

# **Supplementary Design Proof**

For

Land North of Gardenia Close and Garden  
Square, Rendlesham, Suffolk

**By Mr. David Birkbeck BA (Hons) Hon.  
FRIBA**

On Behalf of Capital Community Developments  
Ltd.

A phased development of 75 dwellings, car parking, public  
open space, hard and soft landscaping and associated  
infrastructure and access.

Planning Application Reference: DC/19/1499/FUL

Appeal Reference: APP/X3540/W/19/3242636

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## **1.0 Personal Biography**

### **Qualifications and Background**

- 1.1 I am Chief Executive of Design for Homes (DFH), a social enterprise campaigning to improve new homes. The organisation is into its third decade of researching how to improve housing design practice. Part of its mission is to provide help with the tricky parts of design that can spoil new schemes when not given adequate attention. Examples include recommendations for how to strike a balance between privacy and community in new schemes<sup>1</sup>, successful strategies for car parking<sup>2</sup> and for refuse storage<sup>3</sup>, and how to mix large family homes in high density city apartment blocks<sup>4</sup>. Our outputs are especially useful at the development management level and are often the only design guidance on the subject. They become widely referenced, even when out of print. For example, Suffolk Country Council's May 2019 technical guidance<sup>5</sup> for parking includes recommendations from my 2006 work for English Partnerships (2, above). The same document is offered as a scanned PDF download from Ipswich Borough Council's site.
- 1.2 I was a member of the Homes and Communities Agency's Design and Sustainability Standards advisory board advising the largest housing agency in Europe until it was disbanded. I currently run the only programme of design training for staff at its successor, Homes England. In 2019, I wrote Homes England's tender document 5 which is used to test 'the design character' of most bids for land and funds from its £27bn, 5-year budget.
- 1.3 In 2010 I became director of the Housing Design Awards, when the Department for Communities and Local Government outsourced their management. Whitehall had run them since 1948. I have also been a judge since 2005. The combined role gives me unparalleled access to information about new ideas in design and planning, working with a multidisciplinary panel of expert judges investigating if they work.

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<sup>1</sup> Perceptions of Privacy in Higher Density Housing Design for Homes 2004

<sup>2</sup> Car Parking: What works where, Design for Homes with English Partnerships 2006

<sup>3</sup> Rubbish design. Design for Homes for NHBC Foundation, 2014

<sup>4</sup> New London Vernacular, Design for Homes and Urban Design London 2013

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.suffolkadvice/Suffolk-Guidance-for-Parking-2019-Adopted-by-SCC.pdf>

The awards were set up in the same act of Parliament as the NHS. Their mission for 72 years has been to research new ideas and promote those good enough for replication.

- 1.4 I initiated two major national competitions to modernise homebuilding, Design for Manufacture in 2005, and the Carbon Challenge in 2007 to deliver the country's first low-carbon developments. I was the only private sector representative invited by the Government and its agencies to judge the two competitions. I am currently engaged as a consultant for "Home of 2030", a competition seeking high quality, low-energy intergenerational housing forms promoted by MHCLG and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. A winner should be announced in late autumn.
- 1.5 I was made an honorary fellow of the RIBA in 2008.
- 1.6 I was part of the research team for the 2009 Department for Health HAPPI report which became national guidance for how we design and plan homes for later life.
- 1.7 I provide design advice to each of the 3 largest development proposals in England: Barking Riverside (c.11,000 new homes) promoted by the GLA, St Cuthberts Garden Village (c.10,000) in Cumbria promoted by Carlisle City Council and Otterpool Park (c.10,000) near Folkestone, promoted by Folkestone & Hythe DC.
- 1.8 I am one a pair of 'housing specialists' who are not architects on the Cambridge area design review 'Quality Panel' managed by Cambridgeshire County Council since 2008. The Cambridge area has the largest concentration of high-quality new housing developments in the country, evidenced by winning 8 Housing Design Awards since 2014, a total of wins beaten only by London in the same period.
- 1.9 In 2001, I wrote Building for Life (BFL), a 20-question aide-memoire for the quality of private and shared amenity in new developments which were embedded by Government in the 2003 Sustainable Communities Plan as key performance indicators for quality. In 2010, I rewrote the Building for Life criteria to focus on how new builds relate to existing communities to reflect the National Planning Policy Framework's focus on sustainable development. Called BFL12, these urban design principles were referenced in the last 3 iterations of the NPPF and I note is also referenced in the emerging Suffolk Coastal Local Plan.
- 1.10 I want to start by making it clear that I fully support Garry Hall's previous Building



for Life assessment, and his proofs of evidence. Garry and I have worked together for many years, including on Building for Life.

- 1.11 I also want to point out that highly selective ‘extracts’ from Garry’s BfL assessment (which was provided with his Proof of Evidence) used by the Council in their Design Proof and in their Advocate’s Opening were taken out of context for the purpose of making a ‘cheap point’. Garry’s BfL assessment was an independent assessment. The BfL approach is not ideal to apply at such a late stage, a lesson the LPA would have learnt if they had reviewed the 2018 edition of Building for Life (the existence of which, I understand, was made clear to officers at a meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2019 when they entered the room brandishing a copy of the 2015 version). Garry’s conclusion summed up the Council’s approach:

*“From an independent perspective, it appears that the LPA have resorted to using Building for Life at a late stage, having not referenced it during two round of pre-application advice or during the previous planning application. Bearing in mind the Council’s new local plan extols the virtues of BfL this is unfortunate”.*

- 1.12 I also want to reinforce a point in Garry Hall’s proof. At 1.2.4 he highlights how the Government has switched to championing ‘outcomes’ in its National Design Guide. “Part 2 of the NDG sets out the ten characteristics of well-designed places. In doing so, the NDG departs somewhat from previous national-level design guidance in that it focusses on outcomes rather than providing design solutions. The NDG recognizes that there may be a range of solutions, all of which may be acceptable, so long as the outcomes are those described in Part 2.” I would add that is exactly the same in the NPPF which at paragraph 131 states that “in determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area”.

- 1.13 The Government clearly does not wish to thwart innovation in housing supply by demanding strict adherence to any design orthodoxy; the 2012 NPPF at its paragraph 60 said so very clearly. It has Building Regulations to control items that need to be uniform. Urban design is not a statutory instrument to be wielded but a grammar, a method of 3-dimensional organisation. Breaking its codes with flair can create innovative and memorable outcomes: applying them without imagination can thwart good outcomes. Churchill famously mocked somebody who

corrected his grammar: “That is the errant pedantry up with which I will not put.”

- 1.14 Elsewhere in the country, July 2020 has seen how an indiscriminately rigid approach thwarting a good idea was finally beaten back. In 2009 proposals for a layout of town houses to be built with blind backs, thereby achieving 120 dwellings to the hectare for freehold houses with discrete street access, were shouted down by urban designers at a CABI design review for being ‘back to backs’. Those notoriously mean house types were tiny 1-up 1-down properties of less than 45sqm, with a single window per floor, built over open sewers which their poor ventilation made more dangerous. The homes attacked as ‘back to backs’ in current designs are 150sqm, mechanically ventilated and have roof-top terrace gardens complete with taps for watering planters. The design met with opprobrium by urban designers in 2008 but won a Housing Design Award on 13 July for its first deployment at Kidbrooke village in the Royal Borough of Greenwich. It is the development’s fastest selling unit, despite costing £950,000, a price that includes a premium for being much preferred to an apartment.

## **2.0 What is Building for a Healthy Life? What does BfHL add to its predecessor Building for Life and how does it Relate to the National Design Guide?**

- 2.1 BFL12 was created by DFH, with backing support provided by Design Council CABE. In 2015 Design Council CABE stopped engaging in Building for Life when its board withdrew from low earning activities. CABE's name was later dropped from the Design Council<sup>6</sup>.
- 2.2 By 2017, more than 100 LPAs had adopted BFL12 into local plan policy. I have seen reference to the use of BFL12 in the 2017 issues and options version of the emerging Suffolk coastal local plan. Qualitative research from RICS<sup>7</sup> in February 2016 had suggested schemes using it would become more sought-after places than those that did not<sup>8</sup>. More recently The Bartlett<sup>9</sup> at University College, London said that schemes that used BFL12 to shape their design were twice as likely to be well designed than those that did not<sup>10</sup>.
- 2.3 The 2018 NPPF encouraged others to consider BFL12's potential for improving design proposals, referencing it again in the two 2019 updates. Paragraph 129 name-checks its authors but mistakenly links to a 2015 edition download despite there being a 2016 and 2018 edition. This is because the link is to a page archiving CABE (which MHCLG financed until its demise). MHCLG believe it should be easier for DFH to get CABE to amend the link than for MHCLG to reissue the document.
- 2.4 Mr Robert Scrimgeour's proof suggests at 3.3 that this may be a clue that any later evolutions of BFL do not have political support. It is the unwillingness of an embarrassed Design Council to identify that financial straits made it abandon an initiative later endorsed by the Government. More recent editions are easily available elsewhere (Homes England, Urban Design Group, Design Network, Design for Homes) and widely used, not least by our key housing delivery vehicle, Homes

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<sup>6</sup> Design Council's 2018-2019 report

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.rics.org/globalassets/rics-website/media/upholding-professional-standards/sector-standards/land/placemaking\\_and\\_value\\_1st\\_edition.pdf](https://www.rics.org/globalassets/rics-website/media/upholding-professional-standards/sector-standards/land/placemaking_and_value_1st_edition.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/innovation/healthy-new-towns/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://indd.adobe.com/view/23366ae1-8f97-455d-896a-1a9934689cd8>

<sup>10</sup> Health Select Committee <https://www.parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/478ee71f-47ac-4fe3-9d75-eccc314c6529> (Sir Simon Stevens answers question about prevention (and BHL) at 17:37:10)

England which is, of course, funded like PINS by MHCLG.,

- 2.5 In 2018 Homes England chose Building for Life to benchmark the design quality of its £27bn 5-year investment programme. Its manner of use is severe. Companies bidding for land and grant from its approved developer panels are told their bids will not be considered if they cannot demonstrate how they follow at least 9 of BFL's 12 principles.
- 2.6 In 2019 NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE&I) approached Design for Homes and commissioned an update of BFL12 to include learning from its Healthy New Towns Programme 6. NHSE&I wants a higher percentage of short journeys to be undertaken on bike or on foot. Part of its disease prevention strategy is to make access to essential services part of regular exercise, or 'active travel'\*7, with easy to walk or cycle routes to facilities that people go to most, such as a local food store, school, public open space or place of worship. It also wants design to support people being outdoors more, using the public realm and public open space for leisure. Exposure to daylight is a major source of vitamin D, low levels of which had been identified as a marker for health risks before the arrival of COVID. It should be noted that the east-west configuration of the houses proposed for the appellant's land are designed to maximise the penetration of daylight to help naturalise residents' circadian rhythms. The medical writer Linda Geddes published a series of essays in 2019 documenting research which evidenced the dangers of disrupting the circadian rhythm. Chasing the Sun: The New Science of Sunlight and How it Shapes Our Bodies and Minds.
- 2.7 NHSE&I examined the use of BFL12 and decided that it could have more impact with its healthy new towns learning by grafting it onto a new BFL12 so that the take-up would be immediate and through established channels. To make sure the new edition did not depart from the document endorsed by MHCLG and adopted by Homes England, between December 2019 and March 2020 there were regular tripartite meetings at MHCLG in Marsham Street, Homes England in Windsor House and NHS England in Skipton House with edits made to remove anything that didn't work for all 3 parties. Discussions concluded in early March with the document set to be issued by 31 March, its publication timed to be within the same financial year as the budget spend.
- 2.8 I was unfortunately unavailable to be the appellant's design witness knowing that

I could not commit to producing the new BHL and prepare for and attend a public inquiry timetabled for March 2020. I had learned in spring 2020 that Building for Life 12 was being used by East Suffolk DC as one of its reasons for refusing the appellant's scheme, in spite of page 12 advising very clearly that it should only be used after an application has been made to 'score the scheme' and if the intention to work to BFL12 principles was agreed in pre-app discussions. I had asked Garry Hall if he would act as design witness and make sure the point was well made.

