



# BUILDING FOR LIFE 12



2016 Edition

**Building for Life 12 (BfL12) is the the country's only proven process for creating well-designed homes and neighbourhoods.**

**Endorsed by government and managed by three partners - Design Council CABE, Design for Homes and the Home Builders Federation - BfL12 is integral to the country's commitment to build more and better homes.**

**Reinvented in 2012 to reflect the National Planning Policy Framework, BfL12 was also designed to support the Government's commitment to:**

- Building more homes<sup>1</sup>
- Building better designed homes and neighbourhoods
- Creating a more creative and collaborative planning system
- Involving local communities in shaping development proposals<sup>2</sup>

This guide will help you to understand what BfL12 is and how to use it. BfL12 is free to use – home builders and local authorities across England are encouraged to use it to structure pre-application discussions. Local authorities are also encouraged to refer to BfL12 in their Local Plans, and do not need permission from the Building for Life Partners to embed BfL12 into local policies. Local community groups are also welcome to use BfL12, with many already referring to BfL12 in Neighbourhood Plans.

BfL's 12 questions are designed to help planning authorities, Urban Development Corporations and home builders create a structured and focused design dialogue. BfL12 can also help identify what issues really matter to local communities and how development proposals can respond positively to these.

Based on a traffic light system, the aim is simple – to achieve as many 'greens' as possible, challenge 'ambers' and avoid 'reds'. The more 'greens' a development secures, the better it will be. By using BfL12, better places can be created and common pitfalls associated with many new developments avoided.

Part of the Building for Life initiative is about raising consumer awareness of the benefits of good design and helping them to easily identify which developments have been sensitively designed and considered. The Built for Life™ accreditation scheme<sup>3</sup> offers home builders the opportunity to secure a quality mark to give consumers added confidence that their development is a good place to buy a home. Built for Life™ Quality Marks are available once a development has secured planning approval. To obtain a quality mark the process is simple: secure at least nine 'green' indicators<sup>4</sup>.

In April 2014 we launched [builtforlifelifehomes.org](http://builtforlifelifehomes.org). Here you can find a fascinating range of Built for Life™ schemes from across the country, from north to south, east to west. These reflect a range of market areas demonstrating the Building for Life principles can be achieved even in challenging market conditions. At the time of this publication (May 2016) our website featured 22,000 homes across 52 developments nationwide<sup>5</sup> – a strong indicator of the impact of the Building for Life initiative and those in the industry committed to building more and better homes.



# Why use Building for Life 12?



*Portobello Square, RB Kensington & Chelsea, Catalyst*

An increasing number of home builders are using BfL12 as a way of working to help speed up the planning process and improve the quality of the places they build. Ten years in the making, piloted on live planning applications and written to fit alongside both the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance, BfL12 has become the home building industry's preferred way of creating well-designed new homes and communities.

BfL12 is designed to be used as a design dialogue tool, a basis for discussion with 12 simple, easy to understand questions around which ideas can be shared and explored. BfL is ideal for facilitating local community participation in the place making process. It is also ideal for Neighbourhood Plans and Local Plans. BfL12 can be used to support planning applications and planning applications - but only where it has been used as a basis for discussion throughout the pre-application process.

Since 2012, BfL12 has been widely adopted across the home building industry, by Urban Development Corporations and an ever-increasing amount of local authorities. Its success has secured support from government as a way of not only building more homes, but better places to live.

A key benefit of BfL12 is that it can help local planning authorities consider the quality of both proposed and completed developments. The jargon free language of BfL12 will help planning officers to better communicate design considerations to Elected Members. BfL12 is also useful for creating site-specific briefs, structuring Design Codes and local design policies.



*Horsted Park, Chatham, Countryside Properties*





*The Strike, Helmsley, Taylor Wimpey*

BfL12 is a way of working that helps guide development proposals towards better design. Developments that are based on these principles will help developers demonstrate to local planning authorities that their proposals are well considered and responsive to considerations such as local characteristics specific to a given site.

Where BfL12 is used in this way and particularly where both the developer and local planning authority choose to use it as a basis for discussion, the planning process is often faster with a greater focus on design refinement rather than design fundamentals during the pre-application stage of a development.

BfL12 is therefore a mechanism through which local planning authorities can promote good design practice within their administrative boundaries and against which developers can set benchmarks for their businesses. BfL12 is the only tool that both the house building industry, government and an increasing amount of local planning authorities actively support. As such, BfL12 offers a routemap to consensus on what to focus on when discussing, designing and considering proposed new developments.

*By using Building for Life we have been able to speed up the delivery of new homes whilst also raising the quality of the places being created. It has enabled us to guarantee good quality new housing, which wasn't the case ten years ago. If you're not convinced, come and visit us!*

**Councillor Richard Blunt, Leader of the Council and Christine Fisher, Chief Executive, North West Leicestershire District Council**

BfL12 is managed and promoted by a partnership of CABI at the Design Council, Design for Homes and the Home Builders Federation. The Design Network provides support at the local level, helping us carry out training, workshops and Built for Life™ reviews. Developed between 2010 and 2012 as the planning system underwent a major transformation, it was supported by North West Leicestershire District Council and Nottingham Trent University. Today BfL12 is rapidly growing in both its popularity and its use:

- BfL12 is regularly referenced by government, Ministers and Members of Parliament as a constructive way of supporting house building rates without neglecting good design.
- Management consultancies evaluate whether house builders produce sustainable development using the BfL12 principles. For example, NextGeneration ranks major house builders by their commitment to it. (Source: NextGeneration).
- Building for Life 12 Wales is endorsed by Welsh Government and the Design Commission for Wales (DCFW). BfL12 is available in Welsh and English and complements the requirements of Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note 12: Design. Training and support is available to Welsh authorities and communities from DCFW.
- Leading Chief Executives recognise the value that BfL12 adds to the planning process - helping to speed up the process for well designed schemes and in turn supporting the need for new homes (Source: Christine Fisher, Chief Executive, North West Leicestershire District Council).

By using BfL12 as a dialogue tool throughout the design process, compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) can be demonstrated. BfL12 is aligned to the NPPF and NPPG. By following BfL12's questions and the guidance provided within this booklet, new developments can be designed to accord with design policies set out within the NPPF.

The table below illustrates the relationship between the twelve questions, the NPPF and NPPG. BfL12 is therefore an easy way to ensure that proposed developments meet national policy requirements – a more streamlined way of working than working through 24 individual NPPF policy references. Planning Inspectors are increasingly referring to BfL12 when considering the design merits (or deficiencies) of planning applications. For developments within Wales please refer to the Welsh edition of BfL12 that provides cross references between the 12 questions and Welsh policies. Further details can be found at <http://dcfw.org/building-for-life-12-wales/>

Building For Life 12 Question	Links with the National Planning Policy Framework (2012)	Links with Planning Practice Policy Guidance (2014)*
<b>Integrating into the neighbourhood</b>		
1. Connections	9, 41, 61, 75	006, 008, 012, 015, 022
2. Facilities and services	38, 58, 70, 73	006, 014, 015, 017
3. Public transport	9, 17, 35	012, 014, 022
4. Meeting local housing requirements	9, 47, 50	014, 015, 017
<b>Creating a place</b>		
5. Character	17, 56, 58, 60, 64	006, 007, 015, 020, 023
6. Working with the site and its context	9, 10, 17, 31, 51, 58, 59, 118	002, 007, 012, 020, 023
7. Creating well defined streets and spaces	58	008, 012, 021, 023
8. Easy to find your way around	58	022
<b>Street and home</b>		
9. Streets for all	35, 58, 69	006, 008, 012, 022, 042
10. Car parking	39, 58	010, 040
11. Public and private space	57, 58, 69	006, 007, 009, 010, 015, 016, 018
12. External storage and amenity	58	040

**Generally:**

NPPF: 63, 56 – 58, 63, 64

PPG\*: 001, 004, 005, 029, 031 – 038

(BfL12 is designed to be used to support consultation and community participation. It can also be used to guide masterplans, design codes, frame pre-application discussions and Design Reviews, structure Design and Access Statements, support local decision making and if necessary justify conditions relating to detailed aspects of design, such as materials).

