



DEBATE PACK

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New housing design

This pack has been produced ahead of the debate to be held in Westminster Hall on Tuesday 5 September 2017 from 11.30am-1pm on new housing design. The debate will be opened by Neil Parish MP.

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The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

1. Are homes in the UK poorly designed?

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) - the UK government's adviser on design - is now part of the Design Council. It too aims to improve the quality of design.

A report by CABE in 2011 – [The cost of poor design](#) – argued that, too often, buildings were badly built and the public had to live with a built environment that did not work, at great cost:

Too often, the people who design and construct buildings and parks don't worry about whether they will work properly or what will they cost to run. Once the project is complete, they can move on to the next job.

But the public has to live with badly built, poorly designed buildings and spaces; and taxpayers often have to foot the bill for putting them right again.

This short-term thinking is costing us millions of pounds every year. So what can be done to change the way we invest in our built environment, to make sure we pay more attention to the long-term value and benefits of well-designed buildings?¹

The report argued that poor design could increase costs – either in eventual rebuilding or in the knock-on effects of crime and disorder – and highlighted two instances of poor and costly design:

Two examples illustrate the potential costs. A 1970s housing estate at Holy Street in Dalston, east London, was so badly designed that it had to be demolished and rebuilt only 20 years into its intended 60-year design life, at a cost of £92 million. Meanwhile, George's Park in Lozells, Birmingham was laid out in the 1970s in a design that encouraged crime and anti-social behaviour and made it into a place actively avoided by local residents. It was redeveloped at a cost of £1.2 million.²

The Future Homes Commission's report in 2012 – [Building the homes and communities Britain needs](#) – argued that Britain needed a "revolution in the scale, quality and funding of home building" if it was to meet the housing needs of a growing and changing population. In doing so, it would also need to improve quality of life for new and existing communities. The Commission also argued that better design was essential to making new-build homes more appealing to buyers (which, they had found, they often were not):

The design of our homes contributes to the happiness of our lives, the success of our relationships and the education of our children, yet it is rarely discussed. Meeting the country's housing demand is not simply a question of financing and building a particular number of units, it is providing homes which fulfil the varied and changing needs of individuals and families.³

The quality of buildings and the built environment in the UK has attracted comment – some of it critical – for a long time.

¹ CABE, [The cost of poor design](#), 2011: page 3

² As above: [page 7](#)

³ Future Homes Commission, [Building the Homes and communities Britain needs](#), 2012: page 30

The construction industry needed (the Foundation argued) to listen to consumers.

The criminologist and filmmaker Roger Graef, a member of the Commission, described why buyers often found new build homes unappealing:

Not enough space in the rooms. Not enough storage. Not enough natural light. And not enough flexible spaces for communal and private living or changes in the household over time. In other words, they don't think new homes are built for the needs of modern families in the ways that Victorian and Edwardian houses were.⁴

In similar vein, an [article in the Telegraph in 2014](#) argued that, as a nation, we are better at designing and building office buildings than we are homes and that much of the mass housing built in the last 50 years was poorly designed:

If you look at our big new buildings, as a country we do OK. You may not love the Gherkin and the Cheesegrater or the [Walkie Talkie](#), but they're high quality buildings which have clearly been through a proper design process. However, while we pass muster when it comes to putting up buildings for people to work in, we are truly appalling at constructing decent buildings for people to live in.

This is weird when you think about it. London was the world's first megacity. Britain urbanised before any other country and we came up with a fantastic innovation to deal with this: terraced housing. The Georgian and Victorian terraces in our cities are a modest wonder of the world. They range from the palaces around Regent's Park to the handsome Georgian rows of Islington to the workers' cottages near Waterloo and are some of the very best high-density housing there is. However, mass urban housing is a bit like football. We may have invented it, and we often hark back to how good we used to be at it. But almost every other country in Europe is now better at it than we are.⁵

1.1 Raising the quality of housing design

Design Council/Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment

[Design Council CABE](#) provides various services to local authorities, developers and architects:

Our skilled, professional team works with our nationwide, cross-sector network of [Built Environment Experts](#) to offer support to local authorities, developers and architects. This is delivered through our Cities Programme, a comprehensive design service for cities and local authorities which brings together local knowledge and world-class expertise through Design Advice Panels to help in delivering sustainable places where people want to live and work.

