

# ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS





**Episode #445**  
**What Is A 15-Minute City?**  
**13th Feb, 2024**

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Transcript  | 3  |
| Key vocabulary                                    | 24 |
| Language spotlight                                | 31 |
| Quiz  | 35 |
| Listening Comprehension Multiple Choice Questions | 35 |
| True or False:                                    | 37 |
| Fill-in-the-Blank:                                | 38 |
| Vocabulary Practice:                              | 38 |
| Answers   | 41 |

## **Transcript**

[00:00:05] Hello, hello hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:00:11] The show where you can listen to fascinating stories, and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:20] I'm Alastair Budge, and today we are going to be talking about the concept of a 15-minute city.

[00:00:26] It is both new and old, simple and complicated, a simpler and better way of living, or, if you ask the British government, perhaps a [precursor](#)<sup>1</sup> of a [dystopian](#)<sup>2</sup> future.

[00:00:39] So, let's not waste a minute, and get right into it.

[00:00:44] Let me start this episode by asking you a question: what makes the perfect place to live?

[00:00:51] It's a question that people have no doubt been asking themselves for [as long as time](#)<sup>3</sup>, well before the profession of "urban planner" was invented.

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<sup>1</sup> something that comes before and leads to

<sup>2</sup> negative, frightening, or bleak

<sup>3</sup> throughout history, for a very long time

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

[00:01:01] And of course, one person's perfect place will be different to another person's perfect place.

[00:01:08] You might dream of living on the top of a Scottish mountain, [isolated](#)<sup>4</sup> from the world, with only sheep and [highland cows](#)<sup>5</sup> for company, while I might dream of being in the [pumping heart](#)<sup>6</sup> of the city, the noise and smells from nearby bars and cafes coming in through my window and filling me with a sense of activity.

[00:01:28] I imagine that both of our perfect places to live fall somewhere in between those [extremes](#)<sup>7</sup>, and perhaps we are both lucky enough to have some [agency](#)<sup>8</sup>, some decision-making power, over where we decide to live.

[00:01:44] In the UK, like in many countries, both [extremes](#) exist, and, like in most countries, the percentage of the population that lives in cities and towns has changed over the years, as have the structure and [layout](#)<sup>9</sup> of towns and cities.

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<sup>4</sup> being alone or cut off

<sup>5</sup> cows of a type with long rough hair and large horns

<sup>6</sup> lively and active centre

<sup>7</sup> opposite ends or very different situations

<sup>8</sup> the ability to make choices and decisions

<sup>9</sup> arrangement or plan

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

[00:02:00] Before trains and cars, towns and cities needed to be walkable, and most people rarely left their neighbourhoods because they didn't have the [means](#)<sup>10</sup>.

[00:02:10] What's more, everything they needed was within a short walking distance.

[00:02:16] Of course, this is far from some urban [utopia](#)<sup>11</sup>. The reality of this was, if we're talking about Victorian London, working from [dawn to dusk](#)<sup>12</sup>, 6 or 7 days a week under terrible conditions, only to return to a [cramped](#)<sup>13</sup> [damp](#)<sup>14</sup> room that you shared with a dozen other people. It was about as far from a [utopia](#) as you could imagine.

[00:02:41] Moving into the 19th century, as rail networks were [laid](#)<sup>15</sup>, and public transport meant that people didn't have to live within walking distance of their place of work, those who were able to [seized](#)<sup>16</sup> the opportunity to move out of the [crowded](#)<sup>17</sup> city centres, out of cities like London and Manchester.

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<sup>10</sup> way of doing it

<sup>11</sup> ideal and perfect place

<sup>12</sup> from sunrise to sunset, all day long

<sup>13</sup> overcrowded and uncomfortable

<sup>14</sup> slightly wet or moist

<sup>15</sup> set or placed

<sup>16</sup> took hold of or took advantage of it quickly

<sup>17</sup> filled with many people

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

[00:03:00] They could live in bigger houses, perhaps even with a garden, they could breathe fresh air and hear the birds sing, while still being able to travel to their place of work in the city every day.

[00:03:12] And as private car ownership became more [widespread](#)<sup>18</sup>, the [nature](#)<sup>19</sup> of smaller towns and cities in Britain changed too. People now didn't need to live close to a railway station, they could live anywhere, and they could drive into the town or city to work every day.

