

Staveley Town Deal - Social Infrastructure Project

Proposal for a scoping exercise - draft 04/02/2025

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Background

Staveley Town Deal¹

The Staveley Town Deal is a programme of projects which cover the themes of Place, Health and Wellbeing, Innovation and Enterprise, and Inclusive Growth. Staveley was one of the 101 towns across England invited to make a Town Deal bid as part of the Government's Towns Fund. The Staveley Town Deal was awarded £25.2m in March 2021. It includes a range of regeneration projects that will be delivered by March 2026 with and for the communities of the Staveley area. Key projects include: Barrow Hill Memorial Hall; Chesterfield Canal Restoration; Staveley Waterside; Wheels to Work; DRIIve (Derbyshire Rail Industry Innovation Vehicle); Construction Skills Hub; Staveley 21; Hartington Industrial Park; Staveley Miners Welfare Football Club, Skills Academy. The overall aim of the programme is to ensure the area is "a place to start, stay and grow".

What is Social Infrastructure?

In recent years, the concept of 'Social Infrastructure' has become increasingly popular among local policymakers, researchers and urban planners, often in the context of programmes of local investment, regeneration and socio-economic development. Whilst different definitions are used, in the public policy arena Social Infrastructure tends to refer to "spaces, services and structures that support the quality of life of a nation, region, city or local community" (British Academy 2023). In practical terms, Social Infrastructure is commonly associated with a range of physical spaces, including hubs of public service provision (libraries, health centres, advice centres, etc.) as well as formal and informal spaces of social interaction, support and connectedness, whether they are run by the public, private or third sector.

Academic research has highlighted the role of Social Infrastructure in enabling communities to "create social connections" (Barratt, 2023) and to facilitate interactions "between and within the diverse sections of a community" (Kelsey and Kenny, 2021) leading to the development of meaningful relationships and feelings of trust, reciprocity and belonging.

¹ Source: <https://www.chesterfield.gov.uk/staveley-town-deal>

These elements are strictly related to well-established concepts such as community networks, social cohesion and inclusion, and social capital.

A well-developed Social Infrastructure is considered the basis for the social, cultural and economic development of local communities, and the prerequisite to reduce inequalities, promote social mobility and address economic imbalances within and across regions.

However, the construction of new (or redeveloped of) physical spaces, resources and services does not guarantee, on its own, an improvement of Social Infrastructure. Rather, these resources must be open and accessible to diverse members of a local community, address needs in a culturally appropriate manner, and act as nodes of tight social and physical networks in which people are embedded and through which social and economic capital can be channelled and developed (D'Angelo et al. forthcoming). This requires attention to issues of e.g. accessibility and connectivity, as well as community engagement and participation in planning and organising the use of physical infrastructure.

Researching and Enhancing Social Infrastructure

A Social Infrastructure perspective offers a useful framework to explore the links between physical spaces and community assets on the one hand, and processes of social connectedness, development and growth on the other.

Social Infrastructure activities can employ different methods and approaches, including desk research, primary data collection and analysis, and different kinds of participatory action research (PAR) and community-led research. Research projects and activities in this field can help to assess and 'map' social infrastructure and at the same time be a tool to promote and enhance it. Combinations of these approaches can help with e.g.:

- **Mapping** community **assets**, resources and sources of support, identifying different levels of access and (un)met **needs** across diverse communities.
- **Investigating** community **experiences**, perceptions and **aspirations** regarding local opportunities and support (e.g. focussing on particular socio-demographic sections of the population).
- **Assessing** the community **impact** and effectiveness of regeneration, local **investment** and community **engagement** programmes in the short, medium and long term.
- **Identifying gaps and priorities** for local development, investment and intervention, feeding into strategies and development plans.

Proposed scoping exercise

Objectives

The proposed project is a scoping exercise with the main aim of informing the development of a longer term research project (to be undertaken through a sponsored PhD programme or other funding model – see ‘Costing/Resourcing’ section at the end).

