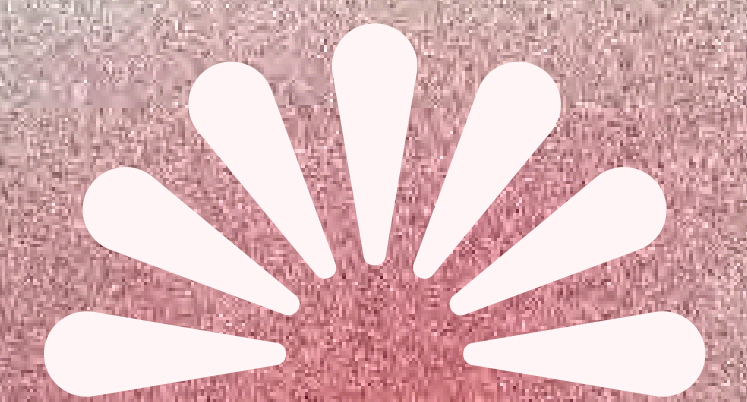


aeowell

An impact evaluation for how the
transformation of Strand, Aldwych benefits
wellbeing and nature connection



● Executive Summary

Strand, Aldwych has been transformed into a people-friendly, social space with greenery, nature and St Mary le Strand Church at its heart. Tranquil City and LDA Design conducted a pilot evaluation, as part of the London Festival of Architecture, to understand how the design affects people's wellbeing.

● Landscape

Four lanes of grey carriageway, now has a variety of landscaped areas, trees and shrubs, herbaceous planting, meandering pathways, seating and greenery.

1,370 m² **35%** **4 out of 5**
landscaped areas tree cover score for perceived 'pleasantness'

● Habitat

The design introduced numerous herbaceous plants, grasses, ferns, shrubs to attract birds and pollinators all year round, and promote soil health. Despite it's urban location, the perceived wildlife richness was rated as 'moderate' to 'high' across the stopping points, with Sanctuary North scoring highest.

8,366 **1,037** **'Moderate-high'**
herbaceous plants trees & shrubs planted perceived biodiversity

● Environmental Quality

Air pollution and noise levels are greatly improved compared to nearby areas (Kingsway and Strand, West), with people rating the central areas near St Mary le Strand as 'quite a lot' tranquil, beautiful, interesting, safe and clean.

-56% µgm³ **-15 dBA** **'quite a lot'**
less NO₂ than 2019 less traffic noise than Kingsway tranquillity, safety and cleanliness ratings

● Access to Nature

An estimated 121 million people visit the Northbank area each year. People perceive Strand, Aldwych as 'safe and calm', 'enveloped by greenery', and rate the area highly for helping them to 'connect with nature'. This shows significant potential for millions to benefit daily from access to restorative space.

331,524 **4 out of 5**
potential daily visitors rating for 'helps connect with nature'

● Use & Behaviour

The design provides a diverse selection of seated and recreational areas, including lawns, seating enveloped by greenery, dining tables, curved walkways and areas for events. Data on footfall shows that in 2025-26, over 35,000 people visit the area daily, with an average dwell time of 1.5 hours.

35,958 **1.5 hours** **94%**
daily visitors dwell time of visits commuters

● Inclusivity

Women scored the area higher on perceived safety than men, and people who visit regularly rated it higher on 'sense of belonging' than new visitors. People found it easy to find seating and people aged 50+ rated accessibility highly.

+0.20 **+1.07** **82%**
women's safety score vs men belonging rating for those who visit regularly find it 'easy' or 'very easy' to find a place to sit and rest

● Health & Wellbeing

Experiencing the area boosted feelings of happiness and nature connection, demonstrating how short term exposure to the design's greenery, seating and heritage elements, can result in notable improvements in mood.

+19% **+12%** **-48%**
happiness nature connection reduction in anxiety

● Project Story

Strand has undergone a radical transformation from four lanes of traffic to a pedestrian-focused, green and social space that helps people slow down, meet and connect.

As part of the London Festival of Architecture 2026, Tranquil City teamed up with designers LDA Design to explore it's different aspects, as well as conduct an experiment to measure how the place affects people's wellbeing, nature connection and belonging.

Measuring how people spend time, the quality of their experience and how this positively affects their wellbeing can provide strong evidence for further investment and also help make the case for similar interventions in nearby areas.

The insights of this study are planned to kick-start an on-going assessment of how the Strand's transformation boosts wellbeing & connection.



FIGURE 1: MEASURING WELLBEING IN A RADICAL STREET EVENT - LFA JUNE 2026

PHOTO: MICKEY LF LEE

● Site Map

Strand, Aldwych - South sits amongst Grand 1 listed buildings, including those of Kings College London, Courtauld Gallery, and provides entrance to Somerset House.

It was once grey, and choked with traffic, as part of the gyratory leading to Strand, West and Kingsway. Nestled within the once busy streets, is St Mary Le Strand, a baroque design by James Gibbs, one of fifty churches built following the Great Fire of London.

The redesign, led by LDA Design, London Heritage Quarter and Westminster City Council envisioned Strand as an exemplar of a softer, greener and healthier city.

In 2023, the transformation opened, closing the street to most traffic, adding 1,370m of biodiverse planting, 17 trees, a wide range of seating and benches, and Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS).

