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Select Committee on National Policy for the
Built Environment

Report of Session 2015–16

Building better places

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Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment

The Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment was appointed by the House of Lords on 11 June 2015 “to consider the development and implementation of national policy for the built environment”.

Membership

The Members of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment were:

<u>Baroness Andrews</u>	<u>Lord Clement-Jones</u>
<u>Baroness Finlay of Llandaff</u>	<u>Lord Freeman</u>
<u>Lord Haskel</u> (until 23 June 2015)	<u>Lord Inglewood</u>
<u>The Earl of Lytton</u>	<u>Lord Macdonald of Tradeston</u> (until 8 July 2015)
<u>Baroness O'Cathain</u>	<u>Baroness Parminter</u>
<u>Baroness Rawlings</u>	<u>Baroness Whitaker</u>
<u>Lord Woolmer of Leeds</u> (from 23 June 2015)	<u>Baroness Young of Old Scone</u> (from 8 July 2015)

Declaration of interests

See Appendix 1.

A full list of Members' interests can be found in the Register of Lords' Interests:

<http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/register-of-lords-interests>

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Evidence is published online at <http://www.parliament.uk/built-environment> and available for inspection at the Parliamentary Archives (020 7129 3074).

Q in footnotes refers to a question in oral evidence.

SUMMARY

The built environment affects us all. The planning, design, management and maintenance of the built environment has a long-term impact upon people and communities. It is widely acknowledged that the quality of life, prosperity, health and wellbeing of an individual is heavily influenced by the ‘place’ in which they live or work.

Policy towards the built environment in England is not the sole preserve of any one Government department; this both accounts for the diverse range of elements which comprise the ‘built environment’, and reflects the diverse range of impacts which it has upon people and communities. There is an urgent need to co-ordinate and reconcile policy across numerous different areas and priorities.

Recently, however, one priority has become dominant in debates concerning built environment policy. Increasing the overall supply of housing, and the speed at which housing is delivered, is a central part of the Government’s policy agenda. **When seen in the context of the housing crisis facing many communities across England, this is understandable and, overall, we welcome the Government focus on increasing and speeding up the supply of housing.**

Restrictions on financial freedoms and flexibilities, however, pose a threat to the ability of local authorities to build houses of their own. The private sector, throughout the post-war period, has very rarely achieved the delivery of 200,000 homes a year. **We do not believe the Government can deliver the step-change required for housing supply without taking measures to allow local authorities and housing associations each to play their full part in delivering new homes.** In addition, Government initiatives have so far failed to address a further part of the housebuilding problem, which is the gap between planning permissions granted and new homes built. **We recommend measures intended to address this, and other, barriers to increasing the number of housing completions.**

More fundamentally, however, we are concerned that the overall emphasis on speed and quantity of housing supply appears to threaten place-making itself, along with sustainable planning for the long-term and the delivery of high quality and design standards. The Government is pursuing a deregulatory agenda as seen, for example, in the introduction of more flexible arrangements for office to residential conversions and the strong policy emphasis placed on the financial viability of new developments. These changes, however, have the cumulative effect of progressively diluting the capacity of local authorities to scrutinise new developments, to safeguard quality and sustainability and to ensure that proposals contribute to an overall and beneficial sense of place. This is compounded by the removal of national building standards—including the zero carbon homes requirement—which were intended to ensure that new developments are planned with long-term challenges and consequences in mind. Speed need not come at the expense of quality, and a short-sighted approach runs the risk of repeating the mistakes of the past. Buildings should be built to last, and to stand the test of time. **We recommend a range of measures which are intended to create better places, promote design quality and enhance the resilience and sustainability of new developments.**

We believe it is important that the Government sets high standards for the built environment, and provides the vision, aspiration and leadership to encourage others to deliver against those standards. As a nation, our aspirations for the quality of the built environment have been routinely too low. Only the Government can set a more ambitious national path, and we urge this one to do so. This should begin with much better coordination of policy across the various Government departments that have an impact upon the built environment. **We recommend the appointment of a Chief Built Environment Adviser, appointed to integrate policy across central Government departments, to act as a champion for higher standards and to promote good practice.**

Better design and higher standards cannot be delivered from the centre alone. We have seen what a powerful actor good local government can be when, through outstanding local leadership, it brings its multiple resources and responsibilities to bear. Across England, however, local authority planning departments have been diminished by funding cuts, leading to a loss in capacity and skills. We believe that local authorities need to play a key role in establishing an ambitious 'vision' for their area, and that the capacity to plan proactively and engage with communities is vital in delivering this vision, wellbeing, prosperity and a stronger sense of place. We would like to see the planning profession regain the status and prestige it deserves. **We recommend measures intended to address funding, promote skills and raise capacity, and to promote the concept of proactive planning at the local level.**

All too often, the link between people and place is lost in decision-making concerning the built environment. Places fail to function effectively for the people who live in them, and exert a long-term negative impact upon health and wellbeing. **We therefore recommend a number of strategies for improvement to streets, highways and the public realm, combined with additional measures intended to promote greater joint working between health and planning professionals and better local monitoring of health impacts resulting from the built environment.**

Building better places

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Why does the built environment matter?

1. The built environment affects us all. The planning, design, management and maintenance of the built environment, and its interaction with the natural environment, has a long-term impact upon people and communities. The quality of life, prosperity, health, wellbeing and happiness of an individual is heavily influenced by the place in which they live or work and, in this way, place shapes us. Striving to develop a built environment where all people can live well and make a full contribution to society should be a key objective for decision makers.
2. The shape, structure, look and feel of a place is largely a result of decisions taken regarding the built environment. These decisions can be taken by a multiplicity of actors including different government departments, local authorities, infrastructure providers, executive agencies and private individuals. This is a complex picture, within which integration can be difficult.
3. The scale and scope of the challenge facing decision makers is also intense. The 2014 Farrell Review of Architecture and the Built Environment highlighted concerns regarding fragmentation of policy making across the field, and skills challenges facing the major professions charged with crafting and caring for our built environment. Recent months have seen an intensification in national policy initiatives intended to address the housing crisis; they have also seen widespread and devastating flooding, along with frustration over delays to major infrastructure decisions.

The focus of the Committee

4. It is against this backdrop that we present this report, which is our attempt to identify a coherent set of responses to these challenges. On 11 June 2015 this Committee was appointed by the House “to consider the development and implementation of national policy for the built environment, and to make recommendations”.¹
5. The focus of our report is upon England, given the extent of devolution across the relevant policy areas. Examples of practice, both good and bad, from the other nations of the UK were, however, highlighted in the evidence that we received.
6. Local authorities play a crucial role in shaping the built environment of the communities within their boundaries. In undertaking our work we have, necessarily, been required to consider the impact of national policy upon local authorities and other sub-national agencies and organisations that play a part in developing and maintaining the built environment.
7. Provisions within the Housing and Planning Bill, currently before the House of Lords, could potentially have an impact upon some of the topics considered within this report. We were not established to scrutinise the Bill,

¹ HL Deb, 11 June 2015, [col 891](#)

and our report considers matters which range much wider than its contents. Our call for evidence was published three months before the Bill was first presented to Parliament. We did, though, receive evidence relevant to the ongoing discussions regarding the Bill's provisions, and have addressed much that is relevant to the Bill. We have made observations based on our evidence where appropriate.

Putting the built environment in context

8. Decisions concerning the built environment need to take account of, and respond to, a diverse range of contextual changes and constraints. Such challenges include, for example, the changing demography of the country, with projections suggesting that the UK population will increase to 74.3 million by mid-2039. This is an average annual growth rate of 0.6%, and represents a 9.7 million increase over a period of 25 years.² This extra population will need to be housed, will need places of work and leisure, and will place additional demands on land, space and infrastructure. The population will also be older; by mid-2039 one in 12 of the population is projected to be aged 80 or over.³ Built environment policy will need to account for these changes.
9. In addition, the built environment needs to respond to climate change. The Foresight Land Use Futures project concluded that:

“The potential role of land and land use in both climate change mitigation and adaptation will be profound. The move to a low-carbon economy will increasingly influence land use decisions, settlement patterns, the design of urban environments and choices on transport infrastructure”.⁴
10. The response to such challenges needs to take account of new technologies and the role that they might play in ensuring new developments are suitable and sustainable for the long-term. This is, however, only one part of the solution; 90% of the buildings and infrastructure that will exist in 30 years have already been built.⁵ The management, adaptation and utilisation of the existing built environment is also, therefore, of central importance.
11. The context for built environment decisions also varies across the country. The housing market, the demand for employment land, the extent of infrastructure provision and many other factors are subject to extensive regional variations. The circumstances that apply in London and the south east are typically different to those in, for example, the south west or north east. Policymakers—at the local and national level—must account for such differences and their implications for place.
12. We were told that the quality of local places could be defined in terms of five characteristics. They are:
 - Friendly (open, cherished and characterful);

2 Office for National Statistics, ‘What do the 2014-based national population projections show?’: (October 2015): <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/npp/national-population-projections/2014-based-projections/sty-1.html> [accessed on 5 February 2016]

3 Office for National Statistics, *National population projections, 2014-based statistical bulletin* (October 2015): http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_420462.pdf [accessed on 5 February 2016]

4 Government Office for Science, *Foresight Land Use Futures Project (2010) Executive summary*, p 13: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/288845/10-634-land-use-futures-summary.pdf [accessed on 4 February 2016]

5 Written evidence from Innovate UK ([BEN0147](#)) and Living Streets ([BEN0010](#))

- Fair (inclusive, healthy and low impact);
- Flourishing (adaptable, dynamic and diverse);
- Fun (vibrant, playful and stimulating); and
- Free (safe, accessible and democratic)⁶

Beauty within the built environment is also important; we were told that “the appreciation of beauty is something that is much valued by the public—in one poll, 81% of those surveyed responded that everyone should be able to experience beauty regularly, with only 3% disagreeing”.⁷

13. Places that are of poor quality, and that fail to function and perform effectively, can have multiple negative impacts upon people and communities. Box One sets out some of these implications.

Box 1: The multiple impacts of poor quality places

Our evidence has illustrated that a poor quality built environment and poor quality places can have significant negative impacts for health, wellbeing, prosperity and happiness.

We were told, for example, that loss of biodiversity and lack of access to green space can result in direct negative impacts on mental and physical health. Natural England has estimated that if each household in England was provided with equitable access to quality green space then savings of £2.1bn could be achieved every year in averted health costs. At present, the distribution of areas with high levels of social exclusion typically coincides with areas of sparse green space which is of limited quality.

The interaction between people and transport—particularly traffic—can have significant impacts. It is well known that congestion and heavy levels of traffic have negative health implications; Public Health England, in a 2014 report, estimated that 5.6% of all deaths in over-25s in England were linked to air pollution, although the figures vary considerably by region. Heavy levels of traffic also contribute to noise pollution; about 10% of the UK population is thought to live in areas where daytime sound levels exceed those which the World Health Organisation considers detrimental to health, and 34% in areas where night-time sound levels exceed 50 decibels. It is known that continuous internal noise of over 30 decibels disturbs sleep.

The quality of streets and the public realm is also important; poor quality pavements and dimly-lit streets make many older people less likely to venture out, contributing to social isolation. The estimated annual cost of falls among older people is £1 billion each year and almost two thirds of general and acute hospital beds are occupied by people aged over 65.

In addition, poor quality housing has an impact upon health and welfare. The Building Research Establishment has estimated that the total health cost to the NHS of poor housing is in the region of £1.4 to £2 billion per year for England. There is also an economic and environmental cost from poorly performing buildings; we were told studies had found that in many cases homes and offices were found to be consuming up to four times their designed energy usage.

6 Written evidence from the Place Alliance ([BEN0143](#))

7 Written evidence from ResPublica ([BEN0044](#))

All of these factors reinforce the need for the planning system—and the many other decision processes that help to form our built environment—to take account of the multiple ways in which decisions impact upon people and places.

Sources: Written evidence from Anchor ([BEN0026](#)), Canterbury Society ([BEN0107](#)), CIWEM ([BEN0078](#)), Innovate UK ([BEN0147](#)), Department for Communities and Local Government ([BEN0200](#)), Transport and Health Study Group ([BEN0094](#)), McCarthy and Stone ([BEN0218](#)), Public Health England ([BEN0186](#)), Parks Alliance ([BEN0133](#))

The work of the Committee

14. Over the course of our inquiry we received 187 submissions of written evidence and took oral evidence from 58 witnesses in 27 evidence sessions. The Committee also carried out two visits, to Birmingham and to Southwark, visiting a range of sites and meeting with local authority members, staff and university representatives. We are grateful to all those who gave up their time to make the visits worthwhile, and to all those who gave evidence to the Committee.
15. We are also grateful to Matthew Carmona, Professor of Planning and Urban Design at the Bartlett School of Planning, University College London, who served as the Committee's Specialist Adviser.
16. Our report concentrates on:
 - The built environment: recent trends and emerging challenges (Chapter Two);
 - Creating better places: design, quality and standards (Chapter Three);
 - Building for the long-term: sustainability and resilience (Chapter Four);
 - Delivering more housing (Chapter Five); and
 - Local leadership, delivery and skills (Chapter Six)

We make 66 conclusions and recommendations, which are summarised at the end of this report.

CHAPTER 2: THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT: RECENT TRENDS AND EMERGING CHALLENGES

17. The decision making which produces our built environment has many different dimensions. National government and local government play a range of roles across multiple policy areas, such as housing, highways, regeneration, environmental management and infrastructure. Across this complex field, the planning system plays a key role in managing land-use and providing a decision making structure within which acceptable development can take place.

The built environment and the planning system

18. The planning system plays a major part in shaping our built environment, through both the production and adoption of plans and the scrutiny and approval (or rejection) of proposals for development. The centrality of the plan-led system in forming and structuring the built environment was emphasised across much of the evidence that we received.
19. The modern history of town planning in England can be traced back to the late 1800s, with the development of enlightened model communities in Saltaire (1853), Bournville (1878) and Port Sunlight (1887). On a number of occasions we were reminded of the strong links between planning and public health in that period.⁸ This link was perhaps exemplified in the work of Sir Ebenezer Howard, who produced the first proposals for garden cities⁹ and was instrumental in the development and construction of Letchworth and Welwyn Garden Cities.
20. The Housing, Town Planning, Etc. Act 1909 was the first piece of legislation to reference town planning in its title. The legislation sought to improve urban housing through the preparation of ‘schemes’ by local authorities. It did not, however, fundamentally alter the preceding system of land-use control and management, which relied heavily upon bye-laws. The inter-war period saw intensive house-building, with 2.7 million homes built in England and Wales between 1930 and 1940. At the outbreak of the Second World War one-third of all the houses in England and Wales had been built since 1918.¹⁰ The pace of urbanisation in this period (particularly in south-east England) led to growing concerns over ‘urban sprawl’. Piecemeal legislative initiatives such as the Restriction of Ribbon Development Act 1935 sought to address this. It was not until the post-war period however, with the Town and Country Planning Act 1947, that the current approach to land-use management was first instituted.
21. The 1947 Act required local authorities to produce forward-looking policy documents to set out where and how land might be developed within their areas. It also required proposals for development (with limited exceptions) to secure planning permission from the relevant local authority. This plan-led approach, with its distinction between ‘plan making’ and ‘decision taking’, has been fundamental to the success of the planning system and has endured throughout a number of subsequent updates and changes to

8 See, for example, [Q.115](#) (Dr Hugh Ellis)

9 Ebenezer Howard, *To-morrow: A peaceful Path to Real Reform* (London: S. Sonnenschein & Co. Ltd, 1898)

10 Barry Cullingworth, Vincent Nadin *et al*, *Town and Country Planning in the UK*, 15th edition (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p 21

legislation. Plans produced by local authorities, along with decisions taken in accordance with policies in those plans, have served as major determinants of local built environments.

The balance between national and local

22. Local authorities play a key role in planning for, developing and managing the built environment within their administrative boundaries. Councils are responsible for developing a local plan, which sets out planning policies and allocates sites for different types of development. They are also responsible for development management, including the processing of planning applications and their determination, either by the Planning Committee or by officers with delegated responsibility.
23. There are, however, national elements to this system. Local plans must, prior to adoption, be able to demonstrate that they accord with national planning policy and guidance, issued by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. Such plans are publicly examined by the Planning Inspectorate for England and Wales, a quasi-judicial agency of the Department for Communities and Local Government. Applicants who are denied planning permission by the local authority also have the right to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate, which may overturn the decision.
24. In addition, the Government has long taken the lead in establishing and prioritising national infrastructure needs,¹¹ and the Planning Act 2008 introduced a simplified system of National Policy Statements for larger scale infrastructure projects. Certain decisions pertaining to nationally significant infrastructure are taken by the Secretary of State (see paragraph 46). There are also a wide range of executive agencies of national government, such as Historic England, Highways England and the Environment Agency, which are responsible for various aspects of the built environment and serve as statutory consultees for many types of planning application.
25. While local authorities therefore play a key role in shaping priorities and spatial developments within their boundaries, they undertake this work within a framework of policy established nationally and are required to adhere to the decisions of the national Planning Inspectorate. They are also required to work with and respond to various national level agencies, funders and decision makers. The built environment is a product of national and local priorities, policies, deliberations and decisions.

Recent policy changes and initiatives

26. The core principles of the planning system have, as detailed in paragraph 21, been long-established and have remained relatively unaltered. Successive governments have, though, sought to respond to challenges within the built environment by reforming planning policies, processes and structures. This has, for example, included the use of Development Corporations to drive regeneration in the 1980s, and the introduction of regional plans and strategies in the 2000s. The Coalition Government carried out a number of reforms to the planning system, with a move towards 'localism' placed at the heart of many of the initiatives. National planning policy was simplified and streamlined, regional plans, and their associated housing targets,

¹¹ See, for example, HM Treasury, *National Infrastructure Plan 2014* (December 2014): https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/381884/2902895_NationalInfrastructurePlan2014_acc.pdf [accessed on 27 January 2016]

were abolished and neighbourhood plans were introduced. The current Government offered its own assessment of the situation in 2010, and the approach subsequently taken:

“In 2010, the Government inherited a broken planning system which was centralised, bureaucratic and complex, and which alienated and disempowered local communities. Planning reforms delivered through legislation and the National Planning Policy Framework were essential to deliver the necessary homes and infrastructure by working with and not against local communities”.¹²

27. The following paragraphs briefly outline the principal reforms that took place from 2010 to 2015. They provide important context for much of the evidence that we received and many of the current challenges facing the built environment.

The National Planning Policy Framework

28. Prior to 2012, national planning policy guidance in England was contained in 25 Planning Policy Statements (often known as ‘PPSs’), each of which dealt with a specific area of policy.¹³ In March 2012 these were consolidated and simplified into a single 52 page document, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).¹⁴ The NPPF sets out broad national policies on themes such as housing, town centres, design, climate change and the Green Belt.
29. Central to the broad policy direction contained within the NPPF is the notion of sustainable development; development which effectively balances economic, social and environmental factors. Box Two describes the definition of sustainable development used in the NPPF.

Box 2: The NPPF, sustainable development and the roles of the planning system

The National Planning Policy Framework defines the dimensions of sustainable development as follows:

“There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

an economic role—contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

a social role—supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and

12 Written evidence from the Department for Communities and Local Government ([BEN0190](#))

13 Planning Policy Statement 3, for example, dealt with housing; PPS 5 concerned the historic environment.

14 Department for Communities and Local Government, *National Planning Policy Framework* (March 2012): https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf [accessed on 10 February 2016]

an environmental role—contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.”

Source: DCLG, *National Planning Policy Framework 2012*.

30. The NPPF also introduced a ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’. If the planning policies of a local authority are deemed to be out-of-date, or there is no appropriate local plan in place, it is presumed that a development proposal should go ahead as long as the applicant for planning permission can demonstrate that their proposals are in accordance with the NPPF. When initially proposed this was the source of some controversy, with bodies such as the National Trust and the Campaign to Protect Rural England concerned that it would favour economic and housing development over protection and preservation.¹⁵
31. In our call for evidence we sought views on the operation of the NPPF since its introduction in 2012, and the order of priority accorded to the various different policy strands contained within the NPPF. A number of issues were raised regarding both the policy content of the NPPF, and the way in which it has been implemented by local authorities and others. These matters are considered in subsequent chapters of this report.

The Localism Act 2011 and the duty to co-operate

32. Some issues relating to the built environment are too large and too strategic to be dealt with solely by individual local authorities. The response to such issues can, in some circumstances, merit action from national government—major transport infrastructure such as High Speed 2, for example. Other matters, such as regional transport or the delivery of housing across a wider housing market area need other, sub-national interventions.
33. Prior to 2011 a regional approach was taken to these matters. England was sub-divided into nine regions, each of which was tasked with producing a Regional Spatial Strategy.¹⁶ In London, this was led by the Mayor, who is required to produce a London Plan under the terms of the Greater London Authority Act 1999. Outside London, the work was led by the regional assemblies until 2009, when it was assumed by a partnership of local authority leaders and the regional development agency.
34. Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) were developed for each of the eight regions outside London, with initial proposals being subject to extensive consultation and, ultimately, examination in public by the Planning Inspectorate. They established a broad spatial plan for the region in question, addressed sub-regional issues which crossed administrative boundaries and set out a regional transport strategy as part of their wider approach. RSSs also established housing figures (‘targets’) for district and unitary

¹⁵ Damian Carrington, ‘Planning law changes: the crux is defining sustainable development’, *The Guardian* (26 July 2011): <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/damian-carrington-blog/2011/jul/26/planning-policy-development-green-belt> [accessed on 27 January 2016]

¹⁶ Outside London, these arrangements were introduced in 2004 and replaced earlier Structure Plans, which were based on County-level agreements between local authorities.

local authorities to take forward in their local plans; this element of the RSS provoked public opposition in some local areas.¹⁷

35. The Localism Act 2011 abolished the RSSs and, instead, sought to address 'larger than local' issues through the introduction of a new duty to co-operate.¹⁸ Local authorities are now required to co-operate with neighbouring authorities on cross-boundary issues when developing their local plans; the extent to which the duty to co-operate has been observed is tested by the Planning Inspectorate when examining local plan proposals.
36. We sought evidence on the practical effect of these changes, in addition to asking broader questions regarding the appropriate spatial levels at which decisions on the built environment should be taken. The final chapter of this report offers an assessment of the current situation.

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment

37. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) was an executive non-departmental public body which provided advice on architecture, design and public space in England. Established in 1999 as a response to the Urban Task Force, CABE was jointly funded by both the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). It disseminated best practice on design issues, and organised research and training, for local authorities, public sector agencies, central government, developers and the public at large. CABE was heavily involved in the development of national standards for the built environment, embodied in guidance such as Building for Life and Manual for Streets. It also provided a design review service, with expert panels scrutinising and suggesting refinements for nationally significant new developments.¹⁹
38. In April 2011 CABE closed, as a result of the decision to withdraw central Government funding in the 2010 Spending Review.²⁰ The design review function was merged into the Design Council, and continues to be offered on a commercial basis through Design Council CABE. The Design Council commissioned a study, chaired by Peter Bishop, a Director of Allies and Morrison Architects²¹, to review design support within the built environment following the closure of CABE.
39. The impact of the closure of CABE, and the loss of central funding and national leadership on some of the matters addressed by CABE, was highlighted in much of the evidence that we received. We also took oral evidence from the Design Council, and from Professor Bishop. These matters are considered in further detail in the next chapter of this report.

17 Communities and Local Government Committee, *Abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies: a planning vacuum* (Second Report of Session 2010–12, HC517)

18 A number of other corresponding changes to regional institutions were introduced in 2010–11, including the abolition of regional development agencies and Government Offices for the Regions. Structures and planning requirements in London were left largely unaltered.

19 This included funded regional review panels covering the whole of England.

20 Limited two-year transitional funding was provided to Design Council CABE in order to establish a design review function.

21 Now also Professor of Urban Design at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London.

The Farrell Review of Architecture and the Built Environment

40. In January 2013 Ed Vaizey MP, then Minister for Culture, Communications and the Creative Industries, asked the architect Sir Terry Farrell CBE to undertake a review of architecture and the built environment. The review was asked to focus on four areas:
 - The role of Government in promoting design quality;
 - The economic benefits of good architecture and design;
 - The issue of whether to preserve ‘cultural heritage’; and
 - Promoting education, outreach and skills.
41. Following extensive public consultation, Sir Terry reported in March 2014. A major theme of the published review was the lack of cohesion and continuity in the approach taken to the built environment by central Government. The review stated that “the built environment has continuously been divided between government departments” and contrasted this with “other government departments [that] have long-standing continuity”.²² The review identified five current Government departments (DCMS, DCLG, BIS, DEFRA and DfT) that currently held built environment responsibilities.
42. The review also called for a more holistic approach to built environment issues on the part of institutions and practitioners, suggesting a new emphasis on ‘place’. Sir Terry suggested that PLACE could be understood as a holistic acronym, representing:
 - Planning
 - Landscape
 - Architecture
 - Conservation
 - Engineering

He argued that design reviews and institutional relationships should be reconsidered to seek to take account of the requirement for joint working between and across these ‘PLACE’ disciplines.²³ The review also noted that the Government has a Chief Medical Officer, Chief Technology Officer, Chief Veterinary Officer, Chief Planner and Chief Construction Adviser, and called for the appointment of a Chief Architect to ensure proper representation of built environment professions.²⁴

43. The Government has yet to issue a formal response to the Farrell Review. DCMS told us that Mr Vaizey had “challenged the sector to prioritise those recommendations as the ones that it wishes to take forward and to take a key leadership role in the implementation”.²⁵ In October 2014 organisations and

22 The Farrell Review of Architecture and the Built Environment, *Our future in place* (March 2014) Executive Summary, p 7: http://www.farrellreview.co.uk/downloads/Executive%20Summary_The%20Farrell%20Review.pdf?t=1453912732 [accessed on 27 January 2016]. Hereafter referred to as ‘Farrell Review’.

23 *Ibid.* p 9

24 Farrell Review, Executive Summary, p 31

25 [Q 22](#) (Gill Graham)

individuals within the sector joined together to launch the Place Alliance, a voluntary movement focused on collaboratively addressing a range of the Farrell Review recommendations.²⁶

44. Max Farrell, who played a key role in the review, told us that his initial response “was one of slight disappointment that there had not been a formal response from the Government when it was a Government-commissioned review, but also after all the extensive consultation that had taken place throughout the country”.²⁷ Themes arising from the Farrell Review were featured and considered in the evidence that we heard.

Government initiatives since May 2015

The National Infrastructure Commission

45. The National Planning Policy Framework states that local authorities, in drawing up their plans, should include strategic policies to “deliver the provision of infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat)”.²⁸
46. Beyond the local level, decisions on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects²⁹ (NSIPs) are taken at the national level, where the Secretary of State makes a decision on whether or not to award a Development Consent Order, which obviates the need for a range of further consents (such as planning permission and compulsory purchase orders). These decisions are made in accordance with policy contained in a number of National Policy Statements dealing with different types of infrastructure.
47. Business groups have long been critical of the pace of infrastructure delivery in the UK. In a submission before the 2014 Autumn Statement, the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) stated that “the UK is trailing the rest of the world in infrastructure development”, highlighting the World Economic Forum’s 2014–15 Global Competitiveness report, which ranked the UK 27th for overall quality of infrastructure—the second lowest in the G7. The BCC went on to state that:

“Current delays in the planning process of infrastructure projects are costing taxpayers. Delays to the construction of the A12 Hackney to M11 link road are estimated to have increased the cost of the project by 100%. In 1994, the cost of building Crossrail was expected to be £1.55bn, but it was subject to delays as opponents questioned the business case. When construction finally commenced in 2009, the cost had increased to £14.8bn”.³⁰

26 Written evidence from the Place Alliance ([BEN0143](#))

27 [Q 29](#) (Max Farrell)

28 Department for Communities and Local Government, *National Planning Policy Framework* (March 2012), para 156: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf [accessed on 27 January 2016]

29 Large-scale projects often relating to energy, transport or waste.

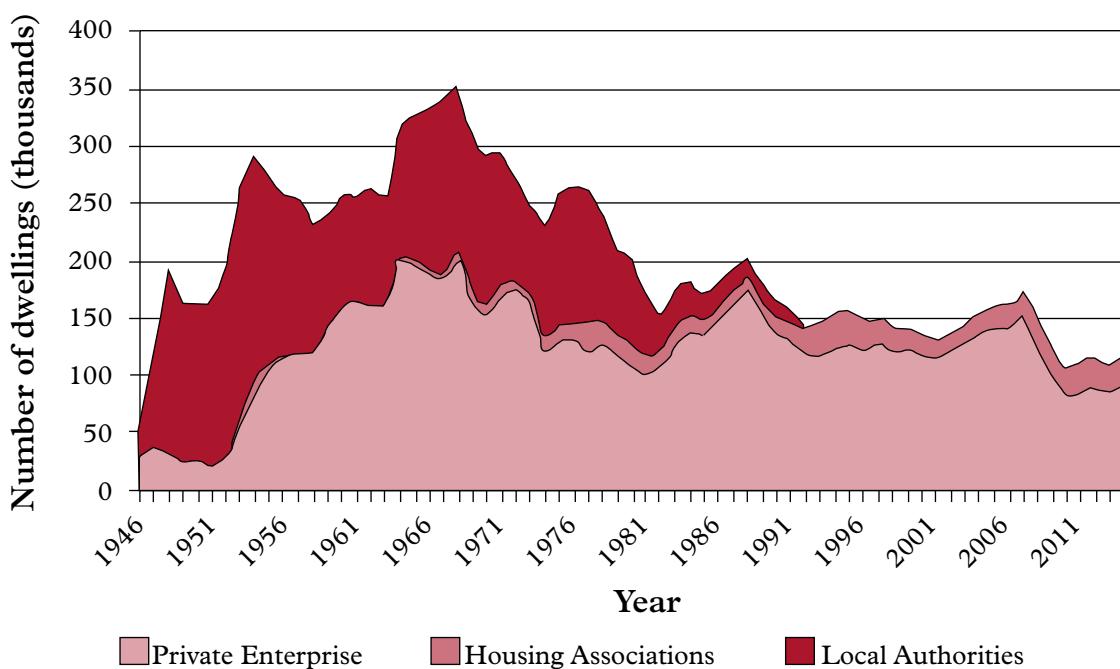
30 British Chambers of Commerce, ‘Submission to 2014 Autumn Statement’ (November 2014): <http://www.britishchambers.org.uk/press-office/press-releases/use-autumn-statement-to-speed-up-infrastructure-projects,-says-bcc.html> [accessed on 27 January 2016]

48. In a bid to address these problems, the Government announced the appointment of a National Infrastructure Commission in October 2015.³¹ The Commission is intended to be an independent body which will look broadly at long-term infrastructure needs and provide impartial advice to ministers and Parliament. It will be asked to research, analyse and publish an assessment of major infrastructure needs and priorities for the UK every five years. It will, in the early part of its operation, focus on northern transport connectivity, London transport and energy efficiency. A consultation on the structure and organisation of the Commission began in January 2016.³²

Responding to the housing crisis

49. House building in England has been on a long-term downward trend since the late 1960s; post-war delivery peaked in 1968 when 352,540 dwellings were completed.³³ The figure for the 12 months up to the end of March 2015 is 124,490, which represents a slight recovery from the post-war low experienced in 2010/11 (107,870).³⁴ Figure One provides an illustration of the long-term trend in housing completions in England:

Figure 1: House building, permanent dwellings completed by tenure, England, 1946–2014



Source: DCLG, *House Building: September Quarter 2015, England (November 2015)*

31 National Infrastructure Commission, 'Chancellor announces major plan to get Britain building' (October 2015): <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-announces-major-plan-to-get-britain-building> [accessed on 27 January 2016]

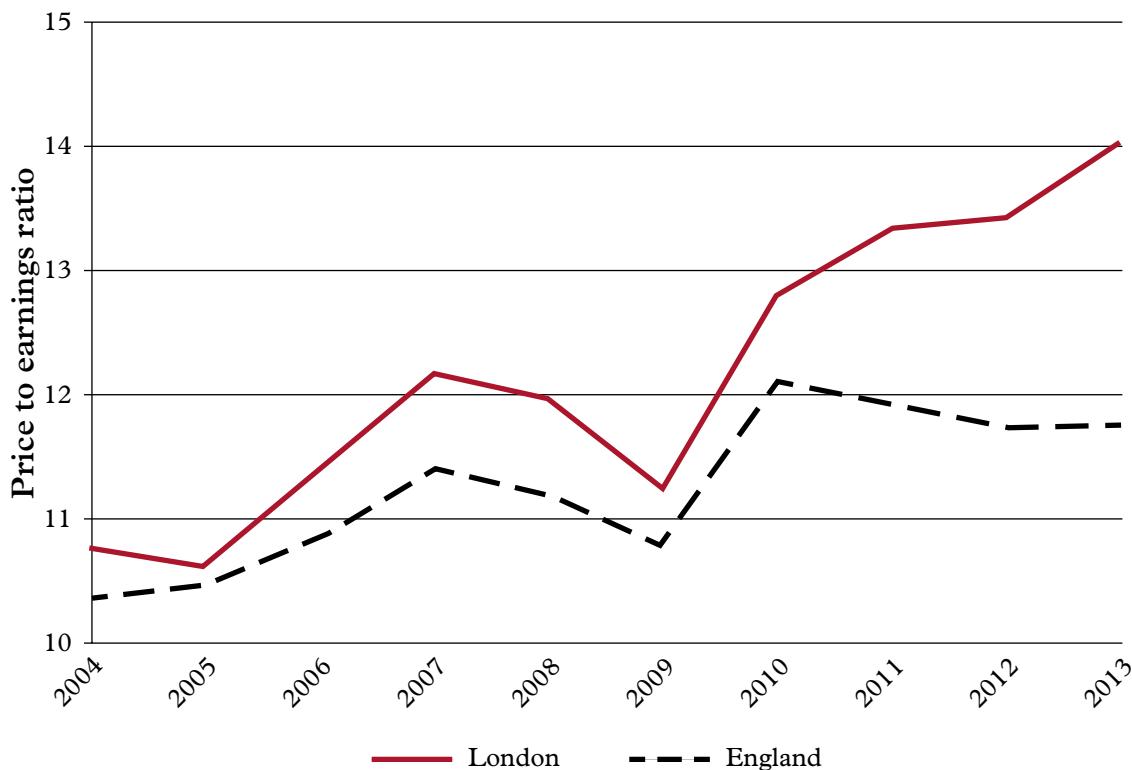
32 HM Treasury, *National Infrastructure Commission: consultation*, Cm 9182, January 2016: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/489950/National_infrastructure_commission_jan_16_print_final.pdf [accessed on 27 January 2016]

33 Department for Communities and Local Government, *House building: September Quarter 2015, England (November 2015)*: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/477823/House_Building_Release_Sep_Qtr_2015.pdf [accessed on 4 February 2016]

34 Figures taken from Department for Communities and Local Government, *House building: September Quarter 2015, England (November 2015)*: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/477823/House_Building_Release_Sep_Qtr_2015.pdf [accessed on 4 February 2016] and from Office for National Statistics, *Trends in the United Kingdom Housing Market, 2014* (September 2014): http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171766_373513.pdf [accessed on 27 January 2016].

