



HM Government

# World class places

## Action plan



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# Foreword



Ben Bradshaw MP



Ian Austin MP

Quality of place matters. It matters to us as Government, our partners who are vital to delivering it and to the communities it affects. That is why we published *World Class Places* in May this year.

Six months on, the challenges of the recession remain, but the agenda is still very clear – we must not sacrifice quality. To do so would be a false economy as all you end up with is places that attract crime, deter investment and harm the environment. Places that people don't like, or where they don't feel safe, soon become underused and under-loved, and end up crying out for re-development. Ultimately this leads to more costs to put these places right, which we simply cannot afford to do.

We know it is possible to achieve good design or quality places, even in these challenging times, as evidenced by the high quality schemes that have been celebrated and recognised with awards over the last few months. That success however depends on strong vision and leadership. Also vital is investment of thought, time and expertise at the design stage through good partnership working between the local authority, developer, urban designer, architects and the community so that ultimately we create places that work for everybody.

This action plan cements the Government's commitment to working with and supporting the industry to encourage this approach to delivering quality places. It builds on *World Class Places* by showing how Government will support local authorities, regional bodies, developers and other partners to strengthen local leadership on quality of place, raise the skills and capacity needed to deliver and help put the public at the centre of place making.

A collaborative effort is what is needed to achieve all of this. This means us as Government and you, our partners, working together to deliver high quality places that stay well loved and well used for generations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B Bradshaw'.

**Ben Bradshaw MP**  
Secretary of State for Culture,  
Media and Sport

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ian Austin'.

**Ian Austin MP**  
Parliamentary Under Secretary  
of State for Communities and  
Local Government

# Introduction

**This action plan builds on *World Class Places*, setting out clear next steps on how the Government intends to work with its partners in the industry to deliver the ambitions set out in the strategy**

*World Class Places*, published on 12 May 2009, set out the Government's strategy for improving the quality of the built environment, recognising the economic, social and environmental benefits that this can bring.

This action plan builds on *World Class Places*, setting out clear next steps on how the Government intends to work with its partners in the industry to deliver the ambitions set out in the strategy. It recognises that a far greater impact can be made if all players collaborate closely, sharing skills, expertise and resources to deliver as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Key highlights include:

- Strengthening the role of Ministerial Design Champions so that quality of place is embedded as a priority across the whole of Government

- Ensuring that policy and standards on quality are consistent and easy to understand through revising and refreshing existing planning policy on green space and heritage, and developing new quality standards for the homes to be delivered by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)

- Assisting local leaders to understand and prioritise quality of place through a package of training programmes and through the HCA's 'Single Conversation' in the regions

- Helping local authorities set clear quality of place ambitions in local development frameworks through a comprehensive training programme

- Making it easier for local authorities to measure and assess quality of place in their area by taking a fresh look at how quality of place can best be reflected in the National Indicator set

- Supporting local authorities to deliver quality of place by using the 'Total Place' initiative to test ways in which efficiencies can be made to meet their full range of objectives, including delivering quality of place, within their existing resources

- Empowering people to have greater influence over the quality of local areas by enabling community groups to take ownership of assets such as parks and open spaces through, for example, the 'Advancing Assets' and 'Community Builders' programmes

- Making it easier for the private sector to justify investment in quality by identifying its clear economic benefits and learning from best practice examples of high quality schemes.

We believe that, taken together, the steps set out in this action plan will help to make a real difference to the quality of the places we all live in and we hope that you, our partners, will work with us to make this ambition a reality.

# Action plan for delivery

## Strategic objective 1

Strengthen leadership on quality of place at the national and regional level

### 1.1

#### **Bolstering the role of ministerial design champions**

Lead  
DCMS/CABE

#### **Rationale**

Improving quality of place is a cross-government issue and it is important that this is recognised at the highest level in all relevant organisations. So the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), with CABE, will lead on strengthening the role of Ministerial Design Champions. The aim will be that every key Department will have a designated Ministerial Design Champion, with the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport acting as the cabinet-level cross-government design champion. Their role will include both supporting and challenging their own departments and agencies to be good clients and promoting publicly the benefits of good design and quality of place. The responsibilities of Ministerial Design Champions will be recognised in their wider ministerial remit and they will have the resources and support from within their departments that they need to play their role effectively and meet their commitments. CABE will support Ministerial Design Champions, and their officials, through training, case study visits and opportunities to showcase their departments' work.

#### **Next steps to deliver action**

To strengthen leadership and prioritise action on quality of place within central Government, Government will bolster the role of Ministerial Design Champions by:

Agreeing with Ministerial Design Champions their departmental remit in delivering quality of place and approach towards addressing opportunities and challenges. This will be led by DCMS's Secretary of State as Government Design Champion

Ensuring Ministerial Design Champions are provided with support to enable them to provide strategic direction on quality of place and creating opportunities for sharing best practice and showcasing their departments' work.