- 2.9 A fully illustrated BHL, complete with an explanation of how its focus on simple walking routes and quality public realm overlapped with responding to COVID, was signed off at NHS England in late May for feedback among key parties, notably the RTPI. The plan was to issue in June with the endorsement of supporting stakeholder organisations which had managed to satisfy their protocols for third-party endorsement, then reissue again when others taking longer catch up (the chief executive of the RTPI hopes her policy committee will agree to add RTPI's logo in first week of August), ahead of a print run in September.
- 2.10 There has been a general bar in Whitehall on activities not viewed as focused on limiting COVID's impact. There are plans for a more formal launch when the time is right. To date, HBF, Urban Design Group, the Design Network and Homes England have issued press releases endorsing Building for a Healthy Life. It should be noted that housing minister Christopher Pincher MP made a speech online unveiling the first winner of the Building for a Healthy Life award on 16 July as the overall Winner of Winners in this year's Housing Design Awards. This is a clear clue to MHCLG's tacit support for the new guidance and its refreshed priorities.
- 2.11 Building for a Healthy Life has replaced BFL12. The document makes the point regularly that if an LPA has BFL12 in its plan policy or in an SPD, it can now switch to the latest iteration. "As BHL is the new name for Building for Life 12, local authorities can use BHL without having to rewrite existing policy documents," (page 2), but emerging documents could usefully be updated.
- 2.12 There is a table on pages 86-88 showing the relationship between the 2018 document and the 2020 one:

Building for Life 12 (2018 edition)	Building for a Healthy Life (2020 edition)	The title change reflects the greater emphasis on healthier and more active lifestyles. NHS England and NHS Improvement have chosen to use the tool as an effective way to reach a broader audience and share the findings of the Healthy New Towns Programme.
Integrating into the neighbourhood	Integrated neighbourhoods	Remarks
1. Connections	1. Natural connections	Greater emphasis and advice relating to connecting places.
2. Facilities and services	2. Walking, cycling and public transport	Greater emphasis on active travel (walking and cycling) to reflect good practice (such as 'Putting Health into Place'); reinforcing efforts by government and the NHS to improve the nation's health and wellbeing through the way in which new developments are planned and designed.
3. Public transport	3. Facilities and services	Moved from being the second to the third consideration; improved written and visual guidance.
4. Meeting local housing requirements	4. Homes for everyone	No change; improved written and visual guidance.
Creating a place	Distinctive Places	
5. Character	5. Making the most of what's there	Moved from being the sixth to the fifth consideration. A distinctive or locally inspired identity will only be created when the time is taken to understand the site and its wider context.
6. Working with the site and its context	6. A memorable character	This consideration has been switched from position 5 to position 6.
7. Creating well defined streets and spaces	7. Well defined streets and spaces	No change; improved written and visual guidance.
8. Easy to find your way around	8. Easy to find your way around.	No change; improved written and visual guidance.
Street and home	Streets for All	
9. Streets for all	9. Healthy streets	Improved written and visual guidance. Renaming this consideration further highlights the importance of street design and the impact this has on people's travel choices, levels of physical activity and public health. Good street design prioritises pedestrians and cyclists, encouraging active travel modes; in turn improving people's health and wellbeing. Additional prompts encourage street space to be shared more fairly between pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles allowing carriageway space to be redistributed; allowing protected cycle ways and wider pavements to be created. Pedestrians can then be offered more space to allow for social distancing whilst protected cycle ways will allow more people to cycle safely and confidently, ensuring that reduced public transport capacity (at times of social distancing) does not lead to greater private car usage (leading to further congestion, increased energy usage and reductions in air quality).
Street and home	Streets for All	
10. Car parking	10. Cycle and car parking	Emphasising the importance of thinking about cycle parking design as a key factor in encouraging people to choose to cycle rather than drive for shorter trips.

2.13 There is a separate table on page 7 showing the relationship between policy in the NPPF and National Design Guide:

Integrated Neighbourhoods	National Planning Policy Framework	National Design Guide
Natural connections	91a; 102c and e; 104d; 127b; 127f	B3; M1; M2; N1; R3
Walking, cycling and public transport	20c; 91a; 91c; 127e	B1; B3; M1; R3
Facilities and services	102; 103	B1; B3; N1; P3; U1; U3
Homes for everyone	60-62	B1; B2; U2; U3
Distinctive Places		
Making the most of what's there	122d; 127c; 127d; 153b; 184	C1; C2; I1; B2; R3
A memorable character	122d; 127c; 127d	C2; I1; I2; I3; B3
Well defined streets and spaces	91a	B2; M2; N2; N3; P1; P2; H2; L3
Easy to find your way around	91b; 127b	I1; M1; M2; U1
Streets for All		
Healthy streets	91b; 102c and e; 110a-d	M1; M2; N3; P1; P2; P3; H1; H2
Cycle and car parking	101e; 127f; 105d	B2; M1; M3
Green and blue infrastructure	20d; 91b; 91c; 127f; 155; 170d; 174	C1; B3; M1; N1; N2; N3; P1; P3; H1; R3; L1
Back of pavement, front of home	127a-b; d; f	M3; H3; L3
Generally	7; 8; 124; 125; 126; 127; 130	15; 16; 17; 20-29; 31-32
Using the tool as a discussion tool	39; 40-42; 125; 128; 129	

**The relationship between Building for a Healthy Life, the National Planning Policy Framework and the National Design Guide.**

- 2.14 On the 23 June I was contacted by the appellant's planning team and asked whether I would be available to substitute for a stricken Garry Hall. I pointed out that Building for a Healthy Life had begun circulating among key stakeholders and would be publicly available before the rearranged inquiry dates. I demonstrated that its greater focus on prioritising pedestrian movement, on richer and more diverse planting, and on prioritising residents' access to and use of outdoor space reflected several key moves in the design of the appellant's application.
- 2.15 The Council applies several standard urban design principles without asking whether there is a need to apply them inflexibly to this site. For example, in his proof at 8.3 he repeats from the National Design Guide that part of "the character of successful streets is an active street frontage". Active street frontages are promoted as a way of using buildings to support the police in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour. 1960s apartment buildings with ground floors built as garage blocks created blind ground floor areas with little surveillance, ideal for drug dealing in inner city Britain. Redeveloping such blocks so that the new ground floors had doors that opened into the street helped drive away most dealers. But away from inner city deprivation and associated criminality, there are plenty of very successful developments that bend these rules creatively, often garnering huge acclaim. Since its completion in 2002, successive Governments have championed BedZED, in leafy south London, as a model of sustainable design in spite of the scheme having **all of its 82 houses facing south**, one row behind the next, like soldiers on parade. Each house is mostly blank to any flank or rear walls, the advantages of energy-efficient design trumping surveillance, perimeter blocks or active frontages.
- 2.16 Similarly, the advantage of having a pedestrian-only street for child's play led to house fronts facing backs in the layout used recently by Marmalade Lane, 42 homes in Cambridge. Marmalade Lane has won many design awards and in April this year was presented with the Silver Jubilee Cup, the supreme accolade presented annually by the Royal Town Planning Institute.
- 2.17 Contemporaneously with this public inquiry, Homes England has been promoting a site in Barnstaple, Devon. Raleigh Park has a planning approval for 105 houses all laid out to face in the same southerly direction for views of the Taw valley and the sea beyond.



- 2.18 Energy efficiency, the location of child's play and views are all given greater weight in these designs, allowing the layouts to dispense with some orthodoxies in the pursuit of special outcomes. Successive Governments, the planning industry's professional body for planning and the government's housing delivery vehicle each show they are comfortable in supporting a special outcome over any design orthodoxy. Location is key. Such designs could face real challenges in problem areas where design orthodoxy is needed to protect the community when police cannot provide sufficient deterrence. I am aware that the evidence simply does not support the proposition that Rendlesham is such a place.
- 2.19 The question for the appellant's site is whether it is appropriate, by which is meant safe, to do so here. We know that crime in Rendlesham is generally low. But we also have data on a site with a very similar layout to address the question. There cannot be a more obvious precedent than the site immediately to the south, the area previously developed by the appellant. It is version 1 of the same principles for layout. The design uses the same fronts-to-backs arrangements, the same arrangements and hierarchy of roads, uses the same parking treatments, uses the same boundary treatments to rears, and very similar house types.
- 2.20 The data shows the Garden Square, Gardenia Close area of Rendlesham is among the least troubled in Rendlesham. But let us jump to a dystopian vision of England in the future after a string of economic mishaps. Could this version of a layout witlessly enable more crime in a lawless England?
- 2.21 Most new-builds have the majority of their fenestration to their main elevation, a little less to their rear and nothing to either flank wall so they can be built close together, to get the efficiency of terraces, but with just enough gap to justify the premium for a detached property. Contrast all those single-aspect poorly lit rooms in general practice with the appellants' types. An abiding design principle that each home maximise natural light to the internal plan multiplies the number and size of windows and gives dwellings and principle rooms multiple aspects. Jeremy Bentham's panopticon promoted multiple aspect for surveillance. These types offer the benefits of 360-degree surveillance for health reasons.
- 2.22 Historically Hampstead Garden Suburb pioneered the idea of short straight streets serving less than 10 dwellings, unseen until then and which later became known as cul-de-sacs, they were intended to socially engineer an instant community. People



arriving unknown into a settlement were expected to bond more easily into small clusters based around colocation, with a wider community being brought together by shared amenity, principally schools, clubs, and places of worship.

2.23 The new Building for a Healthy Life promotes edge to edge pedestrian connections between new development and existing development so that new residents can walk to the places they will most regularly access. Building for a Healthy Life champions straight roads because pedestrians are more likely to walk when they feel routes are direct and they can see where they are headed. The appellant's layout has four separate routes for walking into the existing development. Most importantly it has two pedestrian-only connections to the peace palace, which is anticipated to be a regular destination, if not the most regular destination, for many residents. The simplicity of the layout will generally support walking and the two short closes with filtered permeability connections to the existing Garden Close area can anticipate plenty of pedestrian movement. The value of these will be further enhanced if the planned proposals for a new village centre on the vacant land south of Sycamore Drive opposite the access to Gardenia Close are delivered.

2.24 Mr Scrimgeour's proof applies a number of standardised principles. I would like to apply a few of my own. First, generosity in design trumps basic principles. For example, according to data held by NHBC Foundation, the biggest challenge facing people in new homes today is overheating. Low floor to ceiling heights, small windows, cellular plans allowing no cross ventilation are driving homeowners to sell up their homes in despair as far north as Yorkshire. The appellant's use of 2.8m high ceilings and generously daylight double and triple aspect living rooms means these houses are effectively climate proofed and can be naturally ventilated with cross breezes. I would urge any planning application to push the impact of climate. The generosity of this design has provided a strong mitigation strategy

2.25 Second, ask whether a scheme is likely to get people walking their most regular short journeys. That means straight streets, streets that are lined with trees and planting and direct links to key local destinations. The appellants' design has each of these. It has 4 pedestrian routes southward, two of which will take residents directly to their community focal point, the peace palace. In this matter, it could

not be better organised.

2.26 Third, if the design of a scheme is somehow “unusual”, which Mr Garry Hall’s proof acknowledges, then look for precedents to assess the likely outcome of the innovation. You cannot transplant ideas from a rural to an urban site, but a precedent in a similar location will give you very strong direction as to the likely outcome. With the appellant’s site, there is a precedent immediately to the south. It is a successful scheme, much loved popular by its residents, as evidenced on day one of the inquiry. Its collocation mean it is having to be the best precedent in the country to consider. Yet I can find nothing in the entire proof that acknowledges the numerous similarities between the two schemes. A short visit would have identified the profoundly obvious multi-aspect nature of the dwellings and how they soar over the boundary treatments, the effects of which so worried Mr Scrimgeour. Similarly, it becomes obvious that the short closes are intimate, not sterile, the parking treatments highly attractive, not oppressive.

2.27 For me, this is evidence that the council’s strategy has been to ignore the precedent, because it puts a lie to several standardised principles employed by the council in their proof. But such a successful outcome trumps generalisation. As I have argued, NPPF and National Design Guide warn against blocking innovation, acknowledging it would reduce housing supply, and point us instead towards outcomes. I am confident that the outcome of the appellant’s design would be happy residents, as we heard from in Garden Square.

### 3.0 How does BfHL help articulate development plan policy compliance in this case?

- 3.1 East Suffolk's Development Management Policy 21 begins by asking at its criterion (a) that proposals 'should relate to the scale and character of their surroundings in terms of their siting, height, massing and form'. The strong performance of the appeal scheme against this criterion is best articulated in the '**Integrated Neighbourhoods/Homes for Everyone**' section of the BfHL assessment where the scheme scores a 'green'. It is unarguable to say that the appellant's site does not repeat the earlier and successful design of the adjacent Gardenia Close/Garden Square development and thereby its height, massing and form. Most key design details will be repeated, notably the convincing use of Georgian symmetry, the large 12-paned picture windows, the steep roof pitches to include an extra level of accommodation, the use of lanterns as roof lights, the large lights over the double doors. A significant advantage to the types used, identified in my Building for a Healthy Life assessment, is that apartments are disguised within 2 and 3-storey building as floors within a villa, with the building form presenting a central door as though a large Georgian house rather than an apartment block. Apartments are necessary to extend access to housing to more households, but the massing and form often sit uncomfortably within a rural location, especially one fringing woodland. The appellant offers a very successful response to this tension.
- 3.2 DM21 (b) seeks 'a point of interest'. The proposed obelisk and the manner in which is framed between two formal gate post like Wilby apartments blocks at the end of a classically straight vista is a formal, pronounced point of interest. The performance of the appeal scheme against this criterion is best articulated in the '**Integrated Neighbourhoods/Facilities and Services**' section of the BfHL assessment where it scores a 'green'.
- 3.3 DM21 (e) ask that "layouts should incorporate and protect existing site features of landscape, ecological, heritage or amenity value as well as enhance such features e.g. habitat creation". The performance of the appeal scheme against this criterion is best articulated in the '**Distinctive Places/Making the most of what's there**' section of the BfHL assessment where it scores a 'green'. If a continuous

line of houses had been built with their backs to the wood, or even the fronts facing outwards, this would have threatened the use of the periphery by bats and birds.,. But these houses have less fenestration in their northern gables so will have least impact on the 'dark corridor' sought by bats and nesting birds to the edge of woodland. The open spaces at the end of the closes nearest the wood will also stop 'light spilling out', as sought by DM23 (f).

