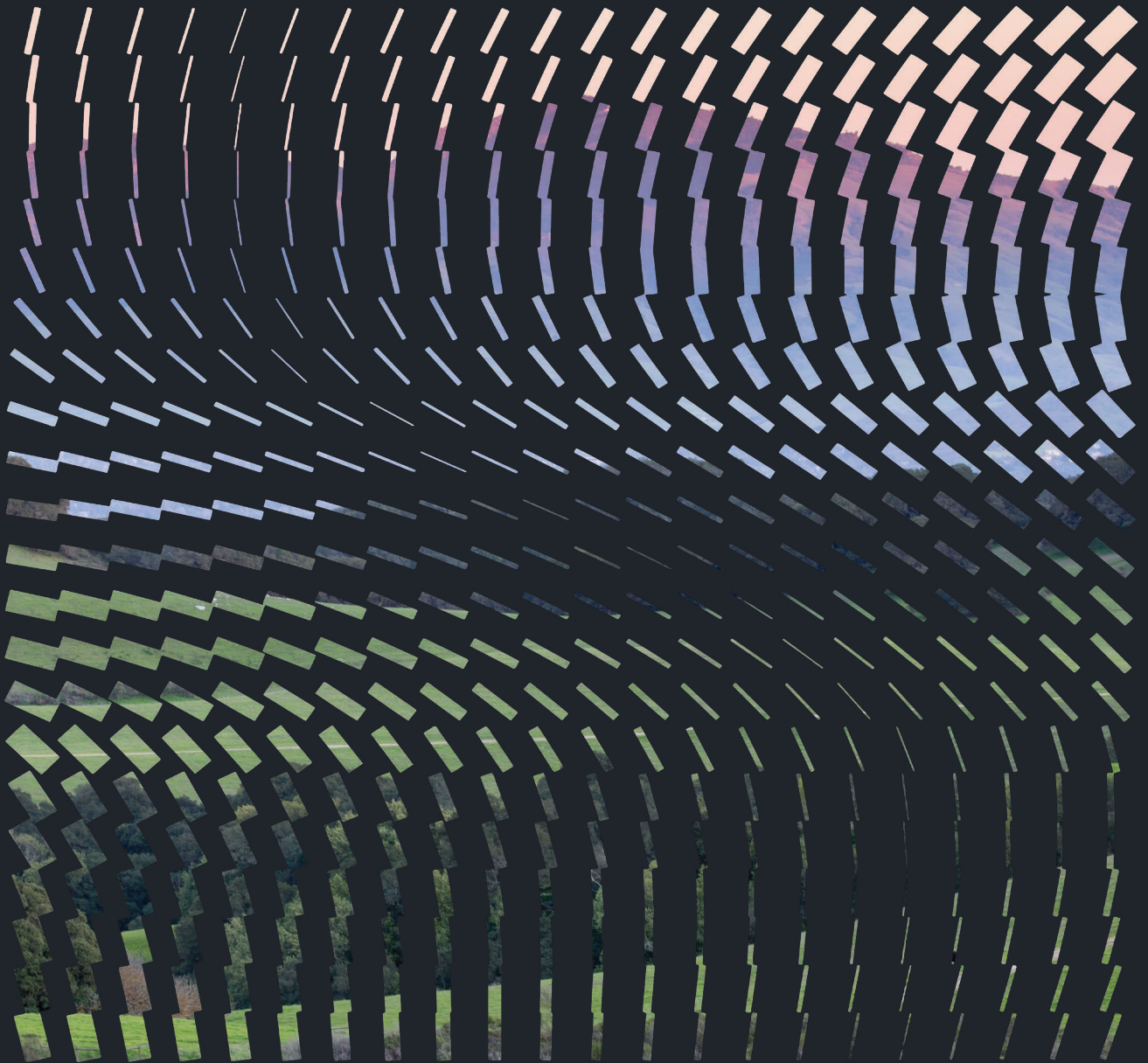


The 30-minute rural community / Future Mobility



wsp
FootAnstey

Change
Re | action

The Paris Agreement focuses on keeping the global temperature rise in this century to 1.5°C to avoid “severe, widespread and irreversible” climate change effects. If current trends continue, the world is likely to pass the 1.5°C mark between 2030 and 2052 unless it finds a way to reach net zero emissions. Our 'domino effect' graphic represents this tension.

FUTURE MOBILITY: CHANGE REACTION

Let's change the way we think.
Let's create change.

Future Mobility *is more than* technology. It's also about people and places.

Future Mobility *is more than* movement. It's also about access to activities and opportunities.

Future Mobility *is more than* transport. It's also about underpinning net zero carbon goals.

Future Mobility *is not just about* the future. It's about now.
Future Mobility is now.

We've done the thinking, and continue to prove it in practice.

The “30 minute rural-community”

Rural communities across the UK are a key contributor to the nation's economy, home to millions of people, they're the life blood of the our food supply, provide a myriad of employment opportunities, are home to areas of outstanding natural beauty and National Parks, thus anchoring the UK's tourist offer.

However, the aesthetic of the bucolic rural idyll, long since lodged in the national psyche, masks a very different reality where access to many of life's essentials, things that town and city dwellers take for granted, is significantly harder.

As our major cities have generally benefited from easier, safer and cheaper mobility, over recent decades rural areas have been left behind. Around 12 million people in the UK live in rural areas and the vast majority of them have experienced a reduction in essential services, including transport provision, leaving them dependent on their cars and burdened with the expense and inconvenience that this brings.

