# University of Bath's health appraisal tool transforms urban development planning



A pioneering tool developed by researchers at the University of Bath offers a transformative approach to urban development by quantifying the potential health benefits linked to environmental improvements such as cleaner air and increased active travel. Developed within the Tackling Root Causes upstream of Unhealthy Urban Development (TRUUD) research consortium, the Health Appraisal of Urban Systems (HAUS) model provides investors and planners with a data-driven means to evaluate the health impacts of their projects, aiming to support more informed and responsible decision-making.

In collaboration with Federated Hermes Real Estate and the University of Reading, the TRUUD team applied the HAUS model to two prominent placemaking projects: Paradise Birmingham and St Mary Le Port in Bristol. These case studies, developed by MEPC within Federated Hermes’ Private Markets business, illustrate the tool's ability to project health-related economic benefits for both immediate and wider communities. The research estimates that the development of these two urban sites could collectively avert approximately £56 million in health costs—a figure that surpasses the minimum benefits anticipated under current Local Plan requirements by as much as £21 million. This assessment underscores the far-reaching implications of urban regeneration when health and wellbeing are prioritised alongside economic and environmental goals.

Dr Eleanor Eaton, an economist from the University of Bath, detailed how the HAUS model incorporates a wide spectrum of health-determining features, including accessibility to walking and cycling routes, public transport, risks of road collisions, air and noise pollution, exposure to green and blue spaces, and even factors like fear of crime and access to quality food. Through modelling various development stages—ranging from pre-development conditions to ideal health scenarios—the reports reveal significant differences in expected health outcomes. For example, the planned Phase 3 development at Paradise Birmingham could yield up to £43 million in health benefits, largely driven by increased active travel and enhanced perceptions of safety, substantially exceeding the projected £20 million under the Local Plan. Further enhancements, such as expanded green spaces and mitigation of pollution, could push these benefits higher, illustrating the value of integrating thoughtful urban design principles.

At St Mary Le Port in Bristol, the model predicts nearly £13 million in potential health-related cost savings associated with ongoing redevelopment efforts. The benefits here are primarily attributed to greater biodiversity and improved security measures, marking a slight improvement over Local Plan expectations. However, the researchers noted some uncertainty in projecting mortality reductions directly tied to biodiversity, reflecting the complex and multifaceted nature of health outcomes in urban settings.

The integration of health considerations into real estate development is gaining momentum, with key figures from both academia and industry stressing its importance. Professor Kathy Pain from Henley Business School at the University of Reading, who leads TRUUD’s real estate engagement, emphasised that HAUS fills a critical data gap, enabling investors to factor long-term community health into asset management decisions. “Directing capital towards urban settings where health is a more significant part of decision making will help reduce spatial inequalities,” she said, highlighting the potential for this approach to reshape investment strategies and urban planning alike.

Chris Taylor, Chairman of Real Estate at Federated Hermes, added that responsible investment must extend beyond financial returns to encompass societal and environmental wellbeing. He pointed to the partnership with TRUUD as a clear example of how private and public sector collaboration can enhance quality of life through human-centric urban design. “By applying the HAUS model, we now have data-backed evidence to demonstrate that thoughtful, human-centric design drives lasting value creation for the people interacting with the place, wider society, and our investors,” Taylor remarked, signalling a shift towards embedding health outcomes in real estate valuation.

The HAUS model is slated for adoption in upcoming government appraisal guidance, suggesting a broader policy shift towards valuing health in urban development decisions. Projects like Paradise Birmingham, a significant city centre regeneration initiative featuring new office spaces and public areas, reflect real-world application of these principles, illustrating how urban renewal can be a catalyst for both economic vitality and public health improvements.