- 3.4 DM21 (f) seeks that attention be given to the form, scale, use, and landscape of the spaces between buildings and the boundary treatment of individual sites, particularly on the edge of settlements. It is frustrating that there is no access to the woodland directly north from the closes, a matter currently outside the appellant's control. However, the edges of the site show a better response to the northern edge of the village. A more standard layout would have seen rear gardens fenced against the countryside beyond. If access is one day secured to the woodland there will be a range of options for where pedestrian links to the new development can go, notably to the northern edges of either of the public open spaces. The performance of the appeal scheme against this criterion is best articulated in the '**Distinctive Places/Creating well define streets and spaces and the Easy to find your way around**' sections of the BfHL assessment where it scores two 'greens'
- 3.5 DM21 clearly warns that "poor visual design and layout ... will not be permitted" and "accordingly development will be permitted where the [above] criteria are met. This sets a clear expectation that a developer investing in the qualities sought by a), b) e) and f) above would warrant planning approval. I do not understand why the appellant has been forced to appeal.
- 3.6 A development that scores 10 greens in a BfHL assessment in no way could be described as poor visual design and layout.
- 3.7 Policy DM21, in my view, provides clear expectations for designers, such that I have been able to relate policy requirements to the BfHL assessment. On this basis I am firmly of the opinion that "design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development".
- 3.8 Policy DM22 concerns design function. On the appeal site car parking is generous. The need for a generous parking provision across the whole of Rendlesham, owing to its rural location and poor public transport, has lead to some successful

attempts to incorporate parking and some less successful, as described in the neighbourhood plan, the generous parking provision at Garden Square and the way it is landscaped is praised and described as a good response, design repeated in appeal. A key feature of the parking is that it does not take away from the amenity space of the front of properties to accommodate cars. Performance against policy DM22 is articulated in the four questions under the heading **‘Distinctive Places/Creating Well Defined Streets and Spaces’** section of the BfHL assessment where the scheme scores a ‘green’.

- 3.9 Policy DM23 deals with residential amenity. Primarily dealt with in the Appellant’s Planning Proof. However, with regard to amenity it is worth remembering the development site was inaccessible to anybody, but will now have generous public open spaces near its principle access point, both as accessible to existing residents of Rendlesham, as for future occupiers. Performance against policy DM23 is articulated in the four questions under the heading **‘Streets for All’** section of the BfHL assessment where all four matters score a ‘green’. In my opinion this demonstrates no unacceptable loss of amenity, quite the opposite.
- 3.10 SSP12 includes a policy criterion requiring design, layout, mix and type of housing to be compatible with the neighbourhood plan. I recall that the Parish Council describing the appeal scheme as presenting the “Ideal Street Scene” in compliance with their neighbourhood plan objectives. Matters of design, mix, and housing type

## 4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 The site is wholly or partly bound on 3 sides by existing development. Its southern boundary lined by an earlier CCD Development, part of its southern and western boundary by a Persimmon development from about 10 years ago. Its eastern fringe is the Redwald estate, built for USAF families in the 1970s who would have once walked or driven across the appellant site to reach their roles at the airbase.
- 4.2 Forces housing and national house types from Persimmon (Persimmon is widely seen as among the worst for design in the country) don't propose an attractive precedent for form or layout, especially when compared with the Hampstead Garden Suburb approach of Garden Square/Gardenia Close. Nearly all of this part of Rendlesham has been built since the 1960s. Suffolk's much vaunted 18th and 19th century townscape is wholly absent within the village, which also lacks a cultural and commercial centre. Its range of facilities, including a new primary school designed to accommodate growth, employment uses, health care and senior housing accommodation are scattered, making it unclear which part of the village is genuinely its high street or hub.
- 4.3 The 2 'ambers' were not given to highlight negative impressions of the design but to identify the location's structural weaknesses, chiefly poor public transport and a northern boundary defined by a 6ft high military fence, both beyond the control of the appellant. The layout of the scheme, with its Garden City-style public realm to encourage walkings, propose an appropriate response, especially if a mooted new village centre is located to the bottom of Gardenia Close between Sycamore Drive and Walnut Tree Avenue.
- 4.4 In my opinion, a development that scores **10 greens in a Building for a Healthy Life assessment** is not, and cannot be, poor design, it functions well and affords its residential high amenity levels. This development evidently meets the Council's policies on design, function and amenity and should have been approved at the start.
- 4.5 To me, the NPPF is clear:
- 4.6 *"where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to*

*object to development”*

And

- 4.7 *“In determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings”*
- 4.8 I have been closely involved in all iterations of Building for Life and now Building for a Healthy Life. My observations of the schemes performance against policy, the approach taken to design assessment by the Council and the assessment of the scheme against BfL/BfHL objectives would apply equally whichever iteration of the document we were working to and this is because each iteration has been an evolution of the next.
- 4.9 Building for a Healthy Life was commissioned because the country’s population has lost the habit of walking, spends too much time indoors in artificially lit rooms and has little access to green open space. These proposals address all of these concerns felt at NHS England through offering substantial private amenity space with homes that have unbeatable levels of natural daylighting. They also have good sized front and back gardens, and come with public open space and simple pedestrian links to most facilities in Rendlesham, features that were not lost on the parish council when it suggested an earlier iteration of the scheme represented the ambitions of the neighbourhood plan.
- 4.10 The key starter for BHL is to ask where people are most likely to want to go and then provide a direct pedestrian link to it. Here the scheme proposes two direct pedestrian-only links to the likely focal point of the community, the peace palace. The development is designed around principles for supporting healthier outcomes through providing closer links to nature and natural daylight. It is extraordinary to me that a planning authority would wish to see such a scheme fail, especially when it’s on allocated land, with the inherent risk that the site will then be sold to a major developer which will build smaller, poorly lit homes with little amenity, remarkable only for their dependence on the car.

## **Appendix 1**





<b>Date of review</b>	28 June 2020		
<b>Developer</b>	Capital Community Developments		
<b>Scheme</b>	Rendlesham, DC 18/2374/FUL		
<b>Planning Status</b>	EIP		
<b>Reviewer</b>	David Birkbeck		
<b>General observations</b>	<p>The site is wholly or partly bound on 3 sides by existing development. Its southern boundary lined by an earlier CCD Development, part of its southern and western boundary by a Persimmon development from about 10 years ago. Its eastern fringe is the Redwald estate, built for USAF families in the 1970s who would have once walked or driven across the appellant site to reach their roles at the airbase.</p> <p>Forces housing and national house types from Persimmon (Persimmon is widely seen as among the worst for design in the country) don't propose an attractive precedent for form or layout, especially when compared with the Hampstead Garden Suburb approach of Garden Square/Gardenia Close. Nearly all of this part of Rendlesham has been built since the 1960s. Suffolk's much vaunted 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century townscape is wholly absent within the village, which also lacks a cultural and commercial centre. Its range of facilities, including a new primary school designed to accommodate growth, employment uses, health care and senior housing accommodation are scattered, making it unclear which part of the village is genuinely its high street or hub.</p> <p>The 2 'ambers' were not given to highlight negative impressions of the design but to identify the location's structural weaknesses, chiefly poor public transport and a northern boundary defined by a 6ft high military fence, both beyond the control of the appellant. The layout of the scheme, with its Garden City-style public realm to encourage walkings, propose an appropriate response, especially if a mooted new village centre is located to the bottom of Gardenia Close between Sycamore Drive and Walnut Tree Avenue.</p>		
	<b>Greens</b>	<b>Ambers</b>	<b>Reds</b>
Integrated neighbourhoods	2	2	0
Distinctive places	4	0	0
Streets for all	4	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

# **Integrated neighbourhoods**

## **NATURAL CONNECTIONS**

### **AMBER**

Views: The treeline along the northern fringe is attractive but because the wood is inaccessible, making it a focal point of the scheme would have frustrated residents who would be pointed towards inaccessible amenity.

Neighbours: Some of the houses closest to the appellant site in Tidy Road are built parallel to the carriageway, giving them blank gables to the appellant site. It should be noted their plotting clearly anticipates a road to pass between them. The standard urban design device of a house ‘endstopping the street’ has not been employed, because it would stem future connectivity.

Two planned pedestrian links from either side of the peace palace into the appellant site usefully provide a direct pedestrian connection as one of the key movement corridors for people moving into the new homes. These pedestrian links would also help to encourage walking or cycling to a mooted new village commercial centre between Sycamore Drive and Walnut Tree Avenue. A bridleway north east takes the scheme into the rural hinterland.

## **WALKING, CYCLING AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

### **AMBER**

Very little in the village is too far to walk. One challenge would be that there is a significant falling off in the quality of the public realm as the pedestrian leaves the Garden Square/Gardenia Close environment and makes their way along Sycamore Drive towards the retail. Crudely applied highways-engineered visibility requirements for the curving road layout have even obliged some homes to abandon their front gardens. Some have been denied soft planting, such as hedge boundary treatments in case it compromises motorists’ ‘forward visibility’. One property have simply given up on the small irregular turfed strips and replaced them with astroturf.

The limited bus service will help those who don’t have cars or driving licenses. It won’t bring any modal shift.

## **FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

### **GREEN**

It’s increasingly rare to be able to walk to a primary school in a few minutes. Likewise there are other useful services, such as a local store. However, like any spiritual community, the location of their group meeting place is key. The peace palace is easily accessible on foot for potential new residents thanks to two new pedestrian routes.

The proposals for a formal public open space and a new play area are attractive additions.

## **HOMES FOR EVERYONE**

### **GREEN**

A scheme strongpoint. Almost all types of home with bungalows, lateral apartments, maisonettes and houses of varying sizes, all typically above the Nationally Described Space Standards and with 2.8 m (rather than 2.3 or 2.4 m) floor to ceiling heights to boost lighting levels. The scheme also sets aside 33% of its 75 homes as affordable, roughly in line with the

local housing requirement. A key aspect of the affordable and smaller market sale homes is that they will be created by the subdivision of 2 and 3-storey buildings that present as villas rather than apartment blocks. Many of these are horizontally subdivided units each with a discrete access. Giving people apartments in buildings that look like houses is much better than putting lower cost homes in apartment blocks, thereby making them second class dwellings. The direct street access arrangement, without any shared common parts, has always proved more popular because it reduces management costs (anything shared incurs cost). During the pandemic it has been especially popular because homes without a shared access have been less stressful to live in.

## **Distinctive places**

### **MAKING THE MOST OF WHAT'S THERE**

#### **GREEN**

The north south streets without buildings to end-stop them will allow the wood to provide a green vista to many of the streets, an arcadian backdrop to the rich landscaping. The no-build area created by the water treatment plant goes from a constraint to an opportunity as a large formal leisure space which will make a very welcoming impression on visitors arriving from the Garden Square access road, the principal access. The land is absolutely flat and there are no views of anything else worth addressing. But the flat site obviously invites use of the dawn and sunset, both of which are captured as unhindered views with houses raised up half a metre to enhance the light penetration.

### **A MEMORABLE CHARACTER**

#### **GREEN**

The design is bespoke using a number of house types which were influenced by working with Adam Architecture, the country's leading neo-classical architects. They advised the appellant that proportion was crucial to any house dependent on the Georgian idiom. The Georgian symmetry, its repetition and the unity it brings creates a strongly ordered identity with the historic style copied with verve and the quality of materials needed.

Some homes also pick up on a number of East Anglian craft traditions, such as pargetting, predating the Renaissance-influenced building forms. Houses don't have chimney but lanterns which add a level of interest absent on many neighbouring units built without any vertical additions to the roof ridges. Most units have full gables (rather than the much cheaper-to-build hipped rooves seen on many national house types). The scheme's large double doors, use of timber sash windows, high quality stock facing bricks, all combine to give a very convincing interpretation of forms that were emerging about 190 years ago. Particularly impressive is the steep-pitched pantile rooves used to create an additional 2<sup>rd</sup> floor, and the large lights over the doors to get natural daylight into the halls.

Most people have little interest in the authenticity of building details. But it will be the landscape architecture which makes the greatest impression. The strategy of hedgerow boundary treatments coupled with softer finishes to footways and carriageways, with fruiting trees such as mulberry and cherry, combine like parts of Welwyn Garden City where rich planting was designed to buoy the often cheap building materials. Here there is rich landscaping and high quality building finishes. This is particularly obvious in the quality of landscaping to the fronts

of plots where real stone flags, real timber picket fence and parking bays in gravel rather than blacktop will deliver a very impressive presentation of the houses.

