



Open
City



Health and Housing



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Executive Summary

We are a global team of dedicated and experienced architects, engineers, planners, designers, and technology professionals who share a common desire – to help our clients create liveable, sustainable, and advanced urban environments.

Our practice provides its services holistically in the realisation that today's urban problems cannot be solved in silos of consulting expertise. IBI Group's diverse group of design and engineering professionals seek to collaborate and integrate their skills to provide significant insights and benefits for projects while enhancing sustainability and smart growth. We organise our expertise into three areas of practice:

Intelligence:

systems design, software development.

Buildings:

building architecture, interior design, building engineering (mechanical, structural, electrical).

Infrastructure:

planning, urban design, landscape architecture, transportation, and civil engineering.

IBI Group combines its worldwide consulting expertise with local home grown experience, providing its clientele in both the public and private sectors with the best of both worlds – global intelligence in combination with local knowledge. Established in 1974, the practice employs more than 2,400 professionals in 69 offices around the world, proudly practicing with ISO 9001:2008 certification.

IBI – Defining the cities of tomorrow.

Introduction

IBI Group, as lead sponsor for this year's Green Sky Thinking events, recently held an interactive event in our new London studio, examining the links between health and housing.

A short introductory presentation outlined the challenge of delivering up to 66,000 new homes a year in London. This was put in context of housing and its financial impact on our UK healthcare system, one that is valued at £2.5bn per year. (1) This headline statement was balanced with new research, which demonstrates that up to 30% of new home owners and renters would be prepared to pay more for a healthy home. (2)

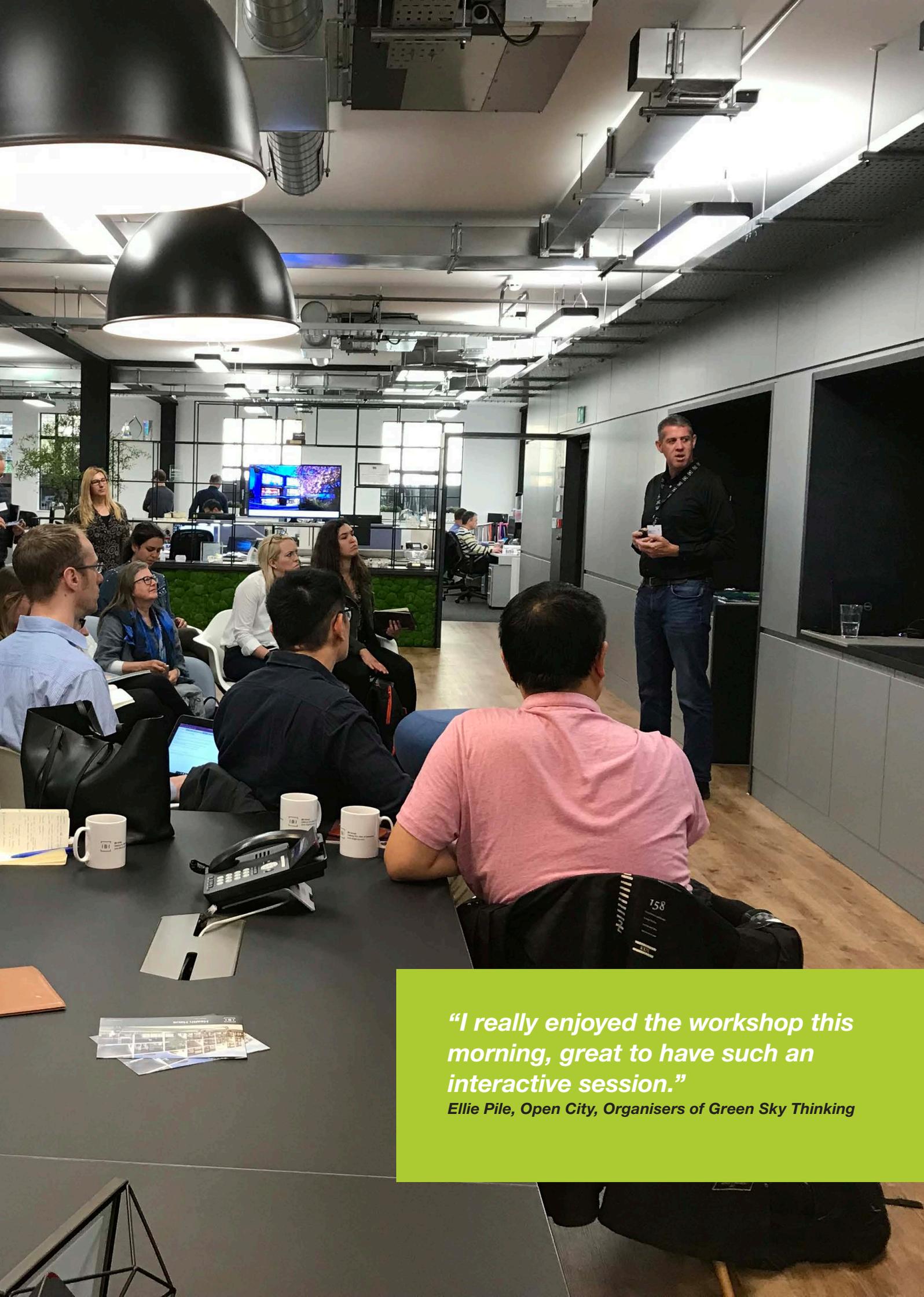
Working upon the presumption that the link between good housing and good health was well known, as evidenced by documentation from many organisations including the NHS, Kings Fund, Green Building Council and a wealth of academic research, attendees were asked to consider three questions:

- What are the best examples of housing that demonstrably contribute towards better healthcare outcomes?
- What are the challenges in each of our professions that prevent us from addressing this issues at greater scale?
- What additional information do you think our professions need to help support a greater delivery of more innovative and progressive housing that supports healthcare outcomes?

Over the course of forty five minutes the attendees 'roved' around IBI Group facilitators to discuss these topics and create a vast number of ideas and thoughts, which are articulated and confirmed on the following pages.



(1) Friedman D. Social Impact of Poor Housing. London: 2010
 (2) <https://multicomfort.saint-gobain.co.uk/media/1096/saint-gobain-uk-home-health-and-wellbeing-report-summary.pdf>



“I really enjoyed the workshop this morning, great to have such an interactive session.”

Ellie Pile, Open City, Organisers of Green Sky Thinking



What are the best examples of housing that demonstrably contribute towards better healthcare outcomes?

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There was a varied response to this question from the groups and vibrant discussion about what constitutes healthy housing.

Examples of healthy housing that emerged from the group discussion had the following characteristics:

- Well connected location with good transport links (public transport, walking and cycling) – not relying on car use
- Good amenities nearby including shopping, schools, healthcare and work (reasonable commute to work , housing that allows to work at home and/or rentable /shared office spaces within the development)
- Community – created by shared facilities and activities
- Access to high quality and varied green spaces – ideally encouraging movement, suitable for all ages and shared by all abilities
- Sustainable design – reduced energy use, lower bills for residents, better for the environment
- Mixed community: mixed tenures, mixed ages, mixtures of houses and apartments, catering for people of all ages
- Vibrancy (what constitutes a vibrant community varies depending on person's age)
- Ideally healthy housing should be inclusive and adaptable to suit various lifestyles, abilities and ages
- The process of development should have large amount of community engagement, allowing future residents to take ownership of the development

The following schemes were identified by the groups as being schemes which contribute towards improved healthcare outcomes.

- **Clapham Park, London, Metropolitan Housing Group**
- **New Ground, Older Womens Housing Group, Barnet**
- **Kidbrook Village, Berkeley Homes**
- **HealthHabitat, Australia: to improve health of disadvantaged citizens through housing**



Clapham Park, London, Metropolitan Housing Group
image source Maria Benton



What are the challenges in each of our professions that prevent us from addressing this issues at greater scale?