If you don't drive, you're often left unable to access healthcare, education, employment, leisure activities or social interaction opportunities easily. Simply cutting and pasting the solutions developed in urban places won't work; rural communities have different needs and want to be connected to surrounding places in different ways.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought more attention to rural areas, as changing working patterns and digital connectivity loosen ties to urban workplaces and peri-urban living and the prospect of rural living turns heads.

The state of rural mobility today – car-dependent, expensive, thus limiting social and economic development – is not inevitable. As we all know transport is a derived demand. It is a result of how society and services have evolved and the behaviours, from organisations or individuals, that have become ingrained over time. The challenges that stand in the way of better rural mobility are creativity, commercial reality and operational flexibility.

The solution to this major issue may lie in looking across sectors, in undertaking joined-up planning to find answers that improve access to the things that we all do and are dependent upon. That is why we want to start a conversation with our clients and with communities about rural mobility.

This short paper reflects on the key issues and complexities within rural communities and presents back an outcome-focussed approach to how we can level-up and facilitate greener, happier, healthier, but also more productive, prosperous, quieter and safer communities.

Drawing inspiration from the emerging 15-minute city concept, we have termed this **the 30-minute community**.



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For far too long our rural communities have been forgotten by decision makers. If we think

differently about the uniqueness of these places and be creative in how we improve mobility and transport, we can deliver significant benefits.

| Giles Perkins
WSP Head of Future Mobility



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The conversation has changed from assuming people want to be hyper-mobile all the time. Now, it's about

accessibility; to goods, services and opportunities, underpinned by a sense of community.

| Chris Pritchett
Head of Energy, Foot Anstey

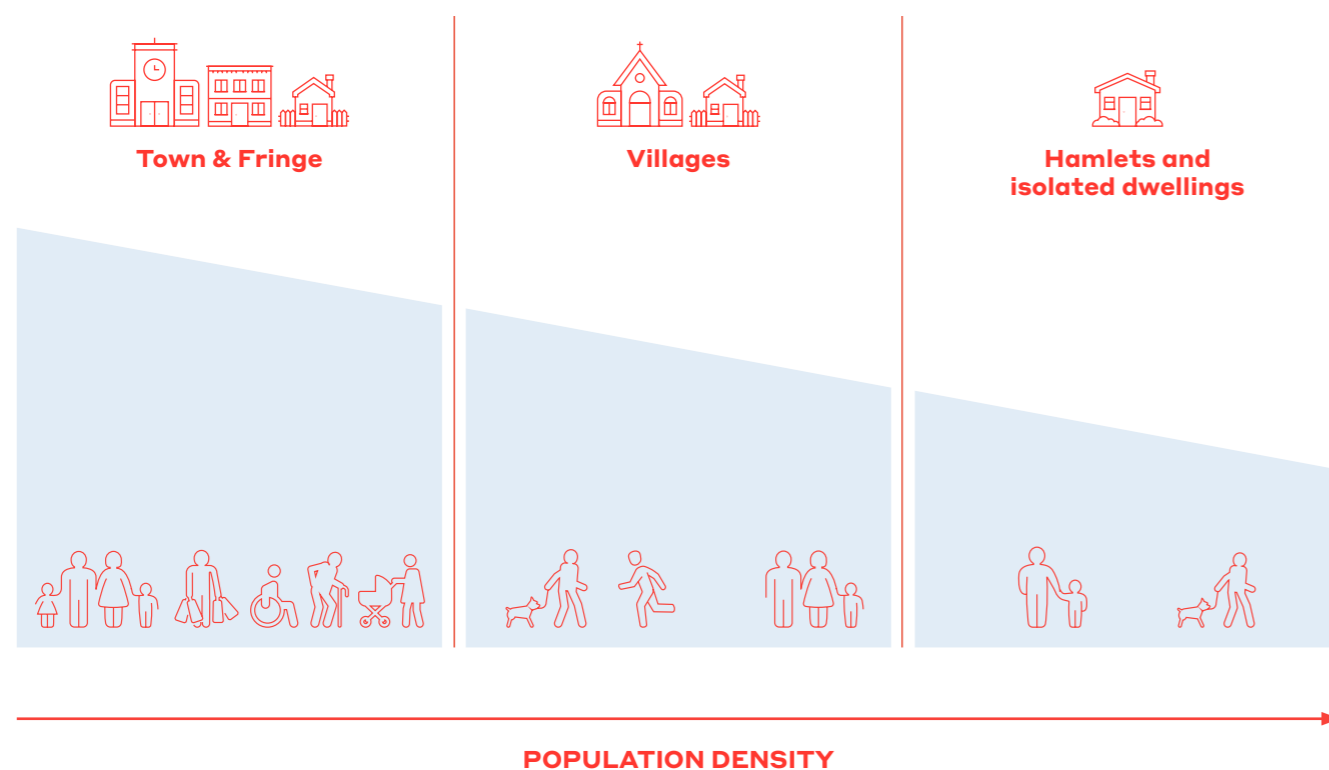
Today's rural communities

The term 'rural' encompasses a range of spatial, social, economic, cultural and topographical interpretations. The Office for National Statistics rural-urban classification¹ is based on population and density (rather than landscape or natural environment) and include six rural classifications which help us consider the breadth of our rural communities and their challenges.

Around 80% of the UK area is officially classified as rural and approximately 20% of the population lives in rural areas, equating to over 12 million people². Rural areas face different challenges to urban areas across transport, accessibility to key services and socio-economic opportunities.

A survey undertaken by The Prince's Countryside Fund found the top three barriers across rural UK are poor broadband and mobile phone coverage, poor road and transport networks, and a poor variety of employment opportunities³.