## **CREATING WELL DEFINED STREETS AND SPACES**

### **GREEN**

There is a general consensus that it is best not to put fronts to backs because in some locations and the hands of some developers, it leaves the backs where the more private rooms are located overexposed to views from those behind and the gardens a potential route for burglars into the property. In addition, each row on paper faces a principal aspect of parking bays and close-board fences. But the treatments proposed (and previously delivered at Garden Square/Gardenia Close) use a multilayering of front and rear boundaries with substantial planting of native species. The shared surface lanes between the 2 parallel rows of houses are surprisingly attractive, almost like car parking within an orchard. The choice of surface materials is particularly high quality and although very unlikely to be adopted, most highway authorities are currently encouraging parts of every new development to be unadoptable to help cap their future maintenance obligations.

It should also be noted that the advice against fronts to backs is regularly set aside, often very successfully, especially when the community moving in are likely to know their neighbours and have defensive bonds against any criminal or antisocial behaviour. Marmalade Lane in north east Cambridge recently won the RTPI's top planning award in spite of a front to backs arrangement with less than 12m between rows, because it was cohousing. Homes England, the Government's key body for housing delivery and quality which uses BHL, is currently marketing Rayleigh Park, 105 Homes in Devon all laid out to face the same way to maximise views towards the Taw Valley and the sea beyond. When people know their neighbours, the shared spaces making it very difficult for outsiders to access without being identified as strangers. This is especially true when there are small numbers of households sharing these spaces. The maximum in any of the proposed streets is 10. Most importantly, each home has a through aspect so that people within any of the ground, first or second floor living rooms have clear views out towards the cars and to property boundaries. Even the ground floor is high enough to offer some surveillance being raised up 0.5m.

Groupings of buildings avoids 'mirroring' windows by with one particular building type forming bookends to a run of properties which step forward a metre or two or backward to avoid overlooking of windows in the flank walls.

A key tenet of BHL is that buildings on corners should address both of the streets that they face. Some housebuilders achieve this but then still fall down because a third elevation can also also seen from the street (where the reduction on facing material and detailing looks utilitarian). Here the focus on providing windows to all 4 elevations (and front doors to 2 where they are maisonettes) means there will be none of the blank walls found on most new-builds (seen on number of key views in the adjacent schemes from Westbury and Persimmon built in the previous 20 years).

It should be noted that the backs of apartment buildings are very successful in addressing the public realm, through the use of a through aspect living space which means they have clear views both west and east from the most used room in each.

## **EASY TO FIND YOUR WAY AROUND**

### **GREEN**

There are two key tenets of BHL that the scheme delivers strongly.

First, that streets should be as straight and as direct as possible. This appears both on pages 14, 17 and again on page 52. This is about getting people to walk. They will if they can see where they are going easily, and feel the environment for walking feels attractive and safe.

The second is that streets should connect and use a pattern that creates a strong mental map of the place. The 'fish skeleton' layout is extremely easy to read and memorise. It is particularly helpful when roads form perpendicular junctions with strong corners and there are different types mirrored on all 4 corners, such as with the Bealings maisonettes to the centre of the site.

The direct link between Tidy Road and Garden Square means that vehicular movement is possible through the scheme so that, for example, postal deliveries can proceed in one direction and not need to go back on themselves to leave the development.

## **Streets for all**

## **HEALTHY STREETS**

### **GREEN**

The planting strategy for the appellant site has a clear intention (evidenced by the soft landscape infrastructure at Garden Square) to provide 'tree-lined streets' and 'landscape layers that add sensory richness to a place'.

The need to respond to pedestrian desire lines is delivered by the pedestrian links back to either side of the peace palace. These are shared surface streets, identified in Manual for Streets for their ability to colonise the highways as part of a development's social space, obliging motorists to consider other users of the carriageway.

The need for tight corner radii at junctions to give people comfort crossing the road is addressed with the perpendicular junctions to the secondary streets. It might have been better to introduce raised tables here rather than speed bumps before them.

The use of footways either side of the principal street is welcomed, helping with the impression of creating a boulevard rather than the preferred curving road promoted by DB32 in the 1990s and delivered as Sycamore Drive.

## **CYCLE AND CAR PARKING**

### **GREEN**

The number of bays is surprisingly high, but this a relection of local policy. Even additional visitor parking will be tidily accommodated in the richly landscaped private drives/mews. The formality of the arrangements is also useful for controlling behaviours. Generally the more formal the street and parking arrangements, the more car users respect them, so that the risk of fly parking on key pedestrian routes is minimised.

## **GREEN AND BLUE ASSETS**

### **GREEN**

The cordon sanitaire around the Anglian Water treatment plant has helped to give the scheme a much larger than usual Public open Space with 5 properties overlooking it. The space to the west is also well overlooked because the designs of the individual units affording east and west views means views delivers 12 apartments at upper level with eyes onto the space. The homes are raised up 0.5m higher than grade so that residents within the ground floor will have sight of the space while those in first and second floor apartments would have vantage point views of the space.

A key test for this new BHL is to look toward the net gain biodiversity regulations due to take effect from next year. By leaving a dark corridor along the north edge, ie no houses backing onto the wood, this would not discourage bat or bird nesting. The landscaping strategy of seasonal native species including many fruiting trees is well established as a key choice for supporting insects and birds.

## **BACK OF PAVEMENT, FRONT OF HOUSE**

### **GREEN**

All homes are raised up above grade by 0.5m, partly to increase the amount of light they enjoy, and partly as a cautious response to the currently minimal potential flood risk in the future. The elevation would normally create a significant design challenge for how to create a Part M compliant ramp up to a level threshold. Happily the depth of the front gardens allows space to plan an easy to use ramp and also for the necessary soft landscape to offset the visual impact of the ramp. It is worth noting how some of the properties in the adjacent Persimmon development do not put any landscaping in front of their ramps, allowing the passer-by to see the exposed workings of their approach. Compare this with the use of real stone flags for the ramps in Garden Square/Gardenia Close and the multi-layered vertical boundary treatments including picket fence, and beech hedges. Front gardens are generally designed not just as points of access but as features to improve the initial impression of the home and thereby the street. The quantum of space to the front and sides of houses deals with the issues associated with wheelie bins. The fact that homes do not put parking within the curtilage of properties secures a good sized front garden for each.

It should be noted that this test is principally about a co-ordinated design strategy for hiding services, in particular the gas and electricity meter boxes that blight so many elevations. The quality of the Garden Square response and thereby the expectations for the appellant site should be compared with the almost universal oversight at Tidy Road.

## **Appendix 2**





# Building for a Healthy Life

A Design Code for neighbourhoods, streets, homes and public spaces







Homes  
England

Homes England  
is the national  
housing  
accelerator.

Building for  
a Healthy  
Life is Homes  
England’s key  
measure of  
design quality.

Building for a Healthy Life is the **latest edition of - and new name for - Building for Life 12.**

**Building for a Healthy Life (BHL) updates England’s most widely known and most widely used design tool** for creating places that are better for people and nature. The original 12 point structure and underlying principles within Building for Life 12 are at the heart of BHL. The new name reflects changes in legislation as well as refinements which we’ve made to the 12 considerations in response to good practice and user feedback.

The new name also recognises that this latest edition has been **written in partnership with Homes England, NHS England and NHS Improvement.** BHL integrates the findings of the three-year Healthy New Towns Programme led by NHS England and NHS Improvement (please see page 12 for more details about ‘Putting Health into Place’).

Many local authorities across the country have cited Building for Life 12 in their **Local Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents.** As BHL is the new name for Building for Life 12, local authorities can use BHL without having to rewrite existing policy documents.

As we approached the publication of BHL, Coronavirus (COVID-19) reached our country. The text had been agreed with Homes England, NHS England and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government before any restrictions were imposed. The need to be able to cycle or walk to essential services and work had been proposed to minimise traffic and mitigate climate change. The virus then made designing for active travel and access to green space vital. We began to think about the impact on the design of neighbourhoods, streets, homes and public spaces. It became obvious to us that design choices that help people feel disposed to walk or ride a bicycle in their streets and neighbourhoods were also critical to supporting a sense of wellbeing from outdoor exercise during the pandemic. These emerging thoughts have been added to BHL – and are easily identified by the symbol⊕.

Front cover image: A street at Trumpington Meadows, Cambridge reflects many of the qualities championed by BHL.

**Building for a Healthy Life is a Design Code to help people improve the design of new and growing neighbourhoods.**

**BHL has been created to allow a broad range of people to use it easily – from members of a local community, local councillors, developers to local authorities – allowing those involved in a proposed new development to focus their thoughts, discussions and efforts on the things that matter most when creating good places to live.**

Organised across three headings, 12 considerations are presented to help those involved in new developments to think about the qualities of successful places and how these can be best applied to the individual characteristics of a site and its wider context. These three headings will guide you from **macro through to micro scale considerations.**

Each consideration is **illustrated with clear written and visual prompts** helping you to identify good practice and avoid common pitfalls.

BHL can help local communities to set clear expectations of new developments by offering a series of easy to understand considerations that will also allow local communities to more easily identify the qualities (or deficiencies) of development proposals.

14 INTEGRATED NEIGHBOURHOODS
Natural connections
Walking, cycling and public transport
Facilities and services
Homes for everyone

38 DISTINCTIVE PLACES
Making the most of what’s there
A memorable character
Well defined streets and spaces
Easy to find your way around

62 STREETS FOR ALL
Healthy streets
Cycle and car parking
Green and blue infrastructure
Back of pavement, front of home





**Building for a Healthy Life's 12 considerations** move away from the 12 questions in Building for Life 12. This is a tactical shift in emphasis. Questions demand a quick response whereas good design requires more time, analysis and thought.

BHL offers written and visual prompts directing you to the components of successful places. You will notice that photographs are free of annotations and descriptions to encourage you to think about why a particular image has been included and help you to better recognise well designed (and less well designed) places.

**The 12 considerations capture the areas of design and placemaking that need most attention** but are often the most overlooked.

**If you already use or are familiar with Building for Life 12 you will recognise that the basic principles are the same. If you're a local authority and you've cited Building for Life 12 in your Local Plan or other policy documents a useful table<sup>1</sup> has been provided to allow you to understand where changes have been made and see that the basic principles are the same.**

When using BHL it is important that local authorities and developers **discuss the 12 considerations at the very start of the design process**, agreeing what is required to achieve a green light against each consideration. It is also recommended that the considerations are also used to frame discussions with local communities and other stakeholders. This approach is much more effective than having these discussions later on when a site layout has been produced - and when a considerable amount of time and money will have been spent. It is simply more effective to use the 12 considerations as a basis for discussion and design exploration before progressing proposals too far - a tenet which distinguishes community engagement from community consultation.

<sup>1</sup>See pages 86-88.

A play area at Alconbury Weald, Cambridgeshire is sunk 1m into the ground. The small flight of steps up to the street allows a hedge to replace the often crude protective metal railings that enclose play areas.



## Using Building for a Healthy Life

BHL works best where it is used as a ‘golden strand’ running through the development and planning process. This involves:

- **Local authorities** embedding BHL considerations into Local Plans, Local Design Codes, Supplementary Planning Documents and site specific briefs. The 12 considerations are a very effective way of structuring pre-application discussions relating to design quality<sup>2</sup>.
- **Highways Authorities** adopting the Manual for Streets principles and thinking.
- **Developers** adopting BHL, using it as a design tool for new developments from the inception of a scheme, rather than after (or towards the end of) the design process.
- **Local authorities, developers, local communities and other stakeholders** using BHL as a way to set expectations of new developments. The larger the scale of the development, the broader the engagement needs to be and to help develop a strong understanding of the site and its wider context alongside the needs of the local community.
- **Planning Committees** and local councillors using BHL to assist with decision making allowing them to more easily identify the design qualities (or weaknesses) of proposed new developments.
- **Public health partners** in local areas working closely with local planning authorities and developers. By building partnerships with local planning authorities and developers, public health partners (such as those working for Clinical Commissioning Groups and/or local Directors of Public Health) could become more involved in shaping new development at pre-application stage (subject to local planning authority and applicant agreement).

Developers, local authorities and local communities can also use BHL to review the quality of completed developments, helping them to understand areas of success alongside areas for improvement.

**Homes England endorse Building for a Healthy Life.** Homes England have used BFL12 since 2019 and are now using BHL. Homes England use the 12 considerations as part of its evaluation process for selecting bidders for its land disposal programme. Procurement panel partners whose designs ignore BHL considerations are marked down in the bidding process.

<sup>2</sup>BHL generally works for developments of around ten homes or more. For smaller developments, the considerations can be useful prompts although not all of them might be appropriate for the scale of the scheme.

Integrated Neighbourhoods	National Planning Policy Framework	National Design Guide
Natural connections	91a; 102c and e; 104d; 127b; 127f	B3; M1; M2; N1; R3
Walking, cycling and public transport	20c; 91a; 91c; 127e	B1; B3; M1; R3
Facilities and services	102; 103	B1; B3; N1; P3; U1; U3
Homes for everyone	60-62	B1; B2; U2; U3
Distinctive Places		
Making the most of what's there	122d; 127c; 127d; 153b; 184	C1; C2; I1; B2; R3
A memorable character	122d; 127c; 127d	C2; I1; I2; I3; B3
Well defined streets and spaces	91a	B2; M2; N2; N3; P1; P2; H2; L3
Easy to find your way around	91b; 127b	I1; M1; M2; U1
Streets for All		
Healthy streets	91b; 102c and e; 110a-d	M1; M2; N3; P1; P2; P3; H1; H2
Cycle and car parking	101e; 127f; 105d	B2; M1; M3
Green and blue infrastructure	20d; 91b; 91c; 127f; 155; 170d; 174	C1; B3; M1; N1; N2; N3; P1; P3; H1; R3; L1
Back of pavement, front of home	127a-b; d; f	M3; H3; L3
Generally	7; 8; 124; 125; 126; 127; 130	15; 16; 17; 20-29; 31-32
Using the tool as a discussion tool	39; 40-42; 125; 128; 129	

### The relationship between Building for a Healthy Life, the National Planning Policy Framework and the National Design Guide.

