



LONDON CONTEXT MAP

Appendix

June 2026

GREATER
LONDON
AUTHORITY

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This document is an appendix to the London Context map which categorises the varied character of different parts of London into six broad ‘character settings’. Its aim is to provide greater clarity and detail on how the character settings of the map are defined and what each character setting contains.

This document is also intended to assist Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) when carrying out more detailed Borough wide or area specific characterisation studies. For instance, LPAs are recommended to use the six character settings defined in the London Context Map when developing a more granular understanding of local character for different areas.

More detailed local studies will also help to inform future iterations of the London Context Map.

The map and this appendix should be read together. They provide a shared evidence base to support consistent strategic and local decision-making, ensuring that good growth reinforces and enhances the physical distinctiveness of different areas.

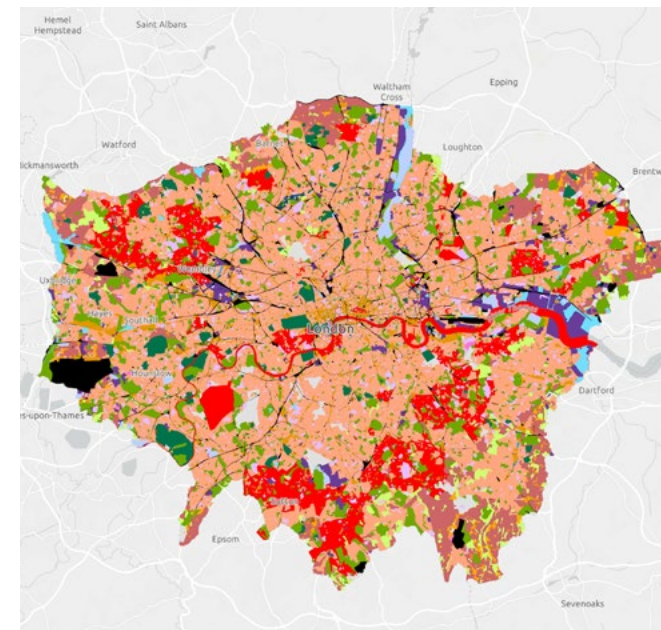
Source data

The London Context Map (LCM) is based primarily on the London Historic Character Thesaurus (LHCT) methodology and data. The LHCT was commissioned by Historic England to describe the historic character of London's built environment. The LHCT is structured according to three tiers:

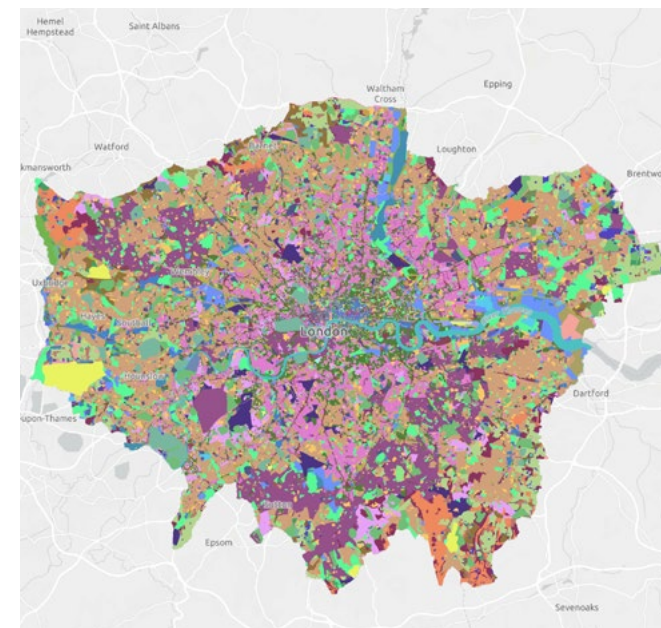
- **Broad types** are high-level functional categories (e.g. settlement, industry, transport), designed for comparative analysis across large areas and time periods.
- **Intermediate types** subdivide broad types into recognisable and dominant patterns of development (e.g. , planned suburbs).
- **Narrow types** provide fine-grained distinctions based on form, date, function, and development process (e.g. garden suburb).

Narrow types were selected as the base data set for the London Context Map due to their granularity and more accurate representation of built form and local character. However, Local Planning Authorities may choose to use intermediate or broad types for their own characterisation studies.

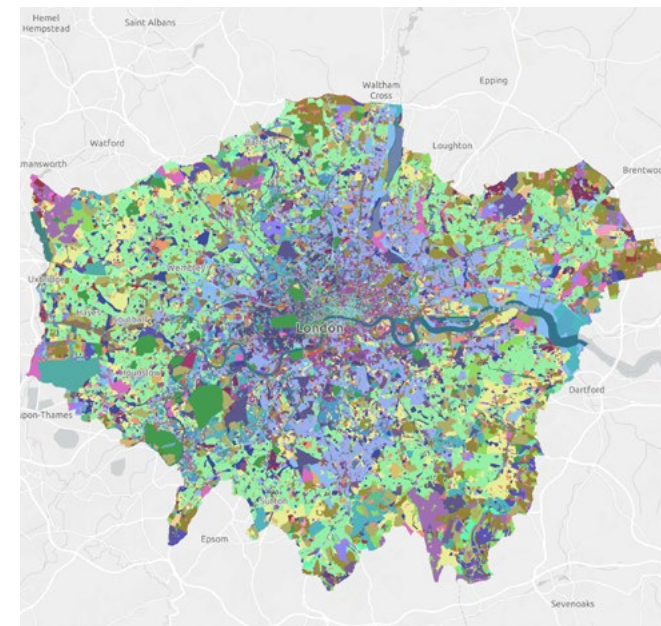
Other sources of data used include the London Datastore (for town centre boundaries) and Ordnance Survey data (for average building heights) to help identify which character setting is most appropriate.



Map of LHCT broad types



Map of LHCT intermediate types



Map of LHCT narrow types

Urban settlement

Terraced housing

Basic terrace

Grand terrace

Link terrace

Palace fronted terrace

Example of the corresponding hierarchy of 'terraced' types. LPAs may choose to characterise their Borough at any level of resolution.

Methodology

The London Context Map has been developed iteratively across three key stages:

1. **Baseline data review**
2. **Defining the character settings**
3. **Testing and refinement**

Stage 1 - Baseline review

The London Historic Character Thesaurus (LHCT) dataset which underpins the London Context Map is itself a patchwork of different sources of cartographic information including aerial photography, historic maps, conservation area appraisals, urban archaeological information - as well as bespoke character mapping in GIS. As such, an initial review of the LHCT baseline data was necessary to identify potential issues such as gaps, overlaps or blank fields relating to narrow type polygons in GIS - issues which are inevitable for character mapping at the London-wide scale. Where detected and where possible, these issues were corrected.

