

METRO
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METRO Property New Builds

We know we're not building enough homes but, says Gordon Miller, a new report says some aren't good enough, either...

BRITAIN has a housing shortage. There's an estimated shortfall of several million homes – and the gap is widening. Last year, there were only 156,000 starts, according to the National House Building Council (NHBC). Analysts agree a minimum of 250,000 per year are required – for a decade or more – to meet the demand.

But there's not only a shortage of new houses, there's also a lack of quality in the new homes being built. That's the finding of an All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Excellence In The Built Environment. The group has published its conclusions in the report, More Homes, Fewer Complaints.

The report's key recommendation is the creation of a New Homes Ombudsman. The role would include mediating disputes between consumers and their builders or warranty providers to offer a quick resolution procedure, paid for by a housebuilders' levy.

The report, based on four inquiry sessions that took evidence from housebuilders, consumer groups, insurance companies and homebuyers, notes that new homes had defects, including the following: mould on both the inside and outside after just a few weeks; door frames contracting so that doors don't fit; water cascading through the roofs; and upward pressure on floors, creating uneven surfaces.

The scale of consumer dissatisfaction is illustrated by the 2015 National New Home Customer Satisfaction Survey, carried out by the Home Builders Federation and the main warranty provider, the NHBC: 93 per cent of buyers reported problems to builders, with 35 per cent reporting 11 or more problems.

As a consequence of the More Homes, Fewer Complaints report, the Building Research Establishment



High quality: Hanham Hall in Gloucestershire

AWARD-WINNER



TRUMPINGTON MEADOWS, CAMBRIDGE
Trumington Meadows has been awarded the prestigious Built For Life award, an achievement of excellence and a commendation for well-designed homes that are both attractive and functional. It has also won an Evening Standard Award for Best Large Development and an NHBC Pride In The Job quality award three years running. The latest phase features two, three and four-bed family homes and apartments, as well as four-bed coach houses. Prices from £399,995. barratthomes.co.uk



It's not just quantity - QUALITY matters, too

(BRE) has committed to implementing the recommendations in its voluntary standard, the Home Quality Mark (HQM). The HQM standard, which was cited in the report as a 'promising development for driving up standards in house building', provides consumers with energy costs, wellbeing and environmental information, allowing them to make a smart choice when buying or renting a new home.

Developed by BRE as a symbol of trust for the consumer, the HQM informs householders about the performance of their home, looking at a wide range of criteria, including air quality, ventilation, lighting, noise, temperature, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), energy costs, access to transport and local amenities, local and global emissions, and the impact of the home's construction.

Gwyn Roberts, New Homes & Communities Lead at BRE, said: 'Quality of design, construction and workmanship in new homes is essential. If we fail to build quality homes we are simply passing on a legacy of underperforming and sub-standard housing to future generations. We know this is detrimental to residents' health and wellbeing, costs them more to heat their homes and negatively affects their quality of life.'

The NHBC says it is introducing construction quality audits at building sites. These will involve NHBC's inspection managers undertaking structured detailed audits of construction quality throughout the build. Currently, all new homes are required to be built to minimum safety and performance standards laid out in the building regulations, which, in England, are set by the Department For Communities And Local Government. These cover structural integrity, acoustics, electrical wiring

and other safety issues. However, going beyond compliance requires commitment. Ambi Singh, of Lumiere Developments, which is creating The Beacon, Hemel Hempstead, says: 'We are setting a new benchmark for luxury sustainable developing that will pave the way for generations to come. 'We believe that the residential building sector needs to act now to safeguard against future environmental challenges – and the only way to do that is to adhere to the very best practices across all parts of the build process.'

Roberts outlines what this should look like: 'Great design, taking into account our future climate; durable products and materials that limit the environmental impact and keep us healthy; and good processes that ensure the design and materials are put together in the best possible

manner. Great workmanship is key, but so is to ensure that if things do go wrong, they are solved quickly. HQM encourages all of this and provides independent and trusted verification that it has happened.'

Rory Bergin, of HFA architects, says: 'Designers can help by designing buildings that are easier to build. Prefabrication is part of the answer, where homes are partially or fully built in factories and then brought to site ready to install, providing higher quality homes and sustainable construction.'

'Our project in Hanham Hall, Gloucestershire, was largely factory constructed to a high quality and to demanding sustainability targets.'

Read the full report at civc.org.uk/homequalitymark.com; hta.co.uk; covonaproperties.co.uk

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THE BEACON
EXEMPLAR LIVING



LUMIERE

DEVELOPMENTS THAT ARE LEADING BY EXAMPLE...



VIVER GREEN, HINCASTER, CUMBRIA
This collection of 19 residences marries modern design with the latest energy-efficient technology. The four and five-bed homes are set on plots of between 156sqm and 291sqm, each with a balcony and landscaped gardens. All homes have SAP ratings of between 92 per cent and 98 per cent and are built using Anvic Insulated Concrete Forms, providing thermal and sound insulation, fire safety, thermal mass and durability. Viver Green is undergoing assessment for an HQM rating. Prices from £445,950. egghomes.uk



IPBUS 08, BLACKFRIARS, LONDON
Ipsus 08 is a collection of seven flats and two luxury penthouses. The scheme is part of the regeneration of the Blackfriars neighbourhood in central London, which sees modern apartments being created in an area which is rich in Victorian and industrial heritage. Along with the attention to detail and high specification, the homes have been designed to be energy efficient and environmentally responsible, and feature a level 4 Code For Sustainable Homes rating (equivalent to excellent). Prices from £675,000. ipsus08.com