

10/2326

Corner Oaks  
46 Tidcombe Lane  
Tiverton  
Devon  
EX16 4EQ

22<sup>nd</sup> January 2014

Miss Lucy Hodgson,  
Planning Services  
Development Management  
Phoenix House  
Phoenix Lane  
Tiverton  
Devon  
EX16 6PP

Dear Miss Hodgson,

**Planning Application 13/01616/MOUT: Land at NGR 298671 113603  
Uplowman Road Tiverton Devon**

**OUTLINE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF UP TO 330 DWELLINGS  
TOGETHER WITH PUBLIC OPEN SPACE, ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE  
AND OTHER WORKS INCLUDING VEHICULAR ACCESS,  
PEDESTRIAN/CYCLE LINKS AND HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS  
REFERENCE 13/0616/MOUT**

It is understood from advice given at the Public Consultation relating to the proposed Masterplan at the Tiverton Hotel that agreement has been reached with MDDC and the DCC highway department to allow a number of trees with TPO's at the Post Hill Hospital site can be felled to allow for a pedestrian/cycle route from the planned development site to Blundell's Road.

It is also understood from consultations held with the Head of Planning and a concerned enquirer that with the felling of a further 3 (three) TPO protected trees this route could be expanded to allow a vehicular access to be constructed although the retention of some trees would result in the access being restricted at one part along its length.

An access through the Post Hill Hospital site would reduce substantially the impact on adjoining roads, dwellings and Families not only by redirecting construction traffic but also providing a more direct route to the A361 and beyond.

However, this route and its design should not be controlled by the need to retain trees whose stability may be affected by the reduction of the group protection to high winds. Also, these trees now have a limited lifespan due to their age. Planting of additional trees

will provide a long term future benefit to the locality retaining the treed landscape in the long term. It is also possible that the construction of the new access will so affect the root structure and access to moisture to the remaining trees that they will be affected to the point that early felling becomes necessary putting into question the principle of retention.

I would therefore request that this route be brought forward as the 'principal route' to the development with controls on Uplowman Road and Golf Club Lane (Putson Lane) incorporated to reduce their use.

**I therefore wish to register an objection to the proposed road design as put forward in this application and that an alternative through Post Hill Hospital, as suggested above, be considered.**

Yours sincerely

David Randell RIBA  
Chartered Architect

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29th January 2014

Masterplanning consultation  
Forward Planning  
Mid Devon District Council  
Phoenix House  
Phoenix Lane  
Tiverton  
EX16 6PP

Dear Sir

**TIVERTON EASTERN URBAN EXTENSION – DRAFT MASTERPLAN  
SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

**I wish to comment on the above and the design and timing of the proposed A361 link.**

It is essential that the A361 link be brought forward and its construction be completed in full within the early years of the Masterplan and eastern development. Any delay will have a substantial and damaging effect on the environment, road users and existing occupiers in the area and further beyond. By bringing the A361 link forward the affect would be:-

- 1) No construction lorries would need to use existing and unsuitable roads and would minimise the impact on the existing road network from the major increase in construction traffic
- 2) The new development would have a direct link to the A361 thus reducing the impact on Blundell's Road, Blundell's School and especially Horsdon roundabout.
- 3) Protect the environment of those living along the Halberton Road and the village of Halberton and beyond (the impact of construction traffic will also affect Sampford Peverell and Willand).
- 4) Not to make worse the current poor air quality at Horsdon as referred to in Cabinet minutes

The biggest issue is that any development requires the importation of large quantities of building materials and the moving of excavated materials. The impact on the existing road network will be considerable causing serious disruption to the free movement of

vehicles, public transport and a heightened risk of damage to the environment and injury to the individual. As stated above, the A361 link is therefore essential.

The question of cost can be resolved by the new link to the A361 being funded by the County Council or borrowing with the cost being recovered from the Eastern development as it proceeds (including interest). Funding the work as the development of the Masterplan proceeds delays the improvements that it would provide and results in considerable disruption, cost and environmental deterioration to the locality.

### **Proposals to the South of Post Hill**

To address the issue of the predominant development taking place to the South of Post Hill, if the 'spine' road proposed was brought out to the East of Post Hill, Between the housing to the east of Post Hill and Hartnoll Farm, this would allow Post hill to take only a nominal increase of traffic from the new development with all major increases following the new road layout. This would have the added benefit of not creating a network of roads and streets with little relevance to the main arterial network.

