

HCA Proposed Core Housing Design and Sustainability Standards Consultation



March 2010

Deadline for Responses: Close of 17 June 2010

The HCA is consulting on potential future design and sustainability core standards. We see such standards as a vital part of delivering our commitment to be at the forefront of good design quality and sustainability in housing.

The consultation seeks the views of stakeholders on options for core standards, their level, and how, if adopted, they should be applied and phased in to operation. We will use the consultation responses to inform final decisions on standards and their application.

Structure of the consultation

Preface - foreword by Robert Napier and Sir Bob Kerlake

HCA Vision - High quality homes and neighbourhoods

Where we are now

Where we need to be

Core standards proposals

Consultation questions

Evidence base and supporting information

Frequently asked questions (FAQ's)

An analysis of the responses, grouped within broad respondent categories, will be made public in due course. We will anonymise responses in any publication if requested to do so.

All the [evidence base sections are available to download](#).

A separate document containing the questions is available to download within the [consultation questions section](#).

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Preface

Quality and sustainability lie at the heart of everything that the HCA does and every investment we make. They form one of our statutory objectives, and are central to our corporate plan and to our delivery on the ground. The HCA is about the creation and renewal of great places, where people enjoy living, working and socialising. Our resources are limited, but our ambitions are broad. We must therefore ensure that all of our investment is lasting, which means promoting quality homes and places that will stand the test of time.

If we are to deliver high standards of design and embed sustainability into everything we do we must be very clear about what we expect. Yet we have inherited a range of different standards from our legacy bodies, creating a picture that is far from clear or consistent across the different parts of our programme. This must change. It is the primary reason for the current consultation. We are seeking to create an open, transparent and ambitious basis for the delivery of our programme at high levels of quality and sustainability.

Any attempt to set new standards must be based upon a clear evidence base and on the needs of the people that matter most – the residents themselves. This consultation exercise is therefore firmly grounded in our evidence base and the research we have undertaken to date. It pays close attention to the aspirations of the people living in the homes we create or renew and it seeks to generate the widest possible debate on the best way forward.

But this consultation cannot happen in a vacuum. It is clear that we are entering a period in which public spending overall will be constrained for the immediate future. The evidence base that underpins this consultation exercise is therefore clear about the cost of potential options for new core standards. We should also recognise that these costs will reduce over time as the industry learns and innovates. It is essential that quality is delivered in a manner that demonstrates the achievement of value for money across our programmes.

We understand the importance of a unified set of core housing standards for the HCA as the national housing and regeneration agency. Our approach has been to use the tried and tested tools that we already have, not create new ones. There is a wealth of experience and best practice to draw upon and we have looked to pull it together into a single place to support our proposals.

It is vital that Government and its agencies, including the HCA, take a strategic lead to help address climate change. We are ready for this challenge but we are keen to engage with it on an open and transparent basis that makes clear the choices to be made, particularly around timescales, and the costs to be faced. We share the Government's ambition to move towards zero carbon homes and we firmly believe that the best way to do this in partnership with the private sector and the suppliers. It is a shared task but it is also one that the public sector has a clear obligation to lead. This document sets out how we propose to offer that lead and seeks your input on the key choices we face.

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We need to establish exactly what good design means in practical terms and how a simple, clear and transparent set of standards can achieve this. We need to provide the market with clarity and consistency. We need to ensure that public money is used wisely in preparing the way for private investment. Your feedback will be a crucial part of formulating this new approach

This is a genuine consultation exercise; we want your views and look forward to hearing from you.

Robert Napier Chairman

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Sir Bob Kerlake Chief Executive

Handwritten signature of Sir Bob Kerlake in black ink.

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HCA Vision – High quality homes and neighbourhoods

HCA key objectives and vision

The Homes and Communities Agency was created through the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, which received Royal Assent in July 2008.

The Act sets out four statutory objectives for the HCA which underlie its vision and are repeated below.

- To **improve** the supply and **quality** of housing in England
- To secure the regeneration or development of land or infrastructure in England.
- To support in other ways the creation, regeneration or development of communities in England or their continued well being.
- To **contribute** to the achievement of **sustainable development and good design** in England, with a view to meeting the needs of people living in England.