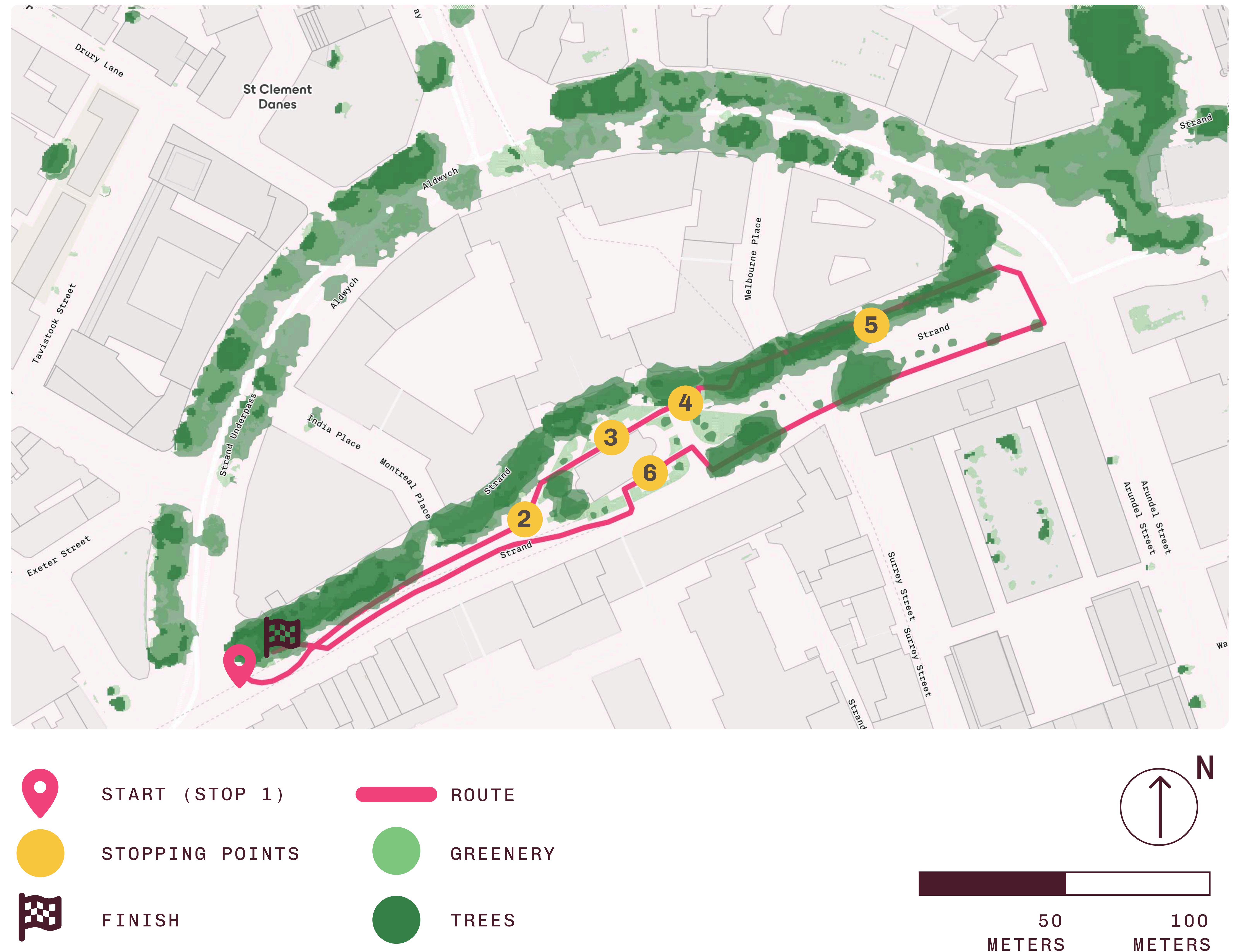
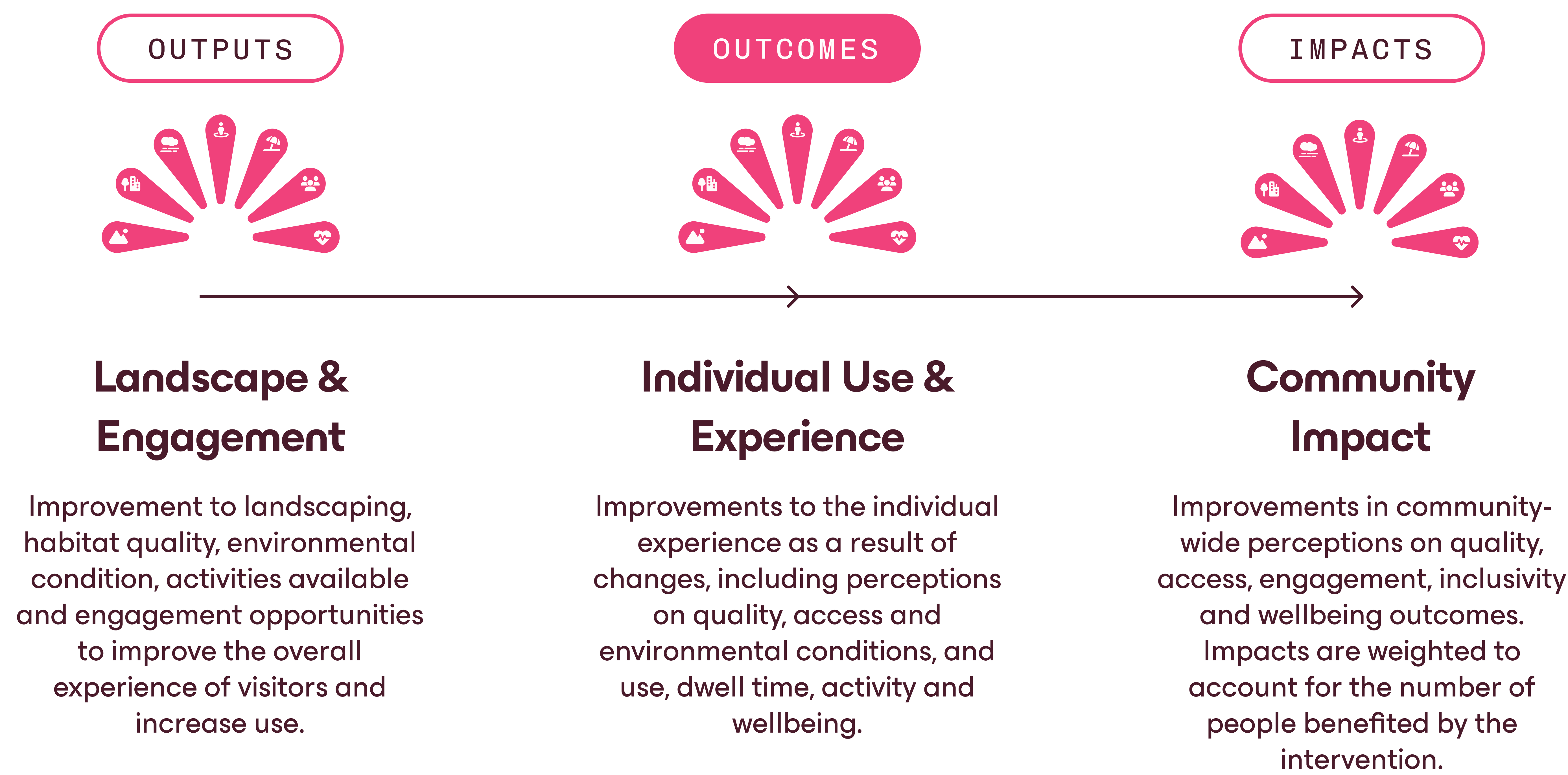


FIGURE 2: MAP SHOWING THE NATURE WALK AROUND STRAND

© OSM CONTRIBUTORS, © GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

● How We Measure



The Aewell Framework measures impact across seven themes, with over 42 different measures capturing objective and subjective changes.

The flow of impact is: physical landscape and engagement changes (outputs), flow into individual use and experience changes (outcomes), which in turn result in wider community level changes (impacts), such as improved health outcomes, increased connection with nature, improved neighbourhood satisfaction or sense of belonging.

For the London Festival of Architecture experiment, we conducted a shortened assessment, gathering existing data on the physical changes, visit frequency and measured people's subjective perceptions when experiencing the environment during a Nature Walk activity, which encouraged people to interact with various elements of the design and rate their experiences.

FIGURE 3: AEWELL FRAMEWORK'S IMPACT FLOW TRACING URBAN NATURE TO WELLBEING

● Strand: Measuring Wellbeing on a Radical Street - LFA 2026



As part of the London Festival of Architecture, we asked the questions “How does this radical street transformation impact the wellbeing and sense of belonging of its visitors?” and “how does engagement with it’s green infrastructure play a role in triggering these benefits?”

We invited participants on a Nature Walk activity, exploring the street’s various elements, planting and wildlife. We asked people how they felt before and after the experience to capture how experiencing the area affected their mood, sense of place and wellbeing (happiness, relaxation, nature connection).

19 people took part in the study, with Cannon Ivers of LDA Design showcasing the design concepts, challenges and future plans, and Grant Waters of Tranquil City, explaining how the environmental conditions and nature connection can boost behaviour, mood and wellbeing.



FIGURE 4: NATURE WALK EVENT AS PART OF LFA JUNE 2026 (PHOTOS: MICKEY LF LEE)

Nature Walk

LFA London Festival of Architecture



Nature Walk

Exploring Strand:
Measuring Wellbeing in a
Radical Street

London Festival of Architecture

June 2026

LD&DESIGN

tranquil city

Before the walk

Right now, in this moment...

How happy do you feel right now?
0 = not at all 10 = completely

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

How anxious do you feel right now?
0 = not at all 10 = completely

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

How emotionally connected to nature do you feel?
0 = not at all 5 = somewhat 10 = extremely

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

To what extent do you feel that you are part of the natural world?
0 = not at all 5 = somewhat 10 = extremely

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

In general, would you say that your health is...

Poor

Fair

Average

Somewhat good

Good

What three words best describe how you're feeling right now?
Any words. Made-up ones count.

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After the walk

Right now, in this moment...

How happy do you feel right now?
0 = not at all 10 = completely

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

How anxious do you feel right now?
0 = not at all 10 = completely

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

How emotionally connected to nature do you feel?
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---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

To what extent do you feel that you are part of the natural world?
0 = not at all 5 = somewhat 10 = extremely

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

What three words best describe how you're feeling right now?
Any words. Made-up ones count.

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Stop 3: Sanctuary North

Walk to Stop 3, entering into the immersive garden to the north of the St Mary le Strand church.