Research undertaken for the DfT found that rural and small urban communities experience transport disadvantage, with the main drivers being lack of transit and a low density of employment, education, recreation and other opportunities.



Key issues for rural mobility: a top ten

- 1. LIMITED PUBLIC TRANSPORT**
 Limited or no publicly accessible transport (in all its forms from traditional bus to app-based taxi) in many rural areas resulting in inequity of access to opportunities
- 2. COSTLY BUS SERVICES**
 Rural bus services facing challenges including high operating costs (by the nature of routes), historic cuts in bus subsidies⁴ and continued challenges in continuing any subsidy versus critical social services.
- 3. TRANSPORT DESERTS**
 Occurrence of 'transport deserts'⁵, where residents have no option for convenient and affordable public transport and risk being cut off from basic services if they don't have access to a car.
- 4. CAR DEPENDENCY**
 Private car use and dependency remaining higher in more rural areas, partly associated with older residents and partly due to the reduced availability of alternatives.
- 5. FUEL POVERTY**
 Fuel / energy poverty in rural areas due to the higher price of fuel coupled with high mileage due to long distances to services⁶ and more recently, a lack of EV charging opportunities particularly in places with only on-street parking.
- 6. LIMITED ACTIVE TRAVEL INFRASTRUCTURE**
 Non-existent or poor-quality infrastructure for walking, wheeling (for the disabled) and cycling in many areas.
- 7. SOCIAL ISOLATION**
 Social isolation and loneliness due to poor transport services for those without access to a car.
- 8. LOGISTICS ECOSYSTEM**
 The underlying eco-system of freight logistics supporting farming (crops, products), supplies (including household fuel) and deliveries (food, medicine, discretionary goods etc.).
- 9. SILOED BUDGETS**
 Siloed budgets across local roads, community transport, public transport and special education with sometimes the volunteer sector stepping in to meet demands.
- 10. ENERGY CAPACITY AND RESILIENCE**
 The added challenges of decarbonising transport in rural areas where energy networks may be less resilient.

Besides the core transport issues listed above there are numerous other, sometimes hidden, factors which exacerbate the complexities in rural communities. These very real and pertinent challenges are all (in full or in part) interconnected with transport and mobility. The focus to date has been on the urban condition, where headline problems are arguably greater but the ability for the market, underpinned by innovation, is also greater given the larger, denser populations.

Rural areas provide some of the conditions and opportunities where innovation could flourish, building upon closer community ties where people and businesses already collaborate to deliver beneficial outcomes, such as the sharing of agricultural assets, parish groups supporting those in need and communities working together to improve broadband and deliver clean energy. However, they also face significant challenges, challenges not consistently experienced in urban areas.

Let's think differently.

It's not just about...

Rural mobility, it's not just about the services or supporting infrastructure, it's about how we help people and communities thrive, it's about how we help businesses grow and how we treat rural places equitably.



WEALTH VARIATION

Huge variation in wealth and income between for instance landowners and those working the land or between lifelong residents and those moving into rural areas from urban locations, particularly later in life.



EMPLOYMENT WEB

A complex employment web through geographically spread small to medium enterprises across a wide range of sectors.



HOUSING MARKET

The pricing of younger people out of the housing market often due to the second home market in rural areas⁷ or very active housing markets.



BRAIN DRAIN

Outmigration of young people seeking higher education opportunities, many not returning driving an ageing population but also an export of skills⁸.



LOSS OF THIRD PLACES

Loss of "third places"⁹ (neither home nor work, such as village halls), which increases social isolation, particularly among older and less mobile groups in society.



RURAL DECARBONISATION

Challenges of rural decarbonisation where underlying energy networks are sometimes poor.



The 30-minute Rural Community

The 15-minute city

The 15-minute city¹⁰ concept places the needs of people and communities at the centre of planning considerations for urban places. At its heart is a basic principle, that everyone should have access to the key amenities and opportunities, at whatever life-stage, within 15 minutes (ideally by sustainable modes of conveyance) of their doorstep.

This most basic of principles, how can we make people's lives better (across numerous metrics) through the integrated consideration of human needs, place and mobility, has caught the imagination of elected officials, planners and practitioners right around the world.

This return to the importance of neighbourhood, buoyed by trends towards localism and reducing impacts, particularly with regards to climate change and the decarbonisation agenda integrates perfectly with an increased focus on walking, wheeling and cycling and innovations such as e-bike, e-scooter and shared (rather than owned) modes of transport.

What if we could develop a similar principle for rural environments?

The 15-minute city conversation is welcomed, but what if we flipped that conversation to consider some of our most overlooked and complex places – namely, our rural communities.

The 30-minute rural community

Adopting a similar, outcome lead approach to rural mobility – encompassing transportation by existing, new and emerging modes, plus, importantly the digital layer (for those who are able) and associated energy needs (in a decarbonising world) – in thinking about how we level-up to deliver greener, friendlier, happier, healthier, more productive, prosperous, quieter and safer communities.

We suggest that this needs a three-pronged approach:

- Improve the baseline level of social and community infrastructure in rural communities to maximise 'day-to-day' opportunities across their diverse populations using clusters of settlements working together as an eco-system rather than individual settlements;
- Localise the layer of social infrastructure through community / public / third sector partnerships to maximise the potential to capitalise on fixed, moving and human resources;
- Improve physical and digital access, and energy provision to the next layer of services that are not available within in those community 'clusters' by improving connectivity to local market towns and cities.