These objectives are supported by the HCA goals which are:

- To accelerate the delivery of **housing growth**;
- To secure the delivery of new **affordable housing** and ensure existing social rented stock is made decent;
- To accelerate the **regeneration** of under-performing areas and the renewal of deteriorating estates, and
- To ensure high standards of design and to embed **sustainability**, with a legacy of skills, knowledge and capacity.

Central to enabling outcomes which meet these statutory duties and goals is the overriding importance of considering the question “**what do residents want and need?**”

Desired outcomes

Design always presents compromises between numerous competing aspirations and constraints. There are balances to be struck between available resources and options for delivering high quality housing, where higher standards have an additional cost this could result in reduced housing delivery. Successful design emerges when our partners carefully manage the design process and make informed choices to ensure that the needs and ambitions of residents are met, now and in the longer

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term. Standards while important are only part of the story for how we achieve good quality and sustainability.

- The delivery of good quality, well designed homes in places where people want to live, work or visit, relies upon a number of key drivers and desirable features being present. Importantly:
- Homes should be sensibly planned and functional; designed to meet the demands of everyday life, providing enough space and facilities, such as privacy and storage, to enable residents to live comfortably and conveniently.
- Homes should aim to be adaptable enough to accommodate residents changing needs and circumstances, such as mobility, and the likely needs of diverse households over the life of the dwelling.
- Schemes should be constructed to make use of products and processes that reduce their environmental impact, better adapt to climate change, benefit from lower running costs and incorporate features that enhance the health and well-being of constructors, residents and the wider community. They should promote the wider definition of sustainability encompassing environmental, social and economic considerations.
- The development of new homes should form a key aspect of delivering great places to live, creating choice through a mix of house types, promoting well-mixed and integrated communities and providing an appropriate balance between private and public open spaces. Successful design of homes and communities means responding to location and context - including the natural and historic environment, promoting safety and security whilst supporting mixed tenure neighbourhoods which engender, character, identity, amenity, including space for families and a sense of place.
- At the same time, residents of these homes should not become burdened by design solutions which are too expensive to maintain, too sophisticated to run or which are not properly tried and tested. These are challenging issues at a time of change as we seek to address the impact of climate change.

Land value and public sector funding is finite. Homes should be affordable to build and any regulation or policy requirement should be considered on an individual and cumulative impact with others. Increasing costs will reduce the number of potential homes that the HCA can fund out of its budget and therefore risks reducing the number that industry can build, with the greatest impacts occurring where land value is lowest. (These potential costs and impacts are set out within [section C of the consultation supporting evidence base](#)).

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Where we are now

The HCA currently has various sets of minimum standards which are set levels higher than building regulation and that transferred from its predecessor organisations. In order to ensure consistency and clarity, it is important that the HCA reviews and aligns core standards across its new projects and programmes.

As a relatively new organisation, we also want to take the opportunity to look forward in terms of our approach. Not only giving our partners and stakeholders an early indication of our aspirations and the direction we wish to travel, but also setting out how we intend to fulfil our design and sustainability obligations.

The Housing Minister has set a priority for improving housing stock sustainability and has set a target for new housing to be built to zero-carbon standards from 2016. The HCA will therefore need to take into account the costs associated with achieving zero carbon homes in reaching its final decisions regarding the harmonisation of our core housing standards. Some of these proposed standards could make a contribution to achieving this and we will bear in mind the relative priority attached to this issue by Government in considering other standards.

The HCA's predecessor organisations historically looked to adopt standards in advance of regulation and promote quality outcomes through a number of routes:

- Incentives on funding
- The application of minimum quality standards
- Using our land to promote high quality
- Supporting exemplars

We are committed to remain at the forefront of promoting quality outcomes and will seek to maintain our leadership role in all aspects of our work with participating organisations across all sectors.

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Where we need to be

Consideration of key issues

This consultation presents the start of an important opportunity to bring together legacy approaches to funding and regeneration, whilst continuing to consider internal environments, sustainability and the importance of urban design. It represents the thorough work which the HCA has undertaken to collate appropriate analysis and an evidence base in support of its proposed core housing standards.