Other bodies also work with government to encourage better housing design

⁴ Roger Graef, "[The British don't want to live in new-build homes. No wonder](#)", *Guardian* online, 26 October 2012

⁵ "[Why is Britain so terrible at domestic architecture?](#)", *Telegraph* online, 15 September 2014

Our expertise ranges from housing and office developments to nationally significant infrastructure projects and neighbourhood planning support, landscape design, healthcare, procurement, public space strategy and sustainable urban design.⁶

In a booklet published in 2010 - [*Simpler and better: Housing design in everyone's interest*](#) – CABE tackled the question of whether (as had sometimes been suggested) good design was an unaffordable luxury. CABE argued that good design could often be achieved without significantly adding to cost:

CABE has commissioned the redesign of a number of recent housing estate layouts judged to be poor under Building for Life. We found that you can greatly – and very quickly – improve designs without, for example, compromising on the use of standard house types. In some cases it has even been possible to fit more homes on sites in better configurations. This suggests that sites can become better quality places without significant additional cost, delivering more product, more efficiently and/or more profitably, through the application of good design.⁷

Likewise, another [report from CABE in 2010](#) highlighted some of the advantages of good design in improving social well-being, quality of life and a community's sense of pride in their neighbourhood; in improving public health and increasing property values and reducing crime.⁸ At that time, though (CABE argued) the picture was mixed. There was some good news about initiatives to improve design and some bad – progress was not swift enough:

The good news is that the housing industry can and does produce good quality housing, and there has been real progress in recent years: more developers recognise the value of better design quality, and are taking measures to achieve it. Many local councils are also better equipped to help create better quality homes and new neighbourhoods for local residents.

We know that good design matters to people, and that it can add to the social and economic value of housing. There are objective and measurable criteria for good design, based on evidence and centuries of learning. Design quality itself is fundamental to how places work: road layouts that prioritise pedestrians; public spaces that are safe and attractive; and buildings at an appropriate scale and density to support local services.

[...]

But the bad news is that housing quality is not getting better quickly enough. CABE's housing audits revealed that almost one in three homes (29 per cent) were so poor that they should not have been given planning permission. It uncovered family housing with no play areas, windows looking out on blank walls, and broad expanses of tarmac. Only one in five schemes were rated as 'good' or 'very good', revealing a disappointing picture of housing quality, and demonstrating that many consumers still get a raw deal when it comes to new homes and neighbourhoods.⁹

⁶ Design Council CABE, [Built environment and CABE](#) (accessed 3 August 2017)

⁷ CABE, [Simpler and better: Housing design in everyone's interest](#), 2010: page 10

⁸ CABE, [Improving the design of new housing: What role for standards?](#), August 2010: page 1

⁹ As above

Royal Town Planning Institute

In 2016 the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) highlighted how the quality of neighbourhoods and access to amenities was linked to inequality and social deprivation. The RTPI's report - [Poverty, Place and Inequality - Why places-based approaches are key to tackling poverty and inequality](#) - examined the relationship between poverty, planning and estate regeneration. It highlighted the part that good design could play:

Well-designed housing and public realm is the key to persuading residents and other stakeholders that estate regeneration is worthwhile.¹⁰

Built for Life quality mark

The [Built for Life quality mark](#) comprises 12 standards. As its website explains, Built for Life approval aims to increase homebuyer confidence:

Built for Life approval is designed to give the homebuyer confidence that important design elements have been checked during the planning process. These include details such as adequate car parking, safe street design and access to amenities. Developments that are Built for Life today have the greatest chance of being the places estate agents will be proud to show buyers around in 5 to 10 years' time.¹¹

Design and quality standards for affordable housing

On the gov.uk website, the Homes and Community Agency provides an [A to Z of design and sustainability](#).

Its [design and quality standards guidance](#) sets out the standards that affordable housing providers must meet, to receive funding from the agency. Its prime expectation is that affordable housing providers should produce housing that is well-designed and good quality.¹²

Housing design awards

The [Housing Design Awards 2017](#) were launched in February this year. The awards were launched in 1948 – in the same Parliamentary sitting as the NHS – to reward better municipal rebuilding after the Second World War. In 1967, Harold Macmillan opened them up to market sale homes.

