



Rebalancing: Better Homes

Maggie Cornall,
Director of Operations,
Blackpool Coastal Housing



Blackpool Coastal
Housing

Blackpool Coastal Housing

- Arms Length Management Organisation for Blackpool Council.
- Largest social housing provider in Blackpool
- Manage approx. 5,000 homes
- Main provider of specialist and supported housing in the town



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The situation in Blackpool...

- Blackpool is 1 of 20% most deprived districts/unitary authorities in England
- 28% (7,200) of children live in low income families.
- Life expectancy for both men and women is lower than the England average
- High rates of early deaths from serious illness such as cancer and lung disease
- Low employment rate
- Proportion of people claiming out of work benefits is double the national average
- Approx. 17.8% of the working age population in Blackpool have no formal qualifications
- 10% of young people are not in education, employment or training



Council's 2 key priorities:

- To support communities and individuals to become more resilient
- To improve the economy

BCH's business plan and activities is designed to underpin these two priorities



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Context of Decent Homes in Blackpool...

- Historically poorly maintained housing stock – by Christmas routine repairs were stopped!
- Major Repairs Allowance introduced to commence some catch up repairs in early 2000s
- Stock Option Appraisal in 2004 led to a decision in 2005 to establish an ALMO
- BCH established in 2007 and awarded 2 Stars with Excellent Prospects in 2008
- Released £55m of funding to deliver decent homes
- Decent Homes programme commenced in 2008 until 2015
- Self Financing arrangement from April 2012 and £41m was reduced from the HRA debt level
- Blackpool Council still has some of the lowest social rents despite rent restructuring arrangements
- 4 years of rent cuts during austerity
- Recent rent increase cap, with the Council setting a rent increase of 5% against inflation running at over 10%



Imaginative Approaches to Decent Homes

...



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**Queen's Park
1960s**



**Queen's Park
now**

- Demolition of the 1960s tower blocks
- 191 new Council apartments and family homes.
- Total cost £22 million





Troutbeck Crescent 2018



Troutbeck 2022

Garstang Road West 2020 and in 2022



Decent Homes priorities...

- Kitchens and Bathrooms
- Double glazing
- Replacement external doors
- Replacement heating systems – mainly gas wet systems
- Improved loft insulation
- Installed cavity wall insulation

However...

Initially our focus was decent homes which distracted from wider asset management priorities – such as balcony stability and in 2012 the Newby Place balcony collapse occurred



Impact of our approach to Decent Homes Standard

- Most of our properties (except 2 properties with tenants who refuse to have coal fires removed) hit the current Decent Homes Standard
- Most properties achieve an EPC C rating.
- During a major upgrade of heating systems from gas warm air to gas wet systems, the death rate reduced... anecdotal and not academically tested!
- Wider asset management considerations are now central to our investment decisions e.g: our steel framed properties at Hawes Side



Future of Decent Homes

- Welcome the approach to safety within the new standard. Keeping people safe is the number one priority
- Welcome the approach to carbon zero homes. But the solutions to this, certainly for our older stock is still emerging, not least because our reliance on gas heating in our 'draughty' properties
- Our business plans need to be financially healthy to afford the investment, or alternative investment is required.




Questions...

Thank you...



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LESSONS FROM THE WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD (WHQS)

Darren Hatton

Head of Housing Standards



Warming Stripes for Wales 1884 to 2020

Welsh Policy Context



Warming Stripes for Wales 1884 to 2020

Welsh Policy Context

- Housing sits with the Minister for Climate Change portfolio
- New build standard is EPC A and non-fossil fuel heating and hot water systems.
- Test and learn approach on decarbonisation for both new and existing homes with social housing leading the way.
- £155m - Innovative Housing Programme (2017-2021)
- £250m - Optimised Retrofit Programme (2021-2025)
- £104m per annum - WHQS (since 2004)
- Social Housing Grant increased from £120m annually (2010's) to £325m annually (2021 onwards)

Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS)

- First introduced in 2002 – sets the standard for all social housing in Wales.
- Successfully raised the standard of social housing in Wales.
- Original standard was aspirational and ambitious for its time.
- All social landlords have met the original standard. But a decade after the original target was set.
- So as a base, we have solid foundations to launch WHQS 2023.
- Different challenges and landscape globally.

WHQS 2023

- Is in a good state of repair
- Is safe and secure
- Is affordable to heat and has minimal environmental impact
- Has an up-to-date kitchen and utility area
- Has an up-to-date bathroom
- Is comfortable and promotes wellbeing
- Has a suitable garden
- Has an attractive outside space