Whilst contemplating proposals for core standards, it is important to consider five key issues:

- Design quality will not be achieved by the use of physical standards alone.
- Proposals will need to be affordable and represent value for money
- The level of quality that we set has to strike the right balance between costs, delivery and long-term benefits.
- “Design” is intrinsically a balancing act. There are numerous design solutions, but careful thought and skill is needed to identify the optimum solution.
- It will need to be possible to apply standards across all of the HCA’s regions and programmes, whether led by HCA staff or indirectly by investment partners.

Design and project management

Setting minimum standards for the physical quality of the housing developed by providers is an important part of ensuring that schemes are successful. However, success and quality are equally dependent upon **how** schemes are designed and managed. The thought and skill that goes into planning, designing and delivering a place will have a huge effect on the outcome.

In addition to developing physical standards, we will continue to promote good professional practice in terms of design management and project management by:

- Contributing to and promoting best practice and case studies through exemplar programmes and the work of ATLAS.
- Building capacity within the sector through the work of the HCA Skills and Knowledge Directorate (previously the HCA Academy).
- Striving to help our partners consider the complex inter-relationships between design issues, whilst not being overly prescriptive in areas where this is not essential to the outcomes.
- Actively promoting best practice within the design management process, including whole life costing and feedback from occupiers, in recognition of their importance in the achievement of good design.

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In particular, to more fully address these matters, we will update the Affordable Housing Construction Commitments in due course¹.

HCA Design and sustainability strategy

The HCA recognises the complexity of the environment in which design and development takes place, including the wide range of regulatory requirements and the additional layers of planning policies which can often make delivering homes a challenging process. The HCA remains committed to working with government and other regulatory bodies to ensure that the cumulative impact of such requirements do not become too complex or burdensome.

In recognition that standards form only part of the picture, we plan to publish further detail setting out the HCA's wider aspirations and approach during the course of 2010. As described in our Corporate Plan, the HCA Design and Sustainability Strategy will set out the HCA's cross cutting approach to achieving its design and sustainable development objectives.

The strategy will provide detail as to the way in which we will embed standards and the need for improved design quality in the wider place making agenda, supporting the HCA's place based business model "the single conversation". By being clear about our approach and ambition we will look to promote market improvements in quality as well as encouraging innovation, efficiency and exemplar initiatives. We will support well designed, successful places that deliver outcomes as well as outputs; great homes *and* great communities.

The Mayor's London Housing Design Guide

In London, the Mayor has published **The London Mayor's Housing Design Guide (LMHDG)** for public consultation.

The HCA's national standards consultation will inform the HCA's approach within the London region. The London region faces particular challenges of developing better quality housing in high density developments to meet London's diverse range of needs.

In London, the HCA standards will need to have regard to:

- The standards contained within the final version of the Mayor's LHDG; and
- The draft London Plan policies published in October 2009 and draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG).

¹ The Construction Commitments were developed by industry and Government as a set of standards for construction and adapted for affordable housing providers. National Affordable Housing Programme investment partners are currently required to sign up the commitments which cover a range of topics from client leadership to health and safety.
http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/upload/pdf/2012_construction_commitments_agreement.pdf

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Both the LHDG and the draft SPG are due to be published shortly.

The revised London Plan will be considered as part of an examination in public (EIP) and is expected to be supported by the SPG.

The HCA will continue to work closely with the Mayor to apply design standards in a manner which is fully attuned to the needs of London; the ultimate aim will be to align relevant standards to avoid additional layers of regulation.

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Core standards proposals

Overall approach

The HCA aims to provide a clear and consistent approach to design quality and sustainable development across all our activities. The standards need to be set against the background of our ambition to ensure that the whole process, rather than just the standards, actively contributes to the delivery of sustainable development through good design.

Over the past few months, we have been researching and developing a new set of design quality and sustainability standards fit for application across all our work as a single organisation.

We are now in a position to invite you to respond to our proposals through this open consultation. Dependent on the outcome of the consultation, we could propose to apply the **new HCA core housing standards** to scheme allocations made under new programmes from **April 2011**. The consultation not only gives you the opportunity to comment on our proposed standards, but also to put forward views on scenarios for their applicability to different housing types and the timing of implementation.

