Green Thinking Review

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Promoting Innovations and Best Practices
in Sustainable Building for A Flourishing Future.

BEYOND THE FRONT DOOR

The Home Begins with the House. Where Does It End?

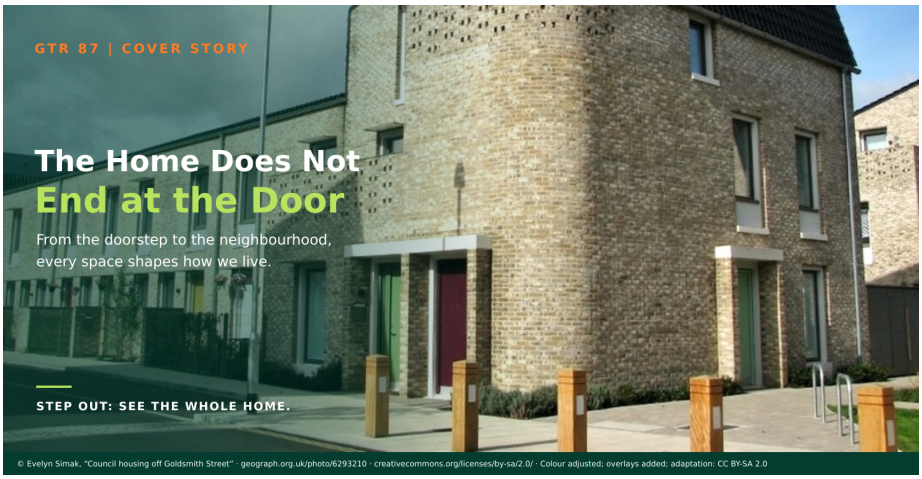


Inside: Goldsmith Street, Norwich, United Kingdom

STEP OUT: SEE THE WHOLE HOME.

Floreat Vita/*Let Life Flourish.*

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Cover:

The Home Does Not End at the Door

We give considerable attention to the rooms we inhabit. What about the spaces we pass through—and the places we depend on—every day?

The rooms are comfortable. The roof is sound. The windows admit light and air. Then someone steps outside.

What meets them?

Before reaching the street, they may cross a veranda, descend a shared staircase, enter a courtyard or follow a path through the premises. These spaces are part of everyday habitation. They deserve the same thoughtful attention we give to the house itself.

A shaded seat can make room for conversation. A clear, accessible path can make leaving home easier. A planted yard can accommodate both people and rain. A shared courtyard can offer somewhere to pause, play or meet a neighbour.

Each space contributes something to the experience of home.

Follow the Journey

That experience continues beyond the plot. The route to school, the walk to a bus stop, the nearby shop and the condition of shared drains all affect how a household lives.

A carefully finished house cannot, by itself, resolve a flooded approach, an exhausting commute or a street that leaves little room for walking.

This invites a broader design question:

How well does the house connect with the life around it?

For architects and developers, the brief should extend through the entrances, grounds and connections to surrounding places. For residents, it includes how shared spaces are used and cared for. For public authorities, it requires attention to the services and routes that connect individual homes.

Inside this GTR:

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Editor's Note:

Between the House and the Street

Dear Green Thinkers,

We tend to know what every room is for. I would like us to bring that same clarity to the spaces around our buildings.

What is the forecourt meant to offer? Who can use the garden? Is there somewhere to wait comfortably, greet a neighbour or sit outside? Does the route from the entrance to the street feel considered—or merely left over?

These questions deserve a place in the brief.

In the Symbiature approach I advocate, architecture supports

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Editor's Note - continued...

life through relationships: between people and places, buildings and nature, practical knowledge and thoughtful judgement. The spaces surrounding a house are part of those relationships. Their usefulness should be intentional.

This edition therefore invites us to follow the home outward: through its immediate premises, into shared spaces and towards the wider neighbourhood. Each transition brings different needs, boundaries and responsibilities.

Care must accompany that wider understanding. A planted setback should preserve access. A shared sitting area should respect nearby residents' privacy. Improvements should respond to the people who already use a place and include a workable arrangement for its upkeep.

Goldsmith Street offers an international example, but the invitation reaches much closer to the path beside our own building, the overlooked yard and the space outside the gate.

My invitation is simple: step out and notice. Ask what each space contributes to daily life—and what thoughtful attention could make possible.

Floreat Vita | Let Life Flourish
– Arc. Denis Uche Akabogu FNIA FIMC
Editor-in-Chief

Green Thinking Tip:
A home's usefulness is shaped by the connections beyond its walls.

Cover Story - continued...

Design the Connections. Sustain the Care.

