

June 2021

Homes and Place Standard

Our guide to quality housing

SOVEREIGN 



Contents

3	Foreword	
4	Acknowledgements	1
5	Introduction	2
8	How to use the Standard	3
12	Customers	
14	Long-term health and wellbeing	
15	Safe, secure and inclusive	
16	Excellent customer experience	
17	Foster pride in homes and communities	4
18	Homes	
20	Usable and adaptable	
28	Enjoyable to live in	
31	Cost effective	
36	Digitally connected	5
38	Place	
40	Character and delight	
45	Well-integrated	
51	Inclusive	
54	Safe	6
56	Sustainable future	
58	Comfortable for the future	
61	A simple approach to moving toward zero carbon	
64	Promote a healthy environment	
66	Empower customers through technology	

Foreword

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 Officer

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 Officer

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

Introduction

1

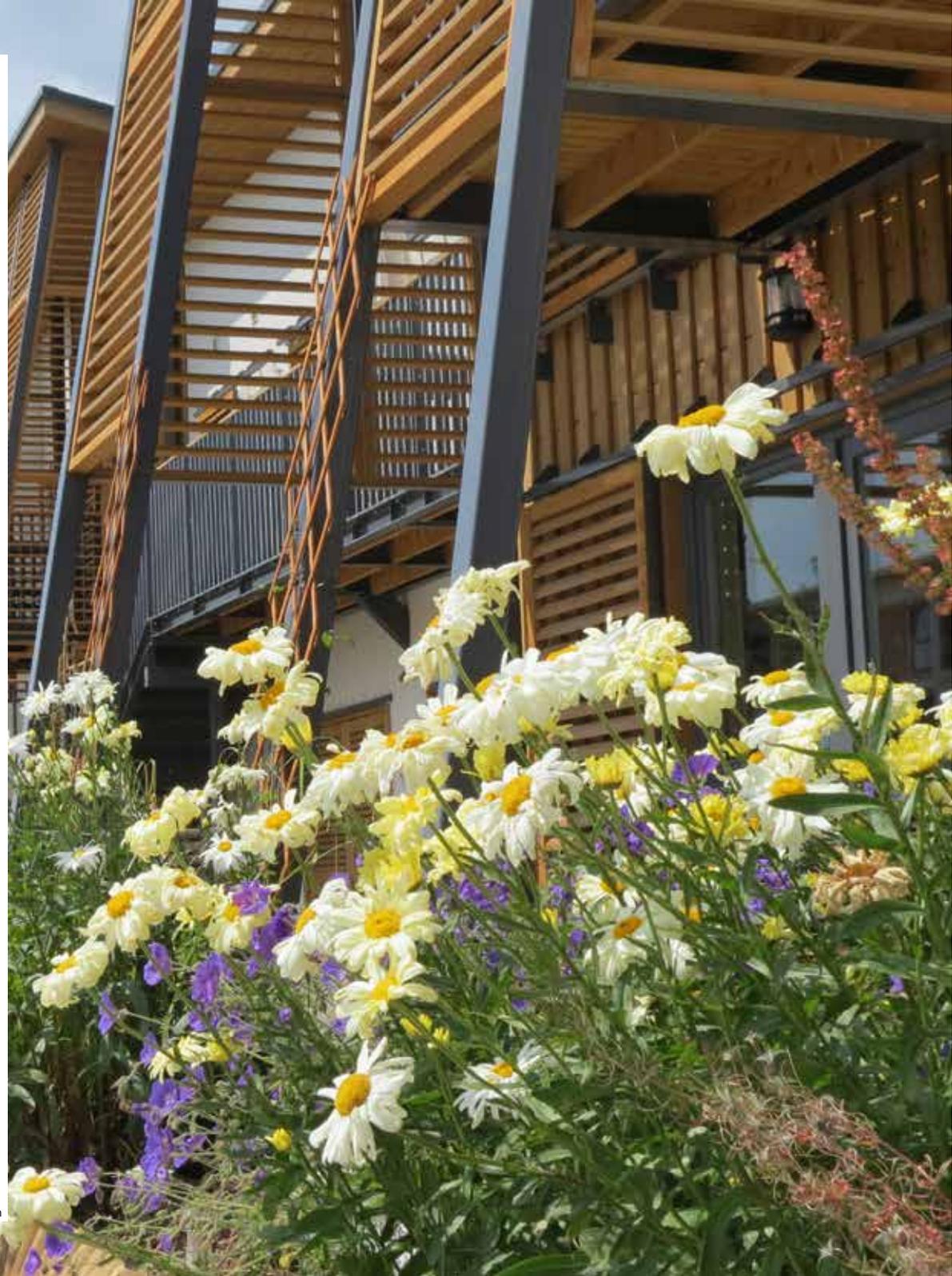
Introduction

Who are Sovereign?

We're one of the largest housing associations in the country providing good quality, affordable homes and services within successful, sustainable communities.

We don't just deliver one of the largest new affordable housing programmes in the country, we make great places too. Whether it's new build, conversions or regeneration schemes, we focus on design, quality and sustainability to make places people want to live today and tomorrow. Our vision is to be the leading landlord across the South and a developer of choice. This is why we have created a Homes and Place Standard.

Image credit: HTA Design



Introduction

The Homes and Place Standard

This Standard will enable us to deliver on our ambition to build and manage homes in the most sustainable way possible. It is a significant milestone on our journey towards ensuring all our homes are great places to live, which enhance the environment and promote sustainable living. Delivering homes with a positive social and environmental impact is a process and not an event. This document is a signpost not a finishing post.

The new Standard will be vital in enabling us to deliver our Sustainability, Development and Strategic Asset Management strategies. It sits at the heart of our social purpose as a housebuilder and landlord.

Unlike most housebuilders, we are driving not by profit but by social purpose. We invest for the long-term, in places and people, and we care about the homes we build long after they are built. Because we put our customers first, we know that good design, reliable maintenance and sustainable communities will have positive impact on their future.

As the basis of our brief for professionals such as architects, landscape architects, energy assessors and ecologists the Standard describes the sorts of houses and flats we want to build, our approach to infrastructure, energy and carbon reduction.