50. The long-term decline in completions, coupled with increases in population, is having an effect on affordability. In 2013 the average house price to annual earnings ratio in London stood at 14:1; across England as a whole the ratio was just under 12:1.³⁵ Such ratios are commonly considered to be unaffordable to most, and particularly to first-time buyers; many mortgage lenders will now only supply loans up to a maximum value of four and a half times annual earnings.³⁶

Figure 2: House price to earnings ratios, England and London, 2004–2013



Source: Adapted from ONS, *Trends in the United Kingdom Housing Market* (September 2014)

51. A pledge to build 200,000 starter homes³⁷ over the lifetime of the Parliament was included in the Conservative party manifesto for the 2015 General Election. Since coming to office, the Government has sought to take steps to achieve this objective, but has also intensified its activity and focus on housing supply more generally. In the Productivity Plan, published by HM Treasury in July 2015, the Government stated:

“The UK has been incapable of building enough homes to keep up with growing demand. This harms productivity and restricts labour market flexibility, and it frustrates the ambitions of thousands of people who would like to own their own home”.³⁸

35 Office for National Statistics, *Trends in the United Kingdom Housing Market, 2014* (September 2014): http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171766_373513.pdf [accessed on 27 January 2016].

36 Nicole Blackmore, ‘Another mortgage lender reduces maximum loan size’, *Daily Telegraph* (3 March 2015): <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/personalfinance/borrowing/mortgages/11445090/Another-mortgage-lender-reduces-maximum-loan-size.html> [accessed on 27 January 2016].

37 See Chapter Five for more discussion of starter homes.

38 HM Treasury, *Fixing the foundations: creating a more prosperous nation*, Cm 9098, July 2015, p 43: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/443898/Productivity_Plan_web.pdf [accessed on 27 January 2016].

52. The Productivity Plan goes on to set out a number of steps that the Government will take to seek to increase housing supply. These include:
- The intensification of housing densities around commuter hubs;
 - The introduction of brownfield land registers and “automatic permission in principle on brownfield sites identified on those registers”;
 - Reforms to compulsory purchase arrangements; and
 - Initiatives intended to speed up local plan-making.

These measures were referenced in some of the evidence that we received; many have also influenced the content of the Housing and Planning Bill. We give further detailed consideration to housing supply issues in Chapter Five of this report.

Reducing regulation and increasing speed

53. As part of its wider effort to increase housing supply the Government has also committed to reducing the amount and extent of regulation facing housebuilders. This was emphasised in the Productivity Plan, which stated that the Government did not intend to proceed with the zero carbon allowable solutions carbon offsetting scheme, or an increase in on-site energy efficiency standards that had been proposed for 2016.³⁹
54. Such moves were part of a wider trend towards deregulation within planning and built environment policy. In October 2015 the Government announced permanent changes to permitted development rights, making it easier to convert office properties into housing, without a requirement for full planning permission.⁴⁰ Changes have also been made to planning practice guidance to reduce the affordable housing requirements placed on developers.⁴¹ The proposals for ‘permission in principle’ contained in the Housing and Planning Bill are intended to reduce the burdens placed upon developers at the planning application stage, by identifying and confirming from the outset the intended use for the land in question.
55. The Minister of State for Housing and Planning, Brandon Lewis MP, told us about his emphasis on speeding up the process:

“We want to look again at the planning process, not policy but the planning process, because one of the other challenges is that you can get planning permission but then spend a year or two discussing and debating a Section 106 agreement, pre-start conditions and various other bits and pieces. We need to look at condensing that so we still get the right result but do it without too much slowing down of bureaucracy ... We are not going to be adding any more bureaucracy or red tape to the process. If anything, I want to try and speed it up”.⁴²

39 HM Treasury, *Fixing the foundations: creating a more prosperous nation*, Cm 9098, July 2015, p 46: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/443898/Productivity_Plan_web.pdf [accessed on 27 January 2016]

40 Department for Communities and Local Government, ‘Thousands more homes to be developed in planning shake-up’ (13 October 2015): <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-more-homes-to-be-developed-in-planning-shake-up> [accessed on 27 January 2016]

41 Written evidence from London Borough of Islington (BEN0183)

42 [QQ 333-334](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/443898/Productivity_Plan_web.pdf) (Brandon Lewis MP)

56. Both the property development industry and the National Housing Federation noted that the requirement to reach agreement on Section 106 planning obligations can slow down the commencement of building on sites with planning permission.⁴³ The National Housing Federation recommended that “draft Section 106 agreements should be submitted as part of the pre-application process, frontloading the negotiations.” It also recommended a dispute resolution mechanism to speed up negotiations where parties do not agree.⁴⁴

Concluding remarks

57. The Committee has undertaken its work at a time when there is great deal of change taking place to the planning system, and to the ways in which major built environment challenges are considered and addressed. Over the course of our work, the Government has intensified its focus on increasing and speeding up the supply of housing. We have sought, however, to focus not only upon much-needed initiatives to increase the overall quantity of housing, but also to consider the need for creating better places, and for quality and high standards in new provision. Housing has dominated the discourse in this field in recent months; while housing is an issue of central importance, it is only one element of the built environment. We have tried to give equal weight to the many other components of the built environment which help to place housing in its proper context. We have sought to take account of interactions and relationships across the many different types of land-use, places and spaces that constitute the ‘built environment’. In addition, we have based our approach on the longer-term; decisions taken regarding the built environment have long-term impacts and implications which can be neglected in the drive to respond to short-term priorities.
58. **We broadly welcome and support the Government’s focus on increasing and speeding up the supply of housing. We discuss specific initiatives and proposals intended to further this aim in Chapter Five of this report.**
59. **We are concerned, however, that the focus on quantity of housing must not work to the long-term detriment of planning for the whole of the built environment and the delivery of high quality development. Moves towards deregulation of the planning system, coupled with an intensification of housebuilding, have the potential to exert significant enduring impacts upon the built environment in England. A consistent theme across much of the remainder of this report is the need for quality, as well as quantity, and the need to think about long-term implications for ‘place’, as well as the important and more immediate need for more housing.**

43 [Q 102](#) (Chris Carr), [Q 185](#) (Adrian Penfold)

44 Written evidence from National Housing Federation ([BEN0152](#))

CHAPTER 3: CREATING BETTER PLACES: DESIGN, QUALITY AND STANDARDS

60. The UK is home to some of the world's leading architects and designers, and to some of the leading educational institutions in the field. We were told that UK schools of architecture were "probably the best in the world" and that they attracted students from across the globe.⁴⁵ Across all continents, British architects have often been commissioned for significant, landmark projects that deliver an enduring legacy.
61. Why, then, is the standard of so much development in England so bad? While one-off (typically high profile) examples of exceptional practice exist, much of the recent development that shapes our towns and cities has often been of a quality that is too low. We were told, for example, that "the English will spare no expense to get something on the cheap".⁴⁶ Prof Peter Bishop suggested that:

"In particular provincial towns and the suburbs, what you see is largely 25 or 30 years old or less and, generally speaking, of quite extraordinary poor quality, and uncoordinated as well".⁴⁷

This view was echoed by Sunand Prasad, who told us:

"We have very little to be proud of in the mass housing built even in the past 30 years. There are very few places of which you can genuinely say of them that the results of the planning system, the architecture and the patronage, whether public or private, are something to be proud of, to leave behind as heritage".⁴⁸

62. This was a consistent theme throughout much of the evidence that we heard; many witnesses told us that the design, quality and standard of much recent development is simply not good enough. The coordination between different aspects of the built environment is, in places, sadly lacking.
63. At the heart of these considerations is the relationship between places and people; DCLG told us that public recognition of good design, and better design standards more generally, were important factors in encouraging community acceptance of new development.⁴⁹ Those built environments that suffer from poor design standards and a lack of cohesion can, of course, have the opposite effect. A poor built environment, moreover, has the potential to exert significant long-term negative impacts on the health, safety, prosperity and wellbeing of those who live and work within it.⁵⁰
64. **We believe that, as a nation, we need to recognise the power of place and to be much more ambitious when planning, designing, constructing and maintaining our built environment. Failure to do so will result in significant long-term costs. We now set out some of the important measures that need to be taken to achieve this aim.**

45 [Q 72](#) (Sunand Prasad)

46 [Q 309](#) (Simon Foxell, quoting the architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner).

47 [Q 37](#) (Prof Peter Bishop)

48 [Q 65](#) (Sunand Prasad)

49 [Q 15](#) (Steve Quartermain)

50 The relationship between the built environment and health was consistently emphasised in the evidence that we received including, for example, from Public Health England ([BEN0186](#)).

The need for national leadership and co-ordination

Joining-up Government and providing leadership

65. We believe that the leadership required to deliver an improvement to our built environment can only come from Government. There are, however, a number of challenges that first need to be overcome.
66. As detailed in Chapter Two, policy towards the built environment in England is fragmented across a number of Government departments. The Farrell Review highlighted five departments that currently play a key role:
 - DCLG is the lead department for planning, housing and (since March 2015) architecture.
 - DCMS has responsibility for heritage.
 - BIS is responsible for the construction industry.
 - DEFRA has responsibility for environmental protection, flooding and related matters.
 - The Department for Transport plays a key role in infrastructure provision.
67. Two further departments could be added to this list. Much significant recent policy concerning the built environment—such as the Fixing the Foundations paper—has emerged from HM Treasury, and the Treasury operates numerous economic levers that can affect the built environment. In addition, the Department of Health plays a key role in addressing the burden of poorly performing built environments. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) told us that the Department of Health should be more closely involved in decision making “to improve the effects of policies for the built environment on other areas of public policy”.⁵¹
68. The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) told us that they could “find no evidence of an overall coordination of policy on the built environment” and that “on the contrary, relationships between some Government departments on key policies such as building standards, renewable energy and green infrastructure appear to be strained or absent”.⁵² A lack of co-ordination across the many Government departments involved in the built environment was a consistent theme in evidence, with witnesses identifying the difficulties and confusion caused by a lack of integration.⁵³
69. We considered possible solutions to this situation. Professor Mark Tewdwr-Jones, of Newcastle University, told us that: “This can be co-ordinated only by the Cabinet Office. It cannot be coordinated by different spending departments; we need a synoptic vision of the spatial impact of their different policies”.⁵⁴ Dr Tim Brown, of De Montfort University, suggested that the Cabinet Office should publish guidance on areas of built environment policy

⁵¹ Written evidence from RICS ([BEN0185](#))

⁵² Written evidence from TCPA ([BEN0171](#))

⁵³ Including written evidence from RIBA ([BEN0157](#)), RTPI ([BEN0126](#)), Mr John Preston ([BEN0100](#)), Hollingbourne Parish Council ([BEN0175](#)), the Woodland Trust ([BEN0130](#)) and the UK Indoor Environments Group ([BEN0112](#)).

⁵⁴ [Q 4](#) (Prof Mark Tewdwr-Jones)

overlap between departments, setting out how such issues are dealt with within Government.⁵⁵

70. A key recommendation of the 2014 Farrell Review was the appointment of a Chief Architect, “reporting to DCMS and DCLG at the highest level”. The review suggested that the role “should be similar to the Chief Planner and Chief Construction Adviser, connecting up government departments and maintaining high standards and consistency of approach”.⁵⁶
71. We considered the proposal for a Chief Architect with a number of our witnesses. Former RIBA President Sunand Prasad told us that he was in favour of such an appointment, based within DCLG and tasked with “joining up with planners and constructors”.⁵⁷ Quinlan Terry CBE told us that, as an architect, he was against the proposal:

“If you made me chief architect I would have a field day; if you made Richard Rogers chief architect he would do the complete opposite. Do not trust architects, because they are very opinionated people”.⁵⁸

72. RIBA told the Committee that they instead favoured an appointment with a focus that was not restricted solely to architecture, and recommended the creation of a Chief Built Environment Adviser role. It was suggested that such a person could co-ordinate policy across the relevant departments, pursue a joined-up approach to procurement, prevent contradictions in policy between different departments and lead the country by example in good practice in design.⁵⁹ Evidence from the RICS, the Edge and the Urban Design Group all supported the call for a Chief Built Environment Adviser.⁶⁰ The Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers also supported the call for a Chief Built Environment Adviser, suggesting that the arrangements for such a post should be similar to the Chief Scientific Adviser model.⁶¹
73. In addition to co-ordination across Government, however, there is a further capacity issue at the national level. There had, since the establishment of the Royal Fine Art Commission in 1924, been a body in place to provide advice to the Government on matters of design, architecture and public space. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), established in 1999, was the successor to the Royal Fine Art Commission. By June 2010 CABE employed over 120 staff, had a network of around 400 design advisers and was in receipt of over £11million in total funding from DCMS and DCLG.⁶² The Commission was an influencer, rather than a regulator; its funding equated to only around 0.02% of the £60,000 million spent on new construction in England each year.⁶³ Both CABE and the Royal Fine Art Commission worked at arms-length from Government, operating

55 Written evidence from Dr Tim Brown ([BEN0088](#))

56 Farrell Review of Architecture and the Built Environment, *Report on consultation*, p 149: <http://www.farrellreview.co.uk/downloads/The%20Farrell%20Review.pdf?t=1453994229> [accessed on 28 January 2016]

57 [Q 68](#) (Sunand Prasad)

58 [Q 68](#) (Quinlan Terry)

59 [Q 146](#) (Ruth Reed)

60 [Q 146](#) (David Henry), Q [326](#) (Simon Foxell and Barry Sellers)

61 Written evidence from the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers ([BEN0102](#)).

62 Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, *Annual report and accounts, 2009/10* HC Paper 56 (July 2010) pp 4–11: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/247803/0056.pdf [accessed on 28 January 2016]

63 Matthew Carmona, ‘CABE RIP: long live CABE’, *Town and Country Planning* (May 2011), pp 236–239

with a strong degree of independence and capable of providing challenge where necessary.

74. The CABE Annual Report for 2009/10 states that the organisation undertook 324 design reviews, delivered training on design to 82% of local authorities and supported 40 local public space projects.⁶⁴ CABE was wound up in April 2011, with some transitional funding provided to Design Council CABE to establish a commercial design review function. Current design review arrangements are considered in more detail later in this chapter.
75. We were told that the demise of CABE had marked the withdrawal of Government from a leading role in the design and place agenda. The Institute for Historic Building Conservation told us that a new body to replace CABE was urgently needed.⁶⁵ Urban Vision Enterprise emphasised the economic rationale for investing in ‘place’, stating that the decision to cut CABE funding was “due to a failure to appreciate the relationship between quality of place and an areas ability to attract investment, employment, population and visitors”.⁶⁶ MADE West Midlands suggested that:

“There has been a loss of leadership since the old CABE disappeared. In our view, out in the field, away from the architectural press and the sort of discussions that go on at high level, what is missed most about CABE is that leadership: the bringing together of knowledge, the publications, and the guidance and training that used to come out, rather than design review”.⁶⁷

76. Professor Peter Bishop suggested that the loss of CABE had left gaps, noting that it had served as a central repository of information and, also, as a body that could undertake independent research on behalf of Government.⁶⁸ Individuals and organisations within the sector have subsequently sought to collaborate to fill these gaps and, also, to take ownership of the place quality agenda, as was emphasised in evidence from the Place Alliance.⁶⁹
77. We were told that the loss of CABE could be addressed through the establishment of a small, strategic, successor body, under the funding of one Government department. It was suggested that the body could provide advice to Government, act as a focus for continuing debate on improving the built environment and commission independent research on specific built environment issues.⁷⁰ The Edge suggested the following priorities for such a team:

“They need mainly to commission a certain amount of good guidance that aids the sector ... During CABE’s most successful years, it produced the most amazing amount of very useful guidance for all parts of the sector which is still relied on”.⁷¹

64 Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, *Annual report and accounts, 2009/10* HC Paper 56 (July 2010) pp 7–11: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/247803/0056.pdf [accessed on 28 January 2016]

65 Written evidence from IHBC ([BEN0160](#))

66 Written evidence from Urban Vision Enterprise ([BEN0026](#))

67 [Q 85](#) (David Tittle)

68 [Q 32](#) (Prof Peter Bishop)

69 Written evidence from the Place Alliance ([BEN0143](#))

70 Written evidence from Professor Peter Bishop ([BEN0011](#))

71 [Q 328](#) (Simon Foxell)

78. **There are two critical elements currently missing in national policy for the built environment. There is an urgent need for much greater co-ordination and integration across the multiple Government departments that effect and respond to the built environment. There is also a need for a national organisation with the capacity to undertake research, develop guidance and build the networks necessary to raise standards and drive better performance. Solving the first of these problems requires access to Government, while delivering against the second objective requires a degree of independence from it.**
79. We believe it is helpful at this point to draw a comparison with the work of the Government Chief Scientific Adviser (GCSA) and the Government Office for Science, both of which play an important role in co-ordinating science policy across Government, researching and promulgating good practice and developing and leading networks within and outside Government.
80. The GCSA has a close working relationship with the Science Minister, and engages directly with Secretaries of State, other ministers and permanent secretaries across Whitehall. He reports, however, to the Cabinet Secretary, which enhances his capacity to operate with a degree of latitude and independence. The GCSA leads the Government Office for Science, which is physically located within the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, but is autonomous from it.⁷²
81. The GCSA chairs networks which promote scientific evidence and research across Government, and develops guidance to ensure a coherent cross-Whitehall approach to science matters. The Government Office for Science is responsible for major programmes of work—such as the Foresight series of reports—which have drawn upon extensive nationwide networks to provide evidence-led, independent analysis of some of the major challenges facing the country. Through engagement with the Global Science and Innovation Network the GCSA also has access to leading international research and best practice.
82. This model is helpful, as it combines access to Government with access to expertise and networks of knowledge, both at home and abroad. The model is able to deliver influential horizon scanning work, develop good practice and drive high standards. This work is all carried out within a framework which provides leverage but respects the need for independence where necessary.
83. **The built environment cuts across a number of central Government departments and our evidence has demonstrated that integration of policy is sadly lacking. We believe that the Cabinet Office should initially play a greater role in addressing policy coordination in this field, by reviewing areas of policy overlap between different departments and publishing definitive guidance on the division of responsibilities.**
84. **To deliver longer-term coordination we recommend the appointment of a Chief Built Environment Adviser, a recognised expert appointed from within the sector to lead this work at an official level. The role of the Chief Built Environment Adviser would be to co-ordinate**

⁷² Government Office for Science, *Guide to the work of the Chief Scientific Advisers* (February 2015): https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/426307/15-2-chief-scientific-advisers-and-officials-introduction.pdf [accessed on 6 February 2016]

relevant policy across central Government departments, to act as a champion for higher standards and to promote good practice across and beyond Government. The status and reporting arrangements of the Chief Built Environment Adviser should be broadly equivalent to those of the Government Chief Scientific Adviser.

85. **In addition, we believe that some of the key functions carried out by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment have been lost. This is to the long-term detriment of the built environment. We recommend that the Government should establish and fund a small, strategic unit to conduct, commission and disseminate research and guidance on architecture and design within the built environment. This new unit should be led by the Chief Built Environment Adviser, and should have access to expertise, research and insight from across and beyond Government.**
86. **We recommend that the Chief Built Environment Adviser should produce an annual report providing high-level monitoring of quality and delivery within the built environment, and establishing priorities for research, policy and action. The annual reports should be laid before Parliament as Command Papers.**

Government strategy on architecture and construction

87. There is, at present, no high-level statement of policy for architecture in England. Northern Ireland published an architecture policy in 2006, and Scotland published its own policy—on architecture and place—in 2013.⁷³ These policies set out broad principles of good design and highlight the qualities of successful places; they do not provide prescriptive, ‘top down’ instruction on detailed design criteria. They express aspirations for the built environment, identify good practice and its benefits and highlight the long-term value—in economic, cultural, social and health terms—of designing good places.
88. We were told that RIBA had previously called for the adoption of a national architecture policy.⁷⁴ Many European countries have such a policy, setting out a vision intended to deliver higher standards of new development. In *Building a Better Britain*, published in 2014, RIBA highlighted the success of architecture policies in Denmark and other north-western European countries. They argued that:

“We need a similar, long-term political commitment to the improvement of our towns and cities, buildings and public spaces, communities and businesses by recognising the added value of design quality in delivering sustainable and resilient places that people can be proud of”.⁷⁵

89. **We believe it is important that the Government sets high standards for the built environment, and provides the vision, aspiration and**

⁷³ Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, *Architecture and the Built Environment for Northern Ireland* (June 2006): <https://www.dcalni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dcal/dcal-architecture-and-built-environment-policy-document.pdf> [accessed on 28 January 2016] Scottish Government, *Creating places: A policy statement on architecture and place for Scotland* (June 2013): <http://www.gov.scot/resource/0042/00425496.pdf> [accessed on 27 January 2016]

⁷⁴ Q 70 (Sunand Prasad)

⁷⁵ Royal Institute of British Architects, *Building a Better Britain: A vision for the next Government* (July 2014) p 9: <https://www.architecture.com/RIBA/Campaigns%20and%20issues/Assets/Files/BuildingABetterBritain.pdf> [accessed on 27 January 2016]

leadership to enable others to deliver against those standards. We recommend that the Government should publish, consult on and adopt a high level policy for architecture and place quality in England. Following adoption, the policy should be monitored and reviewed at regular intervals. Publication of this policy should be an early priority for the Chief Built Environment Adviser who should, thereafter, keep it under review.

90. The Government is one of the most important built environment ‘clients’ in the country. Its approach to construction procurement is set out in the Government Construction Strategy, last published in 2011.⁷⁶ A number of spending departments, and major institutions such as the NHS, play a key part in the development of large sites and built environment projects. We were told⁷⁷ that the Department of Health, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Justice and Department of Education “spend billions of pounds on construction” and that this could amount to a total of around one quarter of all UK expenditure on construction.⁷⁸ In Quarter 2 of 2015 the public sector accounted for £5.8 billion (26%) of construction orders.⁷⁹
91. The Government, therefore, has the potential to lead from the front on construction standards, and to set a high standard for new developments. Sunand Prasad suggested that the Government should revise its approach to construction procurement and that “if every one of those projects set out to be exemplary in the way they are commissioned and the client side is handled, government would revolutionise our world. It would have a knock-on effect and set such high standards”.⁸⁰ The Construction Industry Council supported this, calling for a cross-Government drive towards new, outcome-led procurement models with a clear business case for value.⁸¹
92. It is important to note, in this context, that ‘value-for-money’ does not always equate to choosing the cheapest option. A 2012 report from the All Party Parliamentary Group for Excellence in the Built Environment recommended that public sector construction projects should be procured on the basis of integrated teams (designers, contractors and asset managers). The report stated that:

“Selection of an integrated team must not be made on the basis of lowest price but ... on the basis of a balanced scorecard; that is, marking the bid against specified criteria, of which sustainability should be one”.⁸²
93. **We believe that the Government, and other major public sector commissioners, must lead by example and set the highest possible standards in major construction projects. We recommend that the Government Construction Strategy should be reviewed. This review should acknowledge and emphasise the Government’s leadership**

76 Cabinet Office, *Government Construction Strategy* (May 2011): https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61152/Government-Construction-Strategy_0.pdf [accessed on 28 January 2016]

77 Written evidence from the Chartered Institute of Building ([BEN0043](#))

78 [Q 69](#) (Sunand Prasad)

79 House of Commons Library, Construction industry: statistics and policy, Standard note, [SN01432](#), October 2015

80 [Q 69](#) (Sunand Prasad)

81 Written evidence from the Construction Industry Council ([BEN0071](#))

82 All Party Group for Excellence in the Built Environment, *A better deal for public building* (September 2012): <http://cic.org.uk/admin/resources/appg-for-ebe-report-1.pdf> [accessed on 4 February 2016]

role in these matters, and set out measures and mechanisms for implementing high standards of public procurement in construction projects, seeking to balance place and quality with value.

Places and people

Health and the built environment

94. The places that we create have a profound effect upon the quality of life, behaviours and experiences of people who live and work in them. In recent years policy and guidance has acknowledged this through initiatives and standards such as Secured by Design and Building for Life.
95. Links between the built environment and healthy lifestyles and outcomes were emphasised throughout our inquiry. Public Health England told us that:

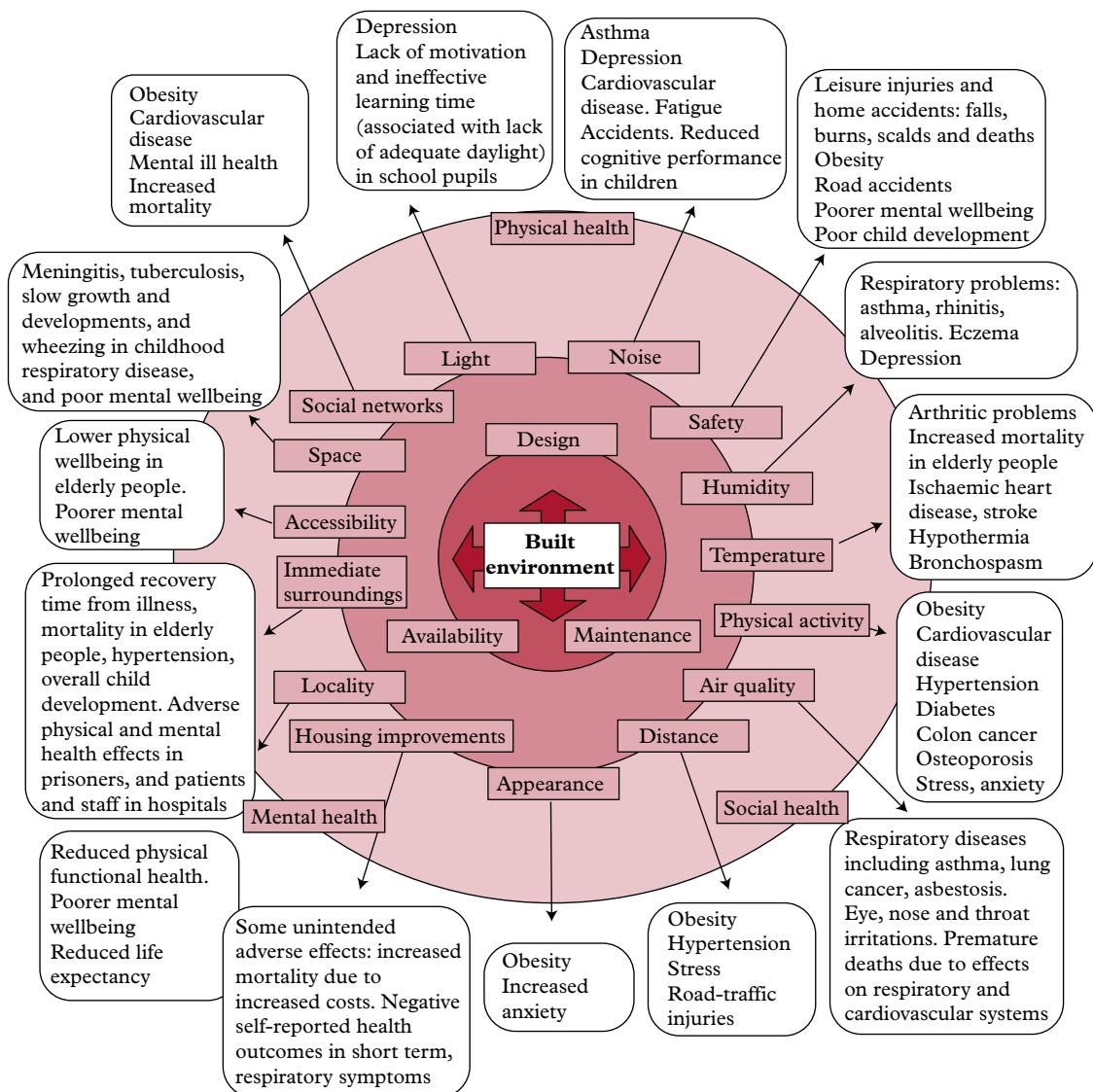
“Some of the UK’s most pressing health challenges—such as obesity, mental health issues, physical inactivity and the needs of an ageing population—can all be influenced by the quality of our built and natural environment”.⁸³

They went on to state that the estimated cost of physical inactivity was £7.4 billion per year, and the cost to the NHS of obesity was £5.1 billion.⁸⁴ There is, therefore, a strong economic rationale for addressing obesogenic and poorly planned environments. The economic case does not, furthermore, rest solely on health benefits; previous DCLG research has suggested that improved design standards could save £530 million per annum through increasing community cohesion and reducing crime.⁸⁵

83 Written evidence from Public Health England ([BEN0186](#))

84 *Ibid.*

85 *Ibid.*

Figure 3: The impacts of the built environment on health

Source: Written evidence from Public Health England (which itself cites Rao *et al*, 2007) ([BEN0186](#))

96. Recent years have seen improved recognition of the relationship between planning, the built environment and health. The National Planning Policy Framework included a dedicated section setting out health policies for application in local planning documents. Witnesses welcomed this⁸⁶; there were concerns, however, that decisions did not always take full account of health impacts.⁸⁷ The Landscape Institute suggested that:

“Decision makers and developers rarely consider adequately the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it ... all parties ... are generally unaware of the potential impacts of the built environment on health and wellbeing”.⁸⁸

86 Written evidence from PATTH ([BEN0082](#))

87 We received a small number of written evidence submissions highlighting concerns regarding the matter of electro-sensitivity and the health impacts of wireless technologies and electro-magnetic fields. Within a time-limited inquiry we did not have sufficient time available to pursue, in detail, this specific health relationship with the built environment. The Chairman has, however, written to the Chairman of the House of Commons Health Committee, and to Public Health England, to notify them of these concerns. Written evidence from Electrosensitivity UK ([BEN0092](#)), Dr Isaac Jamieson & Dr Erica Mallory-Blythe ([BEN0216](#)), C Prosser ([BEN0210](#)), Stop Smart Meters UK ([BEN0166](#)) and Sue Thompson ([BEN0031](#)).

88 Written evidence from the Landscape Institute ([BEN0136](#))

97. The devolution of public health responsibilities to local authorities should, in theory, hold the potential to deliver greater linkages between local planning decisions and health outcomes. Amongst many other relevant functions, local authorities have key planning responsibilities and also play a key role in housing, which is at the frontline of public health. We were told that, while many local authorities had made good progress on developing the appropriate links, there were others that needed to improve.⁸⁹ It was suggested that there was a large cultural gap between planning and public health professions.⁹⁰ We consider that this gap would need to be addressed to allow progress.

98. The National Housing Federation suggested that this gap could be bridged, in part, by involving those tasked with developing Health and Wellbeing Strategies and Joint Strategic Needs Assessments in the production of key planning documents.⁹¹ While planning is typically carried out by lower-tier district councils, the production of these documents is usually led by upper-tier authorities, through Health and Wellbeing Boards. Lord Best suggested that Health and Wellbeing Boards would be central in building links across professions and sectors.⁹² The RTPI told us that:

“When health and well-being boards were established, we pressed very hard for the planning function within local government to be strongly represented. It was quite difficult, because we had the difficulty of two tiers, and health and well-being is at the upper-tier level”.⁹³

99. **It is important that planners and all policy makers, including those working in housing, take account of the health impacts of their decisions; failure to do so will lead to significant long-term costs. We welcome the inclusion of specific health policies within the National Planning Policy Framework, but there is much work still to be done to encourage proper integration between planning and health. Health and Wellbeing Boards need to play a more proactive role in developing links, across different local authority structures, to encourage greater integration.**

100. In order for planners and decision makers to understand the potential health impacts of their decisions it is vital that proper and rigorous monitoring systems and evidence bases are in place. We are concerned that this is not always the case; our evidence suggested that the capacity for monitoring the health impact of planning decisions had declined in recent years.