Existing places deserve this attention too. A neglected forecourt, an obstructed path or an overlooked corner may offer a practical starting point.

Improvement begins by understanding who uses the space, what they need and who will maintain it. A welcoming place must remain welcoming after the initial work is complete.

The home begins with the house. Its ability to support everyday life reaches well beyond the front door

Green Thinking Tip

Judge a home by the spaces and connections that help its occupants live well—inside and beyond its walls.

Green Thinking Insights
Every Space Matters

The spaces around a house contribute to the life within it.

A space can look empty and still be doing valuable work.

An open strip between buildings may admit daylight and air. A courtyard may provide room for rest or play. A sheltered entrance may offer a comfortable pause between the privacy of home and the activity outside.

👉 *1. The quality of home is felt both inside its rooms and beyond its walls.*

👉*2. The spaces between buildings deserve as much thought as the buildings themselves.*

👉*3. The journey home begins before we reach the door.*

👉 *4. Leaving space for light, air and nature is a design decision.*

👉 *5. A welcoming neighbourhood makes room for both privacy and belonging.*

👉 *6. Shared space needs shared care—and clear responsibility.*

👉 *7. The true value of a space lies in the life it helps sustain*

Step Out

Innovations & Best Practices:

Seven Ways To Connect Homes With Their Surroundings

Thoughtful connections can make everyday life easier, more comfortable and more sociable. These approaches apply to new developments and the improvement of existing places.

1 | Give the Entrance a Welcoming Threshold

Use a veranda, porch or sheltered forecourt to create a comfortable transition between indoors and outdoors. Provide room to arrive, wait and greet someone while keeping the entrance accessible and circulation clear.

2 | Make the Walking Route Continuous

Connect entrances, shared facilities and the street with clear, accessible paths. Address changes in level, slippery surfaces and vehicle crossings. Consider the whole journey for children, older people and people using mobility aids.

3 | Create Shared Places to Pause

Give courtyards and communal grounds somewhere comfortable to sit, talk or watch children play. Position seating and shade where people naturally gather, with enough separation to protect the privacy and quiet of nearby homes.

4 | Design Boundaries That Support Connection

Combine planting, screens, appropriate sightlines and well-positioned gates to balance privacy, security and neighbourly contact. Make entrances easy to identify, and give pedestrians a clear arrival point separate from vehicle movement where practicable.

5 | Connect Planting, Shade and Rainwater

Plan trees, planted areas and drainage together. Consider rain gardens or permeable surfaces where suitable, with designs informed by soil, groundwater, foundations and safe overflow routes. Choose planting that can be maintained locally.



6 | Give Everyday Services Their Place

Plan convenient locations for waste storage, deliveries and utility maintenance. Keep these accessible to the people who service them while protecting entrances, walking routes and communal sitting areas. Include space for collection and upkeep from the outset.

7 | Connect to Everyday Destinations

Map the routes to shops, schools, transport stops and other shared facilities. Work with neighbours and relevant authorities to address missing footpaths, difficult crossings and disconnected entrances, so the journey continues usefully beyond the gate.

Step Out

Top 5 Action Points

Five Decisions Before We Approve the Layout

A layout establishes relationships that can be difficult to change later. Before approving a new development—or upgrading an existing place—settle these five decisions.

1 | Agree Whose Needs Will Guide the Design

Identify who will live in, visit, work in and maintain the place. Include children, older people, tenants and people with disabilities. Agree the everyday activities the layout must support, drawing on the experience of those who will use it.

2 | Decide Which Spaces Must Be Protected

Identify the space needed for access, daylight, planting, drainage, privacy and shared activities. Record these priorities before additional parking or building extensions compete for them. Give each protected space a clear purpose in the brief.

3 | Establish Boundaries and Access Arrangements

Clarify which areas are private, shared or public, and who may use them. Agree how gates, entrances and routes will operate. Resolve conflicting uses early so that privacy, security and convenient movement can work together.

4 | Commit Funding to the Surroundings

Include paths, drainage, planting, lighting and communal facilities in the initial cost plan. Where delivery must be phased, establish what occupants need from the first day. Confirm how connections beyond the plot will be delivered and funded.

5 | Assign Responsibility for Continuing Care

Agree who will clean, repair, maintain and manage shared spaces—and how that work will be paid for. Record responsibilities for residents, owners, managers and relevant service providers. Include a straightforward way to report problems and review arrangements.

Put it into practice

Before signing off, request an annotated layout showing intended users, protected spaces, access arrangements and maintenance responsibilities, alongside the cost plan. Walk through an ordinary day on that drawing: arriving, leaving, receiving visitors, collecting waste and spending time outside.