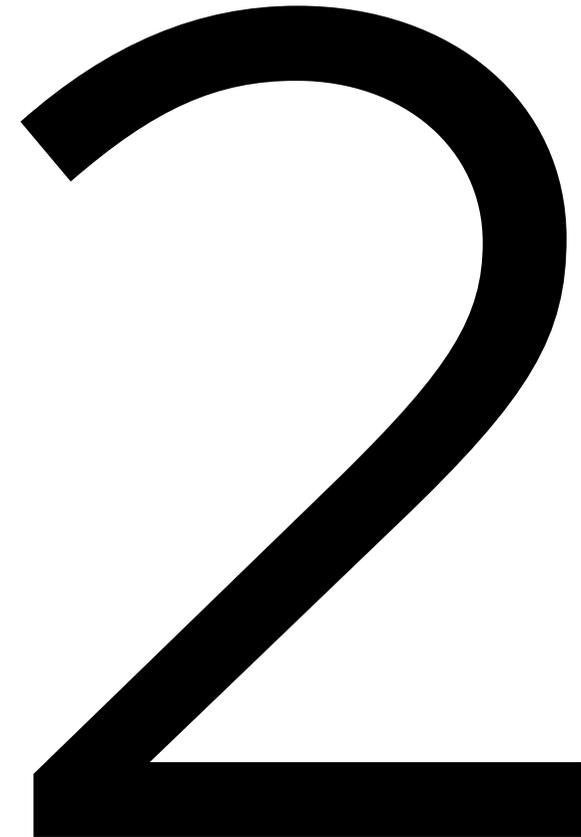
It is also the basis on which we will assess our existing homes, how we will make the right investments and, where we need to regenerate or rebuild homes.

By 2050 all the homes we own and manage will be enjoyable, have character, complement the natural and built environment and be carbon neutral. We have always thought carefully about our homes, but this Standard underlines our commitment to the 60,000 homes we own and those we plan to build.

We know it will be hard to achieve across all our properties, but we have the necessary investment to hand. We want to raise standards across all our homes, and by doing so to raise standards of social housing everywhere.

Above all, this new Standard is not the upper limit of our ambitions, but the starting point of a major programme of renewal, ensuring that our customers live in quality, sustainable homes. We believe in the power of a good home in a great place to enable people from all walks of life to thrive. We are proud to be starting that journey with this Standard – we are committed to getting there together.

How to use the Standard



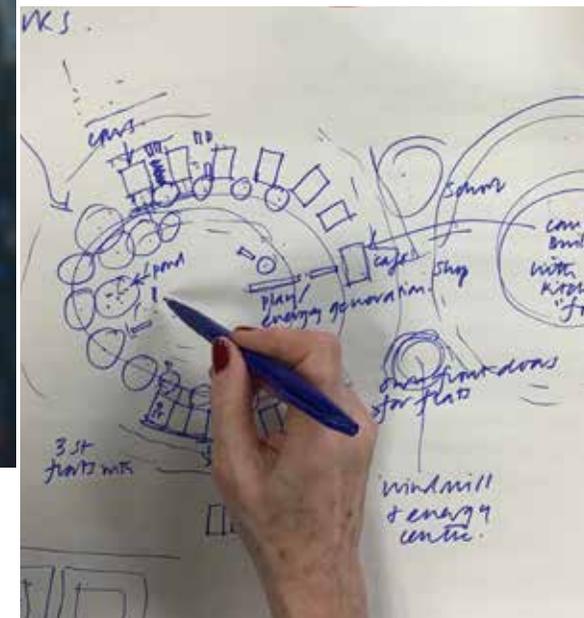
Creation of the Homes and Place Standard

Customers are at the heart of everything we do, and it was vital that the Standard reflected what our customers needed and wanted from the homes and places they lived. This is why the Standard was co-created with our customers and employees. By working together we bring ideas, listen, and have honest conversations to design for now and for the future.

We worked with our Resident Board Partnership (RBP) whom influence strategy, policy, service standards and review our service quality and performance to evolve the Standard. We also conducted surveys with a wider customer base to sense check the Standard to ensure that we were informed of what is important to our customers, and were able to respond in an agile way.



Left and below:
Co-creation
workshops



How to use the Standard

The Standard is structured under four key areas – Customers; Homes; Places 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.

Scoring existing homes

All of our existing homes will be assessed against a separate asset grading model using existing performance data. Homes which have been identified as being suitable for investment will then be assessed against the Homes and Place Standard. The assessment will be used to inform our investment or replacement strategy for our existing homes.

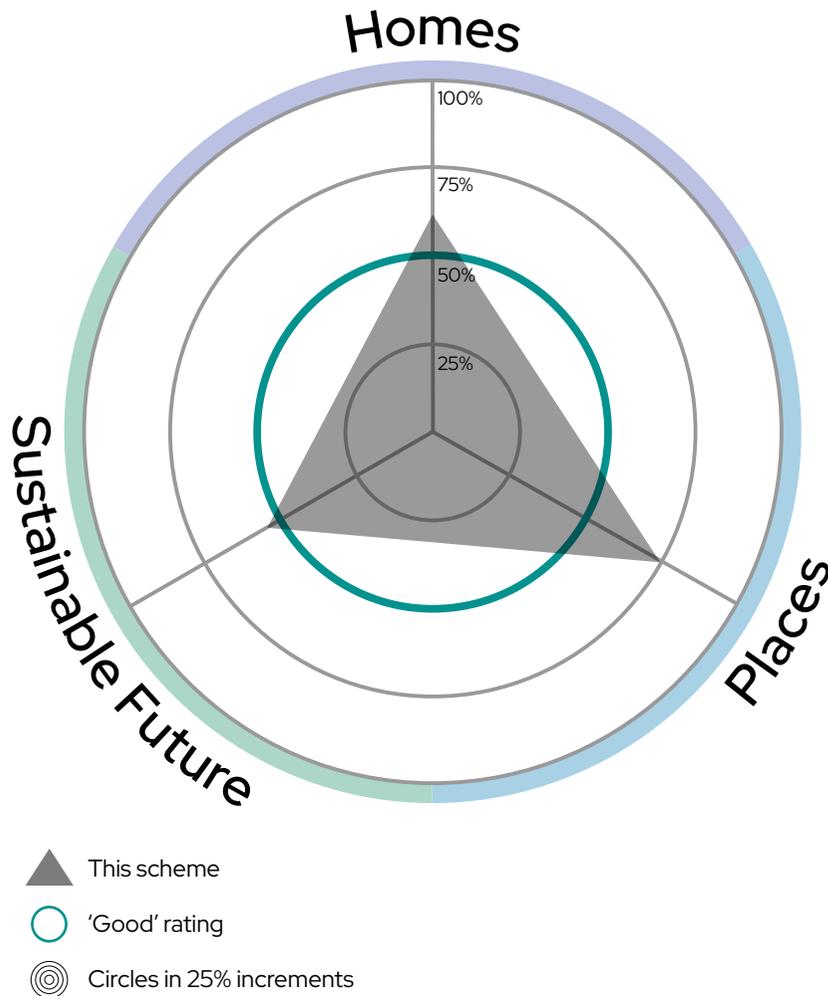
Scoring new developments

Development opportunities will be assessed against the Standard. Good, very good and excellent criteria have been established to judge the quality of schemes. The tool will also indicate where the good criteria has not been met.



Homes and Place Standard scorecard

The outcome of the assessment produces a scorecard. This shows at a high level the performance of the scheme against the three overarching areas. It can clearly be seen which areas perform well and which less so against the Standard.