101. Prior to 2011 local authorities were required to produce an Annual Monitoring Report, a statutory return to DCLG which set out performance and progress against a range of defined planning, transport and built and natural environment indicators. Many of these indicators had application to health outcomes including, for example, access to public transport and access to green infrastructure. Local authorities are no longer required to produce such specific reports, although some still continue to do so. The World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre for Healthy Urban Environments told us:

89 [Q 226](#) (Dr Ann Connolly)

90 [Q 115](#) (Dr Hugh Ellis)

91 Written evidence from the National Housing Federation ([BEN0152](#))

92 [Q 62](#) (Lord Best)

93 [Q 139](#) (Richard Blyth)

“All of this has been scrapped, so we do not have the mechanism to monitor how well local authorities are developing on health at the city or the local authority level”.⁹⁴

102. In addition to monitoring the health outcomes of planning decisions, we were told that more work could be undertaken to assess the health impacts of major planning applications prior to the granting of permission. The Partnership for Active Travel, Transport and Health (PATTH) suggested that health should be strengthened as a material consideration in planning applications; the Transport and Health Study Group supported this stance and also argued that those engaged in spatial planning should build health impact assessments into their decision making.⁹⁵ The UK Health Forum suggested that health impact assessments should be incorporated into all local infrastructure projects.⁹⁶
103. We were told that some local authorities were already using health impact assessments on larger developments, including housing developments of over 100 units; there were, however, difficulties in developing an assessment methodology that was sufficiently robust to incorporate into the planning system.⁹⁷
104. **If built environment policies are to take account of health impacts it is essential that they are informed by a robust evidence base. Local authorities should be proactive in undertaking monitoring of the health outcomes and impacts of planning decisions. We recommend that the Government should, within the National Planning Practice Guidance, set out a common framework of health indicators for local planning authorities to monitor.**
105. **We welcome recent moves towards the adoption and use of health impact assessments in decision making on major planning applications. We call upon the Government to support such initiatives, and to examine ways in which health impact assessments could be more closely integrated into development management processes.**

Streets, highways and the public realm

106. The quality of the public realm⁹⁸ has a significant impact on the overall quality and cohesion of the built environment. Highways are particularly important in this context, constituting over 80% of the public realm⁹⁹; highways also have major air quality and health impacts, as described in Chapter One.¹⁰⁰
107. MADE West Midlands told us that:

“Every city has ... prestige developments and public realm schemes that they can take lovely photos of ... but then you go round the corner

94 [Q 225](#) (Dr Laurence Carmichael)

95 Written evidence from PATTH ([BEN0082](#)) and the Transport and Health Study Group ([BEN0094](#))

96 Written evidence from the UK Health Forum ([BEN0024](#))

97 [Q 229](#) (Dr Laurence Carmichael)

98 Living Streets define public realm as follows: “Public realm includes all the spaces between buildings that can be freely accessed, it encompasses all outdoor areas including roads, parks, squares, pedestrian routes and cycleways”. Taken from Living Streets, *Creating healthy environments: practical tools for increasing walking in the built environment* (2010)

99 Written evidence from PATTH ([BEN0082](#))

100 See Box One, Chapter One.

and see a place that still has masses of surface car parks, is highway dominated, has poor buildings, is difficult to find your way around and so on. A lot of our country is like that”.¹⁰¹

Sunand Prasad echoed this view, telling us:

“Drop anyone from a helicopter almost anywhere on the outskirts of any town in the UK and they will see only highway-dominated spaces, poor spaces, business parks and retail outlets. Those are terrible; they are just not for people. They are there for the hermetic idea of arriving by car, getting into the shops and going out again. There is no care for the public space”.¹⁰²

108. In those parts of the country that have two tiers of local government there is, again, a division of responsibility. District councils are responsible for planning while county councils are typically responsible for highways. We were told that:

“Transportation is arguably the key to promoting more sustainable and resilient built environments, though Highway Authorities are generally car-orientated, detached from local planning authorities and have unquestioned authority”.¹⁰³

109. Nationally, Manual for Streets (first published in 2007) offers Government guidance on approaches to managing transport in residential streets, and on street design. The Transport and Health Study Group emphasised the importance of the manual in providing key design guidance on the creation of safe streets.¹⁰⁴ The guidance is, however, non-binding; Colchester Borough Council told us that, as a result, most transport authorities do not adopt or promote it.¹⁰⁵ We were told that compliance with the guidance should be mandatory.¹⁰⁶

110. **Decisions regarding streets and highways have a major impact upon the built environment, as well as on air quality and pedestrian safety. Those decisions should be made in accordance with existing best practice guidance. We recommend that local authorities—including authorities with highways responsibilities—should fully adopt Manual for Streets and should adhere to the policies contained within it.**

111. Living Streets told us about the important relationship between health, wellbeing and the public realm:

“Walking is a physical and social activity, and is important for mental health and wellbeing. The built environment can influence incidental interactions on streets and in neighbourhoods, helping to build communities. It can also make space for contemplation. Public realm design should include places where people will want to stop, chat and rest, and quiet spaces and walks with access to the natural environment”.¹⁰⁷

101 [Q 85](#) (David Tittle)

102 [Q 67](#) (Sunand Prasad)

103 Written evidence from Colchester Borough Council ([BEN0083](#))

104 Written evidence from the Transport and Health Study Group ([BEN0094](#))

105 Written evidence from Colchester Borough Council ([BEN0083](#))

106 Written evidence from Suffolk Preservation Society ([BEN0080](#)) and Colchester Borough Council ([BEN0083](#)).

107 Written evidence from Living Streets ([BEN0010](#))

112. We were told that around 20 different agencies were able to ‘interfere’ in the public realm, and that many of these interventions did not require planning permission. Management and integration of these different organisations and their activities was often difficult, and ‘cluttering’ of the public realm was often the result.¹⁰⁸ The question of control of these spaces is sometimes difficult; we were told that communities often did not think of the public realm as ‘theirs’, and therefore took relatively limited ownership of such issues.¹⁰⁹ Living Streets had sought to address this through the use of Community Street Audits, engaging local people and producing results such as the de-cluttering of Walworth Road in South London.¹¹⁰ It was suggested, however, that the problem was persistent, and difficult to overcome.¹¹¹
113. This problem is another result of the fragmentation across the various agencies that have the capacity to influence our built environment. We believe that better leadership, properly accountable to local communities, is required. We were told that:

“Sometimes the difficulty in the public realm is that nobody is in overall charge. People have said that in places maybe we need a Tsar who is in overall charge of the streets ... Somebody needs to be in overall charge with the authority to make things happen”.¹¹²

114. **Interventions in the public realm are frequently uncoordinated, and suffer from a lack of accountable leadership. All too often the poor quality of the public realm proves detrimental to the built environment and to those people who live within it. We recommend that local authorities should give one Cabinet Member (or senior officer) responsibility for coordinating services which impact upon street quality and the public realm. Such services have a major impact upon the wellbeing of local people and communities.**

Integrated transport infrastructure

115. When visiting Birmingham we saw the transformative effect that properly planned and well-delivered infrastructure projects can have upon the built environment. The transformation of New Street station, and the HS2 Masterplan proposals in the eastern city-centre, will have an enduring positive impact upon the city.¹¹³ When visiting Southwark, we were told about the central importance of transport connectivity in promoting the regeneration of the Elephant and Castle area.¹¹⁴
116. Witnesses consistently emphasised the interaction between infrastructure and the wider built environment. They highlighted the importance of integrating new infrastructure into its surroundings, and understanding the impact upon ‘place’. We were also told about the extensive work that had been undertaken to ensure new Crossrail stations, and the millions of people that they will deliver to their destinations, were integrated into the urban fabric of London.¹¹⁵ The relationships between infrastructure, accessibility and

108 [Q 87](#) (David Tittle)

109 Written evidence from The Glass-House Community Led Design ([BEN0074](#))

110 Written evidence from Living Streets ([BEN0010](#))

111 [Q 87](#) (David Tittle)

112 *Ibid.*

113 See Birmingham visit note, Appendix 6.

114 See Southwark visit note, Appendix 5.

115 [Q 198](#) (Esther Kurland)

the scale of development were also emphasised. We were told that planning decisions would often take account of the public transport accessibility levels (PTALs) of a location to inform decisions on density.¹¹⁶

117. In considering developments in Birmingham and Southwark, and the wider evidence that we received, it was apparent that successful integration of new transport infrastructure, and leveraging the benefits that it could bring, relied on a sophisticated understanding of place. The work on Crossrail had been taken forward with a diverse range of local partners and stakeholders.¹¹⁷ Proposals for the HS2 station in Birmingham had been modified in response to local feedback, with an emphasis upon delivering maximum economic benefit for the city.¹¹⁸
118. Locality told us, however, that local involvement in transport and infrastructure policy decisions was sometimes difficult:

“You have national planning policy and then you have local/ neighbourhood here, with this kind of gap in between ... You can see a vacuum and there is a real confusion about what you do about infrastructure, what you do about transport and how those things work. They impact enormously on the local ... but they are decided at a national level”.¹¹⁹

119. Sir John Armitt emphasised the importance of early engagement with local communities, and cited recent research which stated that only 6% of British people think there is a ‘very well co-ordinated’ national or local plan. The same research suggested that, when asked what would increase confidence in the infrastructure sector, people highlighted community engagement (41%), consultation (30%) and leadership from politicians (25%).¹²⁰
120. As detailed in Chapter Two, the Government has recently established a National Infrastructure Commission, which will provide advice to the Government and Parliament on national infrastructure priorities. A consultation on the structure and operation of the Commission is currently ongoing; in its initial phase of operation the Commission has been asked to focus upon energy efficiency, London transport and northern transport connectivity.¹²¹
121. The establishment of the Commission was welcomed in evidence from Energy UK, the British Property Federation and the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers, with the potential for the Commission to take a long-term view of built environment issues consistently emphasised.¹²² Friends of the Earth, however, suggested that the move was a continuation of a centralising trend within Government.¹²³ Professor John Worthington, of the Independent Transport Commission, noted that planning in the UK is often focused on 5-year political cycles, but that the implementation of

116 [Q 205](#) (Esther Kurland)

117 [Q 198](#) (Esther Kurland)

118 See Birmingham visit note, Appendix 6

119 [Q 179](#) (Carole Reilly)

120 Written evidence from Sir John Armitt ([BEN0226](#))

121 National Infrastructure Commission, ‘Infrastructure Commission invites submissions on critical infrastructure challenges’ (13 November 2015): <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/infrastructure-commission-invites-submissions-on-critical-infrastructure-challenges> [accessed on 26 January 2016]

122 Written evidence from Energy UK ([BEN0114](#)), British Property Federation ([BEN0135](#)) and CIBSE ([BEN 0102](#))

123 Written evidence from Friends of the Earth ([BEN0137](#))

essential infrastructure was often spread over several political cycles. It was felt that the establishment of the Commission would help to lend a degree of perspective to these decisions.¹²⁴

122. **We welcome the establishment of the National Infrastructure Commission and the capacity that it should provide to take a longer-term view of infrastructure needs. We believe, however, that transport infrastructure in particular needs to be properly integrated into its local surroundings, in order to deliver full economic and social benefits, and an appropriate return on investment. The knowledge required to support this integration is often held by local stakeholders and communities.**
123. **While the Commission is tasked with considering national priorities, the effects of its proposals and projects will often be local in nature. The Commission will need to develop an approach to engaging with local communities, and mechanisms to encourage community support for projects. We note that the Commission is currently undertaking a consultation on its structures and operating practices. As part of its response to that consultation we recommend that the Commission should consider, and publicise its approach to:**
 - **The design impacts and issues associated with its work, and how these will be taken into account; and**
 - **How it will work with local people, local authorities and other partners to ensure that infrastructure investments deliver maximum wider social, environmental and economic benefits.**

Delivering and safeguarding quality

Design Review

124. As described earlier, design review is a process by which planning proposals are considered by an expert panel, who provide scrutiny and feedback on design aspects of the proposals. The National Planning Policy Framework places an emphasis on design review, stating that local planning authorities should put in place local arrangements for reviews and, when appropriate, should refer major projects for a national design review provided by Design Council CABE. The NPPF states that, in assessing planning applications, local authorities should have regard to the recommendations from the design review panel.¹²⁵
125. The importance of good design review arrangements was consistently highlighted by witnesses. We were told that design review panels provide essential multidisciplinary input to project proposals.¹²⁶ Professor Peter Bishop told us:

“In my own experience, a project that goes to design review almost certainly raises questions and comes out better. I would advocate that

124 Supplementary written evidence from Independent Transport Commission ([BEN0222](#))

125 Department for Communities and Local Government, *National Planning Policy Framework* (March 2012) para 62: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf [accessed on 27 January 2016]

126 Written evidence from the Landscape Institute ([BEN0136](#))

there are times when there should almost be a call-in: the schemes are so important that they should be almost required to go to design review".¹²⁷

126. The design review services provided by Design Council CABE were described as "excellent in London".¹²⁸ It is apparent, however, that the provision of services across England has become fragmented and disjointed since the demise of CABE as a stand-alone body.¹²⁹ In addition, questions were raised concerning the quality of some local design review services.¹³⁰ Design Council CABE told us:

"The concern with the change in the marketplace since 2011 must be around the quality and diversity of some of the panels, and the fact that that quality is not always necessarily delivering the public good ... That is perhaps some of the challenge that we see in other panels being set up for commercial gain or benefit in places around the country. There is variation in the quality".¹³¹

Take-up and use of design review services is an important related issue. We were told that, within London, only around 20% of major planning applications underwent a design review; outside London the figure was lower.¹³²

127. If design review services are to be provided to a high standard they will need investment; RIBA made the case for further investment in such services.¹³³ To justify any such investment, though, there needs to be certainty that review panels are going to be utilised by developers, and that their findings will be used to revise and refine planning proposals. RIBA told us that local authorities should be able to mandate the use of design review on schemes in their area; they suggested that such a move would increase the quality of design and place-making and address public concerns about development.¹³⁴

128. In Newcastle-under-Lyme, design review has been included as a pre-requisite in the validation of planning applications. We were told that:

"If you put in a major application—a reasonable-size application—in Newcastle-under-Lyme, you have to have a design review letter and a report saying how you have responded to it ... If national policy was to recommend that approach, it would really transform things".¹³⁵

The Edge suggested that consideration could be given to measures that provide preferential permissions for schemes that perform well at design review.¹³⁶

129. **We welcome the emphasis placed on design review in the National Planning Policy Framework. Design review has the potential to deliver significant improvements to planning proposals, thereby raising standards and encouraging community acceptance of development.**

127 [Q 34](#) (Prof Peter Bishop)

128 Written evidence from The Edge ([BEN0122](#))

129 Written evidence from Urban Design Group ([BEN0141](#)), [Q 34](#) (Prof Peter Bishop)

130 [Q 34](#) (Prof Peter Bishop)

131 [Q 88](#) (David Waterhouse)

132 [Q 88](#) (David Tittle)

133 Written evidence from RIBA ([BEN0157](#))

134 *Ibid.*

135 [Q 88](#) (David Tittle)

136 Written evidence from The Edge ([BEN0122](#))

It can, therefore, help to speed up the process of securing planning permission.

130. **We note, however, that the current provision of such services is disjointed and fragmented. In some places, there are issues of funding and quality. In part, this is a result of the voluntary nature of design review; an insufficient number of applications are going through the process to justify wider investment. The Government should make design review mandatory for all major planning applications; major applications have major impacts on the communities in which they take place.**

Permitted development rights and Article 4 directions

131. For planning purposes, different types of land use (such as business, housing and commercial use) are grouped together and allocated with identifying numbers and letters in the Use Classes Order 1987.¹³⁷ The Order allows changes within a particular use class (such as changing a site from one type of business use to another) but is more prohibitive about changes between different types of use (such as changing from business to residential), for which planning permission is typically required.
132. Planning permission is, of course, not required for all changes to buildings and properties; householders and owners have certain 'permitted development rights' for some types of change. These rights are granted through statutory instruments laid before Parliament¹³⁸ and allow for minor modifications to properties as well as, in certain circumstances, changes of the type of use to which a site or property can be put.
133. Previously, a change from office use (B1a) to a private dwelling house (use class C3) would have required planning permission. In 2013, however, the then Government amended permitted development rights to allow such changes to take place without planning permission; this was for an initial limited period of three years, after which consideration would be given to making the changes permanent.¹³⁹
134. The Government announced in October 2015 that this temporary permitted development right would be made permanent.¹⁴⁰ It made clear that in future the permitted development right would also allow the demolition of office buildings and their replacement with new building for residential use. Regulations to bring this change into force have, however, not yet been made.
135. There are concerns about the potential impact of these changes on the built environment. We were told that this new flexibility was creating conversions of poor housing quality, due to the fact that local authorities had no control

137 As amended by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Order 2015 ([SI 2015/597](#)) made under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

138 In England this is through The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, ([SI 2015/596](#)), made in exercise of the powers conferred by the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 54 of the Coal Industry Act 1994.

139 Department for Communities and Local Government, *Letter from the Chief Planner to local authority Chief Planning Officers* (24 January 2013): https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/68937/Letter_about_permitted_development_rights_for_change_of_use_from_commercial_to_residential_24_January_2013.pdf [accessed on 25 January 2016]

140 Department for Communities and Local Government, 'Thousands more homes to be developed in planning shake-up' (13 October 2015): <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-more-homes-to-be-developed-in-planning-shake-up> [accessed on 27 January 2016]

over important details such as space standards, dwelling mix and tenure.¹⁴¹ The London Borough of Barnet stated that:

“There are no planning standards, so you could theoretically build rabbit hutches, as people sometimes refer to them, if you wanted to, whereas planning standards that define a good-quality size of units are almost set in stone”.¹⁴²

136. There are concerns, too, that the changes could be leading to the loss of much needed office and employment space. Camden Town Unlimited told us that the policy had been “devastating for many small businesses which have been turfed out of neighbourhoods by landlords eager to convert property into more lucrative residential space”. They went on to suggest that the policy was “throttling the operations of small businesses within the capital”.¹⁴³ Evidence from the London Borough of Islington reinforced this point.¹⁴⁴ A recent report from the London Councils umbrella group stated that, since 2013, 834,000 square metres of office space had been lost in the capital as a result of the policy change.¹⁴⁵
137. These effects are not, however, limited to London. In many parts of the country, local authorities are seeking to pursue economic and physical regeneration plans that rely upon new commercial and business investment into city centres. We were told that the extension of office to residential permitted development rights would undermine these initiatives and “run counter to aims to create a Northern Powerhouse”.¹⁴⁶ It can also have a negative effect in centres of historic value and heritage. Bath and North East Somerset Council told us that:

“We have units that are full of start-up businesses, the seedbed of economic growth … losing the office space and their base as a community group of businesses to residential. There is a loss of needed space for offices and … in Bath, we have very limited space to create new offices because of the heritage situation”.¹⁴⁷

138. Local authorities do have the power to remove permitted development rights across a defined area by issuing an Article 4 direction.¹⁴⁸ Article 4 directions are sometimes used, for example, in conservation areas or areas with a high proportion of listed buildings. Implementing such a direction can, however, be difficult and time-consuming.¹⁴⁹ Local authorities typically give 12 months’ notice of their intention to issue a direction; failure to give such notice could leave them liable to compensation claims from affected property owners.¹⁵⁰ Such directions can also be cancelled by the Secretary of State if they are judged to be ‘disproportionate’.

141 Written evidence from Bromley Civic Society ([BEN0151](#)) and the National Housing Federation ([BEN0152](#))

142 [Q 272](#) (Joe Henry)

143 Written evidence from Camden Town Unlimited ([BEN0127](#))

144 Written evidence from London Borough of Islington ([BEN0183](#))

145 Figure cited is for May 2013 to April 2015. London Councils, *The impact of permitted development rights for office to residential conversions* (August 2015): <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/download/file/fid/16326> [accessed on 28 January 2016]

146 Written evidence from Urban Vision Enterprise ([BEN0026](#))

147 [Q 272](#) (Simon de Beer)

148 So called because they are issued under Article 4 of the General Permitted Development Order.

149 [Q 269](#) (Anneliese Hutchinson)

150 [Q 273](#) (Joe Henry)

139. The Government has stated its intention to make permanent the change in office to residential permitted development rights. It is clear, however, that in some parts of the country this change could be detrimental to the built environment. There are concerns regarding the design quality and suitability of some of the housing that is being provided through these conversions. In addition, concerns have been expressed regarding the loss of local character and important employment sites, posing a threat to the mix of uses required to deliver sustainable places.
140. Local authorities are well placed to understand whether an increase in office to residential conversions will be appropriate for their area. We believe that, when changing permitted development rights, the Government must also make it easier for local authorities to respond to local circumstances. We recommend that the Government should review and remove some of the restrictions that currently prevent more widespread use of Article 4 directions by local authorities. One such result might be the removal of the current 12 month period of notice that councils are required to observe in order to avoid liability for compensation payments.

Permission in principle

141. The changes to office to residential permitted development rights can be considered to be one part of the Government's wider deregulatory approach to the planning system. A new and significant element of this approach is the proposed introduction of 'permission in principle'.
142. Clause 136 of the Housing and Planning Bill, which is currently making its way through the House of Lords, would enable the Secretary of State to grant permission in principle to land that is allocated for development in local plans and locally produced registers of land.¹⁵¹ Permission in principle would be granted via a Development Order issued by the Secretary of State; this would then, later in the development process, need to be followed by a Technical Details Consent granted by the local authority. The Impact Assessment for the Bill states that:

"Permission in principle is a new form of planning consent that will give upfront certainty on key issues of site suitability like location, use, and quantum of development ... Firmly establishing the principle of development once before asking applicants to provide costly technical information would: improve efficiency by reducing duplication of effort; reduce uncertainty for all users of the planning system; and encourage applicants to bring forward proposals and/or save them the cost of failed applications turned down due to site unsuitability".¹⁵²

143. These proposals have caused some concern. It was suggested that 'principle' and 'detail' in the planning system were closely related:

"This negates the whole basis of the fact that detail and principle in planning are intimately related. How is it possible to give permission

¹⁵¹ Clause 137 of the Bill would require local authorities to produce local registers of land of a "prescribed description".

¹⁵² Department for Communities and Local Government, *Housing and Planning Bill 2015/16: impact assessment* (13 January 2016) paras 6.5.3–6.5.4: <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/impact-assessments/IA16-002.pdf> [accessed on 26 January 2016]

for something in principle, without understanding its detailed design or flood risk mitigation or sustainable urban drainage or proportion of social housing? I could go on. It misunderstands the intellectual process of making planning decisions".¹⁵³

Bath and North East Somerset Council told us that the proposals could lead to poor quality schemes in some parts of their area, as the local authority would have more limited control over various design aspects of the development.¹⁵⁴

144. The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists were concerned that the proposals would risk development being brought forward without adequate consideration of the effects on the historic environment.¹⁵⁵ There were also concerns that the permission in principle approach would reduce the capacity for taking account of wildlife and biodiversity issues before permission was granted.¹⁵⁶
145. The Minister for Housing and Planning told us that the proposals were intended to encourage local authorities and local communities to bring forward and allocate suitable brownfield land for development:

“The land that comes forward for the planning permission in principle will be driven by the local areas, not from the centre; it will be the local council that comes forward with a piece of land that it wants to get into production more quickly. It will nominate this land. It will be driven by it and it will be identified through its brownfield register, or, as it goes forward, it may do it through its local or neighbourhood plan as well”.¹⁵⁷
146. The sequence of events to be followed under this new form of planning consent is not yet clear. A number of important questions are, in our view, still unresolved. These include when and how community engagement and involvement would be incorporated into the process and how, precisely, the constraints of sites (such as environmental protections, previous contamination or access to infrastructure) would be taken into account.
147. The legislation that would create brownfield land registers and ‘permission in principle’ is currently making its way through Parliament, and may be subject to change. It is clear, in any case, that the operation and implications of these proposals would rest heavily on the precise procedures for securing a Development Order and Technical Details Consent, which have yet to be properly defined. There are, nonetheless, concerns that moves to divorce ‘principle’ from ‘detail’ could have a detrimental effect upon the built environment.
148. **We are anxious to ensure that moves towards a permission in principle do not undermine the capacity of local authorities to develop, design and integrate key sites in a way that ensures that they function effectively and respond to local needs and aspirations. The relationship between principle and detail is important in the planning system. We recommend that the Government should carefully consider the impact its reforms could have upon this relationship. As a minimum, it is important that the process of granting permission**

153 [Q 117](#) (Dr Hugh Ellis)

154 [Q 272](#) (Simon de Beer)

155 Written evidence from the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists ([BEN0063](#))

156 Written evidence from the Bat Conservation Trust ([BEN0172](#)) and RSPB ([BEN0188](#))

157 [Q 334](#) (Brandon Lewis MP)

in principle and Technical Details Consent should give due regard to design quality, sustainability, archaeology, heritage and all the other key components of place-making that would normally be required for the granting of planning permission.

CHAPTER 4: BUILDING FOR THE LONG-TERM: SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

Investing in long-term, sustainable communities

Lifetime homes and lifetime neighbourhoods

149. For a number of years, demographic projections have suggested that the UK needs to address a significant shift in the age profile of the population. The Office for National Statistics projects that the number of people aged 80 and above will more than double, to 6 million, by mid-2037; the number aged between 70 and 80 will grow from 4.5 million to 7.5 million.¹⁵⁸
150. These projections are often lost in the media and public policy debates concerning the housing shortage, much of which focuses on the needs of first time buyers. We were told that 60% of total household growth in England up to 2033 is expected to come from households headed by someone aged 65 or over.¹⁵⁹ In spite of this trend, current housing provision for this demographic is lacking; we were told that only 2% of the country's current housing stock is retirement housing.¹⁶⁰
151. It is essential, therefore, that steps are taken to ensure that the housing and planning system serves the nation as a whole. Changes are required to ensure a proper response to our changing demographic circumstances both in terms of housing supply and specialist accommodation. All local authorities should have explicit regard in their policy documents to the age profile of the local area and the needs of local residents.
152. The provision of specialist retirement housing¹⁶¹ can serve a dual purpose; in addition to meeting the needs of older residents it can also help to release housing that meets the supply needs of different parts of the population. Many of those who would look to move into retirement housing would, in effect, be 'down-sizing'. We were told that, for every 5,000 purchases of retirement properties, larger housing worth a total of £1.5 billion was released into the market.¹⁶² In addition, the provision of specialist housing can prevent or delay the need for institutional care, offering further savings to the public purse.¹⁶³
153. Currently, however, the planning system does not fully recognise these wider social benefits. Some types of housing (including affordable homes and the Government's proposed starter homes) are exempt from the Community

158 Office for National Statistics, *National population projections, 2012-based statistical bulletin* (November 2013): http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_334975.pdf [accessed on 29 January 2016]

159 Written evidence from McCarthy & Stone ([BEN0218](#))

160 Written evidence from Anchor ([BEN0206](#))

161 There are a variety of different types of specialist retirement housing. The Housing and Learning Improvement Network offer definitions in their report *Housing in Later Life: planning ahead for specialist housing for older people* (December 2012): http://www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Toolkit/Housing_in_Later_Life_Toolkit.pdf [accessed on 5 February 2016]

162 Written evidence from McCarthy & Stone ([BEN0218](#))

163 Written evidence from Professor Anthea Tinker and Professor Jay Ginn ([BEN0046](#))

Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106,¹⁶⁴ as they are seen to be delivering a wider social good. This is not the case for specialist retirement housing. McCarthy & Stone and Anchor Housing Association suggested that retirement housing should be excluded from these “onerous requirements”.¹⁶⁵

154. While we did not take extensive evidence on this particular aspect of housing provision, it is clear that an increasing amount of specialist retirement housing will be required. We also support the proposition that such housing delivers wider social and economic benefits.
155. **We call on the Government to examine ways in which the provision of specialist retirement housing can be incentivised and increased. We recommend that the Government should examine and review the case for exempting such housing from Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy payments.**
156. Beyond the provision of specialist housing there is, in our view, a more general case for ensuring that new housing is better equipped to deal with the changing demography of the country and greater opportunities for people to age in place are created. We were told that only 4% of the current housing stock met basic accessibility criteria; this is, in our view, an unacceptably low figure.¹⁶⁶
157. The Lifetime Homes standard comprises a range of measures intended to improve the accessibility levels of new housing development. The cost of incorporating Lifetime Homes criteria into a new dwelling was estimated, in 2007, to be between £545 and £1,615 per dwelling.¹⁶⁷ We were told that cost-benefit analysis had demonstrated that, over the course of its existence, a Lifetime Homes standard property would deliver around £60,000 worth of societal benefit.¹⁶⁸
158. In London, the Lifetime Homes standard has been compulsory since the adoption of the first London Plan in 2004. We were told that this had led to a significant increase in provision¹⁶⁹, although evidence from Create Streets also noted that Lifetime Homes might not be universally suitable for all design contexts.¹⁷⁰
159. Across the rest of England, the accessibility standards of new dwellings are principally determined by the Building Regulations. We were told that Part M of the Regulations,¹⁷¹ which sets standards for accessibility, mandated a

164 These payments are sometime described as planning obligations; in essence, they are payments made (or obligations undertaken) by developers in order to offset the wider impact of their projects on the infrastructure of a community. In the case of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), a payment is made according to a tariff drawn up by the local authority. In the case of Section 106, payment is negotiated as part of the planning process, based upon a judgement as to the wider impact of a development. Section 106 agreements are also sometimes used to secure contributions to affordable housing provision.

165 Written evidence from Anchor ([BEN0206](#)), Written evidence from McCarthy & Stone ([BEN0218](#))

166 [Q 235](#) (Sue Adams)

167 Lifetimes Homes, ‘For professionals: costs’: <http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/pages/costs.html> [accessed on 28 January 2016]

168 [Q 238](#) (Sue Adams)

169 Written evidence from Care & Repair England ([BEN0091](#))

170 Written evidence from Create Streets ([BEN0195](#))

171 HM Government, *The Building Regulations 2010: Access to and use of buildings: Approved document M* (2015 edition): http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/br/BR_PDF_AD_M1_2015.pdf [accessed on 29 January 2016]

level of provision which was below the standard set by Lifetime Homes.¹⁷² Habinteg told us that:

“Government have looked at viability standards in constructing the review of the new [building] standards purely in terms of the financial viability of the housebuilding industry: effectively, what is the impact on the first sale price of that property? What they have specifically excluded from financial viability is any wider societal or health benefit for an individual or local authority or health authority”.¹⁷³

160. We believe that this is a short-sighted approach. Lifetime Homes have the potential to ensure that our built environment is better placed to cope with a changing population. The additional cost appears, to us, to be relatively marginal when compared to the wider social and economic benefits.
161. **We believe that the Lifetime Homes standard can play a key part in addressing the demographic challenge facing our housing stock. We recommend that local authorities should be required, within their local planning policies, to set appropriately ambitious targets for the delivery of Lifetime Homes.**
162. The needs of an ageing population do not begin and end in the home. There is a strong case for ensuring that the built environment as a whole is able to take account of changing demographics.
163. We were told that pavements, traffic junctions and, more generally, ‘places’, were not always designed to take account of the needs of older age groups and those with limited mobility.¹⁷⁴ This can lead to preventable hazards and accidents, and also has the effect of limiting the social contact and access to services of these groups. Edinburgh College of Art suggested that:

“With the cost of sedentary behaviour estimated at £8.3bn per year, this places a further financial burden on the NHS and Local Authorities through increased admissions to hospitals and residential care homes”.¹⁷⁵

164. Habinteg Housing Association told us that design and good management were key to improving this situation:

“For anyone in the street who is slightly infirm, has a temporary injury or is pushing a buggy, that requires good design to start with and then maintaining it. It is about thinking through not just what is a good quality neighbourhood, but the functional importance of allowing people to enjoy and access that environment. That is the kind of issue that stops older people venturing out—when they think they have a six-inch kerb to get over, that there are roadworks, that there is an overhanging tree that blocks their path. It is about good neighbourhood management, but there is a real inclusive design aspect to it as well”.¹⁷⁶
165. Design and management is, therefore, key in ensuring that the built environment is accessible and hospitable to communities as a whole. It was suggested that such neighbourhoods and environments—sometimes

172 [Q 238](#) (Paul Gamble)

173 [Q 238](#) (Paul Gamble)

174 Written evidence from the Access Association ([BEN0198](#))

175 Written evidence from Edinburgh College of Art, University of Edinburgh ([BEN0058](#))

176 [Q 239](#) (Paul Gamble)

described as Lifetime Neighbourhoods—offered benefits to all sections of society. The Olympic Park and Village was highlighted as a good, positive example of an accessible and inclusive neighbourhood; it was noted that the Park was also popular with, and had been successfully marketed to, younger people.¹⁷⁷

166. **We believe that accessibility in the built environment is of vital importance; improving the standard of accessibility is essential if we are to address the long-term demographic changes that are projected to take place.**
167. **We recommend that the Government should set an appropriately high standard in this regard, and should provide guidance drawn from best practice examples such as the Olympic Park. Local authorities and their partners must give this an appropriate degree of priority, and should look to develop and apply ‘lifetime neighbourhood’ principles within their local planning policies.**

The resilience of town centres and high streets

168. Across England, the growth of internet shopping and associated retail portfolio restructuring is presenting a significant challenge to the vitality of our town centres and high streets. We were told that, in 2008, around 4.7% of all shopping took place on the internet; currently, the total is almost 12% and this is projected to grow to 18% by 2020.¹⁷⁸ Peter Brett Associates argued that: “Our high streets have been shaped by the past, they are now trapped in their current configurations and are in poor shape to face the future”.¹⁷⁹
169. The National Planning Policy Framework recognises this challenge and states that:

“Local planning authorities should recognise town centres as the heart of their communities, and pursue policies to support their viability and vitality”.¹⁸⁰

We were told that, over the past 15 to 20 years, the prevailing emphasis of planning policy had been to direct new retail development into town centres, and away from out-of-town shopping destinations.¹⁸¹

170. It is, however, apparent that the challenging circumstances facing our high streets call for a more focused, intensive approach. We were told that the planning system was failing to respond effectively, with local plan-making processes focusing on the wider geography of a council area and failing to conduct intensive appraisal of the needs of town centres.¹⁸² The Theatres Trust told us that local authorities often failed to appreciate the diversity of the ‘offer’ within town centres, and that more could be done to maximise the

177 [Q 239](#) (Sue Adams and Paul Gamble)

178 [Q 194](#) (Adrian Penfold)

179 Written evidence from Peter Brett Associates ([BEN0095](#))

180 Department for Communities and Local Government, *National Planning Policy Framework* (March 2012) para 23: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf [accessed on 27 January 2016]

181 [Q 194](#) (Richard Lemon)

182 Written evidence from Peter Brett Associates ([BEN0095](#))

potential of cultural assets and attractions.¹⁸³ Urban Vision Enterprise told us that existing town centres “must receive a higher priority”.¹⁸⁴

171. We believe that local planning authorities need to develop specific plans to stimulate activity in their town centres, promoting a diversity of uses and—in tandem with our earlier recommendations on lifetime neighbourhoods—increasing access and permeability. In Birmingham we saw the important work that had been carried out, over the long-term, to improve access to the city centre by breaking the ‘concrete collar’ of roads around the city centre. The Minister for Housing and Planning highlighted the importance of accessibility in high streets, and cited research which had shown that people were more likely to drive to large retail developments if they were unable to easily walk to local shops. He went on to highlight the wider health and wellbeing benefits of more accessible town centres:

“I am quite interested in looking at how we get more footfall and more people living in and around our town centres … [This] also has the benefit that people might walk to their shops and get a bit more involved. The moment you are walking around, human nature dictates that you walk past someone and you might nod and smile, and the next time you walk past them a few days later you might actually say hello, and suddenly you are getting to know people”.¹⁸⁵

172. The planning consultancy CBRE suggested that new approaches and more targeted proposals were required to reinvigorate existing town centres. They told us:

“This is going to have to be guided by local authorities and the main landowners in those [town] centres to identify their future role. How do they reinvent themselves so that they are fit for purpose and meet a genuine need? There may be a slightly bitter pill to swallow, which is for those centres to consolidate in some places, so that the fringes, the straggly ends of some of these centres, are converted to residential. As I say, some careful thinking needs to be done”.¹⁸⁶

173. Town centres and high streets should not be seen solely as retail destinations by local authorities and landowners; they often host a complex mixture of uses and a wide variety of employment opportunities. It is clear that, in an era of growing online shopping, retail uses will need to be more carefully blended with cultural, leisure and other uses. There is also a case to be made for encouraging more residential development within town centres—with appropriate safeguards regarding design quality and living standards. All of this requires careful local planning and management and, moreover, vision and leadership on the part of local authorities, who need proactively to manage their high streets. Our earlier recommendations regarding public realm and design quality will also serve to address and improve the situation.