The junction of the 'spine' road and Blundell's Road would be in a south to north direction directing traffic towards the A361 and not westwards along Blundell's Road. In itself a form of traffic calming. Further calming that could be structured at that point rather than belatedly at Blundell's School would have a significant impact on reducing traffic using Blundell's Road rather than at Blundell's School by which time traffic is not likely to reverse direction back to the A361 link.

**I therefore wish to object to the timing of the provision of the full A361 link as set out in the Masterplan document with the recommendation that it be publicly funded to see its construction during initial years of the development of the Masterplan and early estate development with the funding recovered as part of normal planning conditions.**

Yours faithfully

David Randell RIBA  
Chartered Architect



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Dear Sir

**TIVERTON EASTERN URBAN EXTENSION – DRAFT MASTERPLAN  
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**Tidcombe Lane and the proposed sports facilities to the west of Glebelands and South of the old railway line/walk**

**New Sports facilities**

The proposal to use the field to the west of Glebelands needs more careful consideration. The land has been identified as having a 1:15 gradient (see page 128 of the Masterplan document). Football pitches can be between 45m & 90m wide and 90m x 120m long. The land will therefore require either a deep cutting of up to 3m to provide level pitches if 45m wide or 'cut & fill' of 1.5m across a pitch on the smallest pitch size.

If competition pitches are provided (otherwise what is the point) then the cut to provide level pitches increases dramatically. As 2 pitches are proposed side by side (and a single sports pitch), a considerable re-structuring of the ground will be required as sports fields are required to have a level or near level layout. This will mean that some pitches will be higher than others, that there will be banks to be maintained and severe drainage issues to prevent waterlogging.

The fields are identified as grazing fields and in long term memory have not been ploughed. They contain a large number of wild flowers and grasses not found on land farmed on a rotation basis. As such they will be a loss to the natural habitat for many types of bird, moth and butterfly plus small invertebrates etc., etc. Tawny, Barn and Little owl have been seen in the fields as have Deer.

The fields also discharge run-off water onto the railway walk and beyond to the Ailsa Brook that feeds and runs through the SSSI, Tidcombe Fen. Disturbance of these fields will therefore have an impact on the local ecology.

Reverting back to the consequence of constructing sports fields, the changes to the field layout and ecology where water is absorbed into the top layer and run-off is slowed by the denser grasses and natural contour, to a more level field where the topsoil will inevitably be thinner over the natural dense clay sub-soil. This is a recipe for more run-off and a higher risk of flooding downstream. Large swales to control run-off will therefore need to be provided under a SUDS scheme that will require a long term maintenance policy and agreement.

### Access

The access is also a major issue. From the information that can be gleaned from the Masterplan, the principal access will be from Blundell's Road via Tidcombe Lane and Glebelands Road. Tidcombe Lane especially is TOTALLY unsuitable for the extra traffic. When Ailsa House was sold for redevelopment the then Highway Officer advised that he would NOT ALLOW further development unless Tidcombe Lane was widened to a 4.8m road width, 2 x 2m footpaths and a 1.5m cycle path. As this land is in the ownership of Blundell's School, I can find no indication that they would be willing to dispose of a minimum of 5.2m of land width (the minimum required to meet the standard) plus land for either retaining walls or slopes.

The exit from Tidcombe Lane onto Blundell's Road also does not comply to Highway Design Standards as it only has an 'x' dimension of 2.4m when it should be 4.5m. This adds to the hazard for road users not only for those exiting Tidcombe Lane but also for those travelling eastwards and requiring good indication of vehicles leaving Tidcombe Lane.

Tidcombe lane from Blundell's Road to the access to Tidcombe Walk is narrow with widths of 4.1m along substantial lengths. As coaches (and Lorries) have a width in excess of 2.5m and the average domestic vehicle now exceeds 1.8m it is not difficult to see that 2 way traffic along the Northern part of Tidcombe Lane is impossible. Already vehicles have to back up around bends with the obvious risk and delays are frequently caused.