From Autumn 2009

### 1.2

#### **Embedding quality of place objectives and targets in departmental strategic objectives**

Lead  
Government and Ministerial Design Champions

#### **Rationale**

While all departments have a role to play in improving quality of place, some departments have an especially important contribution to make, either because they have lead place-shaping responsibilities (for example, CLG and DCMS) or because their activity can have a major influence on quality of place – generally through their ownership, control or influence over public buildings and land. Departmental strategic objectives (DSOs) provide a means of ensuring that these departments recognise quality of place as a major responsibility and make a positive contribution to it. The Government will consider whether and how DSOs can be revised to include explicit design and broader quality of place objectives at the next suitable opportunity.

#### **Next steps to deliver action**

To ensure that quality of place is a priority across Government, Ministerial Design Champions will work together to embed quality of place objectives into their Departmental performance targets. They will:

Identify ways in which policy priorities that have the potential to improve design and quality of place can be reflected in future revised DSOs

Roll out revised DSOs across Whitehall Departments where they are deemed to be appropriate and realistic.

From Autumn 2009

### 1.3

#### **Ensuring Regional Development Agencies work to improve quality of place**

Lead  
CLG and BIS

#### **Rationale**

Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) play a very important role in shaping quality of place. Legislation, currently before Parliament includes provision to give RDAs and Local Authority Leaders' Boards a duty to produce the new single regional strategies and in doing so to have regard to matters of design and sustainability. Should these provisions become law, the Government will ensure that the guidance for RDAs and Leaders' Boards on producing regional strategies will draw attention to the need to have regard to this duty. The guidance will build on current best practice within the RDAs and will encourage them to develop an appropriate performance management regime which reflects the importance of quality of place.

#### **Next steps to deliver action**

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act, which received Royal Assent on 12 November 2009, sets out a statutory duty for RDAs and Leaders' Boards to have regard to design and sustainability in producing new regional strategies. In order to ensure that leadership on quality of place is secured at a regional level, the Government will:

Consider the best way to help RDAs and Leaders' Boards comply with this duty. This will include clarifying the broad principles for RDAs and Leaders' Boards to follow to comply with the duties of the Bill (including on design and sustainability) and proactive engagement on how to fulfil the requirements

Ensure that the HCA, through its 'Single Conversation' with local authorities, works with RDAs to promote high quality places including public realm. This will be done in the context of promoting new economic opportunities through investment as set out in the Government's Regeneration Framework.

From Autumn 2009

#### **Next steps to deliver action**

The Government will publish its cross-departmental heritage statement and encourage stakeholders to align their business objectives with this vision through widespread promotion, and by working with English Heritage to identify and share best practice.

Publication in Winter 2009/10

### 1.4

#### **Publishing a statement of the Government's vision for the historic environment in England**

Lead  
DCMS

#### **Rationale**

The Government will publish a statement which sets out the guiding principles of its engagement with the historic environment in England. This statement will outline the many contributions that heritage can make to broader government objectives and confirm our commitment to protecting and promoting the historic environment through current and future policy-making. It will also set out the roles of our partners.

## Strategic objective 2

### Encourage local civic leaders and local government to prioritise quality of place

#### 2.1

##### Developing better ways of assessing quality of place

Lead  
CLG

#### Rationale

Relations between central and local government have changed radically in recent years. Reducing the number of performance indicators set by central government, from around 1,200 to the current 188, demonstrated Government's commitment to its new relationship with local government.

The set of 188 National Indicators covers the national priority outcomes which local authorities will be responsible for delivering, either alone or in partnership with other public service providers. Targets in Local Area Agreements can only be set against indicators within the National Indicator Set. Good quality of place has an important role in helping local government achieve many of these indicators. There are current National Indicators on housing, planning, transport and the environment that are directly related to aspects of quality of place, alongside citizen perception based indicators that measure attitudes towards the areas in which people live. However, collectively these do not yet reflect all the aspects of quality of place as defined in this strategy.

The Government will work with local government and other bodies including the HCA, CABE and English Heritage to develop options for measuring quality of place as well as options for a new indicator/suite of indicators for inclusion in the National Indicator Set for future spending rounds. This will be done alongside work that is currently underway to develop a more outcome-focused, holistic way of measuring performance of the planning system and as part of the wider Government review of the National Indicator Set.

#### Next steps to deliver action

To make it easier for local authorities and leaders to prioritise quality of place, the Government will explore ways to assess it more effectively and consider how quality of place can be better reflected in the current National Indicator set, including:

- Identifying ways of amending existing indicators to better reflect quality of place objectives

- Considering whether some existing indicators could be dropped and streamlined into a single, more strategic indicator

- Reviewing existing metrics that aim to measure quality of place and, if necessary, developing a clearer, more robust metric that is easier to use and is more effective.

Spring/Summer 2010



## 2.2

### **Ensuring that quality of place is reflected in the Comprehensive Area Assessment**

Lead  
[CLG](#)

#### **Rationale**

The new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) for local authorities and their partners will provide a robust independent assessment by the local public service inspectorates of how well local priorities are being delivered. It will include an assessment of performance and prospects for improvement in local areas against Local Area Agreement targets and the wider set of national indicators. CAA will consist of an area assessment that looks at how well local public services are delivering better results for local people and how likely they are to improve in future, and organisational assessments of individual public bodies. The inspectorates' recently published guidance advises those carrying out assessments to consider 'whether an area is a good and desirable place to live, work or visit'. The Government will ensure that the inspectorates understand how quality of place is reflected in the National Indicator Set as it develops.

