

Rethinking Housing Adequacy: Linking Lived Experience to Policy

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Research overview

Research Question: *To what extent is* ***'adequate** housing' truly **adequate?***

Three interrelated aims:

1. To critically examine the concept of **housing adequacy**

2. To identify how **housing adequacy** is experienced, interpreted and negotiated by residents in UK coastal towns

3. To interrogate how **(in)adequate housing** impacts residents' everyday lives, and how this may or may not impact on their physical and mental wellbeing

Research overview

Context: Inspired by the UN statement: everyone has the right to an **adequate** standard of living, including **adequate housing.**

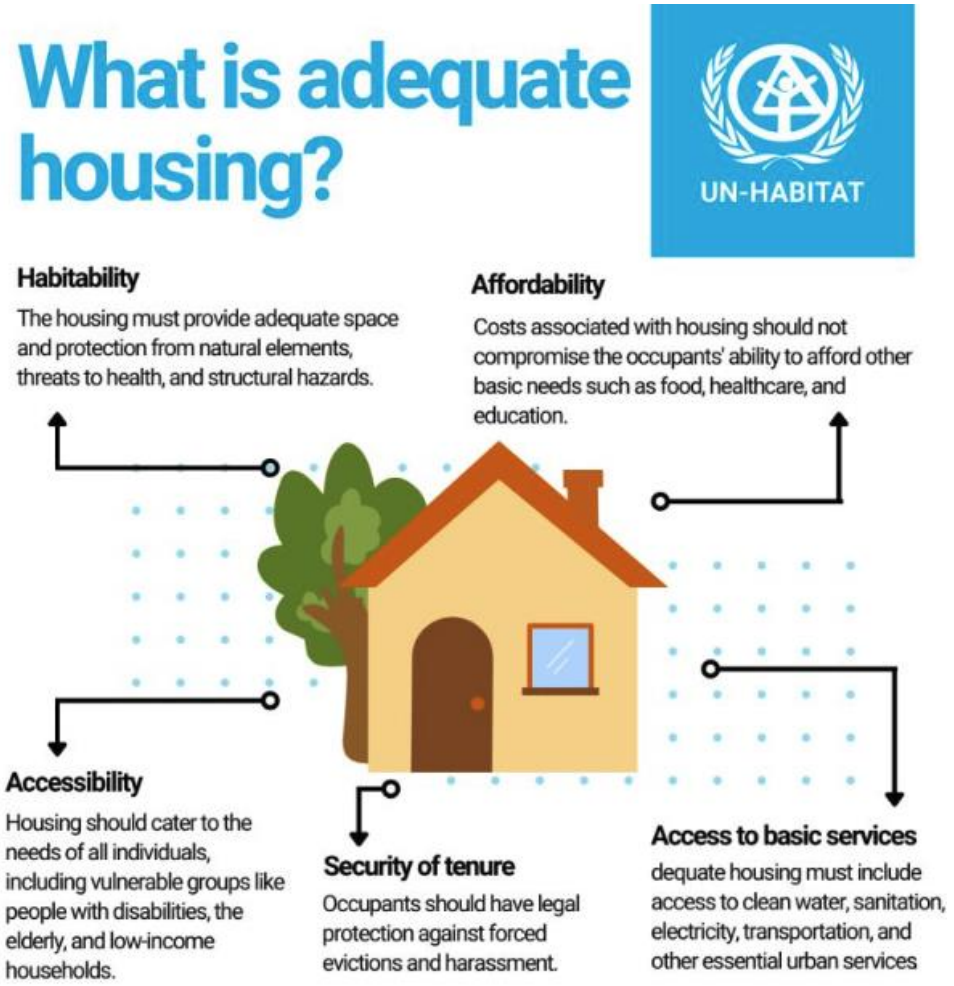
My research aims to critically interrogate the potential limits of fixed **policy-led** definitions of **adequate housing** in the context of coastal regeneration and peripheral urbanism

What does '**adequate**' mean?

How do we measure '**adequate**' in the broad sense of the word?