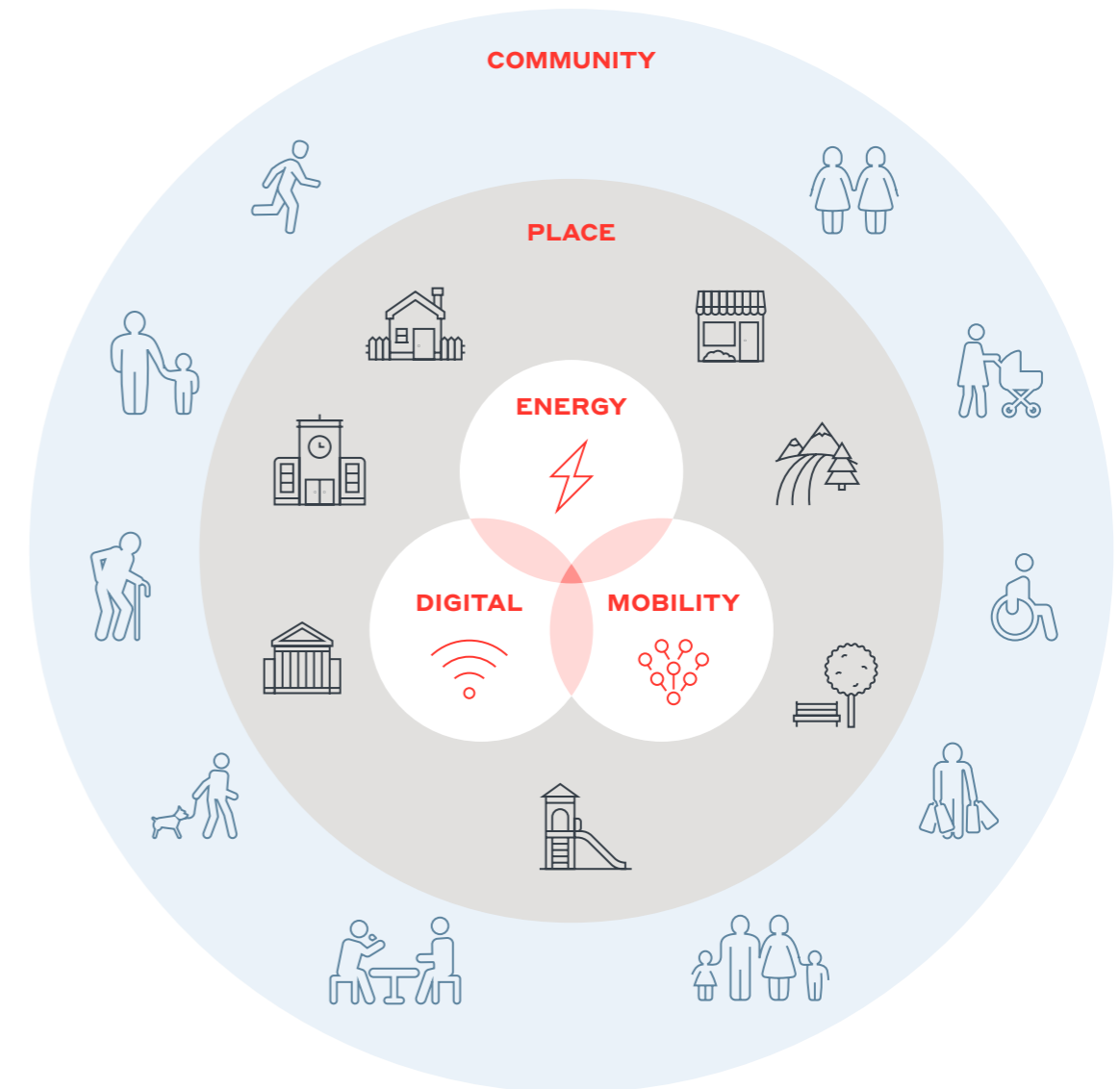
By unpacking and reimagining the mobility ecosystem within our rural communities we could connect dispersed healthcare, retail, education and leisure facilities so that more people have easier access as well as improving connectivity to local jobs and our major centres of activity such as market towns and cities.

Thinking about our rural communities as an interconnected network of facilities that is greater than the sum of its parts is at the heart of the concept, reducing the need to travel long distances to essential services and opportunities where local alternatives exist but importantly also enhancing links to economic centres. Making our rural communities more attractive could help rebalance the loss of young people from our rural communities, provide more opportunities for existing communities and help rebalance local economies.



We need to consider the needs of our communities, through the lens of all those that live there and importantly the life-stage at which they are at, the places that underpin our communities, homes, businesses, medical facilities, shops and other facilities and how we can access life's essential services physically and digitally, whilst considering the decarbonised energy needs to meet net zero goals.

If we took a different approach to thinking about the transport and mobility needs of people and business within our rural communities what might that look like?



Objectives of the 30-minute rural community

To enable this, we suggest a set of 9 core objectives underpin the 30-minute rural community built around 3 pillars of *reducing, changing* and *improving*:

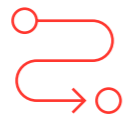


REDUCING

The need to travel through the alternate provision of sustainable services.

Car dependency and the financial burdens that it brings.

The impacts of vehicular movements on rural communities.



CHANGING

Sole-occupancy private car behaviours through the provision of viable, applicable alternatives.

The perceptions of "public transport" through the re-imagining of what rural publicly accessible transport could be.

How under-utilised fixed and moving assets are used to deliver improved and sustainable outcomes.