The HCA is committed to equality and diversity and will ensure that it meets its statutory equality duties for race, gender and disability – whilst seeking to address non statutory equality strands where proportionate and necessary. We have already carried out an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening on the impact of design and quality on equality outcomes - which shows that it has an impact on diverse communities. Therefore, we have incorporated equality related questions into this consultation exercise and will use the responses to inform our full EIA which will be published on the HCAs website in due course.

Further detail regarding each of the proposed standards is contained within the [evidence base and supporting information sections](#) of this consultation. In addition, relevant parts of this section are cross referenced and linked to appropriate consultation questions.

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Core standards proposals

The approach proposed for the core housing standards follows the principle of minimum performance measures covering internal environment, sustainability and external environment, proposed as follows:

➤ **Internal environment**

- Minimum dwelling **space** (m²) criteria incorporating minimum **storage** (%) provision;
- Dwelling **functionality** criteria assessed against a range of internal room size benchmarks. The sum of the proposed room sizes must be equal to or greater than the sum of the benchmark sizes.

➤ **Sustainability**

- Minimum of Code for Sustainable Homes **Level 4**, with a requirement that maximum credits for Security are included. (Covering - physical security of the dwelling elements of Secured by Design).

➤ **External environment**

- Minimum of 14 out of the 20 **Building for Life** criteria achievable.

Additionally, in recognition of its contribution to the quality of the home, the following criterion will be assessed against good practice benchmarks using the Housing Quality Calculator.

- External **private open space** provision assessed against good practice. Where schemes fall below benchmarks they will be subject to further scrutiny.

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



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Table of representative minimum space standards by unit type and occupancy:

Unit type	1B 2P (Flat)	2B 3P (Flat or Bungalow)	2B 3P (House)	2B 4P (Flat or Bungalow)	2B 4P (House)	3B 5P (Flat or Bungalow)	3B 5P (House)	3B 5P (House)	4B 6P (Flat or Bungalow)	4B 6P (House)	4B 6P (House)
No. of people	2	3	3	4	4	5	5	5	6	6	6
No. of bedrooms	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	4	4	4
No. of bathrooms	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
No. of additional WC's / shower rooms to bathroom	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
No. of storeys	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	3	1	2	3
Mandatory minimum GIA (Floor Area) m²	48	61	71	70	80	86	96	101	99	109	114

Key:

	1 storey home
	2 storey home
	3 storey home

The table above indicates **examples** of possible mandatory minimum sizes for homes with particular criteria, as shown. Further floor areas can be generated for alternative scenarios using the Housing Quality Calculator.

A key aim of developing proposals for core housing standards has been to streamline legacy standards for clarity and ease of application. Due to the differences in legacy programme size it would not be viable to apply all of the legacy standards across all programmes as core standards. In particular scenarios, we may be open to consideration of departures from potential minimum space standards following consideration on a case by case basis.

These proposals are designed to provide a simpler and more workable set of core standards and tools to assist with the design process; facilitating and encouraging clear upfront briefing. They have been constructed to support the HCA's commitment to the development of quality homes which are seen to be desirable and better to live in by residents, with a lower carbon footprint and lower energy costs.

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Housing Quality Calculator

In order that housing providers, consultants, local authorities and other key stakeholders might gain an early insight into the extent to which their planned proposals compare with the HCA's proposed core housing standards, we have developed a **Housing Quality Calculator**² for use by stakeholders and HCA staff alike.

The calculator has been designed and developed by the HCA as a way of *measuring* housing quality, but will also identify areas that fall short of a set of proposed HCA benchmarks. It uses the information provided to generate a numerical interpretation of space and functionality factors which can be used as markers for relative comparison across a range of schemes.

For example, in the case of dwelling space, use of the Housing Quality Calculator will indicate the internal floor area necessary for any particular dwelling type. The levels are relatively close to those operated by the predecessor organisations, whilst also addressing some of the previous inherent size anomalies between flat and house provision. The proposed minimum sizes required for HCA funding have been pitched at levels that are fit for purpose and will support family living at full occupancy.

This is a new system designed to be a simplification and improvement on previously used methods of housing quality measurement and covers a range of topics including:

- a) Dwelling space standards
- b) Dwelling functionality and layout
- c) Private open space
- d) Storage
- e) Sustainability
- f) Building for Life
- g) Good practice design process approaches
- h) Opportunities for the application of enhanced standards
- i) Variations that may be required in London³.