WHQS 2023

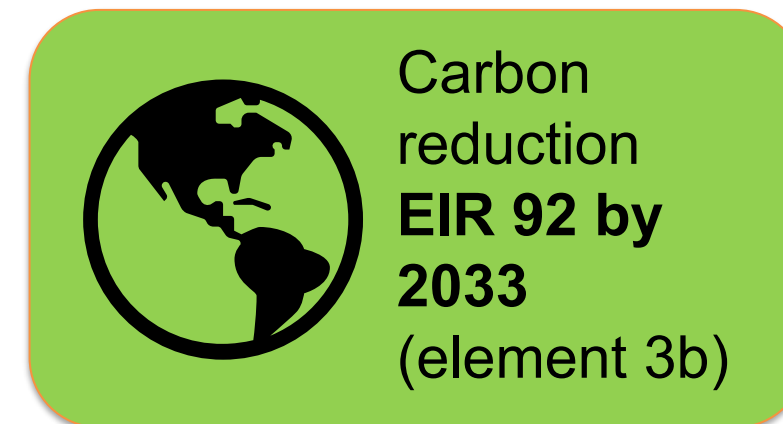
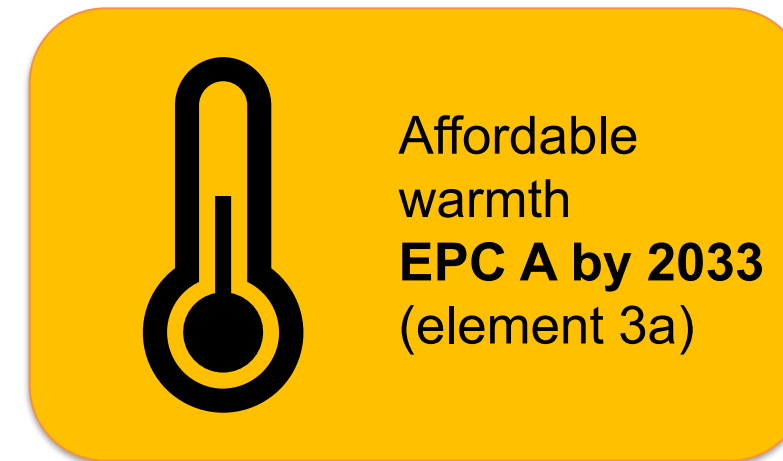
- The standard is made up of 42 elements.

Element	Compliance date
3b) Carbon emissions from homes must be minimised (minimum of EIR 92)	2033
3c) Landlord's must carry out a Whole Stock Assessment and produce Target Energy Pathways for their homes.	2026
3d) All measures recommended through the Target Energy Pathway must be implemented	Step 1 - 2029 Step 2 - 2031 Step 3 - 2026 Step 4 - 2033
3e) Homes, and in particular kitchens and bathrooms, must have an adequate amount of ventilation	2033
3f) Measures to improve water efficiency and alleviating water poverty must be installed when replacing fittings and fixed appliances	2023
3g) Water butts to be installed when appropriate	2026
4a) Kitchens must be less than 16 years old, unless they are in good condition	continuation
4b) Kitchens must have adequate space for kitchen appliances	continuation
4c) Kitchens must be well organised and contain sufficient work surfaces	continuation
4d) Homes must have sufficient general storage	continuation
4e) Homes must have adequate space for local recycling requirements	2026
4f) Kitchens must have sufficient conveniently located	

Element	Compliance date
6c) Exposure to noise should be minimised	2026
6d) As far as possible, homes should suit the specific requirements of the household	continuation
6e) Disabled and older people's housing requirements must be planned for and met in accordance with the duty for reasonable adjustments	continuation
6f) Homes should be clearly identifiable and have definable boundaries	continuation
7a) There should be an external level space no smaller than 10m ² directly accessible from the home	continuation
7b) There should be paved access from the home to any garden gate	continuation
7c) There should be paved access from the home to the drying line if one is present	continuation
7d) Outdoor space must be easy to maintain, and safe	continuation
7e) There must be a robust and lockable external store	continuation
8a) External storage for cycles and equipment must be made available	2026
8b) There should be adequate, practical, maintainable and safe community space(s)	continuation
8c) Biodiversity opportunities should be introduced by landlords who own or manage verges, parks, grounds and open green spaces by changing their management of these areas to make them more wildlife friendly	2023

WHQS 2023

- Consultation closed in August 2022
- Wavehill report published in January 2023
- Majority of feedback on Part 3 Affordable Warmth and Decarbonisation elements 3a and 3b.
- Social Landlords in favour of the principle, but serious concerns about:
 - Practicalities for delivering
 - How much it would cost to fund
 - How quickly expected to meet the standard



WHQS 2023

- Propose a 'planned approach' is taken to achieving the Part 3 elements.
- The approach requires an 'Affordable Warmth and Decarbonisation Plan' within 3 years from the launch of the standard.
- EPC A and EIR of 92 remain within the standard, but the date these targets will be achieved is set by the landlord within their plan.
- The standard expects landlords to ensure that all their homes reach a fabric-based EPC band C by 2029.
- Whole Stock Assessment and Target Energy Pathway will need to be established for all the social landlords' properties.

Tenant feedback

“Since I’ve lived here, I haven’t had a cold. So it must be something to do with **the clean air, that’s the only thing I can put it down with**. And my mum suffers with COPD. And when she’s really ill, she comes here because she knows that she’s going to get better within 24 hours, that’s what she says, I’ve got a magic home”

(Participant 34)

“with any kind of new technologies or anything like this, it’s useful to be able to compare notes with our neighbours ... Whereas traditionally you might have gone out and talked about things, **we’re talking about energy**, energy, energy production and how much they’re getting.”

(Participant 28)

“**I’m not worried about winter**. Which I think every year previously, it was, sort of, a bit of a dread going into winter cos you knew it was gonna be really cold. And it’s always that, sort of, battle of trying to manage how cold you wanna be versus how much you wanna spend on your energy bills.”

