



Development Policy

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out our approach to Building and Acquiring Sustainable Homes in line with the objectives of the Business Strategy Plan A 2022 to 2025.
- 1.2 This policy contributes to the delivery of the Plan A Building and Acquiring Sustainable Homes Strategy and in doing so ensures the viability of the business and achieves the vision of: Improving lives through sustainable homes and places.
- 1.3 This policy ensures that we provide homes that meet housing need and demand while creating sustainable and beautiful places.

2.0 Purpose

- 2.1 This policy establishes our minimum requirements for all new build developments and acquisitions.
- 2.2 This policy ensures that our developments and acquisitions provide sustainable tenancies and contribute to building beautiful places where people would choose to live.
- 2.3 This policy will deliver homes that are high quality and zero carbon ready by improving energy efficiency standards and providing low carbon heating where appropriate.

3.0 Principles

- 3.1 This policy and its supporting procedures reflect our corporate values of trust, respect, innovate and working together.
- 3.2 This policy ensures data and business intelligence is used to identify housing need throughout our geographical operating area when growing the number of well-designed homes in beautiful places.
- 3.3 This policy ensures the principles of Health and Safety, Data Protection and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are central to working procedures and practices.

4.0 Definitions

4.1 The key terms used in this policy are defined below.

Capital Funding Guide (CFG)	Contains the rules and procedures for all Registered Providers delivering affordable housing through one of Homes England's affordable homes programmes.
Technical Housing Standards - Nationally described Space Standards (NdSS)	Technical housing space standards set out the minimum requirements for floor area, dimensions and height of new homes. They are suitable for application across all tenures and are based on a defined level of occupancy. They aim to ensure that new homes provide adequate space for living, sleeping, storage and circulation.
Building for a Healthy Life (BHL)	<p>Used as a design tool for creating places that are better for people and nature. The code incorporates 12 considerations associated with 'Integrated neighbourhoods', 'Distinctive places' and 'Streets for all', with the aim of creating places that are better for people and nature. These considerations are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Natural connections• Walking, cycling and public transport• Facilities and services• Homes for everyone• Making the most of what's there• Memorable character• Well defined streets and spaces• Easy to find your way around• Healthy streets• Cycle and car parking• Green and blue infrastructure• Back of pavement, front of home

Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI)	<p>The HAPPI principles are based on 10 key design criteria. Many are recognisable from good design generally - good light, ventilation, room to move around and good storage - but they have particular relevance to the spectrum of older persons' housing which needs to offer both an attractive alternative to family homes and be able to adapt over time to meet changing needs.</p>
Zero Carbon Ready Home	<p>Homes built with low carbon heating and high levels of energy efficiency where no further energy efficiency retrofit work will be necessary to enable them to become zero-carbon as the electricity grid continues to decarbonise.</p>

5.0 Scope

- 5.1 This policy applies to all proposed developments and acquisitions for new build homes.
- 5.2 All Board members, employees, consultants and contractors must consider and adhere to this policy when considering decisions on new build housing developments and acquisitions.

6.0 Contribution to Plan A

- 6.1 This policy supports the Plan A strategic objective of Building and Acquiring Sustainable Homes and specifically:
 - o Objectives 23, 'Grow the development programme to meet the sustainable, long-term demand for affordable homes within our operating areas',
 - o Objective 24, 'Provide new homes that are sustainable for the future, lowering energy use for our tenants and improving the thermal comfort of our homes' and,
 - o Objective 25, 'Provide new homes that meet the needs of our tenants, including homes suitable for older people and/or people with disabilities'.
- 6.2 This policy supports the Supporting Sustainable Places Strategy vision to deliver 'Beautiful, sustainable and thriving places meeting residents' need aspirations and nurturing a sense of pride and belonging', by delivering a range of good quality homes. The Supporting Sustainable

Places Strategy, specifically objective 13 sets a key action to facilitate and deliver sustainable growth in existing, new and emerging communities using community plan data and insight. This ensures that place making is proactive and evidence based.

- 6.3 This policy supports the Planet A strategic objective 6 to 'Minimise the cost of heat and power, improve energy efficiency of new homes and reduce their carbon impact'.

7.0 Legislative and regulatory framework

- 7.1 The principal legislation applicable to this policy is as follows:
- o The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
 - o The Building Act 1984
 - o The Building Regulations 2010 and Approved Documents
 - o The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015
 - o The Environment Act 2021
 - o The Building Safety Act 2022
- 7.2 The policy also complies with the procedural requirements of the Capital Funding Guide (CFG) in respect of all homes delivered as part of a Homes England Affordable Homes Agreement.