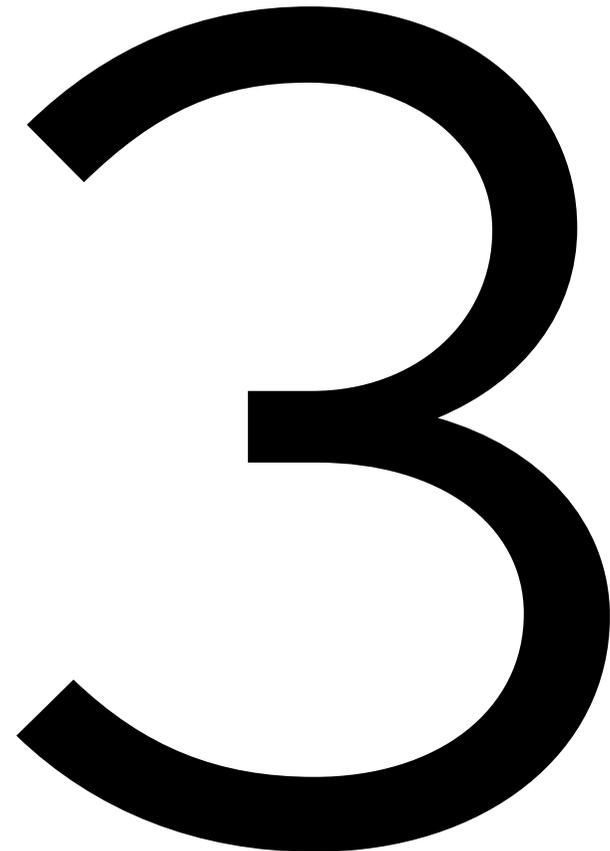


	% achieved	% below or above 'Good' rating
Homes	62 %	+12 %
Homes will be cost effective	67 %	+17 %
Homes will be useable and adaptable	60 %	+10 %
Homes will be enjoyable to live in	60 %	+10 %
Homes will be digitally connected	60 %	+10 %
Places	74 %	+24 %
Places will have character and delight	84 %	+34 %
Places will be strong and well integrated	73 %	+23 %
Places will be inclusive	67 %	+17 %
Places will be safe	67 %	+17 %
Sustainable future	52 %	+2 %
Be comfortable for the Future	60 %	+10 %
Simple approach to moving towards zero carbon	46 %	-4 %
Promote a healthy environment	60 %	+10 %
Empower customers through technology	60 %	+10 %
Overall score	63 %	+13 %
Overall rating		'Good'

2

Customers

Our customers' experience of their homes and places is our priority. We take pride in safe and affordable communities that are healthy, inclusive and full of delight for everyone.



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.



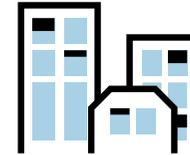
Be safe, secure and inclusive

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.

Sovereign homes will: Encourage long-term health and wellbeing



Left:
Young cyclists
enjoying safe streets

Image credit: HTA Design

Our multi-generational communities

- Our customers include a range of people with differing household make-up and various needs.
- We want to own popular places where customers thrive, want to be, work together, and can enjoy being part of a strong close-knit community.

Affordable choices

- Sustainable, energy efficient and easy to maintain, Sovereign homes are affordable and cost effective to live in.
- A wide choice of homes in different locations offer affordable choices for all our customers.

Connections

- Sovereign places enable community interaction to strengthen the community.
- Places have more communal and community spaces to encourage social interaction and strengthen the community.
- Connections to the established neighbouring communities are vital, supporting wider social cohesion.

Wellbeing

- Homes and places support the health and wellbeing of customers – homes filled with light and space, plenty of green spaces and views of green places, encouraging an active lifestyle with streets and paths designed to encourage walking and cycling.
- Sovereign homes make it easier for customers to live sustainably, in a home that is environmentally-friendly.

Sovereign homes will be: Safe, secure and inclusive



Above:
Well lit spaces
improve feelings
of security

Right:
Simple facade
detailing provides
interest to homes



Safe

- All homes will be constructed and monitored so that they're safe and secure from concept design through to in use. Buildings are developed to a good standard. Customers can be confident in the safety and security of homes and feel comfortable and safe within their wider neighbourhood through feeling connected to place.

Inclusive

- Sovereign places generate a strong sense of belonging and community identity helping people of all ages and abilities to play a role in their community.
- The needs of all ages, abilities, and cultures are considered in all aspects of design.
- The digital infrastructure will be inclusive to all.
- Designs are sympathetic to their locality, creating homes which enhance their local environment.

Homes for life and integrated tenures

- Sovereign places have 'lifetime homes' and are 'lifetime neighbourhoods': inclusive and safe for all generations, places which get better over time.
- Homes will be seamlessly integrated: homes of all tenures will be mixed across an area and balanced on a scheme by scheme basis depending upon the make-up of a local area.
- One size does not fit all and we aim to offer affordable choices which meet the needs of our customers.
- A range of homes to meet the varied needs of families, young people, single people, older people or those with special needs.

Accessible homes and places

- All new homes are designed to be accessible and adaptable. Places are easy to navigate, with wider streets, and dedicated parking close to homes for those with restricted mobility.

Sovereign homes will: Provide an excellent customer service

From the start

- We will make sure the experience of choosing, viewing and agreeing rental or purchase of a home is as smooth as possible, with expert support, and clear and detailed communication.

Post occupancy feedback

- Learning from customers living in the schemes we own – what works well and what can be improved – is an essential part of making our places to live even more successful.

Long-term stewardship

- Our homes will be low maintenance.
- Where possible, community stewardship of external spaces, gardening and food growing, and community facilities will be supported.



Right:
Shared space for
whole community

Sovereign homes will: Foster pride in homes and communities

Engagement and co-design

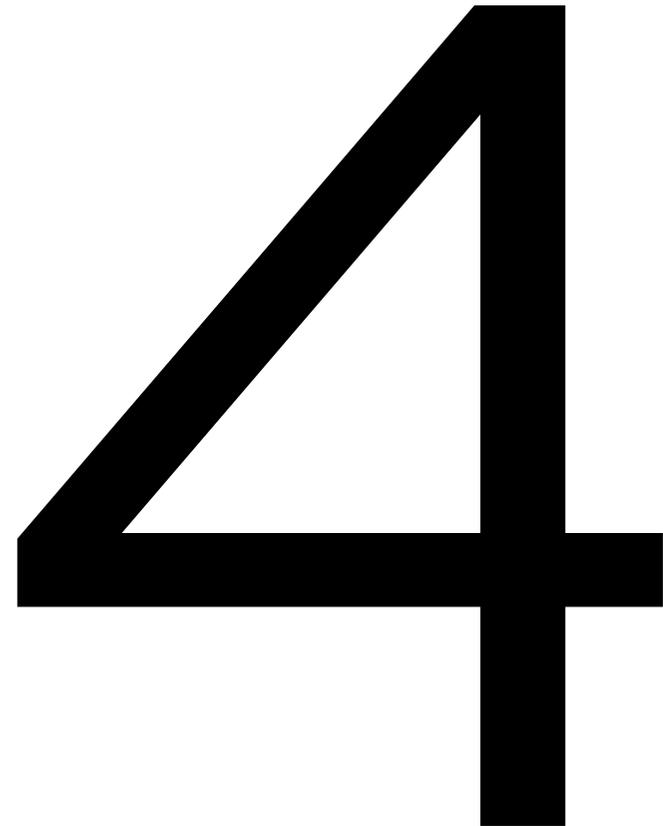
- Hold workshops with focus groups to contribute to the design process where a community does not already exist.
- Consider designing and planting some communal spaces with new customers, so they get to know each other in the process.
- Where possible, larger residential developments should include a community space, shared communal gardens and open space or allotments.



