



Major boost for housing design quality

3 September 2008

Local authorities are being urged to assess the design quality of all new housing schemes against Building for Life standards after they were endorsed by government.

The Building for Life standard is included in the government's updated annual monitoring report guidance for local and regional planning authorities. **Each housing scheme will be assessed against the 20 criteria**, which are jointly promoted by CABE and the Home Builders Federation, the industry body representing the major residential developers.

The move aims to help councils meet housing quality aspirations in Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3).
(29 November 2006 – PPS3 underpins the delivery of the Government's strategic housing policy objectives and our goal to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent home, which they can afford in a community where they want to live. - This replaces PPG3 published in March 2000.)

CABE first called for such an indicator in its second housing audit in 2005 – which revealed that the design quality of 82 per cent of new homes was not good enough.

To improve the design of new housing, quality has to be measured alongside density, tenure mix and housing completions in the annual monitoring returns that all authorities make to central government. The new government guidance means there will in effect be a rolling housing audit.

BUILDING
FOR LIFE



The 20 criteria

Character - Great schemes: [Abode](#), [Highgate](#), [Gainsborough Studios](#), [Tarporely](#).

1. Does the scheme feel like a place with a distinctive character?
2. Do buildings exhibit architectural quality?
3. Are streets defined by a coherent and well structured layout?
4. Do buildings and layout make it easy to find your way around?
5. Does the scheme exploit existing buildings, landscape or topography?

Roads, parking and pedestrianisation - Great schemes: [Staiths South Bank](#), [Micklethwaite](#), [Bishops Walk](#).

6. Does the building layout take priority over the roads and car parking, so that highways do not dominate?
7. Are the streets pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly?
8. Is car parking well integrated so it supports the street scene?
9. Does the scheme integrate with existing roads, paths and surrounding development?
10. Are public spaces and pedestrian routes overlooked and do they feel safe?

Design and construction - Great schemes: [Chapel](#), [Cala Domus](#), [Lacuna](#), [BedZed](#).

11. Is the design specific to the scheme?
12. Is public space well designed and does it have suitable management arrangements in place?
13. Do buildings or spaces outperform statutory minima, such as Building Regulations?
14. Has the scheme made use of advances in construction or technology that enhance its performance, quality and attractiveness?
15. Do internal spaces and a layout allow for adaptation, conversion or extension?

Environment and community - Great schemes: [Village in Caterham](#), [Horsebridge Dev](#), [Maurer Court](#), [Oakridge Village](#)

16. Does the development have easy access to public transport?
17. Does the development have any features that reduce its environmental impact?
18. Is there a tenure mix that reflects the needs of the local community?
19. Is there a mix of accommodation that reflects the needs and aspirations of the local community?
20. Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as a school, park, play areas, shops, pubs or cafes?