(Participant 20)

“We love it here. We absolutely love it. ...it’s just amazing with regards to how much we find we’re saving ... **I think it’s just with the massive change, and everyone’s realising their bills have gone up so much that we think, wow, this is actually, we are so much better off than everybody else at the moment** with everything so cheap here ... Everyone comes in here and says how warm it is as well. The insulation is amazing.”

(Participant 13)

Living Well in Low Carbon Homes Report – Cardiff University

Raising standards in the Private Rented Sector – How Blackpool are responding to “Levelling Up” and PRS reform.

Presented by:

Vikki Piper – Head of Housing, Blackpool Council

A bit about Blackpool.....

- Blackpool is the most deprived local authority in England, it has the lowest male and female life expectancy in England , and is the 5th least socially mobile area in England
- Blackpool has a high concentration of bedsit and HMO accommodation, and at least one in three properties in inner Blackpool have a category 1 hazard
- Blackpool ranks in the bottom 15% of local authorities for the four ONS wellbeing measures.
- At all skill levels Blackpool underperforms compared with the UK average. Average earnings in Blackpool are the third lowest in England
- There is little sense of community, due to the entrenched deprivation and transient population
- The Housing mix is heavily skewed in favour of PRS with 26% of all homes being PRS, increasing to around 50% in the deprived inner areas – high levels of HB/UC

Background and strategic approach:

- Housing/Regen significant priority in Blackpool – always known what we needed
- Housing identified as the most important and pressing public policy challenge
- Working with Govt for last 10 years trying to demonstrate need for different approach in Blackpool – focused a lot on rent and benefit reform
- Made great progress on Economic Regeneration
- Housing lagging behind – need homes to match jobs
- Blackpool Housing Company – getting on with it!
- **Theory of Change** – if we can fundamentally change the housing mix and conditions we will create better homes and more balanced communities, which will have knock on effects on all other deprivation related factors.

Economic Regeneration:

BLACKPOOL INNER AREA - THE JOURNEY SO FAR

"A track record of successful delivery"

What We've Done:

Blackpool has a track record of successful large scale infrastructure and residential delivery. The town is in transition towards a better place to live for families.

Completed Projects

1. Winter Gardens Conference Centre
2. Bickerstaffe Square Mixed Use
3. Station Road - Blackpool Housing Company
4. Troutbeck Crescent
5. Queens Park Residential Development
6. Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone

What We're Doing:

Blackpool has an exciting pipeline of high profile projects that will ensure our town meets the needs of a contemporary coastal tourist attraction. Blackpool has secured significant private sector investment to fund a range of new leisure, employment and residential developments.

Development Pipeline

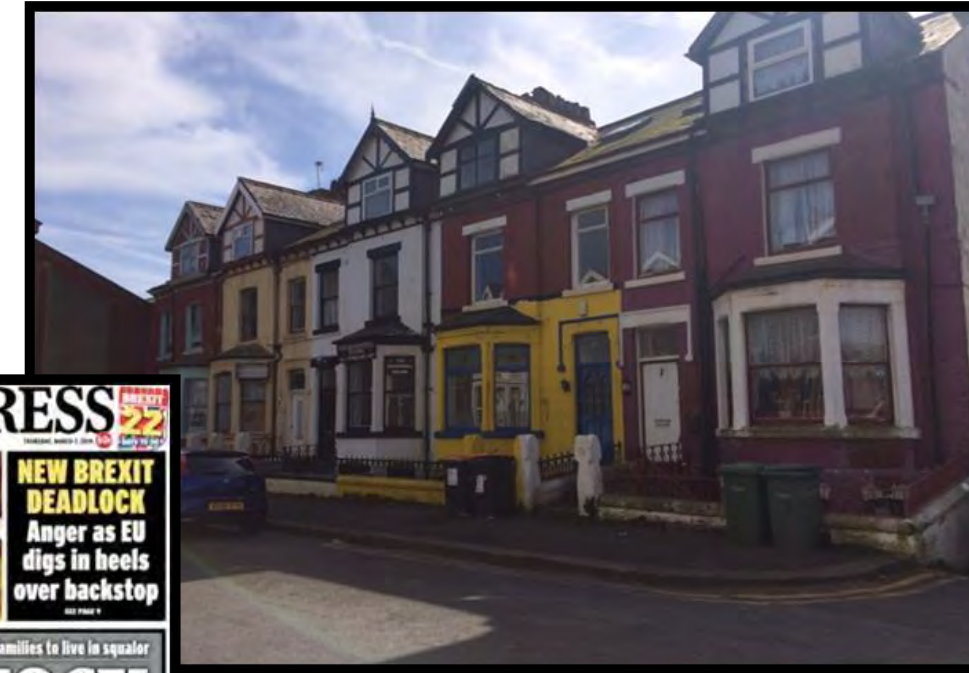
7. Blackpool Centra
8. Foxhall Village Family Housing
9. Talbot Gateway
10. Sands Hotel and Museum
11. Houndshill Phase Two



Housing Conditions:



In the public eye:



What Blackpool are doing about it:



Recent developments/where are we now:

- Blackpool already received significant investment into the wider economy
- LUP and PRS White papers suggest our visions beginning to align
- Opportunity to “pitch” (articulate) what we need from Govt
- Winter/Spring 22 – “Theory of Change” worked up into Business case containing 2 interconnected Housing work streams a) Enforcement Pilot b) Capital investment
- March 2022 – PRS white paper launched “A Fairer Private Rented Sector”. Contains 12 key actions, including the introduction of the Decent Homes Standard (DHS)
- Spring 2022 – SofS announced funding for the DHS Enforcement Pilot, SHIP, and continuing commitment from HE around the capital business case

Right time – Right place – Right Strategy

The Pilot - objectives

- Work to test, and improve, levels of non-compliance against current standards
- Increase utilisation of current powers to address non-compliance (e.g RRO's)
- Allow landlords to assess their readiness for the DHS
- Provide evidence to DLUHC on DHS readiness in Blackpool
- Assess properties against the current "Blackpool Standard"
- Undertake full Stock condition survey in inner areas
- To change the behaviour of poor and bad landlords
- To offer short term support to particularly vulnerable tenants.