#### **Next steps to deliver action**

Once any measures have been taken to include quality of place objectives in the indicator set, the Government will:

Explore options with the Local Government Association and the Audit Commission for incorporating quality of place into Comprehensive Area Assessments to ensure that a robust assessment can be carried out

Ensure that any change in indicators to reflect quality of place is incorporated into guidance for inspectorates which carry out the CAA and that the inspectorates understand the changes.

[From Summer 2010](#)

## 2.3

### Working with local authorities to achieve high quality development

Lead  
CLG

#### Rationale

Government departments have an interest in supporting local government in promoting quality of place. Government will explore with local authorities and other partners how Government investment in local areas is best used to help drive up standards of development and support local authorities to improve quality of place in a cost-effective way.

#### Next steps to deliver action

The Government and its partners will explore with local authorities how they can deliver quality places whilst still meeting other local needs of their area by prioritising the existing resources available to them. This will include:

The 'Total Place' programme, launched in April 2009, which aims to identify how local public agencies, including local authorities, can work together to deliver front-line services using resources more efficiently. The programme is at an early stage and will be tested in 13 pilot areas. The Government will work with the HCA and partners, including CABI and English Heritage, to use the pilot in Durham to test how regeneration can create quality places in a cost-effective and efficient way

#### [Initial findings Spring 2010](#)

The HCA's 'Single Conversation' with local authorities, through which the best way to invest in places to meet local needs and create good quality places will be identified. This will draw on support and advice from relevant partners including CABI and English Heritage

#### [From Autumn 2009](#)

English Heritage's work with local authorities to demonstrate how local areas can be improved by using existing resources and building on the best of what is already there in a sensitive way. Specifically, this will involve publication and widespread promotion of its Historic Environment Characterisation tool and guidance document 'Constructive Conservation: Conservation Areas'.

#### [Summer 2010](#)

## 2.4

### **Improving support and training on quality of place for civic leaders**

Lead  
CLG

#### **Rationale**

To complement the diversity of skills, knowledge and experience that civic leaders bring to their role, it is vital that they are properly supported in learning about quality of place, its importance, and how it can be achieved. There is already a good range of training and support on offer, and many local authorities have appointed Design and/or Heritage champions. Government will ask the LGA to work with other bodies, including the HCA, CABE and English Heritage, to ensure that the offer for civic leaders is well coordinated, relevant, draws on a broad range of disciplines including planning, design, green skills and conservation, and is being consistently taken up.

#### **Next steps to deliver action**

The Government will ensure that civic leaders get the maximum support they need to be able to prioritise quality of place within their local strategies and frameworks and to deliver it effectively. It will be working with its partners, including the HCA Academy, LGA, English Heritage, IDeA and CABE on a comprehensive package of cross-sector leaders' programmes, focussing on delivering outcomes in localities, including quality places. This will include:

Ensuring that the current training offer for leaders reflects how they can and should prioritise quality of place in delivering outcomes for their areas, particularly through the decisions on Local Development Framework (LDF) policies and planning applications

Developing a 'leadership of place' programme that will explore how leaders can work together effectively and be best supported to deliver quality of place objectives as part of local outcomes.

**From Autumn 2009**

## 2.5

### **Establishing an award scheme for high quality places**

Lead  
CLG

#### **Rationale**

A number of award or accreditation schemes already exist, including the Blue Flag scheme for beaches and the Green Flag scheme for parks and open spaces. These have been shown to be very effective in encouraging investment in raising the quality of local environments. Government will explore with LGA and other bodies options for creating a similar scheme for built localities, linked to other relevant award schemes such as the new award and knowledge transfer scheme being developed jointly by the Government and the LGA to replace the Beacons Scheme.

#### **Next steps to deliver action**

An awards scheme that recognises and rewards leaders' role in delivering high quality places has the potential to help motivate them to prioritise quality places.

The Government will explore ways in which the scope of existing awards schemes could be streamlined or widened to reflect this. This will include looking at ways of linking a quality of place theme to existing award schemes such as the new Local Innovation Awards scheme, the HCA Academy Awards and the Prime Minister's Better Public Building Awards.

**By Spring 2010**

It will also explore the scope, in future, to base an award on any new quality of place indicators that are developed.

**From Spring/Summer 2010**

## Strategic objective 3

Ensure relevant government policy, guidance and standards consistently promote quality of place and are user-friendly

### 3.1

#### Developing new planning policy on green space and green infrastructure

Lead  
CLG/DEFRA

#### Rationale

Existing planning guidance emphasises the important contribution that healthy functioning ecosystems make to a better quality of life and to people's sense of well-being (PPS9), and the vital functions that urban green spaces perform as areas for nature conservation and biodiversity and by acting as 'green lungs' (PPG17). Planning guidance also stresses the important role of urban green spaces, sports and recreational facilities in promoting healthy living, and in improving people's sense of well-being in the place they live (PPG17).