This emerging framework aligns with growing calls from urban health advocates and planning organisations to embed health equity into spatial development. As the real estate sector increasingly recognises the economic and social imperatives of healthier places, tools like HAUS represent a critical step towards achieving cities that are not only prosperous and sustainable but fundamentally supportive of the wellbeing of their communities.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/new-urban-health-tool-highlights-major-societal-benefits/), [[2]](https://www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/new-urban-health-tool-highlights-major-societal-benefits/), [[3]](https://www.hermes-investment.com/uk/en/intermediary/press/real-estate-research-collaboration-launched-for-healthier-urban-places/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/new-urban-health-tool-highlights-major-societal-benefits/), [[2]](https://www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/new-urban-health-tool-highlights-major-societal-benefits/), [[3]](https://www.hermes-investment.com/uk/en/intermediary/press/real-estate-research-collaboration-launched-for-healthier-urban-places/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/new-urban-health-tool-highlights-major-societal-benefits/), [[2]](https://www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/new-urban-health-tool-highlights-major-societal-benefits/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/new-urban-health-tool-highlights-major-societal-benefits/), [[3]](https://www.hermes-investment.com/uk/en/intermediary/press/real-estate-research-collaboration-launched-for-healthier-urban-places/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/new-urban-health-tool-highlights-major-societal-benefits/), [[5]](https://www.henley.ac.uk/schools/henley-business-school)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/new-urban-health-tool-highlights-major-societal-benefits/), [[3]](https://www.hermes-investment.com/uk/en/intermediary/press/real-estate-research-collaboration-launched-for-healthier-urban-places/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/new-urban-health-tool-highlights-major-societal-benefits/), [[4]](https://www.paradisebirmingham.co.uk/), [[7]](https://www.truud.ac.uk/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/new-urban-health-tool-highlights-major-societal-benefits/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/new-urban-health-tool-highlights-major-societal-benefits/> - The University of Bath, in collaboration with Federated Hermes Real Estate and the University of Reading, has developed a new tool to estimate health gains from environmental improvements like cleaner air and increased active travel. This tool, tested on projects such as Paradise Birmingham and St Mary Le Port in Bristol, aims to support better-informed decision-making by quantifying potential health benefits. The findings suggest that urban regeneration can lead to significant societal and environmental outcomes, with potential health benefits up to £56 million, exceeding expectations under Local Plans.
3. <https://www.hermes-investment.com/uk/en/intermediary/press/real-estate-research-collaboration-launched-for-healthier-urban-places/> - Federated Hermes Real Estate has partnered with the TRUUD research consortium to examine and deliver health as an element of the built urban environment. The collaboration focuses on two placemaking projects, St Mary Le Port in Bristol and Paradise Birmingham, to assess how TRUUD’s health evaluation tool, HAUS, can aid investment decision-making. This initiative aims to incorporate health evidence into investment management for societal wellness and prosperity, addressing the need for robust evidence on health benefits in urban development.
4. <https://www.paradisebirmingham.co.uk/> - Paradise Birmingham is a major urban regeneration project in the heart of Birmingham, UK. The development aims to transform the city centre with new office spaces, retail outlets, and public areas, enhancing the urban environment and economic vitality. The project is part of a broader initiative to rejuvenate Birmingham's city centre, providing modern facilities and improved public spaces to attract businesses and visitors alike.
5. <https://www.henley.ac.uk/schools/henley-business-school> - Henley Business School, part of the University of Reading, is a leading business school offering a range of undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programmes. The school is known for its research excellence and strong links with industry, providing students with practical insights and opportunities. Henley Business School is committed to developing responsible leaders and fostering a global perspective in its teaching and research.
6. <https://www.planningaid.co.uk/> - Planning Aid is a UK charity that provides free, independent, and professional advice on town and country planning issues. It aims to help individuals and communities understand and engage with the planning system, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect their environment. Planning Aid offers support on a range of planning matters, from local development plans to individual planning applications.
7. <https://www.truud.ac.uk/> - TRUUD (Tackling Root Causes upstream of Unhealthy Urban Development) is a £10 million research project based at the University of Bristol. The project focuses on how urban centres can be planned to reduce health inequalities, examining the impact of urban development on public health. TRUUD aims to provide evidence-based solutions for healthier urban environments, integrating health considerations into urban planning and development processes.