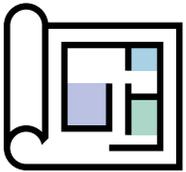
Right:
Community
gardening
spaces

Homes

Our homes will be comfortable and cost-effective for our customers. New homes will be carefully designed to be flexible and adaptable into the future, complementing and enhancing their local community and environment.

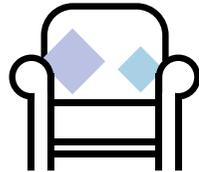


Sovereign homes will be:



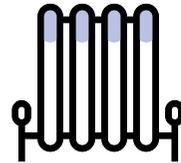
Usable and adaptable

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.

Sovereign homes will be: Usable and adaptable

Space standards

To provide comfortable and flexible living environments.

- The Nationally Described Space Standards provide a good benchmark for the size of homes and we will look to achieve this level on most homes and where required by the local planning authority.
- There may be exceptional circumstances in terms of local housing need or site-specific requirements where this minimum standard can be deviated from.

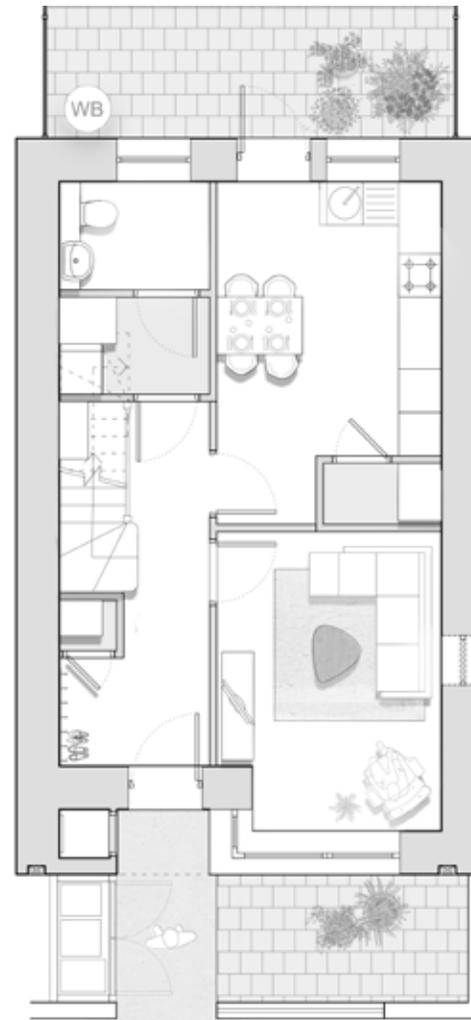
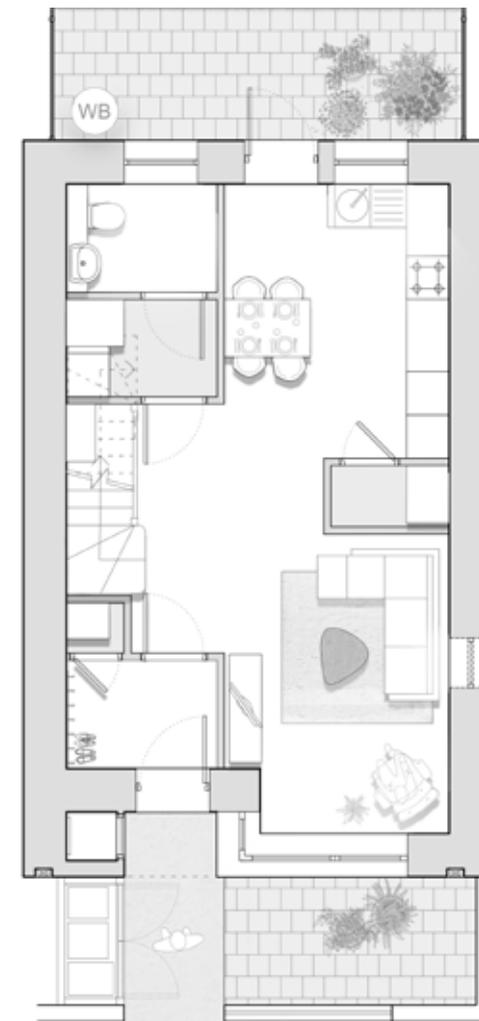


Image credit: HTA Design



Flexible internal layouts allow customers to utilise space to best suit their needs

Sovereign homes will be: Usable and adaptable



Higher ceilings

Increasing the sense of space and light.

- Ceiling heights – all new homes must be designed to have a minimum floor to ceiling height of at least 2.3 metres between finished floor level and finished ceiling level for all habitable rooms.
- An increased ceiling height of 2.5 metres between finished floor level and finished ceiling level for all habitable rooms in new homes is recommended, with a target of 2.6 metres as an excellent standard to attain.
- Consider the design opportunity for higher ceilings allowing improved visibility and natural light in communal entrances.



Far left:
Creating a sense of space
with higher ceilings

Left:
Flexible daylit spaces

Sovereign homes will be: Usable and adaptable



Storage

Carefully integrated and accessible.

- Storage cupboards should ideally be accessed from a hallway rather than habitable rooms and integrated into the layout of the home. Designs will avoid very deep storage cupboards as these are less efficient and less accessible.
- Where possible, designs will include an integrated laundry cupboard with plumbing for a washing machine accessed from a hallway, for example, rather than within the kitchen.
- All new homes should have ample segregated recycling storage internally within the kitchen and outside, close to the main entrance of the building, accessible to customers and waste collectors, but not detracting from the appearance of the front garden or entrance.

- All new homes should have convenient access to external secure and enclosed bicycle storage (minimum of one bicycle space per dwelling) located close to the main entrance of the building.
- In family homes, allow storage space for prams, scooters and other toy vehicles.

