attractive and comfortable environment for adults to enjoy too
- Stimulation, activity and a ‘hang out’ area aimed at young people,



Many would like more places to sit and enjoy the view or meet a friend in Brandon. This bench combines sitting with gentle leg exercises. Age-friendly amenities would be welcome in Brandon to help support health and wellbeing

Nature play (such as boulders) can be relatively cheap, robust and easy to maintain. Nature play allows people to decide how to engage, from jumping to sitting, and can also provide spaces for wildlife.



## 5 ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

giving them something to do and somewhere to meet, whilst also aiming to reduce the likelihood of boredom driven anti-social behaviour and conflict between different age groups and activities

- A rich ecological and hydrological framework that strengthens and diversifies existing habitats, supports a robust water management strategy and improves air quality, to create a sustainable, healthy and beautiful environment, filled with bird song and wildlife encounters

Facilities should be aimed at a range of age groups with interactive elements such as sensory planting and play equipment as well as benches and more usable sports equipment. It will be important to consider robustness and maintenance of any street furniture, planting and play equipment and to carefully design passive surveillance opportunities and aim to promote a sense of ownership to help protect and care for new amenities, and deter vandalism.



Naturalistic planting can be low maintenance and great for wildlife, whilst also providing a sensory environment that can be enjoyed by all age groups. Planting trees at strategic locations can also help provide shelter, shade, drainage, seasonal interest, a focal point and strengthen the structure and character of a space.

MUGA's can provide a multi-functional space for a range of activities, games and sports, that can be used at all times of year. Physical activity and interaction with others is also proven to contribute to positive physical and mental health.





**Brandon Baseline Report**  
Status FINAL  
**January 2022**

This document has been  
produced by URBED on  
behalf of Believe Housing

a. 10 Little Lever Street,  
Manchester M1 1HR  
t. +44 (0) 161 200 5500  
e. [info@urbed.coop](mailto:info@urbed.coop)  
w. [urbed.coop](http://urbed.coop)