The Pilot - model

- Funded until end of March 2025
- New Team of “Decent Homes Standard” Enforcement Officers
- Dedicated legal resource
- Dedicated support workers for most vulnerable tenants
- Initially starting in Central Blackpool (current Selective Licensing Area)
- Aim to expand to rest of inner area over the duration of the pilot
- 1st proactive inspections started March 2023
- Maintain links with capital programme and link in landlords as and when appropriate

Outcomes

- Signal the commitment to change and improve inner Blackpool
- To change the behaviour of poor and bad landlords
- Link to capital by (overtime) identifying acquisition targets and provide landlords with options to exit the market
- By end of pilot have a comprehensive stock condition survey to inform future work
- For Blackpool to be ready to rapidly response to legislative change
- Test existing and new legislation and provide “on the ground” feedback to DLUCH on effectiveness

NB – The pilot itself will not result in significant displacement or impact on tenants, as we are still working to existing HHSRS until/unless legislation changes.

The future

- DHS Enforcement Pilot is now “live” - designed to test and educate landlords on new Decent Home Standard
- Work ongoing with DLUHC and Homes England re the wider capital case
- In dialogue with other Govt departments (via DLUHC) re other key areas (i.e education, skills, employment, health)
- Investment in economic regen continues....
- Starting to work on Selective Licensing Proposal

“Levelling up in Blackpool will require particular focus on housing, health and vulnerable groups, building on recent improvements in local growth and transport”. (DLUCH)

