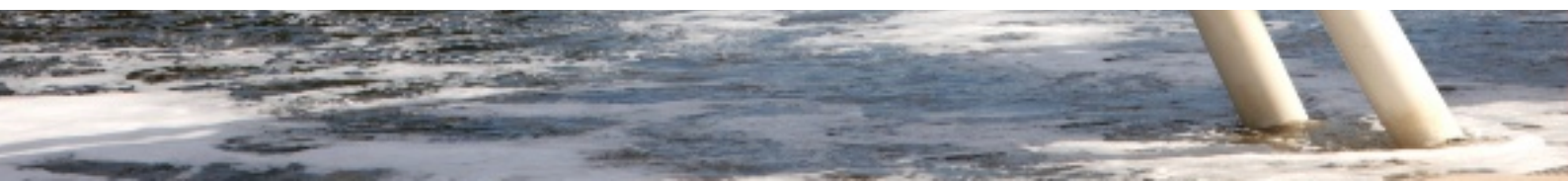




# People and places: Public attitudes to beauty

On behalf of the Commission for Architecture  
and the Built Environment

Ipsos MORI



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# Executive Summary

# Executive Summary

## Background

This study was commissioned by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to provide a basis for examining how people relate to the places where they live. Recognising the Government's commitment to promote a Big Society, the project uses the idea of beauty as a stimulus for debate about the quality of the local environment and how best to involve people in shaping the look and feel of the places where they live.

Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute chose to use a multi-layered approach so that we could engage the public at a variety of different levels. We were conscious from the outset that beauty was a subject worth exploring with people using different techniques, and by doing so, we would be able to provide a representation of public opinion grounded in several sources. Homing in on Sheffield as an area of recent regeneration and 'beautification', we ran six ethnographic interviews and hosted a day of qualitative discussion groups with 60 members of the public. To provide context to the set of local findings generated by this qualitative phase and to further explain differences between groups of people, we ran a national omnibus survey of 1,043 adults across England.

By engaging the public at an individual level (through ethnographies), a communal level (through rolling discussion groups) and a national level (through a survey), we were able to draw conclusions that represent a broad cross-section of the public's attitudes.

## Significance of the research

We would like readers to take away from this report a sense that the public recognise the time and attention that the subject of beauty deserves and that they are ready to see public figures and influencers taking beauty seriously. There is clear evidence that the public enjoy discussing and sharing stories about 'how beauty matters'. For example, participants described their experience at the qualitative event as beautiful and engaging in itself:

*When was the last time you came in somewhere like this, public, and just started talking to people about beauty, I think that's kind of beautiful*

*A group of strangers stood in a room talking...we haven't met before but it's quite beautiful I think. The fact we're being allowed to express our own viewpoints... It's that feeling you get when you meet someone and you don't need to say anything to them but you just connect*

Male, younger, Sheffield

The public desire to make beauty a talking point has far reaching implications for politicians and public figures. Not only are people ready to hear and to engage in a national debate on the subject, they call for beauty to be reinstated as a public value with meaning that stretches beyond the latest trends in fashion, hair, even architecture. A striking example of how much people believe that beauty matters is the way they discuss its importance for younger and future generations. People asked for teachers and trainers to make time in their curriculum or training course to have discussions about beauty and encourage students to make their own time to appreciate beautiful experiences in the world around. When asked 'Why does

beauty matter?' many people immediately looked to the future, mapping out the kind of world they would want their descendents and loved ones to grow up in.

The prospect of a world where there is no beauty is depressing. People describe its public value in utilitarian terms. They talk about access and experience of beauty as adding to the sum of everyone's happiness and making the world a better place. In their ideal society, there would not simply be more beautiful things; people would be more in tune with their capacity to tap into beauty, committed to seeking it out and adopting the right state of mind for an experience of it.

The conclusion people often reach is that beauty is a universal good – worth promoting and preserving for the future. This indicates just how much of a shared understanding there is about why beauty matters. There may be more barriers to discussing beauty with the public which we have not identified here, and they may present themselves over the course of this project which CABE and AHRC are running. However, the message from this preliminary piece of research is that despite differences in personal definitions of beauty, people are in mutual agreement over its public value.

This shared understanding of beauty underlines how welcome a wider debate around the subject will be. The consensus is that beauty deserves more of a place in public and social discourse and people are keen to help make this a reality. This should reassure institutions which play a role in shaping public life and public consciousness that promoting a public message about beauty will have resonance. The important thing will be to draw on the constants that form part of our shared understanding of beauty, the communalities which allow us to talk meaningfully to one another about a subject which has eluded many great thinkers past and present.

## Key findings

In order to analyse the range of data we gathered and address the question 'Does beauty matter?' we found it useful to look at the meaning of beauty in three different contexts: what beauty means for individuals, places and communities, and society.

### What does beauty mean for individuals?

Individuals have a wide variety of associations with beauty. Commonly, these may include nature, memories, happiness and appreciation. People relate beauty to experience - when and where they *experience* beauty is important and on the whole, people relate more to emotional experiences of beauty than visual experiences of beauty. Beauty is regarded as a positive experience strongly related to bringing about happiness and wellbeing in individuals lives.

The natural environment came out very strongly as a place where everyone can experience beauty. Feeling comfortable in your setting was also highlighted as an important part of being able to experience beauty and many people expressed that they feel comfortable and at ease in nature, hence the outdoors being a great place to experience beauty for many people.

The vast majority of people we spoke to think that everyone should be able to access beauty, regardless of wealth. However, participants recognise that barriers to experiencing beauty exist and can be present internally (within the person) or externally (e.g. their surroundings, other people).

## **What does beauty mean for places and communities?**

Beauty in the built environment was seen as being important for civic pride and for attracting people to an area. They believe that beauty is important in their local area and there is a strong consensus for striving for more beauty in neighbourhoods, towns and cities. Beauty in place is recognised as not evenly distributed. Where there is less, it is seen as part of deprivation; people can and do pay more to live in areas which are more beautiful. Beauty in place is also seen as part of a cycle of respect, it can make people respect an area more, and by being respected, an area can retain its beauty.

History and memory can play an important role in making a place feel beautiful. There tends to be a preference for older buildings over newer ones – for a variety of reasons that go beyond purely visual taste. Whilst visual appreciation is mostly viewed as subjective, there are some areas of consensus. People tend to perceive modern buildings as bland and feel they have received less effort and care in their design and construction than older buildings. Natural light was cited as playing an important role in making internal areas of buildings beautiful.

People's overall ability to appreciate beauty is affected by whether they feel comfortable, safe and included in a place. Hence when there is a shared history, feeling of community and pride in a place, people are more likely to say they experience beauty there.

## **What does beauty mean for society?**

People do not make an immediate link between beauty and society. People find it easier to consider the value of beauty to society when they talk about their physical surroundings and the importance a beautiful place can have on wellbeing; both their own and that of other people. After reflection, people recognise how important it is to take time to appreciate beauty given the noticeable benefits it has to individuals, communities and society. People recognise the value of beauty as being uplifting and motivating, and feel it can play a role in learning environments such, as schools, and in generally creating a 'better society'. Increased access to beauty is felt to contribute to overall welfare and a 'good society'; beauty matters.

Older and younger people see the value of beauty in society in different ways. Older people see value in preserving local areas for future generations. Younger people are more concerned with their own access to it and their everyday experience. There is a shared view that placing public value on existing buildings and public spaces will do more to increase the amount of beauty in our surroundings, as opposed to creating new buildings and space.

Participants recognise that they judge, and are judged on, where they live and their physical surroundings, as well as where they spend time. People can be judged for living or spending time in 'ugly' or 'beautiful' areas. It was felt that by investing in improving a place – be it through buildings, public events or general upkeep – it can encourage people to find those places more beautiful, and to treat them with more respect and care. It was felt that there is no body or individual with overall responsibility for increasing beauty in our society; many even recognise their own personal responsibility and feel that everyone shares this. However, many look to local authorities to play a leading role in maintaining and increasing beauty in society. The part played by national figures is less apparent to the public and they struggle to see a practical role politicians can play in relation to beauty.





# Introduction

# Introduction

## Background

Data this year reveals 37% of people agree they can influence decisions affecting their local area, down from 44% in 2001 (MORI Citizenship Survey 2010). And less than one in five people took part in a 'civic consultation' last year (down from 20% in 2005).

Through lack of confidence, uncertainty of language, or just a sense of pointlessness, it appears that few people would currently take part in a consultation about new housing, for instance, coming to their neighbourhood.

The Government wants to change this, as a part of its commitment to the Big Society. This project has asked 'does beauty matter?', as a hook to get people talking about their local environment. The research is intended to unpack the relationship between people and places, understand what the public value, and prompt a debate about how best to get people actively involved in shaping the quality of the places where they live.

## Aims and objectives

The main objective for this study was to explore and analyse public attitudes to beauty. The key questions that we began exploring were:

- Where and when do you experience beauty?
- Does beauty matter and why should there be more?
- Is there enough beauty in your life? Is there enough beauty in our society?
- What prevents you personally from experiencing more beauty? What helps you to experience beauty
- How has your experience of beauty changed over your life?
- Is beauty just a matter of taste or style, or are beauty and taste different?
- Should we expect beauty from our buildings or landscapes – or is it alright to compromise on beauty in pursuit of other things (affordability, sustainability, functionality?)
- Do we as a society or nation attach enough importance to beauty?
- How can government and the rest of us go about reducing ugliness and creating/preserving more beauty?

## Research approach

We gave much thought to the challenges presented in the original brief and, in line with suggestions made by CABI and AHRC, we decided on a mixed methodology that included qualitative, quantitative and ethnographic approaches.

We felt this mix would make the research most valuable by allowing a 360° view of the ways in which people understand beauty - on a rational level (via quantitative research), a

community level (via qualitative ‘rolling groups’) and an individual level, moving through different environments (via ethnographic research).

The primary mode we adopted was visual – filming, photographing and documenting the objects and places that would give us a sense of what people find beautiful in their local surroundings. We used this layered approach to understand in detail how people relate to beauty both in the context of the built environment and more generally.

### **Focusing our gaze**

In order to narrow our focus from a potentially endless set of locations – and within the parameters of budget – we based our qualitative groups and ethnographic fieldwork in one case study location to allow us to build up a detailed understanding of the dynamics of beauty as it is understood and experienced by a single community with common touch points for comparison. That place was Sheffield.

### **Why Sheffield?**

There were several reasons why we chose to focus a large part of the research on Sheffield, not least because of its eventful past: from former glory at the centre of the steel industry, to economic decline and recent regeneration. Its status as a city in the midst of change, presented an interesting starting point for introducing people to the topic and questioning the value of beauty for the future. We felt there would be a good range of settings in which different people might go to find beauty, from the old industry factories to the natural stretches of the Peak District.

We researched different areas of the city prior to conducting the fieldwork. This provided us with invaluable insight into Sheffield’s background, and meant we could go into the fieldwork with a more grounded understanding of the city, past and present. We were given a detailed tour of the city centre, from the commercial shopping district down to the new train station development and rejuvenated factory buildings next to the university. Our guide explained the history of different areas to us, the significance of Sheffield’s buildings (materials, function, design) and the stories behind some of the newer / planned developments.

### **Challenges of the research**

The research was not without its challenges. The first hurdle we faced was the difficulty people had in understanding the question ‘What is beauty?’

This challenge was present from a very early stage in the research, as we conducted scoping interviews with people in London. People often responded to the question with ‘What do you mean?’ and this was echoed throughout the rest of the research (in vox pop interviews, discussion groups, ethnographies and in testing the quantitative questionnaire).

On the one hand, a challenge for the design of the research materials and for interpreting the final data, this also signalled one of the key findings of the research: *understanding* the concept of beauty is not immediately clear to many people.

So far, we have identified four distinct barriers which we think are worth considering before any public dialogue on beauty:

- Beauty is **personal** – people aren’t used to talking about it, indeed some perceive that it may be beyond language (see below ‘beauty is indefinable’). As something which is ‘personal’, people often reserve the word to describe what they hold sacred

or privately meaningful. Typical responses which show this are: 'I don't want to tell you', 'I don't know how to describe it', 'you might not understand me'

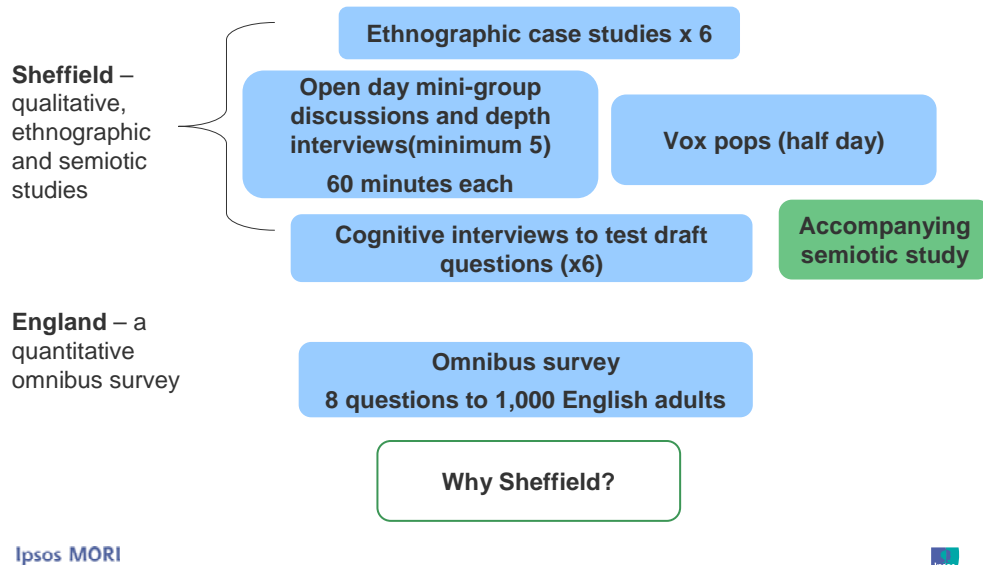
- Beauty is **subjective** – people are very conscious that their perception of beauty is *their* perception and as a result they avoid giving reasons for finding something beautiful in case it jars with someone else's perception. Many also worry that they will be judged because of their taste. Typical responses which show this are: 'Why do you want to know?', 'My beauty is another person's ugliness', 'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder'
- Beauty is **indefinable** – people struggle to find a single, clear definition for beauty. Unlike if you ask 'What is nature?', to which people might say 'Nature is trees and animals' or 'it's the opposite of artificial', the concept of beauty leaves many speechless. People resist defining it, aware that it is something that evolves and that part of beauty is its indefinite quality. Especially significant for the current project is the extent to which beauty is understood in more than purely visual terms; more emotional references such as 'it was a beautiful moment' are just as common as 'that sunset looks beautiful'
- Beauty is '**cosmetised**' – the beauty industry has marketed beauty to people, providing a popular and easy definition that is quickly learnt by adverts, the media and retailers. In the absence of any wider and more meaningful public dialogue on the subject, people's natural terms of reference are often based on superficial

In the context of this research, initial barriers like these took time to overcome. That beauty was a subject which demanded time and consideration is itself an important finding. People needed time to express themselves and respond to the question 'What is beauty?' in a meaningful way. They also said they needed time to appreciate beauty in the first place.

By reserving time to have a public debate people will hopefully be encouraged to reserve time in their own lives to appreciate and access more beauty.

## A mixed methodology

### Summary of mixed methodology



### Qualitative groups and depth interviews

On Sunday March 21<sup>st</sup> we held a full day of discussion groups and depth interviews in the Long Gallery of Sheffield Millennium Galleries. Situated centrally, next to the Winter Gardens and Peace Gardens, the place attracted a variety of local residents and visitors.

We spoke to a total of sixty people throughout the day, spending an hour with each participant as they took part in either a group discussion with approximately eight other people or in one-one / paired interviews.

Twenty-four of these participants were recruited in advance of the ‘qualitative day’ by specialist recruiters

The remaining forty were recruited on the day from Sheffield town centre.

The location of the groups stimulated the conversation on beauty, as the venue overlooked Sheffield Hallam University building and Park Hill flats and was itself a very striking interior

We spoke to people from a good mix of ages, socio-economic grade, nationality, gender and level of ‘ease’ with the subject matter ‘beauty’.

We developed a ‘discussion guide’ with input from CABE to help structure the discussions on the day and act as a point of reference with key questions for the research. This is attached in the appendices

### Quantitative method

The quantitative phase of this research was conducted using the Ipsos MORI Capibus omnibus survey, a weekly face-to-face omnibus survey. The omnibus survey interviewed a representative quota sample of 1,043 adults aged 15 and over throughout England. As a

representative survey of the population, respondents could include heads of households, partners and other household members. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in respondents' homes, using CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) between the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> April 2010. The data have been rim weighted by gender, age, and work status, to reflect the known population profile of England.