While this guidance remains valid, there is now a better understanding of the important role that green 'spaces' or 'infrastructure' will also need to play in response to climate change – including urban cooling and sustainable urban drainage. CLG will therefore work with other departments to revise and consolidate this guidance to provide a clearer message to local authorities about the vital and multifunctional roles of green infrastructure and what is expected of them in its provision.

#### Next steps to deliver action

It is important to ensure that future Government policy reflects the key role that high quality open space, green infrastructure and sports and recreation facilities can play in addressing climate change, delivering safe and attractive places in which to live and supporting the promotion of health and well-being. To achieve this, the Government will be:

Publishing new planning policy which will bring together the key messages from PPS7, PPS9 and PPG17. A draft planning policy statement will be published shortly for consultation

#### Consultation in Autumn 2009

Widely promoting and disseminating this new policy across the sector to ensure proactive take up.

#### Publication of new planning policy statement in Summer 2010

### 3.2

#### Developing new planning policy on the historic environment

Lead  
CLG/DCMS

#### Rationale

Existing planning policy guidance already lays out the need for planning authorities to ensure that the historic environment is conserved and, where appropriate, enhanced (PPG15 and PPG16). It has little to say, however, about the benefits of viewing heritage as an asset that can attract investment, encourage regeneration or promote sustainability. CLG is therefore working with DCMS and English Heritage to develop a new planning policy statement which revises and refines existing planning policy. This will emphasise the positive contribution of heritage assets to local character and sense of place and the importance, wherever possible, of keeping them in viable uses that are consistent with their conservation.

#### Next steps to deliver action

The Government has published and publicly consulted on a draft planning policy statement on the historic environment. This envisages a proportionate response to change, guiding planners to focus on how heritage can contribute to creating quality places. Once the new policy is introduced the Government will be promoting and disseminating it widely across the sector to ensure proactive take up.

#### Publication of new planning policy statement in Spring/Summer 2010

### 3.3

#### **Extending the *Manual for Streets***

Lead  
DfT

#### **Rationale**

The *Manual for Streets*, guidance on the design of lightly trafficked residential streets, put place-making on the agenda of those responsible for designing new residential streets. *Streets for All* and *Traffic Management and Streetscape*, published by English Heritage and CABE, and the Department for Transport respectively, showed how to improve existing local streetscapes. Further guidance is needed, however, on the design of the full range of streets and roads, including high streets and town and city centres, with the aim of improving standards of all highway design, and ensuring that our streets and roads are attractive, encourage cycling, walking and social interaction and serve all social groups. The Department for Transport will work with others including CLG, CABE, English Heritage and the Institution of Highways and Transportation to develop further guidance extending the principles in the *Manual* to other streets.

#### **Next steps to deliver action**

To ensure that quality of place principles are reflected in the planning of all highways design, the Government is working with the Institution of Highways and Transportation (IHT) to:

Produce guidance extending the principles in *Manual for Streets* to other streets. A draft of this guidance will be peer reviewed by key stakeholders prior to publication

Promote and disseminate this new guidance widely to ensure it is effectively used and its messages understood.

**Guidance to be published in Autumn 2010**

### 3.4

#### **Developing an integrated set of standards for homes and neighbourhoods**

Lead  
HCA

#### **Rationale**

The creation of the HCA, bringing together funding for social housing and urban regeneration, provides a good opportunity to strengthen and integrate guidance and standards in designing homes and neighbourhoods. The Government will ask the HCA to develop and promote a strengthened and integrated set of standards, incorporating and/or drawing on existing design principles, guidance and standards, including Building for Life, Secured by Design, Lifetime Homes and Neighbourhoods, CABE's *Principles of Inclusive Design* and the *Manual for Streets*. The new standards will cover not only the design of buildings but the wider public realm, with a particular emphasis on ensuring developments take an inclusive approach to accommodating the needs of all social groups. The HCA will also work with other government bodies to develop options for wider adoption of these standards as they become more firmly established.

#### **Next steps to deliver action**

The Government is working closely with the HCA to embed quality of place objectives into its Design and Sustainability Strategy and performance management framework. This will include:

Developing new harmonised quality standards, drawing on advice from partners including CABE and English Heritage, firstly for affordable housing to be introduced from 2011, and then over the rest of its programmes on a phased basis

Providing a user-friendly and consistent framework within which to deliver quality places. This will include publishing guidance to partners and stakeholders on how the standards should be applied in practice.

The Government will continue to encourage take up, through promotion and awareness raising, of existing relevant standards including CABE's Building for Life tool that can help local authorities, developers and others improve the quality of homes and neighbourhoods.