\*paragraph references within 'Design' guidance category.

Building for Life 12 is about creating better places by promoting basic principles of urban design. Part of Building for Life is about recognising good practice and enabling developers that perform well against the 12 questions to demonstrate their commitment to good design to prospective home buyers. Any new development that secures at least nine 'green' indicators against the twelve questions are eligible to apply for a Built for Life™ quality mark.

**Why nine out of twelve?**

At times there are circumstances beyond the control of a developer that will mean it is not possible to secure a full complement of twelve 'green' indicators. These will normally only be justified in the first section of Building for Life 12, i.e. 'Integrating into the neighbourhood' (please see the 'Assessing what is appropriate' pages for more information). Developments that secure all twelve 'green' indicators are eligible to apply for a Built for Life™ 'Outstanding' quality mark. The process of applying for a quality mark is simple. To be considered for a quality mark a development must have secured planning permission.

The next stage is to upload details of the development onto [www.builtforlifelifehomes.org](http://www.builtforlifelifehomes.org). The scheme will then be subject to a 'light touch' review. If the development will have a strong likelihood of achieving a quality mark, the applicant will be invited to attend a Built for Life™ panel presentation where the scheme will be considered in more depth.



Trumpington Meadows, Cambridge, Barratt Homes





*Oxford Waterside, Jericho, Berkeley Group*

BfL12's questions were created to help designers and non-designers to work better together and create better places. BfL12 is primarily a discussion tool – a framework around which issues and ideas can be explored. BfL12 therefore works best if used at the start of the planning process. BfL12 is not designed to be used in isolation as an assessment tool once a planning application has been submitted. If BfL12 has not been used throughout the planning process we do not support its use as a justification for the refusal of a planning application. Likewise, if BfL12 has not been used by a developer at the inception stages of a proposed development and throughout the pre-application process, it should not be used to support an application.

BfL12 uses a simple traffic light system whereby a 'red' indicator suggests that one or more aspects of the design need to be considered; 'ambers' indicate a need for further discussion or refinement<sup>4</sup>. 'Green' indicators suggest one or more aspects of a scheme have been well considered and resolved. By using the traffic light system early in the process a meaningful discussion can take place between stakeholders. Early on in the process, all those involved can agree what needs to be done to achieve a 'green' indicator on each particular question.

By having these discussions early on in the process, it may be possible to identify the needs and aspirations of a local community – what their concerns are and how these might be resolved through either design and/or Section 106 contributions, for example to local healthcare and education provision.

By using BfL12 early in the design process, it is possible to identify aspects of a proposed development that are of concern - or those that need some attention, as well as those that are well resolved. By using BfL12 in this way, it is easy to communicate what needs to be done to achieve compliance with the design policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework. Developments that achieve 9 'greens' are eligible for 'Built for Life™' accreditation. Built for Life™ accreditation is a quality mark available after planning approval but before build completion - offering developers the opportunity to promote the quality of their developments during sales and marketing activity. Accreditation also gives those looking for a new home the opportunity to find the best designed places to live within their search area and budget – and those that will potentially retain or increase their value over time.

The ambition of the BfL initiative is to encourage hundreds of developments across the country to be built using the BfL12 principles as standard. An increasing number of house builders are using Built for Life™ accreditation to build local reputations for quality, reinforce their brand image and also protect individual plots from discounting or the risk of becoming 'stock plots'. Schemes seeking the quality mark are partly assessed online and partly face to face by local panels comprised of independent assessors. You can expect a panel to request a short but generally informal presentation of your proposals and a discussion taking place around each question in turn.

Panel members will review scheme details before the review presentation and therefore if they are satisfied with some aspects of a scheme they may choose to only focus on aspects of the scheme where they have questions or concerns. Panels will reach a decision on the day, and those presenting will be able to observe their discussions. This will mean that, if for instance, you are unsuccessful in securing accreditation you know the reasons why. We believe that this is an essential part of the review process, both for reasons of transparency but also to help those presenting to panels better understand BfL12. Local authorities that make a commitment to using BfL12 can also achieve recognition. From 2017 local authorities that have adopted BfL12 as a way of working will be given the opportunity to secure recognition.

# Who decides what is green, amber or red?



*Ely Court, South Kilburn, Catalyst and London Borough of Brent*

Previous versions of Building for Life have relied on Accredited Assessors to provide definitive assessments of proposed developments, however this process has now changed. BfL12 places an emphasis on design focused discussions. At the start of the planning process, all those involved including local communities and other stakeholders are encouraged to contribute towards a discussion about what a place should become and what it needs to do. Particular stakeholders might have specific concerns or interests that can be captured in one or more of BfL12's questions.

In previous versions of Building for Life it was not uncommon for a developer to prepare an application, engage in pre-application discussions with the local planning authority – within which no reference would be made to Building for Life. Yet once the application was formally submitted, the planning authority consulted an Accredited Assessor. Inevitably, where a scheme had not been designed with the Building for Life principles in mind they often failed to achieve them. This process often caused frustration and delays for both developers and local planning authorities.

The emphasis has therefore shifted away from formal assessments to using BfL12 primarily as a discussion tool. This way, those involved in an application can discuss each of the 12 questions in turn and agree what needs to be done to achieve 'greens' and in some cases, under what circumstances one or more 'ambers' may be justified.

Through this process, it is possible to identify areas of potential conflict or disagreement early. For instance, a draft set of proposals might be considered by the developer to achieve a 'green' against a particular question. However the local planning authority might consider the proposals to merit an 'amber' instead. At this point, a discussion should take place. The developer should demonstrate why they consider a 'green' to be merited, likewise the local planning authority should offer their perspective.

Where this approach is adopted, it is not uncommon for a consensus to be reached and in turn a solution found. If a consensus or solution cannot be found, we recommend using a local Design Review Panel. Many local panels now offer BfL12 based workshops and review services. The emphasis of BfL12 is about getting people to work better together and create better places.

If a scheme is considered a potential candidate for Built for Life™ accreditation there will be independent scrutiny of developments once an application has secured planning approval. Through this independent review process, home buyers can have the confidence that Built for Life™ accreditation is the sign of a good place to live.



*Cottam Meadow, Preston, Barratt Homes*



Each question is followed by a series of additional questions that we suggest are useful to ask at the start of the design process. We've also provided five recommendations for how you might respond with the aim of offering a range of responses.

Recommendations are designed to stimulate discussion with local communities, the project team, the local authority and other stakeholders to help you find the right solution locally. No one is required to meet all recommendations, instead they are prompts to guide you to better design solutions.

We've travelled the country visiting hundreds of residential developments. During these visits, we found the same problems again and again. So, our 'avoid' tips are there to warn against these pitfalls.