[00:03:31] The result was a large change in the structure of towns and cities in the UK. The centre of many smaller towns and cities in the country became places where people came to work and shop, but not places where people [tended](#)<sup>20</sup> to live.

[00:03:48] [Pedestrians](#)<sup>21</sup> became [second class citizens](#)<sup>22</sup>, schools and [public amenities](#)<sup>23</sup> replaced by car parks.

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<sup>18</sup> happening or existing among many people

<sup>19</sup> the inherent or essential quality

<sup>20</sup> were inclined or likely

<sup>21</sup> people going on foot

<sup>22</sup> people treated as less important or valued

<sup>23</sup> facilities or services provided for the public

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

[00:03:56] And this was a **self-perpetuating**<sup>24</sup> cycle: as people moved out of city centres and they became more car dependent, city centres became less attractive places to live, therefore more people moved out, their houses were replaced by shops and offices, and the cycle continued.

[00:04:14] And moving towards the present day, British town and city centres, especially their shops in them, **faced**<sup>25</sup> two large **threats**<sup>26</sup>.

[00:04:24] Firstly, out of town shopping centres, the large retail parks where people could go to buy everything from food to clothing to TVs, often with a wider choice than would be available in the town centres.

[00:04:38] And secondly, online shopping, where you have all the choice in the world, and you can get anything delivered to your doorstep, often at a lower cost than you would find at a shop. So, people simply didn't need to go into town and city centres nearly as much.

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<sup>24</sup> continuing on its own

<sup>25</sup> encountered or confronted with

<sup>26</sup> potential dangers

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

[00:04:55] The result of this is that many British town centres are, if we have to be [brutally](#)<sup>27</sup> honest, quite [miserable](#)<sup>28</sup> places, [stripped](#)<sup>29</sup> of character and now with [deserted](#)<sup>30</sup> shops and offices.

[00:05:10] If you've been to the centre of London or Oxford or Edinburgh or York you might be thinking “what’s he saying, they’re lovely”, but you probably haven’t been to places like Portsmouth, Slough or Swansea, smaller cities that have suffered from these urban planning decisions.

[00:05:28] Now, of course, there are other factors [at play](#)<sup>31</sup>, including a [faltering](#)<sup>32</sup> economy, decades of cuts by a Tory government, and so on, but when we talk about city centres specifically, this background helps us understand why some of these areas are how they are.

[00:05:46] But there is a plan to [rejuvenate](#)<sup>33</sup> British urban environments.

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<sup>27</sup> harshly or extremely

<sup>28</sup> pitiful or wretched

<sup>29</sup> deprived of, left without

<sup>30</sup> abandoned and empty

<sup>31</sup> in operation or existing

<sup>32</sup> showing signs of weakness or failure

<sup>33</sup> renew or make them fresh and lively



## What Is A 15-Minute City?

[00:05:52] It's called the 15-minute city, and it's something you may well have heard about, as it is not a British plan at all.

[00:06:01] The concept came to [prominence](#)<sup>34</sup> during the 2020 successful reelection campaign of the Parisian [mayor](#)<sup>35</sup>, Anne Hidalgo.

[00:06:10] And the idea of a 15-minute city is a simple one.

[00:06:15] Everyone living in a city should have everything they need to live a happy, healthy life, within 15 minutes, either by foot, on a bike or on public transport.

[00:06:27] To [break it down](#)<sup>36</sup>, residents should be able to [fulfil](#)<sup>37</sup> six [core](#)<sup>38</sup> functions within 15 minutes: living, working, commerce, healthcare, education and entertainment.

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<sup>34</sup> the state of being well-known or standing out

<sup>35</sup> elected leader of the city

<sup>36</sup> explain it in simpler terms or components

<sup>37</sup> satisfy or meet that need

<sup>38</sup> central, basic

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

[00:06:42] The results, according to the main [proponents](#)<sup>39</sup> of the 15-minute city, will be [wide-ranging](#)<sup>40</sup>.

[00:06:48] It will lead to an improvement in air quality, as more people will choose to walk, cycle or take public transportation rather than travel by private car.

[00:06:58] It will also lead to a reduction in CO2 emissions, doing a bit to [curb](#)<sup>41</sup> global warming.

[00:07:04] It will lead to better social connections, as people will exist in neighbourhoods rather than huge, [soulless](#)<sup>42</sup> cities where they go from one place to another in a car.