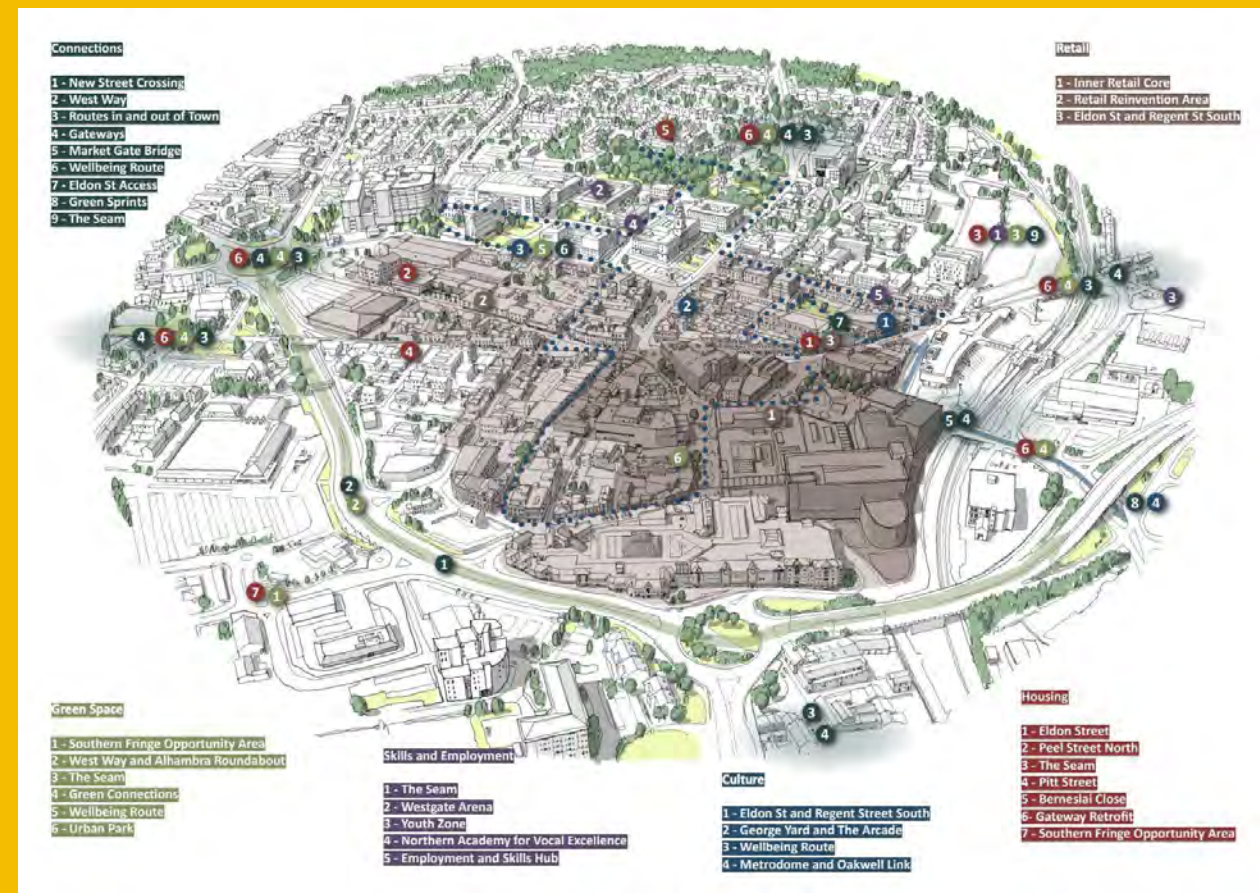
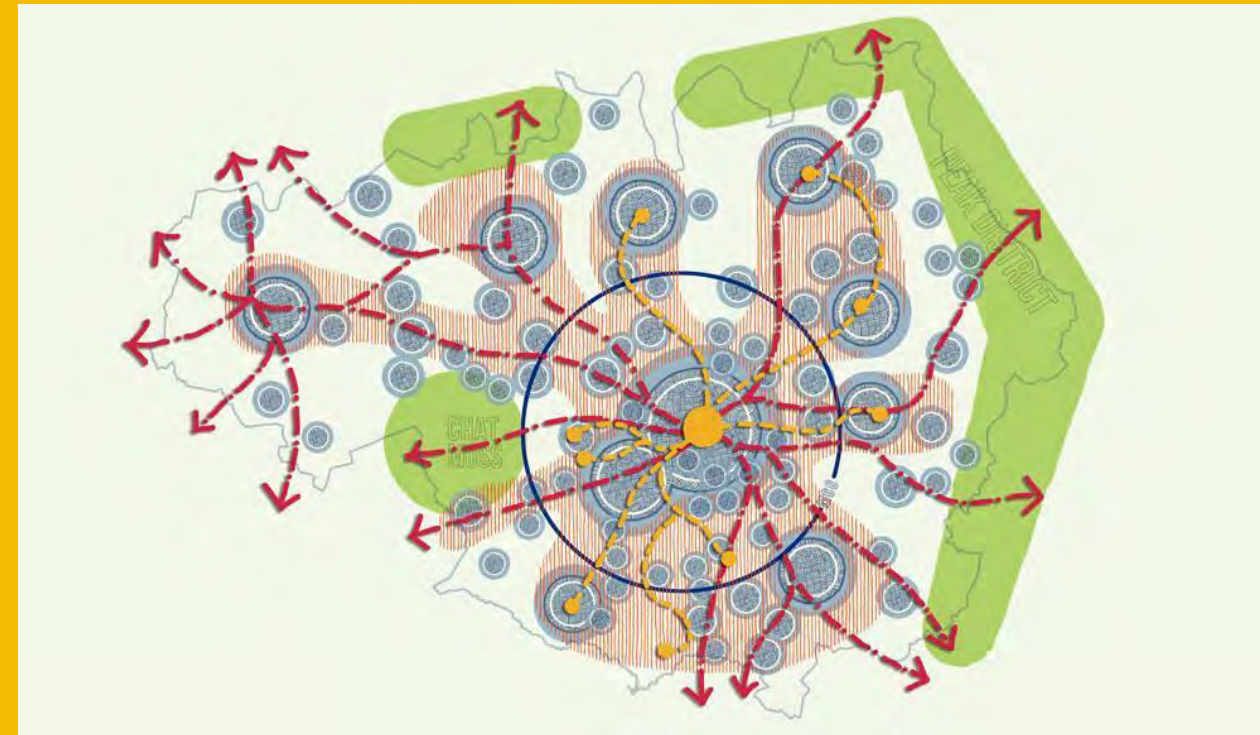