Stage 2 - Defining the character settings

Following the baseline review and data clean-up, the next stage involved grouping the 287 existing narrow types from the LHCT into a limited number of 'character settings' to describe high level differences in London's built character. The first step in this process was to separate out narrow types relating to land that would not typically be developed. Four such categories were defined:

- **Setting GB** - Designated Green Belt
- **Setting GBI** - Designated nature, open spaces, waterways and water bodies.
- **Setting TI** - Areas associated with non-developable transport and highways infrastructure.
- **Setting OI** - Areas associated with other non-developable infrastructure (e.g. waste, civil and energy infrastructure).

The next step was to define separate settings for three relatively consistent patterns of residential development categorised as:

- **Setting A** - Detached or semi-detached housing (and associated suburban non-residential narrow types) typically located in outer London.
- **Setting B** - Low-scale terraced and compact semi-detached housing (and associated urban non-residential narrow types) typically located in inner/outer London.

- **Setting F** - Low density non-residential land uses (e.g. light industrial, out of town retail parks) typically located in outer London

Note: Settings A and B also include some non-residential land uses associated with detached, semi-detached or terraced housing such as the occasional church, school or community building.

Two settings were created to represent differences in London's network of town centres using boundary data from the London Datastore:

- **Setting C** - District and Local town centre designations or high streets/parades outside the CAZ and some taller/denser building types adjacent to these centres)
- **Setting E** - CAZ and International, Major, Metropolitan town centre designations as well as some taller/denser building types adjacent to these centres)

Note: Areas of low density land use (e.g. light industrial, retail parks) smaller than 0.25 hectares within town centres have been assigned to either Setting C or E whereas low density land that exceeds 0.25 hectares within a town centre boundary remains in Setting F.

The final category reflects the most heterogeneous setting which relied on Ordnance Survey buildings heights data to compare average heights for different narrow types:

- **Setting D** - Mostly flatted denser housing and mixed-use building types that range from mid to high-rise located within inner London and outer London.

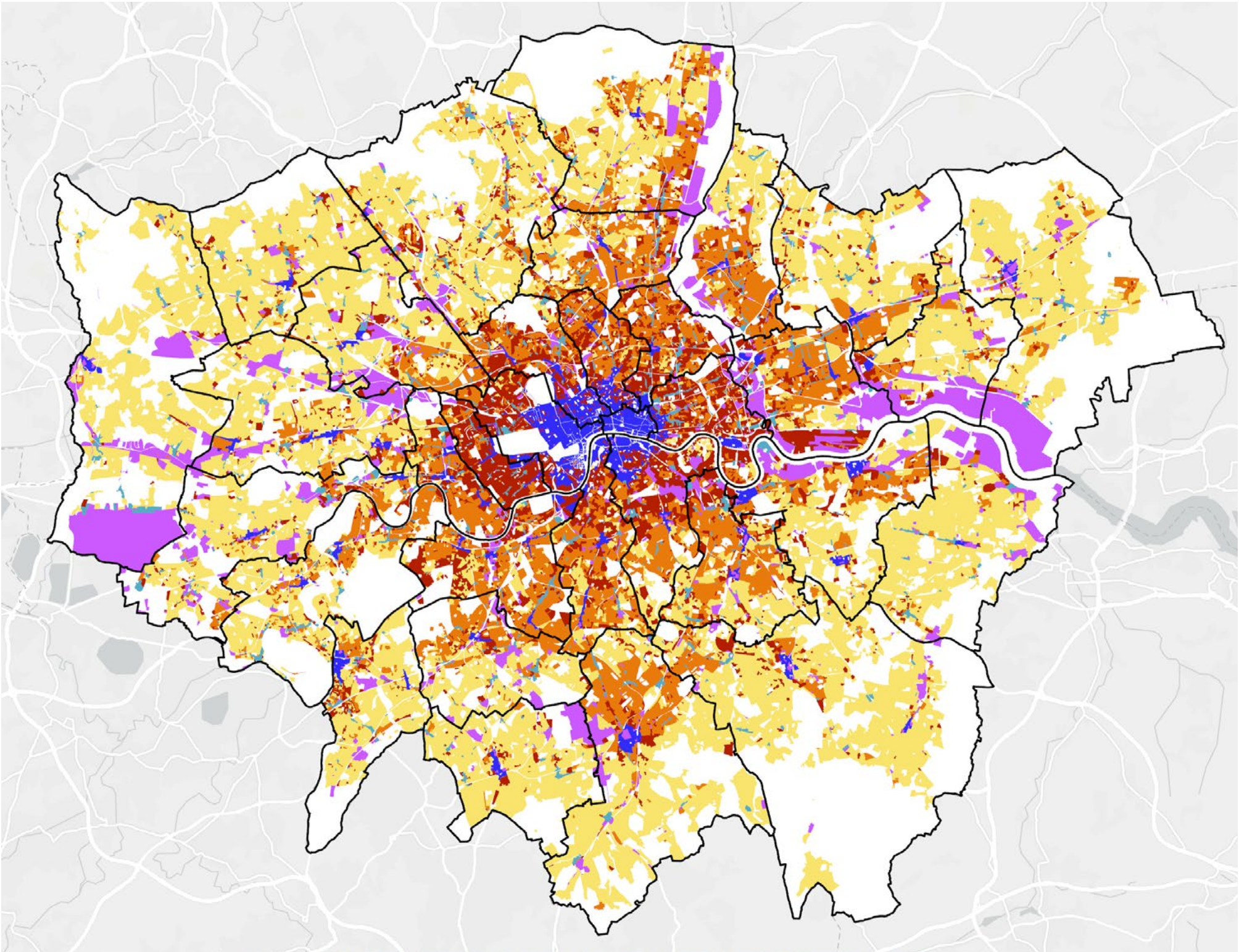
Stage 3 - Testing and refinement

In the final stage, the draft London Context Map was compared with other recent London-wide character maps including London's Character and Density (Historic England, 2018), Complex City: London's changing character (RIBA, 2019), Colouring Britain (Loughborough University & the University of Cambridge, 2026) and various LPA character studies to review and refine the character settings.

The final London Context Map was further refined via targeted engagement with Officers from various GLA teams, Historic England and a selection of London Boroughs.