This year, there were awards for best private rented sector development, best design for the ageing population, best family-friendly design, best affordable housing development, the Defra award for best rural development and best design in London. Defra minister, [Lord Gardiner of Kimble, was quoted as saying](#) that the award for best rural scheme was an acknowledgement of well-designed homes' contribution to their surroundings:

There are several competitions to recognise good (and bad) housing design

¹⁰ RTPI, [Poverty, Place and Inequality - Why places-based approaches are key to tackling poverty and inequality](#): page 26

¹¹ Building for Life, [How to use built for life](#) (accessed 3 August 2017)

¹² Housing Corporation, [Design and quality standards](#), April 2007: page 4

The Housing Design Awards celebrate high-quality development taking place around the country. By promoting the category of best rural scheme, I want to celebrate the positive contribution to rural communities by having well-designed new homes, in harmony with their surroundings.¹³

The overall winner was [New Ground Co-housing](#) in Barnet, London – a third age co-housing project where 21 of the 25 homes look out onto a communal garden.

Building Design online awards the Carbuncle Cup for the ugliest building built in the previous year – a riposte to the [RIBA's Stirling Prize](#). The Cup takes its name from HRH The Prince of Wales' speech in 1984, in which he likened the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square's extension to "a monstrous carbuncle on the face of a much-loved and elegant friend".¹⁴

The [call for entries for the 2017 Carbuncle Cup](#) went out in June this year. The shortlist will be announced at the end of August 2017.¹⁵

Awards around the UK

- The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) runs several [awards and competitions](#), including regional competitions. The [long list for 2017 house of the year](#) has been announced; the shortlist and winner will be announced by the presenter of TV's *Grand Designs*, Kevin McCloud, later this year.
- In Wales, the [Royal Society of Architects in Wales](#) (Part of RIBA) runs the Welsh Architecture Awards and also supports the National Eisteddfod of Wales with the delivery of the Eisteddfod Architecture Medal.
- In Northern Ireland, the [Royal Society of Ulster Architects \(RSUA\) Awards](#) have, since 1998, been raising awareness of architecture and helping to raise standards.
- Housing design in Scotland is recognised by the [Saltire Society Housing Design Awards](#).

¹³ "[Housing design awards open for entries](#)", *Architects Journal*, 3 February 2017

¹⁴ [A speech by HRH The Prince of Wales at the 150th anniversary of the Royal Institute of British Architects \(RIBA\), Royal Gala Evening at Hampton Court Palace, 30 May 1984](#)

¹⁵ "[Carbuncle Cup 2017: Call for entries](#)", *Building Design online*, 21 June 2017

2. Housing and design: who does what?

The Government's [Planning Practice Guidance](#) (PPG) offers top level policy on layout and design of new housing estates. Within the PPG there are also [optional technical standards](#), which local planning authorities can choose whether or not to adopt as local plan policies.

Local planning authorities will need to gather evidence to determine whether there is a need for these additional standards in their area, and justify setting appropriate policies. These standards are:

- [accessibility and wheelchair housing standards](#)
- [water efficiency standards](#); and
- [internal space standards](#) (which includes the nationally described space standard, which sets out requirements for the Gross Internal (floor) Area of new dwellings at a defined level of occupancy as well as floor areas and dimensions for key parts of the home, notably bedrooms, storage and floor to ceiling height.)

Beyond these optional technical standards, it is up to local planning authorities to decide for themselves to impose any further design or technical requirements on new housing estates. This could be done in the relevant local plan for the area or in a supplementary planning document. In some circumstances design or technical details could also be made a planning condition attached to any planning approval given for a development. This is often the case, for example, with housing developments in protected areas such as conservation areas and areas of outstanding natural beauty. As with the optional technical standards, local authorities need to be able to justify the need for more rigorous standards.¹⁶

Developers must ensure that they meet the standards provided in the Building Regulations (set by the Government), and the associated [approved documents](#) which cover issues such as structural and fire safety, water, sanitation, access and use of buildings.

In the absence of prescribed technical standards, it is up to developers to put forward design proposals at the planning application stage, which will then be scrutinised by the local planning authority when determining the planning application.

¹⁶ See, for example, the Southampton City Council, [Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document](#) which sets out and recommendations regarding the amount and design of vehicle and cycle parking at new developments.