The entry/exit from Glebelands onto Tidcombe Lane is also substandard with 'x' dimension complying but 'y' dimension exceedingly poor and no more than 28m in the Northern direction (even less to the South). The Highway Design Guide for a 30mph designated road is 75m for visibility. Even if the road speed was reduced to 20mph, the visibility splay would not be achieved without affecting a number of dwellings (both north and south of the entrance).

Sports fields mean large numbers of cars and coaches with visiting teams. At present none of the roads can cater for this traffic.

Glebelands has issues as the road width from Tidcombe Lane is narrower at its western end than its eastern end. Also cars are parked on the highway at the western end which belong to the adjoining cottages as they have no off street parking. This further obstructs the highway.

Access to the proposed playing fields, if they proceed, has to be from the new development. Whilst a barrier access for emergencies can be foreseen at the end of Glebelands, no direct access is acceptable.

### **Effect of Location**

Locating sports fields in close proximity to an existing development of some 40+ years has consequences for the locality and the occupiers of adjoining dwellings. The issue relating to the impact that the proposal will have on Tidcombe Fen has been raised above.

Noise from such fields will also be an issue as well as the need for controls and servicing.

Para 4.4 'Land Use' in the Masterplan document identifies several areas that could be utilised for 'sports'. These include fields to the East and close to Manley Lane. These fields have a gradient of less than 1:20, (see page 128 of the Masterplan document) far more suitable for grading and can be provided with planting and visual barriers to the Grand Western Canal. They would be within the same distance pattern as shown in the Masterplan and still on the pedestrian and cycle path, the Railway Walk.

They are also in a location where Manley lane can be utilised and improved to provide vehicular access. Manley Lane does not have the restraints of Tidcombe Lane and the cost of upgrading it would be substantially less than Tidcombe Lane. To protect and reduce the impact on the adjacent Canal, a landscaped barrier could easily be formed.

The fields adjoining Glebelands could then be addressed as a 'Green pathway' from the Tidcombe Fen to the Canal with natural and planned planting, the creation of walks and forming a 'green heart between the existing developments and the new. As a facility to encourage exercise, and the enjoyment of the open space, the canal and the natural environment from both the existing and new development, this would have no equal.

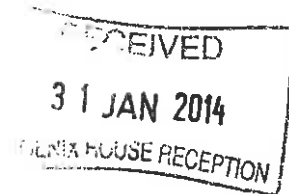
A green pathway is also recommended to provide a natural route for wildlife to spread between open spaces. Interrupting natural pathways has been shown to result in a loss of the indigenous wildlife. Sports fields by their very nature are sterile areas. Locating sports fields adjacent to Glebelands would result in the existing natural pathway being lost.

**I therefore object to the current Masterplan proposal to site sports facilities adjacent to Glebelands with a recommendation that they be re-located adjacent to Manley Lane. If the current location is pursued then the access should be direct and from the new eastern development and NOT from Tidcombe Lane**

~~Yours~~ faithfully

David Randell *KJBA*  
Chartered Architect.

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Dear Sir

**TIVERTON EASTERN URBAN EXTENSION – DRAFT MASTERPLAN  
SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

I wish to raise the issue relating to the use of various existing 'country roads' as the access routes to new development as follows:

**Putson Lane** (referred to as Golf Course Lane by the current applicant)

**PUTSON LANE ACCESS**

The following is based on consulting the Manual for Streets by the Department for Transport & the Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2007 and Devon County Council's 'Highways in Residential Estates'.

Analysis of the Manual and Devon County Council's guide has highlighted several issues that need consideration with regard to the proposals relating to the new access onto the Putson Lane.

**Para 2.3.8 Developments over 300 houses to be provided with 'loop roads'.** This is consistent with the proposed development and why an access is required onto Putson Lane. However this brings into context the need to address the 'access roads' being joined into as follows.

**Para 3.6.3 Shared access is not permitted for Transition Roads.** The access onto Putson Lane (and down to the Halberton Road) will become a 'shared access road'. Because of conflict between pedestrians and vehicles (especially the larger vehicle)



pedestrians are very likely to cross onto the land owned by the Golf Club for safety. This means that private land will be trespassed and the result could be fencing adjacent to the highway exacerbating the issue of safety. Footpaths need to be provided for what will become a busy road.