Throughout the report, we refer to differences between certain sub-groups by age, social grade or location. These differences, when noted, have been tested as significant differences. A detailed set of computer tables, showing a full breakdown of results and statistical significance is provided under separate cover.

In addition to the standard sub-groups, the report references two derived sub-groups 'Advantaged' and 'Disadvantaged' to highlight the differences in attitudes between different population groups. These groups are defined as follows:

Advantaged: Social grade A or B (Professionals and senior managers), Educated to degree level or higher

Disadvantaged: Social grade D or E (Semi-skilled, unskilled and unemployed), Educated to GCSE level or lower

The report also refers to two age groups of 'Younger' (ages 15-34) and older (ages 45 and over).

### **Ethnographies, Sheffield**

Over the course of four days (26<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> March 2010) we conducted 6 ethnographic interviews with Sheffield residents. We spent 3-6 hours with each individual and were provided with an insight into their lives and where beauty fits in to them. In order to provide a loose guide for these discussions we developed a 'discussion matrix' which is attached in the appendices.

Two film pieces accompany this report, documenting the ethnographies and presenting many of the findings of this report in a visual way

A variety of people from different backgrounds were chosen to take part, in order to gather as many varied opinions and experiences as possible. Below is an introduction to each of the 6 participants.

19 year old **Anna** lives with her father and 10month old son Brandon. Anna and both her parents grew up on the Gleadless Valley estate in Sheffield. Until the late stages of her pregnancy, Anna was studying at the local FE college.



### Is beauty escape?

*Some of my friends don't appreciate things like this. They go to the pub to socialise and I just say I will pick you up and we will go to Chatsworth or Bakewell...and they just say they will stay in pub and have a fag or a drink and I suppose that is their beauty to them.*

**Paul** lives on the outskirts of Sheffield and commutes every day. He grew up in the area he now lives in with his wife and two young daughters. The only time he left the area was to go to university in York. Paul's family all live locally and he enjoys the community feel of the area.



### Is beauty belonging?

*That probably to a lot of people looks like a river full of rubbish which it is, I suppose fundamentally it is... it is memories it's got for me and it is something I associate with and there are not many bad memories I have got from my time spent down here.*

**David** grew up in Leeds and is of Nigerian descent. He came to Sheffield for university to study business, finance and politics and is now in his second year. Sheffield has always been welcoming to David and he thinks it is a great place for students to live.



### Is beauty pride?

*I think being in a clean place will help you to work...if you are living somewhere where you are comfortable and happy, it will reflect in other areas of your life than coming into a home that you don't really want to be at*

**Debbie** is married with two teenage sons and has lived in Sheffield all her life. She is a successful business woman and has always worked hard. Home is very important to Debbie and she has spent a lot of money investing in it.



Is beauty *choice*?

*We have had five houses and four have been new. I just prefer new houses. I think it is the thought that it is not anybody else's*

**Jack** is 13 and has lived on Park Hill estate his entire life, along with most of his extended family. He used to love Park Hill before people were evacuated for its regeneration. Now he doesn't feel safe in his own home and likes to escape to a quiet area to get some peace and time for reflection.



Is beauty *respect*?

*'Park hill...no-one wants to think about it, say 'owt about it and no-one wants to look at it anymore, its that horrible'*

**Asad** is a taxi driver who grew up in Sheffield and lived in the city most of his life, apart from a brief three year spell in London. His job has given Asad a good overall perspective of his home town as well as where beauty is experienced by different people in all its various forms.





Is beauty *equality*?

*'When you go to a nice area...its got flowers, its got colour, its tidy, its clean there's not much in the way of intimidation or crime or litter, mentally it makes you think nice thoughts*

### **Differences between findings from each method**

There is variation between the findings from each methodology which reflects a broader conclusion that public attitudes to beauty are very dependent on the time and context in which beauty as a subject matter and as a reality is encountered by people. Beauty is received as both an 'abstract' and 'familiar' concept. It is understood and appreciated by people on different levels dependent on time, setting and mindset.

One of the findings from a mixed methodology approach is that only after spending an extended period of time with people can they think more deeply about beauty, and discuss a broader range of experiences. With this time to reflect, they discuss the deeper impacts of beauty on individuals, communities and society.

With the above points in mind, each set of findings in the following report should therefore be seen in the context of the other two and readers should keep in mind that the methodology used to broach the question of beauty is itself important for understanding why people react to beauty in some seemingly contradictory ways. For example, on one level participants see beauty as a deep, significant feeling they have about something and in another, see it as something conventional and part of day-to-day life; every time they use a beauty product or look in the mirror before going out. By presenting results from each methodology alongside each other in this report, we hope to emphasise the relevance of both 'top-of-mind' and considered public responses to the question.

### **Layout of this report**

This report is spilt into three main sections that differentiate between:

- What does beauty mean to individuals?
- What does beauty mean for places and communities?
- What does beauty mean for society?

Whilst these sections deal primarily with their respective topics, with such a complex set of findings it was inevitable that some overlap occurs. However, during our analysis, we found that these three areas helped to provide a structure with which to present these findings.

## Presentation and interpretation of the data

It is important to note that qualitative research is designed to be *illustrative* rather than *statistically representative* and therefore provides insight into why people hold views, rather than conclusions from a robust, valid sample. In addition, it is important to bear in mind that we are dealing with people's perceptions, rather than facts.

Throughout the report, some use is made of verbatim comments from participants. Where this is the case, it is important to remember that the views expressed do not always represent the views of the group as a whole, although in each case the verbatim is representative of, at least, a small number of participants.

## Note on reporting of qualitative findings

The ideas and attitudes expressed in the qualitative findings reflect a broad range of demographic groups. The event welcomed a mix of people, from different backgrounds, ethnicity, gender and age, and was representative of Sheffield's town centre as well as its outer suburbs. There was certainly variety of opinion and, as you might expect, plenty of personal preferences. However, by scratching beneath the surface of these many differences, we found that whilst there are plenty of differences in what people find beautiful, these rely on such a complex set of influences and personal associations / memories, that people's socio-economic status, even their age, were often not helpful indicators of difference. Perhaps more important for the present study is the finding that despite people holding sometimes quite different perceptions of beauty, there is a shared view that beauty (whatever form it takes) has significant public value.

## Publication of data

Our standard Terms and Conditions apply to this, as to all studies we carry out. Compliance with the MRS Code of Conduct and our clearing is necessary of any copy or data for publication, web-siting or press releases which contain any data derived from Ipsos MORI research. This is to protect your reputation and integrity as much as our own. We recognise that it is in no-one's best interests to have findings published which could be misinterpreted, or could appear to be inaccurately, or misleadingly, presented.

## Acknowledgements

Ipsos MORI would like to thank Thomas Bolton, Ben Rogers, Matt Bell and Elanor Warwick at CABA, as well as Jonathan Breckon at the AHRC for their support on the project. In addition we would like to thank all the participants who took part in the study.

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*Checked & Approved:*

*Johanna Shapira*

*Nick Allen*

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*Naomi Boal*

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*Ella Fryer-Smith*

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What does beauty mean for individuals?



# 1. What does beauty mean for individuals?

When participants first encountered the question ‘what is beauty?’, after overcoming the initial barrier of ‘what do you mean?’, they produced countless examples of things they said they *personally* find beautiful. Many used words like ‘personally’ or ‘to me’ to preface almost any comment about beauty they made, suggesting not just the awareness people have that perceptions of beauty are very subjective, but also that by stating something about what they found beautiful, they were saying something about themselves as a person too; they were opening up and potentially being judged.

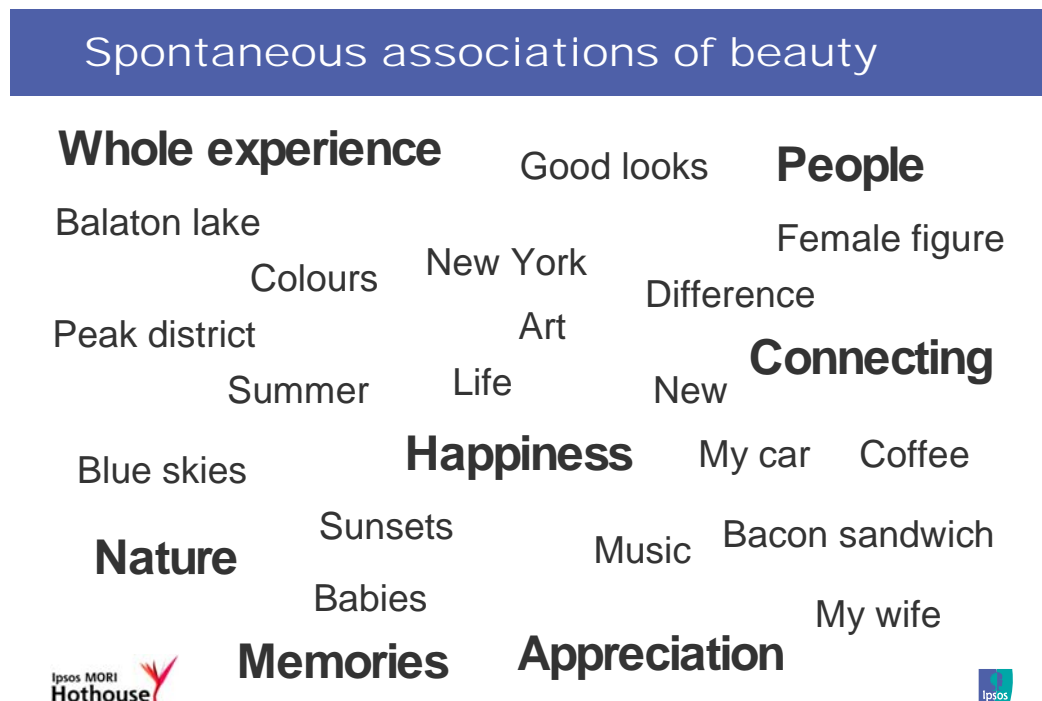
The idea of revealing something ‘personal’ when you talk about beauty is explored more deeply during the ethnographies, a suggestion in itself that the longer people have with the concept ‘beauty’ the more personal meaning they can attach to it.

## 1.1 Associations with beauty

### How do people talk about beauty?

In the qualitative research work, it was interesting to note that whilst there was a huge variety of associations with beauty, as you would expect for something which is ‘personal’, there was also a great deal of commonality; people say ‘it’s in the eye of the beholder’ or ‘but that’s just me’ and yet throughout the day, people who had never spoken to each other, who didn’t participate in the same exercises, responded with similar ‘personal’ stories, suggesting that there really are constants in what people find beautiful. What will be significant for future steps, is recognising that the value people place on beauty relates to the personal aspect, despite there being these general agreements about where to find beauty.

Below is an example of some of the gut reactions people had simply to the word ‘beauty’:



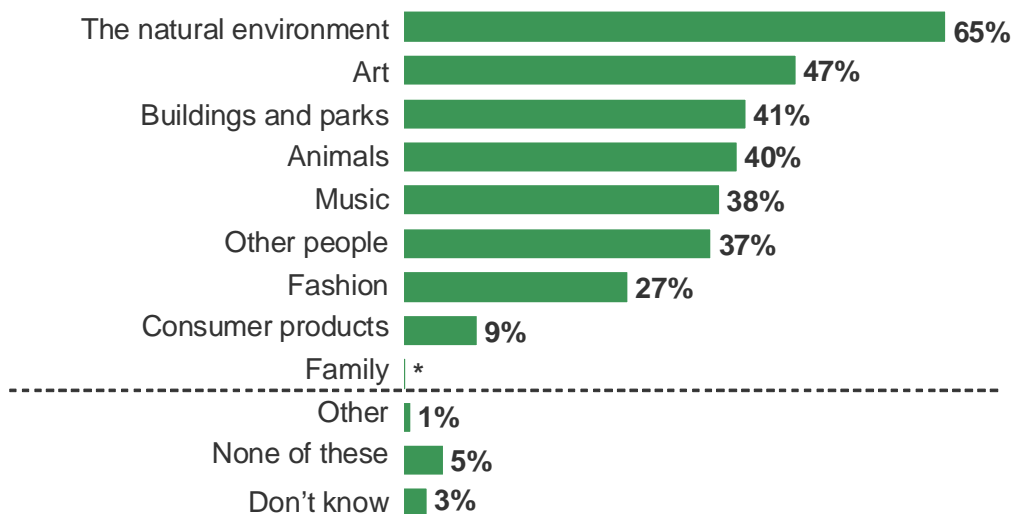
Words in bold are those which came up time and again both at the point of spontaneous association with the concept and later on as people started to form a more thought out picture of what beauty is. Nature, experience, happiness, memory, appreciation were for many people the most immediate means they had of understanding ‘beauty’. For example, when we asked people to look at beauty in the context of different weather states, it didn’t take long before they began discussing that something can be beautiful in one setting and not in another: rain is beautiful to look at from indoors, but not when you are drenched in rain shower on the way to work. Or snow – can be appreciated from a distance but less so when actually experienced.

## 1.2 Experiencing beauty

The national survey confirmed that the general public experience beauty in a wide variety of settings and through different mediums. Two thirds (65%) said they had had experienced beauty in the natural environment, almost half (47%) had experienced beauty through art. Around two in five had experienced beauty in buildings and parks (41%), animals (40%), music (38%) and other people (37%).

### Beauty can be experienced in a variety of settings

In which of the following, if any, have you ever experienced beauty?



Base: 1,043 adults in England (aged 15+)

Ipsos MORI

Source: Ipsos MORI



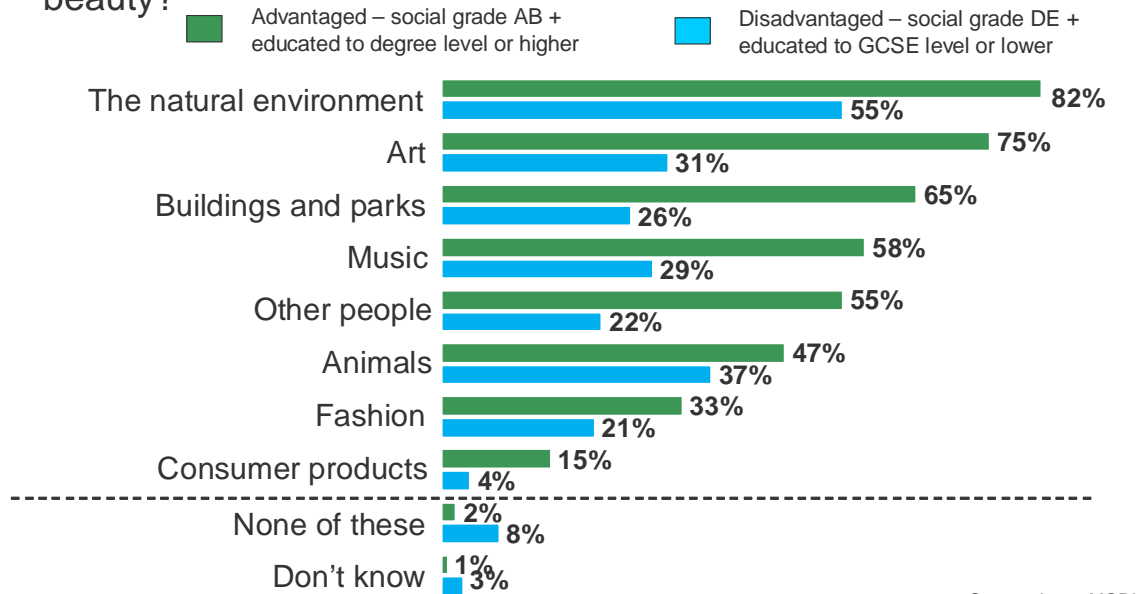
There are clear trends that show that different people experience beauty in different settings. For example, age has a clear role in determining how people understand beauty.

Those aged between 45 and 64 were more likely to have experienced beauty in the natural environment (77%) compared with younger people, aged 15-24 (51%). The same trend also applies to experience of buildings and parks; whilst only one in five (21%) of 15-24 year olds has experienced beauty in this way, more than half (54%) of those aged 45-64 have. In contrast, younger people aged 15-24 were almost twice as likely than older people to have experienced beauty in fashion (37% compared with 18% of those aged 65+) and in consumer products (12% compared with 5%).

Those in the advantaged group<sup>1</sup> experienced beauty differently to the disadvantaged group. This can be seen in the chart below, which shows that those in higher social grades and with a higher level of education are more likely to have experienced beauty in a range of different settings.

## Differences in experiences of beauty

In which of the following, if any, have you ever experienced beauty?



Source: Ipsos MORI

Ipsos MORI Base: 154 disadvantaged adults and 119 advantaged adults in England (aged 15+),



Around four in five (82%) of the advantaged group had experienced beauty in the natural environment compared to around half (55%) of the disadvantaged group. The advantaged group were also significantly more likely to say they had experienced beauty in art, buildings and parks, music and other people compared to the disadvantaged group.