Resources: Refer to Local Authority guidance

[National Design Guide](#)



Far left:
Waste and recycling storage easily accessible and shielded from view

Left:
Convenient bicycle storage

Sovereign homes will be: Usable and adaptable

Minimise circulation

To maximise usable space, while being generous in entrance spaces.

- For blocks of flats, care should be taken to design communal spaces which are welcoming, naturally-lit, and functional with a sense of arrival, but also space-efficient.
- Consider the provision of small clusters of stacking flats or maisonettes with their own private amenity and private front entrances on the street, and no requirement for internal communal areas.
- Communal areas must be designed with natural light and an efficient use of space serving a small number of homes per floor (ideally a maximum of four flats per floor).
- Long internal communal corridors should be avoided.
- Passenger lifts must be integrated for any blocks of flats over four storeys. For low rise blocks a lift may be provided to cater for the specific needs of customers (for example older people or families).
- Where no lift is provided, space should be planned so a lift can be installed in the future.



Above:
Access to
apartments
from a private
courtyard

Left:
Apartments
over
mixed uses

Sovereign homes will be: Usable and adaptable

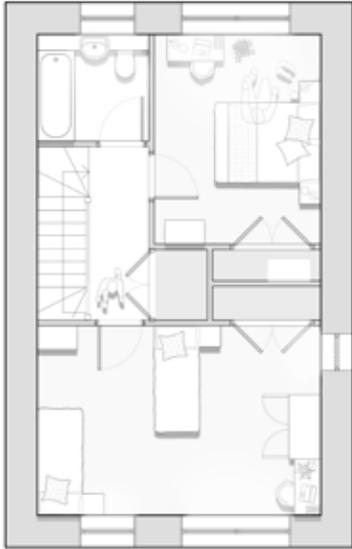


Image credit: HTA Design

Flexible homes

Homes must provide flexibility to meet different customers' needs now whilst being robust for future requirements.

- We will create age-friendly homes.
- Homes that are designed to be flexible, durable and capable of being upgraded easily will sustain "loose fit, long life" communities with resilience for future generations.
- Dwelling layouts should demonstrate how larger rooms might be adapted or sub-divided in the future.
- A flexible home is one that has been designed with generosity of space and an internal layout capable of being readily adapted: to give alternative furniture arrangements, accommodate visitors, and for long-term requirements as circumstances change.
- The layout of the home should prioritise simple rectangular shaped rooms and spaces to flexibly accommodate alternative furniture layouts subject to customers' choices.

- Living spaces – offer choice whether open plan or separate kitchen/dining and living spaces are appropriate for each home. For larger homes a more flexible open plan arrangement may be suitable but there should be distinct zones for living, eating and cooking.
- Bedrooms should be carefully planned to accommodate the required arrangement of furniture without creating conflict with windows or radiators.
- Twin bedrooms should be designed to be adaptable and capable of being sub-divided into two functional rooms, with the creation of a partition and additional doorway.
- Home working – spaces to be integrated with requisite services for different family members to be able to work in their rooms or elsewhere in the home, without distractions.



Above left and right:
Use of an internal dividing wall allows a twin bedroom to be separated into two single bedrooms

Sovereign homes will be: Usable and adaptable

Adaptable homes for life

To accommodate future mobility requirements.

- All homes should be designed to anticipate the changing accessibility and adaptability needs of customers, in terms of ageing, mobility, and modern living.
- Wider hallways, entrance doors and doorways.
- Provide for an accessible toilet and shower at entrance level.
- Dwelling layouts should demonstrate how a future space for a bedroom or separate sleeping space at ground floor can be accommodated.



Above:
Large living spaces for
flexibility of use

Left:
Adaptable living

Sovereign homes will be: Usable and adaptable

Accessible services

- Integrate water, power and waste services to the home so that they are accessible, but coordinated and discreetly located so that they do not detract from the finished appearance of main façades or entrances.
- The placement of all services outlets should be carefully coordinated as part of the envisaged furniture layout of each room or space including radiators, power points, switches, TV and telecoms outlet, and within easy reach for those who are less mobile.
- Kitchen layouts should be carefully and flexibly designed to accommodate the requirements of electrical appliances.
- Rooftop renewables (for example photovoltaic panels and air source heat pumps) should be carefully and discreetly integrated to allow for safe maintenance access but to also minimise their visual impact. Consideration should be given to the location of elements which require cyclical maintenance.



Above:
Carefully located
renewables

Left and far left:
Kitchens with coordinated
services

Sovereign homes will be: Usable and adaptable

Car parking

- Where car parking is provided it should be discreet, not detract from the street scene and should maximise soft planting opportunities.
- The provision of garages is generally discouraged, but if integral car parking is provided as either a locked garage or as a carport it should be designed as part of the overall street scene, with the option to adapt it in the future or incorporate it into the home.
- Car parking should be provided close to the home and on street wherever possible. Please refer to 'Place' for further guidance on integrating car parking successfully within a neighbourhood.



Right:
In curtilage parking

Below left:
Undercroft parking

Below right:
Integrated parking



Sovereign homes will be: Enjoyable to live in

Visible and welcoming entrances

- All new homes must be designed with thoughtfully conceived entrances that provide a generous, sheltered and safe welcome.
- Front gardens should offer opportunities for sitting out and gardening.
- Where possible, all new homes with a private ground floor entrance should have a well-designed and spacious porch area to protect and shelter the entrance, with sufficient external storage space for boots and everyday things.
- All front doors to a home should be secure and robust.
- Consider the overall appearance of entrances by coordinating signage, lighting, services and colour palettes.



Above:
Interest and
shelter to
entrances

Left:
Generous
shelter
to front doors

Sovereign homes will be: Enjoyable to live in



Views and aspects

- Provide dual aspect homes as far as possible, to give best views, aspect and ventilation.
- Triple-aspect homes should be designed wherever possible, including the use of bays or projecting windows.
- Avoid north-facing single aspect homes where possible, and especially for two-bedroom homes or larger.
- Principal rooms should overlook public realm – streets or green spaces.
- When designing the layout of the home consider how principal rooms can be arranged to contribute to the character of the street – large windows, bay windows and Juliet balconies for example.
- Consider homes designed with first floor living spaces where site-specifically appropriate.
- All homes would ideally have direct access to a private balcony, terrace or garden of a minimum size as set out in the assessment criteria. Flatted buildings should have access to shared and secure communal amenity spaces.



Above:
Attractive views
from homes

Left:
Usable sized
balconies

Sovereign homes will be: Enjoyable to live in

Right:
Separation providing
acoustic privacy
between homes

Below:
Common uses
stacked within
apartment blocks



Acoustic privacy

- The acoustic insulation of each home and between homes should be enhanced above Building Regulations to satisfy the employer's requirements specification where possible.
- In flats bedrooms should be stacked over bedrooms and living spaces over living spaces. Bedrooms should not be next to lift shafts.
- Consider any site-specific noise sources and design mitigation measures for homes accordingly.