Finally, we've added endnotes providing further detail, clarity and where appropriate, references that you may find useful.

## Integrating into the neighbourhood

### 1 Connections

Does the scheme integrate into its surroundings by reinforcing existing connections and creating new ones, while also respecting existing buildings and land uses around the development site?

### 2 Facilities and services

Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as shops, schools, workplaces, parks, play areas, pubs or cafes?

### 3 Public transport

Does the scheme have good access to public transport to help reduce car dependency?

### 4 Meeting local housing requirements

Does the development have a mix of housing types and tenures that suit local requirements?

## Creating a place

### 5 Character

Does the scheme create a place with a locally inspired or otherwise distinctive character?

### 6 Working with the site and its context

Does the scheme take advantage of existing topography, landscape features (including water courses), wildlife habitats, existing buildings, site orientation and microclimates?

### 7 Creating well defined streets and spaces

Are buildings designed and positioned with landscaping to define and enhance streets and spaces and are buildings designed to turn street corners well?

### 8 Easy to find your way around

Is the scheme designed to make it easy to find your way around?

## Street & home

### 9 Streets for all

Are streets designed in a way that encourage low vehicle speeds and allow them to function as social spaces?

### 10 Car parking

Is resident and visitor parking sufficient and well integrated so that it does not dominate the street?

### 11 Public and private spaces

Will public and private spaces be clearly defined and designed to be attractive, well managed and safe?

### 12 External storage and amenity space

Is there adequate external storage space for bins and recycling as well as vehicles and cycles?





## Does the scheme integrate into its surroundings by reinforcing existing connections and creating new ones, while also respecting existing buildings and land uses around the development site?

- 1a** Where should vehicles come in and out of the development?
- 1b** Should there be pedestrian and cycle only routes into and through the development? If so, where should they go?
- 1c** Where should new streets be placed, could they be used to cross the development site and help create linkages across the scheme and into the existing neighbourhood and surrounding places?
- 1d** How should the new development relate to existing development? What should happen at the edges of the development site?

### We recommend

**Thinking about where connections can and should be made;** and about how best the new development can integrate into the existing neighbourhood rather than creating an inward looking cul-de-sac development.

**Remembering that people who live within a new development and people who live nearby** may want to walk through the development to get somewhere else, so carefully consider how a development can contribute towards creating a more walkable neighbourhood.

**Thinking carefully before blocking or redirecting existing routes,** particularly where these are well used.

**Creating connections** that are attractive, well lit, direct, easy to navigate, well overlooked and safe.

**Ensuring that all streets and pedestrian/cycle only routes pass in front of people's homes,** rather than to the rear of them.

### We recommend that you avoid

**Not considering how the layout of a development could be designed to improve connectivity** across the wider neighbourhood.

**Not considering where future connections might need to be made** - or could be provided - in the future.



*Simple, direct and overlooked footpaths encourage walking, Church Fields, Boston Spa, Taylor Wimpey*



### Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as shops, schools, workplaces, parks, play areas, pubs or cafes?

**2a** Are there enough facilities and services in the local area to support the development? If not, what is needed?

Where new facilities are proposed:

**2b** Are these facilities what the area needs?

**2c** Are these new facilities located in the right place? If not, where should they go?

**2d** Does the layout encourage walking, cycling or using public transport to reach them?



*This housing for seniors incorporates a wonderful social space, Pegasus Court, Taunton, Pegasus Life*

### We recommend

**Planning development so that everyday facilities and services** are located within a short walk of people's homes. The layout of a development and the quality of connections it provides can make a significant impact on walking distances and people's travel choices.

**Providing access to facilities through the provision of safe, convenient and direct paths or cycle routes.** Consider whether there are any barriers to pedestrian/cycle access (for example, busy roads with a lack of crossing points) and how these barriers can be removed or lessened.

**Locating new facilities** (if provided) where the greatest number of existing and new residents can access them easily, recognising that this may be at the edge of a new development or on a through route; but consider whether existing facilities can be enhanced before proposing new ones.

**Where new local centres<sup>6</sup> are provided, design these as vibrant places** with smaller shops combined with residential accommodation above (rather than a single storey, single use supermarket building). Work to integrate these facilities into the fabric of the wider development to avoid creating an isolated retail park type environment dominated by car parking and highways infrastructure.

**Creating new places within a development where people can meet each other** such as public spaces, community buildings, cafes and restaurants. Aim to get these delivered as early as possible. Think carefully about how spaces could be used and design them with flexibility in mind, considering where more active spaces should be located so as to avoid creating potential conflict between users and adjacent residents.

### We recommend that you avoid

**Locating play areas directly in front of people's homes** where they may become a source of tension due to potential for noise and nuisance.

**Carefully consider the distance between play equipment and homes** in addition to the type of play equipment selected and the target age group.

**Creating the potential for future conflict** if residential uses and commercial premises are not combined thoughtfully.



### Does the scheme have good access to public transport to help reduce car dependency?

**3a** What can the development do to encourage more people (both existing and new residents) to use public transport more often?

**3b** Where should new public transport stops be located?

#### We recommend

**Maximising the number of homes on sites that are close to good, high frequency public transport routes**, but ensure that this does not compromise the wider design qualities of the scheme and its relationship with its surroundings. 'Hail and ride' schemes agreed with public transport providers can help reduce the distance people need to walk between their home and public transport.

**Carefully considering the layout and orientation of routes** to provide as many people as possible with the quickest, safest, attractive and most convenient possible routes between homes and public transport.

**Considering how the layout of the development** can maximise the number of homes within a short walk from their nearest bus, tram or train stop where new public transport routes are planned to pass through the development. Locate public transport stops in well used places, ensuring that they are accessible for all, well overlooked and lit.

**Considering how the development can contribute towards encouraging more sustainable travel choices**, for example by establishing a residents car club, providing electric car charging points, creating live/work units or homes that include space for a home office.

**Exploring opportunities to reduce car miles<sup>5</sup>** through supporting new or existing park and ride schemes or supporting the concept of transit orientated developments (where higher density and/or mixed use development is centred on train or tram stations).

#### We recommend that you avoid

**Thinking about development sites in isolation from their surroundings.** For example, bus only routes (or bus plugs) can be used to connect a new development to an existing development and create a more viable bus service without creating a 'rat run' for cars.



*Development with easy access to Docklands Light Railway, Waterside Park, London Docklands, Barratt London*

### Does the development have a mix of housing types and tenures that suit local requirements?

- 4a** What types of homes, tenure and price range are needed in the area (for example, starter homes, family homes or homes for those downsizing)?
- 4b** Is there a need for different types of home ownership (such as part buy and part rent) or rented properties to help people on lower incomes?
- 4c** Are the different types and tenures spatially integrated to create a cohesive community?

#### We recommend

**Demonstrating how the scheme's housing mix is justified** with regard to planning policy, the local context and viability.

**Aiming for a housing mix that will create a broad-based community.**

**Considering how to incorporate a range of property sizes and types**, avoiding creating too many larger or too many smaller homes from being grouped together.

**Providing starter homes and homes for the elderly or downsizing households.** People who are retired can help enliven a place during the working day. Providing for downsizing households can also help to rebalance the housing market and may help reduce the need for affordable housing contributions over time.

**Designing homes and streets to be tenure-blind**, so that it is not easy to differentiate between homes that are private and those that are shared ownership or rented.