3

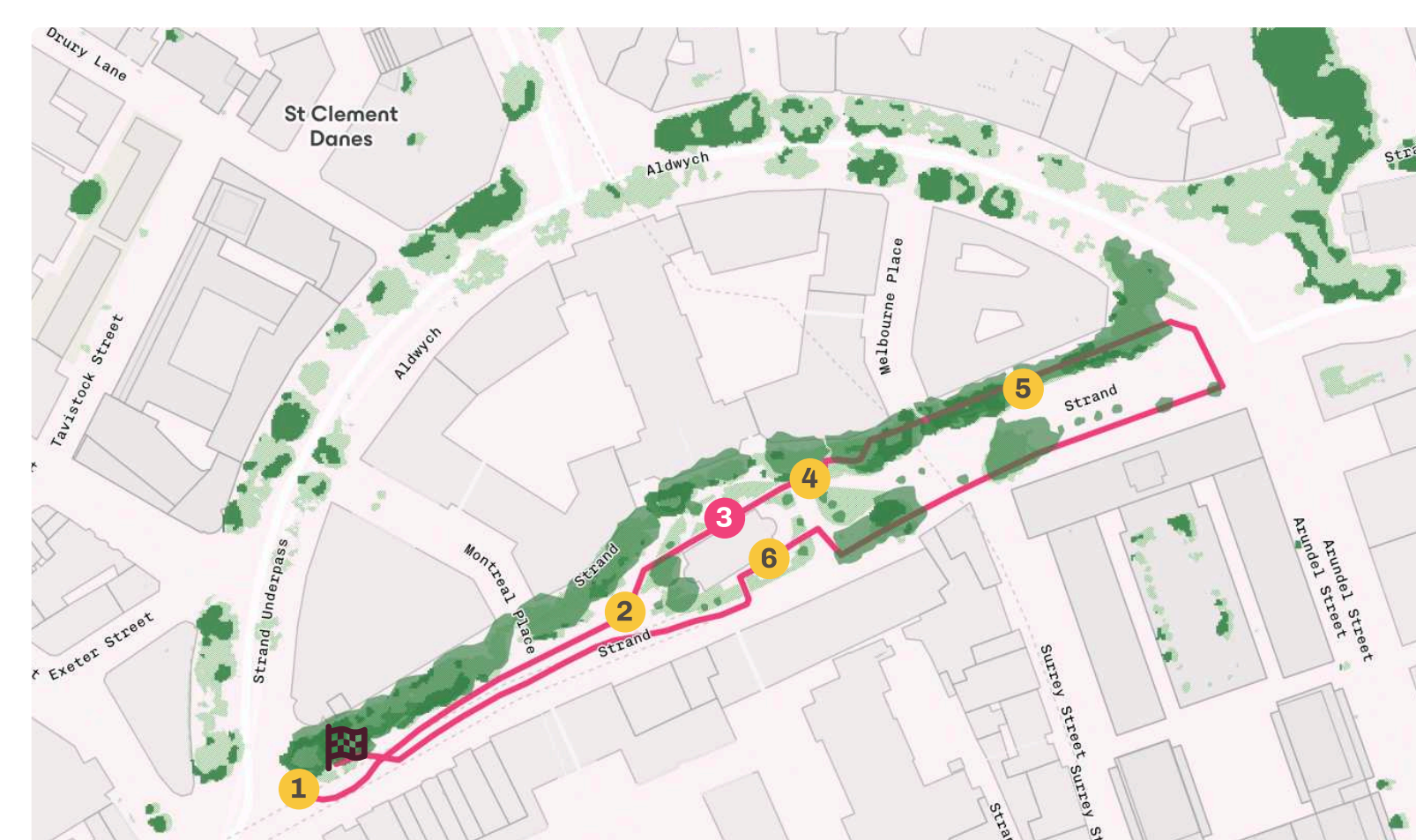
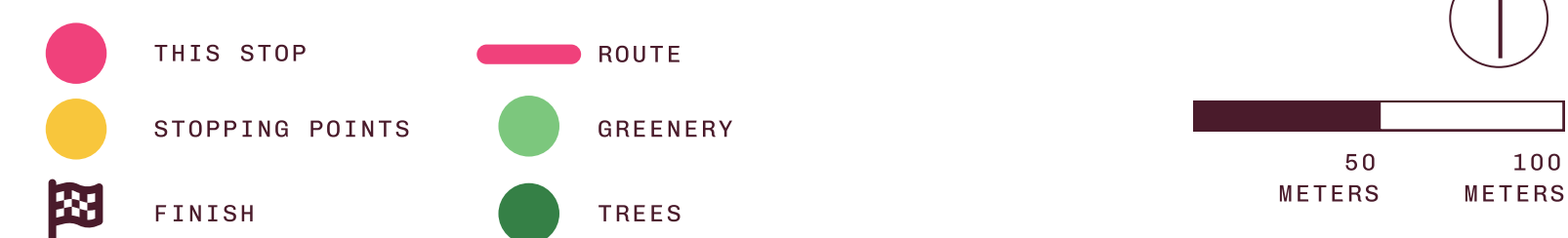


Figure 4: Map highlighting stop 3, Sanctuary North



In this location, we'll meander around St Mary le Strand church, through green pathways, discovering hidden benches and seating.

Please complete the questions and activity on the right. Write down five things that you found beautiful in and around this location. Take a moment to explore, discover and rest. What you discover might surprise you!

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

To what extent is this spot...
1 = not at all, 5 = extremely

	not at all	a little	moderately	quite a lot	extremely
Pleasant	1	2	3	4	5
Tranquil	1	2	3	4	5
Beautiful	1	2	3	4	5
Interesting	1	2	3	4	5
Safe	1	2	3	4	5
Clean	1	2	3	4	5

How rich is the wildlife / nature here?

☐ Very low ☐ Low ☐ Moderate ☐ High ☐ Very high

Write down five things that you found beautiful here...

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Your Visit

To what extent do you feel that this place is...
1 = not at all, 5 = completely

	not at all	a little	moderately	quite a lot	completely
Accessible	1	2	3	4	5
Supports your wellbeing	1	2	3	4	5
Helps you connect with nature	1	2	3	4	5
Encourages exercise	1	2	3	4	5
Helps you connect with others	1	2	3	4	5
Creates a sense of belonging	1	2	3	4	5

How did you get here today?

Select all that apply

Walk/Cycle

Train/bus

Private car or motorbike

Taxi or lift

Other

If you selected other, please specify

Do you experience any barriers or challenges that are stopping you from spending more time here?

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Nature Walk is a core method of our Aewell Framework for evaluating landscape designs in-situ and capture their subjective experience. It includes prompts that help connect people with their surroundings, nature, and share how it affects their wellbeing.

In this experiment, we compared how people felt before and after the walk, asking them to share their views at six different design features, and including nature journaling activities to notice wildlife, moments of beauty, and tell stories of elements they see. Nature Noticing activities are inspired by the Nature Connection Handbook from the University of Derby.

The Nature Walk is designed to be repeated seasonally, helping to gain an understanding as to how people's experience and wellbeing changes in time. It pairs with our Community Survey that measures wider level changes and impacts at a population level over time.

● Landscape

This theme helps understand the physical changes in the landscape, by measuring the amount of greenspace, greening, blue space, and its quality via perceptions of visitors.

Key Insights

1,370 m²

of soft landscaped areas, including planting beds, grassland, and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

148 m²

of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to help water management

35%

tree canopy cover in Strand, Aldwych, compared to only 1% on Strand, West (GLA Tree Canopy, 2024)

3.81/5

perceived pleasantness rating, suggesting people find the quality of the landscape to be attractive

Impact Narrative

The landscape design of Strand, Aldwych includes a diverse range of features that cater for varied uses. This includes grass lawns, communal dining benches, curved seating, meandering pathways that help people feel immersed within greenery, whilst retaining carriageway areas required for events, such as the Lord Mayor's Procession. The area, once including four lanes of traffic, now has large areas of soft landscaped areas, flower beds, shrubs, blossoming trees, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and ample seating to attract a wide range of visitors and behaviours. Participants rated the area 'quite a lot' (3.81/5) on pleasantness, suggesting that they find the landscape design high in quality.

