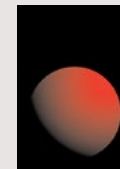


UK Architects Declare Practice Guide → 02 → Regenerative Design



UK Architects Declare
Climate & Biodiversity
Emergency

UK Architects Declare Practice Guide

UK Architects Declare

www.architectsdeclare.com
hello@architectsdeclare.com

Bluesky [@architectsdeclare.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/architectsdeclare.bsky.social)
Instagram [@architectsdeclare_uk](https://www.instagram.com/architectsdeclare_uk)
Linkedin www.linkedin.com/company/uk-architects-declare

Architects Declare was launched as a not-for-profit organisation in the UK on 30 May 2019. Since April 2024 UK Architects Declare is a registered charity. At the time of publication, it has over 1,424 signatories in the UK. It is part of Built Environment Declares, which is now represented in 27 countries around the world.

www.builtenvironmentdeclares.com

Design by Lands
lands.ie

© 2026 Architects Declare

02 Regenerative Design

This document has been created by an Architects Declare working group to help signatories convert their declaration into meaningful action and build momentum within their practice. The guide is intended to be a live, working document that helps fulfil the fourth point in our 12-point declaration by encouraging the sharing of knowledge and research on an open source basis. We expect this guide to evolve and be refined in future iterations as our understanding of the climate and biodiversity crises develops, and as our industry innovates to find new solutions to these challenges. We encourage our signatories—and other architectural practices or built environment practitioners—to contact us with feedback on this version and examples for the next version.

Throughout the guide we have referenced projects, suppliers, methods and frameworks which our contributors have experience of. We included these specifics to help clarify our intention but encourage practices to do their

own due diligence on specific services. We have contacted the practices and initiatives featured in the guide to request permission to reproduce their work. If we have missed any, please do get in touch so that we can resolve this in future versions of this Guide.

This is section 2 of the guide focusing on Regenerative Design; please read in conjunction with all other sections of the guide.

The Architects Declare Practice guide would not have come to light without the contribution, kind help, and guidance of an enthusiastic group of volunteers, and excellent feedback from expert reviewers. We would like to acknowledge and thank all:

KEY CONTRIBUTORS

Amy Thompson [Stonewood Design](#)
Anna Pamphilon [Within Planetary Boundaries Studio](#)
Deepthi Ravi [Architect | Sustainability Specialist](#)
Eike Sindlinger [Arup](#)
Kathryn Firth [FPdesign](#)
Kevin Logan [Maccreeanor Lavington](#)
Marc Seligmann [Maccreeanor Lavington](#)

CONTRIBUTORS

Anna Bardos [Max Fordham](#)
Charlotte Harvey [Wilkinson Eyre](#)
Christian Dimpleby [White Arkitekter](#)
Emily Loquidis [AECOM / UCL](#)
Esfandiar Burman [UCL](#)
Federico Cascavilla [WSP](#)
Giambattista Brizzi [Deerns](#)
Helen Gordon [Nested Living](#)
Jonny Buckland [Studio SAAR](#)
Liz Liddell-Grainger [JTP](#)
Michelle Sanchez [Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners](#)
Mina Samangoeei [Oxford Brookes University](#)
Nuno Correia [Wilkinson Eyre](#)
Oscar Rodriguez [Architecture & Food](#)
Paul Toyne [Sustainability & Business Consulting](#)
Rebecca Cooper [Retrofit Action for Tomorrow](#)
Camila Rock de Luigi [UCL Alumni](#)
Roderic Bunn [UCL Bartlett School of Environment, Energy and Resources](#)
Rosie Bard [Orms](#)

Sam Walters [Allies and Morrison](#)
Sasha Swannell [Bell Phillips](#)
Shreya Aneja [White Arkitekter](#)
Sophia Ceneda [Howells](#)
Sophie Emerson [Haworth Tompkins](#)
Thorsten Nölle [Konstrukt AG](#)

Architects Declare Steering Group members who wrote the previous draft.

REVIEWERS

Alexandra Steed [Alexandra Steed Urban](#)
Anna Hollywell [UK Green Building Council](#)
Carlo Battisti [Living Future Europe](#)
Esfandiar Burman [UCL](#)
Liz Liddell-Grainger [JTP](#)
Patrick Osborne [Patrick Osborne Studio](#)
Paul Toyne [Sustainability & Business Consulting](#)
Philip Hurrell [Millar Howard Workshop](#)
Sophia Ceneda [Howells](#)

IMAGE CREDITS

Owen Jowett [p.21, 22](#)
De Urbanisten [p.21, 24](#)
Benjamin Benschneider [p.26](#)
Hiroyuki Oki [p.21, 28](#)
Daniel Hopkinson for FCBStudios [p.21, 30](#)

Every effort has been made to trace the copyright holders, but if any have been inadvertently overlooked the necessary arrangements will be made at the first opportunity.



Contents

1	What is regenerative design?	6
	Regenerative design principles	7
2	How to broaden the conversation?	8
	Determining what drives a stakeholder	9
	Short-term stakeholders	10
	Long-term stakeholders	11
	Expand how they see things	12
3	How to measure your impact?	15
	Value indicator wheel	16
	Value indicators	17
	Being a good ancestor	18
	Co-evolving with nature	19
	Creating a just space for everyone	20
4	What are the inspirations?	21
	IBAVI Social Housing Production	22
	Watersquare	24
	PAE Living Building	26
	VTN Architects Office	28
	Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings	30
5	What actions can you can take now?	32
	Mission	32
	Vision	32
	The team	33
	The brief	33
	Look local think wide	33
	Innovate and explore	34
	Early handover and feedback	34
	Go for it!	34
6	Where can I dig deeper?	35

1 What is regenerative design?

Our current built environment is unsustainable, exceeding planetary boundaries and harming life-support systems. We must move beyond sustainability to a regenerative model where people and nature thrive together as we try to repair the damage already done.

Regenerative design takes a holistic, long-term view—recognising the interdependence of human, ecological, and physical systems, and considering how future generations will judge our actions.

Designers must envision a flourishing future, guiding projects from degenerative to regenerative practice through collaboration across clients, communities, supply chains, and government.

Building on sustainability, regenerative design shifts:

- ➔ From reducing harm to creating positive impact
- ➔ From human-centred to life-centred thinking
- ➔ From carbon reduction to whole-system thinking

Accountability remains key—we must design infrastructure, buildings and districts that produce more resources than they consume, building on the foundations of sustainable design to restore ecosystems, strengthen communities, and create net-positive outcomes of every project.

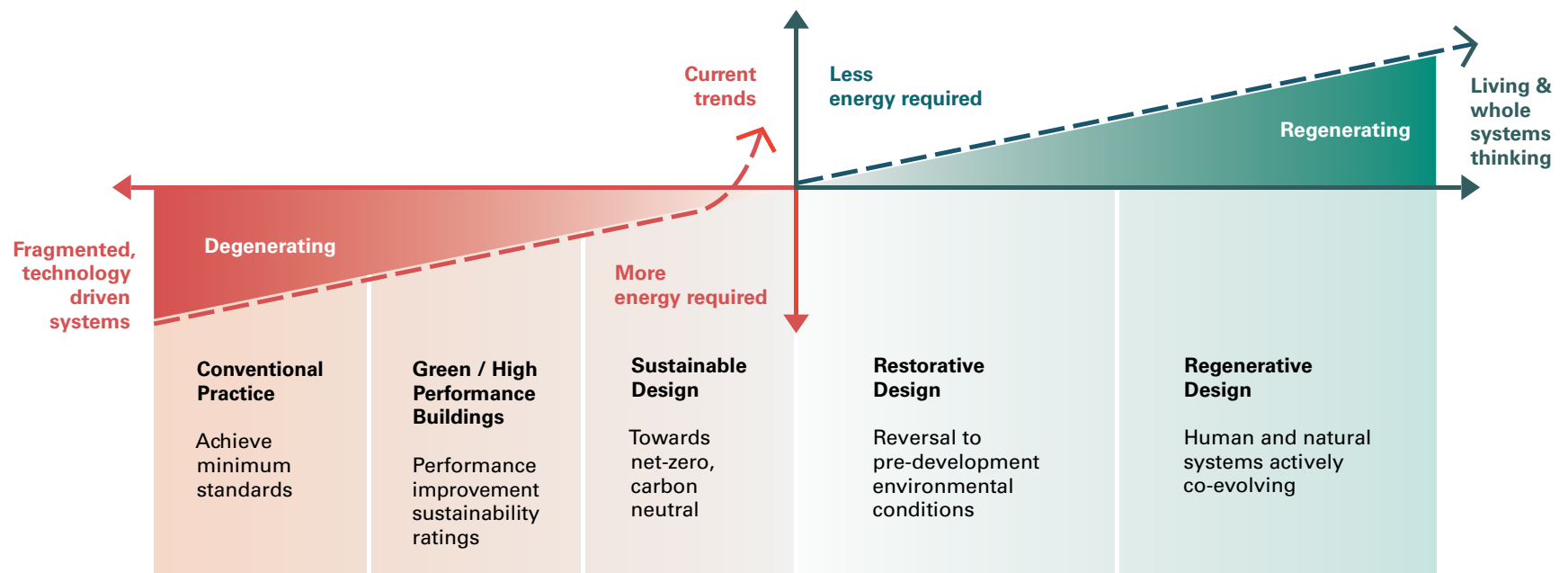


Fig 1 Regenerative design
Source Bill Reed

Regenerative design principles

Regenerative design rethinks how we design and work—shifting from fast, linear, and cost-focused methods to dynamic, interconnected processes that evolve over time.



Our three guiding principles drive this practice and form the basis of our Regenerative Framework:

1 BEING A GOOD ANCESTOR

Embrace long-term thinking by designing for adaptability and benefit across seven generations. This calls for innovative, future-ready approaches.