[00:07:15] It will lead to productivity increases, as people will [waste](#)<sup>43</sup> less time travelling. After all, everything will be less than 15 minutes away.

[00:07:25] It will improve people's health, as walking or going on a bike, and even fresh air [for that matter](#)<sup>44</sup>, this is better than sitting in a car.

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<sup>39</sup> advocates or supporters

<sup>40</sup> covering a wide variety or range

<sup>41</sup> control or limit

<sup>42</sup> lacking character or emotion

<sup>43</sup> pass without being put to good use

<sup>44</sup> used to add information

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

[00:07:34] And perhaps on a harder to measure level, people will be happier. After all, the [prospect](#)<sup>45</sup> of getting into a car, sitting in a [traffic jam](#)<sup>46</sup> and then navigating an underground car park isn't a pleasurable one for most people, and the idea of not doing that, well it would make people [happier](#)<sup>47</sup>.

[00:07:55] Now, as you heard a few minutes ago, this 15-minute city plan was a large part of the Parisian [mayor](#)'s reelection campaign, and it worked, or at least she was reelected.

[00:08:08] Perhaps it is no surprise that Paris was the one of the first major Western cities to [implement](#)<sup>48</sup> this plan, as it already kind of is a 15-minute city.

[00:08:18] If you have been to Paris, you will know that the city centre is a [vibrant](#)<sup>49</sup> place, with everything you might possibly want or need within 15 minutes, often much less.

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<sup>45</sup> possibility or likelihood

<sup>46</sup> a situation where vehicles are stuck or slow-moving

<sup>47</sup> feeling more joyful or content

<sup>48</sup> put into effect

<sup>49</sup> energetic and lively

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

[00:08:30] Of course, the further out of the centre you get, the less this is the case, but the majority of Parisians live with this reality, and so being [sold on](#)<sup>50</sup> the [prospect](#) of [intensifying](#)<sup>51</sup> this, improving green spaces, increasing bike lanes and so on, [presumably](#)<sup>52</sup> this wasn't a particularly difficult one.

[00:08:51] And something that gave Hidalgo, the newly reelected [mayor](#) of Paris, an unexpected opportunity to [fasttrack](#)<sup>53</sup> her 15-minute city plan was the COVID pandemic.

[00:09:02] As the city centre emptied, roads were converted to bicycle lanes, parking spaces to playgrounds and so on. The idea was to reduce the attractiveness of driving, and therefore increase the attractiveness of walking, cycling or taking public transport.

[00:09:20] And although the [mayor](#) has her [fair share](#)<sup>54</sup> of critics, people who complain about her anti-car policies, initial results suggest that the plan is popular with Parisians.

[00:09:31] And other cities are [following suit](#)<sup>55</sup>, they are following the example of Paris.

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<sup>50</sup> convinced or persuaded to support

<sup>51</sup> making it stronger

<sup>52</sup> likely or probably

<sup>53</sup> speed up or accelerate

<sup>54</sup> a lot or a reasonable amount

<sup>55</sup> following this example

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

[00:09:38] From Milan to Cagliari, Cleveland to Utrecht, [mayors](#)<sup>56</sup> and urban planners are looking to this 15-minute city concept for inspiration.

[00:09:48] And this brings us to the UK.

[00:09:52] In British cities, many local councils have proposed ideas that are based on this 15-minute city concept.

[00:10:01] Some have slightly different names, such as “20 minute neighbourhood”, but the concept is similar: make cities more [liveable](#)<sup>57</sup>, and improve access for pedestrians and cyclists.

[00:10:15] As you might expect, it is quite a popular one, with a recent survey suggesting that 62% of British people support it.

[00:10:25] And several British towns and cities have started to [implement](#) it.

[00:10:30] Oxford is one of the best-known.

[00:10:32] Much of the city centre has become completely [pedestrianised](#)<sup>58</sup>, and if you want to travel from the north to the south of the city, you can walk or you can cycle through it.

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<sup>56</sup> elected leaders of cities or towns

<sup>57</sup> suitable or comfortable for living

<sup>58</sup> made for people going on foot, not vehicles



## What Is A 15-Minute City?

[00:10:43] But if you want to go by car, you have to drive north, get on a motorway and drive all the way around the side of the city, and even if you take your car, it is difficult and expensive to find parking, and the speed limit in the city has been reduced to 32 kilometres per hour in most places, so it is quicker, cheaper and more convenient for most people to walk or cycle.