## Achieving the best outcome

BHL is foremost a **design process structure, not a scoring system**. For this reason we list and illustrate examples of good practice highlighted by a green light. Poor practice is highlighted with a red light.

Where an element of design is considered to fall between a green and a red traffic light, an amber light can be assigned to a particular consideration. An amber light does not mean that the design scores ‘half a point’. Instead it cautions that an aspect of a scheme is not fully resolved. In many cases it is possible to rethink and redesign an aspect of a scheme to achieve a better outcome.

**The more green lights a proposed development secures, the better it will be.**

The objective is to minimise the number of amber lights and avoid red lights.

A red light suggests that one or more aspects of a scheme need to be reconsidered.

BHL offers a **process for collaborative working** between developers, local authorities, communities and other stakeholders by providing principles for creating better places and focusing attention on them. Successful placemaking comes from talking, discussing and exploring ideas, workshops, drawing and modelling.

The best way to use BHL is to use the **12 considerations as a starting point and for those involved to agree what is needed to secure a green light against each consideration**. It is particularly helpful if local authorities clearly explain what is expected to secure a green light against a particular consideration.



Myatt's Field, Lambeth.

There may be **circumstances where amber lights cannot be avoided** due to circumstances beyond the control of the local authority and/or the developer.

For instance, third-party land ownership may prevent optimal connectivity from being achieved (See Natural Connections, page 14). Here an amber light might be justified if the layout of streets and spaces does not prevent you from improving the scheme's connections in the future.

BHL reflects Manual for Streets (2007) in the Healthy Streets consideration (see page 62). It is recognised that a number of local highway authorities have not adopted (or have not fully adopted) the principles set out in Manual for Streets. This can make it very difficult for developers to secure a green light against Healthy Streets. Where this is the case, an amber light is considered justified. This means the developer should not be penalised for not being able to secure a green light against this particular consideration.

BHL promotes more innovative practices adopted by some Highway Authorities to encourage other authorities to reconsider current practice. In 2020, Homes England will publish a set of street details that meet the expectations of both urban designers and highways officers. These more innovative approaches to street design encourage slower vehicle speeds, higher levels of walking and cycling; improving levels of physical activity and local air quality.



**red = stop & rethink**



**amber = try & turn to green**



**green = go ahead**



## Who decides what is a green, amber or red light?

By using BHL you can better understand the qualities of well-designed developments. The written and visual guidance against each consideration will help you understand how a green light scheme looks and functions – and how a red light scheme looks and functions.

The more you use BHL, the more confident and knowledgeable you will become. References<sup>3</sup> signpost you to other useful publications.

If you need help, advice or training this can be found from the authors of BHL and also the nationwide Design Network<sup>4</sup> whose members are based locally.

### Building for a Healthy Life Commendations

If a development secures at least nine green lights (and no red lights), you can apply for BHL Commendation. A Commendation will allow you to use BHL logo on the development and help you showcase its qualities to prospective home buyers.

#### Step One: Contact your local Design Network partner and request a BHL Review (fees apply).

If the BHL Review agree that you secure at least nine green lights (and no red lights), you will be issued with a short report confirming this. The local Design Network partner will send a copy of this report to Design for Homes.

If the BHL Review do not agree that your development merits at least nine green lights, you will still receive a report that will clearly explain where the issues are and how you can either resolve these issues or better consider these on a future development.

At least two people will conduct the BHL Review with more people on larger developments.

#### Step Two: Contact Design for Homes.

You will be issued with your BHL Commendation e-certificate and branding pack (fee applies).



<sup>3</sup>See page 89. <sup>4</sup>designnetwork.org.uk.

BHL training at Houlton, Rugby with Homes England employees and local authority officers.



***“Building for a Healthy Life is a process of designing in quality from the start, rather than trying to fix problems later which leads to delays. It’s our choice of design principles for the many different locations and markets we operate in”***

**Stephen Kinsella, Chief Land and Development Officer, Homes England**



# Putting Health into Place

Improving the health of local communities requires greater action, addressing the role that the built environment has on people's health and wellbeing as part of what is called a 'whole systems' approach.

'Putting Health into Place' is a series of publications that capture the findings of the Healthy New Towns Programme. Led by NHS England and NHS Improvement, Public Health England and partners, ten demonstrator sites across England explored the 'how to' of healthy Placemaking. The publications present ten principles that show how healthier places can be planned and designed creating new ways of providing integrated and health care services. The ten principles are also embedded within BHL.



[england.nhs.uk/publications/putting-health-into-place](https://england.nhs.uk/publications/putting-health-into-place)

# The 10 Putting Health into Place principles and Building for a Healthy Life

## Plan, Assess and Involve

1. Plan ahead collectively ←
2. Assess local health and care needs and assets
3. Connect, involve and empower people and communities ←

## Design, Deliver and Manage

4. Create compact neighbourhoods ←
5. Maximise active travel ←
6. Inspire and enable healthy eating
7. Foster health in homes and buildings ←
8. Enable healthy play and leisure ←

## Develop and Provide Health Care Services

9. Develop health services that help people to stay well
10. Create integrated health and wellbeing centres





**Create places that are well integrated into the site and their wider natural and built surroundings. Avoid creating isolated and disconnected places that are not easy places to move through and around.**

**What's needed:**

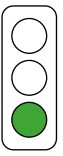
- Look beyond the red line that marks the extent of your site. Ordnance Survey maps along with satellite mapping software such as Google Earth are useful tools to help you understand the wider context and how you can best stitch a new development into a place.
- Identify the places, facilities and services you need to connect to.
- Draw points of connection into and through your site - creating a strong and direct street, path and open space network.
- Create well-connected street and path networks, providing opportunities for these to be extended beyond the site boundary in the future.
- Research and respond to how water flows and nature moves across your site and the wider surroundings.

Filtered permeability. Aura, Great Kneighton, Cambridge.

📷 Photo credit: Timothy Soar





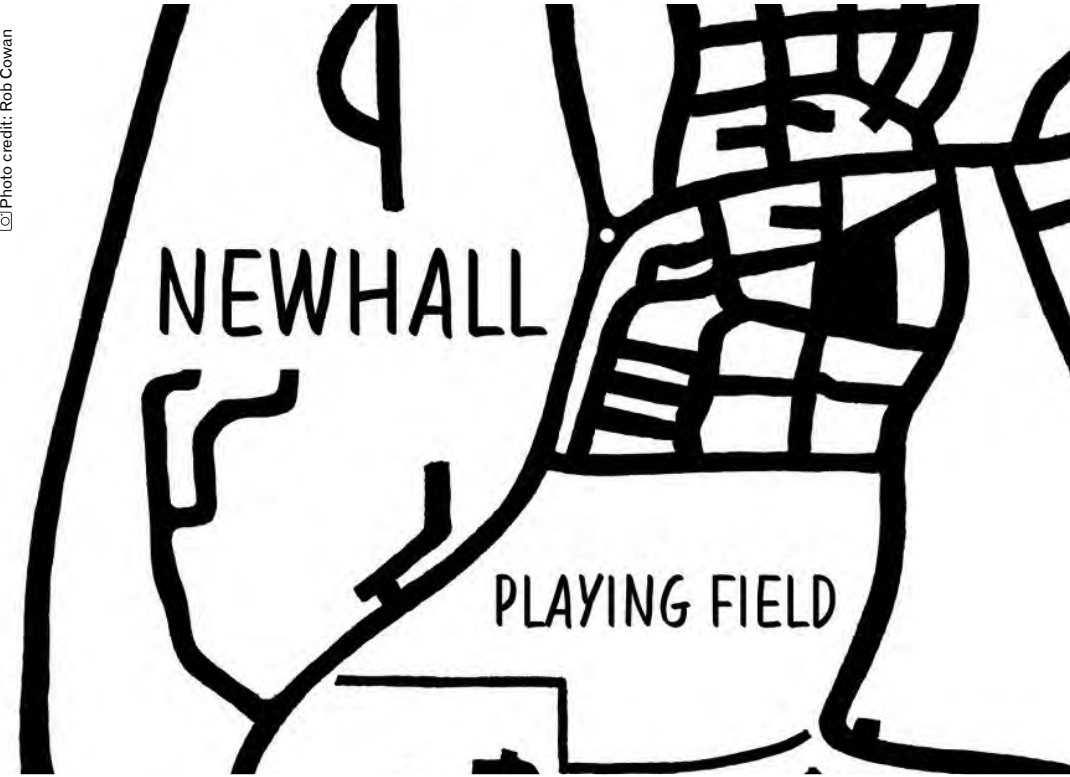


## What 'green' looks like

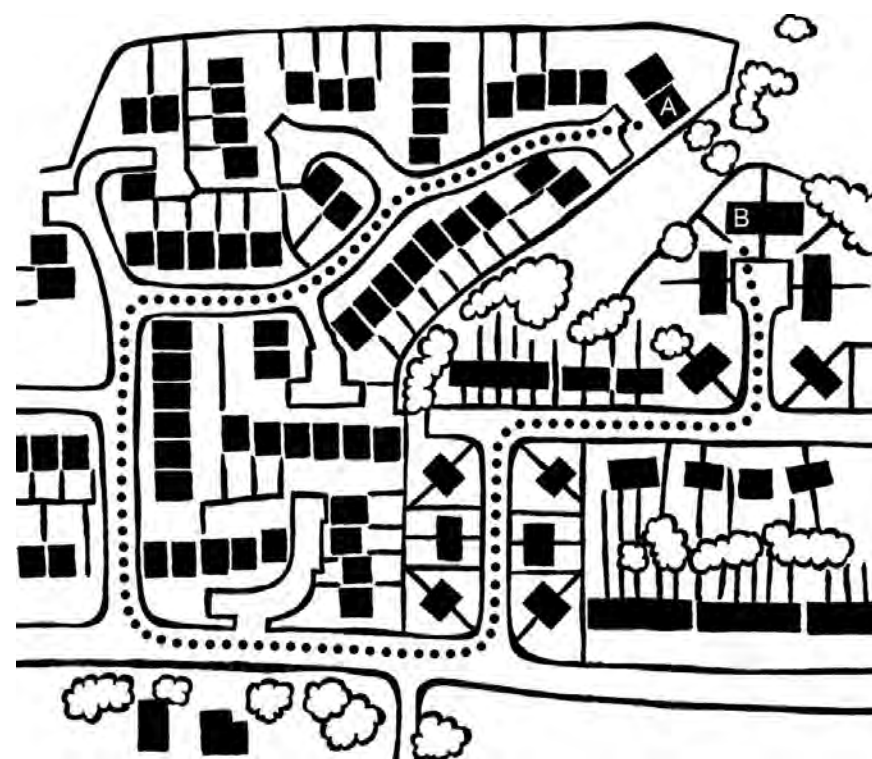
- ✓ Edge to edge connectivity.
- ✓ Respond to pedestrian and cyclist desire lines.
- ✓ Connected street patterns. These work best when they include straight or nearly straight streets to makes pedestrian routes as direct as possible.
- ✓ Filtered permeability. A useful technique that designs out 'rat running' and creates a pleasant low traffic environment around people's homes whilst still allowing pedestrian and cycle movement.
- ✓ Continuous streets (with public access) along the edges of a development. Private drives can frustrate pedestrian and cycle movement along the edges of a development.
- ✓ Connecting existing and new habitats; safeguarding existing or creating new movement corridors for nature.
- ✓ Where retained, keeping hedgerows within the public realm, safeguarding their future retention and management.
- ✓ Streets and routes that can be extended in the future.
- ✓ Adoption to site boundaries.



**green = go ahead**







## What 'red' looks like

- ❌ Single or limited points of access for pedestrians and cyclists.
- ❌ Extensive use of private drives.
- ❌ Pedestrian or cycle routes that are not well overlooked and lit after dark.
- ❌ Failing to respond to existing (or anticipate future) pedestrian and cycle desire lines.
- ❌ No opportunities to connect or extend streets and paths if required by later development.
- ❌ Internal streets and paths that are not well connected or are indirect.
- ❌ Retaining existing hedgerows between the back gardens of individual homes.
- ❌ Ransom strips.