2 CO-EVOLVING WITH NATURE

Recognise that humans are part of living systems. Design should restore ecosystems through circular, closed-loop energy, water, and material cycles.

3 CREATING A JUST SPACE FOR PEOPLE

Promote social connection, equity, and wellbeing. Design must enable communities to foster resilience and ensure inclusive participation.

2 How to broaden the conversation?



Using shared language reframes the benefits of regenerative design, creating leverage points for its wider adoption.

Each person involved in a project is driven by a different priority. They may not have a holistic view of their impact on the environment, nor recognise the long-term value of regenerative design.

Rather than targeting organisations or typecasting practitioners, focusing on what drives individuals as stakeholders helps reveal the factors that shape their decisions.

Identifying drivers enables discussions to use shared language, meeting stakeholders where they are and framing benefits in ways that resonate with their priorities.

By identifying these strategic leverage points within a stakeholder's perspective, regenerative design can be positioned not as an idealistic add-on, but as a compelling opportunity. This provides a stepping stone towards a mindset shift by framing regenerative design in our current climate.

The following pages outline a methodology to explore these drivers, along with example leverage points.

Determining what drives a stakeholder

Understanding what drives a stakeholder allows us to use a common language.

Each individual stakeholder, regardless of common goals or professions, can be driven by different factors. These can often be categorised into commercial value, risk prevention, social value, environmental value, and cultural value. The decisions linked to these factors can vary depending on the length of time the individual has stakes within the project, such as immediate profit return compared with long-term letting value.

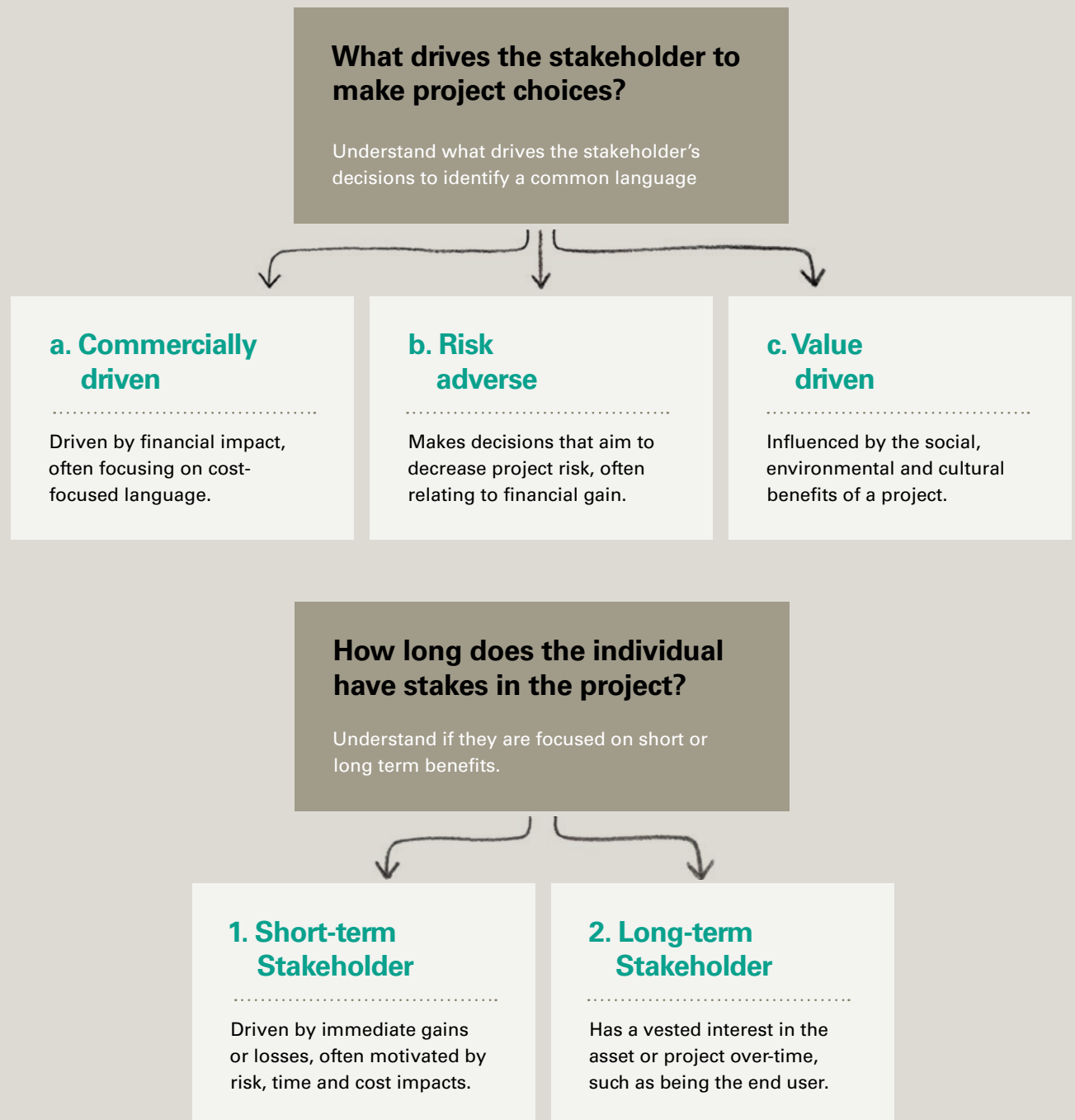
To determine what drives an individual it can be helpful to distill:

1 What drives the stakeholder to make project choices?

Is the project under cost and time constraints? Are they willing to take risks? Are they concerned about occupant wellbeing? Is carbon reduction a priority? Is there community engagement?

2 How long does the individual have stakes in the project?

Are they an end user? Does the business case involve sale or lease? Have they considered future adaptability?



1. Short-term stakeholders



By framing regenerative design in a common language, that aligns with what drives an individual, the stakeholder can understand the benefits of regenerative design to their project goal. This creates a path towards a mindset shift for those focused on commercial value and risk prevention.

The following categories have been identified to align with different communication techniques, prompts and language choices that leverage towards regenerative design.

1a.



Short-term stakeholders **Commercially driven**

Maximising commercial value and minimising cost.

Leverage points that increase the environmental, social and cultural value significantly without inflating cost, such as promoting material efficiency.

1b.



Short-term stakeholders **Risk adverse**

Focus in reducing risk throughout stages. Cautious to untested innovations and diverging from the norm.

Leverage previous tested examples of risk reduction and cases for risk reduction such as de-risking planning processes.

1c.



Short-term stakeholders **Value driven**

Social or unique business model that profits from value within projects.

Leverage how long-term value can increase short-term value, including value retention and depreciation, future project value, business model / brand value.

2. Long-term stakeholders



Dividing the categories into short-term and long-term stakeholders allows different prompts and leverage techniques to be implemented.

Stakeholders may be situated across multiple categories. These categories are not strongly definitive, by merely guide the language to be used.

2a.



Long-term stakeholders **Commercially driven**

Aim to maximise commercial value at the lowest cost over a long time period.

Leverage what can retain commercial value without inflating the lifetime cost and what reduces operational cost, thus reducing cost long-term.

2b.



Long-term stakeholders **Risk adverse**

Concern for both immediate and long term project risk.

Leverage previous of future risk or need for significant redesign through future proofed designing and adaptability.

2c.



Long-term stakeholders **Value driven**

Those looking for whole lifecycle impact of a project. Often have these drivers embedded within company ethos.

Leverage long-term benefits of regenerative design.

Expand how they see things

Working towards the mindset shift

Once a common language is discovered, the benefits of regenerative design can be reframed within this language. This reframing allows the stakeholder to see the benefits aligned with their aims, and thus are more motivated to implement these decisions.

This works towards the stakeholders understanding the holistic benefits of Regenerative Design, encouraging them to expand the impact of their design decisions and work towards a mindset shift.

Some techniques, leverage points and communication techniques have been collated and shown in the following tables.

The following tables are not a comprehensive list, nor may every technique be applicable to every project. Thus we encourage you to employ other techniques and share them with us.

**Leverage
points**

**Leverage
techniques**

**Communication
techniques**

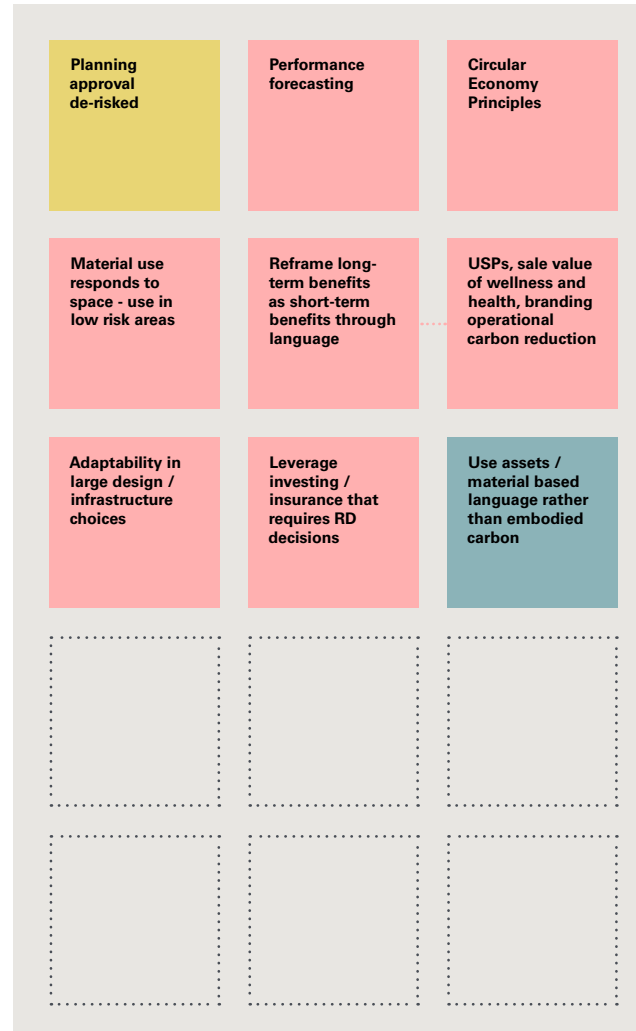
**This list is not
comprehensive
so we invite you
to add to it...**