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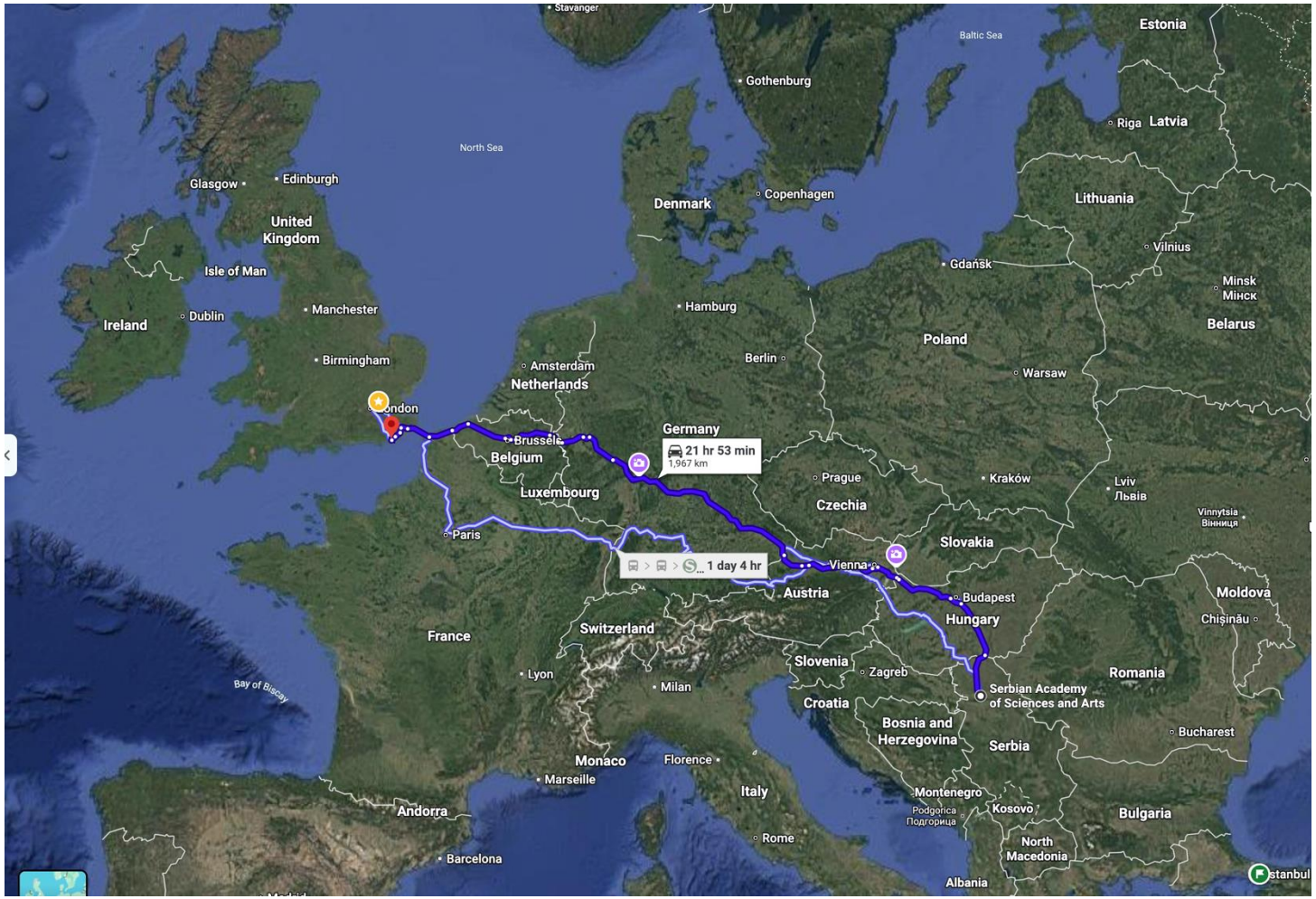
United Nations



Source: UN-Habitat

Case study sites

Hastings and St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex



- Situated along the south coast of the United Kingdom
- Travel into central London, approximately 1 hour 40 mins
- Using the conference venue as a hub, around 4 hours flight

Source: Google Maps (2026)

Case study sites

- Decline in popularity due to the rise in package holidays
- Stigmatised during the 1980s and 1990s
- Described as ‘left-behind’ places
- Both are characterised as ‘marginalised’ and on the ‘edge’ geographically and economically