3. Planning: how can the public have a say?

House of Commons Library briefings

- Briefings on various matters to do with planning are available on the [topic page for housing and planning](#).
- The Commons Library briefing [Planning for Housing](#) offers detailed analysis.¹⁷
- The Commons Library briefing [Planning reform in the housing white paper](#) examines the further changes announced in February 2017.¹⁸
- The [Commons Library Help Hub](#) offers short guides to many of the issues that constituents most frequently raise with Members. There's also a guide to using the [Help Hub and the Commons Library](#).
- One card on the Help Hub sets out some [FAQs about planning in England](#). A link from that page goes to the page on [influencing the planning process](#). This covers (amongst other things) making representations at a planning appeal, requesting call-in by the Secretary of State and the role of the MP.

3.1 How does the planning system in England work?

In England, the planning system is "plan-led", this means that national and local planning policy is set out in formal development plans (a term which can include "local plans", "core strategies" and "neighbourhood plans").

Local plans will cover the whole local planning authority area, whereas neighbourhood plans will normally cover just a parish area.

The Government's planning policy is set out in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF), which is accompanied by online [Planning Practice Guidance](#) and which provides further information about the NPPF's policies.

Local and neighbourhood plans should be in conformity with the NPPF. They describe at a local level what developments should and should not get planning permission, how land should be protected and should seek to ensure a balance between development and environmental protection in the public interest. If a local planning authority has a development plan, it will be available on its website, normally under a "planning policy" heading.

Decisions on individual planning applications are made on the basis of the policies in the NPPF and these development plans, unless there are other competing considerations that need to be taken into account. These are called "material considerations".

For further information see the Government's [Plain English Guide to the Planning System](#) (March 2015)

¹⁷ CBP 03741, 14 June 2017

¹⁸ CBP 7896, 8 February 2017

3.2 The place of design in planning

The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) discusses the importance of good design and sets out (at some length) the Government's commitment to raising standards of design, saying that they can make places better for people:

56. The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people.

57. It is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes.¹⁹

High quality and inclusive design (the NPPF continues) go beyond aesthetic considerations:

61. Although visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings are very important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations. Therefore, planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.²⁰

Local planning authorities (LPAs) should (the NPPF says) spell out their expectations.²¹ Local planning authorities might (the NPPF goes on) want to use design codes, but these should not be too prescriptive and local authorities should not attempt to impose particular architectural styles or stifle innovation:

59. Local planning authorities should consider using design codes where they could help deliver high quality outcomes. However, design policies should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail and should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout, materials and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally.

60. Planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.²²

The planning process should (the NPPF continues) attach great weight to outstanding or innovative design, while poorly-designed developments should be refused:

64. Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.²³

Guidance to local planning authorities is provided by the National Planning Policy Framework, with more detailed guidance in planning practice guidance.

¹⁹ DCLG, [National Planning Policy Framework](#), March 2012: pages 14-16

²⁰ As above

²¹ As above

²² As above

²³ As above

The NPPF also sets out how the community should be involved, suggesting that proposals to which the community has contributed are more likely to be approved:

66. Applicants will be expected to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Proposals that can demonstrate this in developing the design of the new development should be looked on more favourably.²⁴

The Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) more detailed [planning practice guidance on design](#) also sets out why good design matters:

Good quality design is an integral part of sustainable development. The National Planning Policy Framework recognises that design quality matters and that planning should drive up standards across all forms of development. As a core planning principle, plan-makers and decision takers should always seek to secure high quality design.

Achieving good design is about creating places, buildings, or spaces that work well for everyone, look good, last well, and will adapt to the needs of future generations.

Good design responds in a practical and creative way to both the function and identity of a place. It puts land, water, drainage, energy, community, economic, infrastructure and other such resources to the best possible use – over the long as well as the short term.

Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 26-001-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014²⁵

In the [planning white paper](#) published in February 2017, DCLG said that it expected developers to focus on design and quality.²⁶ DCLG also promised local communities a greater say, arguing that this would improve the quality and character of new development, and pledged support for custom-built homes, saying that these would offer people more design choice:

We will ensure they see the benefits of housing growth and have greater say over the design of local developments.

(...)

Giving communities a stronger voice in the design of new housing to drive up the quality and character of new development, building on the success of neighbourhood planning; and

(...)