Sovereign homes will be: **Cost effective for our customers**

Below:
Energy efficient
homes



A fabric first approach with a low energy demand

- Homes will be designed to address the well-being and affordability needs of our customers.
- New homes will be designed to keep warm in the winter and cool in the summer.
- All new homes will be designed with high levels of thermal insulation, renewable technology and allow for high daylight factors.
- Homes will be designed to minimise the amount of energy needed to light, heat and cool them leading to improved affordability for our customers.
- Homes and Places will be designed to minimise maintenance costs and service charges.
- Building form, fabric and materials will be dynamically-modelled during the design process to verify high levels of thermal and environmental performance with low operational and embodied carbon.
- Existing homes will be upgraded to achieve EPC B.
- Natural light and ventilation should be provided to all entrance and communal areas wherever possible to reduce reliance on artificial lighting and to reduce the risk of over-heating.
- Smart movement-sensitive lighting should be used in communal areas to minimise energy demand.
- Smart metering and controls to be used to help inform and mitigate unnecessary energy use.
- Windows to habitable rooms shall be designed to maximise daylight and sun light levels but also reduce risk of over-heating.
- Consider some dual-aspect windows to principal habitable rooms where feasible.
- Bathrooms should be provided with an openable window if located on an external wall, or a rooflight, for natural light and ventilation.

Sovereign homes will be: Cost effective for Sovereign to build

Quality

- Homes will be designed to be simply arranged, efficient and capable of incorporating standardised design components.
- The design and type of construction used should be carefully reviewed in terms of the capability for future use and adaptation, extension, retrofit and disassembly.
- Homes will be capable of being designed using pre-manufactured /modern methods of construction.
- Homes will follow a fabric-first approach which will reduce a reliance on technology and help reduce maintenance costs.
- The materials used to build our homes will be of good quality, sustainably and responsibly-sourced, durable and low-maintenance. They will be appropriate to and complement the local area.



Above:
Repetition of
materials

Sovereign homes will be: Cost effective for Sovereign to build

Design principles for new homes

- Homes will be designed to be simply arranged, efficient and capable of incorporating standardised design components.
- Homes should be designed to be capable of being constructed using offsite or modular technology.
- The design and type of construction of homes should be carefully reviewed in terms of its capability of future adaptation, extension, retrofit and disassembly.



Above and left:
Timber framed
homes

Sovereign homes will be: Cost effective for our customers



Above:
Shutters provide
internal shading

Right:
Well-lit spaces
connected
to the garden

Natural light and ventilation

- Natural light and ventilation should be provided to all entrance areas and communal areas wherever possible to reduce reliance on artificial lighting and to reduce the risk of overheating.
- Smart movement-sensitive lighting should be provided in communal areas to minimise energy demand.
- Windows to habitable rooms should be designed to maximise daylight and sunlight levels and reduce the risk of overheating.
- Consider providing a dual aspect to some principal habitable rooms.
- Bathrooms should be provided with an openable window if located on an external wall, or a rooflight, for natural light and ventilation.
- Flexible open plan and dual aspect layouts should be explored to maximise natural light and ventilation.



Sovereign homes will be: Cost effective for our customers

Set-up cost of a home

- Consideration should be given for homes to be provided with internal finished floor coverings throughout.

Maintenance and management

- Service charges should be minimised by designing-out excessive communal areas where possible requiring regular management and maintenance.
- A landscape-led, biodiversity netgain approach shall be promoted for private and communal areas with a low-maintenance obligation and encouraging customers to take ownership, encourage community gardening and minimising service charges.
- Private and communal recycling and refuse storage should be carefully designed to be discreet and conveniently located with communal storage arranged in small clusters for groups of customers so that it is easy to maintain and deters anti-social behaviour.
- Allow for carefully integrated, conveniently and discreetly located bulky waste collection areas where appropriate.
- Develop a window cleaning strategy for each development with window design allowing for customers to be able to clean their own windows from the inside to minimise service charges.



Above:
Carefully designed
communal amenity

Sovereign homes will be: Digitally connected

Smart technology

- Access to the internet is vital to people's livelihoods and enables them to participate in society and to be connected to family and friends.
- Our homes will be smart now, but will also be adaptable to take advantage of new technology, to support changing needs and enable independent living.
- Energy networks and grids will become increasingly important to achieve low carbon targets.
- Smart heating controls will reduce the complexity of control systems for customers and help to manage their running costs.

Access to fast broadband

- All homes should be designed with the ability to be connected to super-fast broadband as and when it becomes available within an area.
- All homes are to be adaptable to future technology upgrades, subject to local availability.



Above:
All homes will facilitate home study and working

Left:
Customers provided with up to date information and control

Sovereign homes will be: Digitally connected

Electric car charging points

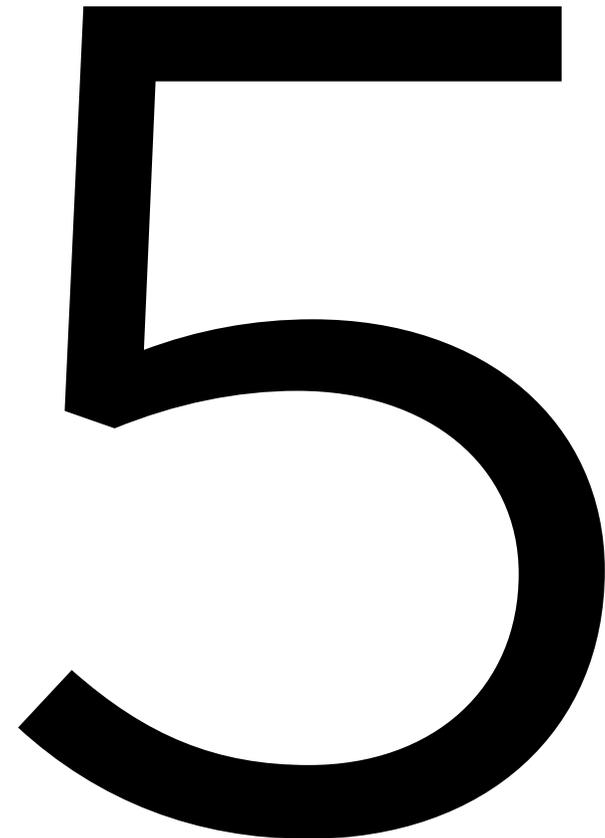
- All new homes should be provided with access to the infrastructure for electric vehicle charging points – either on plot, or communally within streets and courtyards.
- Passive electric vehicle charging infrastructure should be integrated into new developments. The provision of active electric vehicle charging points are desirable where there is an immediate demand for them.



