



# IN SPACE

FEELING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Today's event is part of **Neurodiversity Celebration Week** organised by the staff network at University of Birmingham – follow the QR code to find out more about other events.





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## FEELING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

This workshop is the first in a series exploring the lived effects of various kinds of environment, co-led by the Neurodiversity Staff Network and the Imagining Wellbeing strand of the Centre for Urban Wellbeing.

Today we're focusing on sensory interactions with built environments, especially (but not only) the university campus.

**Jeremy Kidwell**

Neurodiversity Staff Network  
([j.kidwell@bham.ac.uk](mailto:j.kidwell@bham.ac.uk))

**Dorothy Butchard**

Centre for Urban Wellbeing  
([d.butchard@bham.ac.uk](mailto:d.butchard@bham.ac.uk))



# WHAT IS THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT?



“Each aspect of the built environment is created to fulfil human purpose. As those purposes and actions are manifold, so too are the reasons to design and build. Where you are sitting while reading this page, you are surrounded by hundreds of human-created objects, all contributing components of your built environment. The words on this page, this book, your chair and desk...

The cell phone and Internet that connect you to many others throughout the world, even the walls, floor and ceiling of the space are humanly made or arranged and therefore part of the built environment...

Look further afield and observe the variety of objects and environments out of the window. Buildings, automobiles, roads, bridges, the landscaped areas, parks, and the surrounding city are also part of a human-made or arranged built environment...

The built environment fills every nook and cranny of the everyday world; it strongly influences human lives concurrent with their creation and modification of it.”

(Tom Bartuska, “The Built Environment: Definition and Scope”, in *The Built Environment: Second Edition*, 2007)

"The built environment can have a significant impact on how we use and perceive a space.... Many factors contribute to an individual's wellbeing including mental and physical health, stress levels, social connectedness, environmental quality, perceptions of safety, and access to services and amenities. ...

Much of the literature concerning urban design strategies and tools is targeted to the city or neighbourhood-scale.

Although it shares similarities with communities of various scales, a university campus is its own distinctive form and thus needs to be analysed and described in a unique way."

(Eden McDonald and S. Jeff Birchall, "The built environment in a winter climate: improving university campus design for student wellbeing", *Journal of Landscape Research*, 2021)





# SENSORY AFFECT



**“Quite simply, people are affected by their environment through their senses.**

**This results in both psychological and physical effects, whereas people are also the agents that create, modify, and maintain much of the material world in which we live and work; a simple description of a very complex system of cause and effect.**

**The more we know about this process and the intervening variables the more we may be able to design better places, moderate effects, and influence behaviour.**

**The main factors in the environment that contribute to wellbeing relate to our sensory stimulation; that is, what we see, smell, touch, taste, and feel. Both the physical and the ambient environment have an effect on our senses.”**

**(Cooper et al, *Wellbeing and the Environment*, p.1-2)**

## OUR AIMS TODAY

Noise, lighting, colour, size and many other factors can make a huge difference to how we feel and react in a space, whether it's a corridor, classroom, office or built-up area.

We invite you to reflect on how you feel in current spaces on or off campus, and engage with creative ideas for alternative approaches to built environments.



**Quiet Space:** The fourth floor has several open spaces with desks and chairs, and you'll be welcome to step outside at any time.

We also have a room booked as a quiet space in Muirhead 118.