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Figure 5: Visual map of the site, showing landscape areas and activity types
(© OpenStreetMap contributors; © Google Satellite © Greater London Authority Tree Canopy)



Community Voices

"Long grasses (different movements + shades of green)"

"A bumblebee travelling around the city to find flowers. It flies all the way here and finally finds a safe and calm place in which to taste all the flowers"

Policy Alignment



● Habitat

This theme captures the changes in habitat, its condition and how this affects the perception of biodiversity, helping show links between nature recovery and wellbeing.

Key Insights

1,037

trees and shrubs planted including those with berries to help provide shade and food for insects and birds

8,366

herbaceous plants introduced, attracting pollinators, insects and wildlife

3,793

grasses and 244 ferns introduced to help provide ground cover and retain soil moisture for insects

‘Moderate-high’

average perceived biodiversity rating by participants. Stop 3 was rated “high” (4.18/5)

Impact Narrative

The transformation of the area has introduced numerous plant species and forms to promote improved biodiversity. Herbaceous plants, grasses, ferns and shrubs, were chosen to attract birds and pollinators and promote soil health by providing ground cover, food sources and nesting areas. Despite it’s urban location, the perceived richness of biodiversity was rated as ‘moderate-high’ across stopping points, with Stop 3, Sanctuary North, being rated as “high” for biodiversity. This location stood out as a place where people noticed a variety of plants, insects, birds and natural elements, sch as water droplets on leaves, flowers and berries.

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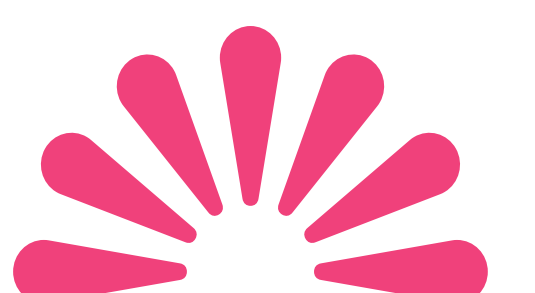


○ Figure 6: A wood pigeon was picking berries in Sanctuary North as the participants took in their surroundings and noticed elements of beauty, nature and heritage (Photo: Mickey LF Lee)

Community Voices

.....
“I’m a hungry red beetle. I’m all alone walking on my personal sky-high playground, steep, complicated structures. Looking for food and friends I can go under the leaves and down to the earth.”

Policy Alignment



● Environmental Quality

This theme understands how landscape and habitat affects the perception of environmental quality, such as soundscape, air quality, cleanliness, and attractiveness.

Key Insights

-56%

Reduction in NO₂, from 76 µgm³ in 2019 to 34 µgm³ in 2022, well below the 40 µgm³ target (LHQ)

-15 dBA

Less road traffic noise compared to nearby Strand (West) and Kingsway (Defra, 2025)

4.37/5

Average cleanliness rating for the Activity Lawn

4.27/5

Sanctuary North quality rating for 'tranquillity', 'pleasantness' and 'beauty'

Impact Narrative

Perceptions of environmental quality, including tranquillity, pleasantness, beauty, interest and cleanliness increased as Nature Walk participants travelling into the central area of Strand, Aldwych - closer to Sanctuary North and the Activity Lawn. Since the transformation, there has been a significant reduction in air pollution levels (56%) for NO₂, and when compared to nearby streets (Strand, West and Kingsway), noise levels from road traffic reduce by 15 dBA or more. This can foster a soundscape that helps people notice nature sounds, that can have a positive affect on wellbeing and restoration, as well as reducing harmful air pollutants. Note: Air quality monitoring insights from Imperial College London, noise data from Defra Strategic Noise Mapping, Round 4.

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Perceptions of Environmental Quality at Various Design Features

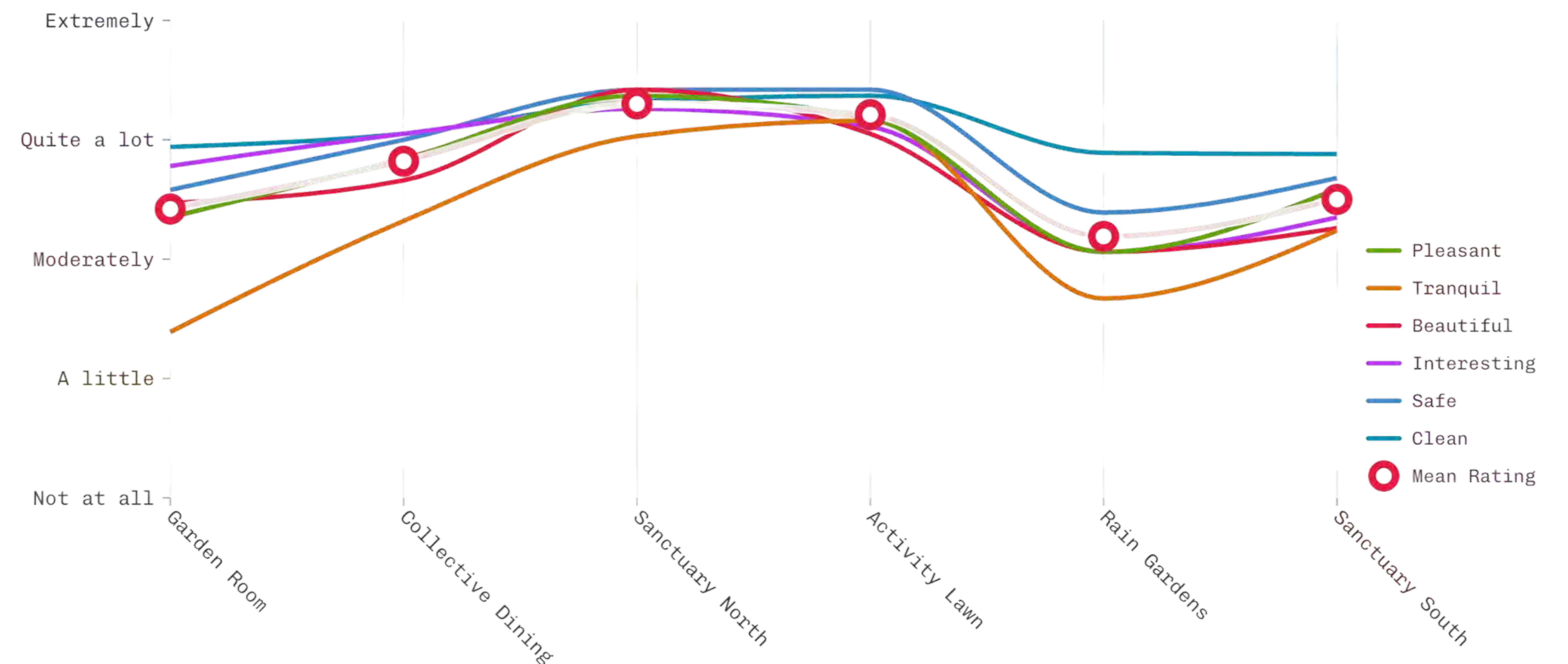


Figure 7: Perceptions of environmental quality, cleanliness and safety ratings for each stopping point (n=19)

Community Voices

"[I feel a] sense of calmness of the space"

"Less smog"

"Air seems clear"

"Overtaken by planting - changes sounds"

"The sense of being enclosed/hidden (if one is seated between the church and the plants)"

Policy Alignment



● Access to Nature

This theme evaluates people's access to and awareness of local nature spaces in their area, helping to reduce both physical and non-physical barriers.

Key Insights

331,524

Average daily visitors to Northbank area (2025-26) for whom Strand, Aldwych is within a 5-10 min walk

78%

of people say that the green space they visit most is the one nearest to them (Adult's People & Nature Survey, 24-25)

4.19/5

Rating of "helps connect with nature" for Strand, Aldwych by Nature Walk participants

"an oasis"

Nature Walk participants described the area as a 'sanctuary', 'safe and calm place', 'enveloped by greenery' and an 'oasis'.