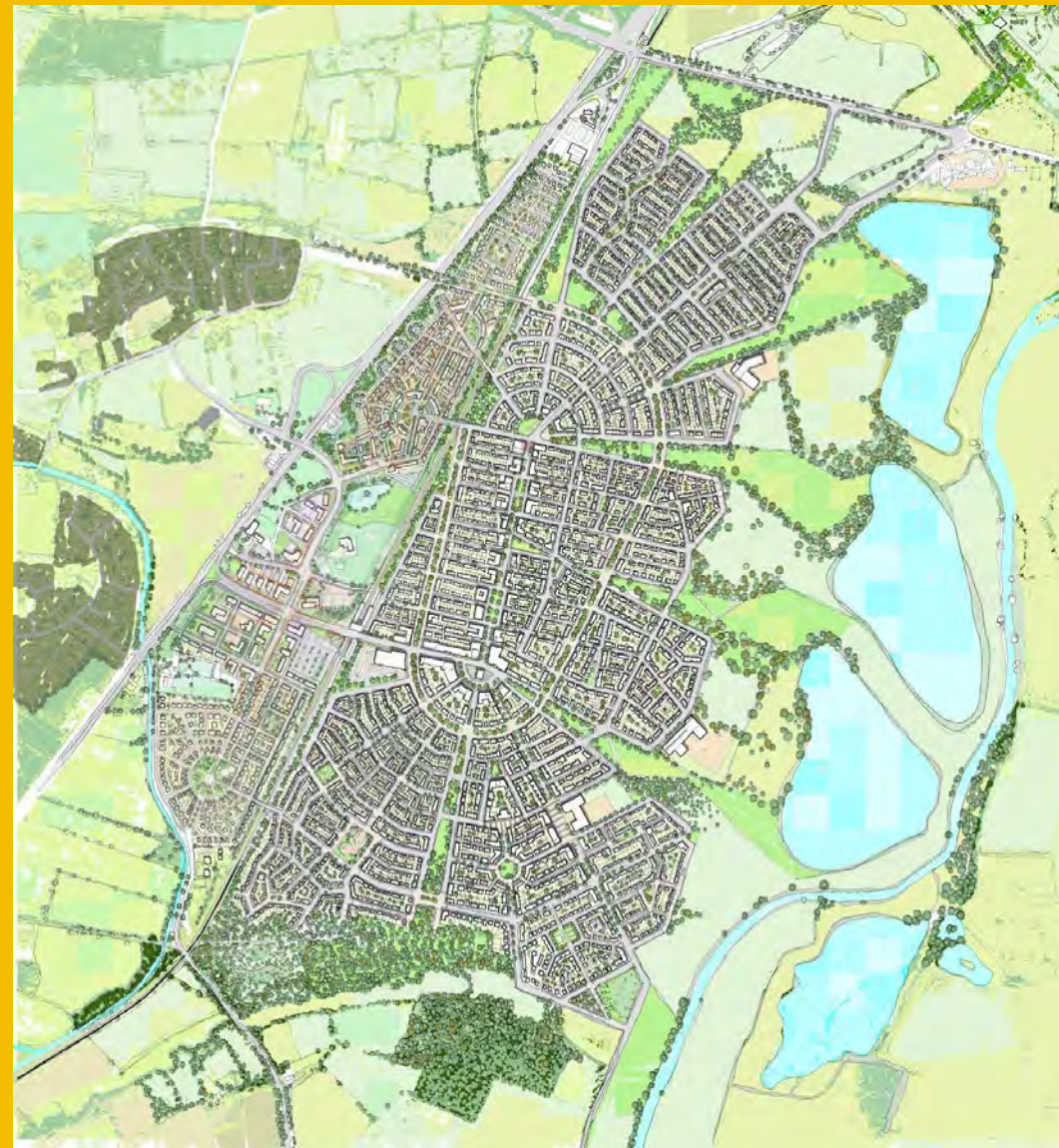