**Para 2.4.0 Shared surface roads are not acceptable outside of new developments.** This would be applicable from the new access proposed adjacent to the Golf Club and onto Putson Lane. Putson Lane, by the very nature of its width and historic use is a country lane and could be argued is already 'shared access'. However the proposed development brings into fact issues of safety and use that it was not originally designed for (historically) which by its very nature is for little more than agricultural use. By adding up to an additional 200 – 300 additional vehicle movements – and this is questionable as it can easily be exceeded as many occupiers will have 2 cars, (mainly concentrated over 2 periods each day) issues of safety, conflict with passing traffic, access etc., will become of major import.

At the very least the junction with Putson Lane and the Halberton Road should be upgraded to a full 'Transition Road' status or the road made ONLY one way. However this latter comment is unacceptable due to the requirement to service the new development in compliance with the Manual or the existing facilities such as the Golf Club.

**Para 3.2.0 Transition Roads should be 5.5m wide with 10m radii, 125mm kerbs and 2m footways both sides. (See also Table 7.1.2)**

Are the standards accepted by Devon County Highways being incorporated within the developing Masterplan?

**Para 7.2 Junctions and Accesses** – states 'The provision of adequate visibility at junctions is vital for the safety of all road users.

The continued use of the junction with the Fairway will result in an increase of traffic using this road as a 'short cut' to avoid delays due to the restricted width of the road between The Fairway and Halberton Road. The present junction has no 'x' or 'y' distance being completely blind when exiting The Fairway onto Putson Lane and for traffic passing The Fairway entrance. No proposals to improve this junction are proposed.

Likewise the proposed junction of Putson Lane and Halberton Road needs addressing (see below)

**Figure 7.2.1 Details visibility Splays.** This provides the basic dimensions required for different road types. The junction improvements as proposed between the Putson Lane

and the Halberton Road do not comply. At present an 'x' dimension is shown as 2.4m when it should be 4.5m and the 'y' dimension is shown as 43m when it should be 75m. Therefore the Masterplan must clearly define the standards to which any new development has to meet when joining to the existing road network.

### **UPLOWMAN ROAD**

Analysis of the Manual & guide has highlighted several issues that need consideration with regard to the proposals relating to the new access from Blundell's Road along Uplowman Road to the new development.

**Para 2.3.8 Developments over 300 houses to be provided with 'loop roads'**. This is consistent with the proposed development and why an access is required onto Uplowman Road. However this brings into context the need to address the 'access roads' being joined into as follows.

**Para 3.6.3 Shared access is not permitted for Transition Roads**. The access onto Uplowman Road (leading to Blundell's Road) will become a 'shared access road'. Because of conflict between pedestrians and vehicles (especially the larger vehicle) pedestrians are very likely to have to cross onto the land owned by adjoining owners (into entrances and layby's) for safety. There is insufficient width to achieve the full standard as set out in the relevant documentation.

**Para 2.4.0 Shared surface roads are not acceptable outside of new developments**. This would be applicable for the new access proposed onto Uplowman Road. Uplowman Road, by the very nature of its width and historic use is a country lane and could be argued is already 'shared access'. However the proposed development brings into fact issues of safety and use that it was not originally designed for (historically) which by its very nature is for little more than agricultural use. By adding up to an additional 200 – 300 additional vehicle movements, and this is arguably low as many occupiers are now 2 car families, (mainly concentrated over 2 periods each day) issues of safety, conflict with passing traffic, access etc., will become of major import. At the very least the link between the new development and Blundell's Road should be upgraded to a full 'Transition Road' status with full footpaths.

**Para 3.2.0 Transition Roads should be 5.5m wide with 10m radii, 125mm kerbs and 2m footways both sides. (See also Table 7.1.2)**

Analysis of the applicants own survey shows that Uplowman Road cannot be upgraded to full Transition Road Status without considerable impact on historic hedge banks and adjoining owners. Table 7.1.2 clearly sets out the requirements for road design to service such developments. The maximum width of the existing road is 6.33m according to the Waddeton survey reducing in places to 4.80m. The Manual for Streets clearly requires

for a development of this size a carriage width of 5.5m with 2m footways each side making a total width of 9.5m. Whilst this could be arguably reduced nominally, under no circumstances could it be reduced to less than 8.1m.