**Consultation on standards in early 2010**

## Strategic objective 4

### Put the public and community at the centre of place-shaping

#### 4.1

##### Encouraging public involvement in shaping the vision for their area and the design of individual schemes

Lead  
CLG

##### Rationale

As announced in the *Communities in Control* White Paper, the Government will make funds available to support local authorities and third sector organisations in involving communities in shaping the vision for their local areas and individual developments. The Government will continue to work with relevant organisations such as LGA, Planning Aid, the Prince's Foundation and CABI to promote innovative techniques for engaging the public and wider communities in influencing development in their local area. English Heritage will also consult widely over the coming year to establish the kinds of historic places people think it is most important to celebrate and protect through statutory designation.

##### Next steps to deliver action

The Government is supporting programmes that will strengthen citizens' and communities' influence over local decision-making which affects the quality of the place in which they live. This includes:

Working with the Network of Empowering Authorities and Regional Empowerment Partnerships to ensure that community groups have greater opportunities to shape the vision of their local communities to create places in which they want to live

Supporting local authorities in meeting the new 'Duty to Involve' which was introduced in April 2009 as part of the Local Government White Paper. This new duty encourages local authorities to establish practices, mechanisms and tools to engage local people in, amongst other things, agreeing priorities and influencing the quality of their localities

Supporting greater public influence in shaping the vision for local places, including their heritage, through use of the Government's £1.5m planning empowerment fund to support community-led planning and English Heritage's Strategic Designation programme to protect heritage assets.

From Autumn 2009

#### 4.2

##### Ensuring the citizens and service users are engaged in the design and development of public buildings

Lead  
DCMS/CABI

##### Rationale

The Building Schools for the Future programme has been very successful at engaging and involving its key users, including schoolchildren and schools staff, in early discussions about the design of new school buildings and facilities. Consequently, the new facilities have a range of innovative features. There are opportunities to promote this approach within other government-led building programmes. The Government will therefore consider how best to encourage this, for example by ensuring that an element of funding within capital programmes is reserved to enable the public and service users to be involved in the early design of public buildings.

##### Next steps to deliver action

To ensure greater engagement in the design and development of public buildings the Government will set up a working group of Departments involved in capital procurement and other relevant partners such as CABI, English Heritage and Architecture and Built Environment Centres (ABECs), to:

Develop and test appropriate and proportionate methods for encouraging wider public engagement in the design and development of public buildings

If proved effective, the Government will roll these methods out more widely to apply to development of all public buildings.

Spring 2010

### 4.3

#### **Encouraging community involvement in ownership and managing the upkeep of the public realm and community facilities**

Lead  
CLG

#### **Rationale**

The *Communities in Control* White Paper set out the Government's commitment to working towards the vision that 'in 2020, in every locality, a proportion of public assets will be in the ownership or management of sustainable and energetic community organisations'. As part of its drive to realise this vision, the Government will continue to promote (through the Advancing Assets for Communities and Community Builders programmes) community ownership and management of public realm and community facilities. The Government will also explore opportunities for building skills within communities so that they can take on these responsibilities with confidence. For example, we will promote the use of the £20m transformation fund to support the development of innovation in adult learning as set out in *The Learning Revolution* White Paper and by continuing to invest, through English Heritage, in developing the capacity of local groups to get involved in, and campaign for, improvements to their local heritage.

#### **Next steps to deliver action**

The Government will work with CABE, English Heritage and its partners to encourage communities to have greater influence over the quality of places through:

Enabling community groups to take ownership of assets that contribute to the quality of places through the 'Advancing Assets for Communities' Programme. This programme will look to ensure that the further 30 demonstration areas selected for Advancing Assets support in 2010/11 will enable greater community involvement in the management, design and upkeep of buildings and public space. An 'Asset Transfer Unit' has been set up to offer guidance, training and support to community groups to enable them to own and manage assets successfully

#### **From Spring 2010**

Supporting successful bidders for the Community Builders Fund to develop well designed and maintained buildings by providing funding and support to enable them to access relevant professional expertise. The investment from the Community Builders Fund has the potential to make a significant contribution to delivering quality of place objectives, for example, through refurbishing buildings and enhancing community facilities

Encouraging local authorities, through widespread promotion and guidance, to work with and support community groups in considering how to develop the skills that they need to get involved in community asset management and maintenance

Supporting community groups to improve and manage public spaces in a way that meets the needs of the whole community. This includes promoting the use of CABE's Spaceshaper tool along with supporting organisations, such as the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, to develop the skills and capacity of community groups who are interested in setting up community managed projects

Supporting communities through English Heritage's new approach to encouraging a stronger emphasis on public engagement with the local historic environment within its strategies. This will include guidance for local groups and societies to help them engage more constructively in the planning process and achieve greater influence over the way their historic environment is managed.

**From Autumn 2009**

## **4.4**

### **Promoting public engagement in creating new homes and neighbourhoods**

Lead  
HCA

#### **Rationale**

It is important that as Government continues to fund development of new homes and neighbourhoods, the public are engaged in this process. The HCA will issue guidance on community engagement in the development process. Local communities will be consulted on and engaged in all HCA-funded development, in accordance with the approach laid down in the guidance.