Whereas survey findings show a fair number of people experience beauty through art and music, these were not so prominent during the qualitative day or the ethnographies. Participants would tell us about how art objects or a piece of music could be beautiful and how some of these ‘everyone knows’ to call ‘beautiful’, but they generally weren’t referring to their personal experiences of these things.

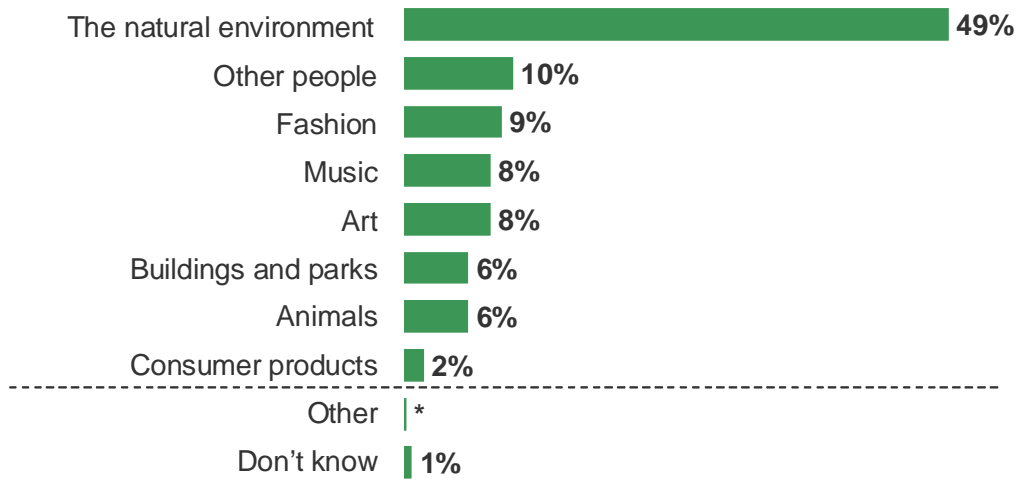
Art and music came in the qualitative and ethnography work, but were seen as being less meaningful in comparison to other experiences of beauty. This suggests that these are things we associate with beauty more as a result of knowing that they are often publicly applauded for being beautiful, than because individuals see them as important for their personal experiences of beauty.

When asked specifically where they experienced beauty *most often*, half of the survey respondents (49%) chose the natural environment.


<sup>1</sup> The advantaged group consist of respondents in social grade A or B, who are educated to degree level or higher.

## Beauty experienced most often in the natural environment

And in which one of these do you experience beauty most often?



Base: 961 Adults in England (aged 15+) saying they have experienced beauty  
Ipsos MORI

Source: Ipsos MORI  


In line with trends outlined in general notions of beauty, younger people were more likely to experience beauty *most often* in other people, fashion and consumer products than those aged over 45. One in five (19%) 15-24 year olds experienced beauty most often in fashion, and one in seven (15%) experienced it most often through other people.

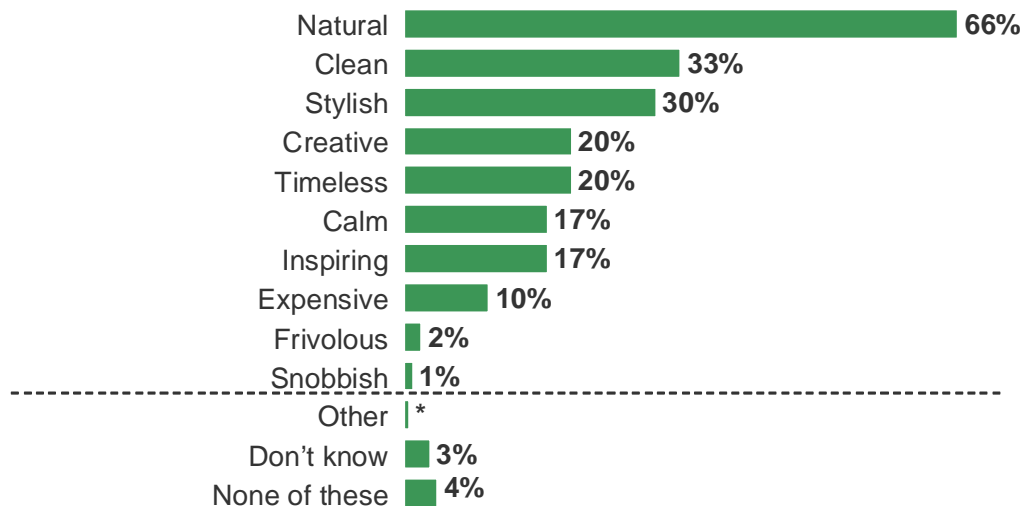
The above findings about young people were reflected in the ethnography, when Anna talked about her friends and the fact that they never wanted to go for a walk in the countryside with her. Rather they preferred to go to the pub socialising, drinking and smoking which, as she remarked *'is their beauty to them'*.



When asked what other words they associated beauty with, people were most likely to select the word 'natural', with two thirds of them (66%) choosing this from the list below. A third (33%) thought that beauty was associated with 'clean' and a similar proportion (30%) selected the word 'stylish'.

## Natural is the most common association with beauty

Which two or three of the following words, if any, do you most closely associate with beauty?



Base: 1,043 adults in England (aged 15+)

Ipsos MORI

Source: Ipsos MORI



Further analysis of the data shows that the advantaged group were more likely to associate beauty with 'inspiring' (26%), 'creative' (27%) and 'timeless' (30%). Younger people were more likely to associate beauty with being 'expensive' (15%) than the older cohort (7%)..

This association of beauty and nature was also reinforced in the ethnographic interviews. When asked to take us to a place they experience beauty, each one of the six participants took us to what they considered to be a natural area. For Debbie and David a park and manmade open space 'Devonshire square' were areas they talked about as 'natural' and showed us as examples of beauty. Asad drove us to the peak district, Paul showed us his field, Anna took us to the wood and Jack took us to 'his castle'.





From the qualitative day it was also made clear by participants that a natural environment is beautiful – they feel ‘at home’ with nature. On one level, people’s constant reference to nature and natural settings seems to underline a finding that the quant data backs up: that nature is one of the most important means by which people experience beauty. But it also suggests something more significant about the character of the experience and association people have with nature that is so important for their appreciation of beauty. People talked about the views, the look, smell, feel of the air, the birdsong, power of the sea, the seasons, autumn colours – a whole host of sensory experiences that come naturally to them and don’t require thought or complication. The simplicity and immediacy of people’s experiences of beauty in natural settings is important. People saw beauty as something intuitive, part of a human instinct and therefore ‘natural’ in a wider sense than just ‘beauty is the birds singing in the trees’. This idea of beauty as instinctive is reflected further in the way people talked about finding beauty in places that feel like home, where you can be yourself.

Despite nature being predominantly associated with beauty, the impact of beauty is also experienced in the built environment. This is discussed in more depth in the ‘community’ section of this report.

### 1.3 The effect of beauty

People who took part in the qualitative element of this project highlighted the calming and uplifting effects of beauty. Many people talked about beauty like as an instinctive need:

*It’s about a whole feeling isn’t it? That moment between everyday life and taking time out, when you can stop and sit somewhere nice for a bit. That’s why I like Peace Gardens or Winter Gardens and places like that. Places that are away from hustle and bustle, more peace and quiet. I can enjoy the city more when I’m there, surrounded by green. It puts me in a good mood.*

*Male, older, Sheffield*

Both the Winter Gardens and Peace Gardens were also cited by Debbie and Paul in the ethnographies, as places to go and 'take a breather' from work. Sitting down and enjoying a coffee in those surroundings was felt to have a calming affect on their day and provide an escape from the hustle and bustle of the rest of the City Centre. This was an easy example for people to give '*top of mind*' when trying to interpret the affect of beauty.

However, one of the main findings of the ethnographic element of this research is that people found it *very hard* to express the affect beauty can have on them and their lives. It is only after spending extended periods of time with people, observing them as they moved through various environments that we could physically see the change beauty had on people. As well as our own observations, participants evidently found it easier to grasp the concept of beauty with its myriad of meanings and articulate how they felt in more thoughtful and in-depth ways after an extended period of time mulling over the subject matter.

Visually speaking there were two moments in the filmed pieces which stick out as 'beauty taking effect'. The first of those was when Jack took us on a trip to 'his castle' an area him and his friends visit when they want to get away from Park Hill. The whole mood and feel was lifted when Jack was not on Park Hill, he looked free and like a young boy at peace with himself. Jack tells us that it is a safe place for him and his friends to talk about their feelings and emotions without having to worry about privacy, because they are in *their* space. This feeling of territory and belonging is important, as made clear by the fact that he and his friends keep the area clean and are prepared to chase people to ensure they do the same. Notably, this is not something he talks about doing by his own house on Park Hill.

The second moment that stands out is when Asad takes us to the Peak District. Asad is extremely talkative throughout the time we spend with him, but as he walks along the peak district and takes in the view he is markedly quiet and reflective which is visually and physically noticeable.

### **Beauty and well-being**

The immediacy with which people would make the connection between experiencing beauty and being happy, was very apparent in the qualitative and suggests that asking the question 'Why should we have more beauty?' is something of a misleading question, like 'Why should we have more happiness?' People were automatically seeing beauty (and the experience of it) as a contributing factor to their overall sense of well being. This points to another reason why people might have found it difficult to broach the question of beauty' and its value, when to many its value is a given.

### **Beauty is important for self-esteem**

It was generally recognised in the qualitative that being able to appreciate beauty contributed to overall mental health and 'high spirits'. People talked of how access to beauty increased their sense of well-being and happiness. Equally, by being happy in the first place people felt they were more likely to be in a position to appreciate it. This cycle of positive effect suggests just how important beauty can be for an individual's whole sense of self-esteem; living without beauty can lead them to a vicious cycle of de-motivation and inaction.

*A world without beauty would be depressing, pointless, is life worth living without beauty?*

Male, younger, Sheffield

Throughout the ethnographic interviews it was also widely recognised that beauty can make a difference to an individual's state of mind. Put simply, experiencing beauty can contribute to happiness whilst experiencing ugliness can contribute to depression.

When Anna took us to Gleadless Valley estate she explained that she would never live in the tower blocks there because; *'home is your sanctuary, your peace...if I lived there I would never want to go home'*. This is an example of the direct affect beauty or ugliness can have, and is perceived to have, on people's lives. The knock-on results of not wanting to go home are huge not only for individuals but the wider community and society at large.

### **Beauty and the senses**

Something that was clear from the outset was how important the senses are for people's understanding of beauty. Linked to the idea of beauty being a personal experience, was the use of visual imagery as their reference point to describe beauty. Starting with the visual, people would tend to go on to include descriptions of the other senses, until they had described what it was like to actually have a 'feeling' of beauty.

The experience of beauty through the senses was something people made an immediate point about when they encountered the topic. But even people's most immediate references to beauty went beyond an easily defined experience of one single sense. One lady we spoke to said it was really about a whole body and mind experience, beginning with the eyes:

*For example, you'll be out in the fresh air and you'll see the trees and birds and then you'll hear them singing and it makes you stop and listen and as you're doing that you're feeling calmer and enjoying the moment a bit more and....do I need to go on?? Basically it becomes a whole experience, so when you say what's beautiful it's all of that, not just one thing*

Female, younger, Sheffield

It is significant that from very early on in people's interaction with the subject, they place a focus on the 'act of seeing' beauty, more than focusing on the objects of beauty themselves. This was an almost immediate recognition amongst participants in the qualitative: that beauty means more than just 'something which is beautiful' that you can state with confidence 'it is beautiful'. Rather it captures a whole experience and therefore when people say 'that is beautiful' they seem to mean something more like 'I am having a beautiful experience'. This is important for thinking about how the role of place impacts people, as their immediate associations of 'beautiful places' go beyond simply the built structures and objects they encounter.

One example of this, is the relationship people see there being between the way in which a place is being used and the amount of beauty they experience there. Places that children played in or that people remembered as a place they themselves played in, were often seen as being beautiful.

### **Beauty in memory**

To many people, the most immediate association they have with beauty is related to something emotional. This took many different forms, from the feeling they get when they're walking their dog in the park, to the sentimental value of meeting someone that you 'connect

with', anything that had emotional resonance for people was something they were likely to call beautiful:

*I like films, I find films beautiful, because they are emotional and you cry and feel different things all at once. You don't get that everyday.*

*Female, younger, Sheffield*

One of the strongest emotions linked with beauty was memory. Memory played a huge part in ethnography participant's experiences of beauty. Everyone talked vividly about memory and took us to places which held special memories for them.

Perhaps the most obvious occurrence of memory in the film piece was with Paul who took us on a trip to his favourite place to go - the field he grew up playing in as a child. Despite the fact that it is filled with graffiti, rubbish, dog faeces and overlooks derelict factory buildings, Paul loves this place. He spent a long time recalling childhood memories and experiences while we were there. Each metre of the field holds a different memory for him which he happily shared with us. Paul is aware that the field may not appeal to everyone, particularly those who have no memories or associations with it. However, he feels that the 'ugly' things about it (faeces, graffiti etc) represent his home town, where he comes from and thereby himself; it's not quite the country, but not quite the city either.

Memory was an important aspect of beauty for all our ethnographic participants, highlighted by the places they decided to take us. Debbie took us to the park that her and her husband used to go to with all their friends as teenagers. Anna took us to the woods where she used to go river jumping as a little girl and Asad took us to Pitsmore where he spent much time as a teenager.

Aside from the emotional impact memory plays in respect to people's experiences of beauty, the people associated with it are also a large factor in making a place or experience beautiful. Jack talks about the important memories Park Hill estate holds for him connected to when much of his family lived on the estate before it was vacated for redevelopment. Jack showed us the close proximity which his family lived to him and talked about the community feeling that existed with everyone saying 'hello' to each other and the difference it made to the area which now feels hauntingly empty.



## Beauty in 'things' considered 'valuable'

It wasn't just emotional content that people felt was important for an experience of beauty, the whole meaning and significance of a 'thing' was what counted. For example, books and art were common examples of objects that people called beautiful because they saw them as 'valuable' for their 'meaning' and 'significance' to both an individual and group.

*Books and paintings, they're all beautiful things too. But I think it's about the value of each thing, that's what makes it beautiful. And not just the value other people place on it, but the value you think it has. That's the most important for something to be beautiful, I have to think its worth something*

*Female, younger, Sheffield*

The findings from the omnibus survey show just how high art is ranked as one of most direct ways people experience beauty, with almost half of the population saying they had experienced beauty through art (47%). In the qualitative, people would mention art with respect to its visual impact, as they talked about paintings and public galleries as places that 'house beauty'. But their explanations for why paintings are beautiful and why art is something they find beautiful went far beyond the visual aspect, just as their descriptions of why they find nature beautiful expanded to include far more than an initial visual cue. Artworks were talked about like national institutions, objects that are there for everyone to experience, having had public value placed on them. People told us 'everyone knows some paintings are just beautiful', suggesting the public value placed on things can carry a lot of weight with people at an individual level.

The idea of placing value and significance on something and the importance of that for how beautiful people see something being relates to one of the themes we explore throughout this report of 'paying care and respect'. Something we look at more in the final section of the report, are the future actions people believe to be most important for increasing beauty. There's quite conclusive evidence from the ethnographies, the qualitative and the quant to show that encouraging people to be more caring and respectful, plays a big part in safeguarding beauty for future generations.

Findings from the omnibus survey, for example, highlight that half of the English public (51%) favour preserving beauty that already exists in their surroundings and two in five (39%) favour keeping places clean and tidy, compared with only 24% who favour building new places that are beautiful and 19% who favour the demolition of ugly places. Valuing, caring for and respecting things, whether its objects, people or places, seem to be three very important contributors for ensuring people have access to beauty

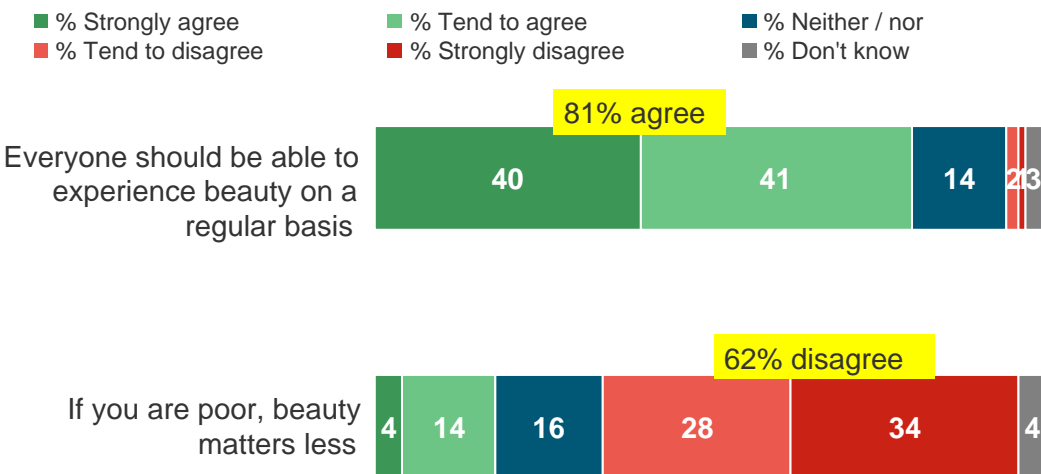
## 1.4 Is beauty fair?