**red = stop & rethink**



**Short trips of up to three miles<sup>5</sup> can be easily made on foot or bicycle if the right infrastructure is in place, helping to improve public health and air quality whilst also reducing local congestion and carbon emissions.**

**What’s needed:**

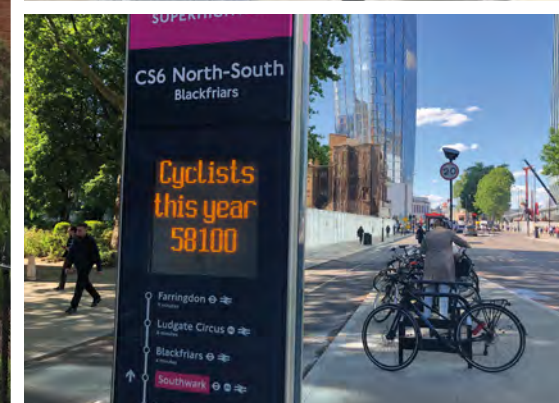
- Cycle and walk the neighbourhood to understand where off-site interventions will be most useful<sup>6</sup>. Local residents and councillors can help you understand where investment in improvements to pedestrian and cycle infrastructure might have most impact.
- Invite people to cycle within the site and beyond to destinations within at least a three mile radius; with routes through green spaces, quiet streets alongside prioritised and protected routes on busy streets, junctions and roads.
- If there is an existing protected cycle network, connect to it. Alternatively, begin a new one by building or funding routes to key destinations.
- Ensure access for all and help make walking feel like an instinctive choice for everyone undertaking short journeys (such as the school run or older generations accessing local facilities and services).
- Streets and paths that connect people to places and public transport services in the most direct way, making car-free travel more attractive, safe and convenient.
- Make sure that all streets and routes pass in front of people’s homes rather than to the back of them – creating a well overlooked public realm.
- Exploit existing (or planned) public transport hubs, such as train stations and bus interchanges, to build at higher densities and channel a higher percentage of journeys to public transport.

<sup>5</sup>National Travel Survey of (2018) identified the average number of cycle trips made per person was 17, with average total miles cycled per person 58. So the average journey is 3.4 miles.  
<sup>6</sup>A local authority may have a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (see NPPF, paragraph 104d).

Great Kneighton, Cambridge offers a connected street network. Techniques such as filtered permeability have been used to encourage walking and cycling whilst also creating low traffic and low speed streets. Bus services are also routed through the development. Credit and copyright: Paul Eccleston, Arthouse.







## What 'green' looks like

- ✓ Share street space fairly between pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles.<sup>7</sup>
- ✓ Cycle friendly streets (see Local Transport Note 1/12) with pedestrian and cycle priority (and protection) with across junctions and side streets.
- ✓ Nudge people away from the car. Offer cycle (and cargo bike) parking closer to the entrance of commercial, leisure and community facilities than car parking spaces.
- ✓ Provide scooter and cycle parking at schools. Scooters can encourage younger children to get active on the way to school.
- ✓ Design out school runs dependent on cars.
- ✓ Start or contribute to the delivery of a Local Cycle and Walking Strategy Infrastructure Plan.
- ✓ Zebra, parallel<sup>7</sup> and signalised crossing.
- ✓ Tight corner radii (<3m) at street junctions and side streets.
- ✓ Concentrate new development around existing or new transport hubs.
- ✓ Demand Responsive Transport<sup>8</sup>, car clubs and car shares.
- ✓ Short and direct walking and cycling connections that make public transport an easy choice to make.
- ✓ New or improved Park and Ride schemes.
- ✓ 20mph design speeds, designations and traffic calming.
- ✓ Protected cycle ways along busy streets.

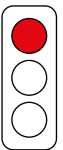


**green = go ahead**

<sup>7</sup>See Department of Transport (2019) Traffic Signs Manual: Chapter 6 (Section 17, p.129) [assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/851465/dft-traffic-signs-manual-chapter-6.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/851465/dft-traffic-signs-manual-chapter-6.pdf)

<sup>8</sup>Also known as on demand transport.





## What 'red' looks like

- ✗ Travel Packs that fail to influence people's travel choices.
- ✗ White line or undivided shared pavement/cycle ways.
- ✗ Pedestrians and cyclists losing priority at side junctions.
- ✗ Oversized radii corners on streets that are principally residential that allow motor vehicles to travel around corners at high speeds.
- ✗ Streets that twist and turn unnaturally in an effort to control vehicle speed but make walking and cycling routes longer than they need to be.
- ✗ Streets principally designed around waste collection vehicles.
- ✗ Overwide carriageways<sup>9</sup> that reduce space for pedestrians and cyclists, making it more difficult for people to get around easily especially when social distancing restrictions are in place.<sup>★</sup>
- ✗ Serviced parcel developments where pedestrian and cycle connections between different phases of development are frustrated.

<sup>9</sup>See Manual for Streets.



**red = stop & rethink**



## Places that offer social, leisure and recreational opportunities a short walk or cycle from their homes.

### What's needed:

- Developments that provide community facilities, such as shops, schools, workplaces, health facilities, co-working spaces, parks, play spaces, cafés and other meeting places that respond to local community needs.
- Locate any new facilities in the best location for those walking, cycling and using public transport.
- Consider whether improving existing facilities will add more value to the local community than adding new ones.
- Assess or identify what sport and leisure provision there is for people of all ages, paying particular attention to the needs of children, teenagers and older people.
- Create places where people can meet each other such as public spaces, leisure facilities, community buildings, cafes and restaurants to provide opportunities for social interaction – helping to improve public health by encouraging physical activity and helping to tackle those affected by loneliness and isolation.
- ‘Play on the way’ can make car-free trips more fun for children making them want to walk or cycle to school.
- Sustainable drainage schemes that contribute towards an attractive and accessible network of streets and public spaces.

The Tuning Fork cafe at Houlton, Rugby is next to the sales office and a multi-function building that is used for community activities such as yoga classes and a toddlers group.







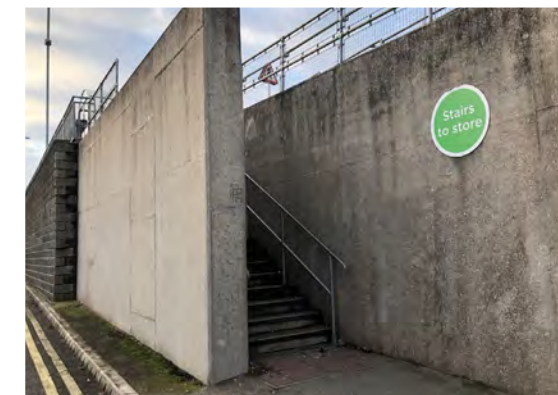
## What 'green' looks like

- ✓ Intensifying development in locations that benefit from good public transport accessibility, in particularly around public transport hubs such as train stations and bus interchanges.
- ✓ Reserving land in the right locations for non-residential uses.
- ✓ Active frontages.
- ✓ Clear windows along the ground floor of non-residential buildings (avoid obscure windows).
- ✓ Mixing compatible uses vertically, such as placing supported accommodation at the heart of new developments above active ground floor uses.
- ✓ Giving places where routes meet a human scale and create public squares.
- ✓ Frequent benches can help those with mobility difficulties to walk more easily between places.



green = go ahead





## What 'red' looks like

- ❌ Local centres that are not easily accessible and attractive to pedestrians and cyclists.
- ❌ Non-residential developments that are delivered as a series of individual parcels with their own surface level car parks set back from the street.
- ❌ Where routes converge, avoid creating places that are of an inhuman scale and that frustrate pedestrian and cycle movement.
- ❌ Inactive street edges, dead elevations, service yards next to the street and obscure ground floor windows.
- ❌ Play and other recreational facilities hidden away within developments rather than in located in more prominent locations that can help encourage new and existing residents to share a space.
- ❌ Not anticipating and responding to desire lines, such as between public transport stops and the entrances to buildings and other facilities.



**red = stop & rethink**



A range of homes<sup>10</sup> that meet local community needs.

What’s needed:

- A mix of housing types and tenures that suit the needs of the local community. This may include first time buyer homes, family homes, homes for those downsizing and supported living.
- Maximising the opportunities offered by supported accommodation, placing these homes at the heart of new developments above active ground floor uses such as shops, community facilities and pre-schools.<sup>11</sup>
- Offering people access to at least some private outdoor space. This is particularly important for people’s mental health and wellbeing especially when social distancing and travel restrictions are in place.🏡

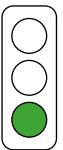
<sup>10</sup>There are mental health benefits associated with older people living in their homes for longer and within a community setting.

<sup>11</sup>Early research indicates that there may be social, physical and mental health benefits by providing opportunities for older generations to feel part of a broader community.

Senior housing development built as enabling project for new stand at Somerset County Cricket Club in Taunton.







## What 'green' looks like



Designing homes and streets where it is difficult to determine the tenure of properties through architectural, landscape or other differences.



Apartment buildings might separate tenure by core but each core must look exactly the same.



A range of housing typologies supported by local housing needs and policies to help create a broad-based community.



Homes with the flexibility to meet changing needs.



Affordable homes that are distributed across a development.



Access to some outdoor space suitable for drying clothes for apartments and maisonettes. ⓘ



Consider providing apartments and maisonettes with some private outdoor amenity space such as semi-private garden spaces for ground floor homes; balconies and terraces for homes above ground floor. ⓘ



**green = go ahead**





## What 'red' looks like

- ✗ Grouping affordable homes in one place (except on smaller developments).
- ✗ Dividing places and facilities such as play spaces by tenure.
- ✗ Revealing the different tenure of homes through architecture, landscape, access, car parking, waste storage or other design features.
- ✗ Not using the space around apartment buildings to best effect and where these could easily be used to create small, semi-private amenity spaces allocated to individual ground floor apartments. 🚶



**red = stop & rethink**



## Understand and respond.

### What's needed:

- Allow time for good design, walk the site and the surroundings with the local planning authority. Discuss, understand and agree opportunities and constraints building a shared vision that makes use of the topography and other existing assets on and beyond the site.
- Explore conceptual ideas before settling on an agreed way forward and producing a site layout. For instance, if there are existing site features explore how these might be best integrated into a place.
- Identify any visual connections into, out, through and beyond the site.
- Work with the contours of the land.
- Understand how water flows across and pools on the site. Explore how water can be used to enhance biodiversity, create character and improve people's sense of wellbeing.
- Draw all these considerations together to get the street, block and open space structure right from the start (a framework or concept plan).
- Consider opportunities for natural lighting, cooling and ventilation. Take care not to compromise important urban design principles such as perimeter block structure.
- Identify opportunities to integrate and reuse existing features of value, these might be natural or man-made, on or beyond the site.
- Be careful that hedges are not simply retained and prevent a sensible and practical new development layout. It may be more effective to create and plant new hedgerows and tree belts into development proposals than work around existing hedges. A well thought out approach may even increase habitat and biodiversity.
- Be sensitive to existing development but avoid creating buffer spaces between existing and new back gardens.
- Using the landform and ground conditions (soil) in a considered way. For instance, low-nutrient subsoils are ideal to put to one side if you wish to establish wildflower meadows rather than importing new topsoil.

Cook's Shipyard, Wivenhoe

📷 Photo credit: Mark Reeves Architects.







## What 'green' looks like

- ✓ Taking a walk to really understand the place where a new development is proposed and understand how any distinctive characteristics can be incorporated as features.
- ✓ Using existing assets as anchor features, such as mature trees and other existing features.
- ✓ Positive characteristics such as street types, landscape character, urban grain, plot shapes and sizes, building forms and materials being used to reflect local character.
- ✓ Sensitive transitions between existing and new development so that building heights, typologies and tenures sit comfortably next to each other.
- ✓ Remember the 'four pillars'<sup>12</sup> of sustainable drainage systems.
- ✓ Protecting and enhancing existing habitats; creating new habitats.
- ✓ Interlocking back gardens between existing and new development (where existing back gardens adjoin a site boundary).

<sup>12</sup>These are water quantity, water quality, amenity and biodiversity.



**green = go ahead**





## What 'red' looks like

- ✗ Designing without walking the site first.
- ✗ Funnelling rainwater away in underground pipes as the default water management strategy.
- ✗ Unmanaged gaps between development used as privacy buffers to existing residents.
- ✗ Placing retained hedges between rear garden boundaries or into private ownership.
- ✗ Building orientations and designs that fail to capitalise on features such as open views.
- ✗ Not being sensitive to existing neighbouring properties by responding to layout arrangements, housing typologies and building heights.



**red = stop & rethink**



## Create places that are memorable.

### What's needed:

- Create a place with a locally inspired or otherwise distinctive character.
- Review the wider area for sources of inspiration. If distinctive local characteristics exist, delve deeper than architectural style and details. Where the local context is poor or generic, do not use this as a justification for more of the same. Inspiration may be found in local history and culture.
- Understand where positive local character comes from: streets, blocks and plots (urban grain), green and blue infrastructure, land uses, building form, massing and materials often underpin the essence of the distinctive character of settlements rather than architectural style and details.
- Using a local materials palette (where appropriate) can be a particularly effective way to connect a development to a place. This is often more achievable and credible than mimicking traditional architectural detailing which can be dependent on lost crafts.
- Brownfield sites can offer sources of inspiration for new development. Greenfield and edge of settlement locations often require more creativity and inspiration to avoid creating places that lack a sense of local or otherwise distinctive character.
- Character can also be created through the social life of public spaces. Create the physical conditions for activity to happen and bring places to life.