174. **Changing technologies and patterns of retail behaviour are posing a significant challenge to our high streets. There is a threat to the long-term resilience of our town centres and the vitality of the urban built**

183 Written evidence from the Theatres Trust ([BEN0123](#))

184 Written evidence from Urban Vision Enterprise ([BEN0026](#))

185 [Q 338](#) (Brandon Lewis MP)

186 [Q 194](#) (Richard Lemon)

environment. We believe that local leadership is central in addressing this challenge.

175. **Planners should continue to encourage retail development into existing town centres. They must also begin to think more proactively, and creatively, about other ways to stimulate additional activity and footfall. Additional residential development may help to deliver this, but must be implemented with due regard for design quality, living standards, a diverse and sustainable mix of uses and the overall cohesion of the built environment. A wide range of services, alongside retail, can help to drive footfall. These include leisure, culture, sports, health, education and small scale manufacturing. Local authorities should use their multiple resources and responsibilities to proactively shape their town centres and positively plan for their future.**

Investing in heritage

176. The Committee received a large volume of evidence highlighting the important role played by historic buildings, townscapes and landscapes in determining and sustaining a sense of place, pride, and wellbeing. While much of our historic environment is fragile and can easily be compromised by poor planning and development, we heard how the careful conservation of townscapes and streetscapes, and the new, sustainable uses that can be found for historic buildings, can help to shape the future as part of positive change, enterprise and regeneration.¹⁸⁷
177. Urban Vision Enterprise and the Institute for Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) told us that the Government had a tendency to see heritage as having ‘cultural’ value but overlooked its economic and social value.¹⁸⁸ There is a wealth of evidence to suggest that the economic and social benefits of the historic environment make a significant contribution to the economy. Repair and maintenance of historic buildings directly generated £4.1 billion of GDP in England in 2010; when indirect supply chain effects are also taken into account, this increases to £11 billion.¹⁸⁹ Heritage tourism accounted for 2% of the UK’s GDP in 2011.¹⁹⁰
178. We heard, however, that the full potential of the historic environment to contribute to place-making and regeneration had not been realised, and that the Government needs to formulate clear policy and guidance which fully recognises the value of heritage.¹⁹¹ RIBA told us that an integrated strategy to address the skills needs of the heritage sector was also needed.¹⁹²
179. While ministerial responsibility for heritage rests with DCMS, the provisions and protections for historic buildings are the responsibility of DCLG.

¹⁸⁷ Written evidence from Beam, Farrells and the Place Alliance ([BEN0217](#)) and Historic England ([BEN0042](#))

¹⁸⁸ Written evidence from Urban Vision Enterprise ([BEN0026](#)) and IHBC ([BEN0160](#))

¹⁸⁹ Historic England, *Heritage and the Economy* (July 2015): <https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/heritage-and-the-economy/heritage-and-the-economy-2015.pdf/> [accessed on 28 January 2016]

¹⁹⁰ Historic England, *Heritage and the Economy* (July 2015): <https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/heritage-and-the-economy/heritage-and-the-economy-2015.pdf/> [accessed on 28 January 2016]. This figure includes direct, indirect and induced effects of both built heritage and natural heritage tourism.

¹⁹¹ Written evidence from CIFA ([BEN0063](#)) and the Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance ([BEN0115](#))

¹⁹² Written evidence from RIBA ([BEN0157](#))

The IHBC suggested that ministerial responsibility for heritage should be transferred to DCLG, in order to integrate it more closely into wider planning policy. Judith Martin, however, noted that it was “hard to think it could operate without the cultural dimension”.¹⁹³ The Design Council emphasised the important role of Historic England, and the capacity of both Historic England and DCMS to “punch above their weight”.¹⁹⁴

180. **England lacks a proactive, long-term national strategy for managing our historic environment, as part of planning for the future of the built environment. We believe that such a strategy, which would recognise the full value of our built heritage as a unique national and local asset, central to place-making, should be articulated for the future.**
181. **Both DCMS and DCLG are responsible, in different ways, for heritage policy and the way in which these policies impact upon the built environment. We do not support the calls for ministerial responsibility for heritage to move from DCMS to DCLG. We would like, however, to see evidence of more joint leadership and proactive joint working between the departments in developing policies, for example, for heritage and regeneration, and across joint policy areas such as the protection of World Heritage Sites.**
182. The NPPF sets out broad policy on conserving and enhancing the historic environment, to be applied by local authorities when developing their local plans. Historic England and the Heritage Alliance told us that, in essence, the right balance had been achieved between heritage protection and development in the policies contained within the NPPF.¹⁹⁵ There were however, sometimes problems regarding the implementation of policy, many of which related to resources and capacity at the local authority level.¹⁹⁶
183. **The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to balance heritage protection and development policies. We believe that it is essential that this balance is sustained, enhanced and delivered. We recommend that planning and development policy and practice should reflect more explicitly the fact that our historic environment is a cultural and economic asset rather than an obstacle to successful future developments—whether in urban or rural areas—and can contribute, uniquely, to the highest standards of design and the quality of community life.**
184. The maintenance and upkeep of buildings of historic value can have a significant impact upon the sense of pride and pleasure that a community feels in its surroundings; we were told that the historic environment has a significant role to play in identity and place-making.¹⁹⁷ At the same time, our evidence consistently identified some of the difficulties in maintaining historic buildings and maximising the use of heritage assets.¹⁹⁸

193 Written evidence from Judith Martin ([BEN0148](#))

194 [Q 92](#) (David Waterhouse)

195 [QQ 159-160](#) (Duncan Wilson and Henry Russell)

196 [QQ 159-160](#) (Duncan Wilson and Henry Russell). Issues relating to local authority resources, capacity and skills are considered in more detail in Chapter 6.

197 Written evidence from the Trees and Design Action Group ([BEN0182](#))

198 Written evidence from IHBC ([BEN0160](#)), Giles Bergne ([BEN0056](#)), Canterbury Society ([BEN0107](#)), CIFA ([BEN0063](#)), The Edge ([BEN0122](#)), Historic England ([BEN0042](#)), Kew Society ([BEN0180](#)), Tony Michael ([BEN0125](#))

185. Listed Buildings—especially Grade I and II*—are some of the community’s most significant assets, and many are still in private hands. They contribute to civic pride and economic prosperity, attracting visitors from home and abroad. It is, therefore, particularly important to the wider public interest that they are well maintained and appropriately used.
186. Unfortunately, tax falls capriciously across the work that is needed to maintain, repair and adapt them. Problems resulting from the application of VAT to historic building repairs were highlighted in evidence.¹⁹⁹ At present, VAT on repairs and alterations to buildings is charged at 20%, while VAT is zero-rated on new build construction and a rate of 5% applies to some residential conversions. There is, therefore, potentially a disincentive towards the retention, renovation and repair of historic buildings. The British Archaeological Trust told us that this:

“ ... has created a development framework that actively works against incorporating heritage assets in regeneration and place-making. This framework must change if we are not to cause significant and irreversible harm to our national heritage assets. VAT rules must be relaxed to promote building conservation”.²⁰⁰

Historic England, the RICS, the Heritage Alliance and the Prince’s Regeneration Trust all supported calls for a change to the rate of VAT charged on repairs to existing buildings.²⁰¹ The Heritage Alliance, in particular, has campaigned for the rate to be reduced from 20% to 5% for private dwellings, and has published research suggesting that such a change could provide a £15 billion stimulus to the UK economy.²⁰²

187. **At present, VAT is charged at a rate of 20% on repairs and maintenance to existing buildings, while VAT on much new-build construction is zero-rated. This provides a perverse disincentive to the retention, restoration and revitalisation of historic buildings, and works to prevent owners from looking after them properly. We recommend that the Government should review the rates of VAT charged on repairs to listed buildings, and examine the economic rationale for reducing the rate.**

Environmental resilience

Protecting against flood risk

188. We received a considerable amount of evidence on how national policy can reduce and mitigate flood risk in the built environment. The Committee on Climate Change (CCC) noted that many towns and cities are currently located on the floodplain, with over 240,000 properties in England currently located in areas of high flood risk, and 1,500 homes a year being built each year in areas that are currently designated as high flood risk. The CCC stated:

¹⁹⁹ Written evidence from the British Archaeological Trust ([BEN0049](#)), Institute of Historic Building Conservation ([BEN0160](#)) and Historic England ([BEN0042](#))

²⁰⁰ Written evidence from the British Archaeological Trust ([BEN0049](#))

²⁰¹ Written evidence from Historic England ([BEN0042](#)), RICS ([BEN0185](#)), [Q 166](#) (Henry Russell and Ros Kerslake)

²⁰² The Heritage Alliance, *Value added taxation (VAT): supplementary briefing* (July 2014): <http://www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/tha-website/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Value-added-taxation-briefing.pdf> [accessed on 29 January 2016]

“Existing flood risk management policy focuses on building bigger defences where possible and affordable but fails to address the increasing numbers of homes and other properties elsewhere that are falling in to the high flood risk category”.²⁰³

189. The Environment Agency informed us that its advice on the flood risk of new development was taken in the vast majority of cases:

“Every year, we review how effective our advice has been. In the last year for which we have full data, 2014–15, our advice on flood risk was taken in 98% of cases … our advice goes wider than flood risk and, if you look at our overall advice, outcomes in line with our advice amounted to 96% of cases. That includes our advice on water resource management, waste water management, land water and quality”.²⁰⁴

190. The Committee on Climate Change also observed that progress in managing surface water flood risk had been slow in urban areas, and that surface water flooding was likely to increase in future with increased paving over of front gardens, infill development and an ageing public sewer network.²⁰⁵

191. The report from the Commission of Inquiry into flood resilience of the future, commissioned by the All Party Parliamentary Group for Excellence in the Built Environment and published in March 2015, stated that 5.2 million homes are at risk of flooding. It criticised the lack of government leadership on the issue and the absence of a sustainable long-term strategy for water management, and argued for a policy shift away from a focus on flood defence and towards a focus on flood resilience. This would include the increased provision and maintenance of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).²⁰⁶

192. Tony Grayling of the Environment Agency told us that local authorities had the power to apply planning policies on surface water flood risk, and that they should aim to incorporate these into their local plans and into their approach to decision-making.²⁰⁷

193. The Committee on Climate Change told us that flood risk management policy currently “fails to address the increasing number of homes and other properties elsewhere that are falling into the high flood risk category”.²⁰⁸ While we recognise there are mechanisms in place to support flood resilience and to manage surface water flood risk, we believe there is scope for these to be toughened to ensure as many new and existing homes as possible are fully flood resilient.

194. While we note the Environment Agency’s remarks on local planning policy, the Committee on Climate Change also told us that local flood risk management strategies have yet to be finalised by the majority of local authorities in England.²⁰⁹

203 Written evidence from the Committee on Climate Change ([BEN0124](#))

204 [Q 294](#) (Tony Grayling)

205 Written evidence from the Committee on Climate Change ([BEN0124](#))

206 All Party Group for Excellence in the Built Environment, *Living with water: Report from the Commission of Inquiry into flood resilience of the future* (March 2015): <http://cic.org.uk/admin/resources/appg-report-1.pdf> [accessed on 26 January 2016]

207 [Q 286](#) (Tony Grayling)

208 Written evidence from the Committee on Climate Change ([BEN0124](#))

209 *Ibid.*

195. The Construction Industry Council told us that all new housing in areas of flood risk must have resilience to flood water built in when constructed. This would incorporate all homes built in flood zones 2 (medium risk), 3a (high risk) and 3b (the functional floodplain).²¹⁰ We believe there is a strong case to support this recommendation.
196. The evidence we received also saw a consensus that the provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) was of key importance to future urban water management. SuDS are intended to mimic natural drainage systems and can incorporate features such as permeable surfaces, green roofs, ponds and wetlands, and underground storage. They provide an alternative to drainage of surface water through pipes to watercourses, which may increase flood risk.
197. The Government's decision not to implement Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, which would have established a separate approval regime for SuDS in new developments, attracted some criticism from our witnesses.²¹¹ The decision means that any SuDS provision will now be considered directly through the planning system, risking its implementation in cases where developers may raise questions over cost and seek to negotiate out of such provision.
198. The Construction Industry Council was highly critical of the decision, telling us that the decision had created voids in policy, uncertainty in planning policy interpretation, the abandonment of the concept of drainage as "critical infrastructure", no structure for the adoption and maintenance of SuDS, and no measures to address flood resilience at a local scale.²¹²
199. **We recommend that the Government takes a more proactive approach to the provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems. The Government should consider whether to introduce a separate approval regime, as was envisaged in the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, or whether to upgrade the status of Sustainable Drainage Systems to critical infrastructure.**
200. **Further efforts need to be made to increase flood resilience in the built environment. This would include taking steps to reduce the number of new properties built in areas of flood risk against Environment Agency advice. In addition, there should be a requirement for all new properties in flood risk areas to have flood resilience measures built in. Government should also promote a co-ordinated programme of retrofit for the growing number of existing properties in such areas.**

Sustainable design and construction

201. In July 2015, the Government announced it was scrapping a proposed regulation to require all new homes to be carbon neutral from 2016, known as the "zero carbon homes" policy.²¹³ This was justified in the Government's

²¹⁰ Written evidence from the CIC Flood Mitigation and Resilience Group ([BEN0053](#))

²¹¹ Written evidence from the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust ([BEN0209](#)); written evidence from the CIC Flood Mitigation and Resilience Group ([BEN0053](#))

²¹² Written evidence from the CIC Flood Mitigation and Resilience Group ([BEN0053](#))

²¹³ Philip Oldfield, 'UK scraps zero carbon homes plan', *The Guardian*, 10 July 2015: <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/jul/10/uk-scrapes-zero-carbon-home-target> [accessed on 25 January 2016]

2015 “Productivity Plan” on the grounds that it was seeking to continue to reduce the overall burden of regulation on housebuilders.²¹⁴

202. Earlier, in March 2015, the Government had also removed the Code for Sustainable Homes, which allowed councils to adopt their own sustainability standards as a planning requirement for new residential development. Instead, elements of the Code are now incorporated into Building Regulations and defined as “new national technical standards”.²¹⁵ The Government justified this on the basis that it “rationalises the many differing existing standards into a simpler, streamlined system which will reduce burdens and help bring forward much needed new homes”.²¹⁶
203. Both these decisions have attracted criticism. The UK Green Building Council told us:

“The Government has removed the national policy driver as well as removing the ability of local planning authorities (LPAs) to promote locally relevant ambitious policies to deliver energy efficient and sustainable homes. Furthermore, with the removal of the Code for Sustainable Homes, Government has removed the common language that has been used by LPAs and housebuilders or developers to negotiate or work in partnership to deliver better than regulated standards”.²¹⁷

204. Elaborating on this point, we were told that the removal of the zero carbon homes requirement had generated uncertainty for housebuilders:

“In the last 10 years we have had this very clear trajectory and everyone has known where they are going and have had a lot of time to put in place the strategies. Now we do not know where we are going. We do not know when the next update to building regulations might be and, therefore, industry has nothing to place its investment in. Not only have we had wasted investment, but we now have no replacement trajectory. The arguments for repeated investment next time, based on a governmental policy, will be much harder to make”.²¹⁸

205. Worcestershire County Council made a similar point in noting the impact of the Government’s decision on sustainability policy at a local level:

“Withdrawing the Code for Sustainable Homes appears to have sent a signal to developers that sustainability measures are less important than before, meaning that councils wishing to promote better environmental performance in new development will struggle to deliver higher standards. For example, Local Plan policy promoting sustainable building practices has had to be compromised by these changes, and lower standards are now seen to be acceptable”.²¹⁹

²¹⁴ HM Treasury, *Fixing the Foundations: creating a more prosperous nation*, July 2015: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/443898/Productivity_Plan_web.pdf [accessed on 27 January 2016]

²¹⁵ Department for Communities and Local Government, ‘Planning update March 2015’, (25 March 2015): <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/planning-update-march-2015> [accessed on 19 January 2016]

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ Written evidence from the UK Green Building Council ([BEN0081](#))

²¹⁸ [Q 251](#) (Louise Sunderland)

²¹⁹ Written evidence from Worcestershire County Council ([BEN0101](#))

206. We disagree with the Government’s decision to remove the zero carbon homes policy and the Code for Sustainable Homes. These decisions are likely to add to long-term housing costs through a reduction in energy efficiency, and we have heard no clear evidence that they will lead to an increase in housebuilding. Nor has the Government given a clear explanation as to how new homes will be energy efficient and environmentally sustainable without the provision of such standards.
207. **The Government should reverse its decision to remove the requirement for new homes to generate no net carbon emissions (known as the “zero carbon homes” policy) and its decision to remove the Code for Sustainable Homes. The Government must set out and implement a viable trajectory towards energy efficiency and carbon reduction in new homes.**
208. We also received evidence noting that environmental resilience measures would have little positive impact unless they also took account of the needs of the existing housing stock. The Committee on Climate Change noted that most existing housing stock will still be in use by 2050 and that retrofit measures are necessary to improve energy efficiency, increase suitability for low carbon heat sources and increase resilience to even moderate increases in global temperatures, but that “this is not currently happening at any scale”.²²⁰
209. The Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers told us that there were “important questions” regarding the retrofit of existing buildings and that a more systematic approach was needed:
- “There have been numerous practical projects and research studies focusing on retrofit of different types of buildings, both domestic and non-domestic. These need to be brought together and the findings used to inform a scaled up national programme of retrofit to improve both sustainability and resilience of buildings”.²²¹
210. The Mineral Wool Insulation Manufacturers Association noted that Germany had operated a system of low interest retrofit loans to households for 15 years, which had proven popular and reduced some of the reliance of the retrofit industry on direct public subsidy.²²² The National Housing Federation made a similar suggestion, arguing that “a wide range of households should be able to access energy efficiency measures, based on effective targeting and a range of relevant, good quality, and affordable products”.²²³ The UK Green Building Council called for improvements to the energy efficiency of existing buildings to be identified as a national infrastructure priority, backed by a long term infrastructure strategy and government capital investment.²²⁴
211. We also heard evidence, from John Preston and the Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance, that existing retrofit policies were inappropriate for older solid wall buildings and that a “one size fits all” approach was proving unsuccessful.²²⁵ The Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance called instead for a “whole building approach” to retrofit, which would be more sensitive to the context of individual buildings and their practical uses. A

²²⁰ Written evidence from Committee on Climate Change ([BEN0124](#))

²²¹ Written evidence from Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers ([BEN0102](#))

²²² Written evidence from Mineral Wool Insulation Manufacturers Association ([BEN0176](#))

²²³ Written evidence from National Housing Federation ([BEN0152](#))

²²⁴ Written evidence from UK Green Building Council ([BEN0081](#))

²²⁵ Written evidence from John Preston ([BEN0100](#))

“whole building” or “whole house” approach sees a building as an energy system with interdependent parts, all of which must be addressed in retrofit, as opposed to more common approaches which focus on the fabric of buildings.²²⁶

212. It noted that there were significant knowledge gaps in how traditional buildings function and that more technical training of surveyors was needed to help identify the most appropriate retrofit requirements for traditional buildings.²²⁷
213. We also heard evidence in relation to the Government’s decision effectively to end the “Green Deal” through cessation of funding to the Green Deal Finance Company, which provided finance to providers of retrofit measures such as insulation, draught proofing and renewable energy generation. The Government justified this decision on the basis of “low take-up and concerns about industry standards”.²²⁸
214. While some respondents criticised the way the Green Deal had functioned, we heard evidence that replacement financial measures to incentivise retrofitting were still necessary. The Royal Academy of Engineering told us that “new policies are needed urgently in the area of home energy efficiency”.²²⁹ The UK Green Building Council informed us that the withdrawal from the Green Deal had “sent a very damaging message to the industry on future intent”.²³⁰
215. While we recognise the evidence that the Green Deal Finance Company did not operate as effectively as hoped, we believe there remains a compelling case for financial incentive measures to support retrofit and energy efficiency measures in existing homes. This is particularly in light of the additional costs imposed on householders over the long-term by poor energy efficiency performance.
216. **We believe that the Government must be more proactive in supporting retrofit measures for existing buildings, and should examine financial measures and mechanisms which would allow for more widespread retrofitting to take place. These might include a low-interest retrofit loan programme on the German model, or consideration of a more effective replacement for the Green Deal. The Government should consider promoting a “whole building” approach to retrofit to encourage more context-sensitive retrofitting of traditional buildings, looking beyond the building fabric to consider the energy performance of all parts of the building.**

Green infrastructure

217. The importance of Green Infrastructure (GI) was emphasised throughout our inquiry. This is a broad term which can encompass green open spaces such as parks, trees, gardens, green roofs, and spaces associated with

226 Institute for Sustainability, *Retrofit strategies Key Findings: Retrofit project team perspectives* (2012): http://www.instituteforsustainability.co.uk/uploads/File/2236_KeySummary03.pdf [accessed on 20 January 2016]

227 Written evidence from the Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance ([BEN0115](#))

228 Department for Energy and Climate Change, ‘Green Deal Finance Company funding to end’ (July 2015): <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/green-deal-finance-company-funding-to-end> [accessed on 21 January 2016]

229 Written evidence from the Royal Academy of Engineering ([BEN0128](#))

230 Written evidence from the UK Green Building Council ([BEN0081](#))

the capture and dispersal of rainwater. Its value lies in improving the sustainability and resilience of built environments as well as in the delivery of wider social benefits, including improved health outcomes. Its role is, however, poorly defined at a national level, meriting just one reference in the National Planning Policy Framework.

218. Public Health England noted evidence that residents in the most deprived areas of the country were “ten times less likely to live in the greenest areas”. It also cited a range of evidence on the relationship between health and access to green spaces including better self-rated health; reductions in stress and depression; lower levels of obesity; improved mental health; and increased longevity in older people.²³¹
219. The Town and Country Planning Association also emphasised the wider social and economic benefits of Green Infrastructure, noting that it could help to tackle a range of problems including air pollution, the economic attractiveness of places, active travel and reduction in overcrowding of public transport, reduction in water run off to drains, reduction in over-heating in urban areas, and increased social cohesion.²³²
220. The Landscape Institute argued that the long-term benefit of Green Infrastructure was being underrated in current built environment policy. They told us:

“Perhaps it is about the clarity of what Green Infrastructure is. It is misunderstood. Developers see Green Infrastructure sitting on the wrong side of the balance sheet ... there are some developers who are far better at this than others. Certainly it is fair to say that they do not necessarily see this just as something that is nice to have but: can we afford it, or is this something else that we are shoving on the bottom line of a development that is going to cause us a problem in our viability?”.²³³

221. This message was echoed by the Land Trust:

“We are very good at planning for grey infrastructure. We are very good at thinking about services, data, communications, roads, highways, streetlights ... what we do not do particularly well is think about how the Green Infrastructure components of development are connected into those much broader landscapes. When you are thinking about development, when you are going through a process to get approval for that development, we think it would add significant value to the end product if green infrastructure was afforded the comparable degree of importance that grey infrastructure gets currently”.²³⁴

222. The Land Trust was also critical of the Government’s decision to archive the guidance to Green Infrastructure at the beginning of 2015, arguing that “this will make it harder for the sector to understand what is involved, the importance of GI and how to embed it into the built environment”.²³⁵
223. The Forestry and Woodland Advisory Committees Network argued that Green Infrastructure should be fully integrated into infrastructure planning

231 Written evidence from Public Health England ([BEN0186](#))

232 Written evidence from Town and Country Planning Association ([BEN0171](#))

233 [QQ 122-123](#) (Noel Farrer)

234 [Q 122](#) (Iain Taylor)

235 Written evidence from The Land Trust ([BEN0069](#))

alongside transport and water, and that each local authority should have a Green Infrastructure Plan which will include urban trees and woodlands as one element. The Parks Alliance cited evidence from the Natural Capital Committee indicating that green infrastructure provides a “good return” on investment but that this is not embodied in developers’ or planners’ decision-making.²³⁶

224. **The Government must do more to protect and promote Green Infrastructure in national policy and guidance, including setting out its benefits for sustainability. It should also encourage local authorities to set minimum standards for Green Infrastructure provision and management in local plans and in planning decision-making. Within and beyond Government, there must be wider recognition of the fact that Green Infrastructure is an asset, and offers wider economic, health and social benefits.**

236 Written evidence from The Parks Alliance ([BEN0133](#))

CHAPTER 5: DELIVERING MORE HOUSING

The national housing policy debate

225. Housing constitutes the principal footprint of the built environment and, as such, housing policy is closely linked with built environment policy at a national level. No initiatives for the improvement of the built environment are complete without an understanding of how they relate to housebuilding and the maintenance of existing housing. Without adequate housing provision to meet the full range of social needs, there is little chance of any other built environment policy objectives being fulfilled.
226. The Government has recently given particular focus to the need to increase housing supply. We heard a firm consensus to the effect that delivery of additional new homes has not kept pace with demand for a number of years, and that this undersupply has had a range of negative impacts, most notably on the affordability of housing across tenures.²³⁷
227. Some reports indicate that the UK's population will pass 70 million in the next 12 years,²³⁸ while ONS data indicates that the number of single-person households has increased by 11% since the early 1970s, placing further pressure on existing housing stock.²³⁹ It therefore seems clear that housing affordability for both renters and buyers will continue to worsen over time unless there is a step change in new housing supply.
228. Most recent figures from the Department for Communities and Local Government indicate that a total of 124,490 new homes were completed in England in the financial year 2014/15.²⁴⁰ While this figure represents the highest annual completion rate since 2008/09, it remains significantly lower than the generally agreed figure for additional annual housing need in England, which submissions to the committee indicated stood at between 240,000 and 250,000.²⁴¹
229. Almost all new housing supply comes from one of three sources: private sector housebuilders; non-profit and charitable organisations such as housing associations; and local authorities. Forty years ago local authorities contributed over 40% of all new housebuilding and were often completing over 100,000 new homes per year alone.²⁴² Following changes to government policy from the 1980s onwards,²⁴³ local authority housebuilding progressively declined, reaching a low point of just 60 new homes across England in both

237 Written evidence from Dr Tim Brown of De Montfort University ([BEN0088](#)), The Chartered Institute of Building ([BEN0043](#)), National Housing Federation ([BEN0152](#))

238 BBC News, 'UK population 'to top 70 million in 12 years'', 29 October 2015: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34666382> [accessed on 22 January 2016]

239 Office for National Statistics, *Families and Households, 2014* (28 January 2015): http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_393133.pdf [accessed on 28 January 2016]

240 Department for Communities and Local Government, *Live Tables on House Building* [Table 209]: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-house-building> [accessed on 5 February 2016]

241 Written evidence from Public Health England ([BEN0186](#)), Town and Country Planning Association ([BEN0171](#)), Construction Industry Council ([BEN0071](#)), Dr Tim Brown of De Montfort University ([BEN0088](#))

242 Department for Communities and Local Government, *Live Tables on House Building* [Table 209], *op. cit.* [accessed on 5 February 2016]

243 Oxford Brookes University, *Housing market and low income housing provision in the UK* (March 2011): <http://rec.brookes.ac.uk/research/relp/network/resources/Housing%20market%20and%20low%20income%20housing%20provision%20in%20UK.ppt> [accessed on 9 February 2016]

1999–00 and 2001–02.²⁴⁴ Following further reforms to support a revival of council housebuilding, there has been a small increase in these figures, with 1,360 council homes having been built in 2014/15.²⁴⁵

230. Figure One (see Chapter Two) set out post-war performance in housing completions, and illustrated the sharp decrease in local authority housebuilding over recent decades. Further details are provided in Tables One and Two, below.

Table 1: Historic overall housing completion rates in England²⁴⁶

Year	New dwellings completed
1974–75	229,360
1979–80	209,460
1984–85	181,990
1989–90	179,360
1994–95	157,970
1999–2000	141,800
2004–05	155,890
2009–10	119,910
2014–15	124,490

Table 2: Historic local authority housing completion rates in England²⁴⁷

Year	New local authority dwellings
1974–75	98,610
1979–80	74,790
1984–85	29,200
1989–90	14,700
1994–95	850
1999–2000	60
2004–05	100
2009–10	370
2014–15	1,360

231. Statistics confirm that the private sector has not made up the shortfall created by the effective removal of local authorities from direct provision of new homes. There has been an absolute reduction in the number of homes built by the private sector over the same period (from 121,490 in 1974/75 to 96,120 in 2014/15). Housing associations are now a much more significant contributor to housebuilding (building 27,020 homes in 2014/15)

²⁴⁴ Department for Communities and Local Government, *Live Tables on House Building* [Table 209], *op. cit.* [accessed on 5 February 2016]

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

but are unlikely to reach the capacity to match the completion rates of local authorities at their peak.

232. This generational reduction in new housing supply has also had an impact on the type and tenure of housing available. Local authorities mostly built low-cost rented housing, a tenure form that has been marginalised in new build over the years with reductions in subsidies for affordable homes²⁴⁸ and the lack of replacements for homes sold through policies such as the Right to Buy.²⁴⁹
233. We heard a large amount of evidence that ‘mixed communities’ (where people on different incomes, different tenures and of different backgrounds live in close proximity) were more successful and desirable places to live.²⁵⁰ We are concerned that recent policy measures, as well as some provisions in the Housing and Planning Bill, will further marginalise low cost rented housing in many areas and thus further undermine mixed communities.
234. While there is little dispute that the current rate of delivery of new housing falls short of need across tenures, there is less consensus as to the nature of the policy measures needed to remedy this shortfall, and of the capacity of the private, housing association and local authority sectors to increase delivery. In particular, there are a range of differing views as to where reform attempts should be focused and on where resources should be directed.
235. As discussed in Chapter Two, the Government has, since 2010, sought to increase housing supply through reforms to planning policy. This was most clearly manifested by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), adopted in 2012. Among other measures, this introduced a “presumption in favour of sustainable development” which obliges local authorities to “positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area” in plan-making, and to grant permission for development proposals unless any adverse impacts of doing so would “significantly and demonstrably outweigh” their benefits.²⁵¹
236. The Government indicated that it would continue to focus on planning reform as a means of increasing housing supply, including ensuring up-to-date Local Plans are in place by 2017; by introducing a “permission in principle” for new housing development; and supporting home ownership through the delivery of 200,000 discounted “starter homes” for first time buyers through the planning system.²⁵²
237. The Government has also signified its intent to direct resources towards promoting home ownership over and above rented products which have historically been the larger recipient of public investment through grants to local authorities and housing associations. Extending the opportunity for

248 Michael E. Stone, *Social Housing in the UK and US: Evolution, Issues and Prospects*, (October 2003): <http://www.gold.ac.uk/media/migrated/media/goldsmiths/departments/researchcentres/centreforurbanandcommunityresearchcucr/pdf/Stonefinal.pdf> [accessed on 9 February 2016]

249 Pete Apps, ‘Councils struggle to replace homes sold under the right to buy’, *Inside Housing*, (4 April 2014): <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/councils-struggle-to-replace-homes-sold-under-the-right-to-buy/7003084.article> [accessed on 9 February 2016]

250 Written evidence from Care Repair England (BEN0091), Judith Martin (BEN0148); Q187 (Adrian Penfold)

251 Department for Communities and Local Government, *National Planning Policy Framework*, (March 2012), para 14:https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf [accessed on 27 January 2016]

252 Written evidence from Department for Communities and Local Government (BEN0190)

home ownership through policies such as starter homes has been a particular focus of the Government's Housing and Planning Bill.²⁵³

238. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) told us that planning reform was necessary to deliver a step change in housing supply. The CBI welcomed the NPPF and other national reforms but stated that "maintaining progress on planning will require these reforms to embed to create political stability and certainty for business" and noted that "sustaining planning reform will also require improvements in performance".²⁵⁴
239. Others, however, suggested that planning policy was far from the only constraint on the ability of built environment professionals to support an increase in housing supply and identified, for example, land banking, skills and finance shortages, development viability constraints, restrictions on direct local authority housebuilding, and a lack of support for the delivery of other forms of affordable housing.
240. We now consider each of these obstacles in turn and recommend changes to national policy which may help to address the shortfall between housing need and new housing delivery in England.
241. **We believe that, in addition to measures to support increased private sector housing development, and to encourage home ownership, there should be renewed focus on how built environment policy can support mixed communities including through the provision of long-term affordable rented housing.**
242. **This should include supporting housing associations in their aspiration to increase housing supply, including reviewing the impact of financial constraints and changes to Government policy.**
243. We did not take detailed evidence on the circumstances or state of the housing stock in the private rented sector. We note, however, that this is one of the key areas of focus for the current inquiry of the Economic Affairs Committee of the House of Lords.