In particular, the scoping exercise will be used to:

- a) identify and detail the research needs of the ‘Staveley Town Deal’, in consultation with key stakeholders and informed by latest developments in research and practice;
- b) finetune the research aims and develop the methodological approach for a three-year Social Infrastructure research project (including identification and engagement of necessary project partners);
- c) develop a full proposal for the Social Infrastructure Project;

Additionally, the scoping exercise will allow us to:

- d) collect preliminary information on the current development of the Staveley Town Deal programme and its relationship to Social Infrastructure across Staveley (informing a scoping exercise report);
- e) identify potential additional ideas and opportunities for research, consultancy, and participatory action research to be developed in this area, exploring internal and external funding opportunities.

Work plan

The proposed scoping exercise will take place over a period of 6 months, and will include the following stages/actions:

- Preliminary **synthesization** of current and emerging research (including both academic research and ‘social infrastructure’ reports from the industry), to identify Social Infrastructure metrics and benchmark against other programmes.
- **Background research** on Staveley and the Town Deal Programme (informed by secondary data and statistics).
- **Site visits** accompanied by members of the Town Deal board or other local stakeholders to key sites of the Town Deal programme.
- Two **focus groups** with key stakeholders to:
 - o firstly, discuss research and change needs and explore the feasibility of different methodological approaches for the project.
 - o secondly, feedback on a research project prototype.

- One online **methodological workshop** with practitioners and academic advisors to develop the project methodology and prototype.
- Production of a **short report** (*deliverable 2**) based on synthesis of emerging research and benchmarks, analysis of background data and focus groups results.
- Development of a 3-year **project plan** (*deliverable 1**); alongside the scoping out of potential additional activities that could be supported by the university.

Gantt chart (indicative)

Month	1	2	3	4	5	6
Project inception						
Preliminary literature review						
Preliminary background research						
Site visits						
Focus groups with stakeholders						
Methodological workshop						
Report on preliminary data analysis					*D1	
Development of project plan						*D2
Scoping out additional activities						

Academic expertise

The project lead for the project will be **Professor Alessio D’Angelo**. He has been working for over two decades on theoretical and methodological developments on social networks and social capital, at the intersection of Social Policy and Sociology, often in collaboration with other scholars (both nationally and internationally) and with private, public and third sector organisations. Over the past few years, Prof. D’Angelo has developed a programme of work on ‘mapping community networks’ and social infrastructure with colleagues at the University of Nottingham and London Metropolitan University². With a background in research consultancy and expertise in the development of measurement frameworks and ‘knowledge exchange’ initiatives, Professor D’Angelo is the convenor of the Social Network Analysis study group at the British Sociological Association.

² See: Alessio D’Angelo, Beatrice De Carli, Elena Genova, Will Paterson and Louise Ryan, Mapping Social Infrastructure: Project Report and Toolkit (London: London Metropolitan University, 2024).

Costing/Resourcing

Scoping Exercise

The indicative cost of the 6-month scoping exercise would be of around £ 15,500 (including costs for a 0.4 FTE Researchers, contribution to Project lead costs, and basic costs for travel and organisation of focus groups and other meetings) + VAT if applicable.

Social Infrastructure Project

The cost of the long-term Social Infrastructure project would depend on the funding model adopted. Main options include:

- **Sponsored PhD**

What it is: A PhD on a pre-defined topic, with costs covered by a sponsor.

Indicative cost: Tuition Fees (~£5k pa) and Stipend (~£20k pa), plus bench fees/travel

Timeframe: As soon as funds and topic are confirmed, UoD can advertise to identify a PhD candidate. PhD starts dates are in September or January.

Info: For examples of PhD studentships at the University of Derby see:

www.derby.ac.uk/research/degrees/applicants/studentship-opportunities/

- **Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP)**

What it is: A longstanding national programme of Knowledge Exchange, with a graduate undertaking a project as part of a partnership between a university and an industry partner. Public funds are used to cover 50%-75% of the costs

Indicative cost: Usually around £30-35k pa of partner contribution (against a total budget of £90-100k)

Timeframe: Developing a KTP application usually takes 6-8 weeks. Once submitted, proposals take about 12 weeks to be assessed and, if successful, are advertised.

Info: For information about the UKRI KTP programme see: <https://iuk-ktp.org.uk/>

- **Contract research**

What it is: This is a research project directly commissioned to the university. It is designed and delivered according to agreed project specs.

- *Indicative costs:* This will vary Depending on the project requirements, usually from 30-60k pa depending on project specs.

Timeframe: This can start as soon as funds and project details are confirmed (and a project team has been appointed).