### **General - Parking**

Finally, the Masterplan must include reference to Local Design Guides not only for the design and layout of estates but also relating to the provision of parking facilities. The Manual for Estates refers to general parking design but the Masterplan design should also make reference to and take note of the 'Supplementary Design Guide for garages' adopted by MDDC 2013. Recently failure to follow the requires listed in the Manual by developers and not supported by MDDC planning has seen many new roads 'clogged' by on street parking because the off street parking and garaging provided does not comply and occupiers cannot utilise garages and in some cases parking spaces due to their restricted width and length.

**I therefore wish to register an objection for the reason that the proposed road design and especially the 'Transition Road Proposals' do not accord with the Manual for Streets, The DCC Design Guide nor does the proposal take account of the historic nature of the existing roads and access to adjoining properties. The references within the Masterplan should be amended to show that the current 'design' guides for streets and highways will be incorporated within it.**

Yours faithfully

  
David Randell RIBA  
Chartered Architect



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Ack

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Dear Sir

**TIVERTON EASTERN URBAN EXTENSION – DRAFT MASTERPLAN  
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**I wish to register my concerns regarding the Masterplan proposals for Blundell's Road as set out in Section F.**

The proposals have ignored the fact that without the A361 link being fully in place, traffic will naturally following the existing route to the town along Blundell's Road. Traffic calming must start earlier and preferably at the junction with Blundell's Road and the new link road to the A361. Any other proposal will be totally unsatisfactory.

The Masterplan proposals suggest that a shared access with a 20mph speed limit and landscaping proposals will mitigate the increased use. This is seriously questioned as a practical proposition. In normal circumstances no road would be allowed to pass through a school campus. It is purely the historical location that has resulted in the status quo. However to make the situation worse is seriously questioned.

The impact on Blundell's School would be serious as a shared access with reduced controls cannot work efficiently. The present traffic/pedestrian lights only suffice to control both pedestrian and traffic best during off peak periods. During 'rush hour' and large pupil crossings traffic is significantly slowed causing traffic delays or significant pupil congregations waiting to cross.

The Masterplan proposal will result in a more haphazard system (the proposal works on paper but not in practice) with the heightened risk of pedestrian accidents. A pupil accident would be disastrous for the school. Already it has been reported that there are concerns expressed by parents regarding the present situation with traffic passing through

the campus. It is further reported that this situation has already dissuaded some parents from sending their children to the school.

Blundell's school has an international reputation. It has day and boarding children from all over the world. As such it is a major benefit to the local economy, to the local community and local businesses bringing substantial income and benefit all round. Unless this is taken on board then the decline of the school could be the consequence and a substantial loss to the town.

Likewise the Air Quality with the increase of traffic (and slowed traffic can add greatly to pollution) needs to be considered. A few trees as suggested will do little to improve air quality. Recent reports suggest that pollution from vehicle exhausts has a long term effect on growing bodies and minds. Also the smaller particles given off by diesel vehicles have been reported this month to be even more harmful and able to enter the blood stream directly from the lungs. Slowing the traffic of which there would be more will result in a significant lowering of 'air quality' through Blundell's School which could have drastic consequences such as a substantial reduction in pupils using the school.

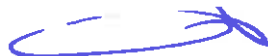
The Masterplan must therefore be expanded to take on board these concerns. Even to the extent of re-evaluating the potential of a northern route around Blundell's School to Heathcoat Way (through the old Poultry Packers site and Janes's scrap yard). The objections of the Environment Agency over the raising of the flood plain can be countered by making more storage available by excavation.

It has been mooted that the cost of a Northern route around the school is too high but so is the cost to health not to do something to relieve the situation through Blundell's School and also the adjoining housing at Horsdon where Air Quality is already below acceptable standards.

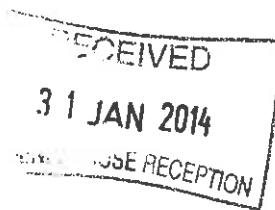
**I am therefore objecting to the Masterplan as it stands regarding the proposals for Blundell's Road and the timing effect that the proposals have for the construction of the A361 link.**

Yours faithfully

David Randell RIBA  
Chartered Architect



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Dear Sir

**TIVERTON EASTERN URBAN EXTENSION – DRAFT MASTERPLAN  
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**I wish to address the issue of Housing quality and size that is not developed in the Masterplan as currently provided.**

It is commonly and nationally understood that the size of housing in Britain is the lowest per sq. Metre when compared with the rest of Europe. For example,

Privately provided housing is between 5 & 10% smaller than public sector standards  
Is 15% smaller than privately provided housing in Ireland  
Is 29% smaller than in Scandinavia  
Is 50% smaller than in Germany

The 1991 'Lifetime Homes' report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation lead to the 1993 Joseph Rowntree '1993 Scheme Development Standards. These proposed a raising of standards with house design but which has not been taken on board by house builders.