The local authority role

244. As discussed above, local authorities are no longer a major direct contributor to new housebuilding in England, though recent years have seen a modest revival.²⁵⁵
245. The first increase in council housebuilding came in response to the extension of social housing grant to local authorities through the Local Authority New Build initiative of 2008 to 2010.²⁵⁶ Subsequently, the introduction of the housing "self-financing" settlement in 2012 enabled councils to retain any surplus generated from rental income to reinvest in existing and new housing,

253 Department for Communities and Local Government, 'Historic Housing and Planning Bill will transform generation rent into generation buy' (October 2015): <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/historic-housing-and-planning-bill-will-transform-generation-rent-into-generation-buy> [accessed on 9 February 2016]

254 Written evidence from the Confederation of British Industry ([BEN0054](#))

255 Department for Communities and Local Government, *Live Tables on House Building* [Table 208], *op. cit.* [accessed on 5 February 2016]

256 Homes and Communities Agency, *Local authorities: bidding for new build*, March 2011: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110303161527/http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/bidding_for_new_build [accessed on 5 February 2016]

rather than paying it back to the Treasury as had previously been the case. At 1,360 new homes in 2014/15, however, local authority housebuilding remains low in historical terms.

246. To understand better the ability of councils to deliver sustainable new housing development through direct building, we visited new homes constructed by the Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust (BMHT). This initiative was launched by Birmingham City Council in 2009 in response to the then Government's Local Authority New Build initiative.
247. BMHT has delivered over 1,400 homes (either completed or under construction) since 2009, working with the private sector on construction and Capita on project management. The homes are provided across a range of housing tenures including market rent and private sale, the latter of which helps to subsidise the delivery of new homes at council rented levels.²⁵⁷
248. The BMHT model is a good example of the ability of local authorities to deliver new housing. Councils often control significant amounts of developable land in their areas—avoiding the risk that land costs will make affordable housing unviable—and are also able to identify and plan for new housing need through their planning function. The multi-tenure model exemplified by Birmingham and pursued by other local authorities also helps to support sustainable mixed communities.
249. However, the ability of local authorities to fulfil their housebuilding potential is subject to a range of constraints, most notably on their capacity to borrow against future rental income. Borrowing through the Housing Revenue Account is capped at a fixed level by the Treasury in every local authority. We were told by Arun District Council that this acts as an arbitrary limit on their housebuilding ambitions.²⁵⁸
250. We were also told by Arun District Council that provisions in the Welfare Reform and Work Bill to reduce all social rents by 1% for four years had led to the council stopping its building programme, following estimates that the policy would cost it around £4 million in lost housing income.²⁵⁹
251. We were impressed by the potential of initiatives such as BMHT, which we believe can provide a considerable increment to overall housing supply as well as supporting new affordable housing. Historic housing completion figures clearly indicate that, while the private and housing association sectors have made significant contributions to new housebuilding, overall delivery rates have never recovered from the withdrawal of local authorities from the sector. While councils may never return to the scale of housing delivery they were able to achieve in the 1970s and earlier, we believe that policies such as borrowing caps and social rent cuts which prevent them from exploring their housebuilding potential represent a considerable wasted opportunity.
252. **Local authorities can play an important role in meeting the need for housing, but in recent decades have largely lost their ability to contribute to new supply. While there has been a minor revival of council housebuilding in recent years, borrowing restrictions limit**

²⁵⁷ Capita Property and Infrastructure, 'Birmingham Affordable Municipal Housing Trust': http://www.capitaproperty.co.uk/our_expertise/all_projects/birmingham_housing_trust.aspx [accessed on 5 February 2016]

²⁵⁸ [Q 222](#) (Councillor Gillian Brown)

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

their development capacity, and proposed social rent cuts may threaten the viability of new schemes altogether.

253. **In recognition that housing need has rarely been met in England without a significant direct contribution from councils, the Government should take steps to ensure that local authorities are able to fulfil their potential as direct builders of new mixed tenure housing. This should include reviewing the impact of borrowing restrictions and proposed social rent reductions.**

Site delivery and land assembly

The importance of smaller sites and SME development finance

254. In addition to measures to support local authority housebuilding, we heard a considerable range of evidence on the need to take steps to increase housing development in the private sector.
255. In particular, we were told that there is scope for policymakers to provide greater support for development on smaller sites, which could provide a significant increment to housing supply. Within local authorities, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments are used to identify sites for housing construction. The Federation of Master Builders told us that these assessments failed to identify sites which would provide fewer than 10 housing units, resulting in difficulties bringing them forward into the planning system.²⁶⁰
256. There are currently no specific policies in either the NPPF or the accompanying National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) in relation to small sites and how they should be dealt with in the planning system.
257. We believe there is a case for a stronger national planning policy focus on the development potential of small sites. The Government should consider amendments either to the NPPF or NPPG to clarify the need for local authorities to promote the delivery of small sites.
258. We heard evidence in favour of a more proactive local authority approach to developing such sites, including supporting SME builders who may be best placed to build on them, as well as supplementary guidance for small sites to encourage their swift delivery through the planning system.
259. Following the recession, many small and medium sized housebuilders went out of business and have yet to re-enter the market in volume. Lord Best advised us that most private sector housebuilding was in the hands of “half a dozen to a dozen” firms.²⁶¹ Chris Carr, of the Federation of Master Builders, told us that SME builders were building around two-thirds of all new homes 25 years ago, but are now building only one-third.²⁶² John Slaughter, of the Home Builders’ Federation, noted that there had been a 75% reduction in the number of SME housebuilders over the last 25 to 30 years.²⁶³
260. By promoting small sites, local authorities could help deliver not just a direct increase to housing delivery, but could help increase development by supporting the aspirations of SME builders to re-enter the market. Such

260 [Q 104](#) (Chris Carr)

261 [Q 53](#) (Lord Best)

262 [Q 95](#) (Chris Carr)

263 [Q 96](#) (John Slaughter)

a policy would therefore help to resolve the dual problems of sites with development potential lying unbuilt, and of the current lack of diversity in the housebuilding industry which has led to the dominance of larger firms, particularly since the financial crisis of 2008.

261. **We believe that smaller housebuilding companies can play a bigger part in addressing the housing shortage. The Government should review the NPPF and NPPG with a view to encouraging local authorities to identify and facilitate development on smaller sites. The Government and local authorities should encourage and enable SME builders to use these sites where appropriate, in order to support diversity in the housebuilding market and to help increase housing supply.**
262. Restrictions on finance were also identified as a key constraint on increasing housing supply from the SME sector. The Federation of Master Builders told us:

“The biggest problem is still finance. The SME sector is still struggling to access finance through the traditional banking system, and having to look at alternatives—we have been with our bank for at least 80 years and we are now deemed as a risky project for no other reason than we are an SME housebuilder”.²⁶⁴

263. The Government has taken some measures to support smaller housebuilders. These include:
 - The Housing Growth Partnership, a fund to make equity investments in small projects;
 - A proposal to ‘directly commission’ SME builders to develop 13,000 homes in five identified locations;²⁶⁵ and
 - The introduction of the Builders’ Finance Fund, a £525 million scheme launched in 2014 to restart and speed up small building projects.²⁶⁶
264. The Department for Communities and Local Government indicated that the Housing Growth Partnership aims to support around 50 investments and around 2,000 additional homes. It informed us that “demand has been strong with a number of deals in the pipeline”. It also noted that the Builders’ Finance Fund would be expanded and merged with the Custom Build Serviced Plots fund, renamed as the Housing Development Fund. The fund would provide £1 billion of loan finance for up to five years to support the delivery of 26,500 homes up to 2024/25.²⁶⁷
265. The Federation of Master Builders welcomed the Builders’ Finance Fund, but informed us that, according to surveys, “access to finance challenges remain severest for those developing the very smallest sites, and for small

264 [Q 95-96](#) (Chris Carr)

265 Department for Communities and Local Government, ‘PM: the government will directly build affordable homes’ (4 January 2016): <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-the-government-will-directly-build-affordable-homes> [accessed on 4 February 2016]

266 Department for Communities and Local Government, ‘Builders Finance Fund: guidance and shortlist’ (8 September 2014): <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/builders-finance-fund> [accessed on 4 February 2015]

267 Supplementary written evidence from Department for Communities and Local Government ([BEN0225](#))

contractors and other new entrants seeking to access finance to bring forward their own developments—these firms invariably find themselves refused because of their lack of ‘track record’”.²⁶⁸ It also stated that “until the lending positions of major banks change, it seems unlikely that the sector will receive finance on the scale and on the terms it needs to drive a real transformation in the output of SME housebuilders”.²⁶⁹

266. **We recommend that the Government should identify the barriers to access now facing SME builders and review how access to finance for this sector could be improved. The Government should also continue to review the progress of existing initiatives to support small builders, including the Housing Growth Partnership and Housing Development Fund.**

Larger sites, and compulsory purchase powers

267. Many larger development sites lie in the sole control of large housebuilders. We heard that this means that they have sole control over the pace of delivery, which is dictated both by the construction capacity of the firm in question and by their desire to phase development in a manner that optimises their return on investment.²⁷⁰
268. This issue was noted by the Housing and Planning Minister, who told us that:

“One of our challenges is that private developers’ business model means that they will tend to build out, on average, 48 homes a year on any given site, so if there is a site of 900 homes with one developer it will take 15 years. If you have three developers building 300 each, they will do it in five years. Therefore, local authorities need to look at that. I visited Didcot last week. That is a site where over 400 homes were built out in a year, but it has four developers on the site competing with each other to build in a high demand area, so it can be done”.²⁷¹

269. We also heard evidence that complex land ownership can create obstacles to rapid development. Steve Melligan of the Crown Estate told us that “one of the many drawbacks of the planning system is site delivery, and when you have multiple land ownerships that is often the biggest constraint to getting sites delivered quickly and efficiently”.²⁷²
270. Local authorities retain the power to initiate a compulsory purchase process to help support land assembly on major sites. The consensus is that compulsory purchase is best used as a mechanism of last resort and as a way to promote agreement between landowners and local authorities, but views differ as to how it should be administered. The power is little used in practice and has regularly been the subject of reform proposals, including in the current Government’s Housing and Planning Bill.
271. The bill proposes a range of reforms to compulsory purchase procedures, which are largely administrative in nature, including increased rights to

268 Written evidence from Federation of Master Builders ([BEN0220](#))

269 *Ibid.*

270 [Q 43](#) (Toby Lloyd)

271 [Q 333](#) (Brandon Lewis MP)

272 [Q 83](#) (Steve Melligan)

enter land, new means for resolving compensation claims, dispute resolution and the power to override easements.²⁷³

272. While we welcome any reforms to improve the simplicity and fairness of compulsory purchase procedures, we were told that the Government's reforms do not go far enough. In particular, in focusing on relatively minor administrative reforms, it was suggested that they fail to incorporate a wider vision of the potential use of compulsory purchase in facilitating development on large sites.
273. The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) suggested that:
- "Development Corporations have the power through compulsory purchase to deliver comprehensive land assembly. Compulsory purchase powers are a vital part of this effectiveness but changes to the compensation code in the 1960s have meant there is no longer a fair balance between the needs of landowners and taxpayers. This issue is not being addressed by the Government's forthcoming changes to compulsory purchase which focus on technical issues".²⁷⁴
274. The TCPA elaborated on this point in noting that, following the passage of the Land Compensation Act 1961, compensation rules for land subject to compulsory purchase are based on market value including "hope value" for speculative future uses such as housing. The TCPA argued that this means "the landowner is in effect asking not simply for the best current use market value, plus all normal allowances for disturbance, but also for a speculative value based on the future actions of a public authority. They are asking for compensation for development rights which they do not own for betterment values for which they have no logical right".²⁷⁵
275. This view was echoed by URBED, who argued for revisions to the 1961 Act to require the price paid for land to be related to its existing use, rather than its possible future use (known as 'hope value').²⁷⁶ The latter often has the effect of requiring substantial payments to the landowner to reflect the increase in value of a site when it receives planning permission for new housing.
276. Toby Lloyd, Director of Policy at housing and homelessness charity Shelter, argued that compulsory purchase "has fallen into terrible disuse" and that prices paid to landowners did not usually include the costs of policies such as infrastructure and affordable housing, which are then entirely borne by the developer.²⁷⁷
277. This view was partially echoed by Dame Kate Barker, who argued that "this is such a regulated market that the public sector sets the price to some extent" and, while opposing valuation based on simple agricultural value of greenfield sites, argued that "the full price" would be too high in the context of new town developments.²⁷⁸

273 [Explanatory Notes to the Housing and Planning Bill](#) [HL Bill 87 (2015–16)-EN]

274 Written evidence from Town and Country Planning Association ([BEN0171](#))

275 *Ibid.*

276 Written evidence from URBED ([BEN0032](#))

277 [Q 47](#) (Toby Lloyd)

278 [Q 47](#) (Dame Kate Barker)

278. The evidence is clear that the matter of compensation for landowners is contentious, and raises a number of technical and legal considerations together with the questions of fair compensation and development viability.
279. At present, a landowner receives the current market value of their land including hope value, though this excludes any value attributable to the specific scheme which forms the basis of the compulsory purchase. Any proposal for lesser compensation raises legal questions upon which we do not offer a view.
280. Separate from the specific issue of compulsory purchase, there is a history of taxation of development gains. In such cases it is for the Government to determine the level of taxation and the level of financial support for development projects. Such taxation must also be borne in mind in considering reforms to compulsory purchase.
281. In the absence of consensus as to how compensation might be calculated in a way which ensures fairness to landowners while also aiding the viability of development, we do not make a specific recommendation on how compulsory purchase may be reformed. We do, however, support the case for a wider review of compulsory purchase to ensure that compulsory purchase operates in a way which facilitates sustainable growth, improves places according to the community's needs and provides fair (but not disproportionate) compensation to landowners.
282. In addition, the Government should promote the use of partnerships and other similar arrangements, with the aim of minimising the need to resort to compulsory purchase and bringing forward development for which planning permission has been granted.
283. **We believe the Government should expand its review of compulsory purchase procedure set out in the Housing and Planning Bill to incorporate a wider review of the functioning of compulsory purchase and its role in supporting development. The review should focus on seeking the most appropriate balance between improving neighbourhoods, securing necessary development and ensuring the landowner receives fair compensation.**

Brownfield, greenfield and Green Belt

284. It has been the policy of successive governments to promote development on brownfield sites as a priority over and above greenfield development. This used to be embodied in a national “brownfield first” policy.²⁷⁹ Though the NPPF does not contain such a policy it does encourage local authorities to consider a “locally appropriate target” for the reuse of brownfield land, and states that planning policies and decisions should encourage the effective use of land by re-using such sites.²⁸⁰
285. We have observed a general consensus that brownfield land can make a positive contribution to the nation’s housing need, and that it should be utilised first where possible, a position to which we are sympathetic. There

²⁷⁹ Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners, ‘Brownfield First: common sense or a political minefield?’ (June 2015): <http://nlpplanning.com/blog/brownfield-first/> [accessed on 27 January 2016]

²⁸⁰ Department for Communities and Local Government, *National Planning Policy Framework* (2012): https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf [accessed on 27 January 2016]

is less consensus, however, over specific policies to promote brownfield development.

286. The Government has undertaken a range of initiatives to support brownfield development including introducing a £1 billion “brownfield fund” to help cover site remediation costs. The introduction of permission in principle and a brownfield register to identify sites which are suitable for new housing development, as proposed in the Housing and Planning Bill, is intended to expedite the granting of planning permission on brownfield sites.²⁸¹ It is, as yet, unclear how matters such as public consultation arrangements and scheme details such as resilience measures will be dealt with through the permission in principle route.
287. We recognise that there is a continuing debate as to which specific locations are most suitable for large-scale new housing; garden cities, urban extensions or inner city redevelopment, for example. It is apparent, however, that brownfield land alone will not resolve England’s housing shortage. Even the most optimistic assessments of brownfield land availability would still require some greenfield housing development to meet demand.²⁸² A question arises, then, as to how best to identify greenfield sites which may be most sustainable and how to ensure that cheaper and more profitable greenfield developments do not undermine the delivery of housing on brownfield land and encourage unsustainable sprawl.
288. The Green Belt remains popular as a means of containing urban sprawl. We received a considerable amount of evidence as to how Green Belt policy operates in practice, including from government and local authorities, and its continuing importance to the English planning system. We were consistently told that, on balance, the Green Belt had achieved its aims.²⁸³
289. It is important to separate rhetoric from reality in addressing Green Belt policy. There is no absolute restriction *per se* either on building within the Green Belt or on redrawing Green Belt boundaries to accommodate future development needs. The NPPF states that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in “exceptional circumstances”. Local authorities, including Birmingham City Council and Bath and North East Somerset Council, told us how this test can be met and Green Belt boundaries be successfully redrawn.
290. We support the principle of the Green Belt as a means of containing urban sprawl and recognise its importance in ensuring that development is directed to the right areas. There are, however, circumstances (such as those in Birmingham and Bath) in which it may be prudent to review Green Belt boundaries where they do not meet the specified purposes in the NPPF of preventing sprawl, preventing the merger of neighbouring towns, preventing encroachment into the countryside, preserving the character of historic towns and assisting in urban regeneration. In such cases, it is reasonable for land which does not meet Green Belt purposes to be reviewed for its suitability to

281 [Explanatory Notes to the Housing and Planning Bill](#) [HL Bill 87 (2015–16)-EN]

282 Richard Garlick, ‘Brownfield alone won’t solve housing shortage’ *Planning*, (7 November 2014): <http://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1320561/brownfield-alone-wont-solve-housing-shortage-richard-garlick> [accessed on 27 January 2016]

283 Written evidence from Campaign to Protect Rural England ([BEN0084](#)), Q 119 (Hugh Ellis)

meet housing need, if there are no other suitable locations outside the Green Belt.²⁸⁴

291. While the “exceptional circumstances” test is clearly expressed in the NPPF, its interpretation by both the Government and planning inspectors is less clear. We were told that Green Belt boundaries could only be revisited through the local plan process as part of a much wider assessment of future growth and housing need²⁸⁵, meaning that no local authority is likely to redraw local Green Belt unless they see it as absolutely necessary.
292. We heard evidence from across the spectrum that the “exceptional circumstances” test should be made clearer, to provide more certainty as to when Green Belt boundary reviews may or may not be appropriate. The Campaign to Protect Rural England told us that “the Government should largely maintain existing policy, but they need to be clearer when exceptions to policy are and are not acceptable”.²⁸⁶
293. Gateshead Council echoed this view, telling us that there was a case for stronger guidance on the conduct of Green Belt reviews:

“... there is no national guidance, so everybody adopts their own opinion as to how that should happen, which is probably why it sometimes takes an awfully long time: because it has to be justified so much in the local area. If we had national guidance about how to do it, or best practice, that might be helpful”.²⁸⁷
294. **The protections afforded to the Green Belt are important; current NPPF policy on the Green Belt should remain. We recommend, however, that the Government should publish clearer guidance on the definition of the “exceptional circumstances” in which Green Belt boundaries may be revised.**
295. **The Government should also consider strengthening the priority given to brownfield development, including considering the reintroduction of a “brownfield first” policy at national level.**

Development management procedures

Local planning departments

296. A fundamental component of the “plan-led” system in England is the power of local authorities to determine individual planning applications, testing proposals against relevant local development plan policies and, where these are absent, the National Planning Policy Framework. This is known as the development management function of the local authority.
297. As detailed in Chapter Two, local authorities are the ultimate decision-making body on the vast majority of planning applications, though unsuccessful applicants may appeal to the Planning Inspectorate for reconsideration of a decision. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government also has the power to “call in” both planning applications and appeal decisions for his own determination where they meet particular criteria.

²⁸⁴ See written evidence from Roger Hutton ([BEN0202](#)) on Green Belt policy interpretation.

²⁸⁵ [Q 275](#) (Anneliese Hutchinson)

²⁸⁶ [Q 110](#) (Paul Miner)

²⁸⁷ [Q 275](#) (Anneliese Hutchinson)

298. Local authorities are expected to abide by statutory time limits for the determination of applications. These are 13 weeks for major development (meaning developments of 10 or more homes, or over 1,000 square metres) and eight weeks for all other types of development. If a local authority fails to meet these timeframes, the applicant has the right to appeal to the Secretary of State on the basis of ‘non-determination’.²⁸⁸
299. If a local planning authority persistently fails to make planning decisions on time, the Secretary of State has the power to “designate” the local authority as underperforming. In these cases, applicants for major developments may make applications directly to the Secretary of State for so long as the designation remains in place.²⁸⁹
300. Recent governments have taken legislative steps with the intention of increasing the speed of planning decision-making, including changing the definition of an “underperforming” planning authority to incorporate any authority which makes 40% or less of its decisions on time.²⁹⁰
301. We were told by the Government that the time taken to determine planning applications, and the bureaucracy involved, was a constraint on the ability of the planning and development industry to deliver growth successfully, including new housing.²⁹¹ Jones Lang LaSalle suggested that planning applications were often hindered by requirements for superfluous information, and told us that “there needs to be a tightening up on what a planning application comprises and what is truly necessary”.²⁹² CBRE suggested that local authorities could provide clearer planning advice at an earlier stage, and that in some cases “one leaves without any clear steer as to whether or not we are engaging in a scheme that has a prospect of going forward and if so, what the key issues are on which we need to engage”.²⁹³
302. The Crown Estate also argued that the quality of decision-making in local authority planning departments was variable, describing it as “broadly speaking a lot better than it was” although there were still problems with some local authorities in securing detailed planning permission and agreement to planning conditions, which must be approved before building can begin.²⁹⁴
303. The Housing and Planning Minister expressed the view that it might be untenable for smaller districts to continue to run stand-alone planning departments. He told us:

“I would be the first to say that it is untenable for small district councils to have stand-alone planning departments for a couple of reasons, not only financial and what it costs to run, but in an area such as Norfolk where there are a number of small local authorities, it seems to be much

288 Department for Communities and Local Government, ‘Planning Practice Guidance: What are the time periods for determining a planning application?’ (6 March 2014): <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/determining-a-planning-application/what-are-the-time-periods-for-determining-a-planning-application/> [accessed on 5 February 2016]

289 *Ibid.*

290 Local Government Lawyer, ‘DCLG to raise speed threshold for “under performing” planning authorities’ (19 June 2014): http://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18926%3Adclg-to-raise-speed-threshold-for-qunder-performingq-planning-authorities&catid=60%3Ahousing-articles&Itemid=28 [accessed on 8 February 2016]

291 Written evidence from Department for Communities and Local Government ([BEN0190](#))

292 [Q 185](#) (Guy Bransby)

293 [Q 185](#) (Richard Lemon)

294 [Q 80](#) (Steve Melligan)

more logical to bring them together in one or two single units where you get a couple of benefits. The first is a cost saving, because we are finding across the country that shared management arrangements save up to 18% on average... equally, you have a better career offer for your planners".²⁹⁵

304. **We recommend that, in the light of declining resources, smaller planning authorities should be encouraged to share resources and built environment expertise with neighbouring authorities.**

The role of Development Corporations

305. We heard evidence regarding the Development Corporation model, as has been introduced at Ebbsfleet and at the Olympic Park and Old Oak Common in London. Development Corporations have historically been introduced in locations such as the London Docklands area and the post-war new towns which had been prioritised by the government for new development.

306. In these areas, the Corporation takes over planning decision-making powers from the local authority with a mandate to deliver major development to a clear timetable. In some cases (such as at the Olympic Park) the Corporation takes on plan-making powers, though in other cases these remain with the local authority. They also often take on powers of compulsory purchase.²⁹⁶

307. While Development Corporations are not suitable for every circumstance, there are cases—particularly on large scale projects such as new garden city locations or major brownfield redevelopment—where they have proven to be a successful model. Michael Cassidy CBE, Chairman of Ebbsfleet Development Corporation, set out some of its attributes:

“The biggest advantage is that Development Corporations operate across boundaries, so you can put them in place where there is more than one local authority involved, and they can prevail because planning powers pass to the corporation ... it has to be carefully chosen, holistic, and, as we are, one complete site rather than fragmented, and it has to be in co-operation with existing authorities”.²⁹⁷

308. Michael Cassidy CBE also noted that the Ebbsfleet site had been prioritised for growth by successive governments for many years, but that very little construction had taken place. He noted that since the inception of the Development Corporation in April 2015, masterplanning work had already commenced and a business plan had been submitted to government, demonstrating the ability of Development Corporations to act swiftly to accelerate the development process.²⁹⁸

309. Evidence received from the Greater London Authority set out the benefits of establishing a Development Corporation at Old Oak Common, a major brownfield regeneration site in West London. They told us:

295 [Q 337](#) (Brandon Lewis MP)

296 Powers to introduce Mayoral Development Corporations were introduced by the [Localism Act 2011](#). Powers for the government to establish Development Corporations exist through the [Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980](#).

297 [Q 245](#) (Michael Cassidy)

298 [Q 242](#) (Michael Cassidy)

“As a Mayoral Development Corporation, the OPDC²⁹⁹ brings together local decision making into one co-ordinated authority, with borough leaders serving alongside transport agencies, business leaders, local representation and education, planning and regeneration experts on a publicly accountable Board to work cohesively together with the shared ambition to capitalise on the opportunity for homes and jobs from the significant Government investment in the Old Oak Common station”.

310. The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) highlighted the ability of Development Corporations to capture uplifts in land value through compulsory purchase powers, the income from which could be used for investment in supporting infrastructure. While the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation has compulsory purchase powers, it is not intended that it should become the principal landowner; Mr Cassidy told us that “we are going to adopt a partnership approach ... whereby we have an agreement with the land owners as to how this will proceed”.³⁰⁰
311. **The Government should consider the potential for extending the Development Corporation model to other major sites in England, where larger housing sites might benefit from having a single delivery authority with stronger powers and where local authorities are supportive.**

Unbuilt sites with planning permission

312. A frequent theme of public debate around housing delivery has been the issue of sites with planning permission for new homes which have yet to be developed.
313. Recent figures produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government indicate that around 251,000 homes were granted planning permission in England in the year to 30 September 2015.³⁰¹ However, only around 124,490 homes were actually completed in 2014/15.³⁰² A range of reasons have been cited for this disparity, along with policy proposals to address it.
314. Dame Kate Barker argued that the extent of “unbuilt” housing was exaggerated because it included major sites which were in the process of being built out over a number of years.³⁰³ Jones Lang LaSalle gave a number of reasons for permitted sites being unbuilt, including sites not being in the control of developers; the time taken to discharge conditions; market conditions and the availability of skills and labour; and the lack of diversity in the housebuilding and development industry, including the loss of small and medium sized businesses during the recession.³⁰⁴
315. We also heard evidence that leaving sites unbuilt can often be a rational economic decision to maximise sale values or to provide guaranteed development pipelines. Shelter informed us that:

299 Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation

300 [Q 244](#) (Michael Cassidy)

301 Department for Communities and Local Government, *Planning Applications in England: July to September 2015* (December 2015): https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/485977/Planning_Applications_July_to_September_2015.pdf [accessed on 5 February 2016]

302 Department for Communities and Local Government, *Live Tables on House Building* [Table 209], *op. cit.* [accessed on 5 February 2016]

303 [Q 51](#) (Dame Kate Barker)

304 [Q 187](#) (Guy Bransby)

“There is plenty of evidence that planning permissions have been going up very fast and housebuilding has not. There is actually very little direct evidence and connection between the number of homes that get built and the number of planning permissions that are secured ... developers quite rationally have no interest in building so many homes that prices are lowered. Therefore, it makes absolute market logic sense to constrain housing supply to maintain maximum sales prices”.³⁰⁵

316. Dame Kate Barker also noted that it was rational for developers to have large “land banks” because of uncertainty over which sites might be granted planning permission. She suggested that local authorities would support the sequencing of development meaning that even in cases where landowners had control of 15 years of land for development, the local authority would be unlikely to grant permission for all of it immediately.³⁰⁶
317. The issue of “land banking” is also connected to the shortage of diversity in the housebuilding industry and the dominance of larger volume housebuilders, particularly following the recession. It was suggested that this could be addressed by promoting a greater mix of large and small developers in the housebuilding industry. The Federation of Master Builders told us:

“The idea that a small developer will buy such land and sit on it is just not going to happen. The national housebuilders are accused all the time of landbanking, but in their defence from purchasing a piece of land to actually building the first property on site is probably three to five years. People do not realise that we are probably going for a year on pre-application before we actually put an application in”.³⁰⁷

318. We also heard evidence relating to overseas nations which have achieved higher build-out rates. Nigel Atkins informed us that, in France, mixed-tenure housing sites of 400 units could be completed in as little as three years.³⁰⁸
319. There have been a range of policy proposals to address the issue of sites with planning permission that are sitting undeveloped, including the imposition of some form of charge to incentivise swifter housing delivery on such sites.³⁰⁹ Any such measure would necessarily need to be discretionary, as it should be recognised that there are legitimate reasons for building work not having commenced on particular sites, including development viability issues and undischarged planning conditions.
320. The Local Government Association (LGA) called for financial penalties for developers who have sought and obtained planning permission but then allowed it to expire. The LGA proposed that this could include a progressive increase in the Community Infrastructure Levy that increases every year the development has not been commenced, or the ability to charge a

305 [Q 43](#) (Toby Lloyd)

306 [Q 51](#) (Dame Kate Barker)

307 [Q 102](#) (Chris Carr)

308 Written evidence from Mr Nigel Atkins ([BEN0223](#))

309 Isabel Hardman, ‘Exclusive: No 10 advised to punish land hoarders’, *Spectator* (19 October 2012): <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2012/10/ministerial-aide-tells-number-10-to-penalise-reluctant-developers/> [accessed on 10 February 2016]; Patrick Wintour, ‘Lyons review for Labour urges new powers to boost housebuilding’, *The Guardian* (October 2014): <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/oct/16/lyons-review-labour-housebuilding> [accessed on 8 February 2016]

level of council tax equivalent to what would have been received from the development from the point that planning permission expires.³¹⁰

321. It was noted, including by the Housing and Planning Minister, that sites in multiple ownership are likely to be built out more quickly than sites in the control of a single developer. This refers back to the issues we have discussed in relation to the diversity of the development and construction industries, and the ability of local authorities to support land assembly on major sites (see paragraph 260).
322. Nevertheless, we see the gap between planning permissions and housing completions as a fundamental one in respect of securing increased housing supply. In a climate where over 240,000 homes a year are being granted planning permission, it is a fundamental failure of the development system that over 100,000 fewer homes are actually being built. This situation must be addressed.
323. **We believe that the Government must consider measures to help accelerate the delivery of housing on sites with planning permission, such as permitting the charge of equivalent council tax rates when development has not commenced after a specified period of time, subject to safeguards when there are genuine reasons to prevent the development proceeding.**

Viability and affordability

Affordable housing and issues with viability

324. Since the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), ‘development viability’ as a concept has become a much more prominent—and problematic—element of the planning system.

Box 3: What is viability?

In planning terms, a development is ‘viable’ if the developer is able to deliver it, cover all of its associated costs, and make a reasonable profit.

The National Planning Policy Framework states that “to ensure viability, the costs of any requirements likely to be applied to development, such as requirements for affordable housing, standards, infrastructure contributions or other requirements should, when taking account of the normal cost of development and mitigation, provide competitive returns to a willing land owner and willing developer to enable the development to be deliverable”.

In practice, this means that all policies set out in the development plan—such as requirements for affordable housing, supporting infrastructure or environmental measures in new developments—must be tested for each individual scheme to ensure they do not make the development unviable once developer profit is accounted for. Often, a developer will submit a ‘viability assessment’ to the local authority setting out costs of the development including land, labour and materials, which is then used as a basis for negotiation of planning obligations such as those set out above. Obligations are often negotiated down from those specified in the development plan to ensure viability.

325. The overarching requirement for local authorities to secure a competitive return for the developer and landowner in every scheme means that, in

³¹⁰ Written evidence from the Local Government Association ([BEN0207](#))

practice, every requirement set out in the development plan is made subject to viability negotiations. We heard evidence that viability is therefore now the key element in discussions between local authorities and developers over specific planning proposals. It was suggested that the absence of an agreed methodology means authorities approach the issue differently, causing uncertainty and delay as well as the potential for exploitation by developers seeking to avoid planning obligations.

326. A particularly frequent point of negotiation is the level of affordable housing that development can viably incorporate. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines affordable housing as:

“Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market ... affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision”.³¹¹

327. Local authorities are also required by the NPPF to plan for housing need in their area, including affordable housing need. We heard evidence, however, that the process of viability assessment undermines this, and thus the delivery of mixed communities.
328. The London Borough of Islington told us that developers' viability assessments are systematically pessimistic in their assumptions about their ability to deliver planning obligations such as affordable housing and supporting infrastructure.³¹² This is to a great extent because developers will bid for land on the basis of their ability to avoid planning obligations, with the bidder who is most confident about avoiding the costs of such obligations bidding the most. This inflated land cost is then factored into developers' viability assessments and used in itself as justification for avoiding planning obligations. This means that there is a circularity to the calculation of land cost in viability assessment.³¹³
329. As a consequence, development even in high property value locations such as Islington is often argued by developers to be 'unviable' because of the cost of development plan policies. These policies may need to be negotiated downwards before a developer is willing to proceed with their plans. This often involves renegotiation of affordable housing contributions.³¹⁴
330. Other evidence gave a similar perspective on the impact of the viability provisions in the NPPF. The Royal Institute of British Architects also highlighted provisions enabling developers to renegotiate Section 106 agreements.³¹⁵
331. We do not believe it is the deliberate intention of the viability provisions in the NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance to undermine the delivery of affordable housing or other key planning objectives such as local infrastructure, as this would be inconsistent with other policy prescriptions

³¹¹ Department for Communities and Local Government, *National Planning Policy Framework* (March 2012) Annex 2: Glossary: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf [accessed on 27 January 2016]

³¹² Written evidence from London Borough of Islington ([BEN0183](#))

³¹³ *Ibid.*

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

³¹⁵ [Q 150](#) (Ruth Reed)

in the NPPF. The evidence that this has been the ultimate consequence of these provisions is, however, compelling.