[00:11:12] Of course, Oxford is not alone, and it is not the first city to [implement](#) these kinds of anti-car measures.

[00:11:19] London, as you may know, has had a similar policy to [discourage](#)<sup>59</sup> the use of private cars in the centre for over 20 years.

[00:11:28] There is a large area of the city centre of London that is under what's called the "Congestion Charge Zone", which cars have to pay a fee to enter.

[00:11:37] It started off relatively small, £5 a day when it was first introduced in 2003, but it is now £15, which is almost €20. And if you want to park in central London, it can cost over £50 a day, so taking your car into the centre of the city for the day can easily end up costing you more than €80.

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<sup>59</sup> deter or make less likely

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

[00:12:01] Now **broadly**<sup>60</sup>, the British government has been supportive of these kinds of local **initiatives**<sup>61</sup> proposed and then **implemented**<sup>62</sup> by local authorities. Good stuff, the government says, well done on making our towns and cities more **liveable** places.

[00:12:17] And as I'm sure is the case also in your country, in the UK the central and local government do not always agree on everything, but this seemed to be an area in which there was **broad**<sup>63</sup> consensus, the government was supportive of the 15-minute city **initiatives** that were taking place throughout the UK.

[00:12:36] However, last year, the British Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, changed his mind.

[00:12:42] He **lashed out**<sup>64</sup> at local councils for their anti-car policies, and he specifically **took aim at**<sup>65</sup> the 15-minute city concept.

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<sup>60</sup> in a general way

<sup>61</sup> actions or plans

<sup>62</sup> put into practice or carried out

<sup>63</sup> general, wide

<sup>64</sup> reacted angrily or forcefully

<sup>65</sup> targeted or criticised

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

[00:12:53] In September of 2023, he **unveiled**<sup>66</sup> a new policy that **backs**<sup>67</sup> motorists, it supports car drivers, promising to do everything he could to stop policies that would restrict or **discourage** car use.

[00:13:09] The transport secretary went one step further, saying that he was “**calling time**<sup>68</sup> on the misuse of so-called 15-minute cities”, and another minister went on the BBC saying that “people are concerned about their civil liberties”.

[00:13:25] Clearly, there was an **orchestrated**<sup>69</sup> government plan to criticise the 15-minute city concept.

[00:13:32] But why?

[00:13:34] It was a curious decision, given that surveys suggest the concept is popular with British people, but **pundits**<sup>70</sup> and commentators have suggested that it is a **last ditch**<sup>71</sup> attempt to win over some voters ahead of what is likely to be a very difficult election in 2024.

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<sup>66</sup> revealed or introduced for the first time

<sup>67</sup> supports or endorses

<sup>68</sup> declaring the end of or stopping it

<sup>69</sup> carefully planned or coordinated

<sup>70</sup> experts or advisers

<sup>71</sup> final attempt or effort

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

[00:13:52] Sunak knows that cars are particularly important for many Tory voters, or Conservative Party voters, and he was trying to [align himself](#)<sup>72</sup> with them on this car-centric policy.

[00:14:06] But even so, it seemed strange.

[00:14:09] The votes the Conservative party need to win in the [upcoming](#)<sup>73</sup> election are not from the now [dwindling](#)<sup>74</sup> number of people who have always voted Conservative; the votes they need are from people who think the Conservative Party doesn't represent them.

[00:14:23] According to some [pundits](#), there is something more [sinister](#)<sup>75</sup> about this decision, this decision to [turn against](#)<sup>76</sup> the 15-minute city.

[00:14:32] See, one thing that kept on being repeated by British ministers was “people are concerned”, “we’ve seen it on social media and on forums”.

[00:14:42] If most surveys were suggesting that it was not an issue for regular British people, why were British politicians suggesting that it was?

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<sup>72</sup> associate himself, support them publicly

<sup>73</sup> approaching or soon to happen

<sup>74</sup> becoming smaller or decreasing

<sup>75</sup> threatening, suggesting evil or harm

<sup>76</sup> become opposed or hostile toward

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

[00:14:52] Well, according to some commentators, this is a so-called “[wedge issue](#)<sup>77</sup>”, something that the Conservatives can use as a way to get people thinking about a subject that they had never really considered before.

[00:15:06] See, this [seemingly](#)<sup>78</sup> [harmless](#)<sup>79</sup> 15-minute city plan has become the target for conspiracy theories.