8.0 Policy statements

- 8.1 We will use business intelligence and objective data to ensure that all developments and acquisitions meet both an identified housing need and demand. We will ensure that the design, type and mix of house types are determined by the prevailing needs of customers, communities and aligned to the targets within the Building and Acquiring Sustainable Homes Strategy.
- 8.2 We will ensure the design and quality of the new homes we build and acquire meet both the needs and aspirations of current and future tenants.
- 8.3 We will secure development opportunities and acquisitions that demonstrate value for money and meet the financial criteria contained within the Board approved development parameters.
- 8.4 We are committed to raising the energy efficiency of our new homes and reducing their impact on climate change. From April 2025, we will ensure that all new developments and acquisitions approved achieve a minimum carbon reduction of 50% over and above the Building

Regulations 2021 and contain low carbon heating systems. This will ensure no retrofit is required and allow them to become zero carbon homes as the energy grid is decarbonised by 2050.

- 8.5 We will ensure that our new developments provide a minimum 10% uplift on current biodiversity levels both to enable resilience to climate change and to improve the natural environment.
- 8.6 We will seek development opportunities and acquisitions that complement Plan A and will look to build and acquire homes within our 'Core' (former Sedgefield Borough Council boundary) and 'Growth' (Bishop Auckland corridor) areas and ensure that a minimum of 75% of all new homes are within these areas. We will also seek opportunities in other key strategic locations where sustainable development can be delivered that provide local amenities, access to employment opportunities and transport links, and where a minimum of 30 homes could be developed in the medium term.
- 8.7 We will only purchase land once a minimum of outline planning consent has been granted and where a financially viable scheme that contributes to both housing need and creates a beautiful, sustainable place will be delivered on the site.
- 8.8 We will not purchase land for purely speculative purposes.
- 8.9 We will ensure all new developments meet 100% of the Nationally described Space Standards (NdSS), and all new acquisitions (S106 or bulk purchases) meet at least 85% of the NdSS. From April 2025, we will ensure all new developments and acquisitions approved meet 100% of the NdSS.
- 8.10 We are committed to following the design principles of 'Building for a Healthy Life' to ensure our new developments create sustainable places that are better for both people and nature.
- 8.11 We are committed to delivering a proportion of our new homes for older and disabled persons aligned to targets within the Building and Acquiring Sustainable Homes Strategy and are committed to following the design guidelines of 'Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation' (HAPPI) for these homes.
- 8.12 We will comply with the relevant standards and procedural requirements in accordance with the Capital Funding Guide for homes where Homes England grant subsidy is used.
- 8.13 We will highlight the impact each development or acquisition will have on key strategic objectives when Board/Committee/EMT considers each proposal for approval.

9.0 Roles and responsibilities

9.1 Roles and responsibilities under this policy are outlined below.

Board	Approval of Plan A strategic objectives in relation to development, including the Building and Acquiring Sustainable Homes strategy. Approval of the Development Policy Approval of Development Parameters. Approval of development schemes in line with the scheme of delegations.
Finance and Investment Committee	Approval of development schemes in line with the scheme of delegations. Monitoring of development scheme progress and the development pipeline including financial approvals and gap analysis.
Executive Management Team	Approval of development schemes in line with the scheme of delegations.
Executive Director of Finance and Investment	Overall responsibility for the delivery of the Building and Acquiring Sustainable Homes Strategy.
Head of Development	Implementation of the Development Policy and delivery of the Building and Acquiring Sustainable Homes Strategy.
Development Manager	Identification of new development opportunities and project management of development schemes.

9.2 This policy will be communicated to our customers via our website and to all employees via our intranet. Those responsible for implementing the policy will where required receive appropriate training, advice, and/or guidance.

9.3 We will deliver training on this policy and the procedures that support it, through appropriate methods including team briefings and on the job training for those working in the development function.

10.0 Related policies and procedures

10.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

Development Procedures	Procedure outlining the process which should be followed when undertaking any development activity.
Development Cashflow Management Procedure	Procedure for recording development expenditure and forecasted cashflows to understand the impact of development within the business plan.
Development Parameters	Financial rules against which the financial viability of a development scheme is considered.
Development Management Practices	Contains details of management practices which must be followed.

11.0 Monitoring and review arrangements

- 11.1 Quarterly reports will be presented to the Finance and Investment Committee which provide a progress update on the delivery of the current development schemes, together with a detailed overview of the developments and acquisitions approved during the financial year, and the number of homes to be completed over the next three years. A summary showing the developments completed during the current financial year will also be provided quarterly.
- 11.2 This policy will be reviewed every three years, unless there is significant development that would require a more urgent review e.g. new legislation or regulation.