Further detail regarding the [Housing Quality Calculator](#) and its proposed use is provided within the consultation supporting evidence base.

² The Housing Quality Calculator has been derived from a dwelling size calculator produced by Levitt Bernstein Associates. The dwelling size calculator is the joint copyright and property of Levitt Bernstein and the HCA.

³ Sections g-i listed above have not been included within the version of the Housing Quality Calculator and accompanying guidance published as part of this consultation but will be developed further in light further policy developments and consultation outcomes.

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Scheme application

If adopted, we propose that the core standards will apply to new build, general needs, non-specialised housing where the HCA is:

- a) Providing an element of grant funding (as in the case of the current NAHP). This represents by far the majority of housing provision supported by the HCA.
- b) Facilitating or providing free or discounted land value (as in the case of Property and Regeneration projects).
- c) Facilitating or funding major infrastructure investment as part of a regeneration project.

Housing type applicability

The above proposal would therefore encompass homes developed for both affordable rent and the intermediate market. Specifically in regard to private sale or open market homes, the core standards will apply in any situation where a scheme receives HCA support as set out in b) and c) only.

Core standards would not apply to private sale or open market homes where the only means of HCA investment and support is through affordable housing grant as set out in a).

Additionally, it is not planned they will not apply in full to certain specialised housing (for which we will develop separate standards), but may apply in part. During 2010 we will develop an approach for specialist housing provision and wheelchair user housing in liaison with the HCA's Board Advisory Groups for Equality and Diversity and Older and Vulnerable People. Guidance will also be prepared to set out standards for homes developed via conversion, rehabilitation or refurbishment.

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Non domestic standards and quality enhancements

When developing on HCA land or where our investment is covered by sections b) and c) as set out above, we may seek to apply additional higher or enhanced standards and requirements for non domestic development as appropriate on a site by site basis, to promote and deliver higher quality. Specifically:

- Where HCA led development currently includes non-domestic development, such as through the current Property and Regeneration programme, we propose that specific standards will continue to be mandated alongside our core standards. We will look to build on relevant part of legacy English Partnerships quality standards as appropriate, developing them in the light of subsequent events. For example, commercial and other building types will need to achieve a BREEAM⁴ rating, and infrastructure projects a CEEQUAL⁵ rating for construction quality as appropriate.
- In seeking to improve quality outputs and using the additional leverage provided by our land, we expect that opportunities to enhance quality will be strongly considered by partners, stakeholders and HCA teams. As a starting point, we will seek enhanced quality standards, building on and developing those previously set out by English Partnerships in order to maximise opportunities. However we will remain mindful of site constraints, viability and value for money and consider specific cases for enhancements to standards not to be applied on viability grounds. Enhancements will look to build on the requirements of legacy standards and cover a range of topics including testing for overheating and noise attenuation, whole life costing, fire safety, digital connectivity and enhanced levels of core standards.

Enhanced quality considerations and mandatory non-domestic standards will be set out within additional sections of the Housing Quality Calculator in due course.

⁴ BREEAM (BRE Environmental Assessment Method) is the most widely used environmental assessment method for non domestic buildings. It sets a standard for good practice in sustainable design and is used to describe a building's environmental performance

⁵ CEEQUAL is the assessment and awards scheme for improving sustainability in civil engineering and public realm projects. Its objective is to encourage the attainment of environmental excellence in civil engineering, and to deliver improved environmental performance in project specification, design and construction

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Alternative scenarios for implementation, timing and sign off

Further to the application criteria set out above, we recognise that there are a wide range of possible scenarios for phasing the introduction of the core standards. We wish to use this consultation to seek stakeholders' views on the best approach to implementation and timing.

In order to structure the consultation and to provide a focus upon which to base a set of costings, four possible scenarios for implementation are set out within [section C of the consultation supporting evidence base](#). However we are open to alternative scenarios that differ from these four.

Publication

Subject to the outcomes of the consultation and ministerial approvals, the HCA plans to publish the final standards in autumn 2010. This is to allow stakeholders time to familiarise themselves with the standards prior to potential implementation in the next spending round from April 2011 onwards.