#### We recommend that you avoid

**Developments that create homes for one market segment** unless the development is very small.

**Using exterior features that enable people to easily identify market sale from rented/shared ownership homes**, such as the treatment of garages or entrances.

**Reducing the level of parking provision for rented/shared ownership homes.**



Mixed tenure houses, Kidbrooke Village, RB Greenwich, Berkeley Homes

## Does the scheme create a place with a locally inspired or otherwise distinctive character?

**5a** How can the development be designed to have a local or distinctive identity?

area, such as building shapes, styles, colours and materials or the character of streets and spaces that the development should draw inspiration from?

**5b** Are there any distinctive characteristics within the

### We recommend

**Identifying whether there are any architectural, landscape or other features**, such as special materials that give a place a distinctive sense of character as a starting point for design. It may be possible to adapt elevations of standard house types to complement local character. Distinctiveness can also be delivered through new designs that respond to local characteristics in a contemporary way<sup>7</sup>.

**Exploring what could be done to start to give a place a locally inspired identity** if an area lacks a distinctive character or where there is no overarching character.

**Landscaping traditions are often fundamental to character**, especially boundary treatments.

**Introducing building styles, details and landscaping features** that can be easily expressed to someone visiting the development for the first time. Where an area has a strong and positive local identity, consider using this as a cue to reinforce the place's overall character<sup>8</sup>.

**Varying the density, built form and appearance or style of development** to help create areas with different character within larger developments. Using a range of features<sup>9</sup> will help to create town and cityscape elements that can give a place a sense of identity and will help people find their way around. Subtle detailing can help reinforce the character of areas and in doing so, provide a level of richness and delight.

**Working with the local planning and highway authority** to investigate whether local or otherwise different materials can be used in place of standard highways surface materials and traffic furniture. Be creative and adventurous by exploring the potential to innovate - develop new ideas and build with new materials.

### We recommend that you avoid

**Using the lack of local character as a justification for further nondescript or placeless development.** Ignoring local traditions or character without robust justification.



*The landscaping of this housing square mirrors the town housing type, Thorley Lane, Bishops Stortford, Countryside Properties*

## 6. Working with the site and its context

**Does the scheme take advantage of existing topography, landscape features (including water courses), trees and plants, wildlife habitats, existing buildings, site orientation and microclimate?**

**6a** Are there any views into or from the site that need to be carefully considered?

designed into the development?

**6b** Are there any existing trees, hedgerows or other features, such as streams that need to be carefully

**6c** Should the development keep any existing building(s) on the site? If so, how could they be used?



*Hard landscaping is responsive to the different levels on site, Osprey Quay, Weymouth, Zero C Developments*

### We recommend

**Being a considerate neighbour.** Have regard to the height, layout, building line and form of existing development at the boundaries of the development site. Frame views of existing landmarks and create new ones by exploiting features such as existing mature trees to create memorable spaces. Orientate homes so that as many residents as possible can see these features from within their homes<sup>10</sup>. Carefully consider views into the development and how best these can be designed.

**Assessing the potential of any older buildings or structures** for conversion. Retained buildings can become instant focal points within a development. Where possible, avoid transporting building waste and spoil off site by exploring opportunities to recycling building materials within the development<sup>11</sup>.

**Working with contours of the land** rather than against them, exploring how built form and detailed housing design can creatively respond to the topographical character; thinking carefully about the roofscape. Explore how a holistic approach can be taken to the design of sustainable urban drainage by exploiting the topography and geology<sup>12</sup>.

**Exploring opportunities to protect, enhance and create wildlife habitats.** Be creative in landscape design by creating wildflower meadows rather than closely mown grassland and, where provided, creating rich habitats within balancing lagoons, rainwater gardens, rills and swales.

**Considering the potential to benefit from solar gain** through building orientation and design where this can be achieved without compromising good urban design or creating issues associated with over heating<sup>13</sup>. Finally have regard to any local micro-climate and its impact.

### We recommend that you avoid

**Leaving an assessment of whether there are any views into and from the site** that merit a design response until late in the design process.

**Transporting uncontaminated spoil away from the site** that could be used for landscaping or adding level changes where appropriate.

**Not carefully considering opportunities for rainwater attenuation** both on plot and off.

**Not carefully thinking about what balancing lagoons will look like** and how people could enjoy them as attractive features within an open space network.

**Careful thought in the design process can eliminate the need for fenced off lagoons** that are both unsightly and unwelcoming.

## 7. Creating well defined streets and spaces

### Are buildings designed and positioned with landscaping to define and enhance streets and spaces and are buildings designed to turn street corners well?

**7a** Are buildings and landscaping schemes used to create enclosed streets and spaces?

**7c** Do all fronts of buildings, including front doors and habitable rooms, face the street?

**7b** Do buildings turn corners well?



*A straight building line reinforces clear distinction between public and private spaces, The Strike, Helmsley, Taylor Wimpey*

### We recommend

**Creating streets that are principally defined by the position of buildings** rather than the route of the carriageway.

**Designing building that turn corners well**, so that both elevations seen from the street have windows to them, rather than offering blank walls to the street<sup>14</sup>. Consider using windows that wrap around corners to maximise surveillance and bring generous amounts of natural light into people's homes.

**Using a pattern of road types to create a hierarchy of streets** and consider their enclosure, keeping to the well proportioned height to width ratios relative to the type of street<sup>15</sup>.

	Maximum	Minimum
Minor streets, e.g mews	1: 1.15	1:1
Typical streets	1:3	1:1.5
Squares	1:6	1:4

Source: Manual for Streets (2007) p.54  
These street to width ratios are for guidance purposes only. If a scheme is landscape led, structural landscaping in the form of large trees and well established hedgerows can provide enclosure instead of buildings.

**Respecting basic urban design principles** when designing layouts. For example, forming strong perimeter blocks<sup>16</sup>.

**Orientating front doors to face the street** rather than being tucked around the back or sides of buildings.

### We recommend that you avoid

**Streets that lack successful spatial enclosure** by exceeding recommended height to width ratios.

**Over reliance on in front of plot parking** that tends to create over wide streets dominated by parked cars and driveways unless there is sufficient space to use strong and extensive landscaping to compensate the lack of built form enclosure.

**Homes that back on to the street** or offer a blank elevation to the street.

**Locating garages and/or driveways (or service areas and substations) on street corners** or other prominent locations, such as the 'end point' of a view up or down a street.

### Is the development designed to make it easy to find your way around?

**8a** Will the development be easy to find your way around? If not, what could be done to make it easier to find your way around?

**8b** Are there any obvious landmarks?

**8c** Are the routes between places clear and direct?

### We recommend

**Making it easy for people to create a mental map of the place** by incorporating features that people will notice and remember. Create a network of well defined streets and spaces with clear routes, local landmarks and marker features. For larger developments it may be necessary to create distinct character areas. Marker features, such as corner buildings<sup>17</sup> and public spaces combined with smaller scale details such as colour, variety and materials will further enhance legibility.

**Providing views through to existing or new landmarks and local destinations**, such as parks, woodlands or tall structures help people understand where they are in relation to other places and find their way around.

**Making it easy for all people to get around** including those with visual or mobility impairments.

**Identifying and considering important viewpoints within a development**, such as views towards the end of a street. Anticipate other, more subtle viewpoints, for example a turn or curve in the street and how best these can be best addressed.

**Creating a logical hierarchy of streets.** A tree lined avenue through a development can be an easy and effective way to help people find their way around.

