

Committee(s): Housing Management & Almshouses Sub Committee	Date(s): 20 July 2020
Subject: Housing Delivery Programme – Housing Design Guide	Public
Report of: Director of Community and Children’s Services	For Information
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Summary

This report provides Members with information relating to the City of London Corporation’s (the Corporation) commitment to ensure our social housing projects are undertaken in compliance with a consistent and comprehensive Housing Design Guide (HDG). The guidance sets out the appropriate design standards required by the Corporation such as space standards and energy performance targets, but also our preference for specific mechanical & electrical components ensuring synergy and efficiency with our long-term maintenance strategies for housing stock.

As highlighted in the Housing Strategy for 2019-23: ‘Healthy Homes; Vibrant Communities’, the purpose of the HDG is to set out our employer’s requirements for a wide range of aspects which include: sustainability, fire safety, energy & carbon management, environment & biodiversity, promotion of health & wellbeing, accessibility, stimulating social value, security, how we create and work with digital models of buildings, and a response to the climate change emergency.

The HDG will also inform and support the procurement of both design services & contractors, forming the basis of a generic employer’s requirements for Housing Design Standards, and will be adaptable to the full range of housing projects which may consist of small clusters of new build, to major housing estate regeneration.

It is of interest to consider that over 100 years ago in 1918, the Tudor Walters Committee published its recommendations on design standards for council housing. These standards were about space and design, but also about energy, transport, and green space. The standards enabled by the 1919 Housing and Town Planning Act which was the origin of council housing in the UK, and together these were seen as fulfilling Lloyd George’s, the then Prime Minister’s commitment for ‘homes fit for heroes’.

Recommendations: The Committee is asked to:

1. Endorse the approach being taken with the ‘Housing Design Guide’ and acknowledge the comprehensive guidance and standards which are contained in the main document and the supporting appendices.

Main Report

Background

2. The City of London is committed to delivering good quality housing which satisfies recognised standards of design & construction, and which can be benchmarked against good practice. The HDG will ensure consistent design standards are implemented and establish the methodology and good practice required to achieve these standards. It is also essential that effective protocol which supports meaningful engagement with residents and stakeholders is given priority and is common practice across the whole of our housing delivery programme.
3. The HDG will support the Corporation's commitment to deliver over 700 socially rented homes over the next 10 years. It will also provide a useful reference point for other forms of tenure. London is facing an acute shortage of homes and particularly socially rented homes where many more need to be built. In order to achieve this vision, the Corporation will maximise the best use of its available housing land and ensure the homes we build are of the quality that our residents deserve.
4. Political attention is focused on the need to significantly increase the rate of house building and particularly affordable housing. However, alongside this aspiration there are growing concerns regarding the quality of the new homes. There have been many cases where new homeowners are struggling to achieve a satisfactory resolution when defects are reported to developers. The key principal is the new housing we deliver needs to be fit for purpose, protected by warranty, performs well in practice, and provides ongoing feedback for continuous improvement with fabric and technology, energy and water use.
5. The design of housing can affect the quality of our lives as well as our physical and mental wellbeing. The quality of people's homes matters to their short-term safety and long-term quality of life. For many who live in poor-quality, cramped, unsuitable accommodation, they are far more likely to suffer from a wide range of illnesses, such as cancer, respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. Well-designed housing can support the changing needs of our residents and help create a sustainable environment for new and existing residents. The HDG will enable people to embrace healthy lifestyles, secure socially inclusive developments, and foster more cohesive communities.
6. There is a fundamental need to ensure that the design consultants and contractors we commission have been procured based on comprehensive and adequate briefing information at the outset. The HDG provides that complete and detailed reference point which can be applied to all new build housing projects both large and small.
7. The HDG brings together a range of standards in a comprehensive manner, covering all elements of design and construction including layout & space, accessibility, to the more granular requirements for particular components. It also sets out guidance for communal spaces, external spaces, public realm, as well as upholding our responsibility for the environment, biodiversity, responsible procurement, and wellbeing of the communities we support.

Standards Implemented

8. A previous information report was presented to and authorised by HMASC committee in 2018 which set out the design requirements for Fire Safety, LABC Warranty, Secured-by-Design and Access & Equality.
9. Fire integrity & fire detection is a high priority for social housing, and there is a need to exceed current guidelines beyond the scope of the Fire Safety Reform and the LACORS Fire Safety Guide for blocks of flats. The key design principles which have been incorporated into the HDG include the following:
 - New apartment blocks will be provided with Fire Suppression installations (sprinklers) irrespective of the height of the development.
 - LD1 Fire Alarm System to be installed - A system throughout the dwelling, incorporating detectors in all circulation spaces that form part of the escape routes from the dwelling, and in all rooms and areas in which fire might start, other than toilets, bathrooms and shower rooms.
 - Fire suppression & Fire compartmentation to be 3rd Party Accredited
 - The external fabric of the development to be non-combustible.
 - Provision of Fire Escape Stairs & Lifts to be compliant with Building Regulations.

LABC Warranty

10. The HDG requires all new housing developments where possible to be provided with a LABC Warranty, this is consistent with best practice and advice obtained from the COL District Surveyor and the COL Insurance & Risk Manager.