Impact Narrative

It is estimated that over 121 million people visit Northbank (the area around Strand, Aldwych) each year, with 13 million visiting Strand, Aldwych itself. The Nature Walk participants rated the space to be highly supportive of connecting with nature, despite it's urban location and setting. Participants described it as an "oasis" and "sanctuary", highlighting the potential for attracting more visitors to benefit from nature exposure. Note: Northbank District visits data gathered via mobile phone usage (LHQ, representative of May 2025-26).

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Type of Beautiful Moments Noticed at Sanctuary North (S3)

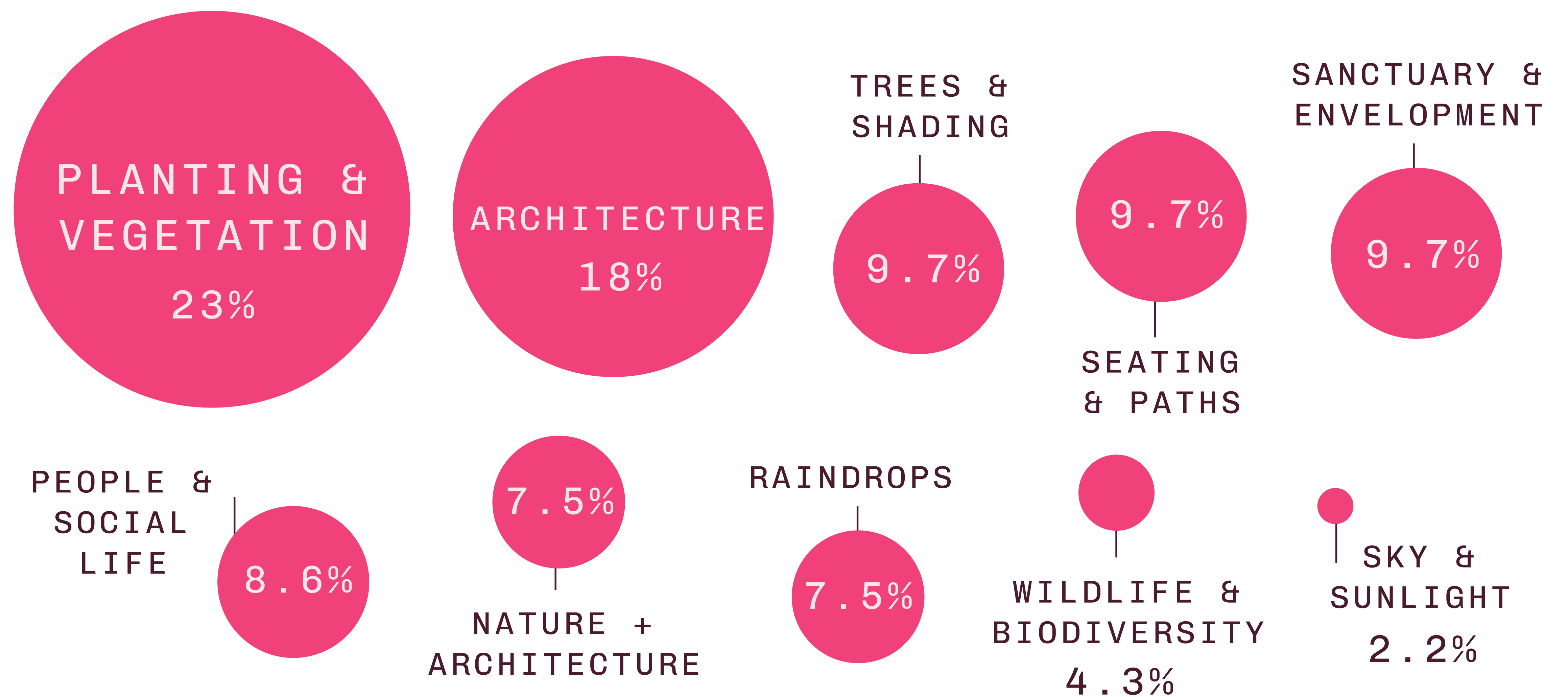


Figure 8: Bubble chart showing the dominant features that people mentioned as beautiful, which included planting and vegetation as the most common feature, including wildlife, trees and nature + architecture.

Community Voices

"The green of trees and how it contrasts with the blue sky"

"Joy, awe, delight at yellow flowers (with their perfect symmetrical structure)"

"A little oasis - to sit amongst the plants"

"Curiosity at the plane tree (one side is more "rough" towards the buildings, the side towards the street is more smooth)"

Policy Alignment



● Use & Behaviour

This theme understands frequency of visits, dwell time, activities, people's motivations and what barriers they experience that could affect use.

Key Insights

35,958

Average daily visitors to Strand, Aldwych (2025-26)

7 areas

for public amenity, seating and social gathering, including the Garden Room, Colourful Seating, Collective Benches, Sanctuary North, Activity Lawn, Rain Gardens and Sanctuary South.

1 h 32 mins

Average visitor dwell time to Strand, Aldwych (2025-26). On a weekday, 55% of visitors spend 30mins-2hours there.

94%

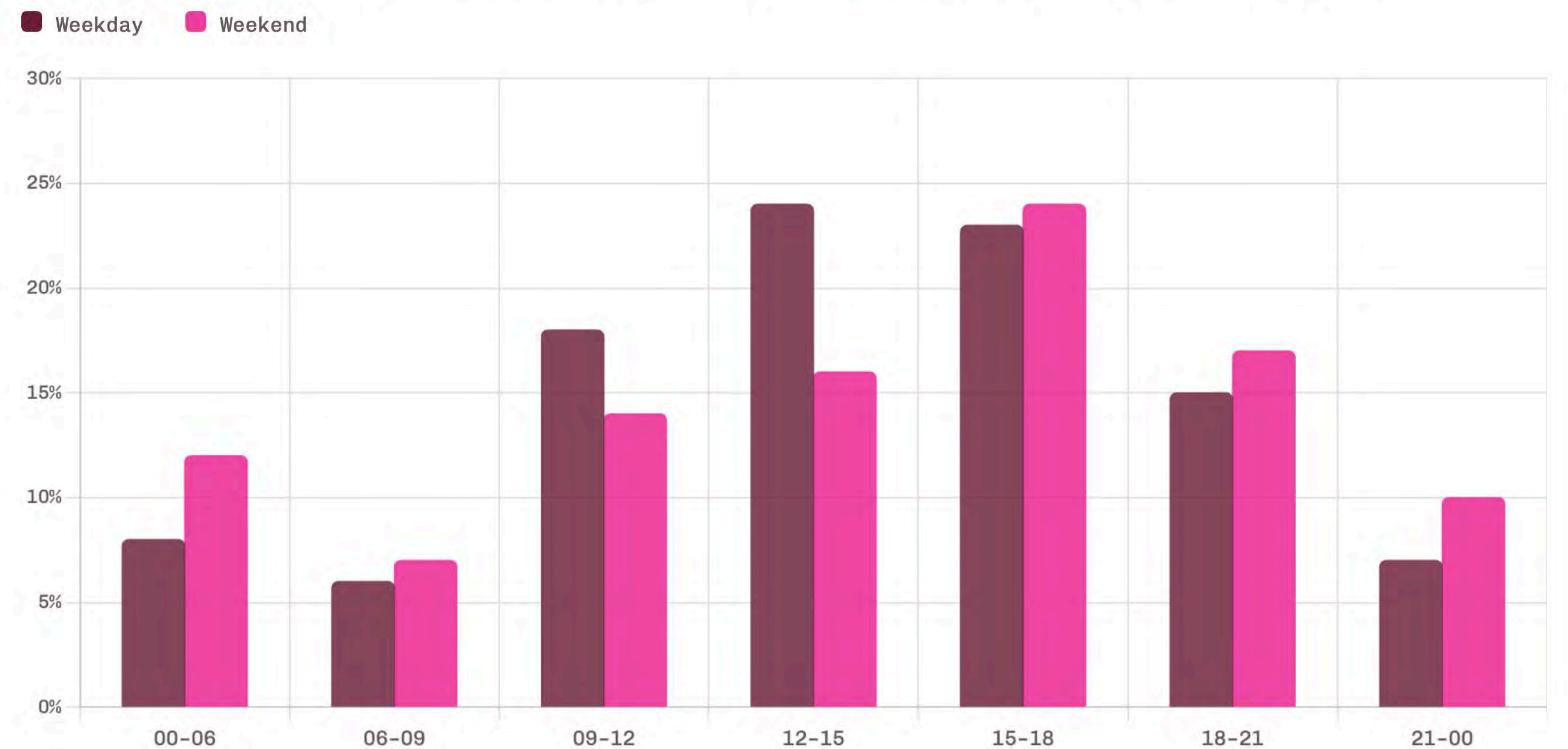
of regular visits are work or commute related, with the remaining 5.4% spread across 'passing through', 'entertainment', 'dining', 'tourism' and 'visiting friends'