332. In particular, the Planning Practice Guidance states that, “where the viability of a development is in question, local planning authorities should look to be flexible in applying policy requirements wherever possible”.³¹⁶ The evidence we have received indicates that such guidance places the onus on local authorities to abandon the delivery of wider planning objectives on individual sites in order to secure development. This has the effect of undermining the plan-led system even where local plans have themselves been tested for viability.
333. We believe there is therefore a compelling case to revise national planning policy and guidance to ensure that individual viability assessments do not systematically undermine the delivery of affordable housing and other planning obligations.
334. Such revisions to planning policy could include a requirement for the full public disclosure of viability assessments; standardised guidance on the calculation of land values and other inputs; a requirement to use independent consultants to determine scheme viability where agreement cannot be reached; and a stipulation that new development should, as a general rule, seek to fulfil development plan objectives including the delivery of affordable housing and infrastructure.
335. **The Government should revise the NPPF and NPPG to make clear that the process of viability assessment should not be used to compromise the ability of local authorities to meet housing need, including affordable housing need, as determined through development plans. This will reduce the unreasonable use of viability assessments to avoid funding of affordable housing and infrastructure.**
336. **The Government should also publish a nationally consistent methodology for viability assessment. This methodology should include standardised guidance on calculation of land values and other inputs, and a recommendation for full disclosure of viability assessments. Local authorities and developers should also have the right to seek arbitration from independent viability consultants where agreement on scheme viability cannot be reached.**

Starter homes

337. As part of the reforms introduced in the Housing and Planning Bill, the Government is proposing to amend the definition of affordable housing to incorporate “starter homes”, which will be available to first time buyers with a 20% discount on the market rate.³¹⁷
338. Unlike other forms of affordable housing, there will be no provision for starter homes to remain at an “affordable” rate for future households after the first five years following a sale, or for the subsidy to be recyclable for

³¹⁶ Department for Communities and Local Government, ‘Planning Practice Guidance: What does the National Planning Policy Framework expect on viability in planning?’ (6 March 2014): <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/viability-guidance/viability-a-general-overview/> [accessed on 5 February 2016]

³¹⁷ Department for Communities and Local Government, *National Planning Policy: consultation on proposed change* (December 2015): <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-consultation-on-proposed-changes> [accessed on 8 February 2016]

future affordable housing provision. They represent a subsidy only to the first buyer of the property or for resales within the first five years, after which they become indistinguishable from private housing. The London Borough of Islington argued that this meant the policy “provides a one off benefit for developers, land owners and initial unit owners at the expense of the community and does not justify its costs”.³¹⁸

339. We consider that a principal purpose of affordable housing is to support the construction and maintenance of long-term mixed communities, where people on a range of incomes and backgrounds are able to live as neighbours. We have heard a range of evidence on the need to support mixed communities in new housing delivery,³¹⁹ and requirements to support mixed communities in planning policy are also set out in the NPPF. Our visits to Birmingham and Southwark also indicated that successful redevelopment can be achieved by providing a mix of tenures in new housing.
340. If starter homes are to be provided in new developments in place of long-term affordable housing, such developments are unlikely to remain as long-term ‘mixed communities’. The Campaign to Protect Rural England also argued that the policy may disincentivise rural landowners who would otherwise have made land available to support the delivery of affordable housing:

“Communities and landowners in rural areas are supportive of new housing when it meets a local need. Both of these measures, however, will mean that there is no guarantee that housing association homes or Starter Homes will remain available to meet local needs in perpetuity. Landowners will be reluctant to sell land for housing which, within a few years, will be available at full market rate”.³²⁰

341. We also heard evidence that the introduction of starter homes may risk the delivery of other affordable housing provision. This is because the Government is also proposing to introduce requirements for local authorities to “plan proactively” for starter homes and for “every reasonably sized site” to include a proportion of starter homes, limiting the ability of developers to support other forms of affordable housing without rendering development unviable. CBRE expressed concern that the measure might marginalise social rented and intermediate housing, telling us:

“If developers are being asked to subsidise starter homes as their number one priority, something else will inevitably get squeezed. A lot of infrastructure is already provided for by CIL, which is already non-negotiable, so that only leaves affordable housing to squeeze”.³²¹

342. We recognise and support the Government’s aspiration to promote home ownership. But the proposal to redefine affordable housing to include starter homes contains two risks. The first is that the policy emphasis on “starter homes” will mean that other forms of affordable housing such as low-cost rented housing are displaced, rather than supplemented.
343. The second is that it will undermine the aspiration to create mixed communities by classifying as “affordable” homes which are in fact only

³¹⁸ Written evidence from the London Borough of Islington ([BEN0183](#))

³¹⁹ Written evidence from Local Government Association ([BEN0207](#)), National Housing Federation ([BEN0152](#)), Judith Martin ([BEN0148](#))

³²⁰ Written evidence from the Campaign to Protect Rural England ([BEN0084](#))

³²¹ [Q 191](#) (Richard Lemon)

subsidised for the first five years of their lifetime, and would henceforth be indistinguishable from market housing. The loss of what might be termed “long-term” affordable housing, and the undermining of mixed communities in new developments, pose risks for the maintenance of successful built environments. This may be compounded by the proposal to require local authorities to sell higher-value council homes.

- 344. **The Government should reconsider its proposal to include “starter homes” within the definition of affordable housing. The proposal risks undermining mixed communities and preventing the delivery of genuinely affordable housing for the long term.**
- 345. **The Government should revise its proposal to require starter homes on every reasonably sized development site. Local authorities should retain the discretion to prioritise long-term affordable housing over starter homes in the planning system where appropriate. The Government should also reconsider other policies set out in the Housing and Planning Bill, such as the requirement to sell higher value council homes, given that they could undermine the maintenance of mixed communities.**

Skills shortages

- 346. Another key component of the under-delivery of new housing lies in the shortage of skills in the construction industry and other built environment sectors, as well as continued restrictions on development finance. The Construction Industry Council (CIC) described the extent of skills shortages and skills gaps as a “serious problem”.³²²
- 347. In addition, a recent survey³²³ by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) noted that UK construction skills shortages were at their highest level since the survey was first undertaken in 1998. Over half of respondents reported difficulties in sourcing labour, with bricklayers and quantity surveyors in shortest supply; 71% of respondents had difficulty sourcing the former while 64% had problems with the latter.³²⁴
- 348. Both the Construction Industry Council and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors called for more outreach efforts to attract young people to the construction industry. RICS recommended the creation of a Construction Skills Investment Charter, while the CIC called for outreach programmes in schools.
- 349. The Homebuilders’ Federation echoed these points, noting shortages in bricklaying, carpentry and quantity surveying, and calling for an increase in apprenticeships as well as support for the new generation of university technical colleges, which it was suggested “offer a lot of opportunities to bring more people into the industry in a creative way”, including as a bridge between technical, vocational and academic education.³²⁵

³²² Written evidence from Construction Industry Council ([BEN0071](#))

³²³ Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, ‘Britain faces bleakest construction skills shortage in almost 20 years’ (23 October 2015): <http://www.rics.org/uk/news/news-insight/press-releases/britain-faces-bleakest-construction-skills-shortage-in-almost-20-years/> [accessed on 26 January 2016]

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

³²⁵ [Q 95](#) (John Slaughter)

350. The Homebuilders' Federation also called for reforms to the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) to make it more attuned to the requirements of the housebuilding industry.³²⁶ The CITB made the case for better coordination between skills requirements and wider built environment policy, with skills policy "based on evidenced future skills demands and a clear understanding of whether we have the recruitment and training in place to meet them".³²⁷
351. The impact of skills shortages on overall housing supply is difficult to quantify, not least because of its relationship to other constraints such as market conditions and development viability. We have, however, observed a clear consensus across the built environment professions which suggests that the issue presents a problem to housebuilders.
352. **Construction skills shortages are acting as a constraint on the delivery of housing. We urge the Government to take measures to remedy this situation. Such measures might include the expansion of apprenticeships, the promotion of construction trades in courses offered by university technical colleges, and increased support for outreach programmes within educational institutions to encourage more young people to enter the industry.**

326 *Ibid.*

327 Written evidence from the Construction Industry Training Board ([BEN0187](#))

CHAPTER 6: LOCAL LEADERSHIP, DELIVERY AND SKILLS

The local role in the built environment

- 353. As we have discussed, while national policy can set a robust framework for delivering and maintaining high-quality built environments, the ultimate power to shape the built environment often still lies at local level. As planning authorities, local councils set policies and make decisions on planning applications; many also own and manage significant quantities of the local housing stock, and play an active part in regeneration initiatives, often in partnership with the private sector.
- 354. Following the removal of Regional Spatial Strategies³²⁸ councils in most of England now have sole responsibility for local planning in their areas, including determining the level of need for new development and identifying suitable locations. There remains a wider strategic plan in place for the Greater London area,³²⁹ and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority - comprising the 10 metropolitan boroughs of Greater Manchester - is also formulating its own joint spatial framework on a similar model.³³⁰
- 355. Initiatives such as neighbourhood planning, introduced in the Localism Act 2011, have also encouraged greater community involvement in the development process, including identifying locations for new sustainable growth.
- 356. The interaction between national policy and local leadership is therefore of key importance in achieving successful and sustainable built environments. There should be a particular focus on proactivity at a local level, and in ensuring that local government and other stakeholders have the power, confidence and influence they need to shape the built environment in a way which supports growth and works for local communities.
- 357. This chapter discusses in further detail some of the policy changes that could be made at both national, and local, levels to support local leadership in the built environment.

Skills, local vision and ‘proactive planning’

- 358. We heard a range of evidence suggesting that local authorities could go beyond their statutory function and embrace a more proactive approach to planning. Max Farrell, who worked on the Farrell Review of Architecture and the Built Environment, told us that:

“One of the key things that we called for in the Farrell Review was more proactive planning, to have a more consistent approach to things like affordable housing levels, shape, form and even materials of buildings, so that people know and agree in advance that that is the right way to go”.³³¹
- 359. The Planning Officers’ Society set out some of the main components of proactive planning, including increased certainty through active

328 See Chapter Two.

329 Greater London Authority, ‘The London Plan’ 2015: <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan> [accessed on 8 February 2016]

330 Greater Manchester Combined Authority, ‘Greater Manchester Spatial Framework’ 2016: <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/GMSF> [accessed on 8 February 2016]

331 [Q 37](#) (Max Farrell)

masterplanning in growth areas; accelerating delivery by frontloading place-making input at the pre-application stage; raising the quality of projects and places by the integration of place-making expertise with plan-making, development management and council-led capital projects; strengthening local support by proactive and ongoing engagement with communities on shaping plans for their local area; and securing external funding and inward investment by putting forward a compelling case to potential backers.³³²

360. The Planning Officers' Society also made a series of more concrete proposals for promoting proactive planning in local authorities, including the establishment of a "Public Service" pilot (since renamed The Place Agency) which would train and develop 'place-making practitioners' who would then be available to local authorities to gain the benefit of their expertise. The practitioners would be offered at "affordable rates", subsidised through private sector support.³³³ Public Service would be established as a social enterprise, and is intended to be launched as a pilot scheme in London this year with the support of the Greater London Authority.³³⁴
361. We also saw evidence of the benefits of a more proactive approach to planning in our visit to Birmingham City Council. We were told about the Big City Plan, a document setting out a clear long-term vision for the city centre area, including priorities for growth and the direction of resources, which had been developed outside the statutory planning processes.³³⁵ We were also told that the council's Director of Planning and Regeneration was responsible for a larger team than would normally be the case in a planning department, incorporating cross-cutting areas of council responsibility.³³⁶ In addition, we were informed that the Council's past decision to break the 'concrete collar' of the inner ring road—including raised walkways and new access points—had improved the accessibility and permeability of the city centre, in conjunction with new pedestrian schemes and canalside regeneration initiatives.³³⁷
362. In essence, this is about vision; councils should be able to set out and define a vision for the built environment in their area, and should then plan proactively to deliver that vision. This may include the more widespread use of design frameworks, strategies or masterplans to clarify development priorities and assist developers in coming forward with site proposals. Such frameworks aid local authorities by providing specific expression to local plan objectives, and helps developers by reducing the cost of upfront site delivery work.
363. While the issue of council proactivity in planning and the built environment cannot be separated from the issue of council resources (see paragraph 372), we believe there is a compelling case for all levels of government to encourage and enable such an approach, recognising its benefits for place-making.
364. The ability to deliver such initiatives at a local level is, however, compromised by skills shortages, on which we received a considerable amount of evidence. Finn Williams noted that problems with public sector planning skills went back several years:

³³² Written evidence from the Planning Officers' Society ([BEN0162](#))

³³³ *Ibid.*

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

³³⁵ See visit note in Appendix 6.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

“The skills shortages that we are talking about are not only post-2008, they go much further back; they are long-standing and systemic. For me, they are not purely about resources; they are about what we think planning is for. In 1976, half of all architects worked for the public sector; it was what public sector planning was for. Now it is less than 2%”.³³⁸

365. Urban Vision Enterprise highlighted the lack of key local authority skills:

“There is also a need for national government to set out more clearly the skills requirements required by local authorities to deal with planning applications in a competent manner. We are especially concerned that some LPAs³³⁹ do not have adequate skills in urban design, building conservation and other built environment matters”.³⁴⁰

366. Much of the evidence we received focused on the need to bring in a new generation of planners and built environment professionals, in coordination with schools, technical colleges and universities. Proposed initiatives included the Public Service proposal from the Planning Officers’ Society discussed above. On our visit to Birmingham we also heard evidence of the strong relationship between the City Council and local universities, including the mutual benefits derived from work-placements for students.

367. Professor Mark Tewdwr-Jones told us that, given the ongoing shortage of public sector skills, universities had a role in developing some of the background knowledge and expertise around the built environment which might previously have been fulfilled by local authorities:

“Local authority planning departments are a shadow of their former selves these days; they have been hollowed out. The question then is: where does the intelligence and data come from to inform policy-making and to create some advantage for places to shape their own future? In Newcastle, the university has stepped into that vacuum to some extent by providing the expertise and the knowledge, but there is intelligence, there is mapping and there is data, and it is essential that the public consultation—the democratic element—is there as well”.³⁴¹

368. We heard evidence on the high status and priority given to planning in French universities. There is a particular focus on city layouts, transportation and planning laws, and effective use is made of regular field trips. We were told that this left France well qualified to handle both regional and town planning.³⁴²

369. While the evidence is clear that proactive planning can help secure attractive and sustainable built environments and ease the delivery of development objectives, the evidence is also clear that the planning sector is running into serious capacity constraints. Any initiative to support proactivity in planning must also address long-standing personnel shortages in order that such initiatives can fulfil their potential.

370. **Proactive local planning can play an important part in defining a ‘vision’ for a local area and improving the built environment. Local**

338 [Q 137](#) (Finn Williams)

339 Local planning authorities

340 Written evidence from Urban Vision Enterprise ([BEN0026](#))

341 [Q 2](#) (Prof Mark Tewdwr-Jones)

342 Written evidence from Mr Nigel Atkins ([BEN0223](#))

authorities should consider mechanisms that would help them to develop the capacity to do this, including the potential for working outside the statutory planning system to raise the status of planning and regeneration in their area. This might include the production of design frameworks, masterplans or strategies. National and local government should also take steps to increase the capacity of the planning sector as a whole, including through educational outreach programmes as well as partnerships with the private sector, universities and neighbouring authorities.

371. We recommend that the Government should consider how best it might support the development of place-making capacity within local authorities. The Government, and local authorities, should consider the merits of supporting the Public Service initiative proposed by the Planning Officers' Society, and the introduction of bursaries to students of planning in a similar manner to that offered to the teaching profession in order to help attract the best students.

Resourcing and capacity

372. A persistent and recurring theme of our inquiry has been the declining resources available to local authorities to support planning and place-making. This has the potential to compromise both statutory functions such as development management and non-statutory approaches such as the “proactive planning” models discussed above and pursued in areas such as Birmingham, Southwark and Croydon.
373. Part—though not all—of the decline in resources can be attributed to Government financial measures. The National Housing Federation, for example, informed us that planning departments had seen a 46% cut in funding between 2010/11 and 2014/15, while the number of applications received in that time has remained consistent.³⁴³
374. The Planning Officers' Society noted that “the pressure on local authority budgets means that planning departments are increasingly retrenching to focus resources on statutory or fee-paying services”.³⁴⁴ This was echoed in evidence from private sector consultancies: Jones Lang LaSalle told us that constraints on local authority planning resources were one of the principal constraints on the development industry, along with shortages of young people entering the industry and similar resource limitations at the Planning Inspectorate.³⁴⁵
375. We also heard evidence that resource cuts had led to a reduction in public sector expertise in other sectors of built environment policy, such as conservation officers. Historic England told us that there had been a 35% fall in the number of conservation specialists advising local authorities since 2006.³⁴⁶ The Suffolk Preservation Society told us that this meant “that at a time of unprecedented development pressures both the capacity and expertise within planning departments is deficient”.³⁴⁷

³⁴³ Written evidence from National Housing Federation ([BEN0152](#))

³⁴⁴ Written evidence from the Planning Officers' Society ([BEN0162](#))

³⁴⁵ [Q 185](#) (Guy Bransby)

³⁴⁶ Written evidence from Historic England ([BEN0213](#))

³⁴⁷ Written evidence from the Suffolk Preservation Society ([BEN0080](#))

376. One cause of the deficiency in local government resources is the national planning fee regime. This prescribes a defined national rate for each different type of planning application including outline, reserved matters, small householder applications, change of use applications and “prior approval” applications (which are not required to go through the full planning determination process). These fees can only be amended nationally through regulations.³⁴⁸ The set fees do not always cover the true cost of processing and determining a planning application.

377. We heard a strong consensus that local authorities should be able to set planning fees locally, to enable “full cost recovery” of the cost of processing applications, and secure a more efficient and effective planning service in local authorities. Short of this, some respondents called for an immediate uplift to the national rate. We were told that:

“Planning fees currently cover only 59% of the costs of providing an effective and efficient planning system—leading to an annual shortfall of £156.2 million. The most immediate and essential first step in putting planning department resourcing on a more sustainable footing would be to realign fees at a national level to allow for full cost recovery, with an automatic rise for inflation”.³⁴⁹

378. Evidence on the potential merits of planning fee reform also came from representatives of the private sector, including the Confederation of British Industry:

“Business and Government must find ways to help planners reach decisions in a prompt manner. There is some discussion in the business community about the pros and cons of paying higher planning fees if there are assurances of timely and quality decisions”.³⁵⁰

379. Councillor Gillian Brown, of Arun District Council and the District Councils Network, made the case for full localisation:

“We have put forward a very robust case for at least two years to have full cost recovery on planning fees—to set our own local planning fees ... We want to be cost neutral, but I do not think the Treasury trusts us to do that. It is very counterproductive not to be able to recruit and retain good planning officers”.³⁵¹

Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council also noted that “prior approvals” attracted significantly lower fees despite taking a similar amount of officer time to full planning applications.³⁵²

380. The Housing and Planning Minister indicated that the Government was reviewing the issue of planning fees, though he highlighted some of the Government’s reservations with regard to full devolution:

“Generally with planning fees, the reticence has always been around making sure we keep planning cost effective ... I am sure there are no

348 The Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications, Deemed Applications, Requests and Site Visits) (England) Regulations 2012 ([SI 2012/2920](#))

349 Written evidence from Planning Officers Society ([BEN0162](#))

350 Written evidence from Confederation of British Industry ([BEN0054](#))

351 [Q 217](#) (Councillor Gillian Brown)

352 [Q 268](#) (Anneliese Hutchinson)

local authorities out there—and I say this with only part of my tongue in my cheek—that would use the planning fees, if it had complete freedom over them, either to price development in its area out of the market or to line its coffers, but we have to look at all these things”.³⁵³

381. On 8 February 2016 the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced that the Government would consult on proposals to allow “well-performing planning departments” the opportunity to increase fees by inflation, so long as the increase reduced the cross-subsidy of the planning function from general council funds.³⁵⁴
382. We also heard evidence on other ways in which local authorities could increase revenue to reinvest in planning services. The London Borough of Barnet told us how its own outsourced service generated revenue from commercial activity and fast-tracking applications:

“You can now fast track a planning application at a premium price. We are the only council in the country doing that at the moment. We offer premium services on pre-application advice; we now have specialist teams on pre-application advice … we also offer private consultancy work”.³⁵⁵

The Council made clear that it was only possible to offer a premium fast-track service if the ‘standard’ service was already performing to a high level.

383. **We recommend that the Government should explore how a localised fee regime would help local authorities to deliver a more efficient planning service, with less direct public subsidy. In this context, the Government should also explore how local fees might be regulated to ensure that planning applications remain cost-effective for applicants.**
384. **Meanwhile, national fees should be set at a level which moves closer to “full cost recovery” for local authorities. The Government should also consider a fee uplift to cover the cost of prior approval applications.**
385. **We also recommend that local authorities should explore the potential for commercial activity and premium planning services such as the fast tracking of applications, in order to increase revenue for their planning departments.**

The local plan making process

386. As discussed above, the changes made through the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework and other national legislative and policy reforms have placed a greater onus on local authorities to identify, plan for and help to meet the demand for growth in their areas.
387. The principal document by which local decisions are guided is the local plan. There is no statutory requirement to have an up to date local plan, although the Government has indicated that it will intervene where an authority does not have a local plan in place by 2017.³⁵⁶ Where a local plan is not in place, planning applications are determined by reference to the NPPF.

³⁵³ [Q 338](#) (Brandon Lewis MP)

³⁵⁴ HC Deb, 8 February 2016, [col 1335](#)

³⁵⁵ [Q 262](#) (Joe Henry)

³⁵⁶ [Q 340](#) (Brandon Lewis MP)

388. Adoption of local plans has improved in recent years, with Ruth Stanier of the Department for Communities and Local Government noting in oral evidence that 82% of local authorities have some form of published local plan, with 64% having an adopted plan in place.³⁵⁷
389. Nonetheless, we have heard suggestions—including from the Government—that the current process for local plan making is too cumbersome and that, in practice, local plans are often unable to keep up local conditions or with national policy.³⁵⁸
390. Those who called for a streamlining of the local plan-making system included the Greater London Authority and the Institute of Historic Building Conservation.³⁵⁹ The Government confirmed that initiatives to streamline the system were under consideration.³⁶⁰
391. We received evidence on the problems caused for local authorities when housing need figures are updated,³⁶¹ often rendering local plans obsolete. Gillian Brown, of Arun District Council and the District Councils Network, highlighted the effect of the problem in her authority, in particular with reference to the requirement for councils to identify sufficient land to meet local housing need for the subsequent five years, known as the “five year land supply”.
- “Many local authorities lost their five year land supply when these new figures came out in March with these massive housing numbers ... in my own district, we had just finished our local plan, as we call it, and on the inspector’s desk when the new figures suddenly arrived within a couple of weeks. Now our plan has been suspended and we are looking at having to produce at least 200 houses more per year for the next 20 years. That has a massive impact on us”.³⁶²
392. Councillor Brown also observed that, having spent a considerable amount on the preparation of the local plan, the loss of its “five-year land supply” following the publication of new housing figures meant that speculative planning applications in the district would be granted on appeal as the council was unable to demonstrate suitable alternative locations for housing development over a five-year period. This had the effect of undermining the local plan process and encouraging unsustainable development in inappropriate locations.³⁶³
393. The Campaign to Protect Rural England suggested that many components of local plans are well established and require little effort to review and refine:

357 [Q 13](#) (Ruth Stanier)

358 Written evidence from Town and Country Planning Association ([BEN0171](#)), British Property Federation ([BEN0135](#)), Campaign to Protect Rural England ([BEN0084](#))

359 Written evidence from Greater London Authority ([BEN0191](#)), Institute of Historic Building Conservation ([BEN0160](#))

360 [Q 26](#) (Steve Quartermain)

361 Local authorities are required by the NPPF to determine the objectively assessed housing need for their areas, based on population and housing projections published by the Office for National Statistics and the Department for Communities and Local Government respectively. This is known as the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and is used to inform the local plan. When these projections are updated, local authorities may need to update their SHMA, potentially rendering existing local plans out of date.

362 [Q 208](#) (Councillor Gillian Brown)

363 [Q 209](#) (Councillor Gillian Brown)

“When you drill down into it, a lot of these so-called far too long and detailed policies are actually well established policies that do not involve too much of local authorities’ effort in reviewing and updating. They are policies, for example, such as the protection of local wildlife sites and policies that show what the landscape character of an area is and how it should be best protected”.³⁶⁴

394. We also noted evidence of how plan-led systems operate overseas. For example, the Town and Country Planning Association informed us of its effectiveness in the Netherlands:

“The success of Almere and those places is having a very strong progressive plan. People buy into that plan and the plan is then delivered through development corporations and other mechanisms through the public sector. That was the framework; of course, they got that framework from us”.³⁶⁵

Friends of the Earth cited the German town of Freiburg im Breisgau as an example of effective plan-making with community participation:

“It is the people (the citizens) of Freiburg with whom the vision for the future is made through planning. The plan is then presented to the builders and developers, and the negotiation starts on delivery. In many cases the city contracts out work, but holds control of the plan and design. The results speak for themselves—it is one of the most popular places to live in Germany and one of the most successful”.³⁶⁶

395. The plan-led system remains the most appropriate approach for delivering successful built environment policy locally, and we do not believe there should be a fundamental change to the status of local plan making. However, we are persuaded by the evidence that the process of adopting and reviewing local plans is too cumbersome. This was particularly the case with regard to fluctuating housing need figures, which form the basis of local plan assessments and so, if altered, can render them immediately obsolete.
396. We welcome the Government’s review of the Local Plan process with its mandate to identify how the process may be streamlined. In particular, we believe there should be a capacity for partial or incremental reviews to ensure that local plans can be kept more dynamically up to date with changing circumstances, and that they continue to play the role intended in planning decision-making. National and local government should look overseas for examples of excellence in plan-making and seek to emulate the example of places such as Almere and Freiburg im Breisgau where appropriate.
397. **The fundamental approach of a plan-led system should remain unaltered, but national and local government should explore opportunities to make local plan-making more dynamic and responsive to changing conditions. The Government should consider the introduction of additional measures to allow for the partial review, or incremental adoption, of local plans, to avoid the need for a lengthy, resource intensive full plan review when underlying circumstances change.**

364 [Q 115](#) (Paul Miner)

365 [Q 112](#) (Dr Hugh Ellis)

366 Written evidence from Friends of the Earth ([BEN0137](#))

Spatial frameworks and ‘larger than local’ planning

398. We received a range of evidence on the impact of the Coalition Government’s decision to revoke Regional Spatial Strategies and return responsibility for strategic planning to local authorities. Evidence considered the way in which matters previously addressed at the regional level—such as cross-boundary and larger-than-local issues—were now being handled. The duty to co-operate placed upon local authorities by the Localism Act 2011 also featured in consideration of these matters.
399. While the main responsibility for planning lies with local authorities, some decisions with cross-boundary significance must necessarily be taken in consultation with others. How these ‘larger than local’ built environment matters should best be addressed was the subject of a significant amount of evidence we received.
400. Unlike many other countries, England does not have a national spatial plan or a statutory regional planning framework, the latter having been abolished following the passage of the Localism Act in 2011. National or regional spatial plans are used to define wider priorities for land-use and to allocate development sites of strategic importance. Scotland retains a national spatial plan, while regional plans were in place across much of England until their abolition. The exception is Greater London which retains a statutory strategic plan, produced by the Greater London Authority.
401. The principle of strategic planning in England has been retained through the “duty to co-operate” set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, which further states that “the Government expects joint working on areas of common interest to be diligently undertaken for the mutual benefit of neighbouring authorities”.³⁶⁷
402. To this end, local authorities must demonstrate in producing their local plans that they have consulted neighbouring authorities on matters such as housing and infrastructure needs, and that they have acted on any outcomes of these discussions in formulating their local plans. Where no such cooperation is demonstrated, local plans may be rejected by the Planning Inspector.
403. The Town and Country Planning Association argued that some form of national or regional planning framework was essential to deliver successful built environments:

“We are one of the very few advanced economies that have neither comprehensive national planning nor regional planning … the process of planning is about the messy business of trying to mediate change. Having some sense of engagement with that change at a national level simply reflects functional geography, and geography is something that is absent from public policy at the moment”.³⁶⁸
404. The TCPA and Professor Mark Tewdwr-Jones also noted that the regional planning process was supported by built environment data which had been lost since its abolition.³⁶⁹ Innovate UK argued that a benefit of spatial planning

³⁶⁷ Department for Communities and Local Government, *National Planning Policy Framework* (March 2012), para 178: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf [accessed on 27 January 2016]

³⁶⁸ [Q 111](#) (Dr Hugh Ellis)

³⁶⁹ [Q 113](#) (Dr Hugh Ellis) and [Q 3](#) (Prof Mark Tewdwr-Jones)

at a national level would be to establish a single source of supporting data on matters such as economic growth, transport and historic land usage which could be used to inform development planning.³⁷⁰ The Landscape Institute argued that the aspirations of the NPPF could only be achieved by some form of regional spatial planning. It stated:

“The effects of sub national [eg. regional] spatial plans would include the co-ordinated delivery of housing need, availability and effective targeting of investment, appropriate planning of linear infrastructure such as rail, road and energy transmission and environmental protection/ improvement”.³⁷¹

405. The current Government has been clear that there is no intention to return to a system of mandatory national or regional spatial frameworks. The Department for Communities and Local Government made clear its objection to the concept, stating that: “The Government does not consider that it is necessary to have a national spatial plan in England”.³⁷²
406. In some parts of England, however, groups of local authorities are coming together to produce voluntary joint spatial frameworks. Councillor Sue Derbyshire of Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority told us about the proposals for a combined spatial plan across Greater Manchester:

“In terms of Greater Manchester, we are doing at least the overall plan on a Greater Manchester footprint, although there will still need to be local plans, because that is a coherent economic structure. We need to look at place. Planning is very important, but it is only an aspect of regeneration and of place building”.³⁷³

407. We received some evidence criticising the operation of the duty to co-operate, a prevalent view being that it was not an adequate substitute for more formal cooperation on spatial planning. Locality argued that it also had the effect of undermining the planning system:

“The ‘duty to co-operate’ between local authorities has proved ineffective in many cases. Only through the failure of local plans has it been recognised by Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) that the duty to co-operate is instead leading to delays in the adoption of local plans, which has led to developer led planning in areas of high demand”.³⁷⁴

408. The Crown Estate informed us that the duty to co-operate also posed problems for landowners and developers, though they took the view that the removal of regional planning made the development process simpler:

“We are finding that authorities of maybe different political persuasions find it quite hard to work together to deal with quite difficult development issues. They often concern issues such as greenbelt, major housing leases in more difficult areas of the country, a whole variety of issues on which

³⁷⁰ Written evidence from Innovate UK ([BEN0147](#))

³⁷¹ Written evidence from the Landscape Institute ([BEN0136](#))

³⁷² Written evidence from the Department for Communities and Local Government ([BEN0190](#))

³⁷³ [Q 212](#) (Councillor Sue Derbyshire)

³⁷⁴ Written evidence from Locality ([BEN0153](#))

we would quite like government to add some additional push in making that duty a bit stronger".³⁷⁵

409. In some parts of the country, however, the duty to co-operate is working successfully. We were told about positive progress in Sussex:

"We spoke to each other—members and officers. We had a good working relationship. We came together as a strategic planning board and we achieved something. We put forward our proposals and, yes, it worked very well. But we were taking into account a functional economic area rather than county boundaries ... that is why ours was successful: because we were an actual economic area".³⁷⁶

410. The Housing and Planning Minister told us that he welcomed groups of local authorities who sought to undertake joint spatial planning on their own initiative:

"As a government we got rid of regional spatial strategies, and I have no desire or intention to go anywhere near bringing them back. The difference with what is happening in London, and indeed what Manchester is looking to do, and what other areas may choose to do, is by coming together and looking on a wider basis as an area region, or whatever the structure is, it is driven by them locally ... I think that is a very sensible thing for them to do, but what is important is it is them doing it, which matters".³⁷⁷

411. We have received a clear indication from the Government that there is no intention to revive regional—or national—spatial planning. We are, however, persuaded by the evidence from Sussex and Greater Manchester that, where councils come together to co-operate voluntarily on spatial planning matters, such an approach can yield positive results in development planning and aid the cause of sustainable growth. We note the Minister's comments in support of such voluntary initiatives.

412. **We believe that local authorities should explore working together on joint spatial frameworks on the model of Greater Manchester, and that the Government should give them further encouragement to do so.**

413. **Such approaches may not, however, be suitable in all parts of the country. In these circumstances, the Government should provide stronger incentives and guidance to ensure that local authorities co-operate effectively on cross-boundary planning matters and that the operation of the "duty to co-operate" does not create blockages and delays in the wider planning system.**

Community engagement and neighbourhood planning

414. Another key tenet of the Government's planning reforms has been the attempt to promote community and neighbourhood engagement in planning and the built environment. The most conspicuous example of this has been the introduction of neighbourhood planning, by which designated neighbourhood forums and Parish Councils can set priorities and policies

375 [Q 80](#) (Steve Melligan)

376 [Q 215](#) (Councillor Gillian Brown)

377 [Q 340](#) (Brandon Lewis MP)

for growth and development in their localities, which are then adopted as formal planning policy, subject to a confirmatory referendum.