Supporting custom-build homes with greater access to land and finance, giving more people more choice over the design of their home;²⁷

²⁴ DCLG, [National Planning Policy Framework](#), March 2012: pages 14-16

²⁵ DCLG, [Planning practice guidance: Design](#), 6 March 2014 (with various updates)

²⁶ DCLG, [Fixing our broken housing market](#), February 2017: Executive Summary

²⁷ As above

3.3 How can local people have a say in the planning process?

As the Help Hub card on [influencing the planning process](#) explains at more length, there are many opportunities for local people to get involved in the planning process at various different stages.

Essentially, these are:

- **Statement of Community Involvement (England):** Each local authority should publish a "statement of community involvement" on its own website, setting out the local authority's policies for involving the community in the preparation, alteration and review of planning policy documents and in deciding planning applications.
- **Neighbourhood planning powers (England):** Parish councils and groups of people from the community, called neighbourhood forums, have powers to formulate Neighbourhood Development Plans and Orders, which can guide and shape development in a particular area. These powers provide an opportunity for constituents to get involved at the stage where the neighbourhood plan is being prepared, at the stage where the plan is consulted on and by voting in the referendum which must be held before it can come into force.
- **Commenting on local plans and public consultations (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland):** Another way to have a say is to make representations on any public consultations on any development plan documents being made by the local authority for the area. This might include a local plan, a core strategy, or a combined area plan.
- **Commenting on a planning application (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland):** All planning applications should be publicised, but the publicity requirements vary depending on the type, scale and size of the proposed development. Publicity requirements set out how and when people can comment on a planning application. It is crucial to observe deadlines, which are often very strict.
- **Making representations at a planning appeal (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland):** Throughout the UK, if a local authority refuses a planning application the disappointed applicant then has the opportunity to make an appeal against this decision. There are no third party rights of appeal against development being granted permission or being refused. There may however, be further opportunity for people to make representations at the appeal stage.
- **Requesting call-in by the Secretary of State/ devolved Governments (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland):** The Secretary of State in England and devolved Governments in the other UK countries can "call in" a planning application so that it is the Government that takes the final decision, rather than the local planning authority.

4. News items

Building Design

Khan offers developers density boost in exchange for 'exemplary design'

18 August 2017

<http://www.bdonline.co.uk/khan-offers-developers-density-boost-in-exchange-for-%E2%80%98exemplary-design%E2%80%99/5089236.article>

The Planner

Report: Better planning and housing would see households £10k a year better off

14 August 2017

<https://www.theplanner.co.uk/news/report-better-planning-and-housing-would-see-households-%C2%A310k-a-year-better-off>

Guardian

Why are Britain's new homes built so badly?

We compare UK construction standards to those abroad – and talk to buyers deeply disillusioned by their experiences

Julia Kollewe 11 March 2017

<https://www.theguardian.com/money/2017/mar/11/why-are-britains-new-homes-built-so-badly>

Guardian

The quiet revolution in British housing

Architects are fighting back. After their cause was hampered by the ill-conceived high-rises of the 60s and 70s, followed by the dire 'traditional' building of the Thatcher era, imaginative and sustainable housing is in the ascendant

Rowan Moore 16 August 2016

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/aug/16/quiet-revolution-in-british-housing-architecture>

5. Press releases

Royal Institute of British Architects

RIBA responds to Housing White Paper

7 February 2017

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) has responded to the UK Government's Housing White Paper published today (7 February 2017).

Speaking today, RIBA President Elect Ben Derbyshire said:

I welcome the recognition given to good design and many of the practical and realistic commitments set out by the government in today's Housing White Paper. I'm pleased to see more focus on rented housing and that regional and local government are given more prominence, although the government has chosen not to give local authorities additional borrowing capacity, which would have allowed them to borrow to build.

Whilst I commend the Government for requiring increased openness from developers, it's disappointing that they have not taken more ambitious action to increase transparency in the housing market. The lack of public viability assessments is a notable gap, leaving a situation where decisions on obligations to build schools and GP surgeries or provide affordable and social housing are taken behind closed doors.

For at least three decades, governments of all parties have failed to make the big decisions needed to properly tackle the housing crisis. This government must make the necessary step-change and recognise in actions, as well as words, the importance of well-designed homes for garnering community support and ensuring the houses we build today are affordable, sustainable and suitable for future generations.

On support for the promotion of good design

I am pleased that the Government has recognised the value of good design in winning local support for new developments. The proposed use of area-wide design codes is a proposal the RIBA has long supported. Areas which have already developed and adopted design codes are amongst the most successful at building new homes. We hope that more parts of the country will take up this mechanism and work with architects, planners and other experts to draw up proposals which reflect local priorities.