Fig 4 Techniques & leverage points
Source Architects Declare

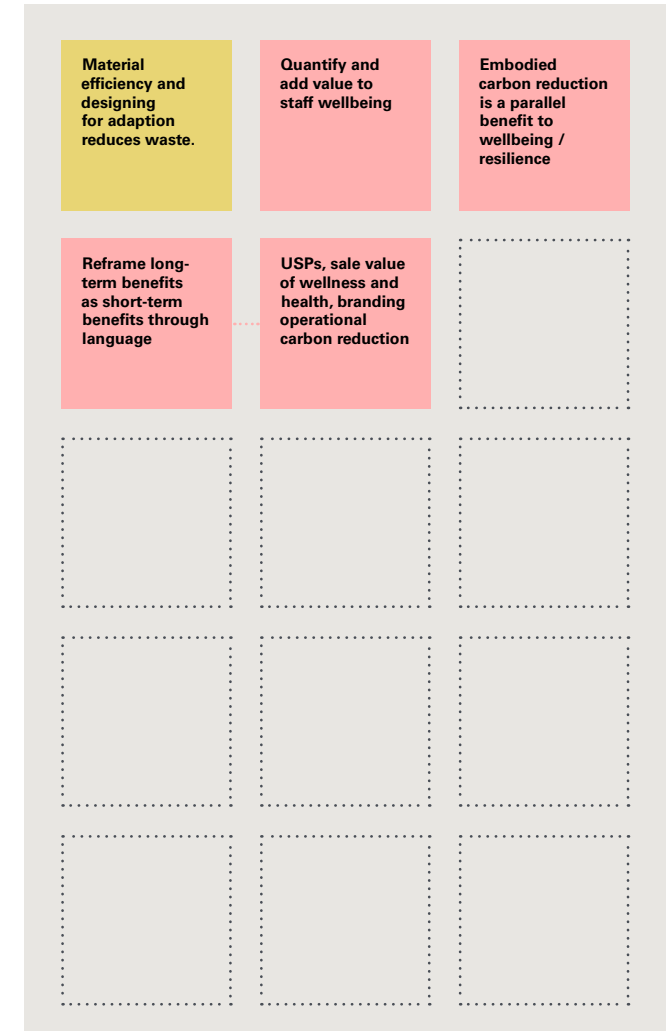
1a. Short-term stakeholders Commercially driven



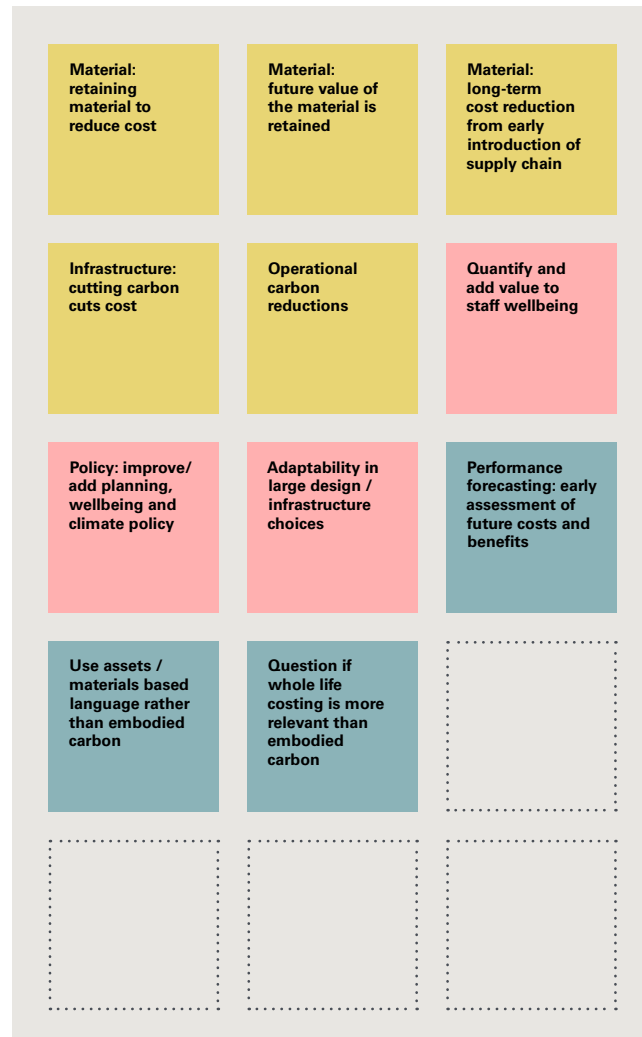
1b. Short-term stakeholders Risk adverse



1c. Short-term stakeholders Value driven



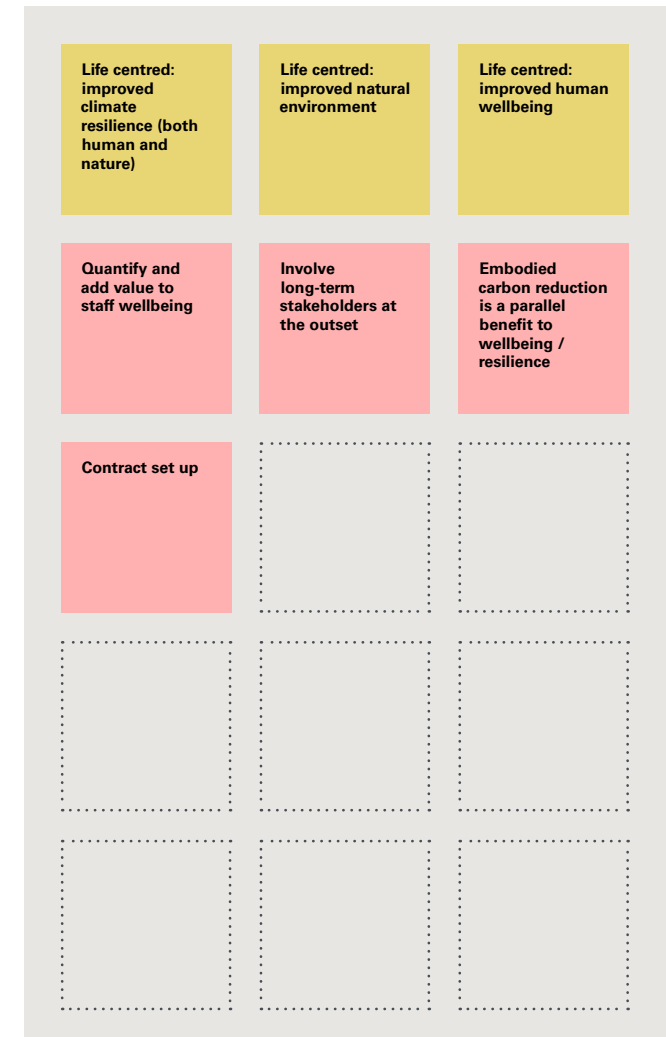
2a. Long-term stakeholders Commercially driven



2b. Long-term stakeholders Risk adverse



2c. Long-term stakeholders Value driven



3 How to measure your impact?

A shift in mindset in how we assess and learn from our efforts to realise regenerative design. It is vital to evaluate the impact of a project or initiative, but we must move beyond current metrics and reflective processes—hence, the Value Indicators.

Fixed targets are too often seen as minimum goals, dampening much-needed ambition and innovation. Therefore, we have posited 'Value Indicators' based around the three guiding principles of the regenerative framework. Aspects of the built environment are aligned with each of these, and, in turn, specific behaviour or actions are delineated which are associated with those. The following pages provide a tool—the 'wheel'—for assessing a project's performance and explanations of the individual Value Indicators.

It also should be noted that evaluating performance or value should not just occur at the completion of a project but rather begin with setting the brief, to then inform and test the concept and scheme design, through to assessing implementation, including stewardship, and wherever possible, its 'afterlife'.

Measuring performance utilises the colours of the wheel:



I DON'T CARE

Red to orange—damaging practice to conventional practice



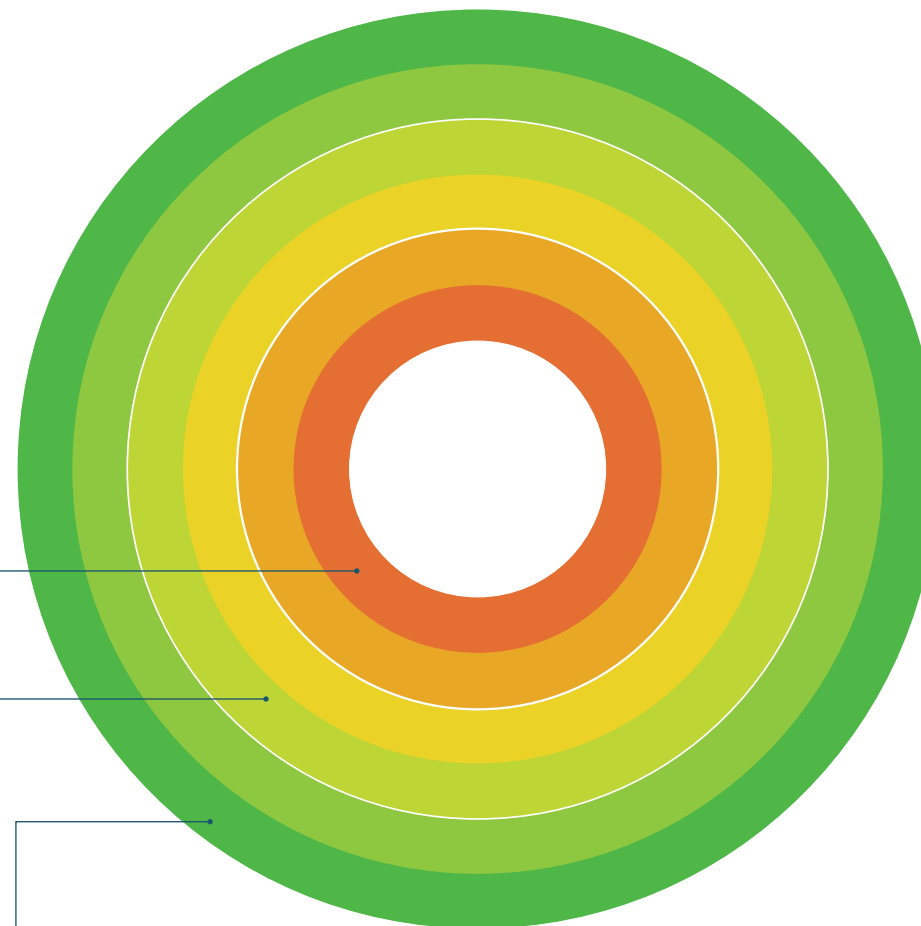
I DO CARE, BUT...