#### **Next steps to deliver action**

To promote greater public engagement in the creation of new homes and neighbourhoods, the Government will work with the HCA to ensure effective community engagement in HCA projects and programmes. This includes:

Ensuring that community engagement principles are embedded within all HCA working practices as set out in its published approach to community engagement 'For People and Places'

#### **From Autumn 2009**

Updating the Community Engagement Toolkit, for HCA staff and partners, to include guidance on the most effective ways of involving and engaging local people in regeneration and new development of homes and neighbourhoods.

**Toolkit completed during Summer 2010**



## Strategic objective 5

Ensure all development for which central government is directly responsible is built to high design and sustainability standards and promotes quality of place

### 5.1

**Applying a design threshold to all new public building programmes**

Lead  
CABE

#### Rationale

The Government continues to invest significantly in new capital programmes to deliver, for example, schools, healthcare facilities and transport infrastructure. The Government is committed to ensuring that all the buildings delivered through these programmes are designed and built to the highest standards and improve the quality of life of their users and the local community. The DCSF, Partnerships for Schools and CABE have already worked together to ensure that all developments funded through the Building Schools for the Future capital programme will meet a demanding new minimum design standard or threshold before funding is released. Partnerships for Schools has also introduced rigorous Post Occupancy Evaluation for BSF schools to test user views of their new school environment. The Government will now work towards establishing and then applying a similar design threshold to all public building programmes, securing the best possible value from public expenditure on capital programmes. We will ask CABE to work with departments to develop an effective and proportionate way to set thresholds and measure performance against them.

#### Next steps to deliver action

To ensure public building programmes are designed and built to the highest standards and improve the quality of life of their users and the local community, the Government will work with CABE and other partners to:

Lead a working group of Departments and agencies involved in capital procurement to develop and test the viability of appropriate ways to implement a design threshold across public building programmes and ensure the threshold is achieved.

Approaches developed and tested by Spring 2010

Where viable approaches are found, the Government will consider which public building programmes could effectively have design thresholds applied to them.

From Spring 2010

### 5.2

**The Government will ensure publicly funded homes and neighbourhoods meet high standards of design and construction**

Lead  
HCA

#### Rationale

As action 3.4 lays out, the Government will ask the HCA to develop an integrated set of design quality standards for homes and neighbourhoods. We will also ask the HCA to ensure that the development that it funds meets these standards. Government will also seek to ensure that where it funds the development of new homes and communities through other routes that this development conforms to the new standards.

#### Next steps to deliver action

To ensure that publicly funded homes and neighbourhoods meet the new design quality standards, the Government will:

Work with the HCA to embed quality of place objectives into its Design and Sustainability Strategy and performance management framework

Ask the HCA to make maximum use of CABE and English Heritage's support and advice on schemes that it funds.

From Autumn 2009

### 5.3

#### **Attaching conditions to the disposal of public land to ensure high quality development**

Lead  
CLG

#### **Rationale**

Government departments, local authorities and public agencies dispose of up to £6 billion worth of public land and buildings every year. It is already established policy that where public organisations dispose of public land to a private sector developer, who intends to use it to build homes, the public body disposing of the land should attach conditions to it ensuring that the development respects HCA quality standards. There is an opportunity to extend this policy to public sector land that is to be used for other types of development, beyond housing. The Government will explore the case for requiring public sector agencies to attach quality conditions to the disposal of public sector land for uses beyond housing, taking into account the evidence base, including the costs, benefits and impact.

#### **Next steps to deliver action**

In order to explore the case for requiring public sector agencies to attach quality conditions to the disposal of public sector land for uses beyond housing, the Government will:

Determine how effective existing policy has been in achieving high quality housing development on public sector land

Depending on the findings of this, either strengthen existing policy or explore the case for extending existing policy to cover wider uses on public sector land, including undertaking a robust cost-benefit analysis to determine impact.

From Autumn 2009

### 5.4

#### **Strengthening adherence to the Common Minimum Standards**

Lead  
CABE

#### **Rationale**

The Office for Government Commerce's (OGC) Common Minimum Standards, established by the Government in 2005, lay down mandatory standards for the procurement of buildings and spaces across central government, including departments, executive agencies and the non-departmental public bodies for which they are responsible. These standards are widely recognised as being exemplary, but they are not consistently adhered to. The Government will review how to strengthen adherence to these standards and look at options for extending their reach or promoting similar standards throughout the wider public sector.

#### **Next steps to deliver action**

In order to ensure that the Common Minimum Standards (CMS) deliver in a consistent way the Government, through OGC, and in partnership with CABE will:

Carry out a review to consider how to strengthen adherence to these standards and extend their reach or promote similar standards throughout the wider public sector. This will include considering how the CMS guidance relates to local authorities

As part of this process, update the standards to reflect policy development since their publication in 2005.

From Autumn 2009

## 5.5

### **Updating and strengthening adherence to the Protocol for the Care of the Government Historic Estate**

Lead  
EH

#### **Rationale**

Just as it is important that new centrally funded public buildings are designed and built to the highest standards, so it is vital that centrally funded services continue to invest in their existing historic buildings and wider properties. Central government and its agencies own 1,100 listed buildings in England alone. In addition, Central Government has direct responsibility, as a landowner, for a significant part of our historic and natural environment. The Ministry of Defence, for instance, owns 174,500 hectares of land and over 610 scheduled monuments. The Forestry Commission owns 260,000 hectares and 650 scheduled monuments. In 2009 English Heritage will publish updated guidance for the care of the Government's historic estate, endorsed by DCMS and OGC.