Transitional arrangements

Once we have the results of the consultation, we will provide partners with further clarity as to how core standards might apply to schemes already in the pipeline.

We will, however, look for opportunities to apply new core standards earlier than this date on projects in which we have a controlling interest, where it is feasible and cost effective to do so, for example through the Public Land Initiative and on land in our ownership. Where the HCA is developing or disposing of land, we will apply any [additional standards](#) that are required for all public sector bodies undertaking such activities.

In light of the consultation and the responses received, general standards which apply for surplus public sector land may be reviewed to take account of evidence received and any subsequent policy change.

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Consultation questions

Once you have reviewed the proposed core housing design and sustainability standards, we would be very grateful if you would complete the consultation exercise.

We have commissioned the Electoral Reform Society (ERS Research) to administer the collection of responses to the consultation on behalf of the HCA. The following link will take you to the [ERS website](#), where you will be asked to input your response to a series of consultation questions.

The consultation has been split into five key sections:

- **HCA standards generally**, applicability and implementation
- **Space and functionality**
- **Environmental Sustainability** (including standards included within the Code for Sustainable Homes)
- **Building for Life**
- **Equality and Diversity**

In addition we will ask you to give some background information about yourself to help us ensure the consultation has reached the attention of a broad base of interested parties and for analysis purposes only. This information will not be passed on to HCA and responses remain unattributed unless you indicate otherwise.

Each section contains a mix of “closed” and “open” questions. The first type of questions has specific answers from which you can choose accordingly, such as “Yes” or “No”. The second are “free text” questions where you can provide written information or explanations to support your answers. Each section has at least one free text question. We recommend that responses should be as succinct as possible and look to be no longer than a paragraph.

If you require assistance, such as alternative formats to respond, please contact ERS Customer Services on 020 8829 8510.

[Download the consultation questions](#)

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Evidence base and supporting information

Evidence base

The evidence base section reviews the work collated by the HCA during development of the proposed core housing standards, and will assist consultees in drawing informed conclusions about our proposals.

It sets out in more detail what the proposed core standards would involve if adopted, their proposed application to schemes, proposed scenarios for implementation including appropriate timing, and costs and benefits where available. Further operational detail as to the manner in which the proposals would be taken forward if adopted, their relationship to other regulatory frameworks and links to further information have also been included as appropriate.

A: Further detail regarding the [Housing Quality Calculator and its proposed use](#) .

B: Further detail regarding the scope of the proposed standards and their [applicability](#).

C: Further detail regarding potential [implementation scenarios and associated cost impacts](#).

D: Further detail regarding proposed [dwelling space criteria](#).

E: Further detail regarding proposed functionality criteria for [dwelling functionality and storage](#).

F: Further detail regarding proposed [open space approach](#).

G: Further detail regarding proposed [sustainability criteria](#).

H: Further detail regarding proposed [Lifetime Homes criteria](#).

I: Further detail regarding proposed [security criteria](#).

J: Further detail regarding proposed [Building for Life approach](#).

K: Further detail regarding the [HCA Equality Impact Assessment – Stage 1](#).

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Supporting information

This section contains further detailed technical information and research carried out by others which inform the consultation process but do not necessarily relate to a specific evidence base section.

(Links to HCA legacy quality standards have been added for ease of reference).

NHBC (The National House-Building Council)

[Zero Carbon: what does it mean to homeowners and housebuilders?](#)
[Zero Carbon Homes – An introductory guide for housebuilders](#)

CABE (The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment)

[What its like to live there – The views of residents on the design of new housing – 2005](#)

[The cost of bad design - 2006](#)

[A sense of place – What residents think of their new homes - 2007](#)

LDA (London Development Agency)

[Recommendations for Living at Superdensity.](#)

Design for Homes, HTA, Levitt Bernstein, Pollard Thomas Edwards Architects and PRP – 2007

Other

[Crowded House: Cramped Living in England's Housing.](#)

Investigation Report, Shelter – 2004

[Residents' Views of New Forms of High Density Affordable Living.](#)

Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) – 2008

HCA (The Homes and Communities Agency)

[Current design and sustainability standards](#)

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Frequently Asked Questions

Any general queries received during the consultation process will be posted here along with the HCA's response to ensure all stakeholders and consultees have access to the same information.