In 2008 the Mayor of London undertook a study of flat sizes (and to a lesser extent, house sizes). This found that floor areas were being reduced to the extent that the quality of life for the occupiers was substantially worse than between 1918 and 1939 and since 1949. Whist Parker Morris standards are no longer enforced, they still relate in many parts to the quality of life standards that are not being followed.

During 2013 the Government undertook a number of reviews:-

Housing Standards Review Consultation Document  
Housing Standards Review Technical Standards Document

This followed the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) 'Homewise' campaign which identified that the average 3 bedroom home currently being built by the UK's top

house builders is **around 8% smaller than the basic minimum size** A copy of the press report is attached.

In the latter part of 2013 the House of Lords debated the Future Homes Commission report (see attached) which again raised the question of current living standards and room/house sizes.

The outcome of the reviews is still to come and until the Masterplan needs to address the issues set out in both documents that are detailed and qualified. It should be incumbent if not mandatory that the standard of housing to be provided should meet or exceed the minimum standards set out so far in the consultation documents.

Also, although the 'Code for Sustainable Homes' (CSH) has been largely withdrawn, Mid Devon District Council should embody the best principles set out in the document within the Masterplan such that sustainability is at the forefront of design. It was proposed that Code level 6 (as set out in the CSH) would be mandatory by 2016. This appears to now be extremely unlikely. However with Councils such as North Devon DC requiring new housing to achieve a minimum of Code level 3 (or 4), Mid Devon can set an example by requiring Code level 5 to be achieved.

As part of the design, the Masterplan should encompass the Government's 2007 document 'Manual for Streets' that defines the character of the development layout and the interaction of dwellings as a community and further afield. Long terraces are not recommended and long cul-de-sacs are to be avoided.

Similarly the Masterplan should encompass the Mid Devon 'Supplementary planning policy 'the provision of parking in new development' adopted in 2013. Too often parking is too narrow, garages do not comply and are not used with the result that on-street parking (and the obstruction of traffic especially service and emergency vehicles) becomes a serious problem.

**It is therefore proposed that the Masterplan be amended to incorporate minimum standards to be achieved and that these are to be continually assessed against Government consultation documents and local (higher) standards in contrast to House builder policy to squeeze floor areas to below quality of life standards.**

**Standards should be continually assessed on an annual build basis (not as approved) such that standards set in the first year are continually improved over subsequent years as Policy is developed.**

Yours faithfully

David Randell RIBA  
Chartered Architect



## Shameful shoe box homes

New research reveals how thousands of brand new houses are failing to provide the space families need.

Business leader Sir John Banham to lead major new inquiry into British homes as the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) launches HomeWise campaign.

The average new three bedroom home currently being built by the UK's top house builders is around 8% smaller than the basic recommended minimum size, leaving thousands of people across the country short-changed. This squeeze on size is depriving thousands of families the space needed for children to do homework, adults to work from home, guests to stay and for members of the household to relax together. The findings feature in Case for Space, new research revealed today (14 September) by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA).

The RIBA's Case for Space report, based on 80 sites across England, exclusively reveals:

- The floor area of the average new three bedroom home is only 92% of the recommended minimum size – therefore missing the space equivalent to a single bedroom which could comfortably accommodate a single bed, bedside table, wardrobe, desk and chair. With a floor area of 88m<sup>2</sup>, the average house is 8m<sup>2</sup> short of the recommended size (the benchmark for comparison is the London Plan space standards for a 2 storey, 3 bedroom home big enough for 5 people).
- The most common new three bedroom home is smaller still at 74m<sup>2</sup>. At only 77% of the recommended size it is missing 22m<sup>2</sup> and therefore the space equivalent to two double bedrooms and all their contents.
- The average single storey one bedroom home is 46m<sup>2</sup>, which is 93% (4m<sup>2</sup> short) of the recommended minimum size – missing out on space equivalent to a single bed, a bedside table and a dressing table with a stool.

