

February 2021

Homes and Place Standard

Our guide to quality housing



Introduction

The Homes and Place Standard marks Sovereign's commitment to building and maintaining good quality homes and better places to live. While we have always striven for high standards in our developments, this new approach will underpin how we invest in our homes and how we build new homes.



Left:
Mark Washer,
Chief Executive

At Sovereign we believe that everyone should live in a home and a place where they feel safe, part of their community and where they can thrive. This Standard promotes affordable homes of all kinds, which enhance wellbeing for people in every stage of life. It will ensure that our homes are built to last, are adaptable, sustainable, and enjoyable to live in.

We are a housebuilder, but we are also a landlord with a lasting stake in the communities we build. We understand our responsibility to future generations, who will inherit the built environment we are investing in today. Our Standard is explicit about the need to build in a way that is sustainable and to build homes that can be sustainably maintained. Our homes will help people move towards zero carbon, reducing energy and water use and save money.

I am proud that Sovereign is leading the way on setting the very highest standards for affordable homes and great places to live. As we make this commitment, I hope that others will follow.

Mark Washer
Chief Executive

Acknowledgments

I am delighted to introduce you to the Sovereign Homes and Place Standard. At Sovereign we are incredibly proud of what we have achieved in putting this new standard together and we are excited about the positive impact it will have as we implement it over the coming years. As you will read, this new approach to how we build and maintain homes has the potential to transform the lives of our customers and to make a positive impact on communities, the environment and the planet.

As you would expect, a project like this depends on input from a lot of people, many of whom gave of their time freely to support the work. The development of the guide was led by Emma Wilson at Sovereign, working with Caroline Dove and Paul Maddock at HTA Design alongside their team of architects with additional advice from experts at the Design Council.

It was always really important that the Homes and Place standard was not imposed on our customers but co-created by them and I want to thank Joyce Ward the Chair of our Resident Board Partnership for taking the time with her fellow representatives to show interest and help shape this work. Thank you as well to the customers who offered feedback directly to us.

The team at Sovereign who worked on this was huge, including people from every part of the business. There are too many to name, but every single one of them should be hugely proud of this project, this document and of the ambition to deliver.

I am confident that in years to come, the Homes and Place standard won't just be sector leading but will be a standard recognised across the sector. The real proof of our vision for more homes and better places will be when this standard is being met in every increasing numbers of homes – homes in all parts of the UK, in every housing association and local authority. That work starts here.

Tom Titherington

Chief Investment & Development Officer



Above:

Tom Titherington
Chief Investment &
Development Officer

Our Homes and Place Standard will be applied to every Sovereign home

It will provide the basis of a brief for architects to describe the sorts of homes we will build, including our approach to infrastructure, energy and carbon reduction. It is also the basis on which we will assess our existing homes, helping us decide where to regenerate or rebuild.

By 2050 all the homes we own and manage will have character, complement the natural and built environment and be carbon neutral.



How we will use the Standard

The Standard is structured under four key areas – Customers; Homes; Place and Sustainable Future. A Design Guide and Assessment Tool accompanies these.

The Design Guide supports the overarching Homes and Place principles with the application of the separate assessment tool used to understand how a development performs against the Standard. This will act as a guide as to where we will retain homes and where we will invest in new homes.

The Standard sets out Sovereign's approach to designing new homes and places. It does not seek to replicate national and local policies or guidance and regulations. Designers and others should carry out their own research to comply with such requirements.

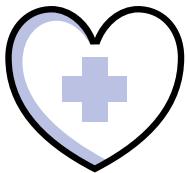


Above:
Carefully designed
communal amenity

Left:
Planting and trees complement
the architectural setting

Customers

Sovereign homes will:



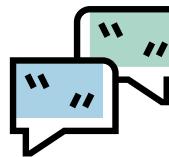
Encourage long-term health and wellbeing

Homes and places where people choose to live and thrive; creating well-integrated, sustainable and sociable communities.



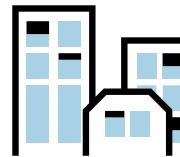
Be safe, secure and inclusive

Customers will be safe and feel secure within their homes and the wider community. People of all ages and ability will be able to play, stay and flourish.



Provide an excellent customer experience

The customer journey of renting or buying, and living in a home from Sovereign will be a great experience.



Foster pride in homes and communities

Places where customers can play a full part in shaping their community.

Customers

Our customers have different needs, so we want places that are diverse, multi-generational and which shape strong communities. They must be affordable and promote energy efficiency and they must be connected to neighbouring communities. Our places will be light and open to green spaces, encouraging healthy living.

Our homes will be accessible for all and digitally connected. When we build new homes or regenerate existing places we will ensure an excellent customer experience and involve local people in the design and development.