IMPROVING

The quality of life and experience for all in our rural communities.

The economic gap between rural areas and neighbouring conurbations.

Access to life's opportunities and essential services for all.



Putting the 30-minute rural community into practice

So how might this be achieved? We could consider change under three headings of *enhancing, aggregating* and *harnessing*:



ENHANCING

Physical access through improved, decarbonised transport connectivity.

Communications and digital alternatives for those who are able to, or wish to use such technologies.

Access to opportunities through physical "mobile" services coming into communities.



AGGREGATING

Highway, public transport, energy and digital assets to provide better functionality focused on community needs.

Place based assets and functions to make the most of existing facilities to provide a focus for services.

Available vehicular assets, both public and private, within the community to enable 'Public Transport v2.0'.



HARNESSING

The sometimes-siloed transport and place-based budgets across the public and private sector to facilitate new revenue streams.

Local skills, experience and resources to help develop and deliver new models of operation tailored to local needs.

The energy and enthusiasm of people, businesses and landowners in rural places who together would benefit.

Achieving these objectives is a huge challenge and this is compounded by the fundamental fact that communities are different, have different needs, different existing infrastructure and services. Taking a place-led, human-centric and importantly evidenced based approach is an imperative to achieving the step-change needed.

To make this work, there may be legislative barriers to overcome, traditional ways of working to deconstruct, new relationships to foster and inevitably enabling the creativity required to think differently and develop the business and commercial models that viable for the long-term.

So how can we tackle the challenge by building upon what we already have in place?



One of the key questions to address in any rural accessibility solution is what organisation can convene or marshal the various resources that suppliers can access and capitalise upon. Parish, District, County and Unitary Councils would, of course, represent the working assumption, but there is an opportunity to harness the power of communities by looking to the groups and organisations that have already done the same with great success.

Stability, governance and longevity are clearly key considerations for whether an organisation can fulfil this role in enabling the 30-minute community concept, but the enthusiasm, human energy, commitment and local understanding are also powerful drivers for change.

1. BUILDING UPON EXISTING OPERATIONS AND EMERGING SOLUTIONS

It is likely that any solution will need to build upon existing transport networks (where they exist) be these traditional linear bus and rail services, existing and emerging demand responsive solutions, social care, education and formal and informal community transport. The importance of the rail network (where available) should not be underestimated in providing rapid access to market towns and major cities.

Re-thinking how transport is provided, focusing on journey outcomes rather than defined, rigid services could unlock more journey opportunities. Layer on top of this new and emerging modes such as community car and bike share, offering alternatives to car ownership and integrated planning, booking and payment systems could provide simplified access to more opportunities.

2. USING COMMUNITY PLACES TO BETTER EFFECT

Many rural communities have community and church halls, shops, village squares, healthcare facilities, pubs and other amenities. These could all help provide focus for the 30-minute rural community concept by becoming formal or informal mobility hubs, providing a focus for information services and infrastructure as well as providing wider community-based services.

By re-thinking the value, form and function of the places within our communities we could provide the foundations for an improved eco-system which when considered with those in surrounding communities is greater than the sum of its parts.

3. PUTTING PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES AT THE HEART OF DECISION-MAKING

Developing the evidence base for any solution or intervention is well understood and is key to successful funding applications and robust business models. We suggest though that an enhanced approach is needed for the 30-minute rural community, where

people-centric evidence and data is gathered to fully understand the breadth of the local community, their relative life-stages and needs, to help form new and importantly, directly applicable, tailored solutions.

Co-creation with the community should be positively encouraged, there being little point in 'experts' imposing idealistic solutions upon places they know nothing of. Harnessing the experiences, views, history and energy of local community groups could help unlock potential and realise hidden opportunities.

4. ENGAGING WITH AND ENCOURAGING OUR PARISH COUNCILS

With any change there is always a risk of objection, politicisation, or perhaps worst of all, lack of interest. Rural Parish Councils understand the needs of their local communities and understand the day to day issues with councillors being drawn from those very communities.

The Parish Council networks could be a valuable resource in helping set the scene for new solutions and the articulating the benefits they could bring in terms local communities understand.

5. CAPITALISING ON COMMUNITY INTEREST / ENERGY COMPANIES AND TRANSITION TOWNS

Typically, a Community Interest Company or Community Benefit Society, community energy companies typically fund renewable energy or efficiency projects through crowdfunding and community share or bond offers. Many such groups have multi-million pound solar or wind assets in their ownership, which can provide a surplus or profit over and above the operating expenditure and the debt-service costs. This is typically a Community Benefit Fund, which can be used to fund local improvements and amenity and could be the perfect annuity funding to finance the infrastructure and services necessary for the 30-minute concept.

Community Energy Companies also have the intangible benefit of being familiar with renewable energy, have a clear sustainability imperative and may already have access to a significant volume of community shareholders to provide additional finance if needs be. Commercial renewables developers are also often asked to make a community benefit contribution as part of the planning requirement for their projects. Again, this could also be a useful funding stream for some of the options discussed in this paper.

The Transition Towns initiative envisages communities stepping up to address the big challenges they face by starting local and collaboratively crowd-source solutions – all essential attributes for success for the 30-minute community concept.



6. UTILISING COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are not for profit organisations made up of community members with the express purpose of furthering the social, economic and environmental interests of a local community by acquiring and managing land and other assets to provide a long-term benefit to the local community.