The RIBA Case for Space report exposes the lack of transparency existing around the size of UK homes – details are simply not recorded or publicly available. Home buyers repeatedly fail to get detailed information about properties for sale or rent, and are rarely given the overall floor area; consumers can therefore be left confused about the actual amount of space they are purchasing.

The figures exposing the lack of choice and information available to home buyers, have been released today at the launch of a new national housing campaign and inquiry led by the RIBA.

The Future Homes Commission, a national inquiry chaired by business leader Sir John Banham will engage with people in their front rooms, town centres and online, to build a comprehensive picture about what people want and need from their homes.



The RIBA's HomeWise campaign calls for:

- Consumers to be HomeWise and demand better information from estate agents and house builders so they can choose the most ideal layout, size and design of their new home.
- House builders, providers and estate agents to include the floor area of properties in their marketing material and indicative floor plans with furniture as well as the number of bedrooms.
- Energy performance certificates - including floor area - to be provided up-front rather than only after contracts have been signed, which is too frequently the case.
- The Government to work with the house building industry to produce an industry-wide voluntary agreement to ensure house builders publish data about the size and quality of new homes.

The [HomeWise website](http://www.behomewise.co.uk) also launched today at [www.behomewise.co.uk](http://www.behomewise.co.uk) features a series of online resources to help people to ask the right questions when choosing a home. The resources include The Nest Test – an easy-to-use online calculator that helps home seekers to find out what the floor area of their home should be according to the recommended standards:

Speaking today, Harry Rich, RIBA Chief Executive said:

'Our homes should be places that enhance our lives and well-being. However, as our new research confirms, thousands of cramped houses - shameful shoe box homes - are being churned out all over the country, depriving households of the space they need to live comfortably and cohesively.

At a time when the Government, house building industry, economists and house buyers and renters are concerned about whether we are building enough new homes in the UK, it might seem odd to suggest that the focus should move to thinking about the quality of those homes. And yet this is the very time to do so. In a rush to build quickly and cheaply we risk storing up unnecessary problems for the future. There does not need to be any contradiction between building or refurbishing enough homes and making sure that they are of the highest quality.

It seems clear that people have too little influence on the design, quality and size of homes available to them. The RIBA's HomeWise Campaign will engage households, architects, builders and policy-makers in a conversation about how to deliver homes to meet or exceed the real needs of our population in the 21st century. This report is the beginning of the conversation. We hope to ask the right questions and we look forward to working in partnership with consumers, house builders, government and many others as we seek the answers.'

Sir John Banham, Chair of the Future Homes Commission said:

'We want to find out from people what they think about their homes and communities where new homes are being built as well as garner intelligence and research from industry about the housing market before making some recommendations about what might happen next.

It seems clear to me from my recent work in Cornwall, from industry and when looking at local government that there are some fundamental issues that need to be addressed to ensure we have

more of the right kind of affordable homes in villages, towns and cities right across Britain. I am convinced that there is no necessary conflict between addressing the current housing crisis effectively and protecting the countryside. But new thinking and financing approaches will be needed, which I hope and expect the Future Homes Commission will be able to provide.'

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, said:

'In London we want to see new developments that enrich the capital's architectural vernacular and that will be admired and cherished for decades to come. This is why, despite challenging economic times, we have successfully introduced clear guidance to improve the design standards of new developments to ensure that homes have the space people need to lead happy, fulfilling lives. It is vital that we build more homes to boost the economy, but as RIBA's campaign rightly points out, we must not compromise on quality and design to do so.'

#### House of Lords debates the Future Homes Commission report



Following a successful report launch, the House of Lords held an hour-long debate on the Future Homes Commission's recently released report - 'Building the Homes and Communities Britain Needs'. The debate was secured by the Labour peer Baroness Whitaker, following briefing from the RIBA.

All 9 of the participants in the debate - including both the Shadow Communities Minister and the Communities Minister were generous in their praise for the work of the Commission and the RIBA.

And there was particular agreement amongst speakers on the need to improve the standards of design in new homes and a call for more robust housing standards to ensure that new homes meet the needs and aspirations of consumers