

# Chris Boyko - Misunderstanding Density: Why We Are Building The Wrong Sort Of Cities



How can we achieve the right city density? Photograph: Tibor Bogнар/ALAMY

*guardian.com. July 2014.* For such a scientific-sounding word, “density” sure is emotive. Utter it to Nimbys and you might get four-letter expletives. Mention a place like Hong Kong, and eyes glaze over at the thought of mile-high walls of people, packed in like sardines. Density still even brings to mind English [cities](#) during the industrial revolution, full of open sewers and cholera.

With so much riding on an ability to create and develop successful cities worldwide, are we making sure they are places we want to live in? That’s the real crux – if we don’t understand what good density looks like, and what the impact of bad density is on people’s long-term health and wellbeing, then we don’t have a working basis for current and future developments.

At a spatial level, density is all about the concentration of things in an area. Most local authorities, as well as the ONS, collect information about things they can readily count, such as the density of houses and people. With these two figures, along with other kinds of information, such as brownfield availability and where certain services are located, cities make decisions about how land is used, how it is described and what future uses might be needed.

Read more: <http://www.theguardian.com/cities-density-building>