On proposals to require local authorities to release more land for housing

We know that a significant proportion of local authorities currently don't meet the requirement to identify a five year housing land supply and that this is often due to concerns about local opposition. Simply introducing a new requirement won't necessarily lead to homes being built unless we can win the battle for hearts and minds with existing local residents. Good design is going to be crucial to this.

On proposals to tackle land banking

The shortage of developable sites available to buy for new entrants to the markets remains one of the biggest barriers to development. It hits small developers particularly hard and is

pushing the price of land up to stratospheric levels. If the government finds evidence that developers are deliberately stockpiling land or delaying build out rates then we hope this will be taken seriously.

On proposals to promote building at higher densities

Building at higher densities around transport hubs is already happening and represents a common sense approach to development. Given the drawbacks that being next to transport infrastructure can bring, it's vital that new homes in these areas are well designed. The use of design review should be mandated.

On the announcement of further protection for the green belt

The RIBA is strongly supportive of a focus on developing brownfield land. However, in many areas we need to recognise that such land is in very short supply. In light of the overwhelming interest, it is a shame that the Government hasn't taken the opportunity to look at the future role of the green belt in more detail. The ability of local councils to open up land for development in exceptional circumstances is welcome, however we need to look at what can be done to promote a more long-term approach to the use of land which sees closer links between new infrastructure and housing projects.

On the proposal to review the Nationally Described Space Standard

The space standard, which has only been in force since October 2015, was introduced following years of work and analysis by those across the housing sector, against a backdrop of public concern that many new-build homes were too small. Over 80% of those asked agreed that a national space standard was needed.

Where the standard has been implemented, we have seen the trend for smaller homes reverse, bedrooms increase to usable size and greatly improved storage provision. Removing or weakening the standard at this time would disrupt the industry as a whole, including the housebuilders who have spent a great deal of time gearing up for it, and the local authorities who have been through costly Local Plan revisions to implement it.

While I understand that the Government wants to help those struggling to get on the housing ladder, we have seen a number examples already of some developers proposing tiny two-person homes of less than 15 square metres in converted office buildings. This cannot be a long-term solution to the housing crisis.

Balancing affordability, quality design and adequate space is vital to fixing the housing crisis. A race to the bottom will not help achieve this and must be avoided. We look forward to contributing to the review.

National House Builders' Federation

Families living in new homes slash fuel bills by half

15 November 2016

A new home built to the latest building regulations can cost half as much to heat as a Victorian house of the same size, according to a new report by the NHBC Foundation.

The advantages of new homes is based on a survey of 2,000 people who had recently moved into a new home and were asked what they considered the advantages of new homes to be. Many pointed to the energy efficiency benefits of new homes - the better standards of insulation enhanced draught-proofing and improved 'airtightness' that help to lower household annual energy bills, and improve levels of comfort.

The report shows that energy bills are expected to be around £440 lower in a modern one-bedroom ground floor flat, compared to its Victorian equivalent. And for a new build four-bedroom detached house, bills are estimated at £1,050 - saving £1,400 compared to those of a 19th century house.

Homeowners of newer properties were also drawn to the idea of buying a 'blank-canvas' ready to be personalised, free from the nasty surprises of previous owners' DIY. They also commented positively on the contemporary, flexible layouts and modern facilities of new homes such as new kitchens, bathrooms and appliances, covered by manufacturers' warranties.

The report outlines the safety advantages of new homes raised by some respondents - such as mains-powered smoke alarms, interlinked throughout the home, which are standard, and the benefits of safety glazing, safer stairs and the additional security features. But the advantages of new homes extend beyond the front door and many of the new homeowners surveyed considered that moving to a new development of like-minded people was also an attraction, allowing the opportunity to make new friends and neighbours in a new community.

Neil Smith, Head of Research & Innovation at NHBC, said:

It is pleasing that homeowners are able to identify the many benefits of new homes, ranging from the obvious advantages of a 'blank canvas' with everything being new, through to the much-improved energy efficiency standards, which lead to greatly-reduced fuel bills, compared with those of older homes.

Maybe less obvious are the more solid foundations on which new homes are built, which are designed to suit local ground conditions, as well as the safety advantages of modern wiring and mains-powered smoke alarms, interlinked throughout the home.