#### **Next steps to deliver action**

Following the recent publication of updated guidance for the care of the Government Historic Estate, English Heritage will work with Government to encourage the widespread adoption of the Protocol.

From Autumn 2009

## 5.6

### **Setting up or expanding public sector enabling teams to support first-time and infrequent clients in capital programmes**

Lead  
CABE

#### **Rationale**

Construction is a complex process and being a good 'client' is essential to getting good results. Clients who don't regularly procure buildings benefit from advice and support from experts. The Government will therefore consider how enabling services can best be made available to support first-time and infrequent clients, for example by ensuring that an element of funding within capital programmes is reserved to fund an enabling team or through enabling support provided through CABE.

#### **Next steps to deliver action**

Government, in partnership with CABE, will develop a Client Support Action Plan that identifies the sort of support that could be beneficial to public sector clients. This will include exploring the feasibility of putting additional enabling services in place and funding to deliver this. It will be achieved through:

- Identifying client requirements across spending departments and agencies (including Lottery distributors)

- Raising awareness about the enabling resources that are already available, particularly CABE's client guides.

From Autumn 2009

## Strategic objective 6

### Encourage higher standards of market-led development

#### 6.1

#### Encourage local authorities to set clear quality of place ambitions in their local planning framework

Lead  
CLG

#### Rationale

It is important that, as local authorities develop their local planning frameworks, they take the opportunity to set clear quality of place ambitions as required by existing policies eg PPS1 (Sustainable Development) and PPS3 (Housing) and relevant forthcoming planning policy. There are existing sources of support for local authorities in doing this – for example, that provided by CABI and the Planning Advisory Service (PAS). The Government will continue to support the provision of these services and facilitate the promotion and sharing of good practice arising from this work.

#### Next steps to deliver action

The Government will work with partners including CABI, English Heritage and PAS to ensure that there is a comprehensive programme of support for local authorities to embed quality of place in the planning system at the local level. This will include:

Adding guidance specifically on place-making and visioning to create quality places to the Government's Plan Making Manual

#### Spring 2010

Tailored workshops to help local authorities understand how design principles can be reflected in a clear spatial vision for the area and ensure that local development frameworks have robust policies within them to deliver quality of place. Lessons learnt from these workshops will be drawn together and widely shared

#### Workshops to continue into 2010

Training programmes for Planning Inspectors to ensure that they carry out robust checks on emerging LDFs to ensure a design ethos is embedded in plans

#### From Autumn 2009

Guidance and characterisation tools for local authorities to help them understand how best to use the historic environment when setting their quality of place ambitions in their local planning framework.

#### Guidance completed in early 2010

## 6.2

### **Encouraging stronger joint working early in the development process**

Lead  
CLG

#### **Rationale**

As identified by the recent Killian Pretty review of the planning application process, pre-application discussions between planning authorities and developers have many advantages – especially for major proposals. They can speed up the planning process, lessen the risk that a scheme will be denied planning permission and help deliver a better quality development.

The Government is already committed to encouraging the wider use of Planning Performance Agreements, and using a simpler approach where appropriate. The Government will ask the HCA's Advisory Team for Large Applications (ATLAS) to work with CABE, English Heritage and other bodies, to ensure that Planning Performance Agreements promote good design and quality of place, alongside other positive outcomes.

#### **Next steps to deliver action**

The Government will be building on the recommendations of the Killian Pretty Review and working with partners such as CABE, English Heritage and ATLAS, on encouraging greater joint consideration of quality of place at an early stage in the development process, by:

Developing and consulting on new proposals for pre-application discussions which will include promoting early dialogue on quality of place, including, for housing schemes, drawing on use of Building for Life guidance and accredited assessors

#### **Autumn 2009**

Testing proposals for improving the take up of Planning Performance Agreements and ensuring that they promote quality of place

#### **Spring 2010**

Supporting English Heritage as it continues to strengthen its engagement in pre-application discussions. This will include promoting and sharing benefits and best practice.

#### **From Autumn 2009**

## 6.3

### **Developing and promoting the business case for investing in achieving quality of place**

Lead  
CLG/DCMS

#### **Rationale**

Many private sector developers already accept the business case for investing in good design and quality of place – as is shown by the quality of their developments. But this is not the case for all developers. The Government will explore with the development industry, CABE, HCA and others, how best to strengthen the business case for investing in quality of place – for example through developing and promoting a series of case studies.

#### **Next steps to deliver action**

To demonstrate the economic benefits that high quality places can bring, Government will work with the HCA, CABE, English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund on:

Research that will aim to demonstrate the links between quality and economic benefits

#### **Spring/Summer 2010**

Research demonstrating the significance of the historic environment to people's sense of place, including exploring both the social and economic benefits of investing in the historic environment.