Impact Narrative

The design provides a range of seated, landscape areas, with individual, communal and informal (grass areas) seating. Over 10% of daily visits to Northbank are to Strand, Aldwych. The majority of footfall is repeat visitors who work, study or commute through the area. Typical dwell time is 1.5 hours, with the busiest time between 12:00-15:00. Note: Data gathered via mobile phone data (LHQ, representative of May 2025-26) and the Strand Aldwych user survey (conducted in 2023).

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Weekday and Weekend Visitor Rates vs Time of Day



○ Figure 9: Time of day vs number of visitors - comparing weekday and weekend differences. Source: London Heritage Quarter Mobile Data footfall counts for Strand, Aldwych (2025-26)

Community Voices

“People eating/sitting taking quiet break”

“People sunbathing, people enjoying their lunch, people having conversations”

“[I] want to share with others

“Different kinds of people enjoying the space freely”

Policy Alignment



● Inclusivity

This theme evaluates how the site is inclusive, safe and welcoming across local demographic groups associated with reduced access to nature, and greater risk of health issues.

Key Insights

+0.20

Women score the area higher on safety (4.08/5) than men (3.82/5) across the 6 stopping points.

+1.07

People who 'visit regularly' score higher on "sense of belonging" (4.57/5) than those new to the area (3.50/5). This was seen across other metrics, e.g. (social/nature connection)

Impact Narrative

Interestingly, women scored the area higher on perceived safety, compared to men. The spot rated highest for safety was Sanctuary North, with the Activity Lawn scored highest on women's perceived safety. When asked about social connection (belonging and connect with others), women also scored higher than men. Sample sizes across age groups was limited, and scores were generally consistent. Note: Sit amenity is derived from LHQ Strand Feedback Survey (2023).

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+0.51

Women score the area higher on "connect with others" (4.22/5) than men (3.71/5) across the 6 stops.

4.5/5

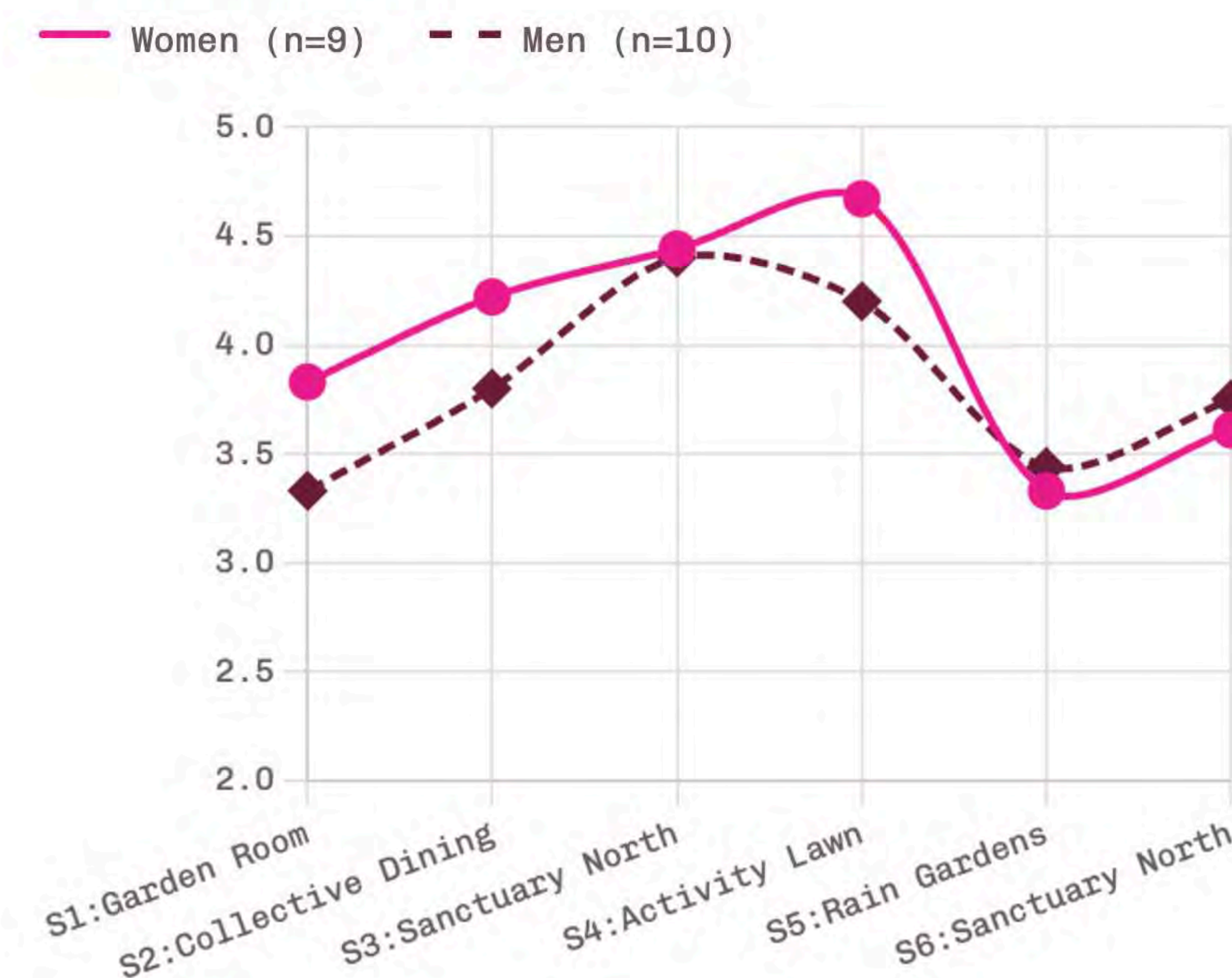
People aged 50+ (n=5) rated highly on 'accessibility'.

82%

of visitors find it 'easy' or 'very easy' to find a place to sit and rest (n=333)