Yellow to light green—standard 'sustainable' to neutral



I REALLY CARE

Light green to dark—restorative to reconciliatory to regenerative



Many of the qualities being evaluated are interrelated and interdependent and often should be cross-referenced

Fig 5 Performance wheel
Source Architects Declare

Value indicator wheel

The Value Indicators are arranged around a 'wheel' encouraging a project to 'score' in the green zone and aspire to even go beyond that.

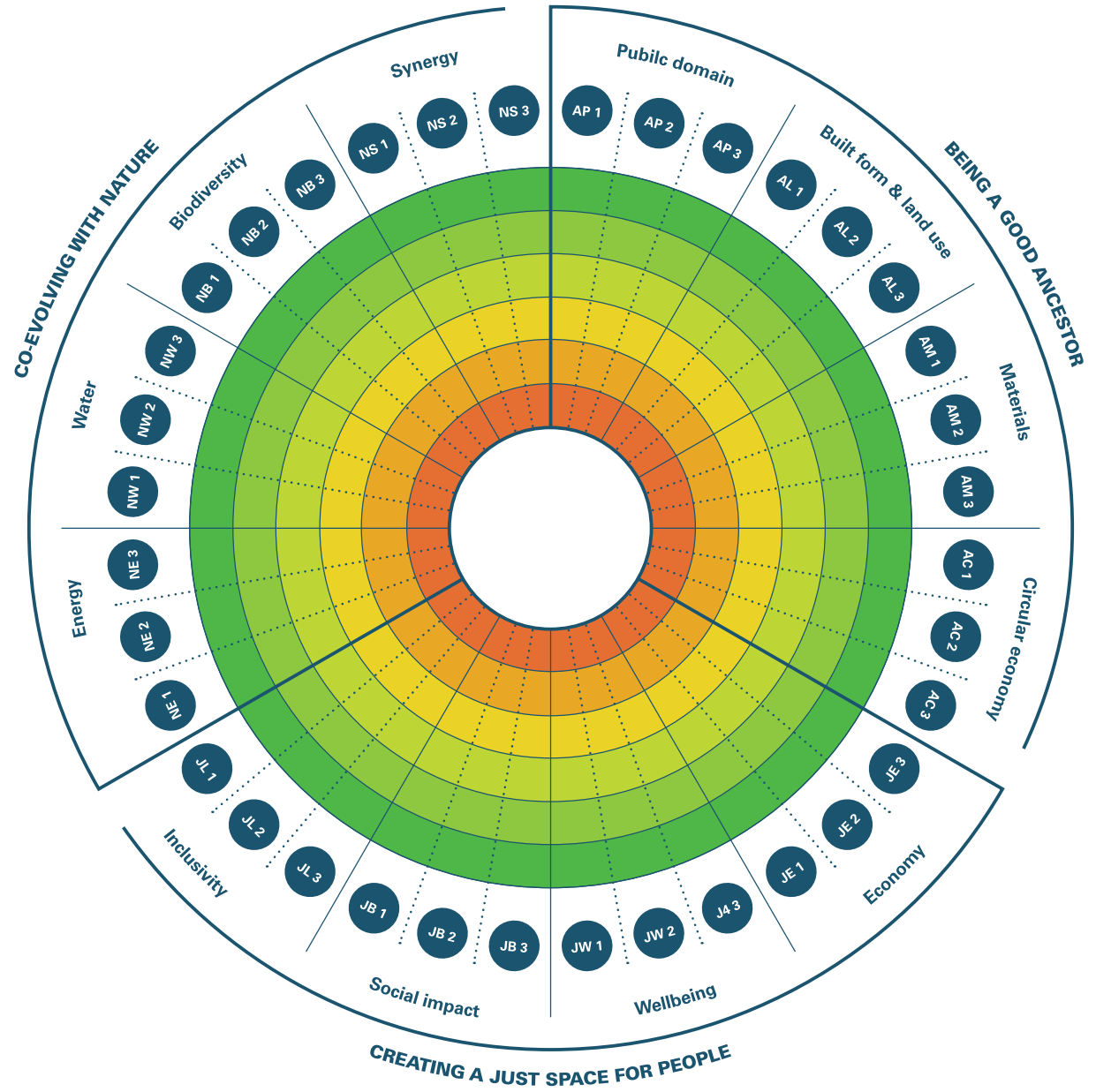


Fig 6 Value indicator wheel
Source Architects Declare

Value indicators

BEING A GOOD ANCESTOR

Public domain

- AP 1 Heat mitigation
- AP 2 Nature-based solutions
- AP 3 Green & blue infrastructure

Built form & land use

- AL 1 Compact urbanism
- AL 2 Integration with existing
- AL 3 Flexibility & adaptability

Materials

- AM 1 Locally grown & sourced
- AM 2 Bio-based
- AM 3 Adaptable

Circular economy

- AC 1 Lifecycle assessment
- AC 2 Minimum waste
- AC 3 Designed for reuse

CO-EVOLVING WITH NATURE

Energy

- NE 1 Decarbonisation
- NE 2 Sequestration
- NE 3 Storage

Water

- NW 1 Rainwater harvesting
- NW 2 Recycling
- NW 3 Usage

Biodiversity

- NB 1 Biophilia
- NB 2 Biomimicry
- NB 3 Ecology

Synergy

- NS 1 Self-determination
- NS 2 Access to resources
- NS 3 Ecosystems approach

CREATING A JUST SPACE FOR PEOPLE

Inclusivity

- JL 1 Inclusive decision-making
- JL 1 Agency
- JL 1 Spatial access for all

Social impact

- JB 1 Access to economic activity
- JB 1 Health and fitness
- JB 1 Cultural history

Wellbeing

- JW 1 Mental health & psychological wellbeing
- JW 1 Human comfort
- JW 1 Active mobility

Economy

- JE 1 Local supply chains & sourcing
- JE 1 Lifecycle maintenance
- JE 1 Lifecycle costs



Value indicators explained

BEING A GOOD ANCESTOR

Public domain

AP 1	Heat mitigation	The adverse impacts of physical hazards such as an increase in heat (including those that are human-induced) are actively mitigated through actions that reduce hazard, exposure, and vulnerability while expanding natural materials systems.
AP 2	Nature-based solutions	Actions are taken to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems to address societal challenges—such as the climate emergency, water security, and disaster risk—while simultaneously benefiting people and biodiversity.
AP 3	Green & blue infrastructure	Natural and carefully planned green spaces are incorporated that provide ecosystem benefits such as improved air and water quality, biodiversity enhancement, climate resilience, and opportunities for recreation. These may include wetlands, rivers, trees, parks, and planted landscapes.

Built form & land use

AL 1	Compact urbanism	Neighbourhoods are built to a density and configuration that enables and encourages easy walking and cycling access to daily service and amenities.
AL 2	Integration with existing	New development is spatially connected to its existing context through streets, routes, green & blue networks, scale and massing.
AL 3	Flexibility & adaptability	The positioning of infrastructure and buildings are able to respond to changing needs such as actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities.

Materials

AM 1	Locally grown + sourced	Raw materials are nurtured and produced in a small geographic area close to the project location, thereby reducing transport and supporting local businesses.
AM 2	Bio-based	The use of materials derived from the natural environment that can be returned to the biosphere after use are prioritised.
AM 3	Adaptable	The ability of a material, asset, or system to adjust to a hazard, take advantage of new opportunities, or cope with change.

Circular economy

AC 1	Life-cycle assessment	The environmental impact of a product (or place) over its entire life cycle is monitored to ensure it can be reused in its original or transformed state.
AC 2	Minimum waste	Policies and practices are enstated that enable maximised use of materials that are waste products, compostable, recyclable, or can be upcycled.
AC 3	Designed for reuse	An asset is designed and implemented so it can be used in differing and numerous ways throughout its life-cycle.



Value indicators explained

CO-EVOLVING WITH NATURE

Energy

NE 1	Decarbonisation	At all stages of construction aim for net-positive embodied carbon and operational energy-related carbon emissions in buildings.
NE 2	Sequestration	Sequestration is the process of capturing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide. The storage of carbon dioxide in vegetation such as grasslands or forests, as well as in soils and oceans, is considered for every project.
NE 3	Storage	Energy is captured when produced at a specific time such that it can be used in the future and not be dependent on, for example, solar rays or wind.

Water

NW 1	Rainwater harvesting	The process of collecting, filtering, and storing rainwater for reuse is employed, rather than allowing it to run off into drains.
NW 2	Recycling	The process of treating wastewater—from sinks, toilets, and industrial processes—to remove impurities and contaminants is employed locally so it can be safely reused for purposes like irrigation, industrial cooling, or, after advanced treatment, drinking water.
NW 3	Usage	Minimal use of water is encouraged by influencing behaviour and installing low-flow fixtures and the above (NW1 and NW2).