I live in Hastings: there are many positives about both towns

Hastings Pier
Source: Photograph by author (2024)

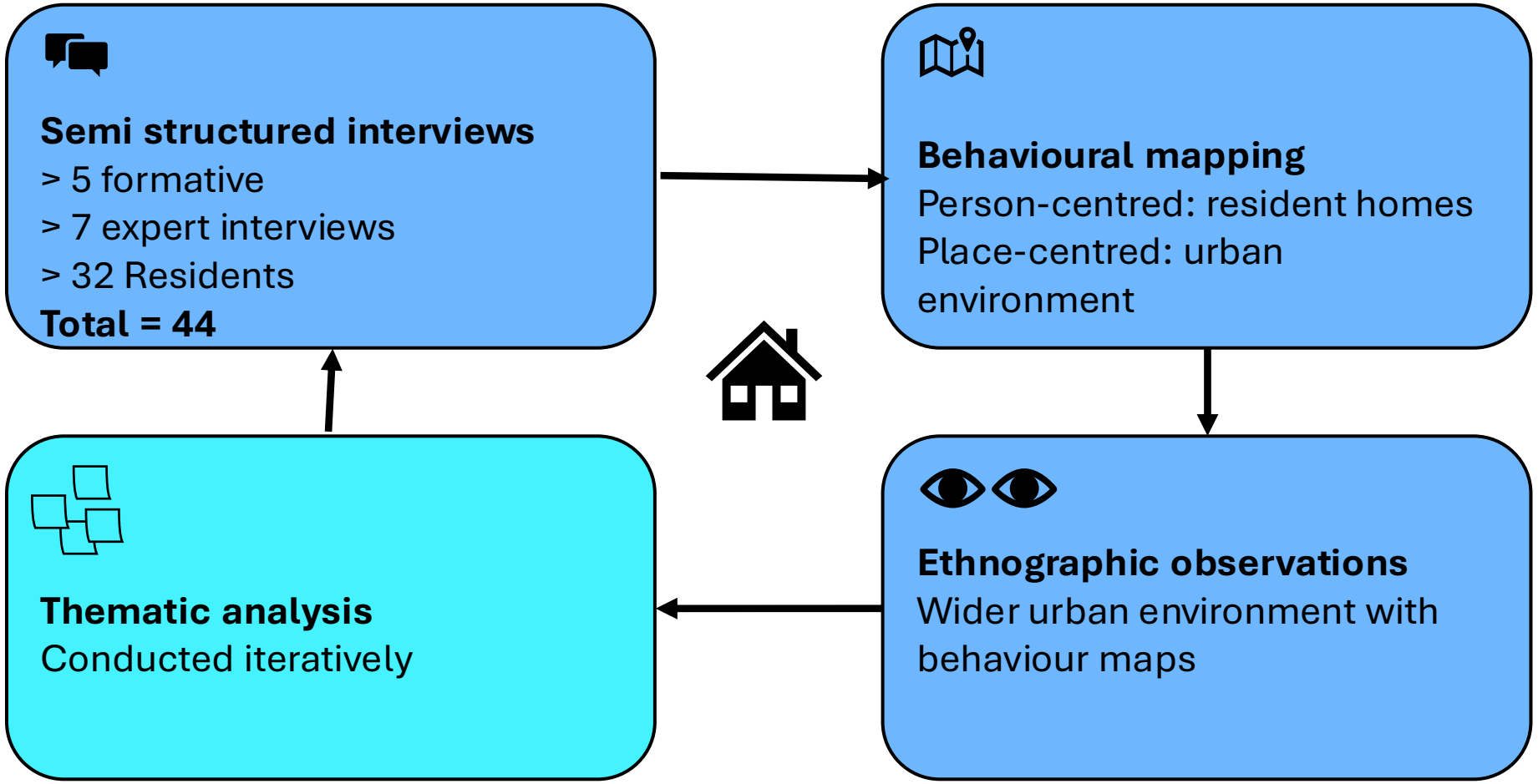
Case study sites

- High percentage of council housing sold as part of right to buy scheme in UK during 80s – 90s onwards
- Freedom of Information (FOI) act revealed that Hastings Borough Council (HBC) have no record of the figures of houses sold under scheme
- Further FOI confirmed that HBC do not hold any stock – transferred around 1996 as a part of voluntary transfer scheme
- There is no council housing in Hastings, but there is social rented housing owned by (Housing Associations)