There was something of an ‘unspoken assumption’ which people made during the qualitative: that ‘beauty is for everyone’ and not something you can deny someone, no matter their social standing, age, health. This links well with results from the omnibus survey that suggest that beauty is seen by the English public as a right, rather than a luxury.

The vast majority (80%) agree that everyone should be able to experience beauty on a regular basis, and only three percent disagree with this. Furthermore, almost two thirds (62%) disagree that if you are poor, beauty matters less.

### Most agree with the need for equal access to beauty

Please could you tell me the extent to which you agree or disagree?



Base: 1,043 adults in England (Aged 15+)  
Ipsos MORI

Source: Ipsos MORI

The disadvantaged group (27%) were almost twice as likely than the advantaged group (15%) to agree with the statement ‘If you are poor, beauty matters less’. Those from a black or minority ethnic background are also significantly more likely to agree (36%) that beauty matters less to those who are poor.

## 1.5 Barriers to beauty

A question we found very useful to ask during the qualitative was ‘what gets in the way of beauty?’

Many of their responses related to things that affect their physical and emotional experience of a place. So for example depression or unease were two of the most commonly mentioned barriers, suggesting that people are immediately aware of their state of mind as a crucial factor in their ability to see beauty. Bad memories, fear, loneliness, anger, loss – all of these were cited as barriers to beauty and, for some, they also symbolised ugliness. While some saw these as being affected by external influences, most people were also quick to see themselves as ultimately holding the power to see something as beautiful and overcome the barriers to that. Being too busy to notice and appreciate things was a common barrier that

people raised, but again it was with an awareness that individuals have a degree of personal responsibility for this: 'whatever you let get in the way will get in the way'.

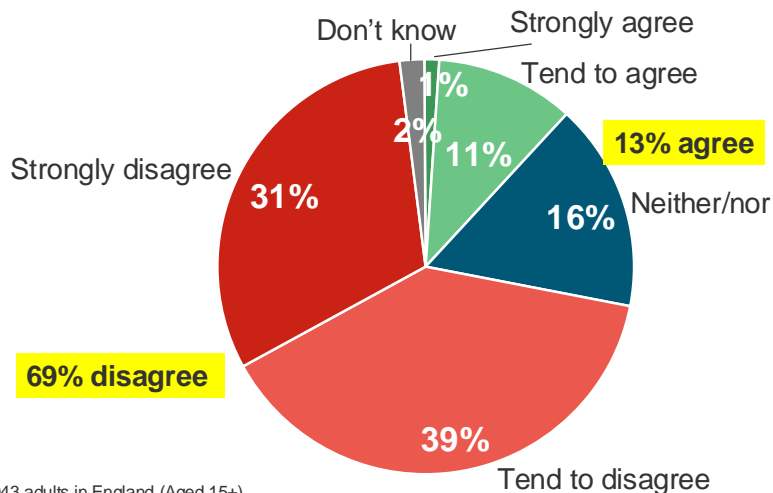
In the ethnography Paul emphasised the importance of 'inner structure' in appreciation of beauty. For Paul 'inner structure' is an individual's perception and reception to beauty and is dependent upon upbringing, experiences and access to and of beauty. For example, if individuals have experienced love, family, community and support in life they are more likely to 'appreciate' and utilise beauty. In this sense beauty is not an equal commodity since not everyone can tap into beauty in the same way, dependant on their upbringing.

Whilst there are barriers to beauty, the majority of the English public disagree that they are too busy to notice beauty in their local area (69%). Only one in eight (13%) agree with this.

## Time for beauty

Please could you tell me the extent to which you agree or disagree?

### *I am too busy to notice beauty in my local area*



Base: 1,043 adults in England (Aged 15+)

Ipsos MORI

Source: Ipsos MORI



There are some variations by region. Analysis shows that those in London are twice as likely (25%) than the national average to agree they are too busy for beauty. Professionals were less likely to say they were busy (seven percent of those in social grades A and B) compared to the semi-skilled, unskilled and unemployed 'DE' social grades (20%).

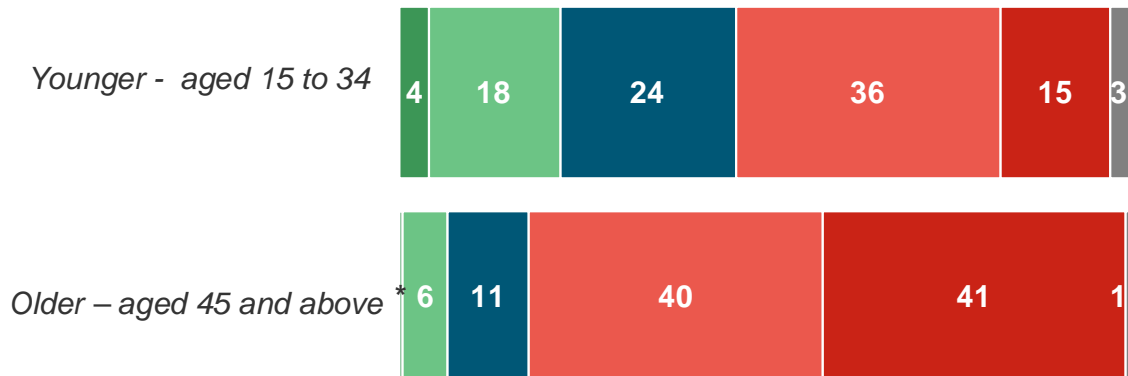
Younger people (aged 15-34) were three times more likely to be too busy to notice beauty (22%) than older people - aged 45 and older (seven percent).

## Younger people more likely to be too busy to notice beauty in their local area

Please could you tell me the extent to which you agree or disagree?

### *I am too busy to notice beauty in my local area*

- % Strongly agree
- % Tend to agree
- % Neither / nor
- % Tend to disagree
- % Strongly disagree
- % Don't know



Ipsos MORI Base: 286 younger adults(15-34) and 601 older adults (aged 45+) in England Source: Ipsos MORI

### Barriers to beauty in the built environment

When people told us what they associate with the opposite of beauty, or what can threaten and get in the way of a beautiful experience, they spoke often about things like ‘litter’, ‘graffiti’ and ‘anti-social behaviour’. Given that at this stage of the discussion they hadn’t been asked to consider their surroundings or the built environment, it seems even more significant that they spontaneously come up with things that are so directly related. It ties in with them theme we explore in later sections, that the demonstration of care and respect, whether by individuals, whole communities or key influencers, is crucial to ensuring there is beauty.

It is perhaps significant that the opposites of beauty come up so early on, as it suggests that some of the barriers to beauty are top of people’s mind, even if the enablers of it (such as care and concern for people and place) were sometimes harder for people to pin down.

*Traffic is ugly, sometimes there’s just too much of it. When all you want is a bit of peace and calm, it can be hard to find in the city centre. But I guess that’s the modern world we live in. It’s a shame, because there are also things you could do more of without traffic – play in the streets, have more a sense of community. I think we’ve lost that feeling now.*

*Female, older, Sheffield*

*A lot of what you’re looking for is neighbourliness and friendliness among others.*

*Male, older, Sheffield*



In this light, barriers are often out of the individual's control. In fact, for many people barriers to beauty are linked to other people in their immediate community. Beauty and community will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

What does beauty mean for places and communities?



## 2. What does beauty mean for places and communities?

### Beauty in place as both a visual and an emotional experience

Participants in the qualitative open day and ethnographic study found it easy to refer to places where they had appreciated beauty. Their opinions on what made that place beautiful were influenced by the **built or natural environment**, feelings of **community**, as well as **personal memories** and experience.

Positive experiences of place were often influenced by one or more of these factors. What emerged from the findings was that beauty in the built environment could be referenced purely as **visual**, or as part of a more **emotional experience** involving other factors such as nostalgia, memory, community, love or peace. Participants found the emotional experiences easier to relate to, and significantly more important.

### 2.1 Beauty as an experience

People's experience of beauty in their surroundings is rarely purely visual. So much so that when we explored which areas of Sheffield people considered more or less beautiful during the open day, the majority of immediate responses were based on the **emotional** and **historical** characteristics of a place, more than the visual. People would refer to the look and feel of a place and the aesthetic appeal, or lack of. This was often tied up with how the place was seen in more holistic terms (the people, memories, crime ratings etc.). This made it hard for people to see beyond this to see a building or area simply for the materials it was made with, or architectural details.

Sometime the two experiences of visual and emotional beauty were contradictory:

In the ethnography, Paul went to an area which he thought most would **see** as 'an absolute dump', but used it as his primary example of where he experienced beauty, where he could escape and feel calm.

During the qualitative open day, a number of participants mentioned Hillsborough (Sheffield Wednesday FC's stadium) as a place they associated with beauty, not for its visual presentation, but in relation to their memories and experiences. Another example from the qualitative open day describes the value of the history experienced through the built environment:

*The road to Meadowhall isn't particularly attractive but it's not run down either...it's just factories, which you wouldn't expect to be aesthetically pleasing. What's important about that area is the fact it's where Sheffield's history is based. There's one building I always go past, where there are structures either side of the road and a bridge linking the two. You drive through and just think 'oh my gosh, this is where my family worked years ago, this is the old steel works, this is amazing.' I don't think of it as ugly, I think of it as really nice, because it's a piece of Sheffield we'll never get back*

Male, younger, Sheffield

## Investing time, money and effort in places can make people more likely to find beauty there

Buildings are not only appreciated as beautiful for their visual style. For some participants, the efforts made to construct and maintain a building could earn it the right to be thought of as beautiful. This can be seen through the example of people's reactions to classical buildings, which were for many (across all age groups) the true examples of beauty.

When we asked people in the qualitative research which places in Sheffield they found most beautiful, the two that were picked out most often were Sheffield Cathedral and St Marie's Cathedral. While for some this was linked to the religious significance of the buildings, for the majority of people it was more about the fact these old, classic structures stood out to them as places that somehow deserved their attention. They talked appreciatively about the amount of time, money and effort they imagined would have gone into building these old buildings and made a link between the investment that had gone into making them and their readiness to find them beautiful:

*Take the cathedral as an example - you step inside and it just makes you think of all the work that's gone into the building of it, the glass, the many different materials....It gives you a special feeling about it...Whether you're a believer or not, it just makes you go 'wow, this place is beautiful'.*

Female, younger, Sheffield



The time and effort invested in these buildings was clear to participants – ‘people died making that kind of thing, real sweat and toil’. Participants would not make these comments of many modern buildings on Sheffield's cityscape, which they referred to as “flat-pack ikea, identikit buildings”, with little sign of human endeavour and care. The issues people had with these modern buildings were not expressed in visual terms, although it almost always started

with a reference to the look and feel of the place. Instead, they were concerned with the amount of respect and thought that was evident in the planning and construction of places suggesting that these are qualities which perhaps on a subconscious level make people more likely to appreciate their surroundings. They used strong language to describe places that they didn't consider to have this element of achievement and craft – referring to them as 'bland' and 'dead-end' places.

### **Preference for old over new**

Perhaps one of the most striking areas of consensus was in the value people placed on old versus new buildings. Across all age groups, older buildings were invariably favoured as being more beautiful. Whilst this could be interpreted solely as visual preference for certain architectural styles, findings from the qualitative research again point to a more complex interpretation.

The most common reason people gave for this was the fact they considered older buildings conveyed a sense of longevity and 'grandeur' that actually made them more pleasing to look at. Compared with these, modern buildings, by the very fact they haven't been around as long, give off a message of superficiality and emptiness, because they've had less time to develop a history. There was also a general concern that modern building materials were not as reliable and good quality as traditional techniques:

*The modern ones so often look like they've been made cheaply. My grandpa always says 'they're not made to last like the old fashioned ones –cathedrals and the old steel works. These modern ones are made for now and now alone. City Locks, for example, that'll never last 100 years, bet you it'll come down in 20'.*

*Male, younger, Sheffield*

*Whether or not you think the architecture is good or bad, buildings like the town hall look like they were built with the aim that they would be there in 100 years time, that we would still be here looking at them thinking 'oh, that's really nice. But I'm not convinced the people who make these modern buildings necessarily do that when they're building strange buildings that come out at funny angles. They're more about 'isn't this so modern, isn't this amazing, aren't you going to enjoy it?' instead of 'is somebody going to think that in 70 years time?'*

*Female, older, Sheffield*

Another finding on modern buildings was the fact people said they were less likely to feel any sense of pride and affiliation with an area if it looked like it had been made cheaply or with little concern for individual character. This in turn made people feel less inclined

### **Importance of comfort and feeling at home**

How people react to a place on an emotional level can be so powerful that it changes the way they experience it visually. For example, areas with a reputation for crime and anti social behaviour, whether a result of bad media presentation or personal experience, were seen as practically impossible to find beauty in. People talked about getting 'mental blocks' against these areas, making it very difficult to see them in a positive light.

*Places like Burnt Green, where you've heard about the drugs and gangsters and problems, you try and avoid them. But we have to go through Burnt Green to get to the hospital and the minute you see the hoodies you just don't feel comfortable so nothing looks nice, nothing. It's probably something subconscious but I think when*

*you go through dark areas and you're under threat, or at least when you feel under threat, even if you aren't really, you don't see any beauty anywhere. You can pass something that might be beautiful if it was another day or somewhere else, but you won't look at it because you just want to get through and get away. Whereas in South Side, you feel freer there and more comfortable, so automatically it's more beautiful*

*Male, older, Sheffield.*

The fear of crime and danger were major barriers to experiencing beauty in neighbourhoods, and are explored further later in the chapter.

### **Beauty in community spirit**

Despite recognising that more affluent areas are more beautiful visually, Asad's favourite area of Sheffield is Pitsmore – one of the least affluent areas of the city. He explains that this is because of the diverse make-up of the population in the area. The feeling of community is strong and the smells and sights are different to other areas of the city - for instance you can buy foods from around the world in Pitsmore, unlike other parts of town.

Participants in the qualitative research also shared this feeling:

*If you asked me what makes Sheffield beautiful, the first thing I'd probably say is 'the people'. They're really friendly and nice – it's like 'big village' mentality but in a large city. And I think that quiet pride people have in Sheffield adds to its charm*

*Female, younger, Sheffield*

## **2.2 Visual beauty in the built environment**

Whilst participants spoke fluently about their wider experience of beauty in the built environment, there also were some common themes that related to the visual experience of beauty.

### **Importance of natural light**

One such theme in the visual appreciation of beauty was the presence of natural light. Without natural light, places were more likely to be seen as doomed and unappealing. People expressed pity for anyone that had to work or spend too much time in areas where there wasn't much light or the overall look and feel was all doom and gloom. By contrast, areas like Winter Gardens and Botanical Gardens, that are seen to make good use of natural light and ensure there is more of it in the city centre, were appreciated as being more beautiful in part because of this.

As mentioned earlier in the report, nature is a common association that people have with beauty, and natural light may in part be favoured for this association.

### **Importance of distinctiveness**

As well as a lack of natural light, one of the most common architectural concerns people spoke of in the qualitative research I was 'blandness'. Having buildings that mean something to the city's residents was thought to be crucial. For many, it was so important that it could be at the expense of accommodating everyone's tastes; it's no good pleasing everyone with

bland boring buildings, they'd say, better to rub some people up the wrong way but make something that stands out and has significance.

*Take the cheese grater, ok so maybe it's not to everyone's taste and I don't even like it that much, it's hardly pleasing to look at. But at least it's something **distinctive**, and looks **well designed**. It's not the same as the old buildings we've got that everyone can accept 'that's beautiful' but it makes you think at least a bit of creative thought has gone into it, something braver than the identikit buildings that pop up everywhere. I'd rather have people writing into the Telegraph to say they hate it, than that they find it boring.*

*Male, younger, Sheffield*



People tended to equate modern buildings with blandness, and worried that Sheffield would lose its own identity if too many of the 'samey-looking' modern buildings sprung up.

*We're in danger of losing Sheffield's beauty...it'll start to be like any other town if we keep celebrating the need for new offices and apartments instead of its uniqueness and history*

*Female, younger, Sheffield*

### **Beauty in place is a relative value**

It's important to note that people didn't tend to judge places as 'ugly' or 'beautiful', as they were aware that their judgement was dependent on what they were already expecting from the place, what mood they were in, and how familiar they were with the location. So people would say Sheffield is beautiful, but they would also say a Barbados beach was. In these discussions, it wasn't a question of which is more beautiful than the other, and these value judgements did not come naturally to people.