Questions should reference the appropriate section of the consultation and aim to be succinct and to the point. It will not always be possible to respond individually to every question but answers will be posted regularly on this section of the site.

It should be noted that consultation submissions should **not** be emailed to the address below. Submissions should be made using the dedicated website with any emailed submissions potentially being viewed as invalid.

Email contact: standardsconsultation@hca.gsx.gov.uk

All **media enquiries** must be directed to the press office <http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/mediacontacts> rather than the email address above.

Q1 Who do you expect will respond to this consultation?

A1 It is expected that a wide range of stakeholders will respond to this consultation. Ideally we would prefer that individuals who represent either a national or regional organisation or group will respond on behalf of the group, rather than on an individual basis.

Our stakeholders cover a wide range of organisations that have a direct or indirect stake in the work of the HCA and its quality standards. For example, housebuilders and developers, architects / designers, housing associations / RSLs, local authorities, tenant / residents groups, other government agencies, public bodies and professional trade bodies.

Q2 What if I can't access the ERS website?

A2 If you require technical assistance with the part of the website hosted by ERS or alternative formats to respond, please contact ERS Customer Services on 020 8829 8510.

Q3 Can I use this telephone number (Q2) to ask questions about the content of the consultation?

A3 No, any queries regarding the content of the consultation should be sent to the following dedicated email address:
standardsconsultation@hca.gsx.gov.uk.

Q4 What if I have a question regarding the consultation and can't find the information in the consultation text of supporting documents?

A4 Queries can be submitted to the dedicated consultation email address standardsconsultation@hca.gsx.gov.uk

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Q5 Can I request the consultation documents in other formats?

A5 Yes, requests can be made for alternative formats by contacting the ERS Customer Services helpline on 020 8829 8510.

Q6 Can I email my responses directly using the standardsconsultation” dedicated email address?

A6 No, consultation submissions must **not** be emailed to this email address. Any such submissions will be deemed to be invalid responses.

Q7 Can I start to answer the consultation questions save them and then come back to them to complete my answers?

A7 No, when completing feedback, consultees are made aware that their responses will not be saved until the “submit” button at the end of the questionnaire form is activated. If the questionnaire is closed or the internet connection is lost before this point, responses will be lost.

However, consultees are able to print a copy of the questionnaire in order that answers and comments might be prepared beforehand prior to submitting their response online. [A PDF of the questions is available to download](#). In addition, consultees will be able to print a copy of their submission in full to retain for future reference.

Q8 How will stakeholders and consultees be made aware of the consultation process?

A8 A link to the consultation website will be clearly set out on the home page of the HCA website giving access to the [consultation](#). In addition, the consultation will be highlighted in the weekly HCA external email newsletter which is circulated widely. HCA corporate and regional teams will notify key stakeholders and use opportunities such as upcoming speaking engagements or presentations to promote the consultation. The launch of the consultation will also involve national, regional and relevant trade press in order to publicise the consultation more widely.

Q9 What HCA design and quality standards do developers / RSLs currently have to adhere to?

A9 The HCA inherited two sets of quality standards from its predecessor bodies – English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation. At present these legacy standards continue to apply (further detail can be found on the [HCA website](#)). If adopted, new HCA core standards will potentially become applicable from April 2011.

Q10 How were the proposed new standards developed?

A10 As the inherited standards differed in their approach and definition, the HCA committed to harmonise these into a single, core set of standards in order to provide clarity and consistency for its investment partners. The options for new core standards set out within the consultation have been developed based on a thorough review of existing standards and compilation of an evidence base that includes research into the needs of residents and cost-benefit analyses.

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The approach has been to base the options on current mechanisms such as Building for Life and the Code for Sustainable Homes in order to help ensure consistency across the housing sector together with greater buy-in and ease of adoption by HCA's partners. The options reflect the need for a balanced set of criteria that will work nationally across a wide range of projects of different sizes, types and tenures.

The development of the standards was carried out in consultation with a range of stakeholders and in conjunction with the HCA Design and Sustainability [Advisory Group](#) whose members have provided considerable feedback and technical support. Consultation with key stakeholders has included amongst others CABE, RIBA, Housing Forum, HBF, TSA, CLG, TCPA, NHBC and Habinteg Housing Association.