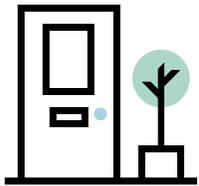
Right:
On street vehicle charging points can be provided to meet demand

Place

New places will prioritise people, natural green infrastructure, connectivity with the existing built environment and promote sustainable design.



Sovereign homes will:



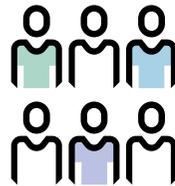
Have character and delight

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.

Places will be for everyone, they will: Have character and delight

Character

- Develop character of place from locally specific qualities:
 - Geography and geology
 - History and culture
 - Climate and micro-climate
- Reflect local materials and building methods in the design.
- Reference historic settlement types and density.
- Consider planted solutions in preference to hard materials.
- Use native and indigenous species where possible to sustain native ecosystems.
- Encourage street greening strategies.
- Consider back garden ecology throughout a development.
- All new developments should assess their local surroundings and interpret unique design principles from the local urban context or natural landscape environment.



Above:
Materials reflect
local character

Left:
Use of natural
materials

Places will be for everyone, they will: Have character and delight

Creating well-defined streets and spaces

- Streets to prioritise walking and cycling.
- A parking strategy should be developed early in the masterplan stage to avoid a public realm that is visually dominated by cars.
- The parking strategy should focus on minimising the reliance on vehicles and promoting walking and cycling. Varied and discreetly-integrated parking solutions should be sought to minimise the visual impact of vehicles on the neighbourhood.
- By design low vehicular speed is encouraged – consider home-zones and play streets for residential areas.
- Accessible and direct routes to amenities and community facilities.
- Create open space that provides a focus for communities.
- Co-locate community facilities, community centres, schools, sports clubs etc. with public open space.
- Green spaces to promote biodiversity and access to nature.

Resources:

[CIHT Manual for Streets 2](#)



Left:
Attractive streets

Below:
Attenuation pond providing visual amenity and improving biodiversity



Places will be for everyone, they will: Have character and delight

Easy to find your way around

- The character of place must be highly legible in terms of movement and wayfinding.
- Create places and spaces that are easy to navigate with appropriate signage and wayfinding.
- Landscape features for example specimen trees, or prominent buildings /features to provide landmarks and wayfinders.
- Locally specific street naming.
- Legible hierarchy of streets.
- Identify key frontages to public spaces, landmarks and street corners that should be given special attention in the design development of places.
- Building signage and house numerals should be clearly visible, and coordinated as part of the street scene.
- Lighting should be considered early on in the design of place to ensure safe and well-lit spaces.

Resources:

[Essex Design Guide](#)

[Legible London](#)

[Design Council – Guide to Urban Design](#)



Above and left:
Sculptures
providing
landmarks within
the public realm

Places will be for everyone, they will: Have character and delight

Trees and planting

- Trees enhance character and sense of place in a neighbourhood, bringing benefits to people and wildlife.
- An arboriculturalist should undertake a tree survey to assess the health and quality of all the existing trees on site.
- Every effort should be made to retain as many healthy existing trees as possible within the proposed masterplan.
- Consideration to the long term management and maintenance of trees should be considered. Trees in back gardens can be problematic whereby the customer is not responsible for management and maintenance.
- The height, canopy spread and spacing of proposed trees should be considered to ensure there is enough space for their optimum size.
- Tree pit details should be suitable for the size of the tree and the ground conditions it will be in.
- Maximise tree planting in street design.
- Soft planting should increase the biodiversity of the neighbourhood, be pollinator friendly and create habitats for wildlife and residents to enjoy. It should also be low maintenance and provide year-round interest.

Resources:

[The Woodland Trust- Street Trees Project](#)



Right:
Homes integrated into a natural setting

Above right:
Trees and landscaping soften the built environment

Below right:
Supporting native pollinators



Places will be for everyone, they will: Have character and delight



Left:
Natural materials

Far left:
Well overlooked
play space

Play spaces

- Play spaces should be incorporated throughout the masterplan to provide high quality, dynamic and challenging experiences for the children of the neighbourhood.
- Play provisions must meet the requirements set out by the Local Authority.
- A variety of play experiences should be created for children of different ages. These should also be located close to their homes, for example for children under five doorstep play is within a one minute walk from home.
- Consideration should be given to inclusive play opportunities for children with a range of abilities.
- Play areas should be integrated into the masterplan early to ensure a richer dynamic play offer. This would encourage play to go beyond the fixed equipment, for example, to create playable streets which encourage children to walk, socialise and be healthy.
- Seating should be placed next to play spaces to allow carers somewhere comfortable to sit and supervise children.
- Provide play facilities and playable spaces for younger members of the community.
- An early assessment should identify the local community's needs in terms of play provision for all ages and develop a unique site-specific play strategy.

Resources:

[Play England](#)

[Sport England](#)

Places will be for everyone, they will: Be well-integrated

Working with the site and context

- Identify and map all landscape features (trees, hedges, ditches, habitats, etc).
- Design strategies to retain significant landscape features.
- Design layouts around retained features that will add value to developments.
- Consideration should be given to inclusive play opportunities for children with a range of abilities.
- Use soft engineering where possible to manage level changes.
- Consider how surface water run-off will be retained on site in the public realm.
- Identify micro-climate and create open space where shelter can be created.
- Consider views, landmarks and wayfinding.
- Discover the distinct wildlife living on and around the site. Maximise the landscape response to create habitats and food sources to support these creatures.
- Detailed investigations into the existing landscape, context and setting should inform the design of new places.

Right:
Integration
of historic
features



Places will be for everyone, they will: Be well-integrated

- Special site constraints and opportunities should be identified at the earliest stage and be reflected within the masterplanning of a site. For example, the retention and integration of mature trees, natural features and exploiting local views and vantage points.
- Detailed investigations into the environmental, micro-climatic and fluvial characteristics of a site should influence the masterplanning layout of a place.
- Special consideration should be given to understanding and reflecting local heritage, including safeguarding and enhancing historic assets, incorporating or refurbishing existing buildings and preserving special features on site.

Resources:

[CIRIA- The SuDS Manual](#)



Above:
Connecting new homes into
the existing environment

Places will be for everyone, they will: Be well-integrated

Connections

- The layout of new places should provide efficient and safe connections within the neighbourhood and to surrounding facilities.
- Design-in direct connections that facilitate ease of movement for young families, wheelchair users, cyclists and the less mobile – wide, level access pavements, dropped kerbs and cycle-friendly infrastructure.
- Promote and integrate legible connections to the local public transport network.
- Ensure there is adequate space integrated in the streets for everyday vehicle movement, such as refuse trucks to pick up rubbish on collection days and delivery vans to drop off parcels incorporated, with sensible manoeuvring accounted for, i.e. no turning heads.
- Have a reason to visit and move through a neighbourhood, with multiple ways in and out for walkers and cyclists, avoiding rat-runs.
- Promote and exploit visual and physical connections to nature, play and the surrounding countryside.
- Consider site selection and location of development to be within proximity of local facilities and services.
- Assess each existing neighbourhood to understand what the local 'need' is – where are the gaps and opportunities to complement existing facilities.