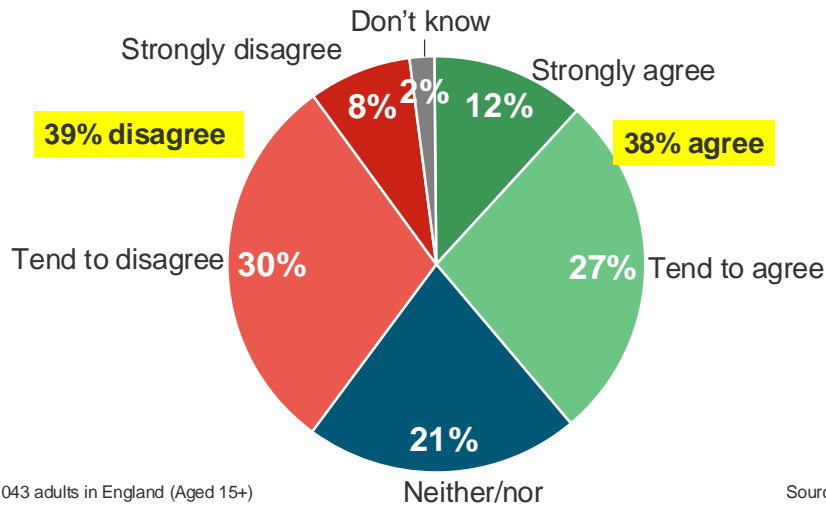
## 2.3 Variations in beauty in different areas

The survey findings show a fairly even split between those who feel they have enough beauty in their local area, and those who do not.

### Divided opinions over whether there is enough Beauty

Please could you tell me the extent to which you agree or disagree?

#### *There is not enough beauty in my local area*



Base: 1,043 adults in England (Aged 15+)

Ipsos MORI

Source: Ipsos MORI



#### Who feels they don't get enough beauty?

Those in the disadvantaged group were less likely to feel they have enough beauty in their local area than the advantaged group. More than half (57%) of the lower skilled, less qualified group agreed that there was not enough beauty in their local area. By contrast, only 33% of the advantaged group agreed there was not enough beauty where they live.

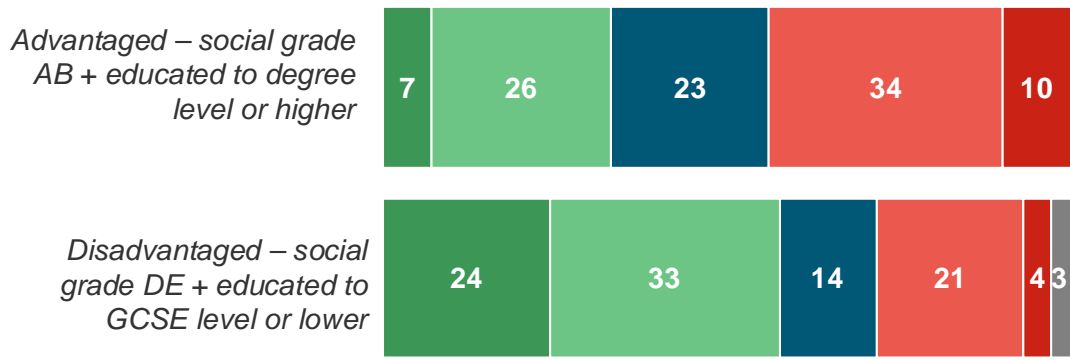


# Variations of beauty in local area

Please could you tell me the extent to which you agree or disagree?

## *There is not enough beauty in my local area*

- % Strongly agree
- % Tend to agree
- % Neither / nor
- % Tend to disagree
- % Strongly disagree
- % Don't know



Source: Ipsos MORI

Ipsos MORI Base: 154 disadvantaged adults and 119 advantaged adults in England (aged 15+),



This trend was reflected in the ethnographic case studies, through the contrasting experiences of beauty between Jack and Debbie. In these examples, safety also plays a prominent role in determining whether experience of place is positive or negative.

Jack found it very difficult to experience beauty on the Park Hill estate where he lives. The threat of violence on Park Hill was a constant concern for him. That, in addition to the area visually appearing ugly to him made it difficult for him to experience beauty at home. In Park Hill, Jack described waking up and feeling like going back to bed so he doesn't have to look at or think about his surroundings.

*'No matter what you do nothings special if you're living round here'*

Jack, ethnographies



Jack gave this as another reason he enjoyed getting away to 'his castle' where the threat of violence no longer existed for him. He recognised and appreciated that people care about and take care of the area. In turn he and his friends also take pride of the area and keep it clean. In contrast to Park Hill, It is a safe place for Jack where he feels at peace and able to relax.

The more affluent can have a different experience. Debbie has spent time and money making the interior of her home exactly how she wants it. The immediate surrounding area is quiet and residential with a low crime rate. After growing up on Gleadless Valley estate (*'when it used to be nice'*) Debbie is no longer comfortable getting out of her car there if she drives through. The dilapidated buildings and general untidiness of the area make it appear dangerous to her, despite her still knowing a number of people who live there.

Debbie chose her current home for the catchment area for schools and because it is a friendly and quiet community where all the kids in the street used to play together and the parents would look out for all of them. Unlike Jack, she was able to move somewhere where she could enjoy a safe and respected environment in her local area.

### **Beauty as a luxury with uneven access**

When asked if beauty is a luxury, Asad talks about the weight richer people hold when it comes to ensuring the 'powers that be' (local council etc) do a good job of maintaining the local area.

*'There are flowers, the lights all work and you just feel nice.'*

Asad, ethnographies

In this way he feels beauty is a luxury since poorer people are less able to mobilise their views politically due to a lack of education, confidence or know-how.

Participants in the qualitative research thought that some areas in Sheffield were more likely to see investment than others, and that this was unfair since everyone should be entitled to the same amount of 'beauty' in their surroundings as anyone else. There was an expectation that any public body managing public spaces should approach the question of 'is there enough beauty here' in an egalitarian way. But the reality people saw was that only some areas of Sheffield were handed investment in a consistent way, the result being that they received a mixed message about their city's surroundings: it's OK for some places to look decrepit, or for some to get cheap new builds, while others are completely spruced-up, or get the creative, well-designed modern developments.

*It's easier for them to put up a cheap apartment block than it is for them to renovate the whole area. You have some really interesting buildings here - the old steel works etc. and loads of industrial heritage the further out from the centre you go. But they're not putting money into these parts because they aren't the places everyone goes to, so they don't come high on the priority list*

Female, younger, Sheffield



## 2.4 How can beauty in places make a difference to people?

The national survey asked how important it was for people that places and buildings in their local area were beautiful, and offered a range of importance from 1 (not at all important) to 10 (very important). The results reveal that it is important for the vast majority of the English public that their local area is beautiful. Less than one in twenty (4%) felt it was not important (scores 1-3) whilst half (49%) rated it 8 or higher on this scale).

Whether for the benefit of providing a visual or emotional experience, beauty is clearly appreciated by many who would prefer to see more of it in their local built environment.

## Beauty and happiness

Participants found that being able to experience beauty in their environment was uplifting and could make them happy. The built environment was seen as playing a role in this, particularly as this was the more likely 'day to day' experience, in comparison with the escapes to the natural environment which were referenced in the ethnography and qualitative research.

*When you're surrounded by beautiful buildings, or something that looks extraordinary, straight away you're more up about things. It's a lovely thing that – just being able to pass by somewhere and feel better. It's like seeing a nice tree or something beautiful in nature, it has the same effect. And that's got to be important for the general public – seeing something you like and feeling happier*

Female, older, Sheffield

## Beauty attracts people

Participants in the Sheffield qualitative open day were quick to argue the case for why we should have more beauty in our public and private spaces. All of them saw the immediate value that a beautiful place has, uplifting people and making them want to go back. Participants talked about beauty as if it had an attractive power and encouraged people to congregate in beautiful areas. Likewise, they thought that places that were not considered beautiful would make people want to stay away.

Many people expressed that both a measure of beauty and an argument in its favour, was the fact that visitors would flock to a place that had a beautiful reputation:

*It's all about having ambition for Sheffield, making sure it's a place people from around the world want to visit. To do that, you have to have memorable buildings that people recognise and flock to. Like Pisa has the leaning tower, what does Sheffield have? The cheese grater car park I guess?!*

Female, younger, Sheffield



*Our train station is great, the way they've mixed old and new, it's very Sheffield, the way the waterfall is made of steel; steel and water are what Sheffield's all about. That makes it beautiful*

*Male, younger, Sheffield*

### **Beauty in the built environment can be relaxing and calming**

It is clear from all stages of the research that the people often experience beauty in the natural environment and have strong associations between beauty and nature. The ethnography participants who worked in the city centre, Debbie and Paul, thought that the recently developed public spaces such as the Peace Gardens and Winter Gardens had a positive effect on people in the city. They felt that offer a 'break' and some 'breathing space' to workers in the middle of the day. It was seen as a positive way of experiencing *nature* in the middle of the city.



### **Places can make people more respectful**

These shared public spaces are also felt to encourage *respect* in the area. David provides a good example of this when he takes us to ‘Devonshire Green’ in the centre of town. He points out that only two pieces of rubbish had been dropped in the entire area. For David, this ‘cycle of respect’ exists because the place looks beautiful to begin with and is surrounded by seemingly affluent residential flats.

### **Poor quality in the built environment is depressing**

Whereas often people talked about the negative effects residents could have on a place and the potential for a nice place to become ugly because of the people that frequented it, with a building like the Magistrates Court, the problem was not a human one, but architectural. Participants thought that working in a poor quality built environment would have a negative impact on their work.

*The Magistrate’s Court is the most horrible place in the world. There’s no natural light, it’s just grey and depressing. It’s not the people, it’s the place. It’s plain horrible!*

*Female, younger, Sheffield*

Participants recognised the consequences of a poor quality environment, particularly in regard to happiness and respect.

*What’s the sense in shoving people in places that will make them feel depressed. I think if places are dull and dowdy it reflects on the people who are living there and they have more of a tendency not to respect that. At least that’s what I’ve seen happen where I am*

*Male, older, Sheffield.*

### **People can make a place beautiful**

Not only are people important in the sense that they are the ones who have the power to keep a place looking nice or let it become rundown, but it was also felt that people – their mood and manners – can literally transform a place into one of beauty. Happy, smiling people created an environment of beauty, and one that in itself, people thought would increase the likelihood of others treating it with the respect and care necessary to make it beautiful.

## People can destroy beauty in place

Regardless of how beautiful the built environment is, participants felt that the residents or users of that environment could treat it badly so that it is no longer beautiful. A more extreme example of this was thought to be the Park Hill estate in Sheffield, where the care and investment which some acknowledged had gone into the buildings was completely undermined by its residents. The lack of investment and respect with which people treated their space with was felt to be a major cause of its dereliction and ultimately, 'ugliness'.

*The only reason I don't like Park Hill, is not because of how it looks, it's because ever since I've lived in Sheffield, since 30 or 40 years ago, it's been getting worse. When it was first built, it was a really nice place to live – good sense of community, people treated it well. But now you can never get that back, it's full of scum now.*

*People haven't appreciated what they had. There used to be shops underneath the flats and a school – everything was there that you'd want and it had a whole sense of community living to it. But you know what they say, you can take the girl out of the gutter but you can't take the gutter out of the girl...that's what happened to Park Hill.*

*Female, older, Sheffield*

## 2.5 Beauty in the built environment in relation to other values

Whilst beauty in the built environment is clearly an important factor for the public, there are other considerations and constraints that are considered when constructing new buildings and places. Historically, architects sought to satisfy the three values of durability, utility and beauty in the buildings they designed.

In our study, we questioned the public about the importance of beauty in relation to affordability and environmental sustainability, both of which have become increasingly important in an age of austerity and concern over climate change. In keeping with the traditional values, we also tested functionality, which in itself was seen as a constituent of beauty in the built environment by some participants in the open day qualitative research. These questions refer to beauty as a visual property rather than the wider emotional experience.

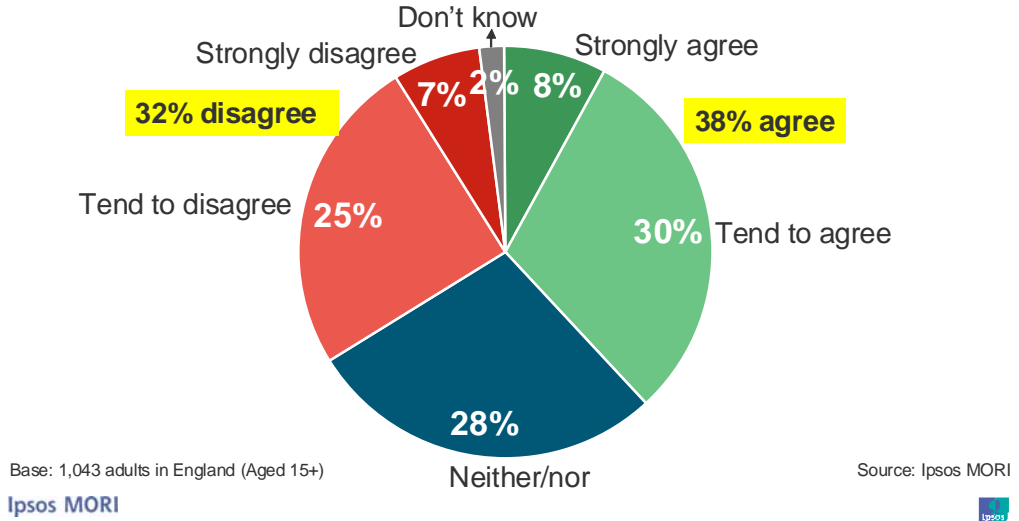
### Affordability

Opinions were divided over whether it was more important that new buildings were affordable than beautiful. Whilst a third (32%) disagreed, almost two out of five (38%) agreed that affordability should have greater importance than beauty in new buildings.

## Affordability vs. Beauty

Please could you tell me the extent to which you agree or disagree?

***It is more important that a new building is affordable than that it is beautiful***



Findings from the qualitative research suggest why a proportion of people valued beauty over affordability, particularly in reference to cheap, modern buildings which were disliked for their lack of effort and care and for their lack of distinctiveness. Some participants found it upsetting that many modern buildings show none of the characteristics that gave them an appreciation of their built environment.



*With a lot of modern housing it seems to me someone has just said, 'what can we get for the money we have', and how can we make a profit at the end of the day. It's not the same as how you imagine they built the City Hall – a place for people to be proud of, something they could admire every time they saw it.*

*Male, younger, Sheffield*



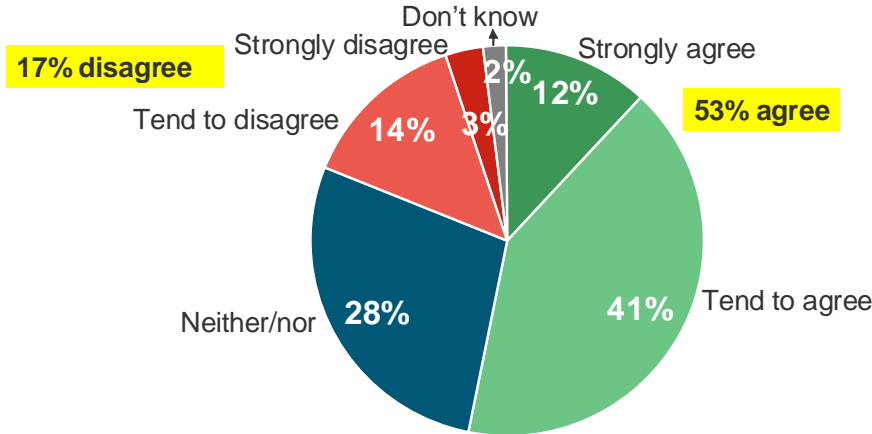
## **Environmental sustainability**

Environmental sustainability was seen as more important than beauty by half of English residents (53%).

## Sustainability vs. Beauty

Please could you tell me the extent to which you agree or disagree?

***It is more important that a new building is environmentally sustainable than that it is beautiful***



Base: 1,043 adults in England (Aged 15+)

Source: Ipsos MORI

Ipsos MORI



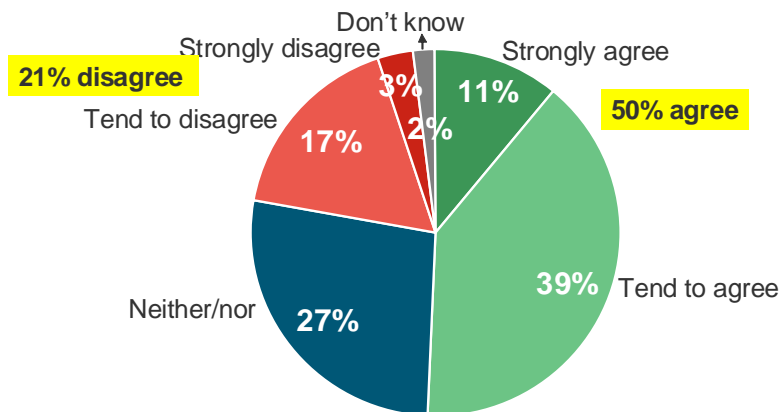
### Functionality

Half of the English public (50%) agreed that it is more important that a new building is *functional* than it is *beautiful*, compared to only one in five (21%) who disagreed.