The main purpose of CLTs is to acquire land for community led affordable housing schemes with the CLT remaining in place to act as a long-term steward of the scheme. However, CLTs can also act as vehicles for these communities to deliver their own services and community enterprises in addition to housing that they consider are important for the community. The 290 CLTs across the UK are particularly effective with numerous village and market town communities taking the initiative to develop new homes and services in their area as a response to a loss of services and a lack of affordable housing.

In the context of the 30-minute rural community, a CLT could be an attractive model in that it:

- Reduces utilisation risk;
- Is community led and ensures any solution is tailored to the needs of that community and delivers true accessibility to the services that are required;
- Ensures that any solution is actively managed and self-funded for the long-term benefit of the community; and
- Can act as a vehicle to collaborate with other organisations and operators and to raise grant funding from government agencies such as Homes England or local authorities.

Funding a local census or door-to-door research could be prohibitively costly, but the importance of a solid evidence base cannot be overstated. Existing local groups with access to databases may, subject to privacy requirements, be able to contact large numbers of local people who are already engaged in community projects, thus providing an efficient short-cut in some cases.

7. BAKING IN REVENUE GENERATION

Irrespective of the organisation that will hold and directly manage any rural accessibility solutions, there may be opportunities to generate revenue from the services being provided that will be important in securing long-term sustainability.

Where a community group or local authority directly manage assets or services, it can enter into separate agreements with transport operators or commercial/community service providers. This would create a "hub and spoke" contractual structure allowing the asset holder to derive an income from such contractual arrangements and give it flexibility to bring in new operators and/or service providers where it is commercially advantageous to do so or where the needs of the community change.

This will inevitably be challenging; innovation will be required to develop new commercial models that may need to consider cross subsidy to be sustainable. That cross subsidy may come from beyond the traditional silos of public transport based on wider community outcomes achieved, Measuring factors such as community wellbeing and cohesion, access to healthcare, jobs and education opportunities, and reduce private vehicle miles travelled may be uncommon but could be the key to facilitating new business cases.

It is important to note that there is not, and shouldn't be, a "one size fits all" solution, especially in places like the National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty where planning considerations may guide potential solutions. A tailored and blended approach is needed to technical, commercial and business case innovation to capitalise upon the uniqueness of our rural communities and their hidden potential.

So how could we bring this thinking to life?

An action plan for a 30-minute rural community

We recognise that delivering such a concept is not without significant challenge and we acknowledge we are dealing with some of the hardest hit transport networks. However, with new service and solutions becoming more viable underpinned by alternative and creative commercial models the conditions may be right to consider application in the rural context.

How do we bring this to life?

With changes to the Treasury Green Book with its emphasis on the strategic case it may be easier to develop business cases which are built of beneficial outcomes such as access to jobs and educational opportunities, improved healthcare outcomes, reduce vehicle miles travelled and carbon emissions.

The following a blueprint for developing, deploying, monitoring and refining the 30-minute community concept in any given place:

It's not just about...

We need the widest range of individuals, groups and organisations, their insights, skills and expertise, to come together, to think differently, using different tools, to re-imagine mobility and deliver new models.

DEFINE

- Vision - for a thriving local community within the 30-minute concept
- Objectives - through the lens of local communities and their needs
- Desired outcomes - in terms of people, their activities and the places they visit.

IDENTIFY

- Actors – public, private, charity and volunteer sectors and crucially the community
- Roles – specifiers, providers, supporters, enablers
- Cross sectoral linkages – including health, education, environment, economic development, energy, digital communications, developers, land / asset owners
- Linkages and interdependencies – to LA, LEP and other local agendas
- Available assets – in terms of infrastructure, vehicles, land and buildings
- Funding – existing and emerging cross sectoral sources of funding
- Legislative and other barriers – to define the art of the possible for commercial solutions
- Potential market – through socio-demographic analysis to take a “consumer retail” rather than “transport operational” approach to the scale of the market.

DEVELOP

- An outcome specification for mobility in terms of local needs
- An approach to meeting the specification through identified assets / services

- A potential suite of interventions to deliver the stated objectives
- Potential commercial models which could be applicable informed by local conditions
- The “bundled” mobility offer and the outline business case which clearly demonstrates the need, the benefits and the route to success
- An approach to identifying capital financial resources and the plan for managing / mitigating future revenue needs / risks

ENGAGE

- Widely with local organisations and community groups including Parish Councils
- Engage with the local community at the individual's level to understand in detail their views, appetite for change
- Use co-operative design techniques to understand local needs so that interventions are tailored to the specific needs of the community

DEPLOY

- Infrastructure and services carefully, respectfully and in a transparent manner, engaging throughout
- Develop a robust monitoring & evaluation regime to measure the impacts, effectiveness and the behavioural responses to the interventions

TEST AND REFINE

- Undertake periodic reviews of solutions and engage with the community to help shape and refine application

