

What does sustainable mean?



Sustainability or 'sustainable development' means looking after the world we live in so that everyone can have a happy future. It means keeping things good for people, the environment and the economy. Something can only be called sustainable if it is good for all three.

So what is a Sustainable City?

A sustainable city offers a good quality of life to current residents but doesn't reduce the opportunities for future residents to enjoy.

A sustainable city should have:

- Good services that everyone can use (young and old, rich and poor, disabled and able-bodied, etc.).
- Public transport which is safe and reliable.
- Safe routes for walking and cycling.
- Areas of open space that are safe and enjoyable.
- Renewable resources that are used instead non-renewable resources, e.g. solar and wind power instead of oil.
- The means to ensure that waste is recycled wherever possible.
- Laws to ensure that when new homes are built they are energy efficient (they don't waste electricity or heat).
- Communities which are strong – people work with their neighbours to make sure that everyone feels safe and happy.

Task: Write a sentence or two explaining what a sustainable city is.

Focus on Sustainable Transport

One way to make a city more sustainable it to improve transport. Some ways to do this include:



Park and Ride scheme operating in Plymouth

Park and Ride schemes.

People park in car parks on the edge of a settlement and catch regular buses into the centre.



Pedestrian shopping streets, Liverpool

Pedestrianised areas.

Some areas are designated as 'pedestrian only' zones.



Permit holder parking in Westminster

Permit holder parking.

Certain parts of the city, particularly near the centre, are designated as permit parking only. This means that people must have a permit to park in that area. This reduces the number of people driving into towns and cities as parking opportunities are restricted.



Speed bump in a residential area in London

Traffic calming.

Road narrowing and speed bumps make traffic move more slowly. Narrow roads may restrict the type of vehicle that can enter certain parts of the city.

Task: Which option do you think would be the best way to improve traffic in your area?

Case study: Masdar City, Abu Dhabi



Masdar City aims to be one of the world's most sustainable urban developments, powered by renewable energy.

It aims to do this by:

- Being completely powered by renewable energy.
- Reducing waste to as near to zero as possible.
- Leading research and education into sustainable technology.
- Designing the city streets and buildings to help create comfortable environments, reducing the need for air conditioning, heating, and artificial light.
- Educating three quarters of the 40,000 residents with five hours of sustainability education each year.
- Full pedestrianisation within the city, with no vehicles in the space. The transport network would be below ground.

Task: Does this sound like a place you would like to live? Why/why not? Watch the video 'Masdar City' – what do you think now?