Biodiversity

NB 1	Biophilia	This approach cuts across all scales, from cities to buildings, as it seeks to connect and embed humans within nature and other forms of life.
NB 1	Biomimicry	Urban, landscape and architectural design learn from, and emulate, the strategies found in nature to solve human design challenges.
NB 1	Ecology	Across all scales spaces and places are design to respect all living species on Earth to allow for biodiversity; this may entail integrating of plants, bacteria, fungi, and animals.

Synergy

NS 1	Self-determination	The lessening of the potential adverse impacts of physical hazards—whether induced by humans or nature—through deliberate and local actions that reduce hazard, exposure, and vulnerability.
NS 2	Access to resources	Actions are taken to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems to address societal challenges—such as the climate emergency, water security, and disaster risk—while simultaneously benefiting people and biodiversity.
NS 3	Ecosystems approach	Human-made or artificial ecosystems designed to preserve and respect existing ecosystems or replicate successful natural conditions through conscious design.



Value indicators explained

CREATING A JUST SPACE FOR EVERYONE

Inclusivity

JL 1	Inclusive decision-making	All members of a community where change is planned are included in the decision-making process to inform the character, opportunities and look and feel of the transformed or new development.
JL 2	Agency	All members of a community have the capacity of make their own choices, act on their own will and shape their own lives; there is a sense of collective/individual power, responsibility and the ability to influence outcomes through forethought and action.
JL 3	Spatial access for all	All members of a community, irrespective of their abilities, ethnicity, or education can easily reach and occupy all parts of a building or place.

Social impact

JB 1	Access to economic activity	All members of a community can reach jobs, education and services by public transport or other modes of active travel. There are no inbuilt biases against any members of the community.
JB 2	Health & fitness	Development prioritises the ability for residents to access formal and informal recreational amenities and entice people to adopt behaviour that promotes health i.e. local food production, walking and cycling routes, etc.
JB 3	Cultural history	Respect for local heritage is embedded in the design of place, represented spatially and through social norms.

Wellbeing

JW 1	Mental health & psychological wellbeing	People of all generations have easy access to nature, high quality open space, healthcare and facilities.
JW 1	Human comfort	People have homes and places of employment or education with appropriate thermal temperatures, daylight, and air quality.
JW 1	Active mobility	Mobility that does not include a private vehicle, i.e.: walking, cycling, public transport, is prioritised through accessibility, affordability and safe ease of movement.

Economy

JE 1	Local supply chains & sourcing	Materials, components and goods come from a very small geographic area near the project site, thereby reducing transport and supporting local businesses.
JE 2	Lifecycle maintenance	Design provides for safe and easy maintenance, access and regular improvements to building and neighbourhood systems throughout the life-cycle of the project.
JE 3	Lifecycle costs	The total value of a project is assessed in relation to the cost of project alternatives and to select the design that ensures the project will provide the optimised overall value across the project life-cycle, without compromising quality and function.

4 What are the inspirations?

Around the world, powerful examples of regenerative design are already demonstrating what's possible. These projects don't just improve environmental performance, they signal a shift in mindset, showing how design can restore ecosystems, strengthen communities, and create long-term value. They serve as inspiration to go further, helping us reimagine what we build and how we shape the future.

They offer a robust prompt to think differently. They illustrate that existing policies, regulations, and industry norms are not fixed limits, but starting points that can be challenged and reimaged to enable more ambitious outcomes.

Not every example fulfils all regenerative principles, and that is part of their value. They invite critical reflection, encouraging us to consider what could be improved and how future projects might go further.



IBAVI Social Housing Production

IBAVI Civil Architects

Palma, Spain



The IBAVI social housing programme is a pioneering public initiative in the Balearic Islands that rethinks affordable housing by embedding it within local ecosystems and economies.

Developed by IBAVI's civil architects, the programme uses natural, low-impact materials to reduce energy demand while strengthening local supply chains.

Through detailed resource mapping, IBAVI prioritises locally sourced materials and passive design strategies that respond to climate conditions, lowering both operational and embodied energy. Materials such as Posidonia seagrass and Mares stone support local ecosystems and avoid high-energy industrial processes.

The programme intentionally redirects public investment towards local businesses, craftspeople, and ethical labour, fostering economic resilience. By reviving traditions of self-sufficiency, IBAVI delivers healthier, non-toxic homes for vulnerable communities while acting as a catalyst for a regenerative regional economy.

IBAVI Social Housing Production,
IBAVI Civil Architects



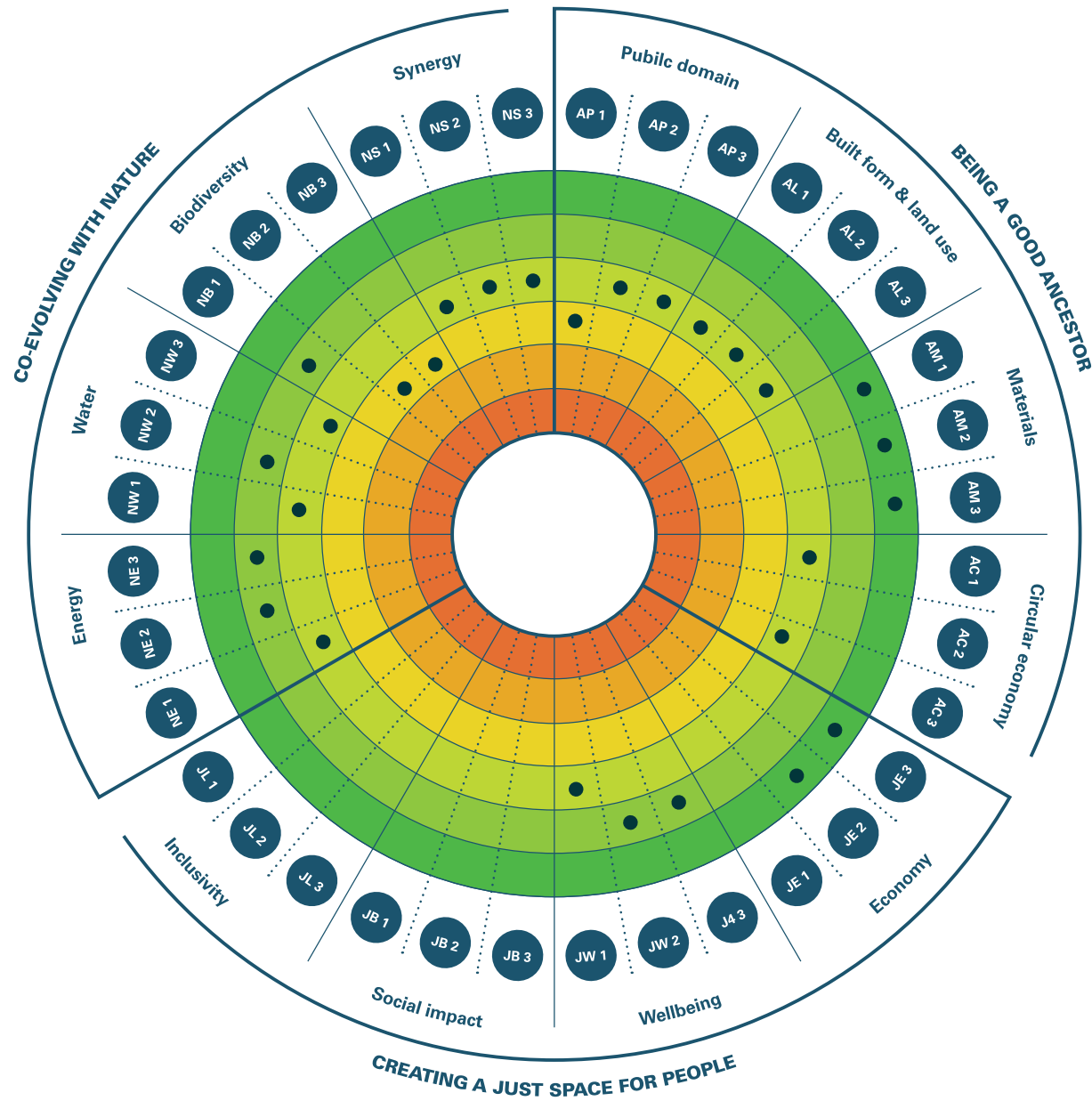


Fig 7 IBAVI Social housing
Source Architects Declare

These desktop studies are based on the information available at the time of writing. As Value Indicators involve judgement as well as measurable performance, you may reasonably disagree with some ratings—and that is welcomed. They reflect the current context: as projects, evidence and expectations evolve, what is exemplary today may be judged differently in the future.

Watersquare

De Urbanstein
Rotterdam, Netherlands



The water square Benthemplein in Rotterdam shows how regenerative design can turn climate risk into shared civic value by aligning ecological function, social life, and long-term resilience. Instead of concealing stormwater underground, the project makes water visible and productive through a series of basins that capture rainfall, respond to changing weather, and operate as active public spaces in dry conditions.

Fed entirely by stormwater, the square supports groundwater balance, reduces urban heat, and enhances local ecosystems, while its flexible programming for sport, play, performance, and gathering encourages inclusive community use. By integrating blue infrastructure, circular water management, and social co creation, Benthemplein demonstrates how cities can co evolve with natural systems and create resilient public spaces that perform ecologically and culturally over time.