[00:15:14] Starting last year, there were reports and posts on forums that the 15-minute city concept is part of a global [initiative](#)<sup>80</sup> to restrict movement, and the first step in a [dystopian](#) future where people literally cannot leave their local neighbourhoods.

[00:15:31] According to some conspiracy theorists, the COVID-19 pandemic was the first step by global elites to get people used to the idea of lockdowns, so that climate emergencies can be declared and people are [banned](#)<sup>81</sup> from using cars or travelling more than 15 minutes from their homes.

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<sup>77</sup> an issue that is likely to cause division or disagreement

<sup>78</sup> appearing to be but not necessarily true

<sup>79</sup> not causing harm or danger

<sup>80</sup> plan or action

<sup>81</sup> prohibited or not allowed to



## What Is A 15-Minute City?

[00:15:50] And while you might think that these ideas would be ideas **confined**<sup>82</sup> to Facebook posts by your crazy cousin or uncle, these ideas are now being repeated by the British government.

[00:16:02] To quote the British transport secretary, “What is **sinister**, and what we shouldn’t **tolerate**<sup>83</sup>, is the idea that local councils can decide how often you go to the shops, and that they can **ration**<sup>84</sup> who uses the roads and when, and that they police it all with CCTV.”

[00:16:18] End quote.

[00:16:20] Here you have the British Minister for Transport saying that the local authorities will be deciding how often people can go to the shops and policing this with CCTV.

[00:16:31] To **underline**<sup>85</sup>, this has never been a part of the 15-minute city project, at least in its original form; there is no plan to decide how often someone can go to the shops or to use CCTV to punish people who break restrictions, but various UK

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<sup>82</sup> restricted or limited

<sup>83</sup> accept or put up with

<sup>84</sup> control and limit the use of them

<sup>85</sup> emphasise or highlight

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

government ministers are [pushing](#)<sup>86</sup> the theory that there will be, and if the Labour party is voted into power, this will be the reality that Brits [face](#)<sup>87</sup>.

[00:16:59] You might be familiar with the expression “[clutching at straws](#)<sup>88</sup>”, which means trying to do anything, no matter how small and pointless, to get out of a situation.

[00:17:10] And this is what many commentators are saying the Tory party is doing by [turning on](#)<sup>89</sup> 15-minute cities - it is trying to [sow the seed of doubt](#)<sup>90</sup> in voters' minds, getting people to think that there could be some [sinister](#) plan and that only the Tory party will be able to save the people of Britain from it; if the Labour party wins, [it's game over](#)<sup>91</sup>.

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<sup>86</sup> promoting or advocating

<sup>87</sup> confront or deal with

<sup>88</sup> trying desperate or unlikely solutions

<sup>89</sup> attacking or criticising

<sup>90</sup> plant the idea of uncertainty or suspicion

<sup>91</sup> it's the end

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

[00:17:31] Now, I use the term “[sow a seed of doubt](#)<sup>92</sup>”, because you might be listening to this and perhaps my words might have [sown a seed of doubt](#)<sup>93</sup> in your mind.

[00:17:42] After all, what if there were a global conspiracy to [restrict](#)<sup>94</sup> people’s movement, and the 15-minute city plan was just the beginning?

[00:17:50] What if there were some secret master plan to [constrict](#)<sup>95</sup> people to their neighbourhoods?

[00:17:56] Clearly, for some people it is a [seductive](#)<sup>96</sup> theory, and the fact that there is no evidence for it hasn’t stopped people from believing it.

[00:18:06] So, to wrap things up, the idea of the 15 minute city is a powerful one, a return to the neighbourhood community feel of [yesteryear](#)<sup>97</sup>, but with the advancements of modern technology.

[00:18:19] Understandably, it is a popular idea in the UK, despite the British government’s unexpected criticism of it.

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<sup>92</sup> plant an idea of uncertainty or suspicion

<sup>93</sup> planted an idea of uncertainty or suspicion

<sup>94</sup> limit or control

<sup>95</sup> squeeze or compress

<sup>96</sup> tempting or attractive

<sup>97</sup> the past, especially a nostalgic one

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

[00:18:27] [As it stands<sup>98</sup>](#), cities across the UK, and in every corner of the world, are looking at the concept and seeing what elements of it can be incorporated into their towns and cities.

[00:18:40] Is this part of some huge global conspiracy?