## Functionality vs. Beauty

Please could you tell me the extent to which you agree or disagree?

***It is more important that a new building is functional than that it is beautiful***



Base: 1,043 adults in England (Aged 15+)

Source: Ipsos MORI

Ipsos MORI



One example of the balance between functionality and beauty came from the taxi driver, Asad, regarding the renovated train station. Asad thought that the station was very beautiful and enjoyed the water feature to look at as well as having a positive visual impact when people arrive into Sheffield. However, he felt that beauty was

prioritised at the expense of functionality. Since the development of the station there have been constant traffic jams getting to and from there. Taxi drivers in particular struggle with this since there is often gridlocked traffic around the area and passengers are late for their trains. Given the choice, Asad would have preferred less beauty around the station if it meant it could be made more functional.

### Who is more likely to favour beauty over other values?

As the tables below show, the advantaged group were significantly more likely to defend the value of beauty in comparison to affordability, sustainability and functionality.

	Affordability is more important than beauty
Advantaged	24%
Disadvantaged	51%

	Sustainability is more important than beauty
Advantaged	40%
Disadvantaged	55%

	Functionality is more important than beauty
Advantaged	38%
Disadvantaged	59%



What does beauty mean for society?

### 3. What does beauty mean for society?

Perhaps a natural way to draw this study to a close is to look at some of the future implications of what we found, and in particular ask what role wider society can play in increasing people's access to beauty.

In this section, we explore some of the connections people made between beauty and society, and make some of our own suggestions for the role it could play.

#### 3.1 The link between beauty and society

It was clear from the qualitative and the ethnographies that people made lots of natural links between beauty and community, and in many cases we heard people define their personal beauty with reference to living in a good community. When we asked people about its link with society, however, they seemed at least initially, to take a step back and revert to the 'why are you asking me' responses that they had given us when we first asked 'what is beauty?'

*However high minded we like to think we're being talking about how beauty links to all these other things – buildings, education, morals – it might all be true but if you just ask the man on the street about beauty they'll tell you about Boots, Chanel, Dior....because that's the way we're swayed into thinking about it. You think beauty, you automatically think – personal beauty. And I don't think I'm alone in that*

Female, younger, Sheffield

However, after an extended period of time thinking about the concept, they began to form an opinion.

#### **Beauty is valuable for society and should be safeguarded**

After people had spent time with the question of beauty and society, we asked them in the qualitative to write a manifesto for beauty, something that would prove its worth to society. They often talked about beauty like it was something that could 'make everything better', as if the world would be a better place if there was just more beauty. The commitment to safeguarding beauty was something that continued to emerge as people discussed the importance of beauty for future generations and improving people's life chances.

Some of the clearest examples of this is in the ethnographies when we asked Debbie towards the end of day if beauty can affect people's life chances. Initially, she said it doesn't matter whether the area you come from and live in is beautiful so long as the inside of your house is nice. But by the end of the interview she had decided that on reflection where you come from can have an affect on how well you do in life since people's opinions of you can change depending on where you live and whether it is considered beautiful (as a good area is) or not (as bad a area is).

Debbie's eighteen year old son explained that there are certain tram stops he and his friends won't get out at. These are usually stops in the middle of a housing estate. He explained that if he looked out the window and felt that the environment 'looks a bit dodgy' he would be less likely to get out as he explains below.

*You are more cautious about the environment because you think it looks a bit dodgy, people are going to be a bit dodgy around it, so because it is not as beautiful as say Dor, you are going to be a bit cautious about the people*

Jack realised the negative connotations of living on Park Hill. He is aware both of the affect it has on him and his own feelings of self-esteem. In a similar way, David is acutely aware that where he lives is a reflection of himself in society and that he will be judged on that basis. David pays a premium of rent in order to live in a clean and beautiful environment because he feels that people will judge him on the basis of appearance and the material things around him. Where he goes is also a conscious decision to reflect a particular kind of image of himself to others. When an area looks good he feels it is more respected like Devonshire Green, where he takes us and points out that no-one has dropped any rubbish.

These points all portray the extent to which an area can have a positive or negative reflection on the people who live in it depending on how beautiful or ugly it is.

### **Appreciating beauty is a worthwhile aspiration**

The idea that beauty is tied to aspirations was a theme that recurred throughout the qualitative. One of the most touching things that emerged was the association people made between beauty and young children or future generations. The importance of taking care and respecting the environment we live in was seen as a crucial lesson for youngsters to learn, just as was the lesson that experiencing beauty on a regular basis was important for overall well-being.

One elderly couple came in to the qualitative day with their grandson. They talked excitedly about the importance of natural surroundings and having access to nature from a very early age. They grateful that their grandson for giving them the opportunity to come out and appreciate their surroundings, but their main concern was that he should be exposed to his local natural environment as much as possible so that he develops the habit for later in life. It was as if getting out and seeing things, being open to new sights and new experiences, were invaluable life lessons which they wanted to pass on to him. Part of the importance of this lesson was learning that beauty is free and easily accessible to all, something that they felt it was crucial for a young person to understand if they wanted a fulfilling and happy life.

*It's about appreciating your surroundings...we walked in here (the Winter Gardens), because the environment is better than outside and that hasn't cost us anything at all. It's not about a price tag; it's about what it gives you, what you get out of it*

*Female, older, Sheffield*



### Older generations feel a sense of responsibility to the young

As well as this sense that older people need to pass on their appreciation of beauty to those younger than them, they also seemed to feel a sense of obligation to make sure there are sufficient opportunities for people to experience beauty in their everyday life in future. People talked about needing to show care and respect for places, not only to ensure that they are nice for the people that live there at the moment, but so they remain so for the future.

*If we don't care for things there'll be nothing left for them, just Lower Don Valley. We need to make sure that places which are beautiful now are preserved and left behind for people to come*

Male, older, Sheffield

This links back to the point about having enough time for beauty which arose in earlier sections. As the omnibus findings showed that older people are three times less likely than those between 15-34 to be too busy to notice beauty, which sits with the view many of this older generation expressed in the qualitative which is that it's almost a duty of their generation to teach the value of taking time for beauty to the younger people.

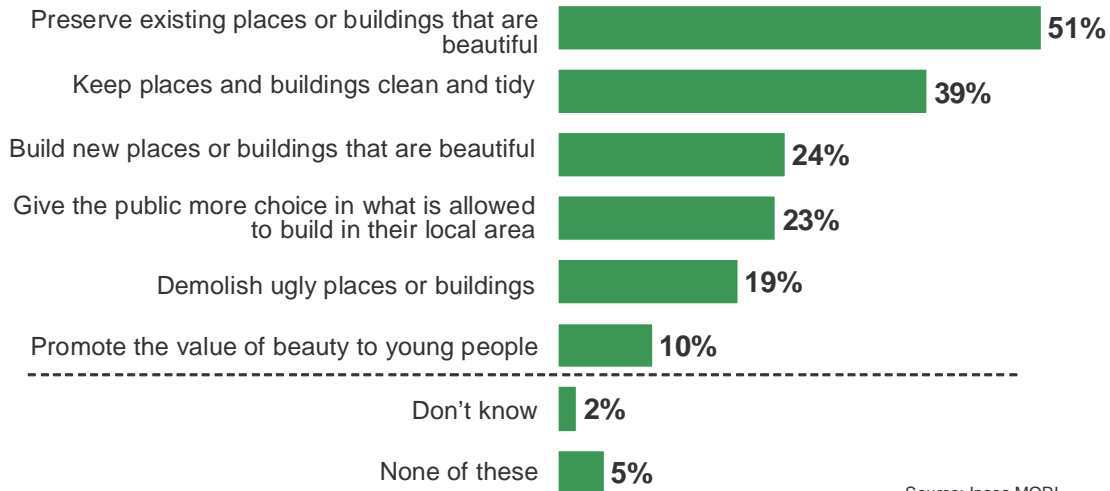
### 3.2 Valuing what we already have

The omnibus findings showed that people put a higher priority on preserving existing 'beautiful' places and on keeping places clean and tidy, than they do on constructing new ones. This indicates that learning to value what we have is perhaps seen by people as a more effective means of finding more beauty than trying to do something radically different. This helps to explain some of the reticence people greet modern buildings with, referring to them as 'eye-sores' or 'intrusions' as if they somehow complicate the relationship people have to their surroundings by adding something foreign and unexpected.

We can see from the chart below that half (51%) of the English public thought that as a society we need to preserve what beauty we have in existing places or buildings that are beautiful in order to reduce ugliness and increase beauty in the built environment. While two in five (39%) were in favour of keeping places and buildings clean and tidy, reflecting findings presented earlier of the apparent association between cleanliness and beauty.

## Majority favour preserving beautiful places and buildings

Which two, if any, of the following do you think are most needed to reduce ugliness and increase beauty in the built environment in England?



Base: 1,043 adults in England (aged 15+)  
Ipsos MORI

Source: Ipsos MORI

## Older and younger people know the value of beauty to society in different ways

*Being surrounded by beauty, or finding it somewhere local, is an important part of everyday. Think about when you get up in the morning and you see it's a nice day, or when you do something that's uplifting, you go somewhere you like, take the dog for a walk in the park. If it's a nice park, a nice place to be in, you just want to carry on and keep walking that bit more... It makes you feel like doing things, carries you through the day. That's something everyone should have.*

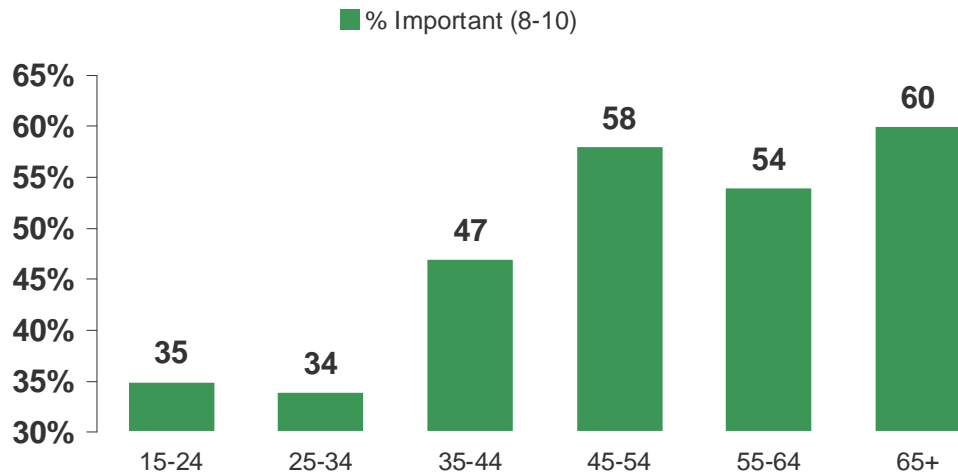
Female, older, Sheffield

The duty older people expressed towards younger people in the qualitative has an interesting parallel in the omnibus findings that show the relatively high importance older people placed on beauty in their local surroundings.



## Beauty in local built environment becomes more important with age

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is very important and 1 is not at all important, how important is it that the places and buildings in your local area are beautiful?



Base: 1,043 English adults (15+)

Source: Ipsos MORI

Ipsos MORI



The above chart suggests that concern for beauty in local built environment becomes more important with age, with only 34% of 25-34 year olds saying it was important, compared with over half of 45-65+ year olds who said it was. But what we found in the qualitative work was that beauty to many younger people didn't always have this immediate association with buildings and their built environment in the way it often did among older audiences.

Young people certainly talked about their surroundings being important to them as well, but they associated 'surroundings' with far more than just nearby places and buildings, extending it to include: peers, community groups, 'vibe' of a place, local teachers, shops, etc. These findings suggest that in order to increase beauty in everyone's local surroundings, the support and investment of many different groups would be necessary. This kind of partnership approach was hinted at by younger groups in the qualitative when they discussed responsibility for increasing beauty in their environment, and stressed the importance of everyone playing their part.

### 3.3 Beauty and education

The association of beauty with education was made by people in two different ways. On the one hand, people would say they saw education as something that could increase the amount of beauty there was in society.

*You need to affect people, somehow, otherwise they just walk around and drop all this broken glass...some people are just not bothered about the way a place looks, but it affects all of us, so something has to be done...is it education, I don't know?*

Female, older, Sheffield

*If you teach a child from when they are young to respect things, I think it goes through their life. As long as it is when they're young*

Female, older, Sheffield

While on the other hand, people also suggested that beauty itself could have an educating, affecting power:

*If you make somewhere nicer and more beautiful for people to live in, they might make it nicer still*

Female, older, Sheffield

*A beautiful school can have positive impact on the kids and how they work*

Paul, ethnographies

The first of these emerged as people talked about the role other people have on your ability to appreciate beauty. People came to a consensus in the qualitative that education played a big part in increasing the amount of beauty in society, given the powerful tool teachers have of informing and guiding people's appreciation and experience. But talk of education was not limited to schools and the young, as people used the term more broadly to mean the education of society as a whole. As well as teachers, the other key influencers people held responsible for nurturing an appreciation of beauty were the media and advertising industries. Unlike teachers and parents, who people saw as having a positive impact, journalists and advertisers were often criticised for promoting an artificial beauty to people and blamed for making people value the wrong things.

### **Beauty plays a part in good schooling**

Towards the end of the time spent with Paul in the ethnographies, he began thinking more deeply about the subject of beauty and all its connotations. Whilst evaluating its meaning in relation to his own day-to-day life Paul talked about the different schools he has to visit as a part of his job as a sports lecturer. Whether an old or new building, those schools that take pride in their appearance feel like they are better looked after and tended to, which in turn makes a positive difference to children's lives.

*As an adult going in...it gives me a different vibe already before you actually spoke to anybody, you would think 'I like this', straight away just by what you walked into, it is comfortable, it is different and it is welcoming...you can see somebody cares about something and has gone out the way to make the best of what they have got and you can appreciate that*



Paul felt that there should be more beauty in schools in order to promote better education. Be it beauty in the architecture, surroundings or simply keeping a clean and tidy image to depict that the school is taken care of and respected, he felt that the beauty of the place had the potential to make a lasting, positive impact.

### **Younger people call for more beauty in their everyday lives**

In the qualitative, young people tended to focus their attention on the immediate benefits that more beauty in society would bring to their everyday lives. They talked about their own happiness and being 'selfish' for wanting to live in a nice environment.

This contrasts again with older people who tended to be more reflective on the subject and argue for the value of beauty to society in general, their children and generations to come.

We talked to a friendship group of young dancers, who all saw beauty as being about working together and connecting with different people. The case they made for more beauty in society centred around the idea that beauty was something which came through having shared experiences and by appreciating others. They talked about their schools and community centres as being nicer places to go to, places that would attract young people like them and encourage everyone to work together.

### **3.4 Role of public investment**

A challenge people recognised during the qualitative was that while they collectively expect 'more beauty from place' they also share many different ideas about what makes a place beautiful, making any collective action difficult. They were confident arguing for the value of beauty and the positive impact it has on individuals and communities, but less comfortable making comparisons between buildings or value judgements about one place being more beautiful than another.

Where they came to agreement was in the value of public investment for making a place beautiful. The kind of investment people referred to took different forms – money normally played a part, but people didn't cite the financial value of a place as the most important thing as they said it was perfectly possible to build an expensive building that was really

unappealing and they were equally confident that a good architect could build a beautiful building cheaply.

More commonly mentioned were the investments of human care and effort. Whether this was at the level of the architects and planners, or the people who frequented the places afterwards taking due care of their surroundings, treating somewhere with respect was considered a necessary part of its beauty.

*The city council and powers that be should be applauded for the whole area around the Peace Gardens – Millennium Galleries, Winter Gardens etc. They've obviously thought about it and put a lot of money in but its money well spent, just look at how many people go there every day!*

Male, younger, Sheffield



*I'm going to sound a bit like Prince Charles, but there's got to be something 'worthy' about the buildings we admire. Modern buildings you see now so often look the same, straight lines and geometric shapes. It comes across as a bit **lazy**, like no one has thought about the **character** of each building, its own individual energy and look.*

*When you see that in a place you get an automatic sense of it as beautiful, but otherwise you just think 'that's a bit lazy'.*

### **Investment need not cost money**

*Sometimes you just think 'what are they doing with all our public money?' So they build fountains in Peace Gardens, and that must cost a bomb, which is ok in some ways because it's nice to look at and people like going there. But there are other things that wouldn't cost so much which would make it a nice place. Music for instance – it's great that the city council are giving away free busking licences to people. It's so nice to go around the streets and hear people make music, and what does that cost anyone? Nothing!*

Male, younger, Sheffield

Local councils are seen as having a duty to encourage people to make their own investment in public spaces - be it through watching public performances of music, taking their children out to play, congregating with friends etc. This suggests that the kind of investment people find important is of a very local sort.

