

Meeting the housing needs of Young People

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Regardless of age, where you call home matters to everyone and their quality of life. Over this past year almost all of us have spent a lot more time at home, at times, all day, every day.

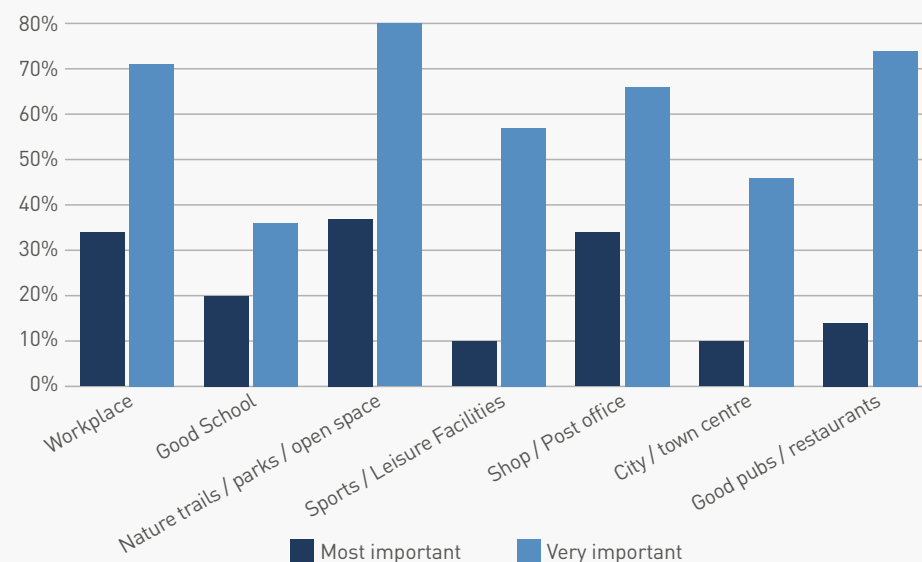
This has forced us to consider whether the space and place is fit for purpose for a whole range of our requirements; living, working, teaching, exercising, baking sourdoughs, virtual calling, to name a few.

Even before COVID-19, the YAC spent a great deal of time discussing the housing options and affordability in Cambridge and whether it was fit for the young population's purpose. We decided it was not. Housing costs for homeowners and renters in Cambridge are high and this impacts Cambridge's ability to attract and retain young people within the city.

We developed two 'housing tribes' that highlight the needs and priorities of two prevalent cohorts who currently work and live in Cambridge. These two tribes – the worker bees and the space cadets – capture key needs and aspirations of each cohort. Survey data and existing research was used to develop these tribes and establish key drivers for housing choices. In particular, we posed the question, 'what is the most important consideration in choosing where to live?' The key finding from this survey was that nature trails and public open space scored the highest 'most important' ranking. This was closely followed by shops and then the workplace.

Survey respondents said:

Please rank the places you would like to be closest to where we live, from most important to least important?



Attendees of the November event said:

What is your most important consideration in choosing where to live?



27 PEOPLE SAID
Nature trails / parks / open space



12 PEOPLE SAID
City / town centre



11 PEOPLE SAID
Workplace



8 PEOPLE SAID
Good school



5 PEOPLE SAID
Good restaurants / pubs



3 PEOPLE SAID
Sports leisure facilities



0 PEOPLE SAID
Shop / post office



Abigail Jones



David Jefferies





Housing tribes articulate bundles of needs and preferences that drive the choices members of that tribe make when choosing where they will live. In order to conceptualise the tribes and better understand the issues they face; each is represented by an imaginary person that embodies the tribe's characteristics.

Key considerations for Rajan our 'worker bee'

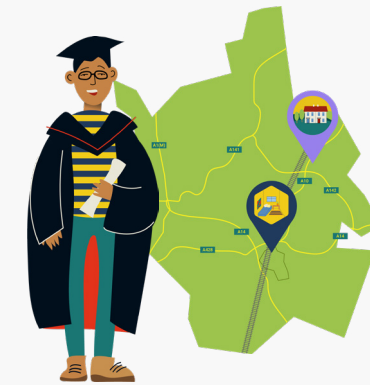
- Primarily came to Cambridge for work
- Wants to live close to the buzz of the city centre
- Is social – he values connectivity over private space
- Is mobile and his social network extends outside the city - he values connectivity to other places.

Key considerations for Lorna our 'space cadet'

- Quantity and quality of space is important
- Proximity to nature, convenient access to shops for essentials, local sports and leisure
- Kept in orbit of Cambridge, restricted by affordability, but nonetheless committed to her work, friends and lifestyle which are now rooted in the city. She is planning a longer term future here.

'Tribes' help us think about policy from the perspective of younger people living in the city. We should use them to invest in what matters to attract and retain people like Rajan and Lorna.

What changes or improvements could we make to improve Rajan and Lorna's quality of life? What are the housing types and tenures that best meet the needs of our young people? How do we create suitable and sustainable housing sites with the right connectivity for our tribes and ensure Cambridge remains a special place to live?



After graduating 'Rajan' came to Cambridge for work.



Rajan needed somewhere central, lively and bikeable to his new office on the science park.

Outside of work, he likes to be out meeting new people and socialising with friends in pubs, coffee shops and the beautiful green spaces surrounding the city. This is also because his shared house doesn't have communal space since the living room has been converted into a downstairs bedroom.



Cambridge is expensive, but he found a houseshare on SpareRoom. He doesn't know his three new housemates but they seem all right.



Rajan still has lots of friends from university in other cities. He spent last weekend with a friend in London, and Cambridge's good rail links are super convenient.

Rajan's Story



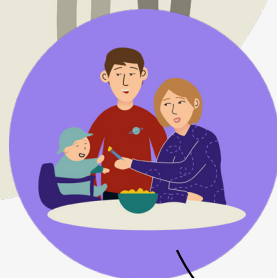
Lorna has got a job she loves in one of the offices on Station Road.



Lorna and her partner had been renting in the city, saving for a number of years and have now bought their first home together.



Cambridge was too expensive, but they found a place 20 minutes away on the train. Lorna liked living in Cambridge but it was worth moving out of the city to get a bigger property with space to potentially start a family in a few years' time.



Lorna's Story

After years of renting, she has enjoyed putting her own stamp on things, decorating, getting a cat (or dog) and making it feel like her own. Lorna started working from home two days a week, again now more relevant than ever, and she enjoys going for run in her lunchbreak.



Breakout session on the housing tribes – key points

- Tribes move the discussion beyond price per square metre and help us interrogate our thinking about housing planning and options. Housing in Cambridge often fails to meet the needs of the tribes - there is a lack of 'build to rent' property that meets young people's priorities.
- The group discussed a growing need to focus on community spaces, especially as the pandemic has highlighted the importance of community groups and green spaces. Could more be done with existing space, for example turning rooftops into community gardens? This focus on 'community' in housing planning is particularly the case to help tackle loneliness in smaller units, studios and 1 bed apartments. There is an increased role for employers, not just in supplying housing, but in helping people who move into the city to find their feet in the community.
- The group discussed how people might transition between tribes, and what factors might lead to a transition period, particularly where people's housing situation became more unsettled. COVID-19, for example, has led to growing demand outside of Cambridge and for green space.
- Which cohorts might be missing from the two tribes – particularly young people from Cambridge who might live at home or with their families, rather than those who have moved into the city. 11% of respondents to the most recent YAC survey currently live with parents. This was also identified as an area for future research.