





We have lost so many of the places that used to bring us together.

From Sure Start centres to department store cafés, we've lost the everyday places where people can gather, eat and connect.

And we haven't replaced them.

High streets are losing their role as places to connect.

At the same time, spending on convenience food is rising.

We're eating out more than ever, but connecting less.

Loneliness is now a public health issue.





**What if health on the high street looked like a restaurant?**

**What if eating out could increase everyday social interaction and reduce isolation?**

Public restaurants bring this missing piece to the UK high street, rethinking the role restaurants can play in society.

By combining scale with affordability, they make eating out accessible to more people, creating everyday opportunities for connection, while supporting more resilient local economies and better-connected food systems.



**Public restaurants are not a service for people in need, they are new social infrastructure, for all of us.**

Large, high-footfall dining halls serving delicious, generous, balanced, climate-conscious meals at prices that make eating out accessible.

Inspired by the belonging of a pub, the flow of a canteen and casual sociability of a food hall. Limited, daily-changing menus, designed for regular visits.

# **The Public Plate:** a system to scale public restaurants

**A social franchising model designed to grow a national network of public restaurants. Built from proven models across public and private sector catering, reorganised to widen access and enable scale.**

## **What The Public Plate provides**

- Shared systems infrastructure: Central production handles labour-intensive prep.
- Standards and stewardship: Consistent quality, purpose and public trust across every location
- Patient capital: A social impact fund provides accessible, long-term finance to support new sites

## **Enabling a network of public restaurants**

- Scaled through social franchising: Opening pathways to ownership for talented operators.
- Locally owned and rooted in place: Independent operators, supported by shared systems.
- Seasonal, supply-shaped menus: Producers at the centre.

## STAY THERE

### HEALTHY FOOD



People need and want to be able to make healthy choices - ensuring high streets offer these both encourages the use of high streets, and healthy behaviours

### GREEN SPACES



Adequate provision of green spaces - even small ones - encourages exercise, and has improves people's mental wellbeing

### SUPPORTIVE WORK



Those working on high streets spend the most time there - the jobs available should encourage them to be healthy and support others to do the same

## BE THERE

### RETAIL



High quality retail, selling the products that people want, remains a key driver of footfall and ensures people are accessing other services

### SOCIAL SPACES



Whether this is pubs, cafes, or community centres - third spaces play a vital role in facilitating social connections and improving people's wellbeing

### HEALTH SERVICES



Providing access to health services - whether that is a GP, pharmacist, or dentists - ensures that people can get support with their health, and draws them to the high street

## GET THERE

### TRANSPORT LINKS



Strong public transport links help bring people into town centres and boost their connectedness

### INCLUSIVE DESIGN



Making it easy for everyone to get around through the design of the streets means that nobody is prevented from accessing the high street

### SAFETY



People do not just want their high streets to be free of crime, but perceive clean high streets as being safer and more accessible

## SHAPE THE HIGH STREET

### COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT



A local community - including the public, businesses, and local authorities - empowered to shape their high streets, supported by the powers to enact changes, is vital to securing positive outcomes

# Policy Alignment: delivering the Streets Ahead priorities

**Healthy food** - Making balanced, climate-friendly meals the visible norm

**Supportive work** - Investing in people, progression and fair work as core to the model

**Social Spaces** - Designed for connection: shared tables, all day access, everyday use

**Safety** - Bringing consistent footfall into the evening to support safer high streets

**Community empowerment** -Community ownership and governance built into the model

# **Policy Alignment:** a practical contribution to delivering “Protecting What Matters”

**Government has set the direction: Confident, cohesive and resilient communities, built through everyday connection, local pride and prevention**

The gap is practical, placed based delivery;

- Visible, shared spaces that bring people together regularly
- Practical ways to reduce isolation and improve wellbeing
- Infrastructure that builds cohesion through everyday use
- Models that combine health, place and local economic value
- Approaches that are scalable without long-term subsidy

Locally rooted models that retain value and strengthen place



Policy paper

**Protecting What Matters: Towards a more confident, cohesive, and resilient United Kingdom**

Published 9 March 2026



## What this enables for local authorities:

- 1. Everyday civic infrastructure:** Shared spaces that build connection, belonging and social capital
- 2. Prevention in practice:** Reducing pressure on health, loneliness and other crisis services
- 3. Stronger, safer high streets:** Anchor institutions driving footfall, activity and evening economy
- 4. Better use of public assets:** Bringing underused buildings and sites back into meaningful use
- 5. Healthier food environments:** Nutritious, climate-friendly meals as the visible, everyday norm
- 6. Resilient local food systems:** Supply-led menus with producers at the centre



The Public Plate model is designed to operate without ongoing subsidy, using cross-subsidy from day one. We are exploring additional mechanisms, such as social outcomes contracts, to extend access over time.

Public restaurants are designed to expand, not compete with, the existing market, broadening access to eating out and growing overall demand.

**We are looking for local authorities who can:**

- **Identify potential pilot sites (especially underused assets)**
- **Support early stakeholder alignment**
- **Act as place-based partners in developing pilots**



**THANK YOU**

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