Where there are no local sources of inspiration be creative and find ways to give a place a more distinctive and memorable character. A Dutch gable on an existing building inspired a more creative approach at Manor Kingsway, Derby.







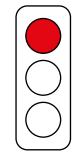
## What 'green' looks like

- ✓ A strong, hand drawn design concept. To find the right solution a number of different ideas and options might need to be explored.
- ✓ Drawing inspiration from local architectural and/or landscape character.
- ✓ Reflecting character in either a traditional or contemporary style.
- ✓ Structural landscaping as a way to create places with a memorable character.
- ✓ Memorable spaces and building groupings.
- ✓ Place names that have a connection to the locality can help stimulate ideas and design thought. A place name like 'Valley View' will always be more helpful on larger, multi-developer developments than generic terms such as 'Parcel R5.1'.



green = go ahead





## What 'red' looks like



Using a predetermined sequence of house types to dictate a layout.



Attempting to create character through poor replication of architectural features or details.



Arranging buildings next to each other in a way that does not create a cohesive street scene.



Referencing generic or forgettable development nearby to justify more of the same.



red = stop & rethink



**Create a network of streets and spaces that are well enclosed by buildings and/or structural landscaping, taking care to ensure that front doors and the principal facades of buildings face streets and public spaces.**

**What's needed:**

- A strong framework of connected and well overlooked streets and spaces.
- Look beyond the plan and illustrative street scenes; what will you actually see and experience walking along the street?
- Perimeter blocks with clearly defined public fronts and private backs.
- Active frontages. Front doors, balconies, terraces, front gardens and bay windows are a good way to enliven and add interest to the street and create a more human scale to larger buildings such as apartments and supported living accommodation.
- Carefully considered street corners.
- Three dimensional models (physical or computer generated) and simple, hand drawn street cross sections can be particularly useful tools to understand and test the spatial qualities of a place.

Upton, Northampton.

📷 Photo credit: Garry Hall.







## What 'green' looks like

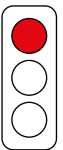
- ✓ Streets with active frontages.
- ✓ Well defined streets and spaces, using buildings, landscaping and/or water to enclose and define spaces.\*
- ✓ Cohesive building compositions and building lines.
- ✓ Front doors that face streets and public spaces.
- ✓ Apartments that offer frequent front doors to the street.
- ✓ Dual aspect homes on street corners with windows serving habitable rooms.
- ✓ Perimeter blocks.
- ✓ Well resolved internal vistas.
- ✓ Building typologies that are designed to straddle narrow depth blocks.

\*Figure ground diagrams can be a useful way to test this.



**green = go ahead**





## What ‘red’ looks like

- ✗ Distributor roads and restricted frontage access.
- ✗ Broken or fragmented perimeter block structure.
- ✗ Presenting blank or largely blank elevations to streets and public spaces.
- ✗ Lack of front boundaries, street planting and trees.
- ✗ Apartment buildings with single or limited points of access.
- ✗ Apartment buildings accessed away from the street.
- ✗ Staggered and haphazard building lines that are often created by placing homes with a mix of front and side parking arrangements next to each other.
- ✗ Street corners with blank or largely blank sided buildings and/or driveways. Street edges with garages, back garden spaces enclosed by long stretches of fencing or wall.
- ✗ Buffers between new and existing development that create channels of movement between back gardens whether access is permitted or not.
- ✗ Single aspect homes on street corners.
- ✗ Bits of left over land between the blank flank walls of buildings.



**red = stop & rethink**



## Use legible features to help people find their way around a place.

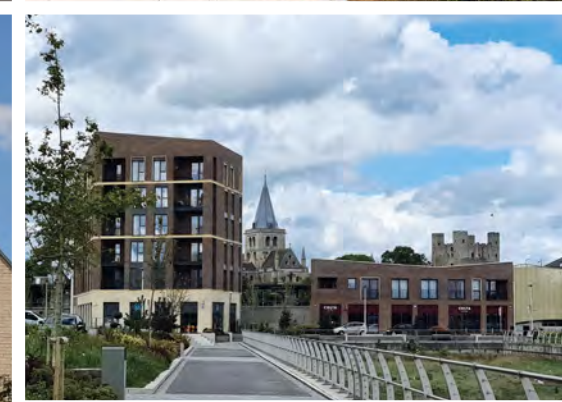
### What's needed:

- Streets that connect with one another.
- Streets that are as straight and as direct as possible.
- Use street types, buildings, spaces, non-residential uses, landscape, water and other features to help people create a 'mental map' of a place.
- Streets with clearly different characters are more effective than 'character areas' in helping people grasp whether they are on a principal or secondary street.
- For larger sites, it will be necessary to use streets and spaces with different characters to help people to find their way around.

An existing tree is the focal point of Southwell Square, Carlisle.







## What 'green' looks like



Designing for legibility when creating a concept plan for a place.



Using streets as the main way to help people find their way around a place. For instance, principal streets can be made different to more minor streets through the use of different spatial characteristics, building typologies, building to street relationships, landscape strategies and boundary treatments.



Navigable features for those with visual, mobility or other limitations.



Frame views of features on or beyond a site.



Create new legible elements or features on larger developments – further reinforce legible features where necessary through the landscape strategy, building and layout design, hard landscaping and boundaries.



Simple street patterns based on formal or more relaxed grid patterns.



**green = go ahead**





## What 'red' looks like

- ✗ No meaningful variation between street types.
- ✗ Disorientating curvilinear street patterns.
- ✗ Disconnected streets, paths and routes.
- ✗ Building typologies, uses, densities, landscaping or other physical features are not used to create places that are different to one another.
- ✗ Cul de sac based street patterns.



**red = stop & rethink**



**Streets are different to roads. Streets are places where the need to accommodate the movement of motor vehicles is balanced alongside the need for people to move along and cross streets with ease. Activity in the street is an essential part of a successful public realm.**

**What's needed:**

- Low-speed streets and neighbourhoods with pedestrian and cycle priority.
- The right balance between movement and place functions.
- Rethinking the way we distribute street space. At times of more relaxed social distancing, demand for better quality cycle provision is expected to increase as public transport capacity reduces. Congestion caused by motor vehicles will make it unattractive for people to switch from public transport to cars creating a unique opportunity to change the way we move around our cities, towns and villages.🚶
- Healthy streets improve people's physical and mental health. Encouraging walking, cycling, outdoor play and streets where it is safe for younger children to cycle (or scooter) to school can create opportunities for social interaction and street life bringing wider social benefits.
- Street trees.
- Avoid streets that are just designed as routes for motor vehicles to pass through and for cars to park within.
- Boulevards and streets with active edges rather than distributor roads and bypasses with no (or limited) frontage access.
- Streets that are easy to cross; providing priority for pedestrians and cyclists across junctions and accesses.
- Well overlooked streets with front doors facing streets and public spaces.
- Provide conditions for cycling appropriate to the speed and volume of motor traffic.
- Inclusive design: think about how people with visual, mobility or other limitations will be able to use the street confidently and safely.

Great Kneighton, Cambridge.

📷 Photo credit: Proctor and Matthews Architects.







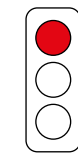
## What 'green' looks like

- ✓ Streets for people.
- ✓ 20mph (or lower) design speeds; 20mph designations.
- ✓ Tree lined streets. Make sure that trees have sufficient space to grow above and below ground, with long term management arrangements in place.
- ✓ Tight corner radii (3m or less).
- ✓ Places to sit, space to chat or play within the street.
- ✓ Pavements and cycleways that continue across side streets.
- ✓ Anticipating and responding to pedestrian and cycle 'desire lines' (the most direct routes between the places people will want to travel between).
- ✓ Landscape layers that add sensory richness to a place – visual, scent and sound.



green = go ahead





## What 'red' looks like



Roads for cars.



Failure to adhere to the user hierarchy set out in Manual for Streets.



Wide and sweeping corner radii (6m or more).



6m+ wide carriageways.



Highways engineering details that make pedestrian and cycle movements more complex and difficult.



Street trees conveyed to individual occupiers.



Distributor roads with limited frontage access, served by private drives.



Painted white line cycle routes on pavements or on carriageways.



Speed control measures that rely on significant shifts in street alignment that contribute towards wasting land whilst also creating disorientating places.



**red = stop & rethink**



**Well-designed developments will make it more attractive for people to choose to walk or cycle for short trips helping to improve levels of physical activity, air quality, local congestion and the quality of the street scene. Well-designed streets will also provide sufficient and well-integrated car parking.**

**What's needed:**

- Provide secure cycle storage close to people's front doors so that cycles are as convenient to choose as a car for short trips.
- Integration of car parking into the street environment.
- Anticipate realistic levels of car parking demand, guarding against displaced and anti-social parking; thinking about the availability and frequency of public transport.
- Avoid confusing car ownership with car usage.
- Creative solutions for attractive, convenient and safe cycle parking or higher density developments (such as apartment buildings).
- Generous landscaping to settle frontage car parking into the street.
- Shared and unallocated parking.

The Dairy, Henlow.  
Unallocated bays located away from individual properties creates efficient and flexible car parking capacity.

📷 Photo credit: Mark Reeves Architects.







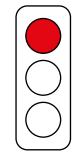
## What 'green' looks like

- ✓ At least storage for one cycle where it is as easy to access as the car.
- ✓ Secure and overlooked cycle parking that is as close to (if not closer) than car parking spaces (or car drop off bays) to the entrances of schools, shops and other services and facilities.
- ✓ Shared and unallocated on street car parking.
- ✓ Landscaping to help settle parked cars into the street.
- ✓ Frontage parking where the space equivalent to a parking space is given over to green relief every four bays or so.
- ✓ Anticipating and designing out (or controlling) anti-social car parking.
- ✓ A range of parking solutions.
- ✓ Small and overlooked parking courtyards, with properties within courtyard spaces with ground floor habitable rooms.
- ✓ Staying up to date with rapidly advancing electric car technology.
- ✓ More creative cycle and car parking solutions.



**green = go ahead**





## What 'red' looks like

- ❌ Providing all cycle storage in garages and sheds.
- ❌ Over reliance on integral garages with frontage driveways.
- ❌ Frontage car parking with little or no softening landscaping.
- ❌ Parking courtyards enclosed by fencing; poorly overlooked, poorly lit and poorly detailed.
- ❌ Over-reliance on tandem parking arrangements.
- ❌ Failing to anticipate and respond to displaced and other anti-social parking.
- ❌ Views along streets that are dominated by parked cars, driveways or garages.
- ❌ Car parking spaces that are too narrow making it difficult for people to use them.
- ❌ Cycle parking that is located further away to the entrances to shops, schools and other facilities than car parking spaces and car drop off bays.
- ❌ Relying on garages being used for everyday car parking.



**red = stop & rethink**



**Creative surface water management such as rills, brooks and ponds enrich the public realm and help improve a sense of wellbeing and offer an interaction with nature. As the richest habitat for a range of flora and fauna, they are also a key play in achieving the net gain in biodiversity sought by the 2020 Environment Bill.**

**What's needed:**

- Create a strong landscape strategy that has impact from 'day one'. Don't 'layer' landscape onto a scheme at the end of the process. Landscape changes can offer opportunities to reintroduce lost habitats and species.
- Create a network of different types of spaces.
- Weave opportunities for habitat creation throughout the development. Plan these as movement corridors to support biodiversity.
- Create food growing opportunities such as allotments and orchards on larger developments.
- Have a sustainable drainage 'treatment train' thinking about the 'four pillars'. Capture water as close as possible to where it falls. Be creative with rain gardens, ponds and swales and avoid steeply-sided or fenced holes in the ground.
- Well-designed multi-functional sustainable drainage will incorporate play and recreational opportunities.
- Well-overlooked public open spaces with strong levels of natural surveillance.
- Robust management and long term stewardship.

A multi-functional sustainable drainage scheme at Forest Way School, Coalville, Leicestershire.







Photo credit: Garry Hall.



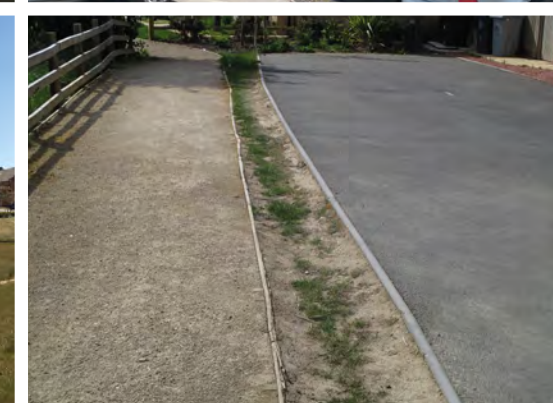
## What 'green' looks like

- ✓ Biodiversity net gain.
- ✓ Movement and feeding corridors for wildlife, such as hedgehog highways. Bird boxes, swift nesting bricks and bat bricks may be appropriate.
- ✓ Plans that identify the character of new spaces, such as 'parks', 'woodland', 'allotments', 'wildflower meadows' rather than 'P.O.S.'. Be more specific about the function and character of public open spaces.
- ✓ Create Park Run ready routes on larger developments and other ways to encourage physical activity and social interaction.
- ✓ Capturing and managing water creatively and close to where it falls using features such as rain gardens and permeable surfaces. Allow people to connect with water.
- ✓ Create a habitat network providing residents with opportunities to interact with nature on a day to day basis. Wildlife does not flourish within disconnected back gardens, artificial lawns and tightly mown grass.
- ✓ Provide natural surveillance opportunities.
- ✓ A connected and accessible network of public open spaces with paths and other routes into and through.
- ✓ Species rich grasslands.
- ✓ Well considered management arrangements whether public or privately managed.