St Leonards-on-Sea
Source: Photograph by author (2024)

Research Methods



Key research findings: affordability and availability

‘Hastings, if you like is a microcosm of the country. But it's an exaggerated microcosm. So we're actually the **worst hit borough in the country in terms of the speed of increase in the cost of housing. I think we're the worst in the country** (Harry, local councillor)’.

*Rise in house prices alongside a low wage economy has really impacted **affordability** and **availability.***



Hastings Old Town
Source: Photograph by author (2025)

Key research findings: affordability and availability

‘Since the Thatcher government took social housing, destroyed social housing [and] did not put the money that came from right to buy back into housing, we've had a crisis of supply. Very good for landlords and very good for property owners. **So it is a, it’s a deliberate political strategy in my view by the Conservative Party to enrich the few at the expense of the many**’ (Harry, local councillor)

Newspaper article highlighting budget implications on council due to paying for private rented housing for local tenants.

Councils in England facing bankruptcy as lack of housing pushes up costs

Budgets could be overwhelmed as evictions and rising mortgage rates cause homelessness to surge



Hastings borough council estimates that it will spend £5.6m on temporary accommodation each year. Photograph: Richard Barnes/Alamy

Source: Butler and Goodier, The Guardian, (2023)

Key research findings: Case Study Marine Court, St-Leonards



Key research findings: maintenance and general property management

‘I think the scaffolding came down in 2019 and everybody says the same thing. **Why didn't you finish that bit? You know, sort of like some unfinished masterpiece’** (Bob).



Marine Court, St Leonards-on-Sea
Source: Photograph by author (2024)

Key research findings: neighbourhood, social infrastructure and belonging

‘What's it called the Old England, which is a stalwart for the locals. Local, local, local, it must stay there. Do not change that. **Do not let the yuppie DFL’s take that pub over, please, because it's, it's edgy.** Right, okay and then down the road, there’s the Prince of Wales which is even rougher. **Then, of course, The Horse and Groom. I think we all call it the Doom and Gloom** (Bob)’.



Horse & Groom, St Leonards-on-Sea
Source: Photograph by author (2024)

Outside adequacy: Map of urban environment

- Mapping exercise of local area to identify popular meeting spots
- Walkable meeting spots were highly valued
- Strengthened community connections and fostered friendships
- Urban area but described as a ‘village’

Popular bars and pubs

1. The Railway, King’s Road
2. The Royal, St John’s Road
3. The Cactus Hound, Western Road
4. The Prince of Wales, Western Road
5. The Old England, London Road
6. The Piper, Norman Road
7. Heist Market, Norman Road
8. Collected Fictions, London Road
9. Goat Ledge, Grande Parade
10. The St Leonard, London Road
11. Oscars on the Square, Grande Parade
12. The Horse & Groom, Mercatoria
13. The Forbidden Fruit, Grande Parade

Notable meeting spots for spontaneous interaction/socialising

1. St Leonard’s Warrior Square Station
2. The Co-operative, Western Road
3. Warrior Square Gardens, Warrior Square (often used for local festivals)
4. Kino-Tear, Norman Road
5. Marine Court Parade
6. Stretch along the sea front (10 minute walk from Marine Court to Warrior Square Gardens)



Building adequacy: the future of coastal housing

‘For me, ultimately, **the council buying its own stock**. Okay, so we can guarantee to your fundamental point about adequacy. Yeah, I would say the temporary accommodation that we've been taking from the private rented sector is not adequate. Yeah, it's not adequate physically. A lot of the properties have black mould and all of that kind of issues and damp, and so on and so forth. **So it's inadequate in every way, for the dignity of people who have a right to a safe and dry home. So the answer to that is we are building and buying as fast as we possibly can’**. (Harry, local councillor) (Betts, 2024)