London Context Map

- London Borough
- Setting GB Green Belt
- Setting GBI Green and blue infrastructure
- Setting TI Transport infrastructure
- Setting OI Other infrastructure
- Setting A Predominantly outer suburban area
- Setting B Predominantly inner urban terrace area
- Setting C District and local centres
- Setting D Predominantly flatted development
- Setting E Large town centres and Central core
- Setting F Low density land



London Character Settings overview

	London Borough		
	Setting GB	Green Belt	Designated Green Belt land, including developed areas but excluding released Green Belt land.
	Setting GBI	Green and blue infrastructure	Designated nature, open spaces, waterways and water bodies.
	Setting TI	Transport infrastructure	Areas associated with non-developable transport and highways infrastructure.
	Setting OI	Other infrastructure	Areas associated with other non-developable infrastructure including waste, civil and energy infrastructure.
	Setting A	Predominantly outer suburban area	Mostly detached or semi-detached housing (and associated suburban non-residential narrow types) typically located in outer London.
	Setting B	Predominantly inner urban terrace area	Mostly terraces and compact semi-detached (and associated urban non-residential narrow types) typically located in inner/outer London.
	Setting C	District and local centres	District and Local town centre designations or high streets/parades outside the CAZ and some taller/denser building types adjacent to these.
	Setting D	Predominantly flatted development	Mostly flatted or denser housing and mixed-use building types that range from mid to high-rise within inner London and outer London.
	Setting E	Large town centres and Central core	The CAZ and International, Major, Metropolitan town centre designations as well as some taller/denser building types adjacent to these centre.
	Setting F	Low density land	Low density non-residential land uses (e.g. light industrial, out of town retail) typically located in outer London.

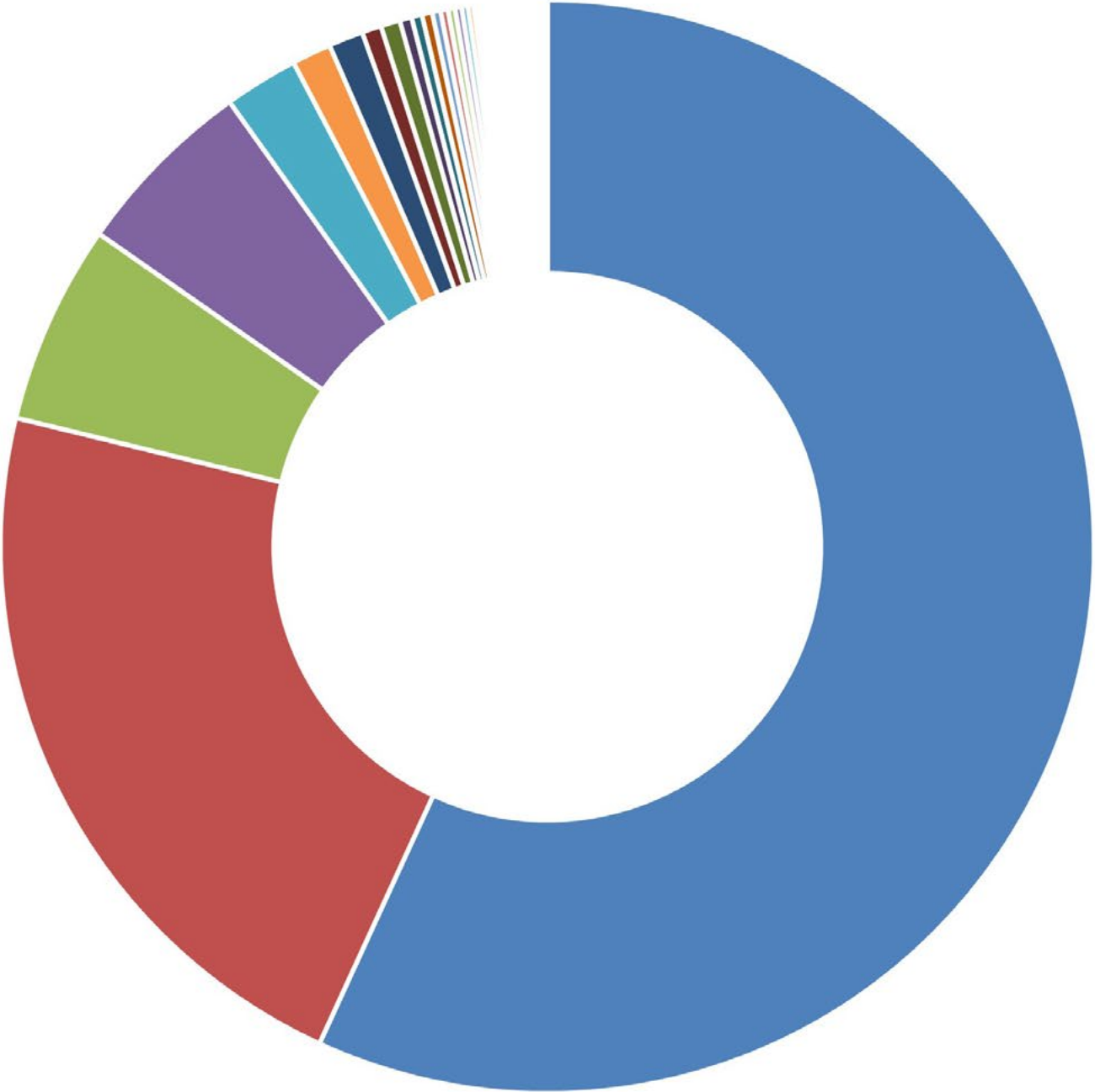
Note: these are general descriptions of the character settings and do not cover the full range of assumptions/ exceptions for why specific narrow type categories or polygons were assigned within each setting. The final London Context Map was developed via an iterative process that involved a combination of automated (objective, rules-based) and manual adjustments. See methodology.

Narrow types contained within Setting A

(Predominantly outer suburban area)

MOST PREVALENT NARROW TYPES BY AREA

1. Metroland Estate	57%
2. Speculative Estate	22%
3. Villas	6%
4. School	5%
5. Modest Semi-Detached	2%
6. Garden Suburb	1%
7. Municipal Housing Estate	1%
8. Park suburb	1%
9. Hospital	1%
10. Cottage Estate	1%