Resources Box

Designing the Spaces Between

👉 *Global Street Design Guide – Global Designing Cities Initiative*
Practical guidance on walking routes, accessible footpaths, crossings and streets designed for people.
Explore the guide

👉 *Global Public Space Toolkit – UN-Habitat*
Principles and practical approaches for creating, managing and caring for public spaces with community participation.
Read the toolkit

👉 *Goldsmith Street – Mikhail Riches*
The architects' account of how housing layout, pedestrian-friendly streets and car-free access to play work together.
Explore the case study

Translate these lessons to local climate, daily routines, accessibility needs and capacity for upkeep.

Step Out **Case Study Snippet**

Goldsmith Street, Norwich, United Kingdom:

Connecting Homes with Everyday Life



Goldsmith Street, Norwich: Street-level entrances, coloured doors, planted thresholds and a clearly defined pedestrian edge bring the relationship between home and street into view.

Photograph © Evelyn Simak, "Council housing off Goldsmith Street" / Geograph · CC BY-SA 2.0 · Cropped for layout.

Goldsmith Street, designed by Mikhail Riches with Cathy Hawley for Norwich City Council, offers useful lessons for Nigerian housing by showing how homes can support life beyond the dwelling.

Every home, including the flats, has its own entrance at street level. Different door colours strengthen identity, while private gardens and communal spaces balance retreat with opportunities for neighbourly contact.

The architects describe pedestrian-friendly streets and car-free access to play as ways of connecting homes with everyday outdoor activities. A shared passage between rear gardens provides protected space for younger children.

For Nigerian housing, these relationships should be considered from the outset. Shaded entrances, usable compounds, accessible paths and shared seating can support comfort, safety and neighbourly life, especially where outdoor space is essential for children and daily social interaction.

These features also require clear responsibility for drainage, cleaning, security and upkeep. Without maintenance, shared spaces can quickly become neglected or unsafe.

Good housing requires attention to both the dwelling and the spaces through which residents move, meet and belong. In Nigeria, this means designing homes that respond to climate, culture and everyday patterns of community life.

Not every home has a front garden, and the shared rear passages depend on residents taking on their care.

Nigeria Focus: Where the Plot Ends: Who Cares for the Shared Space?

Step outside a well-kept home and the experience can change: a blocked drain, an uneven verge, an exposed waiting spot or a footpath interrupted by parked vehicles.

The boundary marks ownership, but daily life crosses it. Children leave for school. Visitors arrive. Waste is collected. Rainwater flows between properties and the street.

Improvement begins within the premises: provide shade, usable outdoor space, accessible paths and drainage that respects neighbouring properties. At the boundary, consider how gates open, where pedestrians wait and how vehicles enter without obstructing movement.

Beyond the plot, responsibility needs agreement. Residents' associations, estate managers, developers and public authorities each have roles, depending on ownership and statutory duties. Identify who maintains drains, repairs paths, manages waste and cares for shared planting.

Collective action should support public responsibility, with clear arrangements for funding, access and accountability.



An imagined future.

It is an ordinary morning in a Nigerian neighbourhood.

A grandmother sits on her shaded veranda, watching her grandson leave for school. He passes through the courtyard, where a neighbour tends a small vegetable bed, then follows a clear path to the gate. Nobody has to move a parked car to let him through.

Outside, the footpath continues. At the corner, children gather beneath a tree before crossing with an adult. The bus stop has shelter and somewhere to sit. These improvements did not arrive together.

Step Out

Residents began with the spaces closest to home: an entrance too narrow for a wheelchair, a courtyard given entirely to parking, a drain repeatedly blocked by waste.

Architects helped reconsider layouts. Residents agreed how shared grounds would be used and maintained. Public authorities improved crossings and connected missing sections of footpath.

Outside the Box

There were disagreements—about costs, access, noise and responsibility. Progress depended on resolving them fairly and keeping commitments.

By 2040, the difference is visible in ordinary routines: a shorter struggle with shopping bags, a comfortable place to wait, a child's opportunity to play, a neighbour close enough to notice when help is needed.

The future of housing may be shaped as much by how we connect its spaces as by what we build within its walls.

GTR Closing Reflection

No space is too small to matter. Small changes at entrances, courtyards, paths and shared edges can make daily life safer, more inclusive and more connected. When residents, designers and public authorities work together, overlooked spaces become places that support movement, care, play and belonging.

A Question for Today

Between your front door and the street, which space deserves attention first—and who could help improve it?

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Think Differently. • Design Intentionally. • Build Responsibly.