**green = go ahead**





## What 'red' looks like

- ❌ Surface water management by way of a large, steep sided and fenced holes in the ground.
- ❌ Small pieces of land (typically grassed over) that offer little or no public, private or biodiversity value that over time become neglected and forgotten.
- ❌ Large expanses of impervious surfaces.
- ❌ Not designing paths and routes through open spaces where it is difficult for people to create distance between themselves and other people when social distancing restrictions are in place. 🚶
- ❌ Buildings that turn away from open spaces.
- ❌ Poor quality finishing, detailing and maintenance.



**red = stop & rethink**



**Garden cities, towns and suburbs used hedges to define public and private spaces, helping to create characterful and biodiverse places. The space between the back of the pavement and the face of buildings has a significant impact on the quality of a place. Clear demarcations between public and private spaces can encourage people to personalise the front of their homes whilst also offering opportunities to integrate level changes, utility boxes and waste storage.**

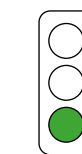
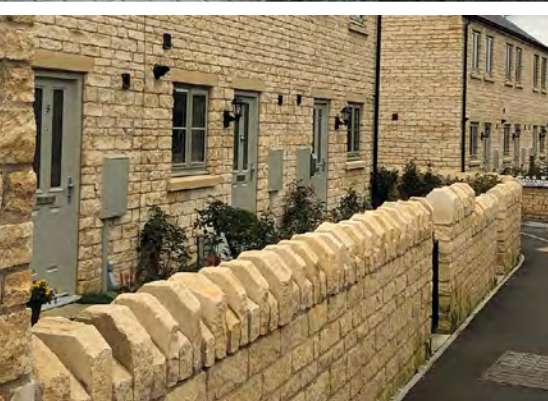
**What's needed:**

- Clearly define private spaces through strong boundary treatments.
- Manage changes in level in a way that does not compromise the qualities of the street.
- Design the space between the back of the pavement and building façades carefully to integrate services, waste storage and utilities cabinets (meter boxes) so their impact is reduced.
- Avoid pieces of 'leftover' land that serve no useful public or private function. Homes with shallow street backs need careful thought as it is not uncommon to see these spaces poorly resolved with small pieces of grass turf or gravel.
- Outdoor amenity space for apartment buildings, such as a balcony for relaxing☺ or the drying of clothes.

Upper Tuesley, Milford.







## What 'green' looks like



Defensible space and strong boundary treatments.



Boundary treatments that add ecological value and/or reinforce distinctive local characteristics.



Well integrated waste storage and utility boxes. If relying on rear garden storage solutions for terraces and townhouses, provide direct access to these from the street.



Front garden spaces that create opportunities for social interaction.



Ground floor apartments with their own front doors and semi-private amenity spaces help to enliven the street whilst also reducing the amount of people using communal areas.⚠️



Consider providing terraces or balconies to above ground floor apartments – these can also help to enliven the street, increase natural surveillance and provide residents with access to the open air.⚠️



No left over spaces with no clear public or private function.

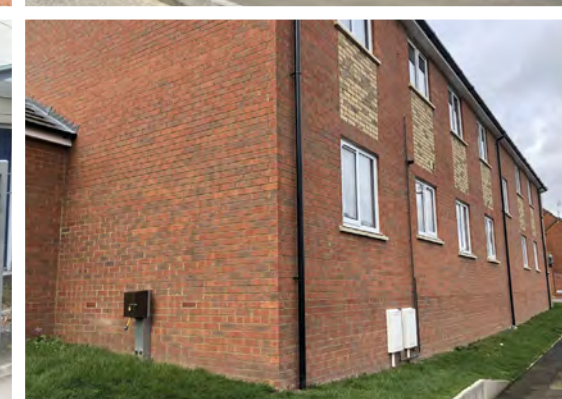
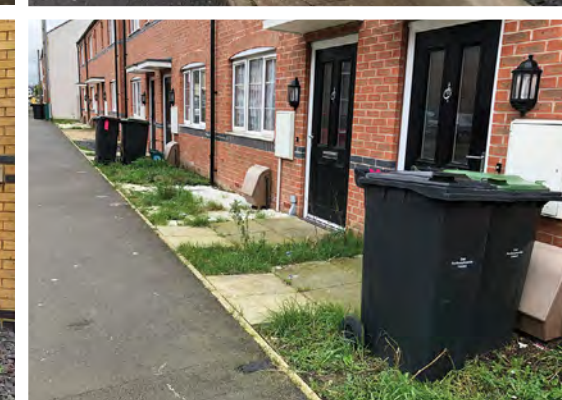
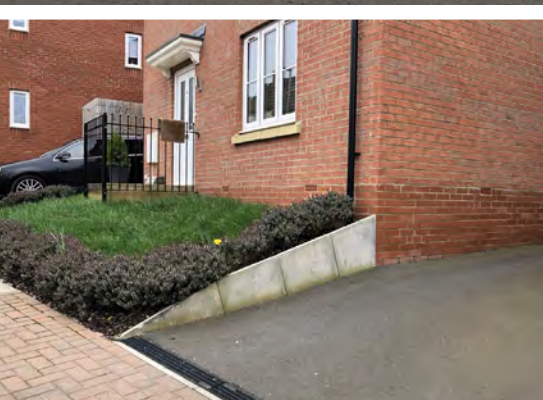


Consider apartment buildings whose access is from a deck rather than a corridor, enabling cross ventilation of apartments while limiting shared common parts which are enclosed.⚠️



green = go ahead





## What 'red' looks like

- ✗ Poorly considered spaces between the back of the pavement and the face of buildings that erode the quality of the street environment.
- ✗ Narrow and small grass frontage strips for space between the back of the street and the façades of buildings that are impractical to maintain.
- ✗ Waste storage solutions for terraced homes that rely on residents storing bins and crates in rear garden spaces and instead often sees bins and crates placed next to front doors.
- ✗ Slab on edge.
- ✗ Concrete screed with pebbles.
- ✗ Prominent external pipes, flues and utility boxes.
- ✗ Pieces of left over land between or to the side of buildings with no clear public or private function.
- ✗ Poorly resolved changes in level.



**red = stop & rethink**



### Moving from Building for Life 12 to Building for a Healthy Life

We recognise that many local planning authorities refer to BFL12 in their Local Plans and other policy documents. BFL12 and BHL share the same principles and structure. For this reason, we consider that local planning authorities will be able to switch from BFL12 to BHL providing that this is made clear at the start of pre-application discussions.

Local authorities may well choose to keep using the previous edition of BFL12 and this is a decision best made locally. If a local planning authority chooses to use BHL but a prospective planning applicant expresses reservations, we suggest using the previous edition of BFL12 as the next best alternative.

The differences between the editions (BFL12 and BHL) are set out and explained here.

Building for Life 12 (2018 edition)	Building for a Healthy Life (2020 edition)	The title change reflects the greater emphasis on healthier and more active lifestyles. NHS England and NHS Improvement have chosen to use the tool as an effective way to reach a broader audience and share the findings of the Healthy New Towns Programme.
Integrating into the neighbourhood	Integrated neighbourhoods	Remarks
1. Connections	1. Natural connections	Greater emphasis and advice relating to connecting places.
2. Facilities and services	2. Walking, cycling and public transport	Greater emphasis on active travel (walking and cycling) to reflect good practice (such as 'Putting Health into Place'); reinforcing efforts by government and the NHS to improve the nation's health and wellbeing through the way in which new developments are planned and designed.
3. Public transport	3. Facilities and services	Moved from being the second to the third consideration; improved written and visual guidance.
4. Meeting local housing requirements	4. Homes for everyone	No change; improved written and visual guidance.
Creating a place	Distinctive Places	

5. Character	5. Making the most of what's there	Moved from being the sixth to the fifth consideration. A distinctive or locally inspired identity will only be created when the time is taken to understand the site and its wider context.
6. Working with the site and its context	6. A memorable character	This consideration has been switched from position 5 to position 6.
7. Creating well defined streets and spaces	7. Well defined streets and spaces	No change; improved written and visual guidance.
8. Easy to find your way around	8. Easy to find your way around.	No change; improved written and visual guidance.
Street and home	Streets for All	
9. Streets for all	9. Healthy streets	Improved written and visual guidance. Renaming this consideration further highlights the importance of street design and the impact this has on people's travel choices, levels of physical activity and public health. Good street design prioritises pedestrians and cyclists, encouraging active travel modes; in turn improving people's health and wellbeing.  Additional prompts encourage street space to be shared more fairly between pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles allowing carriageway space to be redistributed; allowing protected cycle ways and wider pavements to be created. Pedestrians can then be offered more space to allow for social distancing whilst protected cycle ways will allow more people to cycle safely and confidently, ensuring that reduced public transport capacity (at times of social distancing) does not lead to greater private car usage (leading to further congestion, increased energy usage and reductions in air quality).
Street and home	Streets for All	
10. Car parking	10. Cycle and car parking	Emphasising the importance of thinking about cycle parking design as a key factor in encouraging people to choose to cycle rather than drive for shorter trips.



11. Public and private spaces	11. Green and blue infrastructure	Focuses on public space only with private space consideration being moved into the last consideration. The change in title to 'green and blue infrastructure' reflects forthcoming changes in legislation that place a greater emphasis on improved habitat creation and better water management.
12. External storage and amenity space	12. Back of pavement; front of home	<p>The emphasis of this consideration has been directed to focus more on the space between the back of the pavement and the façade of individual buildings. These spaces are very often poorly resolved and have a significant impact on the quality of the street environment.</p> <p>Developments that perform well against this consideration will also resolve storage issues relating to waste and recycling containers.</p> <p>The consideration also highlights the need to consider providing some amenity space for apartments and maisonettes. This is in direct response to the challenges experienced by those living in apartments and maisonettes during lockdown, recognising the importance of being able to sit outside in the open air to people's mental wellbeing.</p>

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### David Birkbeck

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David is Chief Executive of Design for Homes, a social enterprise founded in 2000 to campaign for homes to be better designed and produced in greater volumes. David co-authored Building for Life 12 and is both the Housing Design Awards' director and a judge. An honorary fellow of RIBA, he has served as a design advisory board member at the Homes and Communities Agency, as an NHBC councillor and as 'ambassador' for Wood For Good. David sits on the Cambridge Quality Panel. Other work includes "Car Parking: What Works Where" and he had a hand in the 2009 HAPPI report recommendations to make developments designed for seniors at least as appealing as general market-sale homes.



### Stefan Kruczkowski

BA (Hons) DipTP (Dist) PhD

Stefan is an urban designer and co-authored the original version of Building for a Healthy Life - Building for Life 12 with David Birkbeck. Stefan completed the first doctoral thesis on Building for Life 12 in 2018.

Stefan primarily offers face to face and remote urban design support to local planning authorities across England with over a decade of experience in development management and policy. Stefan also contributes to design review panels for Design:Midlands and Design:West and is a Design Council Built Environment Expert. Stefan regularly collaborates with Design for Homes delivering training and overseas study tours.



### Phil Jones

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Phil is a Chartered Engineer with over 35 years' experience in traffic engineering and transport planning. Phil specialises in achieving synergy between transport and urban design, with the aim of creating places and spaces that meet aesthetic, social and functional aims.

He founded Phil Jones Associates in 2003; the PJA group of companies now provides services in transport, engineering and placemaking and employs around 80 staff based in four UK offices and in Melbourne, Australia.



### David Singleton

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David set up DSA Environment + Design to focus on bringing people and landscape together to make places. He believes this may be done through high quality, well-managed blue-green infrastructure.

His experience covers a wide range of landscape and urban design practice, from planning to detailed design, on projects as diverse as commercial and housing to minerals. He teaches at Nottingham Trent University and is a member of the Design:Midlands Design Review Panel.



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Sue is an independent urban design consultant with extensive experience of masterplanning and design coding for new settlements. Sue is wellknown as a presenter and is co-author of the seminal urban design book Responsive Environments: A manual for designers.

Sue contributes to design review panels for Design:West, Design: Midlands and is Design Council Built Environment Expert. Sue regularly delivers urban design training and recently contributed towards a nationwide programme for Homes England. Her contribution to urban design has been recognised by the Urban Design Group with a Lifetime Achievement Award.



**Building for a Healthy Life is the latest edition of and new name for Building for Life 12.**

**The original 12 point structure and underlying principles within Building for Life 12 are at the heart of Building for a Healthy Life.**

**Building for a Healthy Life is about how to assemble neighbourhoods and new settlements by thinking about and applying 12 key considerations. Designed to frame discussions between local authorities, developers, local communities and other stakeholders Building for a Healthy Life will help you to create better places for people and nature.**



Homes  
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