SHARE

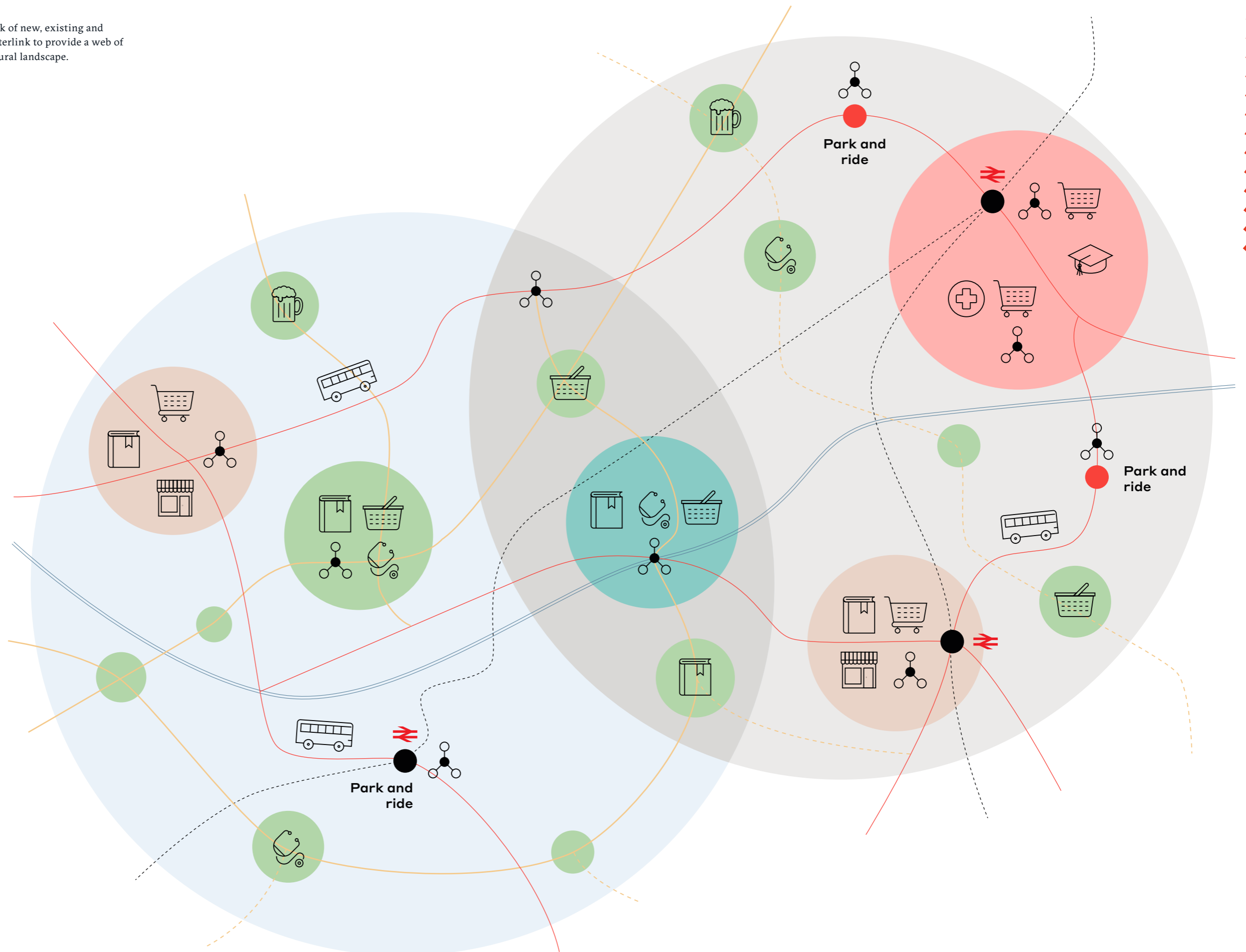
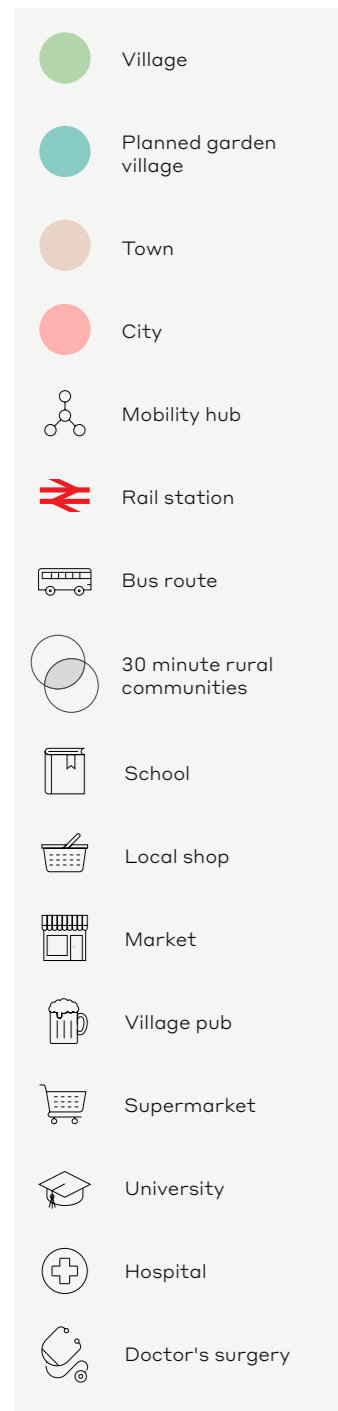
- Insights, learnings, successes and failures willingly and widely
- Share commercial models and business cases so that others can capitalise upon them.

What is clear is that we need a more equitable treatment of rural and urban places with similar amounts of investment made to level up our communities and their economies, facilitated by strong and collaborative leadership from public, private and third partnerships, essential for delivering bespoke solutions.

We believe that the time is right for a new conversation about mobility and our rural communities to bring about lasting change. Might you be a part of that change?

**Together, let's think differently.
Let's create change.**

This diagram illustrates how a network of new, existing and improved assets and services could interlink to provide a web of improved outcomes for a theoretical rural landscape.



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About WSP

As one of the world's leading engineering professional services consultancies, WSP brings clarity and vision to complex challenges.

Our team of technical specialists and strategic advisers across the UK is part of a talented global family of expertise. Together, we ensure innovative solutions solve complex problems for our clients and the communities we serve, meeting both the needs of today and addressing the challenges of the future.