**QUALITY
OF LIFE**
FOUNDATION

Rebalancing Better Homes
Vicky Payne



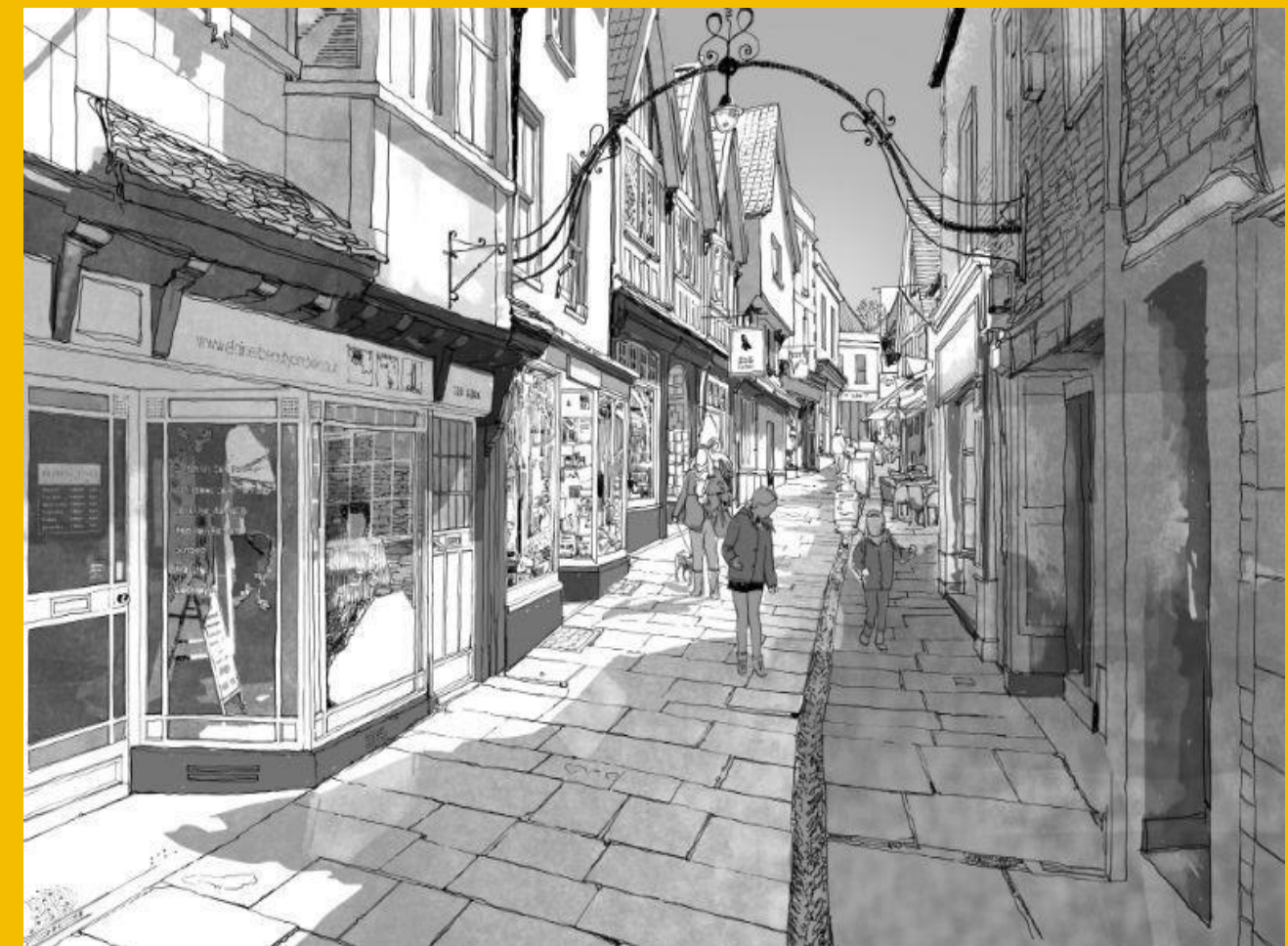
My Background



National Model Design Code

Part 1
The Coding Process

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government



Introduction to QOLF



Quality of Life Framework

1 | Control



2 | Health



3 | Nature



4 | Wonder



5 | Movement



6 | Community



Beyond the Front Door



Clarion

Neighbourhood Standard



1 Control



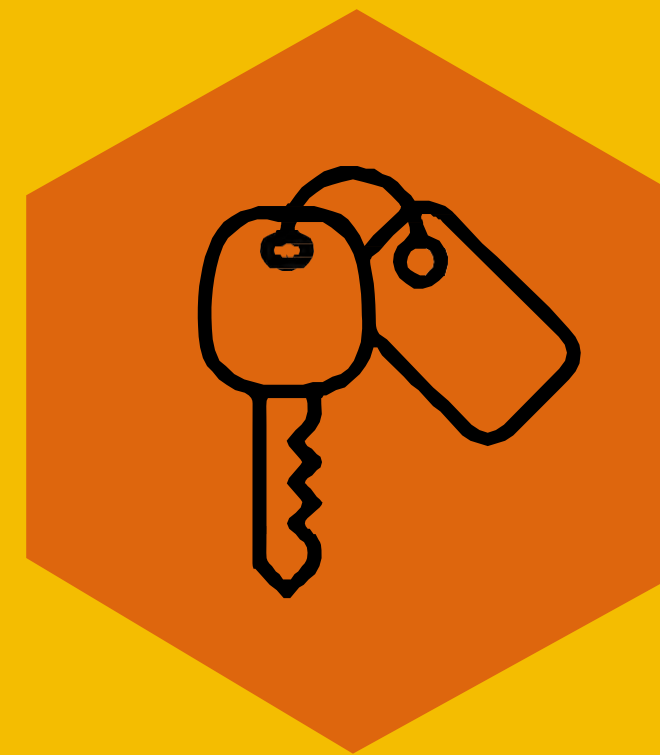
A

**Influenc
e**



B

Safety



C

Permanence

2 Health



A

Housing



B

**Air
Quality**



C

Recreation

3 Nature



A

Green Space



B

Biodiversity



C

**Environmental
performance**

4 Wonder



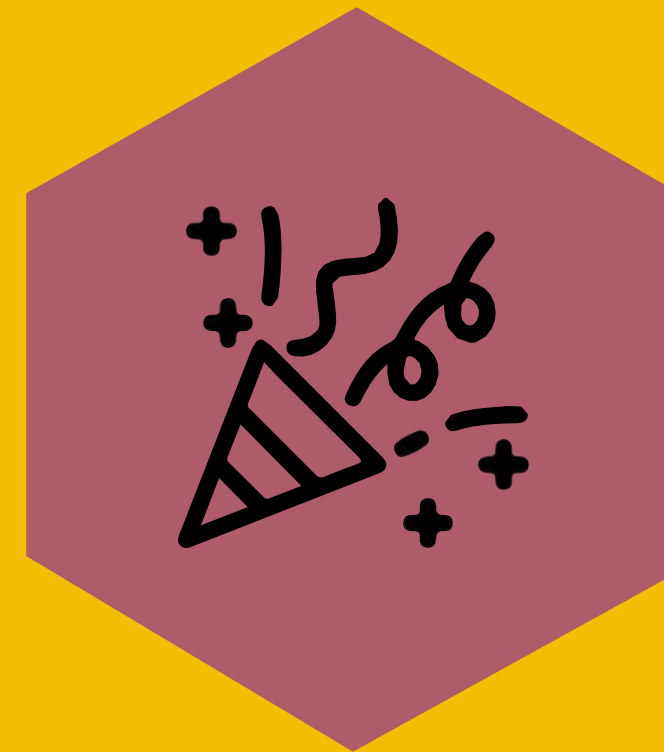
A

Culture



B

Distinctiveness



C

Playfulness

S

5 Movement



A

**Walking
& Cycling**



B

**Public
Transport**



C

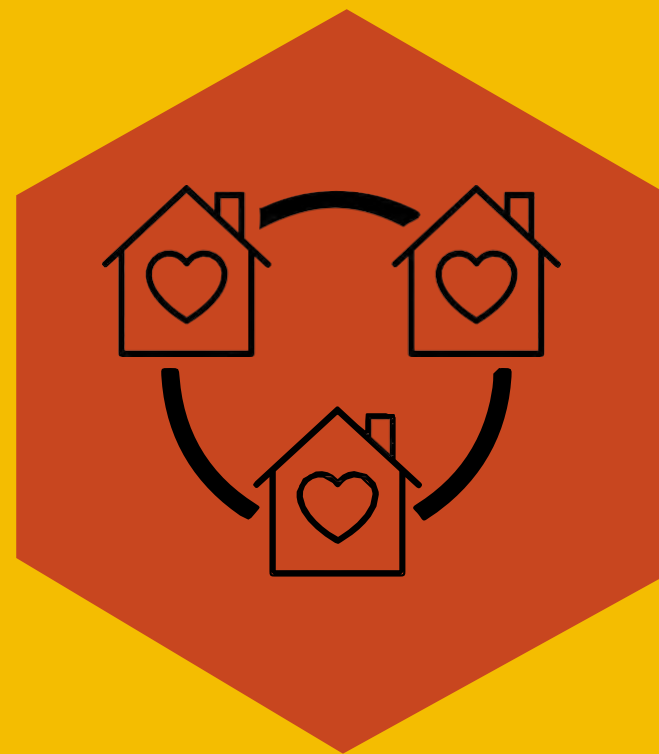
Cars

6 Community



A

Diversity



B

Neighbourlines

S



C

Services



3A) Green Space

Most of the country is covered in green space. More than 90% of the UK consists of pasture, arable land, forests, moors, wetland, natural spaces and the green spaces within our towns and cities.

This green space can be brought into cities as green fingers along river valleys, canals and former railway lines. It can form a network linking natural spaces within urban areas along with parks and formal green spaces such as school grounds, sports pitches and cemeteries. This in turn can link to local spaces like village greens, pocket parks, play areas, community gardens, allotments and urban farms. All of these spaces can be linked by streets with verges, trees and planters. There are also private gardens and courtyards which can have the richest biodiversity of all. Even within buildings, there are balconies and window boxes, green roofs and walls.

While greenery is good for our wellbeing this does not mean that the more green space there is in cities, the better. In the past, the architect Le Corbusier went as far as lifting his blocks on piloti (columns) so that everywhere could be grass. However, you can have too much of a good thing if it means that there is so much green space that there aren't enough people to support shops, facilities and public transport. Towns and cities can be greened without grassing every piece of space.

Garden sizes

One of the lessons of lockdown is the importance of outdoor private space in the form of gardens and balconies. The London Housing Design Guide includes minimum sizes of 5m² of external space for a 1- to 2-person property with an additional 1m² per additional person. Outside London, you might expect gardens to be a lot bigger than this. The London guide also suggests that balconies should be at least 1.5m by 1.5m to allow them to be used for dining.

Communal space is also important, especially for flats. This can include courtyards and roof gardens which can be used for recreation, children's play, barbecues and food growing. It can also include the street that can be turned into a home zone or play street, creating space where the community can come together