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The groups' responses to this question consistently identified five broad areas of concern that will need to be addressed if our professions and industry is to start building healthier homes. The challenges span across a range of responsibilities including policy makers, developers and design professionals and highlight the importance of establishing coordinated leadership to identify issues and offer tested approaches.

Five broad and inter-related headings were identified as follows:

1. Lack of know-how and recognition of best practice

Delegates perceived a general lack of understanding of the importance of health and wellbeing across the development industry. Whilst there is a sizable evidence base available that demonstrates the links between the places we build and health outcomes, publications are often obscure, lack authority or are fragmented in scope, with no one document to bring the conclusions together. Assembling case studies of innovative and successful projects was seen as a good starting point to address this challenge.

2. Market attitudes from both builders and customers

Delegates' perception was that developers would be cautious of improving design for healthy living without clear market demand from their customers yet that demand would not be evident unless healthier choices were offered. This apparent impasse raises parallels with ongoing debates around design quality and sustainability. Research into the cost impacts of healthier building was suggested, as was wider adoption of objective assessments of

projects, and possible government incentive schemes. The fundamental issue is how potential cost increases for developers can be reconciled against savings to the taxpayer of improved public health.

3. Regulatory Environment

The current regulatory environment addresses accessibility and disability discrimination but is weaker on wider public health issues. Some policy objectives appear to contradict healthy design principles e.g. energy and insulation standards or fail to make sufficiently strong links between planning and environmental threats e.g. air quality. As a start, the National Planning Policy Framework could be strengthened.

4. Existing stock and Retrofit

Whilst this country needs to stop making places that make people sick, the scale of impact that will shift long-term projections for chronic illness and healthy life expectancy cannot be achieved in new development alone. Given that the majority of homes in the UK already exist, retrofitting and adaptation of those homes, along with evolution of care models for existing communities will remain a long-term challenge.

5. Leadership and coordination of responsibilities

Delegates identified a lack of consensus as to who should be responsible for delivering healthier homes. Coordination between local authority departments (e.g. housing, planning, and transport), engagement of those tasked with public health and healthcare in wider planning decisions and political leadership to validate and prioritise health objectives were all identified as pressing challenges to be addressed.



“Many years of research into the relationship between health and housing and placemaking is finally now starting to influence policy and practice. There is some way to go, but events such as the IBI-hosted GreenSky breakfast seminar are making an important contribution to the interdisciplinary sharing of knowledge that can help create healthier and more sustainable places and environments for us”

Marc Sansom MBA, Managing Director, SALUS Global Knowledge Exchange



What additional information do you think our professions need to help support a greater delivery of more innovative and progressive housing that supports healthcare outcomes.

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We had a variety of responses to this question from the three groups with the following being the thematic areas that resulted from the conversations

Demand

- Greater feedback and statements around user demand
- Understanding the aspirations from a more diverse population
- The need being driven by an increased personal contribution to wellbeing.

Training

- A greater understanding at educational level of issues around the benefits of the natural environment including light / air / water on healthcare outcomes.
- Opportunities for professionals to change job mid-career to create better insights or indeed 'work-swap' placements.
- Feedback from healthcare professionals, and a more diverse group of professionals beyond simply built environment professionals.
- NHS England to become embedded in Local Planning Process, whether at Local Plan level or at more detailed stages.
- Improved awareness of issues around health in planning professionals.
- Increased collaboration between academia, planning professionals and architects.

Information

- Government and Local Policy better defined.
- A centralised and actively updated Evidence Base with Research and Statistics
- A data base of best practice exemplars.
- Comprehensive review of local and global approaches to the development of Healthier Places.
- Guidance upon issues around optimal housing locations and connectivity

Outcomes

- A greater understanding of what can and should be measured to demonstrate better health outcomes.

Technology

- Insight and understanding in emerging and supportive technologies.

Standards

- Development and definition of standards around what constitutes a 'Healthy Home'





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