We have long taken an evidential approach to our work to understand the trends influencing transport. We focus on desirable outcomes, not the technology. Most importantly we are human and place-centric. Future Mobility must focus on people, the day to day activities they undertake and the places they visit.

Our team is answering some of these big questions now, by changing perceptions and putting people first. We are recognised experts with deep insights into the changes that are impacting how, when and where we access life's essential activities. We help our clients' future-proof their infrastructure, design for people and capitalise upon the momentum for change.

<https://www.wsp.com/futuremobilityuk>
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About Foot Anstey

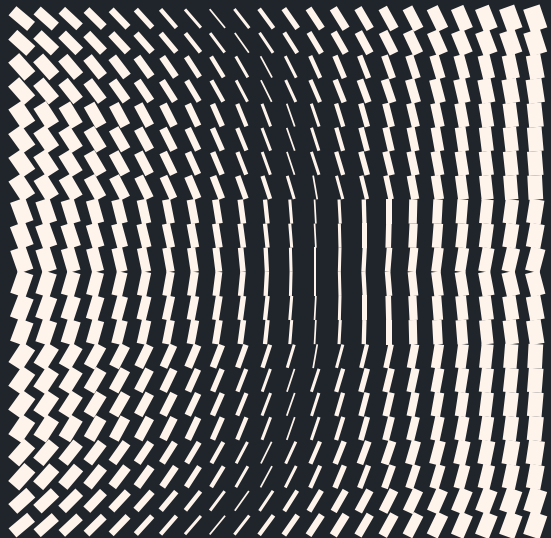
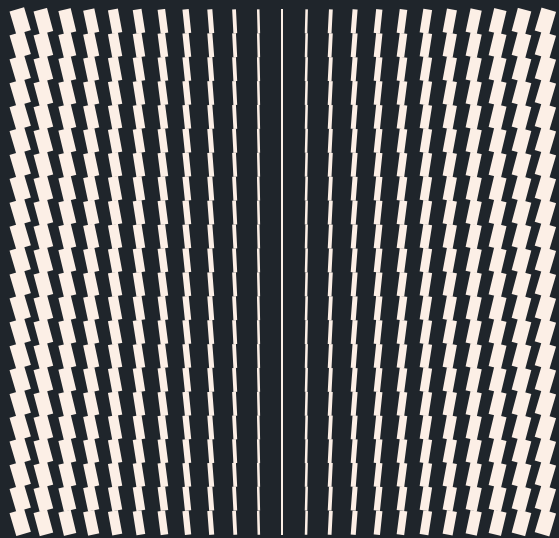
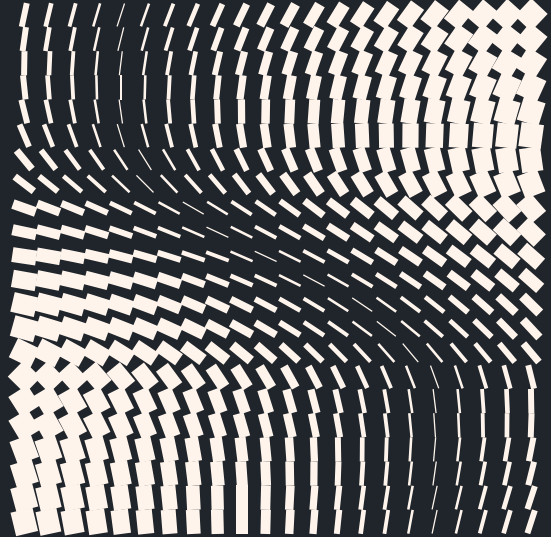
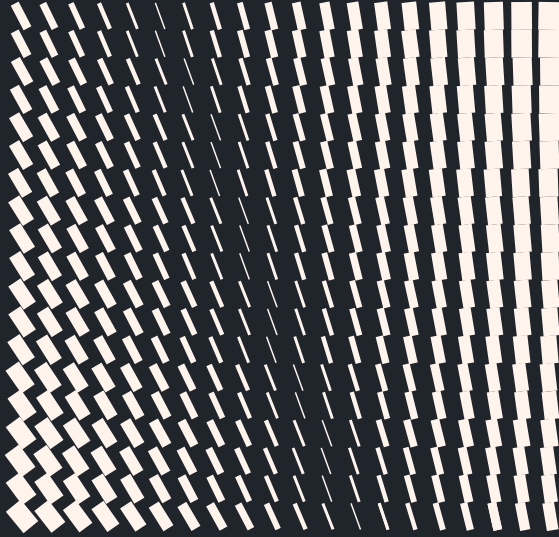
At Foot Anstey we believe in helping you to achieve what's important to you. Our team of business and legal advisors want to understand your business or personal goals and partner with you and your other advisers to deliver the solutions you need. We've developed sector advisers to focus on the issues relevant to you, strengthen our understanding and provide expert advice that is easily integrated and actionable in your world.

Foot Anstey's mobility team are well connected in the market through their involvement in policy groups such as the Urban Mobility Partnership, the Energy Data Taskforce, and the London EV Taskforce. Involvement at this policy level means we are able to provide you with invaluable insight on sustainable transport policy, mobility planning and the delivery of projects.

The team have a particular strength in project development; funding and M&A; data & tech; energy storage; and, mobility infrastructure, policy and planning. We take a collaborative approach with public and private sector organisations when it comes to Mobility as a Service (MaaS), and are well placed to make introductions to funders, developers, operators and local authorities.

<https://www.footanstey.com/service/mobility/>





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