[00:18:44] Who knows, but if there is some huge secret global masterplan to make cities more liveable, green and friendly, then I, for one, am happy to say [count me in<sup>99</sup>](#).

[00:18:57] OK then, that is it for today's episode on 15 minute cities.

[00:19:02] I hope it's been an interesting one, and that you've learnt something new.

[00:19:05] As always, I would love to know what you thought about this episode.

[00:19:09] Is there much talk of 15 minute cities in your country? Do you live in a town or city that has implemented some “15 minute city” policies?

[00:19:17] How has this changed the city, and what do you think of it?

[00:19:21] I would love to know, so let's get this discussion started.

[00:19:25] You can head right into our community forum, which is at [community.leonardoenglish.com](https://community.leonardoenglish.com) and get chatting away to other curious minds.

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<sup>98</sup> in its current state or condition

<sup>99</sup> I want to be a part of it or participate

[00:19:33] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:19:38] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

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## **Key vocabulary**

| Word            | Definition  |
|-----------------|---|
| Precursor       | something that comes before and leads to            |
| Dystopian       | negative, frightening, or bleak                     |
| As long as time | throughout history, for a very long time            |
| Isolated        | being alone or cut off                              |
| Highland cows   | cows of a type with long rough hair and large horns |
| Pumping heart   | lively and active centre                            |
| Extremes        | opposite ends or very different situations          |
| Agency          | the ability to make choices and decisions           |
| Layout          | arrangement or plan                                 |
| Means           | way of doing it                                     |
| Utopia          | ideal and perfect place                             |
| Dawn to dusk    | from sunrise to sunset, all day long                |
| Cramped         | overcrowded and uncomfortable                       |

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Damp</b>                  | slightly wet or moist                          |
| <b>Laid</b>                  | set or placed                                  |
| <b>Seized</b>                | took hold of or took advantage of it quickly   |
| <b>Crowded</b>               | filled with many people                        |
| <b>Widespread</b>            | happening or existing among many people        |
| <b>Nature</b>                | the inherent or essential quality              |
| <b>Tended</b>                | were inclined or likely                        |
| <b>Pedestrians</b>           | people going on foot                           |
| <b>Second class citizens</b> | people treated as less important or valued     |
| <b>Public amenities</b>      | facilities or services provided for the public |
| <b>Self-perpetuating</b>     | continuing on its own                          |
| <b>Faced</b>                 | encountered or confronted with                 |
| <b>Threats</b>               | potential dangers                              |
| <b>Brutally</b>              | harshly or extremely                           |
| <b>Miserable</b>             | pitiful or wretched                            |

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Stripped</b>      | deprived of, left without                     |
| <b>Deserted</b>      | abandoned and empty                           |
| <b>At play</b>       | in operation or existing                      |
| <b>Faltering</b>     | showing signs of weakness or failure          |
| <b>Rejuvenate</b>    | renew or make them fresh and lively           |
| <b>Prominence</b>    | the state of being well-known or standing out |
| <b>Mayor</b>         | elected leader of the city                    |
| <b>Break it down</b> | explain it in simpler terms or components     |
| <b>Fulfil</b>        | satisfy or meet that need                     |
| <b>Core</b>          | central, basic                                |
| <b>Proponents</b>    | advocates or supporters                       |
| <b>Wide-ranging</b>  | covering a wide variety or range              |
| <b>Curb</b>          | control or limit                              |
| <b>Soulless</b>      | lacking character or emotion                  |
| <b>Waste</b>         | pass without being put to good use            |

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>For that matter</b> | used to add information                             |
| <b>Prospect</b>        | possibility or likelihood                           |
| <b>Traffic jam</b>     | a situation where vehicles are stuck or slow-moving |
| <b>Happier</b>         | feeling more joyful or content                      |
| <b>Implement</b>       | put into effect                                     |
| <b>Vibrant</b>         | energetic and lively                                |
| <b>Sold on</b>         | convinced or persuaded to support                   |
| <b>Intensifying</b>    | making it stronger                                  |
| <b>Presumably</b>      | likely or probably                                  |
| <b>Fasttrack</b>       | speed up or accelerate                              |
| <b>Fair share</b>      | a lot or a reasonable amount                        |
| <b>Following suit</b>  | following this example                              |
| <b>Mayors</b>          | elected leaders of cities or towns                  |
| <b>Liveable</b>        | suitable or comfortable for living                  |
| <b>Pedestrianised</b>  | made for people going on foot, not vehicles         |

What Is A 15-Minute City?