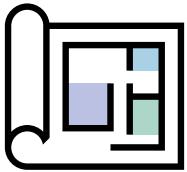
Above:
Safe green spaces

Left:
Shared street for the
whole community



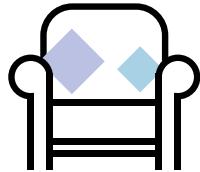
Homes

Sovereign homes will be:



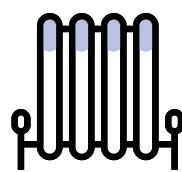
Usable and adaptable

Homes will be designed to be flexible so they can meet the changing needs of households over the long-term.



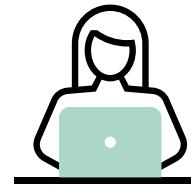
Enjoyable to live in

Homes will be designed to be welcoming, creating a sense of arrival and providing shelter. Consideration will be given to views from the home and noise insulation between homes.



Cost effective

Homes will be designed to keep customer costs, service charges and energy use as low as possible.



Digitally connected

Homes will be future-proofed so that customers can take advantage of new technology.

Homes

We will use quality and sustainable materials, appropriate to the local area. Quality of design will be consistent across all tenures. We will build with a view to adaptability in the future. Low energy demand will be a priority.

The Standard sets out requirements for natural light, ventilation and room size. Homes will have good storage and access to bike stores and recycling. We will also design to minimise the cost of maintenance. We will design-out communal areas that attract high service charges. We will take into account the growing need for homeworking.

Access to technology will be as standard, but we will look to future-proof homes, with access to smart technology to support energy efficiency. We will meet the growing demand for electric car charging points.

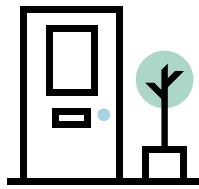


Above:
Distinctive homes
in a landscaped setting

Left:
On street vehicle charging
points can be provided
to meet demand

Place

Sovereign homes will:



Have character and delight

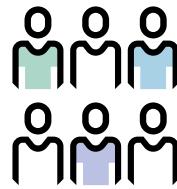
Our homes will be beautiful and complement their local area, enhancing the built and natural environment.

Places will be designed to look and feel great and will provide usable and inviting outside spaces.



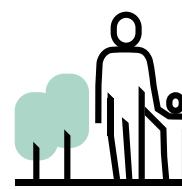
Be well-integrated

Places will connect and integrate with the surrounding area, making it easy for people to get about.



Be inclusive

Places will provide different kinds of homes to reflect local housing need with supporting facilities and services.



Be safe

People will feel safe in their local areas created through a deep sense of belonging and understanding of their community. Places will be designed with safety and security in mind.

Place

New homes will complement their area, reflecting local styles and building materials. Streets will be designed to prioritise walking and cycling and to avoid public realm dominated by cars. We will encourage co-location of community facilities, sports clubs and schools. We will design green spaces that encourage biodiversity. Throughout our developments we will incorporate safe places for children to play and learn. Our places will connect neighbourhoods and promote the use of public transport.

We will design places that meet housing needs, taking into account the Local Plan, the housing mix needed and demographics. We will support rightsizing for customers.

We will design with a view to maintenance costs, so that our places are managed efficiently and sustainably, avoiding creating future costs for customers.



Above:
Imaginative play features

Left:
Building materials respond
to the character of the area

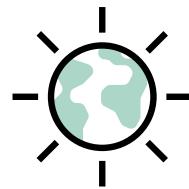
Sustainable future

Sovereign homes will:



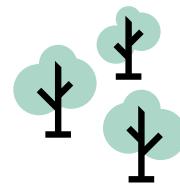
Be comfortable for the future

Homes will be future-proofed against climate change and increasing extreme weather events. They will be easy to keep cool in the summer and warm in the winter.



Have a simple approach to moving towards zero carbon

We will take a fabric-first approach to the delivery of homes. Embodied carbon and energy requirements will be minimised.



Promote a healthy environment

Homes and places will have a positive impact on the environment and the community. Gardens and allotments will sit alongside existing trees and hedgerows to encourage biodiversity.



Empower customers through technology

Our homes and places will take into account how customers use technology, so they can make the most of its benefits from day one.

Sustainable future

Homes should support customers to reduce their negative impact on the environment, promoting energy efficiency and regulating temperatures at home.

We will have homes which minimise water use. We will aim for zero carbon homes, including aiming for the RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge targets. We will also reduce the carbon in building homes, using modern methods of construction.

Our homes will generate renewable energy, offsetting the carbon used to build them.

We will avoid traditional concrete in favour of materials with low-embodied energy. To enable our customers to prepare for the future, from 2025 new homes will use electricity for heating and cooking.



Image credit: ilke Homes



Above:
Shutters and protective
shady roofs

Left:
Modular homes under
construction

Far left:
Panelised timber
construction for houses



To find out more about Sovereign's
Homes and Place Standard,
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