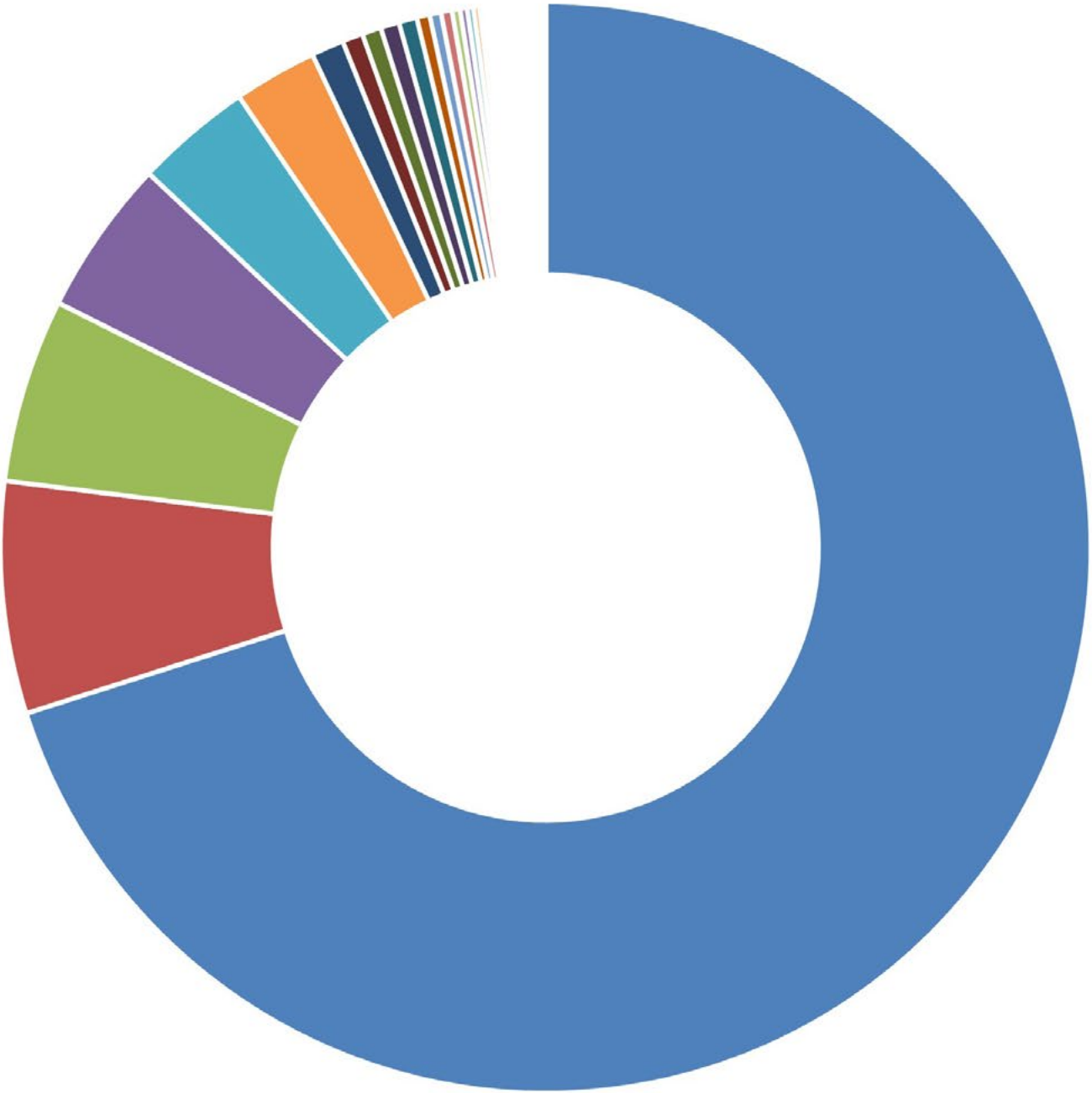
- NarrowType
- Metroland Estate
 - Speculative estate
 - Villas
 - School
 - Modest Semi-Detached
 - Garden Suburb
 - Municipal Housing Estate
 - Park Suburb
 - Hospital
 - Cottage Estate
 - Shellfish Collection
 - Church
 - College Campus
 - Low Rise Blocks
 - Residential Care Home
 - Recreation Ground
 - Village

Narrow types contained within Setting B

(Predominantly inner urban terrace area)

MOST PREVALENT NARROW TYPES BY AREA

1. Basic Terrace	70%
2. Grand Terrace	7%
3. Villas	5%
4. School	5%
5. Modest Semi-Detached	3%
6. Municipal Housing Estate	2%
7. Hospital	1%
8. Church	1%
9. Speculative Estate	1%
10. Town House	1%



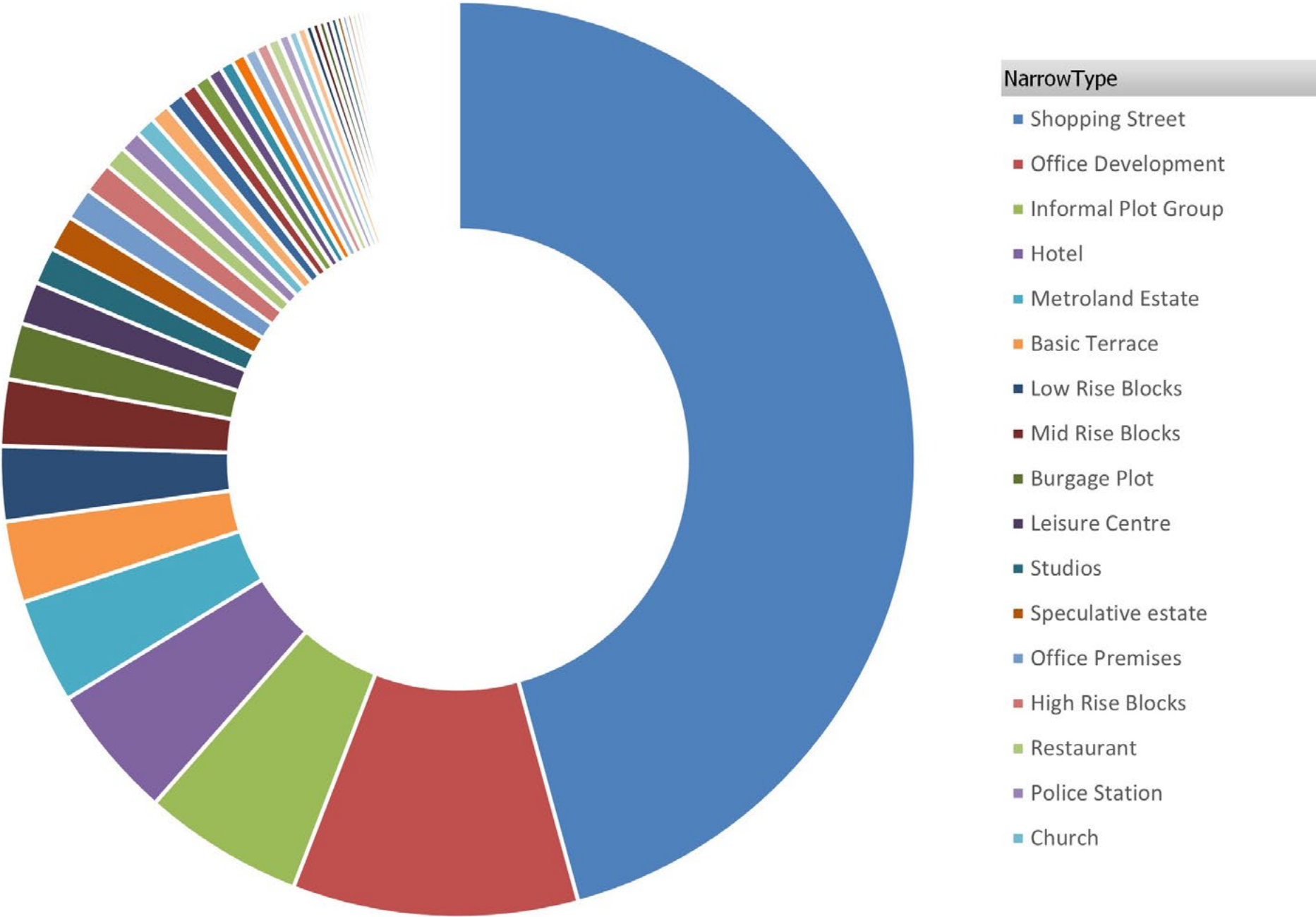
- NarrowType
- Basic Terrace
 - Grand Terrace
 - Villas
 - School
 - Modest Semi-Detached
 - Municipal Housing Estate
 - Hospital
 - Church
 - Speculative estate
 - Shopping Street
 - Low Rise Blocks
 - Town House
 - Mid Rise Blocks
 - College Campus
 - Shellfish Collection
 - Recreation Ground
 - University Campus