This report is a useful reminder of the benefits of buying a new home, designed and built in accordance with up-to-date standards. What's more, an important advantage frequently raised in the survey is the peace of mind provided by NHBC's warranty and insurance protection under Buildmark, from exchange of contracts through to a maximum of 10 years after completion.

Visit the Foundation website and download the article by clicking [here](#).

6. Parliamentary material

Statements and Debates

Westminster Hall Debate: [New Towns](#)

HC Deb 12 July 2017 | Vol 627 cc120WH-

Statement: [Housing White Paper](#)

HC Deb 7 February 2017 | Vol 621 cc229-

Lords Debate: [National Policy for the Built Environment](#)

HL Deb 24 January 2017 | Vol 778 cc97-

[on HL Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment [Building Better Places](#), HL100 2015-16]

Lords Debate: [Housing](#)

11 October 2016 | HL Deb Vol 774

PQs

[Housing](#)

Asked by: Lord Patten

Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the need for high quality, high density housing in England and Wales.

Answering member: Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth | Department: Department for Communities and Local Government

The White Paper, Fixing our Broken Housing Market, sets out the case for lasting reform that will deliver more homes. This includes the need for new housing to be well designed and make good use of land. Responses to the White Paper are being assessed. Housing in Wales is a matter for the Welsh Assembly.

HL Deb 03 July 2017 | PQ HL144

[Housing: Construction](#)

Asked by: Lord Judd

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of how all new housing, including low cost housing, can have trees, space and gardens in its immediate environment; and what action they are taking in this regard.

Answering member: Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth | Department: Department for Communities and Local Government

The National Planning Policy Framework recognises the importance of access to high quality open spaces. It explains that local planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision.

The Framework also encourages local communities, through local and neighbourhood plans, to identify green areas of particular importance to them for special protection by designating them as Local Green Space.

The Framework is clear that local authorities should set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure

In addition, when granting planning permission local planning authorities have a duty to ensure, whenever appropriate, that planning conditions are used to provide for tree preservation and planting.

HL Deb 21 March 2017 | PQ HL6032

[Housing: Construction](#)

Asked by: Parish, Neil

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to support the creation of traditional, street-based, high-density designs in new housing developments.

Answering member: Gavin Barwell | Department: Department for Communities and Local Government

The Government is very clear that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. We want to see new developments that function well and add to the overall quality of the area, that establish a strong sense of place by using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit. Our planning guidance reinforces this strong focus on design, and provides advice on tools for delivery - including design codes. However, it is for local authorities and their communities, through their Local Plans and Neighbourhood plans, to set out the quality of design that they wish to see in their area.

HC Deb 11 January 2017 | PQ 58654

[Housing: Construction](#)

Asked by: Parish, Neil

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to support the role of local communities in the design of new housing developments.

Answering member: Gavin Barwell | Department: Department for Communities and Local Government

We have introduced reforms to enable local communities to produce statutory Neighbourhood Plans. These Plans empower communities to shape the areas in which they live and future developments.

HC Deb 28 November 2016 | PQ 907516

[Housing: Construction](#)

Asked by: Lord Patten

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the importance of landscape quality when new housing is built on greenfield sites.

Answering member: Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth | Department: Department for Communities and Local Government

The Government is very clear that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. It wants to see new developments that function well and add to the overall quality of the area, that establish a strong sense of place by using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit.

The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that planning policies and decisions should take account of the different roles and character of different areas and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

HL Deb 01 November 2016 | PQ HL2418

7. Useful links and further reading

DCLG *Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard* March 2015

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-housing-standards-nationally-described-space-standard>

DCLG *Housing: optional technical standards* March 2015

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-optional-technical-standards>

Royal Institute of British Architects *Space Standards for Homes* 2015

https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&ved=0ahUKEwjfj-Tm5u3VAhVMY1AKHWB-BBMOFgg5MAM&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.architecture.com%2F%2Fmedia%2Fgathercontent%2Fspace-standards-for-homes%2Fadditional-documents%2Fhomewisereport2015pdf.pdf&usg=AFQjCNEPPDtj32MnqaF3L_tKF8UjikenFA

CABE, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
Improving the design of new housing: What role for standards? 2010

<http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/asset/document/improving-the-design-of-new-housing.pdf>

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