.....
Watersquare,
De Urbanstein



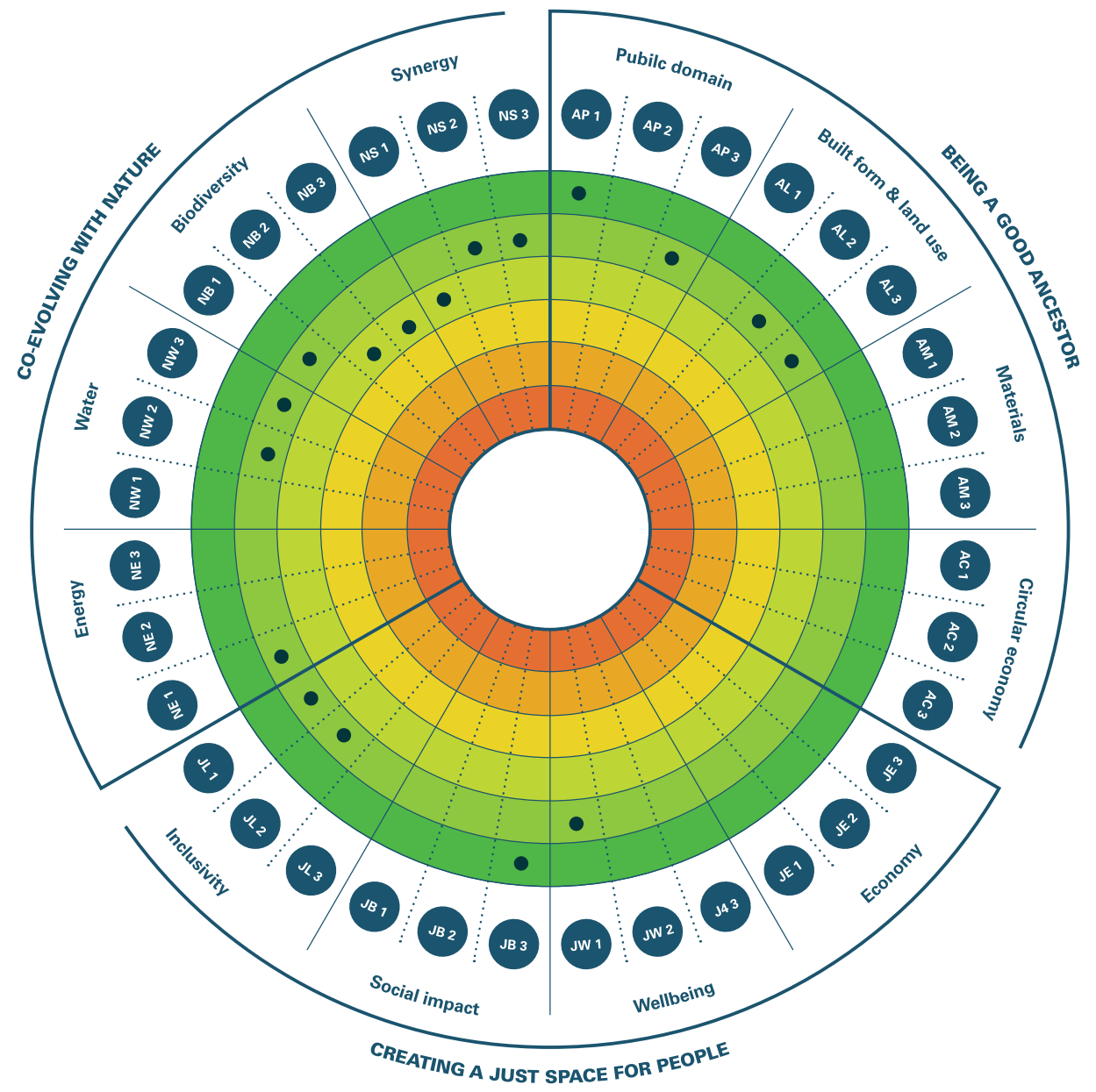


Fig 8 Watersquare score
Source Architects Declare

PAE Living Building

ZGF Architects
Portland, USA



The PAE Living Building is a net-positive commercial office designed as a closed-loop ecosystem that generates more energy and water than it consumes. Built with cross-laminated timber (CLT), glulam columns, and concrete shear walls, the structure reduces embodied carbon while providing exceptional seismic resilience and long-term durability. Responsibly sourced FSC-certified timber, salvaged materials, and construction processes that diverted nearly all waste from landfill reflect the project's commitment to circular resource use. The building also transforms a former parking lot into a walkable, transit-oriented development that integrates with the surrounding historic district.

The building produces over 100% of its annual electricity through rooftop and off-site solar arrays, supported by battery storage for extended off-grid operation. Rainwater harvesting, onsite treatment, composting toilets, and greywater systems allow it to supply all potable water needs while minimising wastewater. Biodiversity initiatives include rooftop beehives and edible planting, while social initiatives promote active mobility and support affordable housing through renewable energy partnerships. Inside, biophilic design strategies such as natural ventilation, daylight, and views enhance occupant wellbeing, demonstrating how regenerative architecture can benefit both people and the environment.