Narrow types contained within Setting C

(District and local centres)

MOST PREVALENT NARROW TYPES BY AREA

1. Shopping Street	46%
2. Office Development	10%
3. Informal Plot Group	6%
4. Hotel	5%
5. Metroland Estate	4%
6. Basic Terrace	3%
7. Low Rise Blocks	3%
8. Mid Rise Blocks	3%
9. Point Burgage Plot	2%
10. Leisure Centre	2%

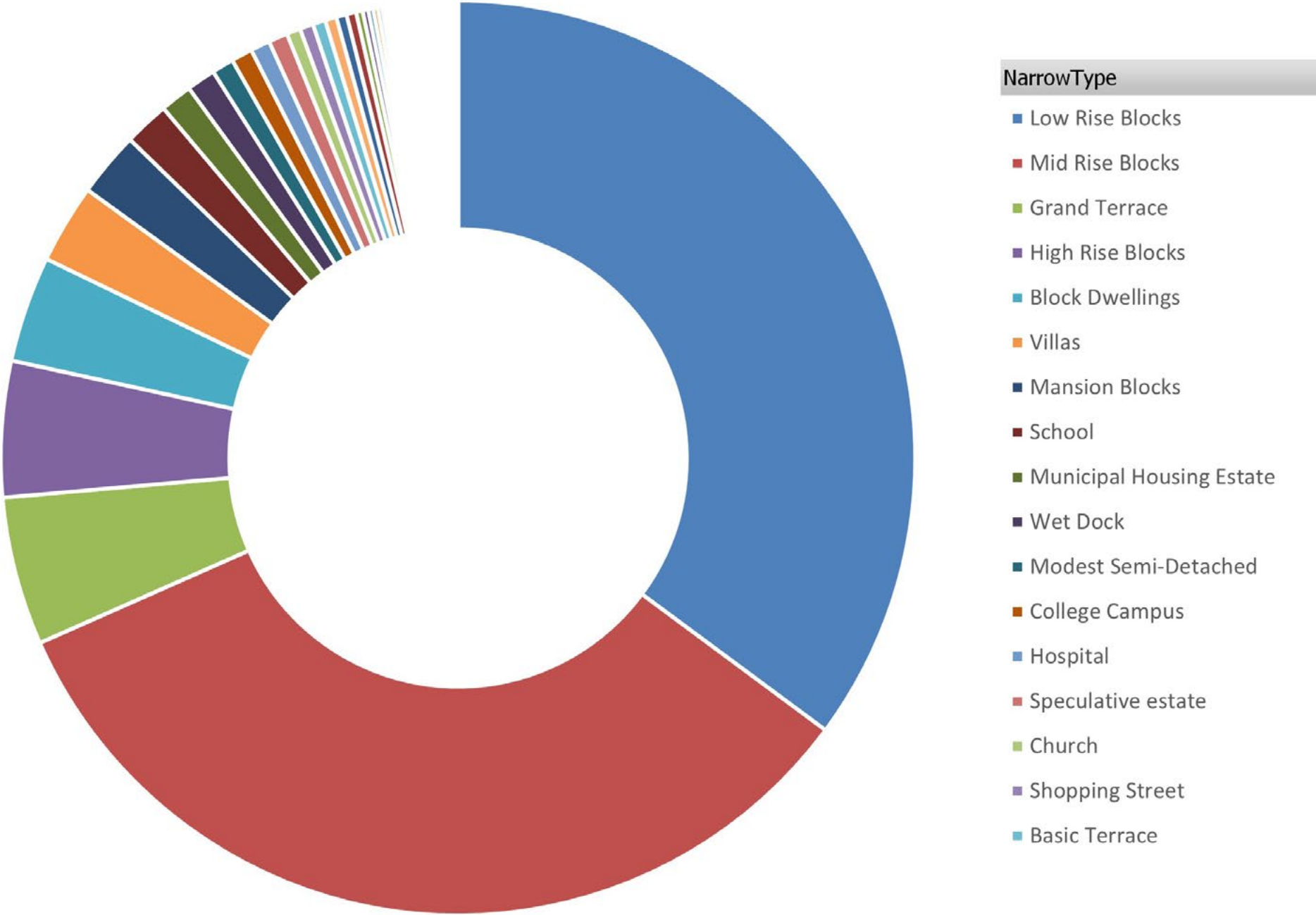


Narrow types contained within Setting D

(Predominantly flatted development)

MOST PREVALENT NARROW TYPES BY AREA

1. Low Rise Blocks	35%
2. Mid Rise Blocks	33%
3. Grand Terrace	5%
4. High Rise Blocks	5%
5. Block Dwellings	4%
6. Villas	3%
7. Mansion Blocks	2%
8. School	2%
9. Municipal Housing Estate	1%
10. Wet Dock	1%