415. The Housing and Planning Minister told us that, since the introduction of neighbourhood planning, 125 areas have put an adopted plan in place with a further 1,600 plans currently going through the consultation process. We were also told that every plan to have reached the referendum stage had been approved to date.³⁷⁸
416. We heard positive evidence of the impact of neighbourhood planning from Bath & North East Somerset Council, who suggested that it had changed the attitude of local communities to planning for future growth in the built environment:

“We have advised them that being in control of development in their communities is the way forward for them, which they have understood, and they have done a phenomenal amount of work locally on local village character assessments. For the first time ... our villages are offering us housing sites ... nearly all our villages are happy to propose a site if it is a product of the work they have done locally”.³⁷⁹

417. However, it was also noted that neighbourhood planning risked being undermined by speculative development applications made before plans were able to be adopted:

“If a developer comes forward midway through the process and puts an application in that is not bad enough to refuse, it usurps the local community’s hard work, and some of them are quite disillusioned with this process where there is a lot of development pressure. The fault is that there is an inability in the system to give any weight to an emerging plan that a community is producing”.³⁸⁰

418. We also heard evidence noting the limitations of the neighbourhood planning model including, for example, the geographic imbalance in the areas where it was being pursued. Worcestershire County Council told us that:

“Only those communities which have people willing to take action—very often in rural and affluent areas—tend to be successful in this process. This creates a very patchy distribution of neighbourhood plans, with areas of higher need and urban areas often left out of the process”.³⁸¹

419. CPRE also indicated that obstacles in the system meant that the take-up of neighbourhood planning had been lower than anticipated:

“Progress in the actual making of neighbourhood plans (as distinct from the designation of neighbourhood areas) has however been much slower than officials originally hoped, and CPRE believes that much of this is due to either (i) the lack of up to date Local Plans in many areas, or (ii) direct challenges by developers, or both. In several cases, neighbourhood planning initiatives have been frustrated or undermined

378 [QQ 330-331](#) (Brandon Lewis MP)

379 [Q 262](#) (Simon de Beer)

380 *Ibid.*

381 Written evidence from Worcestershire County Council ([BEN0101](#))

- by developers looking to promote large housing sites against local wishes, but encouraged by policies in the NPPF".³⁸²
420. We believe there is a case for Government and local authorities to promote neighbourhood planning more widely, particularly in areas where take-up has been lower, in order to correct geographic imbalances. This may include the commitment of resources to pursue the establishment of neighbourhood forums across districts.
421. **We recommend that the Government should give stronger weight to emerging neighbourhood plans in planning policy, to enable rejection of speculative development which might conflict with the neighbourhood plan.**
422. **We recommend that the Government, and local authorities, should take measures to streamline and simplify the neighbourhood planning process, and provide resources for promoting the establishment of neighbourhood forums and supporting the neighbourhood planning process in areas where take-up has been low.**
423. We also heard a range of evidence on other aspects of community engagement in the built environment, with Parish Councils in particular expressing frustration that the views of communities were not taken seriously.³⁸³ MADE West Midlands offered the following assessment of local authority community engagement:
- “There are some exemplary cases of community engagement, people working with communities from scratch with a blank sheet of paper to design new places, new developments, urban extensions and so on. Aside from those good examples, the overall picture is very poor. It is often tokenistic and manipulative. We talked about the difficulty of engagement in local plans, but engagement around particular schemes is often very poor”.³⁸⁴
424. The Confederation of British Industry, Royal Town Planning Institute, Locality and Urban Vision Enterprises emphasised that early engagement could allow communities greater opportunities to exert influence over development proposals and local plans.³⁸⁵ We believe that early engagement is crucial in encouraging local residents and communities to participate in decision making concerning the built environment.
425. **We recommend that there should be stronger policy support for early community engagement in both local plan making and planning decision-making. The Government, and local authorities, should give consideration to making good community engagement a material consideration in major planning decisions.**
426. It was also suggested that communities should have a right of appeal against decisions made by the planning authority where they may be contrary to

³⁸² Written evidence from CPRE ([BEN0084](#))

³⁸³ Written evidence from Boughton Parish Council ([BEN0097](#)), Braunston Parish Council ([BEN0145](#)), Brington Parish Council ([BEN0105](#)), Croughton Parish Council ([BEN0025](#)), Overstone Parish Council ([BEN0121](#)), Sellindge Parish Council ([BEN0194](#))

³⁸⁴ [Q.93](#) (David Tittle)

³⁸⁵ Written evidence from Confederation of British Industry ([BEN0054](#)), Royal Town Planning Institute ([BEN0126](#)), Locality ([BEN0153](#)), Urban Vision Enterprise ([BEN0026](#))

local development plans, in order to ensure a stronger community voice on planning decision-making. Former Chief Planning Inspector Katrine Sporle CBE had some sympathy with the idea, telling us:

“Many people who do not understand the planning system find it bewildering if a decision comes out that looks to be contrary to everything they were told was going to happen ... if it is contrary to the development plan there should be something in place that allows much more debate than is perhaps currently the case”.³⁸⁶

427. Chris Shepley CBE, also a former Chief Planning Inspector, expressed more scepticism, indicating that it would be “unworkable” if there were a universal third party right of appeal and that it was not always straightforward to determine which decisions may be contrary to the local development plan.³⁸⁷ Mr Shepley noted, however, that such rights exist in Ireland and Jersey, with certain safeguards and limitations placed upon their operation.
428. In Jersey, the third-party right of appeal is limited to owners of properties within 50 metres of the site in question. In addition, anyone wishing to make such an appeal must have objected to the proposed development at an earlier stage of the planning process.³⁸⁸
429. CPRE proposed that a community right of appeal could apply where planning decisions were deemed to be contrary to an emerging or approved neighbourhood plan, to discourage speculative applications.³⁸⁹
430. **We believe that the Government should consider the introduction of a community right of appeal in certain specified circumstances, such as when a planning decision conflicts with an emerging neighbourhood plan or deals with a site unallocated by the local plan. This may serve to discourage speculative or unsustainable development.**

386 [Q 279](#) (Katrine Sporle)

387 [Q 279](#) (Chris Shepley)

388 Mourant Ozannes, ‘Right of appeal? Comparing planning appeals in Jersey and Guernsey’ (2012): <http://www.mourantozannesproperty.com/2012/09/right-of-appeal-comparing-planning-appeals-in-jersey-and-guernsey/> [accessed on 29 January 2016]

389 [Q 116](#) (Paul Miner)

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter Two: The built environment: recent trends and emerging challenges

1. We broadly welcome and support the Government's focus on increasing and speeding up the supply of housing. We discuss specific initiatives and proposals intended to further this aim in Chapter Five of this report. (Paragraph 58)
2. We are concerned, however, that the focus on quantity of housing must not work to the long-term detriment of planning for the whole of the built environment and the delivery of high quality development. Moves towards deregulation of the planning system, coupled with an intensification of housebuilding, have the potential to exert significant enduring impacts upon the built environment in England. A consistent theme across much of the remainder of this report is the need for quality, as well as quantity, and the need to think about long-term implications for 'place', as well as the important and more immediate need for more housing. (Paragraph 59)

Chapter Three: Creating better places: design, quality and standards

3. We believe that, as a nation, we need to recognise the power of place and to be much more ambitious when planning, designing, constructing and maintaining our built environment. Failure to do so will result in significant long-term costs. We now set out some of the important measures that need to be taken to achieve this aim. (Paragraph 64)
4. There are two critical elements currently missing in national policy for the built environment. There is an urgent need for much greater co-ordination and integration across the multiple Government departments that effect and respond to the built environment. There is also a need for a national organisation with the capacity to undertake research, develop guidance and build the networks necessary to raise standards and drive better performance. Solving the first of these problems requires access to Government, while delivering against the second objective requires a degree of independence from it. (Paragraph 78)
5. The built environment cuts across a number of central Government departments and our evidence has demonstrated that integration of policy is sadly lacking. We believe that the Cabinet Office should initially play a greater role in addressing policy coordination in this field, by reviewing areas of policy overlap between different departments and publishing definitive guidance on the division of responsibilities. (Paragraph 83)
6. To deliver longer-term coordination we recommend the appointment of a Chief Built Environment Adviser, a recognised expert appointed from within the sector to lead this work at an official level. The role of the Chief Built Environment Adviser would be to co-ordinate relevant policy across central Government departments, to act as a champion for higher standards and to promote good practice across and beyond Government. The status and reporting arrangements of the Chief Built Environment Adviser should be broadly equivalent to those of the Government Chief Scientific Adviser. (Paragraph 84)

7. In addition, we believe that some of the key functions carried out by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment have been lost. This is to the long-term detriment of the built environment. We recommend that the Government should establish and fund a small, strategic unit to conduct, commission and disseminate research and guidance on architecture and design within the built environment. This new unit should be led by the Chief Built Environment Adviser, and should have access to expertise, research and insight from across and beyond Government. (Paragraph 85)
8. We recommend that the Chief Built Environment Adviser should produce an annual report providing high-level monitoring of quality and delivery within the built environment, and establishing priorities for research, policy and action. The annual reports should be laid before Parliament as Command Papers. (Paragraph 86)
9. We believe it is important that the Government sets high standards for the built environment, and provides the vision, aspiration and leadership to enable others to deliver against those standards. We recommend that the Government should publish, consult on and adopt a high level policy for architecture and place quality in England. Following adoption, the policy should be monitored and reviewed at regular intervals. Publication of this policy should be an early priority for the Chief Built Environment Adviser who should, thereafter, keep it under review. (Paragraph 89)
10. We believe that the Government, and other major public sector commissioners, must lead by example and set the highest possible standards in major construction projects. We recommend that the Government Construction Strategy should be reviewed. This review should acknowledge and emphasise the Government's leadership role in these matters, and set out measures and mechanisms for implementing high standards of public procurement in construction projects, seeking to balance place and quality with value. (Paragraph 93)
11. It is important that planners and all policy makers, including those working in housing, take account of the health impacts of their decisions; failure to do so will lead to significant long-term costs. We welcome the inclusion of specific health policies within the National Planning Policy Framework, but there is much work still to be done to encourage proper integration between planning and health. Health and Wellbeing Boards need to play a more proactive role in developing links, across different local authority structures, to encourage greater integration. (Paragraph 99)
12. If built environment policies are to take account of health impacts it is essential that they are informed by a robust evidence base. Local authorities should be proactive in undertaking monitoring of the health outcomes and impacts of planning decisions. We recommend that the Government should, within the National Planning Practice Guidance, set out a common framework of health indicators for local planning authorities to monitor. (Paragraph 104)
13. We welcome recent moves towards the adoption and use of health impact assessments in decision making on major planning applications. We call upon the Government to support such initiatives, and to examine ways in which health impact assessments could be more closely integrated into development management processes. (Paragraph 105)

14. Decisions regarding streets and highways have a major impact upon the built environment, as well as on air quality and pedestrian safety. Those decisions should be made in accordance with existing best practice guidance. We recommend that local authorities—including authorities with highways responsibilities—should fully adopt Manual for Streets and should adhere to the policies contained within it. (Paragraph 110)
15. Interventions in the public realm are frequently uncoordinated, and suffer from a lack of accountable leadership. All too often the poor quality of the public realm proves detrimental to the built environment and to those people who live within it. We recommend that local authorities should give one Cabinet Member (or senior officer) responsibility for coordinating services which impact upon street quality and the public realm. Such services have a major impact upon the wellbeing of local people and communities. (Paragraph 114)
16. We welcome the establishment of the National Infrastructure Commission and the capacity that it should provide to take a longer-term view of infrastructure needs. We believe, however, that transport infrastructure in particular needs to be properly integrated into its local surroundings, in order to deliver full economic and social benefits, and an appropriate return on investment. The knowledge required to support this integration is often held by local stakeholders and communities. (Paragraph 122)
17. While the Commission is tasked with considering national priorities, the effects of its proposals and projects will often be local in nature. The Commission will need to develop an approach to engaging with local communities, and mechanisms to encourage community support for projects. We note that the Commission is currently undertaking a consultation on its structures and operating practices. As part of its response to that consultation we recommend that the Commission should consider, and publicise its approach to:
 - The design impacts and issues associated with its work, and how these will be taken into account; and
 - How it will work with local people, local authorities and other partners to ensure that infrastructure investments deliver maximum wider social, environmental and economic benefits. (Paragraph 123)
18. We welcome the emphasis placed on design review in the National Planning Policy Framework. Design review has the potential to deliver significant improvements to planning proposals, thereby raising standards and encouraging community acceptance of development. It can, therefore, help to speed up the process of securing planning permission. (Paragraph 129)
19. We note, however, that the current provision of such services is disjointed and fragmented. In some places, there are issues of funding and quality. In part, this is a result of the voluntary nature of design review; an insufficient number of applications are going through the process to justify wider investment. The Government should make design review mandatory for all major planning applications; major applications have major impacts on the communities in which they take place. (Paragraph 130)
20. The Government has stated its intention to make permanent the change in office to residential permitted development rights. It is clear, however, that in some parts of the country this change could be detrimental to the built

environment. There are concerns regarding the design quality and suitability of some of the housing that is being provided through these conversions. In addition, concerns have been expressed regarding the loss of local character and important employment sites, posing a threat to the mix of uses required to deliver sustainable places. (Paragraph 139)

21. Local authorities are well placed to understand whether an increase in office to residential conversions will be appropriate for their area. We believe that, when changing permitted development rights, the Government must also make it easier for local authorities to respond to local circumstances. We recommend that the Government should review and remove some of the restrictions that currently prevent more widespread use of Article 4 directions by local authorities. One such result might be the removal of the current 12 month period of notice that councils are required to observe in order to avoid liability for compensation payments. (Paragraph 140)
22. We are anxious to ensure that moves towards a permission in principle do not undermine the capacity of local authorities to develop, design and integrate key sites in a way that ensures that they function effectively and respond to local needs and aspirations. The relationship between principle and detail is important in the planning system. We recommend that the Government should carefully consider the impact its reforms could have upon this relationship. As a minimum, it is important that the process of granting permission in principle and Technical Details Consent should give due regard to design quality, sustainability, archaeology, heritage and all the other key components of place-making that would normally be required for the granting of planning permission. (Paragraph 148)

Chapter Four: Building for the long-term: sustainability and resilience

23. We call on the Government to examine ways in which the provision of specialist retirement housing can be incentivised and increased. We recommend that the Government should examine and review the case for exempting such housing from Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy payments. (Paragraph 155)
24. We believe that the Lifetime Homes standard can play a key part in addressing the demographic challenge facing our housing stock. We recommend that local authorities should be required, within their local planning policies, to set appropriately ambitious targets for the delivery of Lifetime Homes. (Paragraph 161)
25. We believe that accessibility in the built environment is of vital importance; improving the standard of accessibility is essential if we are to address the long-term demographic changes that are projected to take place. (Paragraph 166)
26. We recommend that the Government should set an appropriately high standard in this regard, and should provide guidance drawn from best practice examples such as the Olympic Park. Local authorities and their partners must give this an appropriate degree of priority, and should look to develop and apply 'lifetime neighbourhood' principles within their local planning policies. (Paragraph 167)
27. Changing technologies and patterns of retail behaviour are posing a significant challenge to our high streets. There is a threat to the long-term resilience of

- our town centres and the vitality of the urban built environment. We believe that local leadership is central in addressing this challenge. (Paragraph 174)
28. Planners should continue to encourage retail development into existing town centres. They must also begin to think more proactively, and creatively, about other ways to stimulate additional activity and footfall. Additional residential development may help to deliver this, but must be implemented with due regard for design quality, living standards, a diverse and sustainable mix of uses and the overall cohesion of the built environment. A wide range of services, alongside retail, can help to drive footfall. These include leisure, culture, sports, health, education and small scale manufacturing. Local authorities should use their multiple resources and responsibilities to proactively shape their town centres and positively plan for their future. (Paragraph 175)
 29. England lacks a proactive, long-term national strategy for managing our historic environment, as part of planning for the future of the built environment. We believe that such a strategy, which would recognise the full value of our built heritage as a unique national and local asset, central to place-making, should be articulated for the future. (Paragraph 180)
 30. Both DCMS and DCLG are responsible, in different ways, for heritage policy and the way in which these policies impact upon the built environment. We do not support the calls for ministerial responsibility for heritage to move from DCMS to DCLG. We would like, however, to see evidence of more joint leadership and proactive joint working between the departments in developing policies, for example, for heritage and regeneration, and across joint policy areas such as the protection of World Heritage Sites. (Paragraph 181)
 31. The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to balance heritage protection and development policies. We believe that it is essential that this balance is sustained, enhanced and delivered. We recommend that planning and development policy and practice should reflect more explicitly the fact that our historic environment is a cultural and economic asset rather than an obstacle to successful future developments—whether in urban or rural areas—and can contribute, uniquely, to the highest standards of design and the quality of community life. (Paragraph 183)
 32. At present, VAT is charged at a rate of 20% on repairs and maintenance to existing buildings, while VAT on much new-build construction is zero-rated. This provides a perverse disincentive to the retention, restoration and revitalisation of historic buildings, and works to prevent owners from looking after them properly. We recommend that the Government should review the rates of VAT charged on repairs to listed buildings, and examine the economic rationale for reducing the rate. (Paragraph 187)
 33. We recommend that the Government takes a more proactive approach to the provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems. The Government should consider whether to introduce a separate approval regime, as was envisaged in the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, or whether to upgrade the status of Sustainable Drainage Systems to critical infrastructure. (Paragraph 199)
 34. Further efforts need to be made to increase flood resilience in the built environment. This would include taking steps to reduce the number of new properties built in areas of flood risk against Environment Agency advice. In addition, there should be a requirement for all new properties in flood

risk areas to have flood resilience measures built in. Government should also promote a co-ordinated programme of retrofit for the growing number of existing properties in such areas. (Paragraph 200)

35. The Government should reverse its decision to remove the requirement for new homes to generate no net carbon emissions (known as the “zero carbon homes” policy) and its decision to remove the Code for Sustainable Homes. The Government must set out and implement a viable trajectory towards energy efficiency and carbon reduction in new homes. (Paragraph 207)
36. We believe that the Government must be more proactive in supporting retrofit measures for existing buildings, and should examine financial measures and mechanisms which would allow for more widespread retrofitting to take place. These might include a low-interest retrofit loan programme on the German model, or consideration of a more effective replacement for the Green Deal. The Government should consider promoting a “whole building” approach to retrofit to encourage more context-sensitive retrofitting of traditional buildings, looking beyond the building fabric to consider the energy performance of all parts of the building. (Paragraph 216)
37. The Government must do more to protect and promote Green Infrastructure in national policy and guidance, including setting out its benefits for sustainability. It should also encourage local authorities to set minimum standards for Green Infrastructure provision and management in local plans and in planning decision-making. Within and beyond Government, there must be wider recognition of the fact that Green Infrastructure is an asset, and offers wider economic, health and social benefits. (Paragraph 224)

Chapter Five: Delivering more housing

38. We believe that, in addition to measures to support increased private sector housing development, and to encourage home ownership, there should be renewed focus on how built environment policy can support mixed communities including through the provision of long-term affordable rented housing. (Paragraph 241)
39. This should include supporting housing associations in their aspiration to increase housing supply, including reviewing the impact of financial constraints and changes to Government policy. (Paragraph 242)
40. Local authorities can play an important role in meeting the need for housing, but in recent decades have largely lost their ability to contribute to new supply. While there has been a minor revival of council housebuilding in recent years, borrowing restrictions limit their development capacity, and proposed social rent cuts may threaten the viability of new schemes altogether. (Paragraph 252)
41. In recognition that housing need has rarely been met in England without a significant direct contribution from councils, the Government should take steps to ensure that local authorities are able to fulfil their potential as direct builders of new mixed tenure housing. This should include reviewing the impact of borrowing restrictions and proposed social rent reductions. (Paragraph 253)
42. We believe that smaller housebuilding companies can play a bigger part in addressing the housing shortage. The Government should review the NPPF and NPPG with a view to encouraging local authorities to identify

and facilitate development on smaller sites. The Government and local authorities should encourage and enable SME builders to use these sites where appropriate, in order to support diversity in the housebuilding market and to help increase housing supply. (Paragraph 261)

43. We recommend that the Government should identify the barriers to access now facing SME builders and review how access to finance for this sector could be improved. The Government should also continue to review the progress of existing initiatives to support small builders, including the Housing Growth Partnership and Housing Development Fund. (Paragraph 266)
44. We believe the Government should expand its review of compulsory purchase procedure set out in the Housing and Planning Bill to incorporate a wider review of the functioning of compulsory purchase and its role in supporting development. The review should focus on seeking the most appropriate balance between improving neighbourhoods, securing necessary development and ensuring the landowner receives fair compensation. (Paragraph 283)
45. The protections afforded to the Green Belt are important; current NPPF policy on the Green Belt should remain. We recommend, however, that the Government should publish clearer guidance on the definition of the “exceptional circumstances” in which Green Belt boundaries may be revised. (Paragraph 294)
46. The Government should also consider strengthening the priority given to brownfield development, including considering the reintroduction of a “brownfield first” policy at national level. (Paragraph 295)
47. We recommend that, in the light of declining resources, smaller planning authorities should be encouraged to share resources and built environment expertise with neighbouring authorities. (Paragraph 304)
48. The Government should consider the potential for extending the Development Corporation model to other major sites in England, where larger housing sites might benefit from having a single delivery authority with stronger powers and where local authorities are supportive. (Paragraph 311)
49. We believe that the Government must consider measures to help accelerate the delivery of housing on sites with planning permission, such as permitting the charge of equivalent council tax rates when development has not commenced after a specified period of time, subject to safeguards when there are genuine reasons to prevent the development proceeding. (Paragraph 323)
50. The Government should revise the NPPF and NPPG to make clear that the process of viability assessment should not be used to compromise the ability of local authorities to meet housing need, including affordable housing need, as determined through development plans. This will reduce the unreasonable use of viability assessments to avoid funding of affordable housing and infrastructure. (Paragraph 335)
51. The Government should also publish a nationally consistent methodology for viability assessment. This methodology should include standardised guidance on calculation of land values and other inputs, and a recommendation for full disclosure of viability assessments. Local authorities and developers should also have the right to seek arbitration from independent viability consultants where agreement on scheme viability cannot be reached. (Paragraph 336)

52. The Government should reconsider its proposal to include “starter homes” within the definition of affordable housing. The proposal risks undermining mixed communities and preventing the delivery of genuinely affordable housing for the long term. (Paragraph 344)
53. The Government should revise its proposal to require starter homes on every reasonably sized development site. Local authorities should retain the discretion to prioritise long-term affordable housing over starter homes in the planning system where appropriate. The Government should also reconsider other policies set out in the Housing and Planning Bill, such as the requirement to sell higher value council homes, given that they could undermine the maintenance of mixed communities. (Paragraph 345)
54. Construction skills shortages are acting as a constraint on the delivery of housing. We urge the Government to take measures to remedy this situation. Such measures might include the expansion of apprenticeships, the promotion of construction trades in courses offered by university technical colleges, and increased support for outreach programmes within educational institutions to encourage more young people to enter the industry. (Paragraph 352)

Chapter Six: Local leadership, delivery and skills

55. Proactive local planning can play an important part in defining a ‘vision’ for a local area and improving the built environment. Local authorities should consider mechanisms that would help them to develop the capacity to do this, including the potential for working outside the statutory planning system to raise the status of planning and regeneration in their area. This might include the production of design frameworks, masterplans or strategies. National and local government should also take steps to increase the capacity of the planning sector as a whole, including through educational outreach programmes as well as partnerships with the private sector, universities and neighbouring authorities. (Paragraph 370)
56. We recommend that the Government should consider how best it might support the development of place-making capacity within local authorities. The Government, and local authorities, should consider the merits of supporting the Public Service initiative proposed by the Planning Officers’ Society, and the introduction of bursaries to students of planning in a similar manner to that offered to the teaching profession in order to help attract the best students. (Paragraph 371)
57. We recommend that the Government should explore how a localised fee regime would help local authorities to deliver a more efficient planning service, with less direct public subsidy. In this context, the Government should also explore how local fees might be regulated to ensure that planning applications remain cost-effective for applicants. (Paragraph 383)
58. Meanwhile, national fees should be set at a level which moves closer to “full cost recovery” for local authorities. The Government should also consider a fee uplift to cover the cost of prior approval applications. (Paragraph 384)
59. We also recommend that local authorities should explore the potential for commercial activity and premium planning services such as the fast tracking of applications, in order to increase revenue for their planning departments. (Paragraph 385)

60. The fundamental approach of a plan-led system should remain unaltered, but national and local government should explore opportunities to make local plan-making more dynamic and responsive to changing conditions. The Government should consider the introduction of additional measures to allow for the partial review, or incremental adoption, of local plans, to avoid the need for a lengthy, resource intensive full plan review when underlying circumstances change. (Paragraph 397)
61. We believe that local authorities should explore working together on joint spatial frameworks on the model of Greater Manchester, and that the Government should give them further encouragement to do so. (Paragraph 412)
62. Such approaches may not, however, be suitable in all parts of the country. In these circumstances, the Government should provide stronger incentives and guidance to ensure that local authorities co-operate effectively on cross-boundary planning matters and that the operation of the “duty to co-operate” does not create blockages and delays in the wider planning system. (Paragraph 413)
63. We recommend that the Government should give stronger weight to emerging neighbourhood plans in planning policy, to enable rejection of speculative development which might conflict with the neighbourhood plan. (Paragraph 421)
64. We recommend that the Government, and local authorities, should take measures to streamline and simplify the neighbourhood planning process, and provide resources for promoting the establishment of neighbourhood forums and supporting the neighbourhood planning process in areas where take-up has been low. (Paragraph 422)
65. We recommend that there should be stronger policy support for early community engagement in both local plan making and planning decision-making. The Government, and local authorities, should give consideration to making good community engagement a material consideration in major planning decisions. (Paragraph 425)
66. We believe that the Government should consider the introduction of a community right of appeal in certain specified circumstances, such as when a planning decision conflicts with an emerging neighbourhood plan or deals with a site unallocated by the local plan. This may serve to discourage speculative or unsustainable development. (Paragraph 430)

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF MEMBERS AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members

Baroness Andrews
 Lord Clement-Jones
 Baroness Finlay of Llandaff
 Lord Freeman
 Lord Haskel (until 23 June 2015)
 Lord Inglewood
 Earl of Lytton
 Lord Macdonald of Tradeston (until 8 July 2015)
 Baroness O'Cathain (Chairman)
 Baroness Parminter
 Baroness Rawlings
 Baroness Whitaker
 Lord Woolmer of Leeds (from 23 June 2015)
 Baroness Young of Old Sccone (from 8 July 2015)

Declarations of Interest

Baroness Andrews
Vice President, National Parks Association
President, Friends of Lewes
Trustee, Prince's Regeneration Trust
 Lord Clement-Jones
London Managing Partner DLA Piper UK LLP (International law firm)
Member of Council, University College London
 Baroness Finlay of Llandaff
Incoming chair of National Council for Palliative Care
Clinical lead for Palliative Care for Wales
Currently engaged in personal planning dispute
 Lord Freeman
Married to Lady Freeman, who is a specialist developer of architecturally historic buildings
Patron, Independent Transport Commission
 Lord Inglewood
Owner Hutton-in-the-Forest, Grade I Building
Agricultural and residential property in Cumbria
Trustee, Elton Estate, Cambridgeshire/Northamptonshire
Trustee, Raby Estates, Co Durham and Shropshire
Trustee, Thoresby Estate, Nottinghamshire
Political Adviser (House of Lords) Estates Business Group
Member, Board of Directors, Historic Houses Association
Trustee, Board Member, and Parliamentary and Tax Committee Historic Houses Association
Chairman, Cumbria Local Nature Partnership
Member, Advisory Council of Friends of Lake District
Member, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
President, Cumbria Wildlife Trust
Patron, Lake District Housing Trust
Vice President, National Parks Association
President, Ancient Monuments Society

Earl of Lytton

Dwelling house in West Sussex, occupied as principal residence with parts let to residential tenants and to a lodger, from whom rental income is received

Co-owner (with wife) of rural estates in Somerset and Sussex including farm and woodland, let business and residential accommodation, holiday lets, mobile phone masts, wayleaves, sporting interests and a private toll road; trustee of associated family trusts

Residual interests qua Lord of the Manor of several manors in Surrey, West Sussex and Somerset

Director (effectively sole principal), John Lytton & Co Ltd, Chartered Surveyors (all the Member's professional work as a chartered surveyor under this head is done as a sole practitioner trading as a limited company; as such every invoice for work carried out by the Member is paid to the company's account and not directly to the Member; the Member does no work in a private capacity (i.e. non-professional work) that is paid to this or to any other company) (company ceased trading 31 March 2015)

Director (with wife), Lillycombe Estate Ltd (sporting interests in Somerset; the Member provides no services for which he makes any charge)

Part-time employee, Lawrence Foote and Partners (London) Ltd (chartered quantity surveyors)

Commissioner, RICS Land and Society Commission (think tank looking at localism and community ownership/management of property assets) (interest ceased end 2014)

Chairman of the Industry Consultative Committee, University of West London (linking the university outputs with the construction, engineering, building technology and regulatory world) and Rights of Way Review Committee

Trustee, South of England Agricultural Society

A Vice President, National Association of Local Councils (and West Sussex Association of Local Councils) (national body for parish, town and neighbourhood councils); and Local Government Association

Sponsor of a private bill aimed at better means of determining property boundary disputes

Member, Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation; Chartered Association of Building Engineers; Chartered Institute of Arbitrators; Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors; All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Private Rented Sector, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Excellence in the Built Environment

Baroness O'Cathain

Member, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

Baroness Parminter

Principal Spokesperson on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for the Liberal Democrats in the House of Lords

Former Chief Executive, Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) (1998–2004)

Baroness Rawlings

Trustee, Chevening Estate

Member of Council, The Georgian Group

Chairman of Governors, English College in Prague, currently involved in the development of a new school site (in Prague)

Baroness Whitaker

Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects

President, South Downs Society

President, Newhaven Historical Society

Lord Woolmer of Leeds

No relevant interests declared

Baroness Young of Old Sccone

A Vice President, RSPB

President, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust

Former Chief Executive of the Environment Agency

Chancellor, Cranfield University

Incoming Chair of the Woodland Trust (will take effect in May 2016)

A full list of Members' interests can be found in the Register of Lords Interests:

<http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/register-of-lords-interests/>

Professor Matthew Carmona (Specialist Adviser)

Professor of Planning and Urban Design, The Bartlett School of Planning, University College London

Chair, Place Alliance

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF WITNESSES

Evidence is published online at www.parliament.uk/built-environment and available for inspection at the Parliamentary Archives (020 7219 3074).

Evidence received by the Committee is listed below in chronological order of oral evidence session and in alphabetical order. Those witnesses marked with ** gave both oral evidence and written evidence. Those marked with * gave oral evidence and did not submit any written evidence. All other witnesses submitted written evidence only.