### 3.5 Responsibility for beauty

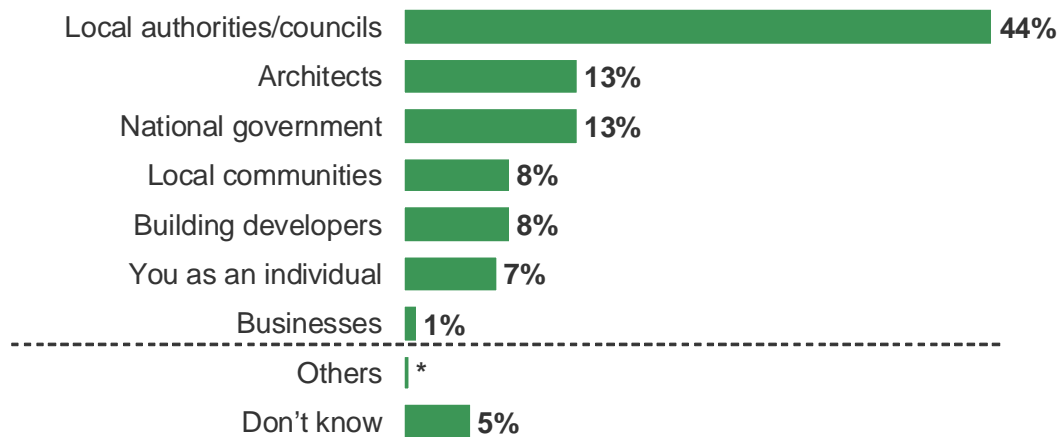
For the most part, people concluded that responsibility for beauty is shared and different groups each have their own remit. It was clear also, however, that individuals feel they carry a personal duty, both to themselves (as there is personal choice involved in the experience of beauty) and to others (as they admit their actions impact those around them). People seemed to suggest that the reason there was such a wide spread of ‘those responsible’ was because of the all encompassing ‘beauty’ they were thinking of: the cleanliness, friendliness, happiness and overall ‘feeling’ they get about a place. However, when prompted to consider the practicalities of who can affect change in a local community, they concluded that local authorities and town councils played a key and leading role; leading by example was thought to be a reliable way to ensure that everyone played their part in safeguarding beauty.

#### Councils must listen to individuals and local communities

The above findings from the qualitative groups mirror those from the quantitative, national survey, which showed that almost half of the English public think the greatest responsibility for increasing beauty in the built environment lies with Local Authorities (44%). This was mostly consistent across different socio-demographic groups.

#### Local authorities have the greatest responsibility for beauty in the built environment

Of the following, who do you think has the greatest responsibility for ensuring that the built environment in England is beautiful?



Base: 1,043 adults in England (aged 15+)  
Ipsos MORI

Source: Ipsos MORI

While this is supported by the qualitative work, there was also recognition amongst participants that the solution is not so simple as leaving it upto ‘someone else’.

One lady challenged the discussion, highlighting that actually it couldn't just be the job of the council, since that would risk silencing the voice of local people. She felt that some kind of public vote was the only way to make sure key decisions were taken which took everyone's point of view in to account.

*Really it's down to the local community to tell the council what they want. If a large enough number of people get together and want the same thing, there should be a petition or a poll that goes round to gather support. Then this can be presented to someone who can actually do something about it, like someone in the council*

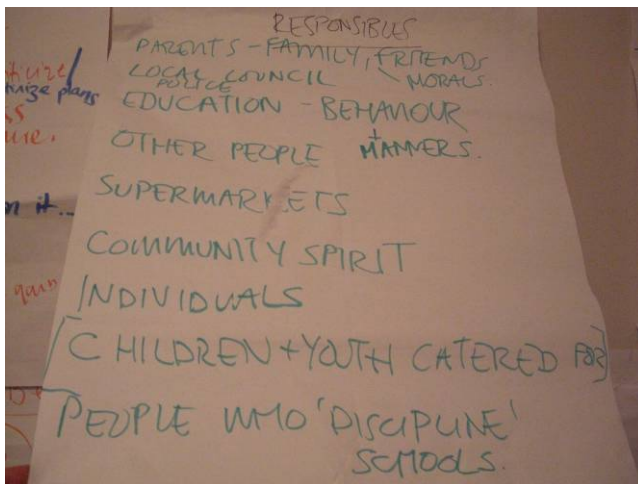
*Female, younger, Sheffield*

*It's up to the people and the council. The council don't know what we want unless we tell them. It's down to people to ask for something if they want it; So there need to be more public, what do you call them.... consultations, yes*

*Female, younger, Sheffield*

The figure below shows a flipchart with participants' ideas for 'Who is responsible for beauty?'

Qualitative open day, Sheffield



## Individuals and key local influencers have a role to play

People accepted that responsibility also lies at a very personal level, in the everyday actions and manners we treat our surroundings and one another with.

*Everyone has a responsibility for beauty – you can say that the local council needs to keep the place clean and tidy, but it's actually down to us – we shouldn't be making it dirty in the first place*

Female, younger, Sheffield

The importance of good manners and more 'social' behaviour was important for participants experience of beauty in place and relates back to the connection people made between beauty and other moral values. It also reflects many of the spontaneous associations with beauty people had when they first encountered the question 'What is it?':

*If someone's got bad manners, it doesn't matter how pretty they might be, you'd find it hard to say they were beautiful*

Male, younger, Sheffield

The role of national influencers and Government was less clear to people as they felt that the experience of beauty was so tied up with local and personal issues that any more distant body was a bit out of place. Some even thought that politicians would only 'interfere' and they questioned the credibility of politicians talking about beauty since it wasn't something they would normally do.

The emphasis people put on the behaviour and attitudes of those around them, the power they considered others had to trigger or block an experience of beauty, did point them towards one way in which public policy has a role. In their ideal society, a place with more and fairer access to beauty, a high standard of up bringing and education was felt to be important for ensuring more 'social' spirit and behaviour at a local level; anti-social behaviour was a major barrier to beauty. The practicalities of how policy could take affect were harder for people to explain, but it suggests an interesting link the public make between beauty and 'good society'.

## 4. Questions to consider



## 4. Questions to consider

Throughout the research and analysis of the findings, a number of questions arose which could prompt further discussion and debate into an understanding of beauty:

### **Defining beauty**

- Are the non-visual, emotional experiences that people relate to and call 'beauty' actually beauty?
- When people talk about 'positive experience of place', is this really the same as beauty (as they say it is)?
- Why is beauty primarily seen as visual when all the other senses can receive it?
- Can people be told what is beautiful?
- Can people be taught to experience beauty?
- What can we gain from a shared definition and understanding of beauty?
- Why do we have two (or more?) quite different ways of understanding beauty? (the visual and emotional)
- If architecture only focuses on the visual, is it a narrow view of how buildings can be beautiful to people?
- If visual experience of beauty is just the first part of a wider experience, what visual cues in the built environment can trigger beautiful experience?
- Are respect, care and investment important to an experience of beauty because they make a place look 'nice' (as an end) or are they important because they just show that someone does care (as a means)?

### **Practical questions**

- If architecture mirrors nature, will it be seen as more beautiful?
- By what means of respect and care can we make a place more beautiful?
- How can you encourage residents and users to treat places with respect and care?
- How can you share the values of modern architecture so that the public appreciates them?
- How can you encourage debate and consultation on changes to the built environment using a 'common' understanding of what beauty is?

# Appendix 1 – Ethnography discussion matrix

## **Beauty** **10-007507-01**

### Ethnographic discussion matrix

***NB. Please note that a discussion matrix is different to a discussion guide in that the discussion takes place in a much more organic fashion. The questions/ areas of focus are embedded into the participant's everyday life and are therefore led by the respondent's behaviour.***

<b>Questions</b>
<b>Life general</b>
<p>Local area/ How long have they lived there/ Why they live there/ What they like or dislike? What's beautiful / ugly about your immediate surroundings (show us round your house / garden)</p> <p>Family/ social networks / relationship with partner (beautiful feelings?)</p> <p>Job/ Interests/ hobbies/ holidays</p>
<b>Beauty</b>
<p>What is beauty? Is it important? Biggest impact of beauty on your life? How do you experience beauty? How do you feel when you experience beauty?</p> <p>What difference does beauty make to your life? What happens when you don't have beauty? What could make a difference for you?</p> <p>Is beauty a necessity / right or a luxury? Does everyone have the same access to beauty? Is beauty fair?</p> <p>Are you aware of how much beauty you experience in life? Are other people aware of how much beauty they experience in life?</p> <p>What makes something ugly?</p>
<b>Beauty and everyday life</b>
<p>Do you get enough beauty in your life? How much beauty is enough?</p> <p>Where / when in your day to day life do you experience beauty? In what ways? PROBE: emotional, physical, mental, natural?</p> <p>Typical weekday, weekends - show us how you spend your typical weekdays / weekend &amp; where you experience ugliness/ beauty within that</p>

Would you like more beauty in your life? Would more beauty in your life make a difference to you? How?

PROBE: would it increase your productivity? Wellbeing? Health? Quality of life? Stress? Work? Motivation? Depression?

Would a lack of beauty / more ugliness in your life make a difference to you? How?

PROBE: would it increase your productivity? Wellbeing? Health? Quality of life? Stress? Work? Motivation? Depression?

### **Threats to beauty**

Do you experience barriers to beauty? Could / should this change? What difference would it make to you / your family? What happens when you don't have beauty in your life?

Is beauty threatened in any way? Why / how?

Does society value beauty? What values do you think are associated with beauty / something being beautiful? What values do you associate with beauty/ something being beautiful?

PROBE: goodness, purity, moral awareness?

Does everyone experience beauty in similar ways?

How could more beauty in society be created? Do you think beauty can motivate society?

### **Overall**

How does beauty (or lack of it) make you feel about your sense of self? Does it signify how society sees you or how you define yourself?

Does beauty (or lack of it) signify how you and/or society see's your possibilities / life chances / horizons? Does it affect your sense of belonging or being part of something larger?

Now you have thought about beauty in more depth;

What is beauty? Is it important? Biggest impact of beauty on your life? How do you experience beauty? How do you feel when you experience beauty?

What difference does beauty make to your life? What happens when you don't have beauty? What could make a difference for you?

# Appendix 2 – Qualitative discussion guide

## **Public Attitudes to Beauty**

Topic guide for Sheffield ‘happening’  
21<sup>st</sup> March 2010

### A note about this guide:

This is intended mainly as a *guidance document* for moderators to steer the discussion and ensure key objectives are covered.

Over the course of the day we foresee that discussions with the general public will each take slightly different formats, as they evolve and adjust to match the needs of each group and build on what previous groups have contributed. The format and content of discussions will depend also on whether pre-recruited groups or one-one-depth interviews are taking place. And discussion timings will need to accommodate any time constraints participants have (except during the 4 pre-recruited groups which will last one hour).

As much of the day is about interaction and a general openness to the expression of ideas about beauty in new and non-predefined ways, it will be especially important that moderators do not use the guide as a script, covering off all questions and using all probes. While there are important questions in each section that moderators will need to explore with all participants, we must be sensitive to prescribe to influence peoples’ definitions and understanding of the very terms and ideas up for discussion. The guide also includes the sort of activities which participants will be encouraged to participate in – although again we will need to judge on the day the value of each and decide which participatory exercises all participants complete and which are left as optional.

### **Objectives:**

The primary objective of this project is **to explore and analyse public attitudes to beauty**

We have grouped secondary objectives into four topic areas:

#### **1. Public perceptions of beauty**

- To explore all the different associations and definitions people have of ‘beauty’
- To raise questions about subjectivity and personal ‘taste’
- To understand the relevance of personal context to an individual’s perception of beauty (or lack of)

#### **2. Public perceptions of beauty in the context of one’s surroundings**

- To link personal associations with beauty to a shared reality – the built environment of Sheffield – and discuss whether a public ‘standard’ exists
- To explore the importance of location and habitat to an individual’s experience of beauty
- To reflect on where there are trade-offs and compromises to be made in development between beauty and other public objectives e.g. affordability, sustainability, efficiency and where beauty is ‘at risk’

### **3. Public attitudes towards beauty in relation to other values**

- To explore the relationship between beauty and other common values
- To explore how people’s value systems shape understanding of what beauty is
- To identify where beauty has a role in private and public life, highlighting potential barriers and threats (private and public) to its promotion

### **4. Public attitudes towards the place of beauty in relation to politics and future development**

- To question where responsibility for ‘beauty’ and ‘beautification’ lies and who, if anyone, is responsible for promoting beauty and demoting ugliness
- To explore specifically the role of politicians in the promotion of beauty and the public’s expectations
- To evaluate the benefits of a world that treats beauty like it matters

A general objective running throughout the day will be:

- To notice the language and means of expression people use in broaching the subject of beauty, and to look at the alternative words people choose to express their attitudes to, and experiences of, ‘beauty’

#### **Moderator introduction**

**2 min**

A brief explanation of why Ipsos MORI is carrying out this research. It is part of a wider exploration of the values of beauty in society today and this discussion is one of many similar things going on over the next few weeks.

Code of conduct: Ipsos MORI is bound by the MRS code of conduct and works independently of its clients. No mention of CABE or AHRC at this point in case it focuses the discussion too much on architecture and the built environment.

No right or wrong answers. Aim of today is to have an open discussion, not a static list of questions, so please take things in the direction you want and I’ll guide if we go off track.

The subject matter is Beauty so it's very broad! We're aware you may have different understandings of the word from other people here, from me, from my colleagues and from things you see written up around the room etc. Please don't hold back, we want to hear everything that comes to mind. It's also OK to disagree with people / with me, so if you feel strongly about anything we talk about feel free to argue the point out.

Beauty might also be hard to talk about in a normal conversation. So if you want to use any of the materials around the room, or draw, or think quietly for a bit, that's fine – just tell me and we'll get whatever you need.

You can tell your friends to drop in later too....

Audio recording, confidentiality, timings

### **Participant introductions**

Name, work / life occupation, neighbourhood, last time you used the word 'beauty' ...

### *Zone 1*

#### **Public perceptions of beauty**

- To explore all the different associations and definitions of 'beauty'
- To raise questions about subjectivity and personal 'taste'
- To understand the relevance of personal context to an individual's perception of beauty (or lack of)

Using flipcharts.....(a separate one per group or depth interview)

- When I say 'beauty' what first comes to mind?

Encourage as many spontaneous responses as possible before moving on

- Tell me a story about something that recently happened to you, or that you came across, which you would describe as 'beautiful'?

*Probes:* something you saw, did, felt, a place you went to, a song, an experience, a person, a possession, object, a meal, a time of day, a colour, a piece of art etc.

Encourage participants to draw their story / memory on the flipchart if they want

- Where, what kind of settings, do you experience beauty in?

*Probe:* objects, works of art, nature, music, alone, with others, at work, at home, standing still, active, UK, abroad, in buildings

- When do you experience it?

*Probe:* everyday, at weekends, evenings, in the near future, distant future, in the past, all the time, rarely, time of day, time of year, state of mind

For example, we spoke to someone recently who said they had no time for beauty because of the kind of work they do (long hours in a restaurant). How do you relate to that? Does time affect your appreciation of it?

- What else gets in the way of experiencing beauty?

Use flipchart to list barriers to an experience of beauty

Probe for explanations around each barrier

- What about the opposites of beauty?

*Probe:* ugliness, blandness, old things, new things....

- Where and when do you experience these?

We're going to talk a bit now about some of the details of your actual experiences of beauty.

Write up and draw the 5 senses on flipchart:

SMELL	HEARING	SIGHT	TOUCH	SPEECH
NOSE	EARS	EYES	FINGERS, SKIN	
MOUTH				

- Which of the five senses is most important for your experience of beauty? Is it a combination of all? Does it depend on the situation?
- Talk me through some examples of how experiences of beauty involve the senses?

Spontaneous responses, then...

- Is experiencing beauty through one sense a trigger for experiencing it through one of the others?

For example, you might see something that looks beautiful and after contemplating it find it's about more than just the 'look' but the whole feel you get when you look at it....

- Or maybe is one of the senses more important than the others when it comes to experiencing beauty? Which?
- Can we come to an agreement about that? Or shall we agree to disagree?
- How important do you think it is that when we talk about beauty we are referring (mainly) to the same experience of sense?