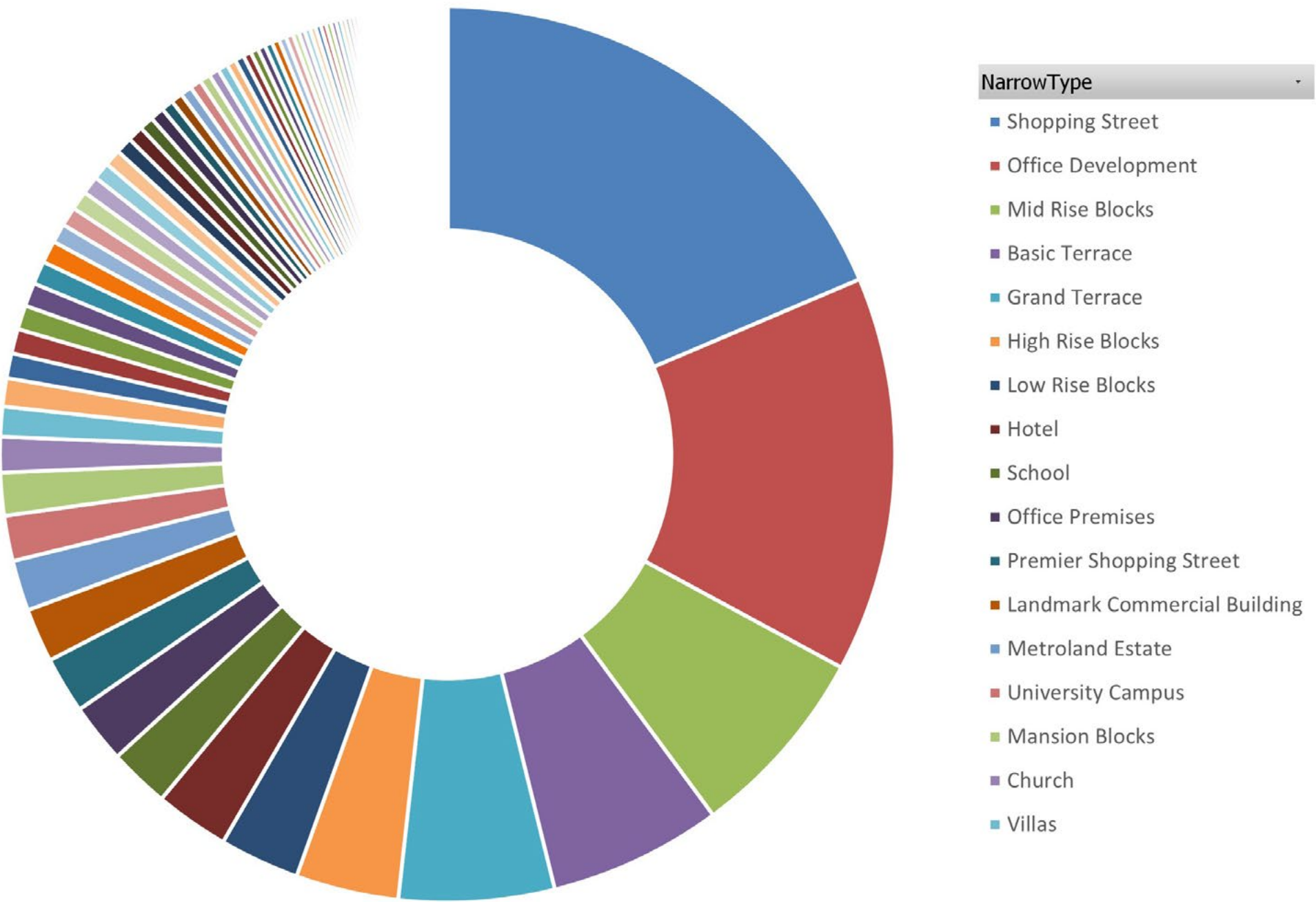


Narrow types contained within Setting E

(Large town centres and Central core)

MOST PREVALENT NARROW TYPES BY AREA

1. Shopping Street	19%
2. Office Development	14%
3. Mid Rise Blocks	7%
4. Basic Terrace	6%
5. Grand Terrace	6%
6. High Rise Blocks	4%
7. Low Rise Blocks	3%
8. Hotel	3%
9. School	3%
10. Office premises	2%