Shared communal gardens in Hyndland, Glasgow. Photography: © URBED

What You Can Do

Communities

Do an audit or review of your green spaces – not just the recreational space mentioned in 2c, but all green spaces from parks to private gardens. How much space is there? How many trees? How much is publicly accessible? Google Earth photos can be useful in doing this. Is there space that needs to be improved? Or that could be better used?



4B) Distinctiveness

Many of our places are, quite frankly, ugly. New housing estates, out-of-town shops, road junctions and business parks are not designed to lift the soul or to enhance our quality of life. There is no reason why this should be. There are lots of places that we find attractive; the places we visit or go on holiday to. Good design need not cost more so there is no reason we can't improve our quality of life by designing better places.

People tend to like old places, be they historic cities or winding village streets, with their human scale, variety, activity and distinctiveness. Some might conclude that this means that all new development should be designed to look like an old place, with traditional architecture. But this is not necessarily true. Modern buildings and contemporary architecture can create places that are loved. The trick is to distinguish between the urban form of a place and the way its buildings are designed.

Urban form

Urban form means creating human-scaled, walkable neighbourhoods based on streets that link to other streets and are fronted by buildings. These urban design principles apply to villages, suburbs, urban neighbourhoods and cities. As places become more urban, their densities rise, as does the height of their buildings, the mix of uses and activity on the streets. However, all places should be able to support local shops and facilities. These principles of urban design create the shape of neighbourhoods and the character of public spaces where we feel comfortable.



Motcomb Street, London. Active frontage and walkable street contribute to distinctive urban form. Photography: © Grosvenor

Background buildings

The design of the buildings adds another layer of richness. While many great places are made up of fairly plain buildings, these background buildings follow basic principles of scale and proportion, often using local materials and detailing. They can do this whether they are traditional or contemporary in design.

Star buildings

Then there are the special buildings. In the past they would have been churches and town halls but today might be an arts or leisure centre, a school or even a quite modest public building like a pavilion or a shelter. These are the buildings that we photograph as visitors, that appear on postcards and make a place feel different to everywhere else.



Goldsmith Street, Norwich. Photography: © Mikhail Riches

CASESTUDY 3A:

PORT LOOP BIRMINGHAM

- Birmingham
- Market Sale/ Shared Ownership
- 1150 homes



Image: © URBED

CASESTUDY 4B:

KELHAM ISLAND, SHEFFIELD

- Sheffield
- Market sale
- 5000+ population



Photography: © Academy of Urbanism, 2019



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