



heat mapping

a unique approach to
healthy and sustainable housing layouts

What if you knew the secret to good housing?

ZCD Architects have developed a system to do exactly that. We can help you predict and plan successful places that meet your social impact objectives, that are sustainable and can support healthy lives.

At the heart of what we do is our unique mapping system, grounded in over 10 years of rigorous and published research. We apply it to large scale as well as infill projects, new or existing, working with developers, housing associations and local authorities.

Each space is scored according to four principles, see below. When a space scores well across all four, it appears as a 'warm' colour on a map. These warm spaces, so-called 'doorstep spaces', will work well for social interaction and play. They will be spaces that the community will enjoy spending time in and can support healthy lives.

'Cool' spaces are difficult for the community to use, for children to be able to play out in and can even be the source of anti social behaviour and crime.

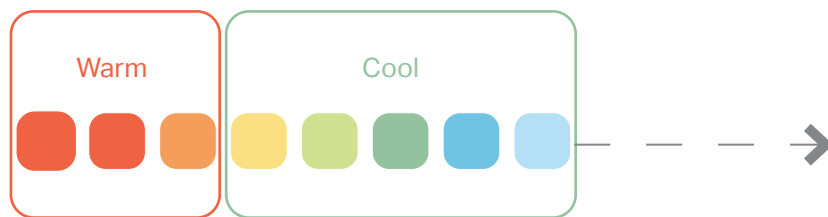
Heat mapping is a science for housing, one that you should be applying from the start. It can be used to improve early stage designs or even to set benchmarks for local plans, development plans and masterplans.

Car free

Connected

Directly accessible

Overlooked



*'Doorstep space in residential areas is defined as a space that is **directly accessible** from homes. It should facilitate social interaction and intergenerational uses, including independent children's play.'*

MHCLG Design and Placemaking PPG 2026



How will working with us help your project and your team?

We start by creating a heat map of your development site that will reveal the relationship between homes and external spaces. The map will show which spaces will support social interaction and play, and we can then show you how to improve your designs, increasing access and connectivity.

The mapping system can underpin briefing, setting benchmarks before design or development teams are procured.

It can also help set the brief for community engagement, shifting the conversation away from parking into an outcomes approach that allows genuine conversations and buy in from the community.

We can help with this, and have extensive experience facilitating intergenerational and inclusive community engagement, where we build trust around shared values.

Your project will benefit from this approach. Our mapping provides the basis for a common language for interrogating layouts, engaging with your community and meeting planning objectives. We can further support you as your proposals develop, up to a planning submission and beyond.

Your team will feel supported in their design development.

'We brought ZCD Architects in at a critical juncture for our infill housing scheme and they completely transformed the project. By focusing on what residents already valued about their estate, they shifted the conversation to a holistic, resident-led strategy for the entire landscape. Dinah and her team's ability to build trust and find creative, strategic solutions was the key to turning this project around.'

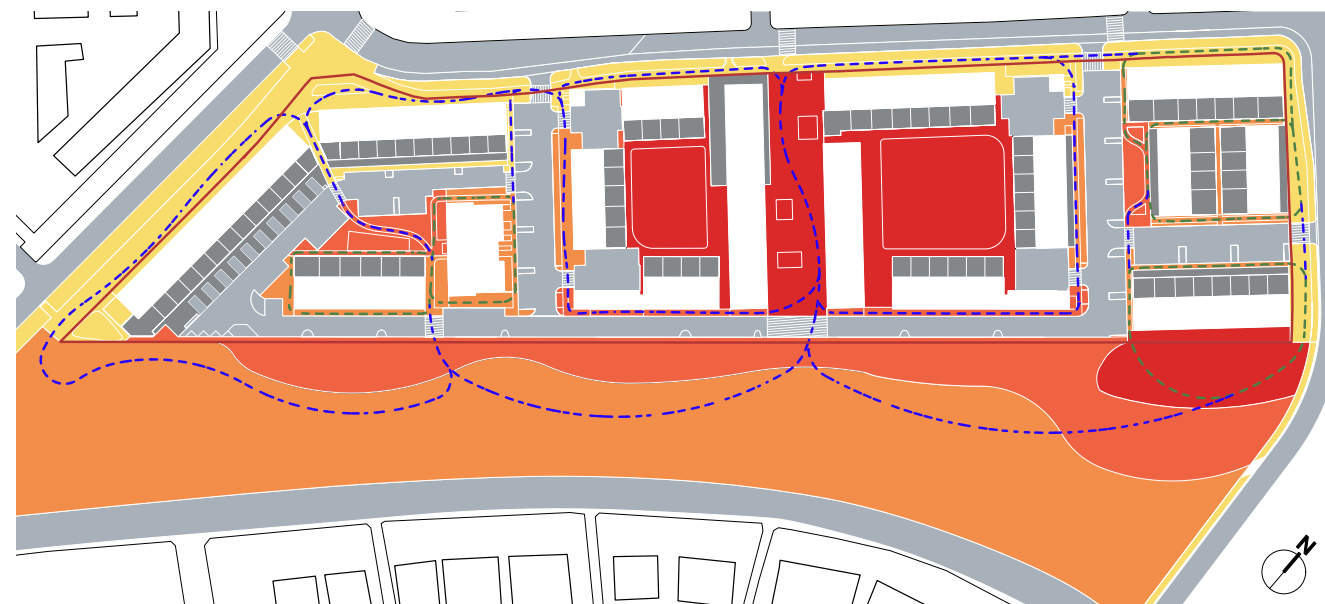
Marco Mancini, Development Manager. Hackney Council

Why should you use this approach in your housing developments?

Put simply, you can't afford not to: National policy and design guidance has embedded our research. The NPPF and the Design and Placemaking PPG now require external spaces on housing developments to support play and social interaction. The mapping system is the clearest way to demonstrate compliance.

But it's about more than policy, we work with development and design teams that want to achieve good social outcomes on their projects, who want to make places that people choose to live in and stay. Our job is to help them do that.

Northstowe for Homes England



Who benefits from well designed housing layouts?

The short answer is everybody. We know that housing layouts that are well designed benefit children and young people in particular as they are the main users, but our research also shows that spaces that are well used by children are well used by adults too (*Housing Design for Community Life 2014*).

We also know that sustainable communities are built on community trust. Our mapping system is underpinned by extensive community engagement, much of it intergenerational. The mapping language is straightforward and accessible for residents of all ages and provides a sound way for navigating some of the more thorny issues as well.

We believe passionately in authentic community engagement and can facilitate co-design sessions through creative workshops.

Get in touch at info@zcdarchitects.co.uk



'ZCD have created, coordinated and facilitated a very intensive and inclusive programme of engagement. It is the most impactful engagement our collective (highly experienced) team has ever undertaken.'

Rebekah Paczek, Director of Public Affairs, Social Impact and Community Relations. Earls Court Development Company



ZCD Architects is an award winning practice led by Dinah Bornat, the author of *All to play for: How to design child friendly housing*. She is an internationally renowned expert on child friendly and inclusive design, a Mayor's Design Advocate and an advisor to Government.

Clients include: Greater London Authority, Hackney Council, TOWN, L&Q, Clarion, Peabody, Homes England, Earls Court Development Company, Poplar Harca, London Legacy Development Corporation, This City Manchester, Hounslow Council.



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