

# BRIEFING



Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Housing Standards Review

11 Dec 2009

Because the housing standards required by the HCA have an impact on most home builders, we thought we should give you a progress report on work currently being undertaken by the HCA.

The HCA inherited the differing standards of the former English Partnerships and Housing Corporation. Therefore it is carrying out a review, with a view to adopting a single set of standards. The HCA intends to publish a consultation document around the end of January 2010, allowing three months for responses. This will pose a set of questions for home builders and other stakeholders, as well as presenting the results of consultancy work looking at the impact of various standards on development costs and land value. We understand the consultation will seek the views of stakeholders and aim to assess the full implications of each of the standards being considered.

The four areas being examined are:

- Space provision in the home;
- Functionality within the home;
- Sustainability/Code for Sustainable Homes;
- External environment/Building for Life.

The HCA has assured us that the new standards, once decided, will not be implemented until April 2011, thus giving time for companies to prepare for their introduction. Of course existing standards requirements will continue to apply on existing schemes.

The HCA will seek to coordinate its standards with those adopted by the London Mayor, although the Mayor's standards apply to a wider range of issues than will be required by the HCA.

I note that the Government announced in the Pre-Budget Report (9<sup>th</sup> December) that it will not now implement Lifetime Homes standards for all new housing until 2013 at the earliest. The Government also announced it will carry out a review of Lifetime Homes standards in early 2010. In addition, we understand the Government is shortly expected to publish a consultation on the Code for Sustainable Homes. The outcome of the Lifetime Homes review, and the Code consultation, may influence the HCA's decisions about its own standards.

At this stage we do not have any detailed information on any of the standards being considered by the HCA, although we have fed our views through to the HCA and its consultants. However we will keep you informed about the consultation as any new information emerges. It will be extremely important for as many home builders as possible to respond to the consultation, given the potential impact of HCA standards on so much of the industry's production, and on land costs and site viability.

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