



## Towards Successful Suburban Town Centres: a study of the relationship between morphology, sociability, economics and accessibility

Within the next 20 years, most of the growth in housing development in England and Wales is predicted to occur in suburban settlements. At the same time, this development is expected to be sustainable economically and environmentally, which means that the suburb is required to provide local economic activities in order to minimise travel and to support cohesive and vibrant communities.

One of the main problems that urban planners and designers face when they try to materialise this vision is the lack of knowledge on the factors that make the suburban town centre and its surroundings successful and vibrant. The Towards Successful Suburban Town Centres project is addressing this issue and developing tools and techniques that will assist in the development of new urban areas.

The Towards Successful Suburban Centres project, which runs for three years, is conducting spatial analysis of social and economic activities at street block level using space syntax tools integrated into a geographical information system. The research is focusing on a range of 26 case studies drawn from the Greater London area with a detailed study of 3. We have developed an integrated methodology that allows the visualisation and analysis of a particular urban form - the structure of the streets and the layout of buildings - in combination with information about the people who live and work in the same area. In most policy research there is no unified analytical framework; urban designers focus on the street layout, while social-scientists are concerned with the social and economic aspects of town centre planning.

Within this research we have developed new techniques for the analysis of the suburban town centre and its surroundings. In Geographical Information Systems (GIS), we have developed a method that enables the adjustment of historical maps to the latest detailed digital data from the Ordnance Survey. We are using GIS to integrate the suburbs data and to conduct spatial analysis on their socio-economic development. Space Syntax and GIS techniques will both be used to analyse the way in which suburban space is being utilised by people and to integrate the social and economic data with information about urban form. Added to we are using ethnographic methods to study patterns of movement and space use.

The Towards Successful Suburban Centres project will contribute to the policy debate on the future of suburbs, develop methods to assist urban planners in making development decisions, innovate in the use of historical maps and explore possibilities for integrating socio-economic data with information about the layout of urban areas. The project is already benefitting the public by creating a profiling tool online in which spatial, social and economic data is made available for the design of successful suburbs, see [www.sstc.ucl.ac.uk/profiler](http://www.sstc.ucl.ac.uk/profiler). Publications can be found on the [project website](#).

### Project contacts:

Email: [sstc@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:sstc@ucl.ac.uk)

Web: [www.sstc.ucl.ac.uk](http://www.sstc.ucl.ac.uk)

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7679 1833

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*Surbiton, 2008 showing built form and potential movement*