### We recommend that you avoid

**Creating a concept plan for a scheme that does not include careful consideration as to how people will create a mental map of the place.**

**Layouts that separate homes and facilities from the car**, unless the scheme incorporates secure underground car parking.



*Apartment blocks at corner give streets definition and helps way finding, Bedford Park, Bedford, Barratt Homes*



## Are streets designed in a way that encourage low vehicle speeds and allow them to function as social spaces?

**9a** Are streets pedestrian friendly and are they designed to encourage cars to drive slower and more carefully?

**9b** Are streets designed in a way that they can be used as social spaces, such as places for children to play safely or for neighbours to converse?



High quality hard landscaping, The Avenue, Saffron Walden, Hill

## We recommend

**Creating streets for people where vehicle speeds are designed not to exceed 20 mph<sup>18</sup>.** Work with the Highways Authority to create developments where buildings and detailed street design is used to tame vehicle speeds. Sharp or blind corners force drivers to slow when driving around them while buildings that are closer together also make drivers proceed more cautiously<sup>19</sup>. 20mph zones are becoming increasingly popular with local communities and are a cost effective way of changing driver behaviour in residential areas.

**Thinking about how streets can be designed as social and play spaces,** where the pedestrians and cyclists come first, rather than simply as routes for cars and vehicles to pass through<sup>20</sup>.

**Using the best quality hard landscaping scheme that is viable** without cluttering the streets and public spaces.

**Designing homes that offer good natural surveillance opportunities;** carefully considering the impact of internal arrangement on the safety and vitality of the street<sup>21</sup>. Consider maximising the amount of glazing to ground floor, street facing rooms to enhance surveillance opportunities creating a stronger relationship between the home and the street.<sup>22</sup>

**Creating homes that offer something to the street<sup>23</sup>,** thinking carefully about detail, craftsmanship and build quality. Afford particular attention to the space between the pavement and front doors<sup>24</sup>. A thoughtful and well designed entrance area and front door scheme will enhance the kerb appeal of homes whilst also contributing towards creating a visually interesting street. Carefully consider changes in level, the interface between different materials, quality finishing and the discreet placement of utility boxes.

## We recommend that you avoid

**20mph speed limits enforced with excessive signage** or expensive compliance systems or features.

**Designing a scheme that allows drivers to cross pedestrian footpaths at speed** to access their driveways. Consider how hard and soft landscaping can be used to make drivers approach their street and home more cautiously and responsibly.

**Minimise steps and level changes** to make them as easy as possible for pushchairs and wheelchairs.

**A pavement that has lots of variation in levels and dropped kerbs** to enable cars to cross it can encourage unofficial parking up on the kerb and may make movement less easy for those pushing a pushchair, in a wheelchair or walking with a stick or walking frame.

## Is resident and visitor parking sufficient and well integrated so that it does not dominate the street?

- 10a** Is there enough parking for residents and visitors? (a parking courtyard) and are they well overlooked by neighbouring properties?
- 10b** Is parking positioned close to people's homes?
- 10c** Are any parking courtyards small in size (generally no more than five properties should use
- 10d** Are garages well positioned so that they do not dominate the street scene?



Unallocated bays in small shared courts efficiently deal with varied parking demands, The Mill, Horton Kirby, Fairview Homes

## We recommend

**Anticipating car parking demand** taking into account the location, availability and frequency of public transport together with local car ownership trends. Provide sufficient parking space for visitors.

**Designing streets to accommodate on street parking** but allow for plenty of trees and planting to balance the visual impact of parked cars and reinforce the spatial enclosure of the street. On street parking has the potential to be both space efficient and can also help to create a vibrant street, where neighbours have more opportunity to see and meet other people.

**Prevent anti-social parking.** Very regular and formal parking treatments have the potential to reduce anti-social parking. People are less prone to parking in places where they should not be parking, where street design clearly defines other uses, such as pavements or landscape features.

**Making sure people can see their car from their home** or can park it somewhere they know it will be safe. Where possible avoid rear parking courts<sup>25</sup>.

**Using a range of parking solutions** appropriate to the context and the types of housing proposed. Where parking is positioned to the front of the property, ensure that at least an equal amount of the frontage is allocated to an enclosed, landscaped front garden as it is for parking to reduce vehicle domination. Where rows of narrow terraces are proposed, consider positioning parking within the street scene, for example a central reservation of herringbone parking<sup>26</sup>. For higher density schemes, underground parking with a landscaped deck above can work well.

## We recommend that you avoid

**Relying on a single parking treatment.** A combination of car parking treatments nearly always creates more capacity, visual interest and a more successful place.

**Large rear parking courts.** When parking courts are less private, they offer greater opportunity for thieves, vandals and those who should not be parking there.

**Parking that is not well overlooked.**

**Using white lining to mark out and number spaces.** These are not only costly, but unsightly. It can be cheaper and more aesthetically pleasing to use small metal plates to number spaces, and a few well placed block markers to define spaces.

**Not providing a clear and direct route between front doors and on-street parking** or not balancing the amount of parking in front of plots with soft relief.

## Will public and private spaces be clearly defined and designed to have appropriate access and be able to be well managed and safe in use?

- 11a** What types of open space should be provided within this development?      the developer contribute towards an existing facility in the area that could be made better?
- 11b** Is there a need for play facilities for children and teenagers? If so, is this the right place or should      **11c** How will they be looked after?



Shared garden, The Square, York, Nixon Homes

## We recommend

**Clearly defining private and public spaces** with clear vertical markers, such as railings, walling or robust planting. Where there is a modest building set back (less than 1m), a simple change in surface materials may suffice. Select species that will form a strong and effective boundary, such as hedge forming shrubs rather than low growing specimens or exotic or ornamental plants. Ensure sufficient budget provision is allocated to ensure a high quality boundary scheme is delivered.

**Creating spaces that are well overlooked by neighbouring properties.** Check that there is plenty of opportunity for residents to see streets and spaces from within their homes. Provide opportunities for direct and oblique views up and down the street, considering the use of bay, oriel and corner windows where appropriate. Designing balconies can further increase opportunities for natural surveillance.

**Thinking about what types of spaces are created and where they should be located.** Consider how spaces can be designed to be multi-functional, serving as wide an age group as possible and how they could contribute towards enhancing biodiversity<sup>27</sup>. Think about where people might want to walk and what routes they might want to take and plan paths accordingly providing lighting if required. Consider the sun path and shadowing throughout the day and which areas will be in light rather than shade. Areas more likely to benefit from sunshine are often the most popular places for people to gather.

**Exploring whether local communities** would wish to see new facilities created or existing ones upgraded. Think how play can be approached in a holistic manner, for example by distributing play equipment or playable spaces and features across an entire open space.

**Providing a management and maintenance plan** to include a sustainable way to fund public or shared communal open spaces.

## We recommend that you avoid

**Informal or left over grassed areas that offer no public or private use** or value and do little or nothing to support biodiversity.

**Avoid creating small fenced play areas** set within a larger area of open space where the main expense is the cost of fencing.

**Landscaping that is cheap**, of poor quality, poorly located and inappropriate for its location. Low growing shrubs rarely survive well in places where people are likely to accidentally walk over them (such as besides parking bays).

### Is there adequate external storage space for bins and recycling, as well as vehicles and cycles?

**12a** Is storage for bins and recycling items fully integrated, so that these items are less likely to be left on the street?