#### **Autumn 2010**

## Strategic objective 7

### Strengthen quality of place skills, knowledge and capacity

#### 7.1

#### Strengthening advisory support on design quality for local authorities, the wider public sector and developers

Lead  
CLG

#### Rationale

There is already an array of support services available at regional and sub-regional levels to help local authorities, developers and others improve design standards and improve quality of place. These services include regional design review – review of a development scheme by independent design experts – and enabling services: input from expert design and construction advisors into the design of a scheme. These services are currently supported and provided by a number of bodies including Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), CABE and Architecture and Built Environment Centres (ABECs), which also play an important role in engaging the public, including schoolchildren, in place-shaping. However, the full range of services is not available in all regions, and in the light of recent changes to the role of RDAs and the creation of the HCA, there is a need to ensure that good joined-up regional support continues to be available. The Government will work with RDAs, HCA, CABE, English Heritage and other bodies to further develop the business case for regional support, and where it is shown to be cost-effective, to sustain regional support for quality of place.

#### Next steps to deliver action

The Government will be working with CABE, HCA, ABECs and English Heritage to continue to strengthen the level of regional support so that there are the skills, knowledge and capacity to deliver quality of place. This includes:

Renewed support in the regions through the HCA's 'Single Conversation' to advise on and agree priorities and identify better ways of delivering through partnership working

**From Autumn 2009**

Continued support for the English Heritage/CABE Urban Panel which provides expert critical assessment and advice in the regions

**From Autumn 2009**

New guidance on how to operate design review panels at all levels

**Autumn 2009**

Evaluating, with partners, how the current regional offer can continue to be sustained and strengthened.

**From Autumn 2009**

## 7.2

### **Encouraging local authorities to share planning, design, conservation and related expertise**

Lead  
CLG/BIS/CABE

#### **Rationale**

Recognising that not all local authorities are able to develop in-house capacity, not least because not all areas are subject to the same development pressures at the same time, there is a strong case for encouraging and supporting a 'shared service' model of conservation, design and planning expertise. Making the most of the opportunities this could provide becomes more important, as local authority planning and environmental budgets come under pressure. The Government will therefore ask sector-led improvement bodies including the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships (RIEPS) to explore how best to encourage greater pooling of local planning, design and historic environment expertise.

#### **Next steps to deliver action**

The Government will work with its partners, including CABE, English Heritage and the RIEPS, to maximise the value of the current skills, expertise and knowledge on quality of place that exists within local authorities. This will include:

Development of a 'shared services' model to enable local government to make the most efficient use of design expertise within local authorities

#### **Spring 2010**

Building on recent research into local authority staffing levels in order to consider additional new models for the future delivery of local authority historic environment services, potentially including the sharing of certain 'expert' services and joint working to maximise the impact of specialist staff

#### **From Autumn 2009**

Peer review programmes that share expertise and good practice amongst local authorities

#### **From Autumn 2009**

Promoting the more effective use of Historic Environment Records which are an important shared resource

#### **Spring 2010**

## 7.3

### **Ensuring that councillors on planning committees have the skills and support they need**

Lead  
CLG/BIS/CABE

#### **Rationale**

Planning committees, made up of democratically elected local councillors, are a valuable part of our local democracy. Nevertheless, it is important to ensure that committee members have the support and the training they need, so that they can exercise good judgement on design and quality of place matters, particularly in the light of the new requirements to achieve good design and sustainable development that were introduced in the Planning Act 2008. Therefore Government will work with the LGA and other bodies to establish whether the current training and guidance that is available for planning committees sufficiently covers the quality of place aspects of planning and to develop additional support if necessary.

#### **Next steps to deliver action**

The Government will work with CABE, English Heritage, the HCA Academy, PAS and the IDeA to ensure that councillors are fully supported to deliver quality places, including:

Reviewing and, where necessary, refreshing and updating the training offer currently provided to councillors, including Heritage and Design Champions, to reflect the principles of *World Class Places*

#### **From Autumn 2009**

Improving guidance to councillors such as the forthcoming 'Councillors Companion' which will give guidance on how to take good decisions on ensuring quality of place.

#### **Spring 2010**

Quality of place matters. That is why the Government published *World Class Places* in May 2009, setting out a strategy for improving the quality of the built environment, recognising the economic, social and environmental benefits that this can bring. This action plan builds on *World Class Places*, setting out clear next steps on how the Government intends to work with its partners to deliver the ambitions set out in the strategy. It recognises that a far greater impact can be made if all players collaborate closely, sharing skills, expertise and resources to deliver as efficiently and effectively as possible.



**Department for Culture,  
Media and Sport**

2–4 Cockspur Street  
London SW1Y 5DH  
T 020 7211 6200  
[enquiries@culture.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@culture.gov.uk)  
[www.culture.gov.uk](http://www.culture.gov.uk)

**Communities and  
Local Government**

Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU  
T 0303 444 0000  
[contactus@communities.gov.uk](mailto:contactus@communities.gov.uk)  
[www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)