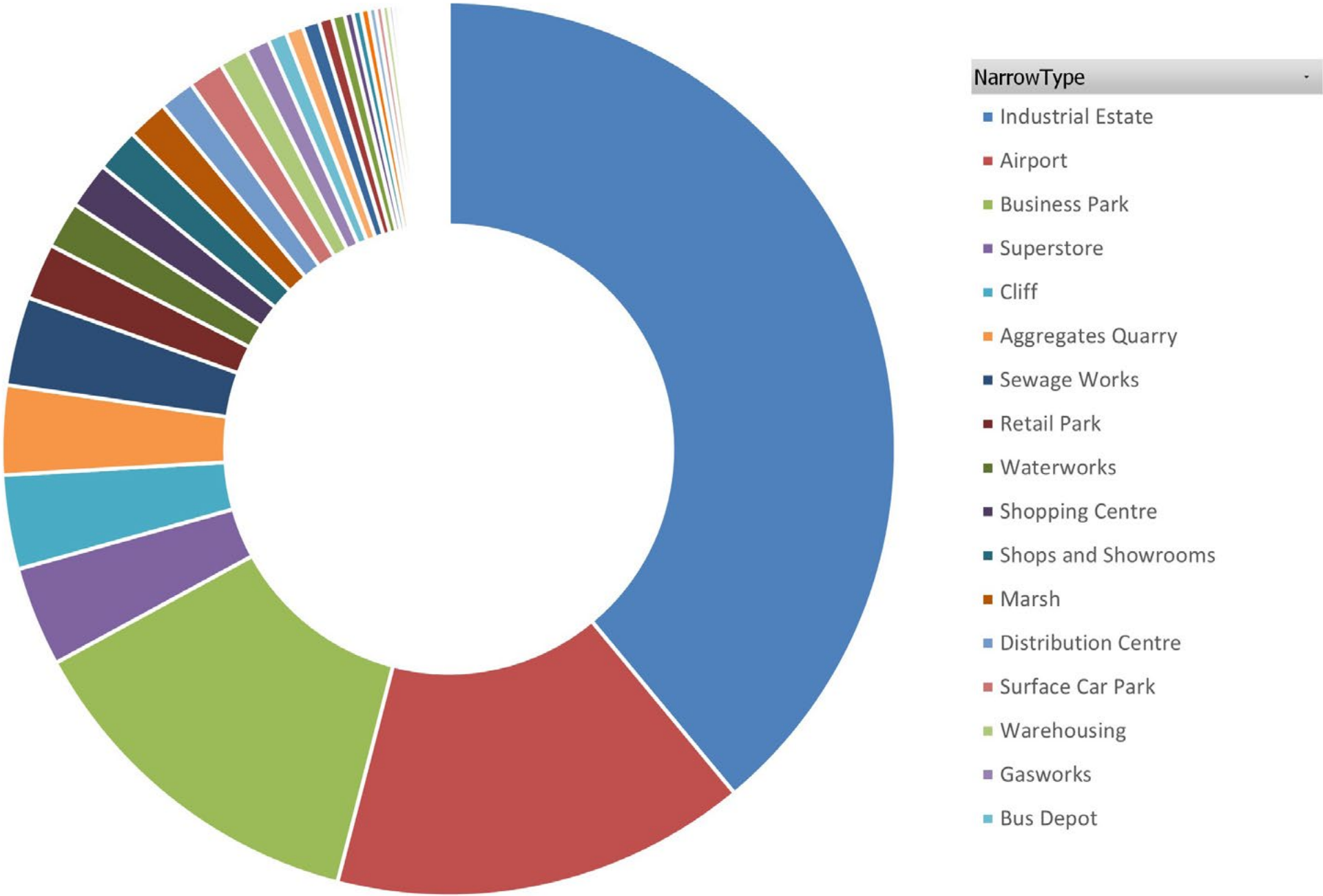


Narrow types contained within Setting F

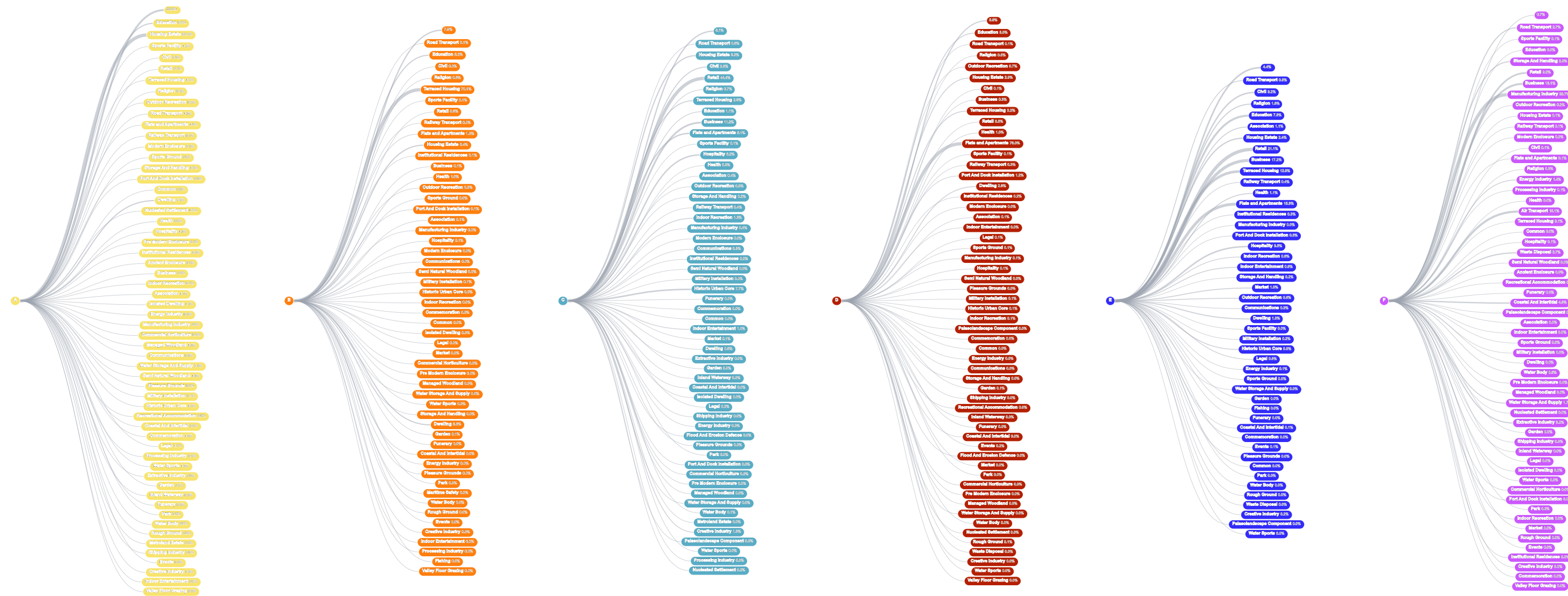
(Low density land)