**12b** Is access to cycle and other vehicle storage convenient and secure?



*Robust brick bin stores, Centenary Quay, Southampton, Crest Nicholson*

### We recommend

**Providing convenient, dedicated bin and recycling storage** where bins and crates can be stored out of sight. Check with the local authority to determine exactly what space is required and minimise the distance between storage areas and collection points. Where terraced housing is proposed, consider providing integral stores to the front of the property (such as within an enclosed section of a recessed porch) or by providing secure ginnels between properties that provide direct access to the rear of properties<sup>28</sup>.

**Designing garages and parking spaces that are large enough to fit a modern family sized car** and allow the driver to get out of the car easily. Where local authorities have requirements for garage sizes, parking spaces and circulation space design these into your scheme from the outset. If garages do not meet local requirements, do not count these as a parking space.

**Considering whether garages should be counted as a parking space.** If garages are to be counted as a parking space, ensure that sufficient alternative storage space is provided for items commonly stored in garages. Consider extending the length of the garage to accommodate storage needs or allowing occupants to use the roof space for extra storage<sup>29</sup>.

**Anticipating the realistic external storage requirements of individual households.** Residents will usually need a secure place to store cycles and garden equipment. A storage room could be designed to the rear of the property (either attached or detached from the home), reviving the idea of a traditional outhouse. More creative solutions may be needed to satisfy the cycle storage requirements of higher density apartment accommodation.

**Thinking carefully about the size and shape of outside amenity space.** It is a good idea to ensure that rear gardens are at least equal to the ground floor footprint of the dwelling. Triangular shaped gardens rarely offer a practical, usable space<sup>30</sup>. Allow residents the opportunity to access their garden without having to walk through their home.

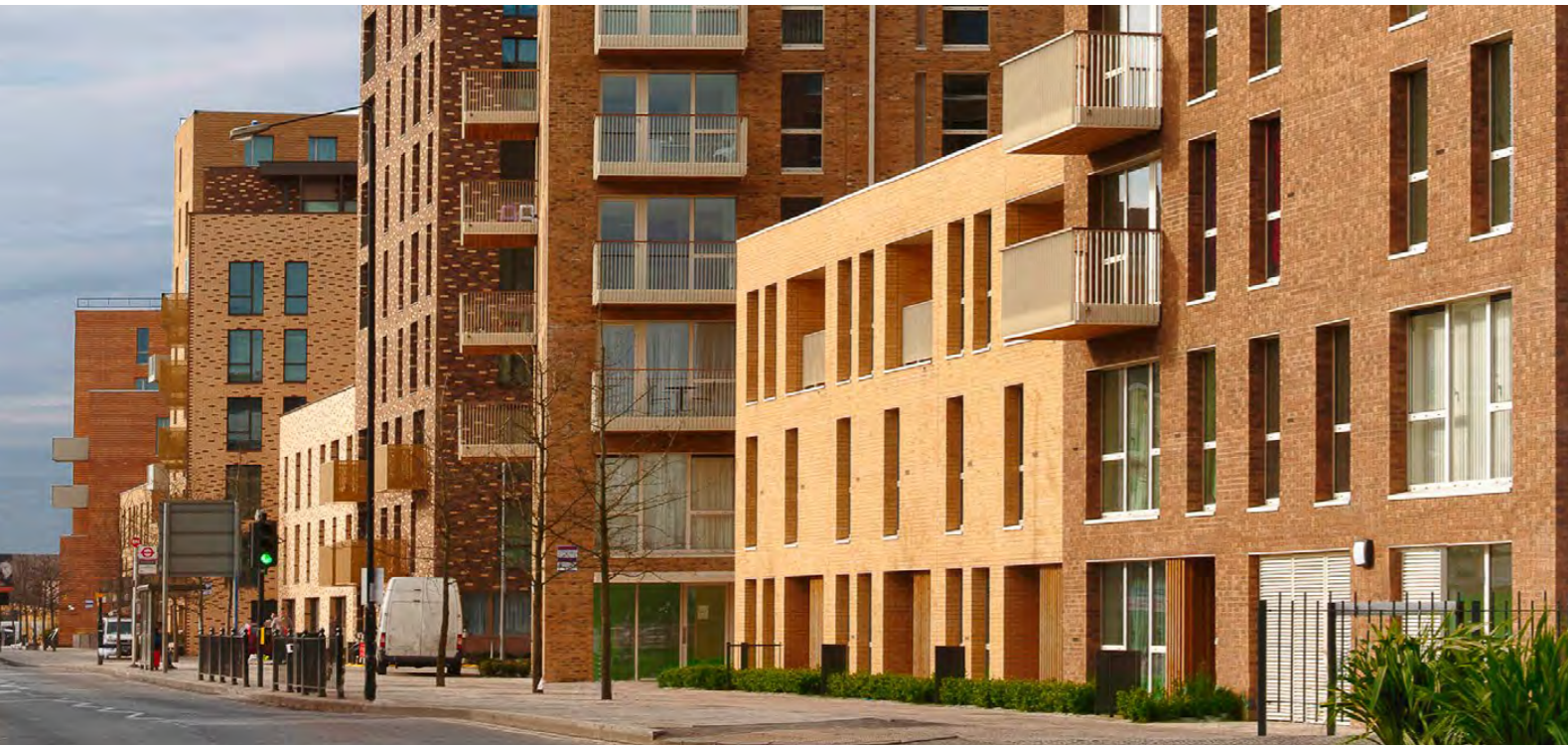
### We recommend that you avoid

**Bin and recycling stores that detract from the quality of the street scene.**

**Locating bin and recycling stores in places that are inconvenient for residents,** or they might find it easier to leave their bin and containers on the street.

**Designing garages that are impractical or uncomfortable to use.**

**Cycle storage that is not secure or is difficult to access.**



St Andrews, Bromley by Bow, Barratt Homes

Supplementary design prompts were introduced in November 2014 in response to feedback from users about the need to better address design issues in more urban locations. This supplement deals with issues found where apartment blocks of three or more storeys create new developments with few, if any, new streets and where key design issues are how blocks respond to their locality, existing streets and movement.

Six of the twelve questions now have an alternative prompt to suit urban situations. Whilst the ethos of each question remains the same the emphasis and considerations reflect better the challenges and considerations associated with more urban locations and higher density developments. We recommend that design teams agree with the local authority which version of the questions are most appropriate to any proposed development.

### Connections and scale

Does the scheme respond to the scale of its surroundings, respect existing view corridors (or create new ones), and reinforce existing connections and make new ones where feasible?

**Design rationale:** To emphasise visual connectivity whilst ensuring that where possible, the opportunity is taken to make physical connects that are going to be well-used and of benefit to residents and the wider community.

### Easy to find your way in and around

Is the scheme designed to make it easy to understand the links between where people live and how you access the building, as well as how you move through it?

**Design rationale:** To emphasise the importance of creating a well defined entrance(s) to a development. Is it easy to find the front door?

### Active Streets

Does the development engage with the street so passers-by will understand the movement between the building and the street, and is there an obvious visual link between inside and outside?

**Design rationale:** To emphasise the importance of creating active edges to a development at street level, carefully consider how the building relates to the street, how vehicle and servicing is designed and to avoid dead elevations.

### Cycle and car parking

Will the development be likely to support and encourage cycling by providing cycle storage which people can use with confidence? Where parking is provided, is this easy to use? Are accesses to car parking designed not to impact on those not in cars? Are entrances to car parks over-engineered, visually obtrusive or obstructive to pedestrians and cyclists?