Q11 When will you be issuing new HCA standards?

A11 Subject to the outcomes of the consultation and ministerial approvals, the HCA plans to publish the final standards later in 2010. This is to allow stakeholders time to familiarise themselves with the standards prior to potential implementation from April 2011 onwards.

Once we have the results of the consultation, we will provide partners with further clarity on transitional arrangements, such as when core standards will apply to schemes already in the pipeline.

Q12 If this is an open consultation, how will you decide what the final standards will be? Will this be determined simply by the most 'votes' for one option?

A12 The HCA in partnership with its Design and Sustainability [Advisory Group](#) will consider the consultation responses alongside the evidence base it has gathered and including further cost impact work that will be undertaken. A balance will need to be struck between policy objectives, the views of stakeholders, the needs of residents and value for money. The final proposed standards will be decided by the HCA Board and Ministers.

Q13 How will the new standards compare with those of English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation?

A13 The options for new core standards take account of the key requirements of both successor programmes. In conjunction with the HCA Design and Sustainability [Advisory Group](#) we are looking at a range of ways in which standards may be implemented and promoted on HCA sites and through the single conversation process.

Q14 How will you monitor the use of these standards and evaluate whether they have been met?

A14 Until the completion of HCA legacy projects and programmes, existing monitoring and evaluation criteria will continue. It is anticipated that monitoring and evaluation arrangements will be increasingly unified over the coming years, in tandem with the work to develop proposed new HCA standards.

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Q15 How will the HCA core standards fit in with the Mayor's housing standards for London?

A15 In London, the Mayor has published **The London Mayor's Housing Design Guide (LMHDG)** for public consultation.

The HCA's national standards consultation will inform the HCA's approach within the London region. The London region faces particular challenges of developing better quality housing in high density developments to meet London's diverse range of needs.

In London, the HCA standards will need to have regard to:

- The standards contained within the final version of the Mayor's LHDG; and
- The draft London Plan policies published in October 2009 and draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG).

Both the LHDG and the draft SPG are due to be published shortly. The revised London Plan will be considered as part of an examination in public (EIP) and is expected to be supported by the SPG.

The HCA will continue to work closely with the Mayor to apply design standards in a manner which is fully attuned to the needs of London; the ultimate aim will be to align relevant standards to avoid additional layers of regulation.

Q16 Will there be any transitional arrangements for quality standards in relation schemes currently in the pipeline?

A16 Yes, the HCA will publish transitional arrangements to ensure clarity if new core standards are agreed and will apply to schemes already in the pipeline. This will be clearly indicated when the HCA looks to publish its final core standards in autumn 2010.

We will, however, look for opportunities to apply a possible version of new core standards earlier than this date on projects in which we have a controlling interest, where it is feasible and cost effective to do so, for example through the Public Land Initiative and on land in our ownership. Where the HCA is developing or disposing of land, we will apply any [additional standards](#) that are required for all public sector bodies undertaking such activities.

Q17 Will Housing Quality Indicators continue to be used?

A17 From April 2011, if new core standards become applicable, new systems will be put in place to measure housing quality replacing the Housing Quality Indicators. It is envisaged that new systems will look to mirror the format of the Housing Quality Calculator, a version of the Calculator and supporting information forms part of this consultation.

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However, Housing Quality Indicators will continue to be used for legacy National Affordable Housing Programmes (NAHP), for example schemes allocated funding under the 2006-08 and 2008-11 programmes.

Q18 What will the new standards cover?

A18 The new core standards proposals cover a range of aspects of design and sustainability based around meeting performance criteria in respect of the sustainability, internal and external environment of the homes.

Q19 What will the new standards apply to?

A19 We propose that the core standards would apply to new build, general needs, non-specialised housing where the HCA is:

- a) Providing an element of grant funding (as in the case of the current NAHP). This represents by far the majority of housing provision supported by the HCA.
- b) Facilitating or providing free or discounted land value (as in the case of Property and Regeneration projects).
- c) Facilitating or funding major infrastructure investment as part of a regeneration project.

However respondents are invited to give their views on these applicability proposals.