Perceptions of Safety and Social Connection vs Gender

Perceptions of Safety vs Gender



Perceptions of Belonging vs Gender

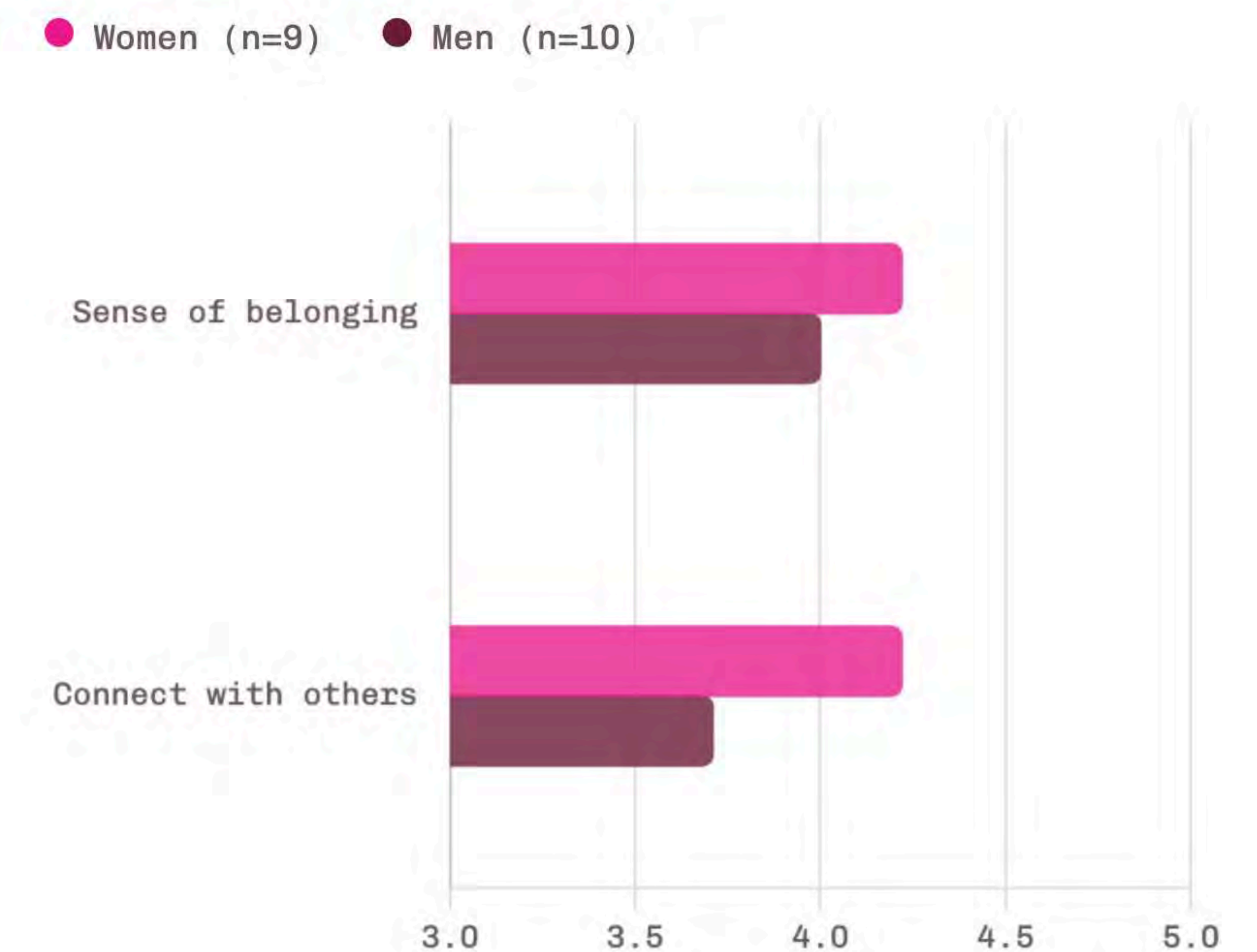


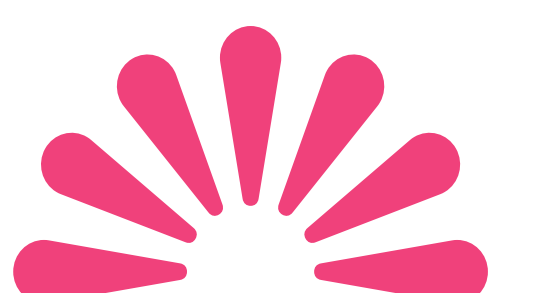
Figure 10: LFA Strand Nature Walk 2026 survey (N=19). Safety scores are means of per-stop ratings (1 = not safe at all, 5 = completely safe). Social connection metrics are from post-walk perception questions.

Community Voices

"New meets old - wooden benches against church wall"

"There are no visible toilets or water fountains"

Policy Alignment



● Health & Wellbeing

This theme evidences how the site and its design affect's people's health and wellbeing, including specific measures such as happiness, relaxation, and connection to nature.

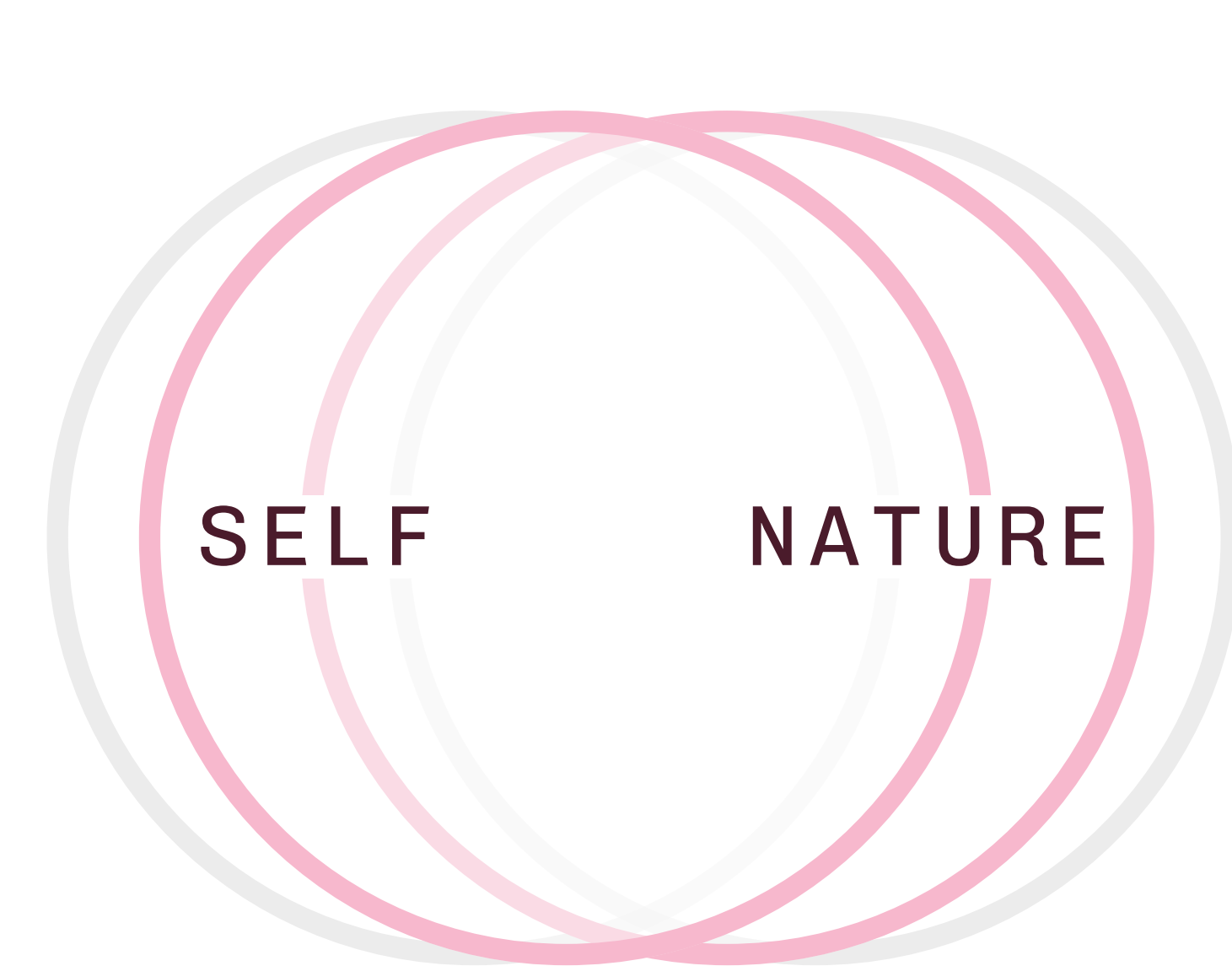
Key Insights

+19%

increase in happiness, compared to before the walk, with participants sharing feeling “wonder” and “fascination” and “enveloped by greenery”.

-48%

reduction in anxiety, compared to before the walk, which mirrored after-walk descriptions of “serene”, “calm”, “hopeful” and “content”.



