

Setting the Standards for New Homes: Government Consultation

Briefing from Care & Repair England for Older People's Action Groups

Introduction

From our '[More than Bricks and Mortar](#)' survey we know that the standards & suitability of homes are fundamental to older people's health, well being & quality of life.

For many years Care & Repair England and many others have been arguing that *all* new homes should be built to '[Lifetime Homes](#)' standards in order to make homes accessible and adaptable for all ages. Other groups have put the case for building more sustainable and energy efficient homes as this reduces fuel and water bills as well as being better for the environment.

Some positive steps had been taken towards setting better national standards through '[The Code for Sustainable Homes](#)' and it had been hoped that further progress could be made. However, the gains made could now be lost.

The Government is reviewing the building standards for new homes in England. It is aiming to reduce what it calls '*the burden of regulation*', setting out a single set of '*nationally described requirements*'.

The consultation

The consultation covers standards for accessibility, space, security, energy and water efficiency.

The full consultation document (which is 80 pages long) can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/housing-standards-review-consultation>

Many of you may be concerned about standard of housing being built at present.

By responding to the consultation there is an opportunity to influence **all** future homes being built by arguing for standards that make them better for all ages, shaping the home building of the future for ourselves, our communities and future generations.

DEADLINE for comments 22nd October 2013

Email to: HousingStandardsReview@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Write to: Simon Brown, Code for Sustainable Homes and Local Housing Standards
Department of Communities and Local Government , 5 G/10 Eland House, Bressenden Place
London, SW1E 5DU

Care & Repair England will be drafting its own response to the consultation and will make this available.

Key issues in responding to the consultation

The main areas you might want to consider in your response are -

1. Space:

Do you want minimum space standards to be introduced?

2. Accessibility and adaptability:

This affects both access to and from the home and internal design.

3. Energy and water efficiency:

This affects on the ongoing living costs for occupants as well as the environment

Space standards

The last standards ie Parker Morris were abolished in 1980 and since then new homes have become smaller.

The Royal Institute of British Architects have found that in England we are building smaller homes than any other country in Europe. This is affecting how people feel about the new homes for sale. Findings from their survey say that:

1. Lack of space is the main reason why people living in homes built less than 10 years ago want to make changes or are considering moving home.
2. 69% of people moving into new-build homes said there wasn't enough space for their possessions.
3. 60% of people who said they would not buy a new home claimed room size was a major factor in their decision.

If you want to consider space standard issues we suggest you look at

<http://www.withoutspaceandlight.com/>

Lifetime homes/accessibility standards

In 2008, the Government had plans to make the Lifetime Homes Standard the norm for all new housing with the aim of making this compulsory for all new public sector homes by 2011 and, with regulation, for all new homes by 2013. While this was not delivered except in London, the majority of social housing and some private housing is built to this standard which is both accessible and adaptable for all ages.

One of the challenges has been the desire by house builders to keep house building costs to a minimum, particularly in the current economic climate and there is a building cost for the Lifetime Homes Standard, ranging from £167 - £500 per home. But the future costs of adaptations or moving because of the lack of adaptability are born by eventual purchasers and those who pay for any future adaptations including the public sector.

The consultation proposes a three tier accessibility standard – covering Part M of the building regulations (in essence about the ‘visitability’ of homes which would apply to all housing), the Lifetime Homes standard and the Wheelchair Housing Design Guide standard. While the technical standards for each, it is proposed, will be consistent across the country the proportion of homes built to Lifetime and Wheelchair Accessible Standards (called Intermediate standards) will ‘be determined at local level in response to local need.’

This proposal has been criticised by Habinteg and Age UK. Habinteg suggest that the Part M standard is not enough to meet future demand. Age UK worry that councils might only prescribe the Intermediate standard to specialist housing and not general housing for all.

Care & Repair England supports the approach taken by Habinteg – the experts – which wants to see a standard similar to Lifetime Homes required as the default option for all new homes. Habinteg want to see this standard adopted by all as the default standard for all new homes across tenures integrated to and enforced by Building Regulations.

Habinteg’s draft response can be found here (we suggest looking at the summary)
<http://www.habinteg.org.uk/main.cfm?type=POLICYRESPONSE>

Energy and water efficiency

The review would end the legislation which allows councils to set energy efficiency and renewables targets for new developments that are higher than national regulations. It would end the Code for Sustainable Homes (which also covers water).

It proposes to repeal the Planning and Energy Act 2008 which allows local planners to set ‘reasonable requirements’ for new developments to source a minimum percentage of energy from renewable sources, such as rooftop solar or biomass boilers, and minimum levels of energy efficiency of the building’s fabric.

[The Association for the Conservation of Energy](#) has commented on the proposals and is part of a campaign to retain standards.

Useful resources

[Habinteg’s initial response](#) (we suggest looking at the summary draft response)

[Lifetime homes website](#)

[Space and light website](#)

[Age UK’s blog](#)

[The Association for the Conservation of Energy](#)

Produced Sept 2013 by Care & Repair England, The Renewal Trust Business Centre,
3 Hawksworth Street, Nottingham, NG3 2EG Tel 0115 950 6500
info@careandrepair-england.org.uk www.careandrepair-england.org.uk

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