**Design rationale:** To emphasise the modal emphasis on bikes in more urban development where people are more likely to live close enough to work and leisure to cycle. Seeks to also promote well-designed entrances to parking areas whether at grade or underground.

### Shared spaces

Is the purpose and use of shared space clear and is it designed to be safe and easily managed? Where semi-private or private spaces are created, are these clearly demarcated from the public realm?

**Design rationale:** To emphasise the importance of designing such spaces to be functional, attractive and well used.

### Private amenity and storage

Are outdoor spaces, such as terraces and balconies, large enough for two or more people to sit? Is there opportunity for personalisation of these spaces? Is waste storage well integrated into the design of the development so residents and service vehicles can access it easily whilst not having an adverse impact on amenity for residents.

**Design rationale:** To focus on practical balcony sizes and well designed communal waste facilities that are well resolved in relation to building entrances and screened from publicly accessible routes.





*Kilburn Park, South Kilburn, Catalyst and London Borough of Brent*

BfL12 is effective where local authorities use it as a way of working, framing pre-application discussions relating to design and support decision-making against the twelve questions. Yet, BfL12 is at its most effective where it is used as a 'golden strand'. The 'golden strand' comprises of a series of elements. Local authorities are encouraged to work towards putting each of these elements in place. In some situations, we recognise it might be difficult or impossible to embed or achieve each of these elements for a variety of local reasons. The more elements that are in place the better and more effective BfL12 can be in your local area.

## What are the elements?

- **Strategic leadership** – senior Elected Members and Chief Officers supporting BfL12 and understanding why it is important. Securing a Cabinet or Committee resolution to adopt BfL12 as a way of working and as an expectation of future planning applications is a great start.

- **Cross authority consistency.** If neighbouring local authorities work together and use the same method to frame discussions and decision making around design considerations, it will become even better and easier for those involved in the planning and design process.
- **In house training** – you can do it yourself or by contacting your local architecture centre or Design for Homes. Getting officers and Elected Members to understand what BfL12 is and why it is important. It can help people understand what happens when developments are created without the BfL12 principles in mind.
- **Local Policy.** BfL12 is supported by the NPPF and therefore local planning authorities are encouraged to adopt BfL12 as a measure of quality.
- **Tell home builders that are active in your local area** that you are using BfL12. Why not organise a low cost event to launch BfL12 locally and bring together developers, local designers and the local authority? Design for Homes can offer guidance and assistance.
- **How are we doing? Post completion review.** BfL12 is a useful tool to understand how well recently completed developments have been designed. Some local authorities use BfL12 performance as a key indicator to help measure the impact and effectiveness of their planning services. Some local authorities engage developers in these reviews as a constructive critique of what is being collectively created.
- Using BfL12 to **structure pre-application** discussions relating to design. The 12 questions are a useful aide mémoire and help to ensure that every aspect of a proposed development has been well considered.
- Using BfL12 to **support planning decisions.** Not every scheme can achieve 12 'greens', but 'reds' should always be avoided.

Market conditions would merit a 'green' where good standard house types are used, but built with a locally appropriate materials palette. Conversely, an increased expectation for a more locally tailored or bespoke approach would be reasonable in a stronger market area.

Using BfL12 on **outline applications** to help safeguard the quality of future applications. It is a good idea to secure BfL12 at outline stage by doing two things:

First, by establishing and securing **key principles** in an illustrative masterplan. For instance, connections (Question 1); which will in turn minimise walking distances between existing or local facilities or services/public transport (Questions 2 and 3), capture opportunities and constraints that may impact on the amount or cost of development (Questions 5, 6 and 7) for instance:

- If a site is adjacent to existing development it is good practice to respect existing built form along development boundaries (for example, storey heights and plot character).
- Views into, out of and through a site that need to be respected by way of either 'no build corridors' or location where a lower built form would be appropriate.
- Existing built or natural features.
- The need to 'feather' or 'lighten' development if a new, and permanent edge to a settlement will be formed adjacent to open, undeveloped land such as countryside, heathland or woodland.
- Robust perimeter block structure.

It is also useful to consider whether the proposed coverage of a scheme (i.e. number of units) will provide or compromise the ability to provide sufficient and well integrated parking provision based on local circumstances (Question 10).

Second, by attaching a concise condition to any outline planning approval that requires a developer to demonstrate that any future Reserved Matters application performs well against BfL12.

Such a condition will be useful to land buyers, particularly where an outline application is submitted by a land promoter - rather than a developer. Such a condition can be justified on the basis of the need to secure a good standard of design as required by the NPPF. A 'Note to Applicant' should encourage any Reserved Matters applicant to *'engage with the local planning authority at an early stage, using BfL12 as basis for discussions relating to design'*.

**Celebrating and recognising quality.** Ensure that developers that secure Built for Life™ accreditation are recognised. A 'well done' press release and photo shoot with a developer and a local politician can help raise positive interest in a new development when sales activity begins. This in turn can help raise wider public and industry interest and demand for Built for Life™ accredited schemes.



*Bridport House, Hackney, London Borough of Hackney*

**Ensuring the local highways authority are aligned** with Manual for Streets and in turn Question 9. This can be more challenging in two tier authority structures. As such, the ability of a scheme to achieve a 'green' against this question may well be constrained – and justified – by regulatory constraints. Of all the BfL12 questions this is consistently the most challenging and discussed across the country!

In some regions, local highways authorities are working together to refresh local highways design standards to better align these with Manual for Streets and BfL12. We warmly welcome these changes to highways standards.

**Finally, keep Elected Members and Chief Officers engaged in BfL12.** The nature of these leadership roles is that they are often 'desk bound'. As such, it often takes little persuasion to get a Portfolio Holder and the Chief Executive in a car for a few hours a couple of times a year with an well informed officer to see how design quality is improving locally – and discuss areas for improvement or greater focus.

If your local authority helps a developer secure a **Built for Life™** quality mark, contact Design for Homes to order your own quality mark plaque<sup>3</sup>. These attractive and eye catching certificates are a visible reminder of the good work of the planning team in your authority.



*Roseberry Mansions, Kings Cross, One Housing*

As outlined before, Building for Life's 12 questions are grouped in three distinct sections:

- 1. Integrating into the neighbourhood**
- 2. Creating a place**
- 3. Street and home**

Based on a simple 'traffic light' system (red, amber and green) we recommend that proposed new developments aim to:

- Secure as many 'greens' as possible,
- Minimise the number of 'ambers' and;
- Avoid 'reds'.

The more 'greens' that are achieved, the better a development will be. A red light gives warning that a particular aspect of a proposed development may need to be reconsidered. However, it is important to recognise there will be schemes of substantial merit that might trigger one or more red lights in the first chapter, such as:

### **Integrating into the Neighbourhood**

For example, take a rural exception site in a beauty spot where soaring house prices have priced out local people. A scheme of just 6 houses for rent - perhaps some distance from a bus stop and with limited access to other amenities would fail questions 2, 3 and 4.

In such cases, it is important to consider the flexibility to make 'waivers' (which in turn, would 'upgrade' an otherwise 'red' indicator to an 'amber'). However, waivers should be supported by the local planning authority and highlighted early in the design process.

Yet, it is important to note that we would not recommend that any scheme is permitted a 'waiver' against any questions within the chapters named 'Creating a place' and 'Street and home' sections as these questions relate to design features that no scheme should be without. For instance, there is no reason to build a development where footpaths are not overlooked and safe or where front doors do not face the street.