+12%

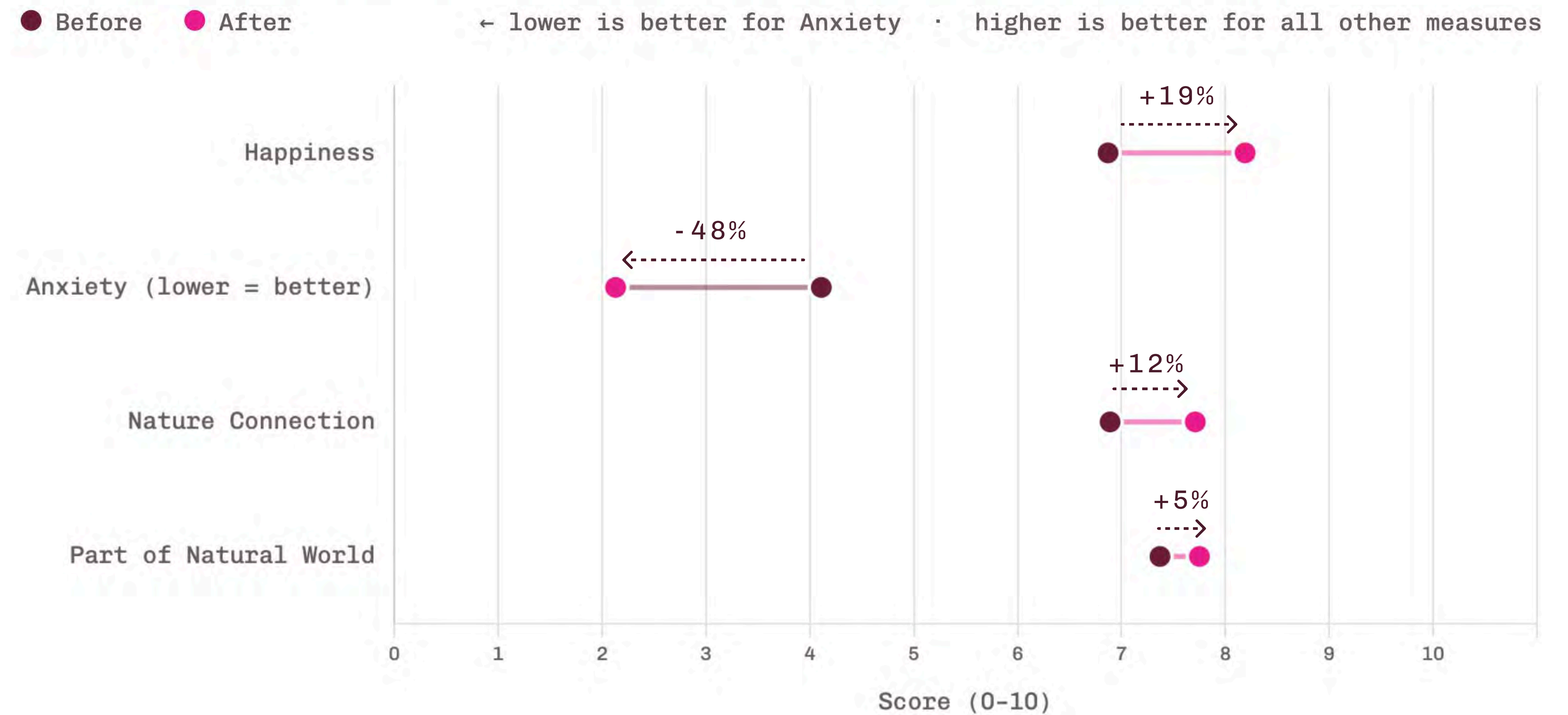
increase in nature connection, compared to before, with people feeling “joy”, “delight”, “gratitude” and “awe” when noticing natural elements

Impact Narrative

People's experience of the Strand's transformed space boosted feelings of happiness, nature connection and feelings of being part of the natural world. Most notably, the experience reduced anxiety levels by nearly half, compared to before the walk, suggesting that even short exposures and activities could provide significant improvements in mood, that with repeated exposure could lead to longer-term wellbeing benefits.

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Self-reported Mood & Nature Connection Before & After Walk



○ Figure 11: Wellbeing measures collected immediately before and after the walk. Mean scores shown; all respondents completed both before and after sections (n=19)

Community Voices

“Revitalised. Poised. Nurtured”

“Calm. More attuned. Clear-headed”

“Hopeful. Inspired. Connected.”

Policy Alignment



● Stories (of nature)

During the Nature Walk, we asked participants to write a story about something they observed in the space. It could be a living or inanimate object, it could be a true or made-up story. We do this to help deepen connections and a sense of belonging to the area. Here's some of the stories that people told...

" A bumblebee travelling around the city to find flowers. It flies all the way here and finally finds a safe and calm place in which to taste all the flowers"

"I'm a hungry red beetle. I'm all alone walking on my personal sky-high playground, steep, complicated structures. Looking for food and friends I can go under the leaves and down to the earth."

"A small bee flew to the flower. It searched long I the concrete city to find it. Happy that its mission was a success, it came back to its home to tell a story of a sanctuary near a church. The bee's queen-bee said: "back in my days there was just concrete, cars, and roads, what a nice surprise :) maybe the humans care!" Let's bee better :)"

"Pigeon on the June tree. Symbol of the museum of London"

"I bet the wintersweet stops students in their tracks in the winter - and they can't figure out where that delicious scent is coming from. A memorable mystery :)"



FIGURE 12: JOURNALING EXERCISE (PHOTO: MICKEY LF LEE)

● Stories (of recreation)



FIGURE 13: NOTICING BEAUTY (PHOTO: MICKEY LF LEE)

Some people told stories of recreation, like forgotten connections to the Thames or of loved ones exploring the newly installed furniture and feeling free. Here's a selection of stories that explore how we interact and feel about Strand, Aldwych.

.....

"Strand station was once the main access to the beach by the Thames. Every summer crowds and crowds came out of the station and poured down the street towards the Thames"

.....

"My daughter climbing through benches, obstacle course for her to play in the city, sense of space + connection. Using space in a different way. Arrive, explore, play, slide, climb"

.....

"There's somewhat of a community garden feel to this spot. Perhaps it was the bench that made me feel that way. I can imagine a KCL student (one with green fingers) seated on the stool to de-weed/re-plant etc. Or perhaps he/she has left tools on the bench"

.....

"Tranquil, getting busy from workplace, peaceful, nice place to catch a breath"

● Stories (of St Mary le Strand)

Many stories told were centred around St Mary le Strand church. Such a powerful monument of peace and calm. When people wrote about it, it seemed to spark feelings of wonder, awe, delight and gratitude. Some wrote of how it has emerged from the chaos of before, being a symbol of gathering and rest.

“I feel the pride of the church. It’s a survivor, an elder who arrived ina busy time - then the noise was the leaving of humanity and carts chattering. Then it saw the arrival of omnibuses, trams, cars, all adding more chaos. Now for the first time in its lifetime we’ve allowed it a greater chance to spread peace and. harmony. From the perspective of an agnostic non-Christian”

“The Church. Once a place to gather, with time perhaps forgotten as a place to gather around, but more a place to pass by. Now, back to a place for gathering and rest.”

“I think about the person who carved this piece of stone, wrote down the year. How was their life, where they went to after working at the construction of the church”

“Window that looks like a clock and changes colours with the changing light and somehow fits the greenness of nature perfectly”



FIGURE 14: PONDERING ON STRAND (PHOTO: MICKEY LF LEE)

● Acknowledgements

We'd like to thank Cannon Ivers, Eve Lewis and the LDA Design team, alongside WSP, FM Conway and Westminster City Council. We'd also like to thank Alison Gregory at London Heritage Quarter for sharing useful footfall information. Thank you to Mickey LF Lee for photographing the event.

Finally, we'd like to thank the organisers of the London Festival of Architecture and everyone who came along on the Nature Walk on June 2nd 2026. We all braved the storms and tube strike, and we were rewarded with an hour of lovely sunshine and breaks in the clouds for the event.

Data References

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FIGURE 15: SANCTUARY SOUTH (PHOTO: MICKEY LF LEE)