Write up and draw different weather states on flipchart

SUMMER	WINTER	AUTUMN	SPRING	DRIZZLE
SUNNY		CLOUDY	RAINY	NIGHT
BLUE SKY	BLOSSOMS	CITY	SUNSET	DAY
DUSK	PITCH BLACK		SNOWY	DAWN

- How is the weather or time of year important for your experience of beauty?
- Are you more likely to encounter beauty on a certain type of day / time of year? Or in a certain type of climate?
- When are you less likely to encounter beauty?
- Talk me through the effect this can have on your well-being?
- How do you cope at those times of year or types of day when you're without beauty? Do you notice when it's not there?
- What about ugliness? When there's less beauty around, does it feel like things are actually uglier? What effect does this have on you?



- Or when there's less beauty around, are things just 'neutral' – not beautiful, not ugly?
- What would things be like if there was no beauty? Could you imagine a world where there was none? Do you ever feel there isn't any? Or not enough?

*Probe:* when, where, what kind of situation, environment, state of mind

- How does having a lack of beauty or no beauty affect you? How does it make you feel?

Flipchart responses....

## **Zone 2:**

### **Public perceptions of beauty in the context of one's surroundings**

- To link personal associations with beauty to a shared reality – the built environment of Sheffield – and discuss whether a public 'standard' exists
- To explore the importance of location and habitat to an individual's experience of beauty
- To reflect on where there are trade-offs and compromises to be made in development between beauty and other public objectives e.g. affordability, sustainability, efficiency and where beauty is 'at risk'

Hand out coloured pens and maps of Sheffield (either individual A4 copies for the discussion groups or using a large A-Z map for all participants to write on)

Take a few minutes to look at this map....find where you live, work, shop, where we are today...circle these points

We're going to look now at your local environment and how it effects your experience of beauty (by local env. I mean the places in Sheffield where you spend time, live, work etc.)

1) Using pens, show me how you would break the city up into sections

*Probe:* beautiful, ugly, nice to be in, not nice to be in, peaceful, hectic, unique, bland, welcoming, hostile, nature, businesses, wealthy areas, deprived spots

Also mark out landmarks or buildings that come to mind, anything you especially like or don't like, things you'd want removed or things you're proud to live / work near

During discussion, display photos and colour copies of recent urban regeneration projects.

'Before and after' images. CABA case studies and areas of Sheffield Andrea (semiotician) is visiting.

Stick maps up on flipchart....

- *Can you each talk through your map? How does yours compare to what others have done? Are there similarities? Differences? Why do you think there are?*
- *What is it about the areas you've marked that give them a particular look and feel?*

*Probe:* architecture, pollution, public spaces, parks, nature, artwork, shops, number of people, type of housing, type of people, public buildings, amount of money that's gone into them

- *To what extent is beauty something you associate with Sheffield?*
- *Has this changed over time? How?*
- *What other words like beauty, or instead of beauty, do you associate with Sheffield?*

Ask participants to write all words on a flipchart – circling ones others have written that they agree with

Spontaneous words, then probe:

*Do you associate these words with it:*

*Depressing, uplifting, pleasing to look at, eye-sore....*

- *What is it about Sheffield that makes you say that? Probe: buildings, history of development, public spaces, city centre, outskirts, public investment*

Standing next to large visuals of the built environment in Sheffield. These include CABE case studies of recent urban regeneration projects and areas of Sheffield the semiotician will be visiting. Aswell as classical buildings, modern builds, open spaces, commercial centres.

Examples: Park Hill Estate, Peace Gardens

- *Take a look at these areas in Sheffield, what's your first thought about them?*
- *What kind of an experience do you associate with these places?*
- *Do you associate beauty with these places? Why?*
- *What other words would you use to describe the feelings you might have if we went and stood in one of these spots?*
- *Does this experience happen when you just visit or do you have to spend time there?*

- *What else can effect whether you have an experience of beauty in these places, other than just your surroundings? Probe: state of mind, purpose, who else you are with*

Using the Millennium Gallery room as a talking point and the view from the window across to park hill estate, Sheffield Hallam uni buildings and the new developments on the hillside....

- *What about this place? How do you feel coming in here?*
- *What about the view?*
- *Or to the Winter Gardens next door?*
  
- *How is it a different experience to where you've come from today? Is it better? Worse? What makes it so?*
  
- *How affected do you normally feel by your surroundings?*

Looking at visuals of classical buildings and structures:

- *What do you think of these sorts of buildings?*
  - *Do you find them 'beautiful'? Why/ why not?*
  - *Probe: nice / not nice to look at, well-designed, boring useful, old-looking, grand, imposing, proportioned, welcoming, old fashioned*
  
- *How do they compare with other buildings and areas in Sheffield?*  
*Probe: Modern developments, places you consider ugly, natural spaces*
  
- *Is there something that makes these 'older' ones stand out as more or less 'beautiful'? What is that?*

- *Do you find them unique / not unique? Why?*

Looking at visuals of new developments:

- *What do you think of these sorts of buildings?*
  - *Do you find them 'beautiful'? Why/ why not?*
- Probe: nice / not nice to look at, useful, modern, grand, ugly, imposing, different, proportioned, too modern, welcoming, arty, impractical, well-designed
- *How do they compare with other buildings and areas in Sheffield?*

Probe: Older ones, places you consider ugly, natural spaces

- *Is there something that makes these 'newer' ones stand out as more or less 'beautiful'? What is that?*
- *What makes them unique / not unique? Why?*

Imagine you were in charge, which buildings in Sheffield would you want to showcase and tell people about? Places that make you feel good / happy to be living or working near...

- What about areas that you think have been 'neglected' in the city, or on the outskirts. Which are these?

Plain paper and pens

Imagine you are in charge of town planning and the development of the area in Sheffield and surrounding suburbs. Take 2 minutes to think about the arguments you would give to your committee and to the public for why:

- 1) Place A is beautiful and you would like it to be preserved
- 2) Place B has potential to be beautiful and you would like it to be reworked / restored
- 3) Place C is an area that you don't find 'beauty' in and you would like to see completely 'done up' / remade afresh

*Write 1-3 up on flipchart*

*Collect in responses and, if time, read out and discuss. If not, save and use in discussions with subsequent participants*

### **Zone 3:**

#### **Public attitudes towards beauty in relation to other values**

- To explore the relationship between beauty and other common values
- To explore how people's value systems shape understanding of what beauty is
- To identify where beauty has a role in private and public life, highlighting

Recap discussion so far – we've talked about

*Your personal experiences of beauty  
How your surroundings affect this*

We're going to look now at whether or not beauty is important and how it compares to other things you consider important in life, things which contribute to your overall well being

*Stick up A1 sheet of 'values' and hand out colour pens*

*Includes: BEAUTY (in centre of sheet), surrounded by*

*Work, age, happiness, cosmetics / looks, family, culture, religion, spirituality, commercialism, economics, food, history, science, environment, society, community,*

*education, justice, architecture, politics, sustainability, sadness, nationalism, right and wrong, morality, children, the future, imagination, art, humanity, globalisation, art, money, wealth, emotions, death, mental health, physical health, time, travel, luxury, green issues, poverty*

With the person on your left, take 5 minutes to discuss how you see beauty as in any way connected to these other words. Draw a line between Beauty and any that you think relate to or can affect your experience of beauty.

There are lots - we don't have to talk about each one, it's just a starting point

I'm doing it with you

Going round each pair....

- Can one / both of you explain the lines you've drawn

For example, I've linked BEAUTY to time because I know that when I have no time, I rarely 'see' the beauty in things. But when I do have time, I can appreciate it more. So a resolution I might make is - make time to take in and experience beauty more often

Someone we spoke to before said they related BEAUTY to spirituality. They felt that it was a private thing that they looked 'inwards' for. So they said they make an effort to find time and peaceful situations where they can be spiritual

What resolutions would you make? What would enhance your experience of beauty? What needs to change for you to experience more?

*Probe around any similarity in the 'links' people make between values and their resolutions they make. Look for whether there's a consensus about some things*

- Thinking back to all our discussions about beauty and your experiences of beauty, is it as important a personal value as these other ones on the sheet?
- Which is it more / less important than? Why is that?
- People often talk about 'happiness' and 'well being' as things that are important to them. How does beauty and your experience of beauty affect your happiness or well-being?
- To what extent is it just something personal, that's important to you?
- Do you see it as being something that's important to other people?
- We talked before about the idea of life without beauty and what that would be like. It's sometimes said that life without health and happiness is a 'less good life'. That being happy and healthy are two of the most important things in life.

- How does a life without beauty compare to a life without health and happiness? Is having access to beauty as important as access to good health and happiness?
  - Does your access and experience of beauty improve your health and happiness?
- *Can you tell me about a time when you felt you didn't have any beauty in your life, or not enough?*

Looking back at visuals of new developments and urban regeneration

- *How important do you think these developments are in terms of bringing about more experiences of beauty?*
- *What effect do you think developments we've seen have on Sheffield as a whole? On individuals?*
- *How many of you have felt affected by them? Is that because it's a place you live or have some direct contact with? Or is there a more general sense of 'this is good for Sheffield'?*

*Topics to discuss in this section if they don't come up before*

- What is the relation between beauty and money? To what extent is beauty something you can 'buy'? Does how much money you have, determine how much beauty you can experience?
- Is beauty worth spending money on – both for you personally, and for society?
- Or is beauty a luxury? A bonus extra?
- Are there more important things to focus on – you personally? And society?



## **Zone 4:**

### **Public attitudes towards the place of beauty in relation to politics and future development**

- To question where responsibility for 'beauty' and 'beautification' lies and who, if anyone, is responsible for promoting beauty and demoting ugliness
- To explore specifically the role of politicians in the promotion of beauty and the public's expectation of them in this

Our last topic today is about how society takes responsibility for 'beauty' and the role that other people and organisations have in its preservation and creation

*Bring out all materials used so far - maps, 'values sheet', original flipcharts with associations of beauty and flipcharts with peoples individual experiences written on and move towards the window as visual stimulus of the built environment*

- Thinking over everything we've discussed so far –
  - Your personal experiences
  - Your opinions about how your surroundings affect this
  - The question of how important beauty is to you and others
- Tell me all the ways that other people are involved in making your access to beauty possible?
- Do you think there are things that are outside of your control that affect your access of beauty?
- Who is responsible for this? *Probe: family and friends, employers, politicians, David Cameron, local councillors, culture minister, environment minister, Westminster, Gordon Brown*
- To what extent do you think society attaches importance to beauty? Is it enough?
- Should politicians take more responsibility for the bringing about beauty and limiting ugliness? Why?
- To what extent do you think politicians can have any effect on how beautiful your surroundings are? Can collective action change how much 'beauty' there is in your life? Or is it just down to you?

*If there is some consensus that politicians can have an impact....*

- What should politicians do to change the *amount* of 'beauty' you come in contact with?
  - *Probe: Is it in their policies, in building and preserving beautiful areas?*
  - *Probe: Or is it in their language, in the speeches they give?*

There's a lot of talk in politics at the moment about shrinking public finances and how to decide where public money is spent

But there are some new things that politicians often argue we need to pay more attention to for the future well-being of the country and the world. This sometimes means more money goes to these areas. For example they talk about preserving the environment and creating a low carbon world.

- Imagine we are going to make an argument for spending more public money on 'beauty'. Where would we start?

*Flipchart all responses and probe throughout*

- How much do you think spending money on 'beauty' is good value for money? What are the 'returns' / what do we benefit as a society?
- Is it right that we should put a price-tag on beauty? Why / why not?
- Would you pay to see something beautiful? To live in somewhere beautiful? Why?
- To what extent does spending money on beauty, mean less money to spend on other things? Is that ok? Is that fair?
- Do we lose something if we focus on beauty? *Probe: affordability, equality of access*

*Write on separate flipchart:*

*'Sustainable development'                      'Beauty'*

These isn't always an 'either or' scenario, but

- How would you decide which of these is more important?
- People say we should be as environmentally aware as possible – recycling at home, building energy efficient homes, reducing our carbon footprint – how important is it to be as 'beauty-aware' as possible?
- Are they equally important?
- Can we compare looking after our planet with keeping it beautiful?
- Can we *combine* looking after our planet / our towns / countryside with keeping it beautiful?

*Probe: clean street, modern design of rubbish bins (Sheffield), advertising around 'keeping Sheffield cleaner, greener, safer'*

- What would you think if you saw a sign that said  
  
'Keep Sheffield cleaner, greener, beautiful'

- How would it be different to 'cleaner, greener, safer'? Is it better or worse?
- Would it encourage you to keep it clean / look after your surroundings? Why?
- To what extent is it about creating beauty, not just preserving it?

*Finally....*

- Could you imagine a world like where people in power talked about beauty as much as they talk about the environment, banks?
- What would be different about that kind of world? *Probe: well-being, happiness, quality of life*
- Do you think it is important to hear politicians talk about how beauty matters?
- Would it change the way you think about politicians if they did?
- So what do we / they do?

*Draw a line up on flipchart:*

*Where we are now-----Where we want to be*

- Before you go, can you each plot on the line the most important things which you think need to happen to improve the situation of 'beauty' in the world / or in Sheffield?
- *Probe: whatever!*

*Build new buildings, preserve old buildings, retain / make more open space, improve social housing estates, better access to 'views', greener / sustainable solutions, more government investment, promote beauty as important for individual well being*

Thank group and ask everyone to stay around as long as they like – wander around or talk more to one of the moderators.

Ask everyone before they leave to spend a few minutes at the 'exit station' where a member of the ethnography team will film their final comments

Exit station:

*Blow up image of Andrew Motion's poem 'What If?' written on the wall of Sheffield Hallam University*

## Appendix 3 – Topline results from omnibus

### CABE Beauty Survey

10-007507

#### **Topline Results – 20/04/10**

- Ipsos MORI carried out a face-to-face quota survey with 1,043 residents across England aged 15+.
- Interviews were conducted using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI).
- Results are based upon all completed interviews between 9/04/10 and 15/04/10.
- Data are weighted by age, gender, work status
- Where figures do not add up to 100%, this is the result of computer rounding or multiple responses.
- An asterisk indicates a score less than 0.5%, but greater than zero.
- Unless otherwise indicated, results are based on all respondents.

#### **Associations with beauty**

**Q1. Which two or three of the following words, if any, do you most closely associate with beauty?**

	%
Natural	66
Clean	33
Stylish	30
Creative	20
Timeless	20
Calm	17
Inspiring	17
Expensive	10
Frivolous	2
Snobbish	1
Other	*
None of these	4
Don't know	3

**Q2. In which of the following, if any, have you ever experienced beauty?**

	%
The natural environment	65
Art	47
Buildings and parks	41
Animals	40
Music	38
Other people	37
Fashion	27
Consumer products	9
Other	1
None of these	5
Don't know	3

**Q3. And in which one of these do you experience beauty most often?**

*Base: All who say they have experienced beauty*

	%
The natural environment	49
Other people	10
Music	8
Fashion	8
Art	8
Buildings and parks	6
Animals	6
Consumer products	2
Other	*
Don't know	1

**Q4. I am about to read out some statements about beauty. For each of the statements, please could you tell me the extent to which you agree or disagree?**

		Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither / nor	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<b>Everyone should be able to experience beauty on a regular basis</b>	%	40	41	14	2	1	3
<b>If you are poor beauty matters less</b>	%	4	14	16	28	34	4

**Beauty in the built environment**

**Q5. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is very important and 1 is not at all important, how important is it that the places and buildings in your local area are beautiful?**

	%	MEAN SCORE = 7.26
Important (8-10)	48	
Neither (4-7)	45	
Not important (1-3)	4	
Don't know	2	

**Q6. Of the following, who do you think has the greatest responsibility for ensuring that the built environment in England is beautiful?**

Local Authorities/Councils	44
Architects	13
National Government	13
Local communities	8
Building developers	8
You as an individual	7
Businesses	1
Other	*
Don't know	5

**Q7. Which two, if any, of the following do you think are most needed to reduce ugliness and increase beauty in the built environment in England?**

	%
Preserve existing places or buildings that are beautiful	51
Keep places and buildings clean and tidy	39
Build new places or buildings that are beautiful	24
Give the public more choice in what is allowed to be built in their local area	23
Demolish ugly places or buildings	19
Promote the value of beauty to young people	10
Other	-
None of these	5
Don't know	2

**Q8. Now I am about to read out a number of statements about beauty in the built environment. For each of the statements, please could you tell me the extent to which you agree or disagree?**

		Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither / nor	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<b>There is not enough beauty in my local area</b>	%	12	27	21	30	8	2
<b>I am too busy to notice beauty in my local area</b>	%	1	11	17	38	31	2
<b>It is more important that a new building is affordable than that it is beautiful</b>	%	8	30	28	25	7	2
<b>It is more important that a new building is environmentally sustainable than that it is beautiful</b>	%	12	41	28	14	3	2
<b>It is more important that a new building is functional than that it is beautiful</b>	%	11	39	27	17	3	2