For these reasons, whilst we encourage local authorities to adopt BfL12, we strongly recommend that they avoid explicitly setting a requirement for every proposed development to achieve 12 'greens'. Such an approach is not consistent with the creative and collaborative ethos at the heart of BfL12 within a time where we are facing a major under supply of new homes.

Instead, we recommend local policies to refer all proposed developments to use BfL12 as a design tool throughout the pre-application and community engagement stages.

Rather than local policies requiring all schemes to achieve 12 'greens', local policies should require all proposed developments to perform positively against BfL12 with the maximum number of 'greens' secured, with 'reds' avoided and 'ambers' well justified.



<sup>1</sup>Department for Communities and Local Government (2011) 'Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England', HMSO <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/housingstrategy2011>. Further supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and the Localism Act and Planning Practice Guidance.

<sup>2</sup>According to the Farrell Review (2014), a government-commissioned inquiry into design quality by an independent panel of notable experts, BfL12 can help in creating a "collective vision shaped in collaboration with local communities, neighbourhood forums and PLACE Review Panels." [www.farrellreview.co.uk](http://www.farrellreview.co.uk) Accessed 31.3.2014

<sup>3</sup>To find out more about obtaining Built for Life quality mark please visit [www.builtforlifehomes.org](http://www.builtforlifehomes.org). Building for Life training and support (including facilitation of community workshops using BfL12) is available locally through the Design Network [www.designnetwork.org.uk](http://www.designnetwork.org.uk)

<sup>4</sup>It may be that it is agreed between those involved that one or more 'ambers' are justified. We recommend that 'ambers' are normally only justified on those questions where issues may be outside of an applicant's control, i.e. within the 'Integrating into the Neighbourhood' section.

BfL12 Question:	Issue:	Justification:
1 Connections	Inability to provide full connectivity	Third party land ownership.
2 Facilities and services	Lack of facilities and services	Part of a larger development where facilities and services are planned as part of a later phase. Rural Exception Sites.
3 Public transport	Lack of public transport	Part of a larger development where public transport services are planned as part of a later phase. Rural Exception Sites.
4 Meeting local housing requirements	Non-policy compliant	Accepted by the planning authority as justified on viability grounds.

<sup>5</sup>For strategic developments, such as sustainable urban extensions.

<sup>6</sup>On larger developments.

<sup>7</sup>A simple test is to ask how the architecture whether traditional or modern acknowledges and enhances its context. But there is no benefit in recycling tradition if treatments are not locally authentic.

<sup>8</sup>However, this does not require pastiche. The aim is to exploit qualities in the character of local stock and link to them, not replicate them, but at the same time recognising that in some circumstances there is a need for a step change in approach to overall design ethos and approach.

<sup>9</sup>Such as landscaping, tree lined streets, parks, greens, crescents, circuses, squares and a clear hierarchy of streets such as principal avenues, lanes, mews and courtyards, as well as colour, landscaping and detailing.

<sup>10</sup>Consider using windows where appropriate to frame views from within the home.

<sup>11</sup>Weathered materials can help add instant character whether within retained structures or reused as to create boundary walls, plinths or surface treatments.

<sup>12</sup>For example by using permeable paving and creating a network of rills, swales, rain gardens and green roofs where suitable.

<sup>13</sup>East-facing bedrooms are very popular for morning sun, while west-facing or south-facing patio gardens and living rooms boost their appeal in spring and autumn. In higher density schemes endeavour to have at least one principal room being able to receive sunlight through some of the day.

<sup>14</sup>These windows need to serve habitable rooms where occupants tend to spend a lot of their day rather than bathrooms, hallways, stairwells and cloakrooms.

<sup>15</sup>These may need to be varied within medium to higher density schemes.

<sup>16</sup>Where buildings create the outside edge of the block and interlocked back gardens and/or shared amenity spaces create the middle.

<sup>17</sup>Perhaps incorporating commercial premises where viable or designing flexible units that could be easily remodelled to accommodate commercial premises in the future.

<sup>18</sup>By restricting forward visibility, using vertical features such as raised plateaus and/or designating Home Zones. Carefully consider the impact of features such as over engineered corner radii on vehicle speeds and pedestrian safety and comfort. See [www.20splentyforus.org.uk](http://www.20splentyforus.org.uk).

<sup>19</sup>See <http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/manual-for-streets/pdfmanforstreets.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup>Shared surfaces may be appropriate in low traffic areas though carefully consider how shared environments can still be navigable by those with visual impairments.

<sup>21</sup>First floor living rooms can be very effective for this purpose, even more so with bay or corner windows and balconies. The key attribute is that windows that face the street should be from habitable rooms where occupants are likely to spend a lot of their day.

<sup>22</sup>Whilst also maximising the amount of natural light penetrating internal spaces.

<sup>23</sup>Such as colour, detail, craftsmanship or other form of artistic expression and creativity.

<sup>24</sup>Or shared access for apartment accommodation.

<sup>25</sup>If rear parking courtyards are used, keep them small, so that residents know who else should be using it. Make sure at least one property is located at the entrance to the parking courtyard to provide a sense of ownership and security. Avoid multiple access points. Allow sufficient budget for boundary walls, surface treatments, soft landscaping and lighting to avoid creating an air of neglect and isolation. Contact the local Police Architectural Liaison Officer to determine whether local crime trends justify securing the courtyard with electric gates.

<sup>26</sup>To avoid a car dominated environment, break up parking with a tree or other landscaping every four bays or so but ensure that the landscaping still allows space for people to get into and out of their cars, without having to step onto landscaped areas.

<sup>27</sup>Discussions with local police officers and local community groups can be a useful source of information on what works well and what does not in a particular area and can help guard against creating potential sources of conflict.

<sup>28</sup>If storage is provided within the rear garden, think about how bins and containers can be discreetly stored out of sight.

<sup>29</sup>Non solid garage doors can dissuade residents from using these spaces as storage areas, but this will only be effective where sufficient alternative storage space is provided and where Permitted Development Rights are removed and enforced.

<sup>30</sup>Where balconies are provided, design these generously so that they are large enough for a small table and at least two chairs.

**References:**

Department for Communities and Local Government (2012) National Planning Policy Framework, HMSO

Department for Communities and Local Government and Department of Transport (2007) Manual for Streets, HMSO

The Institution of Highways and Transportation (2000) Guidelines for Providing for Journeys on Foot, London. [www.ciht.org.uk](http://www.ciht.org.uk)



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**Building for Life 12 (BfL12) is a way of working that local communities, home builders and local authorities are invited to use as a design tool for creating better designed homes and neighbourhoods.**

*By using Building for Life we have been able to speed up the delivery of new homes whilst also raising the quality of the places being created. It has enabled us to guarantee good quality new housing, which wasn't the case ten years ago. If you're not convinced, come and visit us!*

Councillor Richard Blunt, Leader of the Council and Christine Fisher, Chief Executive, North West Leicestershire District Council

*We have got the country building again with our clear ambition to deliver a million homes. But it's not just about building homes but creating value and quality through the importance of good design.*

*Building for Life 12 accreditation gives home buyers the confidence of a quality well-designed property and neighbourhood, creating homes and communities that hardworking people can be proud of.*

Brandon Lewis MP, Housing and Planning Minister



David Birkbeck and  
Stefan Kruczkowski

[www.builtforlifehomes.org](http://www.builtforlifehomes.org)