PAE Living Building,
ZGF Architects



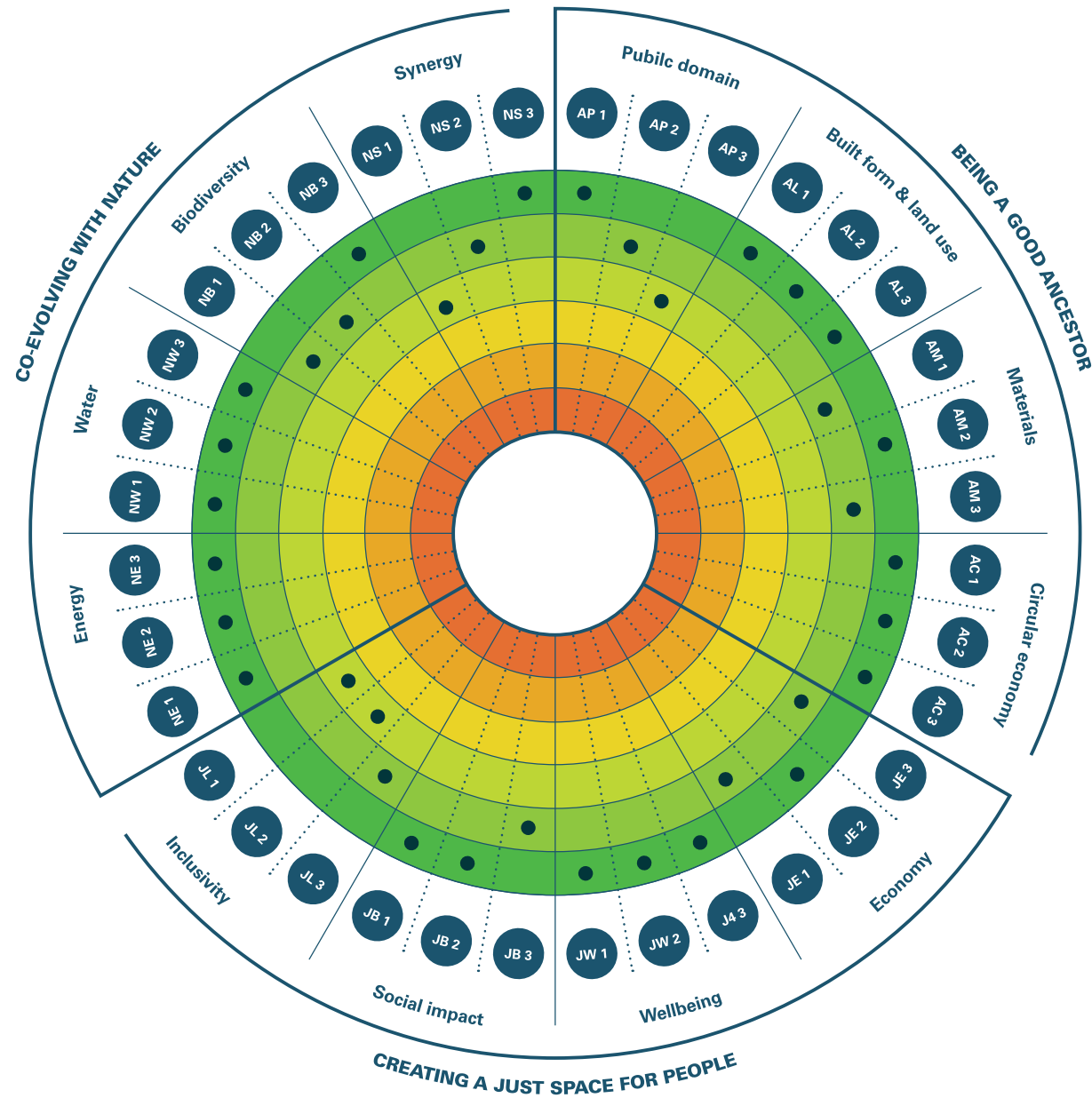


Fig 9 PAE Living Building score
Source Architects Declare

Urban Farming Office

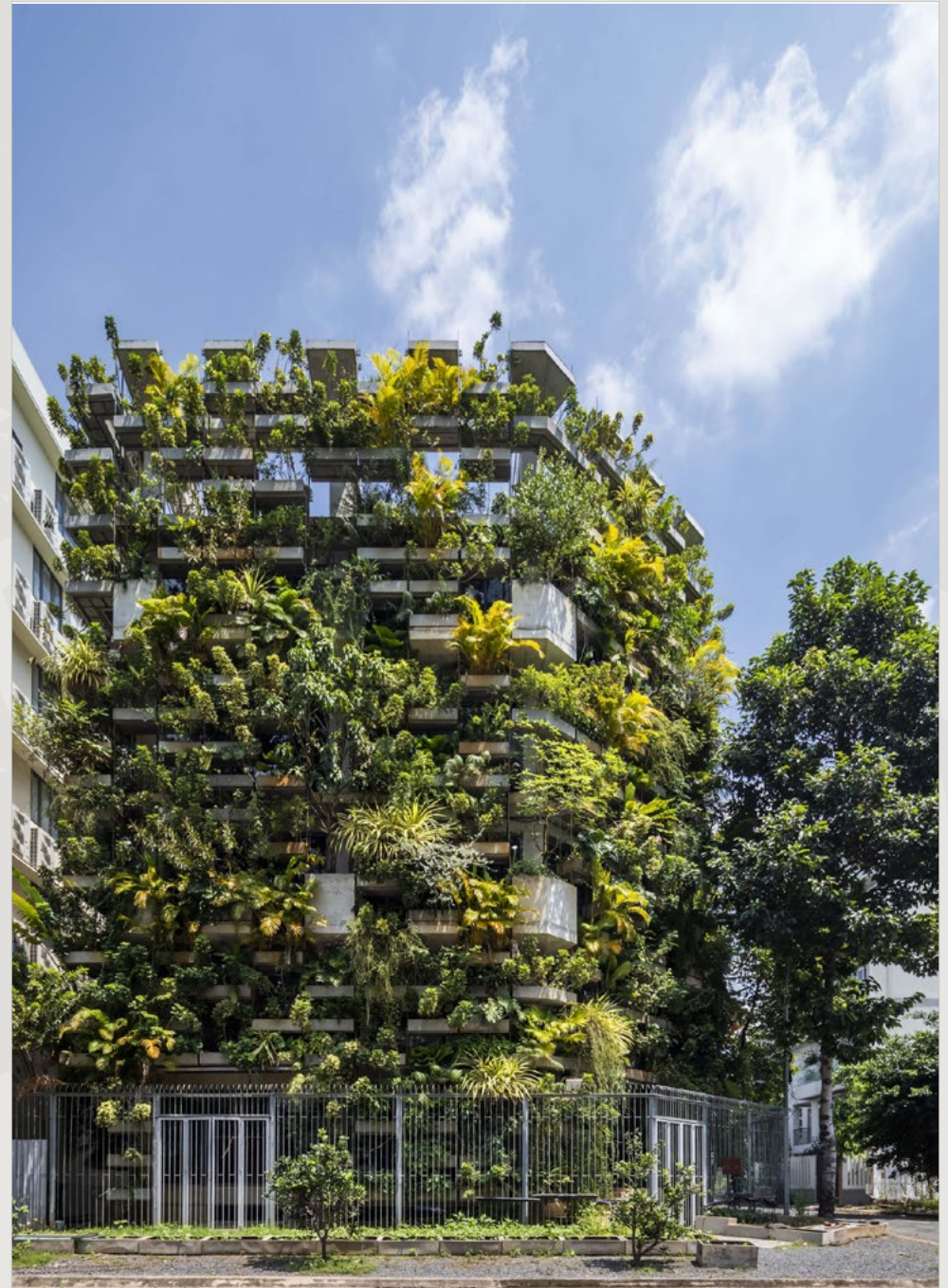
VTN Architects
Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam



The VTN Office integrates renewable, locally sourced materials such as bamboo and brick to reduce embodied carbon while reflecting regional construction traditions. Bamboo ceilings and structural elements celebrate local craftsmanship, while the flexible floor layout allows the workspace to adapt to future needs. By combining office functions with urban agriculture, the design rethinks the relationship between buildings, landscape, and everyday urban life. A concrete frame structure is also used in parts of the building, which increases the overall embodied carbon despite the use of lower-impact materials elsewhere.

Nature is embedded throughout the building as an active environmental system. A planted façade of suspended native vegetation shades the building, filters air pollutants, and creates a cooling microclimate that reduces reliance on mechanical air conditioning. Rainwater is reused to irrigate the vegetation, while rooftop gardens and façade planting transform the office into a productive urban farm for occupants. Large openings, natural ventilation, and shaded terraces improve comfort and wellbeing, while the project demonstrates how architecture can restore greenery and ecological value within dense urban environments.

.....
Urban Farming Office,
VTN Architects



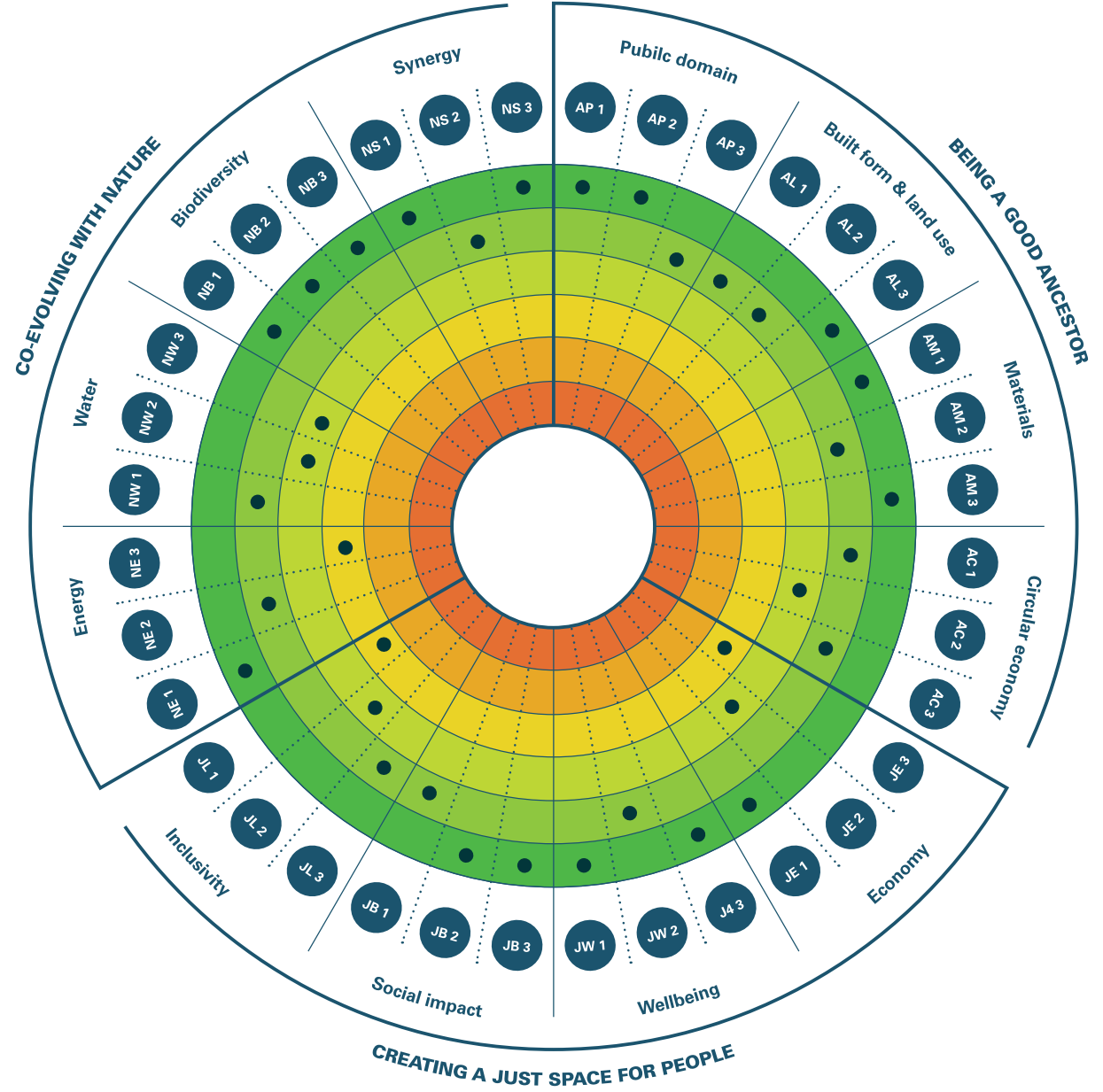


Fig 10 Urban Farming Office score
Source Architects Declare

Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings

Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios
Shrewsbury, UK



The Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings project is a landmark example of sustainable heritage led regeneration, transforming the world's first iron framed building into a low carbon mixed use destination through careful repair, reuse, and circular construction. Working within a fixed budget, the team applied long life loose fit principles, prioritising retention of historic fabric and reusing materials such as oak rafters, Georgian brick pavers, cast iron gutters, and original bricks, while sourcing new materials locally, including UK timber, Welsh slate, sheep's wool insulation, and locally supplied lime and aggregates. A whole building environmental strategy introduced ground source heating, maximised daylight and natural ventilation.

Shaped by community co design and long-term engagement since 2010, the Maltings now hosts a volunteer led visitor centre, café, and creative workspaces, acting as a catalyst for local pride, skills training, economic uplift, and social cohesion. As an exemplar for Historic England's Climate Change Strategy, it demonstrates how historic buildings can drive sustainable development and social value over the long-term.

.....
Shrewsbury Flaxmill Malting,
Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios



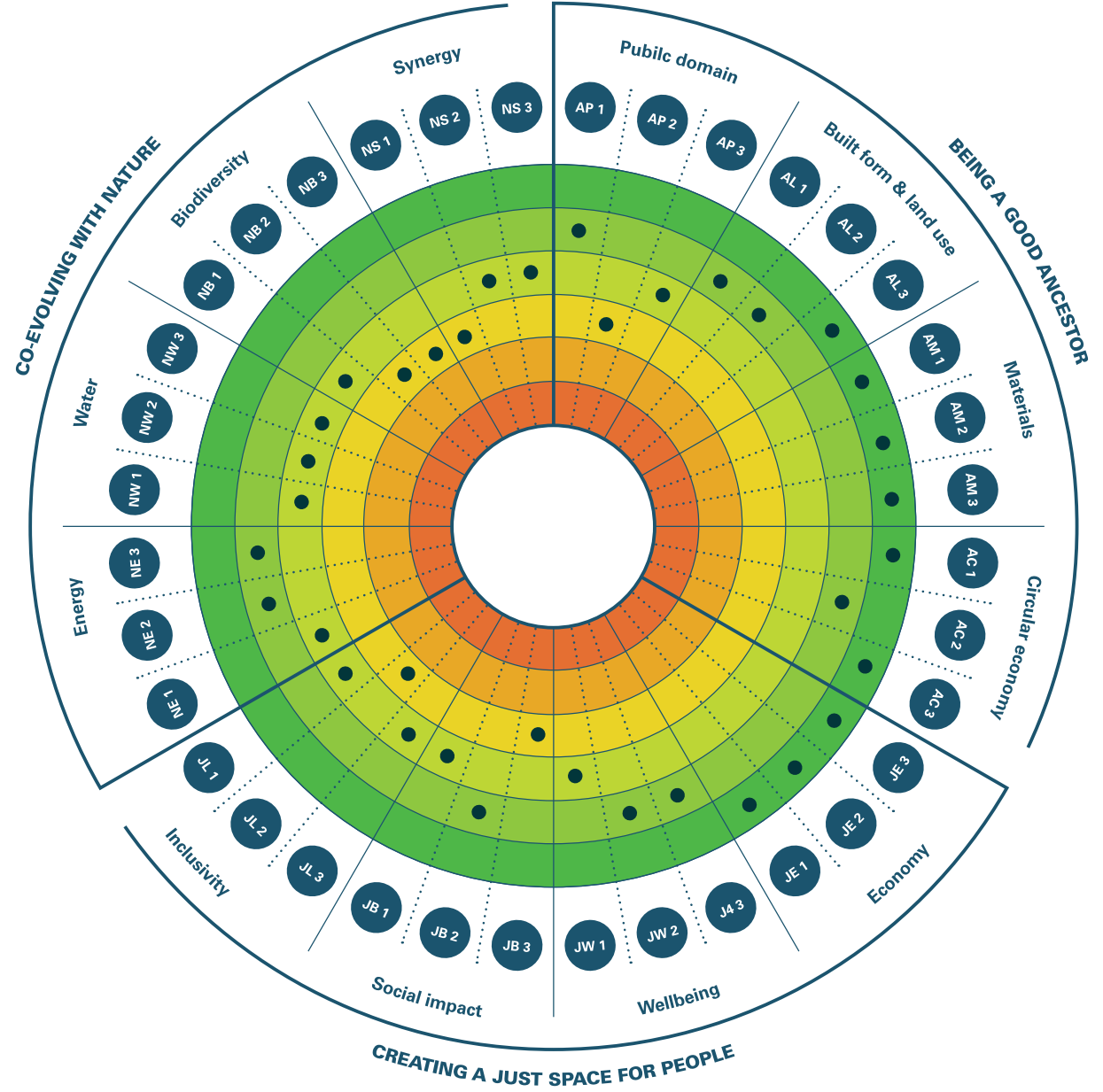


Fig 11 Shrewsbury Flaxmill score
Source Architects Declare

5 What actions can you can take now?

Regenerative design is a mindset, not an extra task; it should run alongside existing frameworks, driving ambition throughout the project.

Good design, and regenerative design, are a circular process, where early insight and end-stage feedback arguably have the greatest impact—allocate time and fees accordingly.

Treat regenerative design as an ongoing process, not a final outcome.

Mission



Before you start—declare your deep purpose and get your house in order!

- Clarify your purpose: define a mission aligned with the planetary emergency and seventh-generation thinking; make it visible to attract like-minded clients, projects, and staff.
- Embed regeneration: align profit and impact through certifications (e.g. B Corp), invest in staff learning and research, and encourage innovation through incentives and experimentation.
- Build resilience: plan for succession, strengthen team connection to nature and local communities, and collaborate early with clients to embed regenerative goals from the outset.

Vision



Set ambition early: commit time, collaborate closely, and agree clear regenerative goals from the outset.

- Determine stakeholder drivers: uncover what the client truly values, stretch ambitions, and plan for long-term positive impact (e.g. real zero emissions, healthy ecosystems).
- Formalise intent: capture ambitions in engagement letters and allocate fees for early, strategic problem-solving.
- Question the brief: consider whether a new building is needed at all; aim for healing rather than harm.
- Build the case: develop long-term, holistic business cases grounded in past learning and deep site understanding.
- Protect value: avoid early speculative (free) work—strategic exploration is where you add the most value and shape genuinely regenerative briefs.



The team

Build a team for long-term regenerative impact.

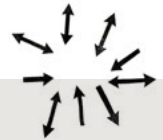
- Choose committed, inclusive partners aligned with climate action (e.g., Built Environment Declares).
- Create a project charter defining shared behaviours and values.
- Engage early-stage experts: ecologists, social scientists, community officers, etc.
- Engage in co-creation with communities and stakeholders early and meaningfully.
- Collaborate with smaller companies or individuals offering fresh perspectives.
- Select team members with the needs of future users (seven generations ahead) in mind.
- Include nature and future generations as stakeholders in decision-making.



The brief

Kick off with regenerative ambition.

- Set regenerative design as the project's core goal from day one: replace "do less bad" with "make things better" as a core goal.
- Challenge default goals—shift from economic growth to living system health.
- Meet on site to engage the ecosystem and identify what's needed for its thriving future.
- Run a workshop (e.g. Human Layers) to encourage seven-generation thinking and set high ambitions.
- Highlight long-term client benefits and commercial viability. De-risk the project by setting targets that stay relevant as regulations evolve.
- Prioritise solutions with multiple co-benefits, not single-issue fixes.
- Reframe briefs through regenerative questions: Who benefits? How does nature thrive?



Look local think wide

Identify who is doing what, where, when and why.

- Understand and map the full system of the site and its wider context environmental, social, economic, and mobility networks, before tackling problems.
- Understand how resources move through the site—energy, water, materials, and waste—and design these flows to be circular and beneficial to wider systems.
- Expand the project boundary and design permeable edges, allowing flows of resources, people, ecology, energy, and ideas between the site and its surroundings.
- Start design based on what's available locally; use material mapping to include onsite, local, reused, bio-based, and by-product resources this is your ingredient list.
- Identify opportunities to enhance nature, people, and place—how can you improve what is there and ensure a thriving ecosystem?



Innovate and explore

Encourage open discussion, challenge silos, and rethink traditional approaches.

- Be creative with local, natural, and reusable materials; design for longevity, adaptability, repair, and future disassembly.
- Start from material availability and learn from suppliers and past regenerative projects to make smarter decisions.
- Keep design processes flexible, iterative, and experimental; encourage fast failure to unlock better solutions.
- Engage manufacturers and contractors early to support circular and regenerative outcomes.
- Prioritise long-term benefits, continuous learning, and multi-generational impact.
- Design with 7+ generations in mind, not just immediate users.
- Make time for workshops and collective imagination to explore better futures.
- Include guidance in specifications for maintenance, repair, and future adaptation.



Early handover and feedback

Embed regenerative principles through ongoing engagement and learning.

- Help clients create stewardship plans with maintenance guidance and expected lifespans.
- Provide clear end-user information and host community events at completion.
- Maintain detailed “as-built” records and consider material passports for resource tracking.
- Build in time for feedback and post-occupancy evaluation; schedule reviews at one, three, etc. years.
- Share lessons internally and externally to improve future regenerative projects.
- Take responsibility beyond completion—embed stewardship, not handover.
- Assess success across environmental, social, and economic indicators, rather than focusing on a single measure.



Go for it!

You have agency—do things differently, push at boundaries and keep moving forward.

- Move beyond red lines
- Be impactful
- Think big and long
- Act holistically
- Operate systemically

6 Where can I dig deeper?

There are an increasing number of resources available, which can feel overwhelming. We've kept this primer as concise and practical as possible to support everyday design. Below are a few further reads the primary authors and reviewers of this guide have found helpful — if you feel something is missing or have additional resources to share, please email hello@architectsdeclare.com or contribute to <https://regenerativearchitecture.org/>

Overview

Doughnut Economics
Kate Raworth, 2018

Flourish: Design Paradigms for Our Planetary Emergency
Sarah Ichioka & Michael Pawlyn, 2021

Regenerative by Design
David Cheshire, 2021

Regenerative Development and Design Pamela Mang & Ben Haggard (Regenesis), 2016

Thinking in Systems
Donella Meadows, 2008

The Regenerative Design Handbook Elliott Wood, 2026
<https://elliottwood.aflip.in/regenerative-design-handbook>

Early thinking

Regenerative Design for Sustainable Development
John T. Lyle, 1994

Long-term thinking

The Good Ancestor
Roman Krznaric, 2020
<https://www.romankrznaric.com/goodancestor>

Practice

The Pattern Book for Regenerative Design Oliver Broadbent, 2025

Frameworks & resources

Architecture is Climate
Practice directory and climate design resources
<https://architectureisclimate.net/>

Regenerative Places Framework for Housing
UK Green Building Council
<https://ukgbc.org/our-work/topics/regenerative-places/regenerative-places-framework/>

Regenesis Group
<https://regenisigroup.com/>

The Regenerative Architecture Index
Architecture Today
<https://architecturetoday.co.uk/the-regenerative-architecture-index/>

Business case

Creating a Business Case for Regenerative Design Living Future Europe & Ramboll, 2026
<https://living-future.eu/>

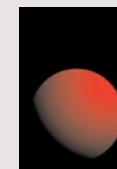
REGENERATIVE
ARCHITECTURE
INDEX



Architects Declare was launched as a not-for-profit organisation in the UK on 30 May 2019. Since April 2024 UK Architects Declare is a registered charity. At the time of publication, it has over 1,424 signatories in the UK. It is part of Built Environment Declares, which is now represented in 27 countries around the world.

This document has been created by an Architects Declare working group to help signatories convert their declaration into meaningful action and build momentum within their practice. The guide is intended to be a live, working document that helps fulfil the fourth point in our 12-point declaration by encouraging the sharing of knowledge and research on an open source basis. We expect this guide to evolve and be refined in future iterations as our understanding of the climate and biodiversity crises develops, and as our industry innovates to find new solutions to these challenges. We encourage our signatories—and other architectural practices or built environment practitioners—to contact us with feedback on this version and examples for the next version.

www.architectsdeclare.com



UK Architects Declare
Climate & Biodiversity
Emergency