MOST PREVALENT NARROW TYPES BY AREA

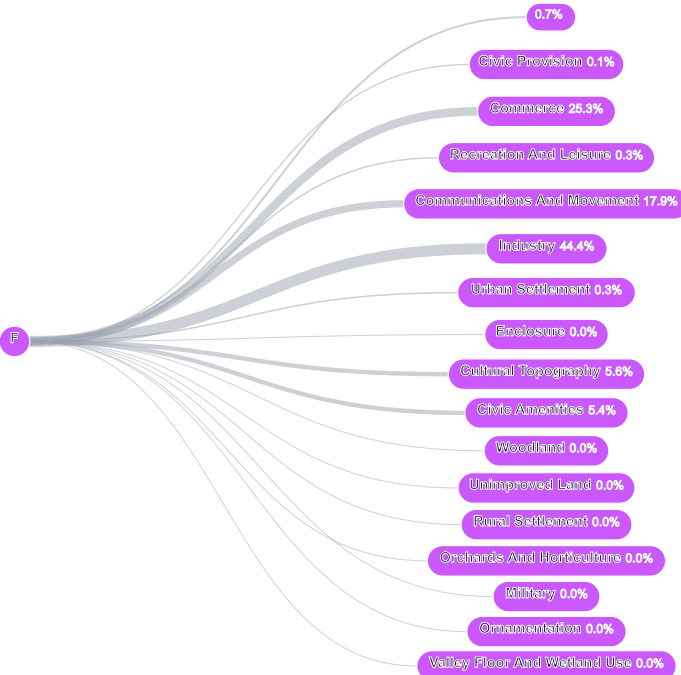
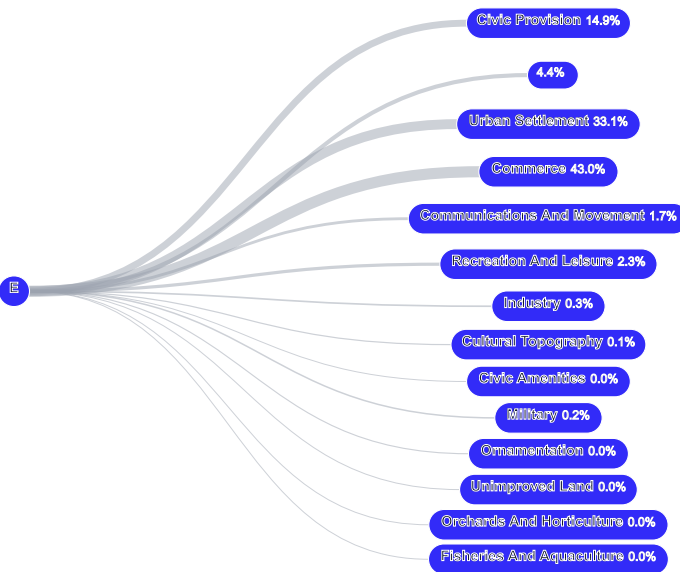
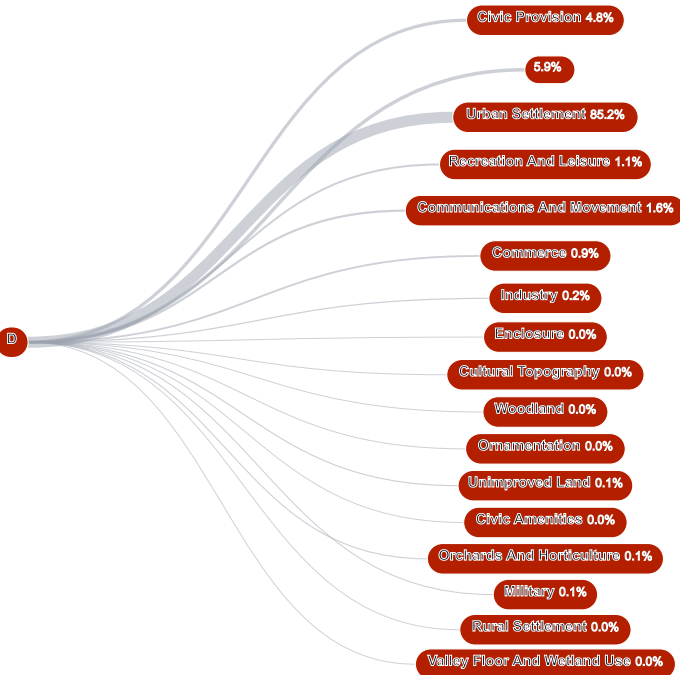
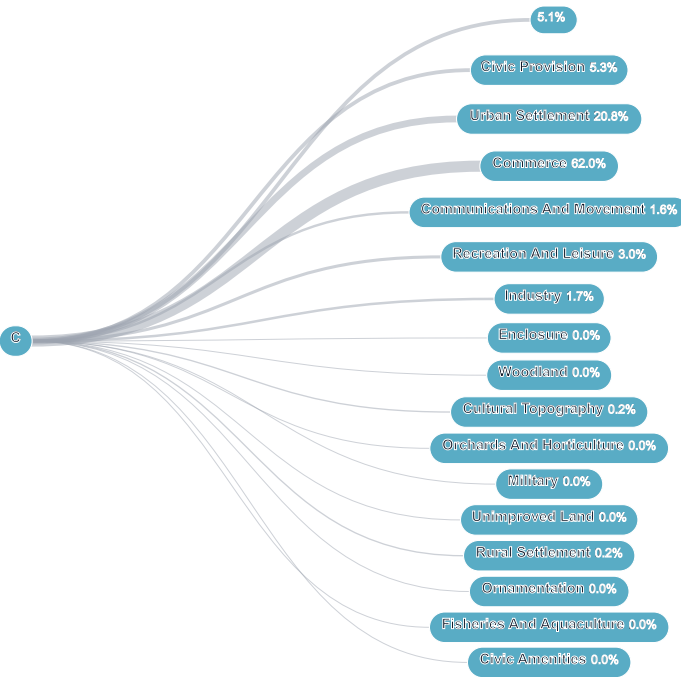
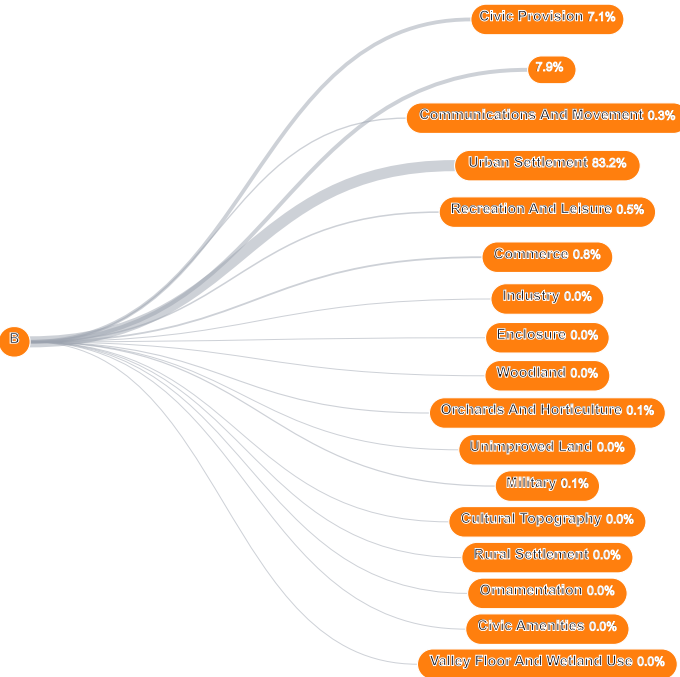
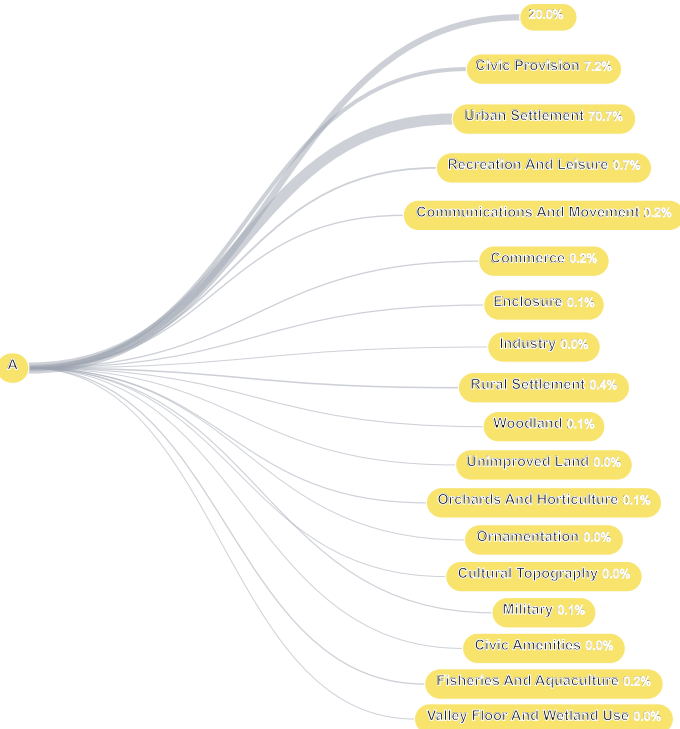
1. Industrial Estate	39%
2. Airport	15%
3. Business Park	13%
4. Superstore	4%
5. Cliff	3%
6. Aggregates Quarry	3%
7. Sewage Works	3%
8. Retail Park	2%
9. Waterworks	2%
10. Shopping Centre	2%



Intermediate types contained within each setting



Broad types contained within each setting



GREATER
LONDON
AUTHORITY