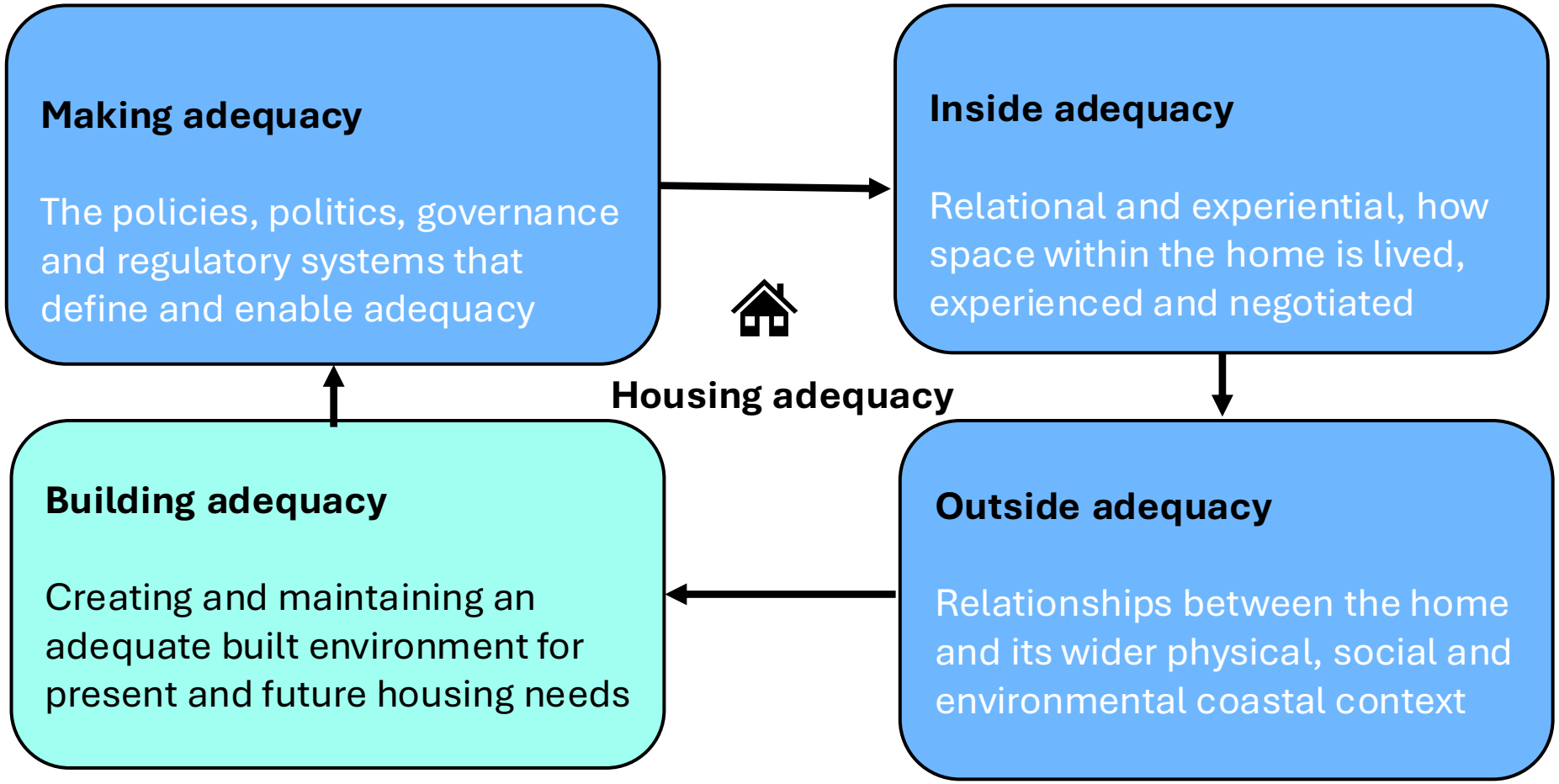
Image of current social housing empty as housing associations say refurbishment is too expensive.



Source: Betts, Hastings Independent, (2024)

Summary of research findings

Four conceptual lenses for policy reform



Key finding: Housing adequacy emerged in this study **not as a threshold to be met**, but something **that was actively produced** through the interaction of structures, material conditions and **lived experience of place.**



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