Oral evidence in chronological order

- * Professor Rachel Cooper OBE, Professor of Design Management, Lancaster University [QQ 1-12](#)
- ** Dr Richard Simmons, former Chief Executive of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)
- * Professor Mark Tewdwr-Jones, Professor of Town Planning, Newcastle University
- * Gill Graham, Head of Heritage, Department for Culture Media and Sport [QQ 13-28](#)
- * Bob Ledsome, Deputy Director, Building Regulations and Standards, Department for Communities and Local Government
- ** Steve Quartermain, Department for Communities and Local Government, Chief Planner
- ** Ruth Stanier, Department for Communities and Local Government, Director of Planning
- ** Prof Peter Bishop, Professor in Urban Design, The Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL; Author, The Bishop Review: The Future of Design in the Built Environment [QQ 29-40](#)
- ** Max Farrell, Partner, Farrells; Project Leader, The Farrell Review of Architecture and the Built Environment
- ** Dame Kate Barker, economist, author of the Barker Review of UK Housing Supply, former member of the Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee [QQ 41-51](#)
- * Toby Lloyd, Policy Director, Shelter
- * Lord Best, former Chief Executive of the National Housing Federation, former Chief Executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust [QQ 52-63](#)
- ** Kathleen Kelly, Assistant Director of Policy and Research, National Housing Federation
- * Sunand Prasad, Penoyre & Prasad Architects [QQ 64-72](#)

- * Quinlan Terry CBE, Quinlan and Francis Terry Architects
- ** John Grinnell, Deputy Head of Development, The Crown Estate [QQ 73–83](#)
- ** Steve Melligan, Strategic Land Manager, The Crown Estate
- * David Tittle, Chair, Design Network and Chief Executive, Made West Midlands [QQ 84–93](#)
- * David Waterhouse, Head of Strategic Development, CABE at Design Council
- ** Chris Carr, Chair of the Home Builders' Group, Federation of Master Builders [QQ 94–108](#)
- * John Slaughter, Director of External Affairs, Home Builders Federation
- ** Dr Hugh Ellis, Head of Policy, Town and Country Planning Association [QQ 109–120](#)
- ** Paul Miner, Planning Campaign Manager, Campaign to Protect Rural England
- ** Noel Farrer, President, Landscape Institute [QQ 121–131](#)
- ** Iain Taylor, Director of Business Development, Land Trust
- ** Richard Blyth, Head of Policy, Royal Town Planning Institute [QQ 132–145](#)
- ** Finn Williams, Director, Planning Officers Society
- ** David Henry, Planning Director Savills, appearing on behalf of Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors [QQ 146–158](#)
- ** Ruth Reed, Former Past President, Royal Institute of British Architects
- * Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive, Prince's Regeneration Trust [QQ 159–170](#)
- * Henry Russell, Chairman of Spatial Planning Advocacy Group, The Heritage Alliance
- ** Duncan Wilson, Chief Executive, Historic England
- ** Carole Reilly, Head of Neighbourhood Planning, Locality [QQ 171–183](#)
- ** Sophia de Sousa, CEO The Glass-House Community Led Design
- * Guy Bransby, Lead Director, Planning and Development, Jones Lang LaSalle [QQ 184–196](#)
- * Richard Lemon, Associate Director, Planning, CBRE
- * Adrian Penfold, Head of Planning, British Land
- * Esther Kurland, Director, Urban Design London [QQ 197–207](#)

- ** Professor John Worthington, Independent Transport Commission
- * Cllr Gillian Brown, Leader of Arun District Council and planning lead for District Councils Network [QQ 208–223](#)
- * Cllr Sue Derbyshire, Leader of Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council and planning/housing lead for Greater Manchester Combined Authority
- * Dr Laurence Carmichael, Coordinator, WHO Collaborating Centre for Healthy Urban Environments [QQ 224–233](#)
- * Dr Ann Marie Connolly, Deputy Director, Health Equity, Place and Mental Health, Public Health England
- * Dr Matt Egan, Senior Lecturer, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
- ** Sue Adams OBE, Chief Executive, Care & Repair England [QQ 234–240](#)
- * Paul Gamble, Chief Executive, Habinteg
- * Michael Cassidy CBE, Chairman, Ebbsfleet Development Corporation [QQ 241–250](#)
- ** Louise Sunderland, Senior Policy Advisor, UK Green Building Council [QQ 251–260](#)
- * Simon de Beer, Planning Policy & Environment Manager, Bath and North East Somerset Council [QQ 261–275](#)
- * Joe Henry, Service Director, Development Management and Building Control, London Borough of Barnet
- * Anneliese Hutchinson, Service Director, Development and Public Protection, Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council
- * Chris Shepley CBE, Chief Planning Inspector and Chief Executive of the Planning Inspectorate, 1994 to 2002 [QQ 276–282](#)
- * Katrine Sporle CBE, Former Chief Executive of the Planning Inspectorate, 2003–2011
- * Tony Grayling, Director of Sustainable Business and Development at the Environment Agency [QQ 283–307](#)
- ** David Wilkes, Honorary Vice-President of CIWEM
- ** Simon Foxell, appearing on behalf of The Edge, built-environment think tank [QQ 308–329](#)
- ** Barry Sellers, appearing on behalf of Urban Design Group
- ** Brandon Lewis MP, Minister of State for Housing and Planning, DCLG [QQ 330–343](#)

Alphabetical list of all witnesses

	The Access Association	BEN0198
	Anchor	BEN0206
	Sir John Armitt	BEN0226
*	Arun District Council (QQ 208–223)	
	Mr Nigel Spencer Atkins	BEN0223
**	Dame Kate Barker (QQ 41–51)	BEN0197
	Tom Bartlett	BEN0181
	Bat Conservation Trust	BEN0172
*	Bath and Northeast Somerset Council (QQ 261–275)	
	Beam, Farrells and The Place Alliance	BEN0217
	Giles Bergne	BEN0056
*	Lord Best (QQ 52–63)	
**	Professor Peter Bishop (QQ 29–40)	BEN0011
	Boughton Parish Council	BEN0097
	Boxley Parish Council	BEN0073
	Professor Glen Bramley	BEN0104
	Braunston Parish Council	BEN0145
	Brington Parish Council	BEN0105
*	British Land (QQ 184–196)	
	British Property Federation	BEN0135
	Bromley Civic Society	BEN0151
	Dr Tim Brown, De Montfort University	BEN0088
	Building & Engineering Services Association	BEN0134
	Dr Kerry Burton	BEN0118
	Byfield Parish Council	BEN0036
	Cambridge Centre for Housing & Planning Research	BEN0109
	Camden Town Unlimited	BEN0127
	Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)	BEN0084
**	Campaign to Protect Rural England and Town & Country Planning Association (QQ 109–120)	
	Campaign to Protect Rural England Kent	BEN0038
	Campaign to Protect Rural England Lancashire	BEN0070
	Campaign to Protect Rural England Maidstone	BEN0079
	Canterbury Society	BEN0107
**	Care & Repair England (QQ 234–240)	BEN0091 BEN0219

★	CBRE (QQ_184–196)	
	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA)	BEN0063
	The Chartered Institute of Building	BEN0043
	Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE)	BEN0102
**	Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (QQ_283–307)	BEN0078 BEN0221
	City of London Corporation	BEN0199
	Colchester Borough Council	BEN0083
	Collyweston Parish Council	BEN0022
	Committee on Climate Change	BEN0124
	Confederation of British Industry (CBI)	BEN0054
	Construction Industry Council (CIC)	BEN0071
	Construction Industry Council Flood Mitigation and Resilience Group	BEN0053
	Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)	BEN0187
★	Professor Rachel Cooper (QQ_1–12)	
	Create Streets	BEN0195
	Croughton Parish Council	BEN0025
**	The Crown Estate (QQ_73–83)	BEN0211
**	Department for Communities and Local Government (QQ_13–28)	BEN0190 BEN0200 BEN0225
★	Department for Culture, Media and Sport (QQ_13–28)	
**	Design Council CABE (QQ_84–93)	BEN0177
	Professor Danny Dorling	BEN0204
	Professor Neil Dunse	BEN0104
★	Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (QQ_241–250)	
	EcoSystem Services	BEN0006
	Edf Energy	BEN0117
	The Edge	BEN0122 BEN0224
	Edinburgh College of Art, University of Edinburgh	BEN0058
★	Dr Matt Egan (QQ_224–223)	
	Electrosensitivity UK (Es-UK)	BEN0092
	Energy UK	BEN0014
	Eythorne Parish Council	BEN0068

**	Farrells (QQ_29–40)	BEN0139 BEN0217
**	Federation of Master Builders (QQ_94–108)	BEN0220
	Friends of the Earth	BEN0137
	The Gardens Trust	BEN0051
	Gas Safety Trust	BEN0017
*	Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council (QQ_261–275)	
	Professor Jay Ginn	BEN0046
	Glass and Glazing Federation	BEN0174
**	The Glass–House Community Led Design (QQ_171–183)	BEN0074 BEN0214
	Professor Vincent Goodstadt, University of Manchester	BEN0103
	Greater London Authority (GLA)	BEN0191
	Grove Park Group (Residents Association)	BEN0067
	Guide Dogs for the Blind Association	BEN0096
**	Habinteg (QQ_234–240)	BEN0116
	Headcorn Parish Council	BEN0161
*	The Heritage Alliance (QQ_159–170)	
**	Historic England (QQ_159–170)	BEN0042 BEN0213
	Hollingbourne Parish Council	BEN0175
*	Home Builders Federation (QQ_94–108)	
	HTA Design LLP	BEN0028
	Roger Hutton	BEN0202
**	Independent Transport Commission (QQ_197–207)	BEN0149 BEN0222
	Innovate UK	BEN0147
	Institute of Acoustics	BEN0059
	Institute of Historic Building Conservation	BEN0160
	The Institution of Structural Engineers	BEN0033
	Dr Isaac Jamieson	BEN0216
	Joint Parishes Group (JPG)	BEN0189
	Bulent Kazim	BEN0003
	Kent Woodland Employment Scheme (KWES)	BEN0150
	Kew Society	BEN0180
	Local Authority Building Council (LABC)	BEN0064

**	Landscape Institute (QQ_121–131)	BEN0136 BEN0208
**	The Land Trust (QQ_121–131)	BEN0069
	Professor Chris Leishman	BEN0104
	Lincolnshire Rural Housing Association	BEN0021
	Living Streets	BEN0010
**	Locality (QQ_171–183)	BEN0153 BEN0212
	Local Government Association (LGA)	BEN0207
*	London Borough of Barnet (QQ_261–275)	
	London Borough of Islington	BEN0183
	Janet Mackinnon	BEN0099
*	Made West Midlands (QQ_84–93)	
	Ken Mafham	BEN0178
	Dr Erica Mallery-Blythe	BEN0216
	Judith Martin	BEN0148
	McCarthy & Stone	BEN0218
	The Mersey Forest	BEN0077
	Tony Michael	BEN0125
	Mineral Wool Insulation Manufacturers Association (MIMA)	BEN0176
	Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and the Built Environment for Northern Ireland	BEN0085
	Moulton Parish Council	BEN0120
	MRC Epidemiology Unit & Centre for Diet and Activity Research	BEN0085
	Dr Lucy Natarajan, University College London	BEN0103
	National Federation of Roofing Contractors	BEN0060
	National House Building Council (NHBC)	BEN0111
**	National Housing Federation (QQ_52–63)	BEN0152
	New Garden Cities Alliance (CIC)	BEN0108
	Dr Richard Newman	BEN0118
	Sir William O'Brien	BEN0192
	Dr Fabiano Lemes de Oliveira	BEN0086
	Overstone Parish Council	BEN0121
	The Parks Alliance	BEN0133
	Partnership for Active Travel Transport and Health (PATTH)	BEN0082

	Paulerspury Parish Council	BEN0203
*	Penoyre & Prasad Architects (QQ_64–72)	
	Peter Brett Associates	BEN0095
	Place Alliance	BEN0143
	Places for People	BEN0066
*	Planning Inspectorate (QQ_276–282)	
**	Planning Officers Society (QQ_132–145)	BEN0162
	Pontefract Civic Society	BEN0193
	Portsmouth School of Architecture and Radian Group	BEN0087
	Potterspury Parish Council	BEN0014
	John Preston	BEN0100
*	Prince's Regeneration Trust (QQ_159–170)	
	C. Prosser	BEN0210
**	Public Health England (QQ_224–233)	BEN0186
	Pupils 2 Parliament	BEN0201
*	Quinlan and Francis Terry Architects (QQ_64–72)	
	Reclaim London	BEN0184
	ResPublica	BEN0044
	Rescue, The British Archaeological Trust	BEN0049
	Riverhead Parish Council	BEN0156
	Royal Academy of Engineering	BEN0128
	Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)	BEN0164
**	Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) (QQ_146–158)	BEN0157
**	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) (QQ_146–158)	BEN0185
	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)	BEN0188
**	Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) (QQ_132–145)	BEN0126 BEN0215
	Rushden Town Council	BEN0155
	Professor Yvonne Rydin, University College London	BEN0013
	Daniel Scharf	BEN0005
	Professor Alister Scott	BEN0227
	Sellindge Parish Council	BEN0194
*	Shelter (QQ_41–51)	
	Shine	BEN0131
	Henny Shotter	BEN0076

**	Dr Richard Simmons (QQ_1–12)	BEN0170
	Dr Felicity Simpson	BEN0196
	Social Life	BEN0159
	Stelling Minnis Parish Council	BEN0093
*	Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (QQ_208–223)	
	Stop Smart Meters UK	BEN0166
	Teresa Strachan, School of Architecture and Planning, Newcastle University	BEN0173
	Suffolk Preservation Society	BEN0080
	Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance (STBA)	BEN0115
	Syresham Parish Council	BEN0065
	Tata Steel	BEN0179
*	Professor Mark Tewdwr–Jones (QQ_1–12)	
	The Theatres Trust	BEN0123
	Sue Thompson	BEN0031
	Professor Anthea Tinker	BEN0046
**	Town & Country Planning Association (TCPA) (QQ_109–120)	BEN0171
	Transport and Health Study Group	BEN0094
	Trees and Design Action Group	BEN0182
	Dr Shann Turnball	BEN0110
**	UK Green Building Council (QQ_251–260)	BEN0081
	UK Health Forum	BEN0024
	UK Indoor Environments Group	BEN0112
	Ulcombe Parish Council	BEN0098
	University of Manchester	BEN0023
	University of Northampton, Collaborative Centre for the Built Environment	BEN0027
	Urban Design Group	BEN0141
	Urban Forestry and Woodlands Advisory Networks Committee	BEN0072
	Urban Vision Enterprise	BEN0026
	URBED	BEN0032
	Wappenhamb Parish Council	BEN0048
	Dan Ward	BEN0020
	Weodon Bec Parish Council	BEN0168
	Welton Parish Council	BEN0050

Westbere Parish Council	<u>BEN0055</u>
West of England Nature Partnership	<u>BEN0132</u>
West Malling Parish Council	<u>BEN0119</u>
Wildfowl & Wetland Trust	<u>BEN0209</u>
The Wildlife Trusts	<u>BEN0113</u>
Woodland Trust	<u>BEN0130</u>
Worcestershire County Council	<u>BEN0101</u>
World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre (QQ_224–233)	
Yelvertoft Parish Council	<u>BEN0047</u>

APPENDIX 3: CALL FOR EVIDENCE

The House of Lords has established a Select Committee to consider ‘the development and implementation of national policy for the built environment’.

The Committee will explore the following key issues in detail and would welcome your views on any or all of the following questions. Please note that questions are not listed here in any particular order of importance.

As many of the policy areas which are likely to be considered by the Committee are devolved, the principal focus of the inquiry will be upon policy for the built environment in England. Notwithstanding this, comparisons and examples of practice from other parts of the UK would also be welcome.

The Committee wishes to focus primarily on the future challenges and priorities for built environment policy. Comments on past and present practices are welcome where they illustrate the lessons that should be learned for built environment policy in the future.

Written evidence should arrive no later than 6 October 2015.

Questions

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?
2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?
4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?
5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?
7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking?

Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

Skills and design

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?
10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and 'place-making' at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

Community involvement and community impact

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?
12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

Financial measures

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

APPENDIX 4: GLOSSARY

BIS	Department for Business, Innovation & Skills
BCC	British Chambers of Commerce
BMHT	Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust
CABE	Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CCC	Committee on Climate Change
CIC	Construction Industry Council
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
CITB	Construction Industry Training Board
CPRE	Campaign to Protect Rural England
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
DfT	Department for Transport
GI	Green Infrastructure
HS2	High Speed 2
IHBC	Institute for Historic Building Conservation
LGA	Local Government Association
LPAs	Local Planning Authorities
ONS	Office for National Statistics
NPPF	National Policy Planning Framework
NPPG	National Planning Practice Guidance
NSIPs	Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects
OPDC	Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation
PATTH	Partnership for Active Travel, Transport and Health
PPSs	Planning Policy Statements
PTALs	Public Transport Accessibility Levels
RIBA	Royal Institute of British Architects
RICS	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
RSSs	Regional Spatial Strategies
RTPI	Royal Town Planning Institute
SME	Small and Medium sized Enterprises
SuDS	Sustainable Drainage Systems
TCPA	Town & Country Planning Association
URBED	Urbanism Environment and Design

APPENDIX 5: NOTE OF COMMITTEE VISIT TO SOUTHWARK COUNCIL AND ELEPHANT & CASTLE: WEDNESDAY 16 SEPTEMBER

As part of its inquiry, the Committee met with members and officials of Southwark Council, before travelling to Elephant and Castle to meet with staff from Lendlease and to view part of the new Elephant Park development.

The following Members took part in the visit:

Baroness Andrews, Lord Clement-Jones, Baroness Finlay of Llandaff, Lord Inglewood, Earl of Lytton, Baroness O'Cathain, Baroness Whitaker and Baroness Young of Old Scone.

The Committee heard from:

Simon Bevan, Director of Planning, Stephen Platts, Director of Regeneration, Councillor Nick Dolezal, Chair, Planning Committee and Councillor Mark Williams, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and New Homes.

The Committee were told that the delivery of new housing in London is concentrated in the high-density, inner London Boroughs such as Southwark, rather than the outer Boroughs and suburbs.

The Council officials noted that Southwark is in a relatively fortunate position to meet the demand for new housing, as it has a relatively large amount of land to exploit compared to most other urban councils.

Housing targets

The Committee were told that the Mayor of London sets targets for housebuilding in all the London boroughs. Southwark's target of 2,736 new homes per year—the equivalent of 1 every 3 hours—is the 2nd highest in London.

Southwark Council have, at times, raised concerns regarding housebuilding targets set out by the Mayor (both the former Mayor Ken Livingstone and current incumbent Boris Johnson MP). Their target was set at 1,600 new homes per year initially, then raised to 2,005 and then again to 2,736 per year. It was suggested that success in delivering against targets in the past may have contributed to a subsequent increase in targets, which could prove difficult to deliver.

Old Kent Road development

The Committee were told about the initial planning for a large new housing development around the Old Kent Road in Southwark.

The area surrounding the Old Kent Road is largely made up of old industrial sites, based around the former Surrey canal, gas works and railways. It has a high number of single-storey factories and yards. It has been protected for many decades for industrial usage, in order to safeguard local employment opportunities and to supply the rest of London with the products of those industries. As a result of this designation, little or no new housing has been allowed in the area.

In the last couple of years, however, this position has been re-evaluated and housing is now being considered for the area. This change was initiated by Southwark Council, who had asked the Mayor of London to consider the Old Kent Road as an 'opportunity area'.

The council are planning for 20,000 new homes in the Old Kent Road area, accommodating 50–60,000 people (approximately the size of a town such as Woking). It is a 15–20 year programme that is in its early stages at present. The homes are not being built to meet particular demographic or population projections—other than to contribute towards the Mayor’s target—but the Committee were told that the pressure for housing in the capital was such that there was no risk that there would not be the demand for new housing.

At this stage the Council have not undertaken the detailed planning for education and health infrastructure, but have identified that new infrastructure will be essential, particularly transport connections. The proposed Bakerloo Line extension is deemed vital to the overall viability of the proposals.

Southwark Council are actively working with local residents to engage them in the process of developing the plan for the area. They have set up an Old Kent Road community group that has regular meetings about the project and which is discussing ideas with the architects for the project, Allies and Morrison.

The Committee asked about risks the project might face. The Council does not own much land in the Old Kent Road area, and ownership is fragmented, meaning that acquisition for development could be a lengthy and complex process, with a risk of land value speculation. It will require Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) and likely result in incremental construction and on-site assembly (which is more costly). In addition, there is the possibility that the Bakerloo Line extension does not happen (or an alternative route for the extension through Camberwell and Peckham is chosen). Site contamination could present a further complicating factor.

There are also the risks and potential costs of planning appeals and judicial reviews, which can cause significant delays in delivery. Experience in the Borough relating to the ‘Quill project’ was highlighted. This had been intended as student accommodation for King’s College London; delays caused by planning appeals, however, had led to this accommodation need being met elsewhere, with the development being changed to become private accommodation instead.

In terms of infrastructure investment, the Southwark Council officials told the Committee that the Old Kent Road project is too early in its formulation to get financial support from the Greater London Assembly, though it may be possible to access cheaper borrowing for the project through the Assembly in due course.

They noted that the London Mayor introduced a CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) for funding Crossrail that London boroughs had to contribute towards. Southwark was a significant contributor to the CIL, despite receiving no direct benefit from Crossrail (the East-West route of the line does not go through Southwark, and will do very little to alleviate congestion on travel routes in or through the borough). Southwark Council asked for the Bakerloo Line extension project to receive contributions from this fund—the request, however, had been turned down

Affordable housing, viability and Elephant Park

Southwark Council told the Committee that they have a robust planning policy for affordable homes—35% need to be affordable (broken down into 70% to buy and 30% to rent).

The Committee were told, however, that the viability definitions in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are making it difficult to get 35% on all the developments happening in the borough. The NPPF requires that local policy (such as setting the proportion of affordable housing, or levels of infrastructure contributions etc.) does not impede developments from being deliverable. The Committee were told that, in practice, some developers would tell the Council that the requirement to provide 35% affordable housing made their proposals no longer viable, thus requiring the negotiation of a lower percentage of affordable housing. The Committee were told that the financial calculations underlying such viability assessments were problematic, as they considered only the current land values of a site, rather than projected land values at the completion of a project (which may be 10-20 years into the future). Some contention also existed regarding the inclusion of projected infrastructure costs in viability assessments.

Southwark Council said that for the Elephant Park site (which the Committee later visited), the developer Lend Lease had initially calculated that only 11% of the housing on the site could be affordable. Southwark Council negotiated this up to 25%, although they acknowledged that this was still short of their 35% target. However across the Elephant & Castle area the Council expect to reach 35% overall over the next 30 years, as some sites will be 80%-100% affordable.

The Committee were told that while mixed-tenure housing blocks were desirable, they are difficult to deliver in practice. One of the major reasons is that service charges in private blocks are higher and it is hard to resolve service charge issues in a mixed-tenure block. It was also noted that service charges are not covered by housing benefit, so high service charges would effectively price people out of the blocks, making them no longer affordable. Southwark have sought to ensure that the affordable housing in the Elephant Park development is superficially no different to the private housing in order to create mixed-tenure developments, if not mixed-tenure blocks.

Southwark planning & skills

Southwark have a Local Plan, called the Southwark Plan. This plan is complete and a revised version is due to be finished in 2017. Southwark's plans have to conform with the Mayor's London Plan.

The Committee were told that councils' planning budgets had been cut by 40% in the last few years and that further cuts of around a third are expected in the next 3 years.

Southwark has a comparatively large planning team and is reasonably well-resourced compared to other councils, but were still feeling the effects of funding reductions. Recent changes to the way in which developers are charged for applications had proven helpful. It was noted, however, that Southwark is in a fortunate position due to the value of building in inner London, and extracting significant sums from developers would not be possible for councils operating in lower-demand areas.

In terms of skills, the Southwark team are relatively well-equipped, though consultants are sometimes engaged for particularly technical pieces of work. In recruitment terms, it was sometimes difficult to compete with a private sector that was typically able to offer higher salaries. Appealing factors such as a good work-life balance are required to attempt to entice people to work in public sector planning.

What would Southwark Council recommend?

The Chairman asked the Southwark Councillors and officials what they would like to see the Committee recommend.

The Councillors said they would like to see an end to the Right to Buy policy and that if the proposal for a Right to Buy for Housing Association properties went ahead it would be disastrous for the borough.

The Council officials said that skills shortages were a significant problem, particularly construction skills. They also suggested that the contracting model was 'broken', that there was too much sub-contracting and that the construction supply chain was not robust.

The Committee were also told that there is not enough housebuilding by local government and that national government needs to trust local government to build and give them the borrowing capacity to do so.

The Chair of the Planning Committee suggested that a less adversarial planning process would help to deliver more housing and better planning outcomes.

Lendlease

The Committee received a presentation from Rob Heasman (Project Director) about the Elephant Park development followed by a tour of the Trafalgar Place site by Elizabeth Randall (Senior Project Manager) and Iain Smith (Communications Manager).

About Lendlease

Lendlease are a subsidiary of an Australian property developer that operates across the world. They are an integrated company, working at all parts of the property 'food chain', including planning, construction and management. The Committee were told that Lendlease will see a development through to completion and then afterwards will consider selling it on as an investment (e.g. to pension funds). They developed the Bluewater out-of-town shopping centre, which they recently handed over to new owners 15–20 years after starting the project.

The Elephant Park development is the biggest UK resident site for Lend Lease, although they currently have bigger residential developments in the USA and Australia. They also currently have ongoing developments in Deptford and Stratford and have acquired the Crosby Homes portfolio.

Elephant Park

The Elephant Park project involves the regeneration of a 1970s mono-tenure housing estate (the Heygate Estate), attracting investment further south into the borough of Southwark.

Elephant Park is a key opportunity area in the London Plan. More buses go through Elephant & Castle every hour than anywhere else in Europe; it also has two tube lines and the Thameslink rail connection, and is less than one mile from 11 river crossings.

Lendlease noted that one of the benefits of the Elephant & Castle project is that there is not fragmented land ownership. This has made the large scale demolition, planning and redevelopment more straightforward.

The new Elephant Park will have ~3,000 homes and 50 shops by 2025 and create a new ‘linear park’ with 1,200 trees. This includes retaining many of the mature trees currently present and designing the site around them. Lend Lease are seeking to create a new ‘town centre’ with diverse usage in the area. The former Heygate estate had 1,212 homes on it—the new Elephant Park will have 2,800.

Lendlease said that 25% of the development will be affordable housing, with half for rent and half for shared ownership. It was emphasised that, from the outside, it would not be possible to tell which blocks were private and which were affordable. Of the rented properties, the 3 and 4 bed homes will be social rent and the 1 and 2 bed homes will have a capped rent.

APPENDIX 6: NOTE OF COMMITTEE VISIT TO BIRMINGHAM: WEDNESDAY 14 OCTOBER

The following Members took part in the visit:

Lord Clement-Jones, Lord Freeman, Lord Inglewood, Earl of Lytton, Baroness O'Cathain, Baroness Parminter, Baroness Whitaker and Lord Woolmer of Leeds.

The Committee travelled to Birmingham on Wednesday 14 October, undertaking a range of site visits and meetings with representatives of Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust and Birmingham City University. The Committee are grateful to all those who supported and participated in the visit.

Birmingham Growth Story

The Committee began by visiting the new Library of Birmingham, and receiving a presentation (including Q & A) on recent developments in the city from Mr Waheed Nazir, Director of Planning and Regeneration at Birmingham City Council. Mr Nazir explained that, since the late 1980s, the city had been seeking to address the legacy of 1960s planning which had been car dominated and defined by a land-use zoning approach and modern, high-rise developments. These developments had left the city with an inner ring-road that acted like a 'concrete collar' around the city centre, and had restricted economic growth.

A new approach, beginning with the 1988 Highbury Initiative, had sought to break the 'concrete collar', re-connecting the city centre to its immediate environs through the use of raised walkways and new access points. A greater emphasis had been given to the needs of pedestrians, and a mix of uses was being sought in regeneration schemes, to avoid some of the fragmentation created by zoning. In addition, a great deal of work had been undertaken to rejuvenate canals within the city, creating new leisure and retail space and utilising adjoining paths to increase access and permeability. A notable example of this was the Brindleyplace redevelopment.

Now, the city was looking ahead to its future growth needs. Projections suggested that Birmingham would need to accommodate a minimum of an additional 150,000 people by 2031, with around 80,000 new homes required to meet this need. In addition, 407 hectares of employment land would be required to provide over 100,000 new jobs. While provision had been made within plans and allocations (including the Birmingham Plan 2031) for 51,000 additional homes, there was still a projected shortfall of 30,000 homes within the City Council boundary. A housing market assessment funded by the Local Enterprise Partnership had suggested that, across the wider Birmingham Housing Market Area, the total shortfall amounted to 37,500 dwellings.

Birmingham City Council (BCC) was seeking to manage this challenge through dialogue and cooperation with neighbouring local authorities. The loss of the clarity provided by Regional Spatial Strategies, however, and the introduction of the duty to co-operate, created some complexities and increased the need for deliberation and negotiation. The scale of housing need in the city meant that it was impossible to protect the Green Belt in its entirety. To avoid piecemeal speculative Green Belt development, BCC and its neighbours had sought to allocate a single large site for housing to the north of the city, where the necessary infrastructure could be provided at an appropriate economy of scale. This presented a more sustainable

approach to managing housing growth demands, and helped to protect remaining parts of the Green Belt.

The Council was also—through the Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust—active as a housing developer in the city, with 1,000 new homes completed since 2009 and 700 completions projected in 2015/16. Some of these dwellings were for rent, while others were made available for market sale. This proactive approach enhanced the Council's understanding of delivery and viability in local housing markets, bringing wider advantages to the planning and regeneration teams (including in negotiations with developers).

The Birmingham City Centre Masterplan had been published in September 2010, setting out priority areas within the city centre for transformation, development and investment. In common with a number of other key strategy documents, this had been produced outside the statutory Local Plan processes. This was seen to offer a number of advantages, including enhanced capacity for 'vision' and clarity of purpose on the part of the Council. An innovative Tax Increment Financing (TIF) approach had been used to secure investment in infrastructure within the city centre. A masterplan was also being produced for the area encompassing the proposed new High Speed 2 station. This incorporated a particular emphasis on design quality and on ensuring the station was properly integrated with its surroundings and with other transport infrastructure such as the Metro.

Mr Nazir concluded his presentation by outlining the structure of the planning teams within the City Council. The Director of Planning and Regeneration was a member of the corporate management team within the authority and was, therefore, able to bring the built environment into key strategic decision making within the Council. The department itself had been re-organised to become more "outcome focused", with housing and education development functions included within the wider Planning and Regeneration service. On an area-by-area basis, across the city, planning policy, development management and regeneration officers had been brought together into area teams, under one manager. This provided an integrated approach to planning for each area, under the clear leadership of one senior officer. The Council was taking on around 10 graduate planners each year, working alongside local higher education institutions. It was suggested that the 'future planner' needed to have a more holistic, integrated approach to town planning, incorporating an understanding of planning strategy, planning control, design / conservation, regeneration and housing development.

Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust

The Committee then received a presentation (including Q & A) from Mr Clive Skidmore, Head of Housing Development at Birmingham City Council. Mr Skidmore explained that new housing completions in Birmingham had fallen from 4,000 in 2005/6 to 1,809 in 2014/15. Completions were only at around half of the rate needed to keep pace with demand. There were currently 26,000 people on the housing waiting list in the city.

The Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust (BMHT) was set up in January 2009 to lead the development of the Council's new build housing programme. At that point, the Council had not built any new houses in 30 years. BMHT was, in essence, a brand name—the Trust was part of the Council, rather than an arms-length body.

All of the developments were on City Council owned sites—mainly clearance sites—and housing types and designs were developed by the Council's own

architects. The new sites would move away from the “monotenure” of past estates by delivering a range of tenures on each site, including homes for private sale.

Private sector partners were used to publicise and negotiate purchases of the market sale properties, with stipulations from the council that homes should be sold for owner occupation and not to property investors. All homes were built to Code Level 4 and to Lifetime Homes and Secured by Design standards. The homes typically had higher space standards than those found in housing association or private sector properties.

The Council was able to bid for grants from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) in the same way as a housing association could, and such bids were used to support the operation of BMHT, with the HCA grant being worth approximately £25,000 per property. Some homes were offered for social rent, with rent levels set in accordance with the Government’s “target rent” formula; other properties were offered on an affordable rent basis, which was around 71% of the market rental price.

Income from private sales was used to cross-subsidise the construction of rental properties. Over 1,000 new rental homes had been completed since 2009, with over 700 homes for sale completed; completion rates had accelerated in recent years. In 2014/15 the Council built more social rented and affordable homes than all of the housing associations in the city combined.

Mr Skidmore concluded by noting that the BMHT model could have application elsewhere, and that public sector house building would have a key role to play if the UK was to deliver the extra housing completions required to meet projected need.

Site visits

The Committee then visited the Newtown Housing Project. This was a BMHT development in Aston, a district immediately adjoining the city centre. 16 residential tower blocks had been constructed in Newtown in the late 1960s / early 1970s. The estate had, however, fallen into decline by the turn of the century and, from 2007 onwards, regeneration work had been taking place.

While some blocks had been refurbished, a number of others had been demolished, with new low-rise housing constructed in its place. Properties ranged from one and two bedroom apartments through to three and four bedroom homes. The original estate was wholly council rented on completion, while the redevelopment provided for a range of tenures. Schools within the estate had also been redeveloped; again, the inclusion of schools development within the Planning and Regeneration team of the Council was seen as an advantage here. A number of partners, including Keepmoat Housing, were involved in the marketing and promotion of the new properties. The ‘Help to Buy’ scheme had also helped to provide financial support to potential homeowners and, therefore, generate custom.

The Committee then travelled through the Jewellery Quarter, receiving briefing on some of the challenges involved in protecting and maintaining limited amounts of green space within the city centre and, also increasing the amount and use of public space within the Quarter. A number of approaches to preserving and enhancing the historic fabric of the Quarter were being pursued by the Council and its partners; this included successful applications to the Heritage Lottery Fund for regeneration funding. A priority was to ensure the continuation of a successful balance between residential development and the Quarter’s traditional

manufacturing function. The council was also seeking to restore and promote the Quarter's links to the city centre, particularly by seeking to overcome the barrier of the ring road.

Birmingham City University, and the HS2 Curzon Masterplan

The Committee then travelled to University House, which hosts the City Centre campus of Birmingham City University (BCU). This was located at the heart of an area which would be subject to significant development as a result of the High Speed 2 railway; the Committee were able to look out over the proposed location for the Birmingham terminus of the railway, before receiving a briefing from Mr Nazir (including Q & A) on some of the proposals and their implications for Birmingham.

As a response to the proposed introduction of HS2, the City Council had developed the Curzon HS2 'Masterplan for Growth'. This was intended to maximise the benefit to the city centre of the major investment being made into the railway as a whole, and the Curzon terminus in particular. Phase one of the development of HS2 would reduce the travel time from Birmingham to London from 1 hour 24 minutes to 49 minutes. Connections to the existing HS1 line to continental Europe would be in place by 2026. Mr Nazir explained that the Masterplan was intended to take advantage of this increased connectivity and, thereby, to regenerate the eastern side of the city centre. The Masterplan set out the potential for 36,000 new jobs, 600,000 square metres of employment space, 4,000 new homes and around £1.4 billion of additional GVA per annum.

The City Council was seeking to ensure that the station design was of a high quality, and was prioritising investment into the wider public realm around the station, and local connectivity beyond it. These elements were seen as important in ensuring that the city could maximise the benefits of investment. In addition, a number of steps were being taken to preserve and integrate existing aspects of historic environment, including Grade 1 listed buildings associated with the original Birmingham-Euston connection. £600 million was to be invested in local infrastructure, with local contributions to include a Community Infrastructure Levy. The city centre enterprise zone was to be extended to include the Curzon Masterplan site; this would allow further investment based upon future business rates growth, under the TIF model (as described above). The infrastructure investments would allow the existing city Metro line to be extended, thereby linking up with the HS2 station.

Planning and built environment professions and training

The Committee then received a presentation from Alister Scott, Professor of Environment and Spatial Planning at Birmingham City University, setting out some of the skills required by town planners and, also, some of the wider work undertaken by the BCU School of Engineering and the Built Environment. Emphasis was given to the need for planners to be adaptable, to have good negotiation skills and, crucially, the need for interdisciplinary understanding and knowledge. Professor Scott suggested that built environment professions had a tendency towards 'silos', which must be overcome. In addition, the denigration of planners had had a long-term negative effect upon the profession; it was essential for those working within the profession to better communicate successes and positive outcomes.

This presentation was then supplemented by a round-table discussion amongst Committee members, Professor Scott, Mr Nazir, Peter Larkham (Professor of

Planning, BCU) and Professor Kevin Singh (Head of the Birmingham School of Architecture, BCU). A key theme concerned the need to move away from a training and education approach which promoted 'silos' in built environment professions and, instead, to develop better cross-disciplinary understanding and knowledge across architecture, planning, engineering and other professions. Within BCU, steps had been taken towards this end, with first-year undergraduates experiencing a number of common elements and modules across the various relevant courses. In addition, work placements and projects were used to bring together students from different disciplines, enhancing understanding from the outset of training.

Strong relationships existed between the City Council, BCU and other education institutions. The educational institutions were trying to react and respond to changing employer demands, and 'real-world' experience was seen as key for students. The Council offered a number of placements, and graduate training initiatives, to support this. There was a continuing challenge in terms of retaining good planners within the public sector following training and immediate post-qualification development of key competencies; private sector 'poaching' of good staff was mentioned. In addition, questions were asked regarding the 1 year full-time Masters qualification in planning; it was felt that this did not always provide enough of a grounding in the subject, and that a good deal of further development was often required upon finding employment. It was also suggested that, when considering training and development needs, it was important to keep an emphasis on future needs (ie 20 years on), rather than training solely for the 'here and now'.