Secured by Design

11. The HDG requires all new social housing projects to be designed to achieve 'Secured by Design' standards. The external environment needs to offer security to its end users both in terms of reality and perception. For the safety and long-term security of residents and visitors to any development, all requirements for emergency service access and maintenance access will be compliant with current policy, legal obligations and best practice.

Access and Equality

12. The HDG supports the provision of flexible and accessible developments which are adaptable over the life of a building. New housing should support family life in the flexibility of homes built with easily accessible, built in, long-term adaptability to suit growing and aging families or new owners and tenants. The HDG will support the development of well-connected, walkable neighbourhoods which provide a choice of homes and accessible infrastructure, services and supporting uses and facilities in order to enhance health and wellbeing, social inclusion and community cohesion.

Housing and Climate Emergency

13. Climate change is a defining issue of our time and a challenge which requires a collaborative approach for positive environmental leadership across the organisation. The need for credible leadership for carbon neutrality underpins one of the fundamental aims of the HDG.
14. The UK Government has declared a Climate Emergency committing to achieve Net Zero Carbon by 2050. Supporting the roll-out of low and zero carbon technologies, promoting sustainable transport, restoring natural environments and contributing towards a circular economy are some of the key actions that could deliver the 2050 target
15. There has been a significant growth in new public commitments to climate action, including many London boroughs. To date, 28 London boroughs have declared a climate emergency, 22 of whom have set a goal of net zero emissions by 2030.
16. Councils have influence over around 70% of carbon emissions, but to achieve carbon neutrality or zero carbon will require definitive action by boroughs and lobbying for further funding and policy levers where necessary. This is particularly the case when it comes to improving the energy performance of homes in London and reducing carbon emissions from the sector, which currently accounts for around 36% of all emissions in the capital.
17. The construction industry has a major impact as well as being impacted by these conditions. In December 2018, the Mayor of London also declared a Climate Emergency. The years to 2030 will be most critical in mitigating the effects of climate change and London has accounted for this by pledging to match all the targets to achieve Zero Carbon as soon as 2030.
18. In construction terms - a response to the Climate Emergency must take into account the design, new build and retrofitting of our housing stock. Important aspects are firstly embodied carbon of the materials and operational energy. Embodied carbon can dominate a home's lifecycle carbon to 2030 and be 30-50% over 60 years. Heating and hot water for homes also make up 25% of the total energy use and 19% of our greenhouse gas emissions.
19. Furthermore, although most homes are naturally ventilated, rising temperatures will result in increasing need for active cooling, which in return will increase the energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.
20. The HDG performs a significant role in delivering a carbon zero future since the Corporation is committed to provide at least 700 new social rented homes, making 25% of Corporation's current portfolio.
21. The Corporation supports the declaration of Climate Emergency and aims to take the measures needed to achieve Carbon Zero by 2030. The HDG aims to align with the Committee on Climate Change (CCC's) report for low-carbon, sustainable homes, in support of the main targets set by the UK Government. Exemplar initiatives such as low-carbon heating and sustainable urban drainage systems are adopted from the CCC's report and are promoted within the HDG.

22. Several London Boroughs have been exploring a range of options to improve efficiency in council-owned housing including boiler replacements, heat networks, and renewable energy generation measures such as solar panels. Standards relating to all these aspects are contained in the HDG.
23. The HDG aims not only to set design standards, but also deliver performance in-use. Within the HDG, there is practical guidance that can help developers and designers in putting the UK Government's overarching targets and aspirations into practice. The HDG places an emphasis on a fabric first design approach, maximising the performance and material in use. This is achieved by early stage considerations, such as sustainable material sourcing and designing for deconstruction, reuse and repair, while contributing towards a circular economy that moves away from gas, as the primary fuel source.
24. Alongside the City's Responsible Business Strategy and Climate Action Strategy, this HDG aims to drive new residential developments commissioned by the Corporation towards the ambitious standards required when responding to the Climate Emergency.

Modern Methods of Construction / Design for Manufacture and Assembly

25. In considering how to meet its ambitious target of enabling the delivery of 300,000 homes per year by the mid 2020's and net-zero carbon target by 2050, the government is promoting the delivery of non-traditional construction techniques, broadly known as 'modern methods of construction' (MMC). The term 'MMC' essentially refers to a wide range of construction techniques, meaning anything that differs from 'traditional' building methods.
26. The HDG highlights that MMC or Design for Manufacturing and Assembly (DfMA) presents an opportunity to increase the speed of delivery, construction quality, environmental performance while reducing the impact of construction nuisance to local residents and improving health and safety on construction sites.
27. The HDG requires project teams to presume a preference to explore and adopt an appropriate level of off-site fabrication for all projects. Project teams are required to produce a written assessment on the feasibility of MMC and DfMA as an integral part of the early design stage report.

Cost Overview

A cost review of the HDG has been completed by an independent Quantity Surveyor, and this cost appraisal has been included in Appendix 1

Appendices

- **Appendix 1** – Cost Overview prepared by Turner & Townsend

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