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Discourage</b>    | deter or make less likely                 |
| <b>Broadly</b>       | in a general way                          |
| <b>Initiatives</b>   | actions or plans                          |
| <b>Implemented</b>   | put into practice or carried out          |
| <b>Broad</b>         | general, wide                             |
| <b>Lashed out</b>    | reacted angrily or forcefully             |
| <b>Took aim at</b>   | targeted or criticised                    |
| <b>Unveiled</b>      | revealed or introduced for the first time |
| <b>Backs</b>         | supports or endorses                      |
| <b>Calling time</b>  | declaring the end of or stopping it       |
| <b>Orchestrated</b>  | carefully planned or coordinated          |
| <b>Pundits</b>       | experts or advisers                       |
| <b>Last ditch</b>    | final attempt or effort                   |
| <b>Align himself</b> | associate himself, support them publicly  |
| <b>Upcoming</b>      | approaching or soon to happen             |

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Dwindling</b>           | becoming smaller or decreasing                            |
| <b>Sinister</b>            | threatening, suggesting evil or harm                      |
| <b>Turn against</b>        | become opposed or hostile toward                          |
| <b>Wedge issue</b>         | an issue that is likely to cause division or disagreement |
| <b>Seemingly</b>           | appearing to be but not necessarily true                  |
| <b>Harmless</b>            | not causing harm or danger                                |
| <b>Initiative</b>          | plan or action  |
| <b>Banned</b>              | prohibited or not allowed to                              |
| <b>Confined</b>            | restricted or limited                                     |
| <b>Tolerate</b>            | accept or put up with                                     |
| <b>Ration</b>              | control and limit the use of them                         |
| <b>Underline</b>           | emphasise or highlight                                    |
| <b>Pushing</b>             | promoting or advocating                                   |
| <b>Face</b>                | confront or deal with                                     |
| <b>Clutching at straws</b> | trying desperate or unlikely solutions                    |

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Turning on            | attacking or criticising                    |
| Sow the seed of doubt | plant the idea of uncertainty or suspicion  |
| It's game over        | it's the end                                |
| Sow a seed of doubt   | plant an idea of uncertainty or suspicion   |
| Sown a seed of doubt  | planted an idea of uncertainty or suspicion |
| Restrict              | limit or control                            |
| Constrict             | squeeze or compress                         |
| Seductive             | tempting or attractive                      |
| Yesteryear            | the past, especially a nostalgic one        |
| As it stands          | in its current state or condition           |
| Count me in           | I want to be a part of it or participate    |

## **Language spotlight**

### **1. Clutching at straws**

- Meaning: To make a desperate or unlikely attempt to solve a problem or improve a situation when all other options have failed.
- Synonyms: Grasping at straws, trying one's last resort, scraping the bottom of the barrel.
- Antonyms: Having a solid plan, being well-prepared.
- Examples:
  - "When he lost his job, he started applying for positions he wasn't qualified for. It felt like he was **clutching at straws**."
  - "She was so desperate to find her lost keys that she was **clutching at straws**, checking every room in the house multiple times."

### **2. Turn against**

- Meaning: To change one's opinion or attitude towards someone or something and become unsupportive or hostile.



## What Is A 15-Minute City?

- Synonyms: Become opposed to, go against, become critical of.
- Antonyms: Support, favour, stand by.
- Examples:
  - "After hearing about the new policies, many of his loyal supporters began to **turn against** him."
  - "The company's decision to raise prices caused customers to **turn against** their once-beloved brand."

### 3. Calling time

- Meaning: To declare the end of a situation or activity; to stop or discontinue something.
- Synonyms: Ending, concluding, terminating.
- Antonyms: Continuing, extending, prolonging.
- Examples:
  - "The coach decided to **call time** on the practice session due to the approaching storm."

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

- "After hours of negotiations, they finally **called time** on the meeting without reaching an agreement."

### 4. Sow the seed of doubt

- Meaning: To introduce uncertainty or suspicion about something, typically by making subtle suggestions or remarks.
- Synonyms: Cast doubt, raise suspicions, plant scepticism.
- Antonyms: Confirm, clarify, reassure.
- Examples:
  - "By questioning the accuracy of the data, the journalist managed to **sow the seed of doubt** about the company's financial stability."
  - "He tried to **sow the seed of doubt** in his opponent's mind by implying that their strategy was flawed."

### 5. Count me in

- Meaning: To express one's willingness or eagerness to participate in or be a part of something.

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

- Synonyms: Include me, I'm interested, I'm on board.
- Antonyms: Count me out, I'm not interested, I'm not involved.
- Examples:
  - "When they mentioned the charity event, she immediately said, '**Count me in**; I'd love to help.'"
  - "If you're planning a trip to the beach this weekend, **count me in**! I've been wanting to go."

## **Quiz**

### **Listening Comprehension Multiple Choice Questions**

1. How did some British ministers describe the concerns about 15-minute cities?
  - a) As unwarranted and unnecessary
  - b) As realistic and critical
  - c) As conspiracies and civil liberty issues
  - d) As hopeful and progressive
  
2. According to the podcast, what was the main impact of out-of-town shopping centres on British town centres?
  - a) Increased foot traffic in town centres
  - b) More jobs created in town centres
  - c) Decrease in prices
  - d) Reduced attractiveness of town centres

**What Is A 15-Minute City?**

3. Why did the British government's attitude towards 15-minute cities change in 2023?
  - a) They realised the concept was unpopular
  - b) They wanted to support local councils
  - c) They saw it as a way to win more votes
  - d) They believed it was against global warming
  
4. How did the COVID-19 pandemic influence the implementation of the 15-minute city concept in Paris?
  - a) It made public transportation unavailable
  - b) It provided funding for more cars
  - c) It created an opportunity for change
  - d) It had no impact on urban planning
  
5. What is the central idea behind the 15-minute city concept, as explained in the podcast?
  - a) To discourage car ownership

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

- b) To restrict movement within neighbourhoods
- c) To make everything accessible within a short distance
- d) To promote long-distance travel

### True or False:

- 6. According to the podcast, the British government's attitude towards 15-minute cities has remained consistent over the years. (True or False)
- 7. The British government fully supports the 15-minute city initiatives taking place throughout the UK. (True or False)
- 8. Some politicians used the 15-minute city concept as a wedge issue to create doubt among voters. (True or False)
- 9. Before the introduction of trains and cars, towns and cities were designed to be walkable, and most people rarely left their neighbourhoods. (True or False)
- 10. There is strong evidence supporting the idea that 15-minute cities are part of a global conspiracy to restrict movement. (True or False)

## What Is A 15-Minute City?

### Fill-in-the-Blank:

11. It's a question that people have no doubt been asking themselves for as long as \_\_\_\_\_, well before the profession of "urban planner" was invented.
12. Some people might dream of being in the pumping \_\_\_\_\_ of the city.
13. The reality of this was, if we're talking about Victorian London, working from dawn to \_\_\_\_\_.
14. Pedestrians became second \_\_\_\_\_ citizens, schools and public \_\_\_\_\_ replaced by car parks.
15. Now, of course, there are other factors at \_\_\_\_\_, including a faltering economy, decades of cuts by a Tory government, and so on

### Vocabulary Practice:

16. What does the word "**precursor**" mean in the context of the podcast?
  - a) A successful campaign
  - b) An idea with no future
  - c) A predecessor or something that came before
  - d) A controversial concept

What Is A 15-Minute City?

17. In the transcript, what is a synonym of "**dystopian**"?

- a) Utopian
- b) Bleak
- c) Perfect
- d) Very likely

18. What is an opposite of "**isolated**" as used in the podcast?

- a) Alone
- b) Connected
- c) Remote
- d) Secluded

19. What does the word "**rejuvenate**" mean in the context of the podcast?

- a) To age gracefully
- b) To make something look older



What Is A 15-Minute City?

c) To restore or make something new and fresh again

d) To age rapidly

20. What is the definition of a "**wedge issue**"?

a) A minor problem

b) A controversial topic used to create division and doubt

c) A solution to all problems

d) A widely accepted belief

## **Answers**

1. c) As conspiracies and civil liberty issues
2. d) Reduced attractiveness of town centres
3. c) They saw it as a way to win more votes
4. c) It created an opportunity for change
5. c) To make everything accessible within a short distance
6. False
7. False
8. True
9. True
10. False
11. time
12. heart
13. dusk
14. class, amenities
15. play
16. c) A predecessor or something that came before
17. b) Bleak
18. b) Connected
19. c) To restore or make something new and fresh again
20. b) A controversial topic used to create division and doubt