Above:
Direct
connections

Left:
Attractive
routes

Places will be for everyone, they will: Be well-integrated

Choice of movement

- Consider site selection and location carefully at the start and assess what exists in terms of reliable and regular public transport – understand where people need and want to go to and influence local policy on public transport.
- Make using public transport easy and a primary option for all.
- Take measures to reduce vehicle dependence within the neighbourhood and promote walking, cycling, cycle hire and alternative transport options, including car clubs and car-sharing.
- Consider the local transport needs of the elderly, care services, school buses and those with disabilities, and design in features for ease of access.
- Promote and encourage a 'cycle-friendly' culture throughout all parts of the neighbourhood that can link up with public transport.
- Consider the needs of older people and those with disabilities in the signposting of public transport and providing place for rest and shelter.
- Pedestrian and cycle connections to public transport should be safe, well-overlooked, adequately lit at night, and integrated with playable trails.

Resources:

[Sustrans traffic-free routes and greenways design guide](#)

[London Cycling Design Standards](#)



Above:
Level access
paths

Right:
Doorstep
green routes

Places will be for everyone, they will: Be well-integrated

A mix of tenures

- Our homes will be appropriate for the area in terms of the types of homes, providing balanced and diverse communities.
- Affordable homes will be distributed evenly across an estate or development.
- When developing new homes, we will explore the opportunity for supported living, older persons' housing and multi-generational housing.



Above:
Well-integrated
apartments

Left:
Tenure blind
homes

Places will be for everyone, they will: Be well-integrated



Car parking

- Car parking solutions should be carefully and discreetly integrated to minimise the visual impact of all vehicles on the street scene, and flexibly planned to allow for future adaptation.
- Determine at an early stage a sustainable and lower level of car parking provision for the range of housing sizes being proposed for its location. Consider zero or very low parking provision for urban developments. Avoid over-provision of car parking that could dominate the character of place.
- Car club bays to be considered at an early stage and contact made with local providers to promote their location within new developments.
- Wheelchair accessible parking bays should be provided to exceed the minimum requirement of the Local Authority, be evenly located throughout a development and across all kind of homes.
- Consider the requirements of parking bays for delivery vehicles, motorbikes, scooters and visitor car parking.
- Car parking solutions should be capable of either being deconstructed or adapted into homes to reflect future changes in transport patterns.

Left:
In curtilage
parking allows
for future
alternative uses

Places will be for everyone, they will: Be inclusive

Local housing requirements

- All parts of a place and the homes within it should be designed to be suitable for people of all ages.
- Sovereign is committed to inclusive, mixed tenure, integrated neighbourhoods with housing choices and homes which are tenure blind.
- It is important to liaise with the Local Authority on their housing policy, needs and Local Plan.
- Assess what is an appropriate and sustainable housing mix for the size and location of development; each development is unique. A range of housing types and sizes should be the priority, with design principles that integrate choice, flexibility and adaptability.
- Consider the specific environmental needs of the housing mix and types in designing the surrounding external place, in terms of open space, play, gardening and accessibility.
- Incentivise and support rightsizing for customers – supported by good local infrastructure, open spaces, and communal gardens.
- Allow customers to have pets and cater for this within designs.

Resources:

[National Design Guide](#)



Above:
Variety of homes

Right:
Cluster of apartments
help to turn a street
corner

Places will be for everyone, they will: Be inclusive

Facilities and services

- Neighbourhoods should have a 'community focus', centred around a flexible neighbourhood space or hall carefully located and equitable to all.
- Existing play and sports facilities should be assessed within the local neighbourhood – understand the local provision and future local needs.
- Influence the investment of any community infrastructure payments into local facilities and services for developments.
- Places for work and shops are a crucial part of the neighbourhood fabric – consideration should be given to small business, flexible and adaptable co-working spaces, shared workspaces, social spaces and, shops /cafés.
- Design in informal spaces for social interaction, community-building, rest and relaxation, for example 'buddy benches'.
- Integrate easy-to-use and carefully locate public litter and recycling bins throughout the community.
- Use creative and ambient lighting solutions appropriate to the scale and size of each space.
- A preference for smaller and individual carefully integrated storage rather than large communal stores where possible.
- Recycling and refuse storage to be located conveniently, and discreetly, both for residents and near to the street for collection operatives. Liaise with the Local Authority.
- Meters to be discreetly integrated for all homes.



Above:
Shared street for the
whole community

**Places will be for everyone, they will:
Be inclusive**



Community

- Consider site selection and location carefully at the start and assess what exists in terms of local neighbourhood infrastructure and how it will benefit the quality of life of Sovereign's customers.
- Existing play and sports facilities should be assessed within the local neighbourhood – understand the local provision and future local needs.
- Neighbourhoods should have a 'community focus' - centred around a flexible neighbourhood space which could include indoor and/or outdoor facilities, which are carefully located and equitable to all.
- Connecting with existing communities on site to support, foster and grow social networks between old and new.
- Co-creating places with the existing community and harnessing local knowledge is a key part of investigating a site.
- Explore the opportunity for including community-managed resources with supporting community infrastructure to assist with maintaining spaces, for example a community tool shed.



Above left:
Play space

Left:
Rest space

Places will be for everyone, they will:

Be safe

Streets for all

- Create people-focused streets.
- Places should be characterised by a legible network of attractive, tree-lined, walkable, universally accessible streets that link a place up to the wider neighbourhood or countryside beyond, and not be over-dominated by car parking.
- The hierarchy, scale and character of each street should relate intuitively to the scale of types of buildings that enclose it.
- All new residential streets to be designed to limit traffic speeds and should target a maximum 20 mph limit.
- Integrated street tree planting and natural features help reduce traffic speeds – no speed bumps should be needed.
- Design in traffic calming features, such as changes in paving patterns and textures to lower traffic speeds.
- All streets should be highly legible, with good forward visibility, promoting walking and cycling.
- Some streets could be designed to be car-free or capable of being used by the community for social interaction or as play streets.
- Wide, level and uncluttered footways should be carefully planned to encourage a walking community.
- Integrated SUDS features can enhance street design.
- Integrate generous levels of visitor cycle stands throughout a development, in well-lit, well-overlooked locations, and include options for cycle-hire schemes.



- Ensure walking routes are well overlooked, accessible and safe.
- Ensure public space is overlooked and has active edges.
- Champion accessibility throughout all parts of the public realm and avoid street clutter.
- All stores, such as bin or cycle stores, should be well integrated into the street, overlooked and designed such to discourage anti-social behaviour.

Above:
Well designed streets that integrate needs for all users

**Places will be for everyone, they will:
Be safe**



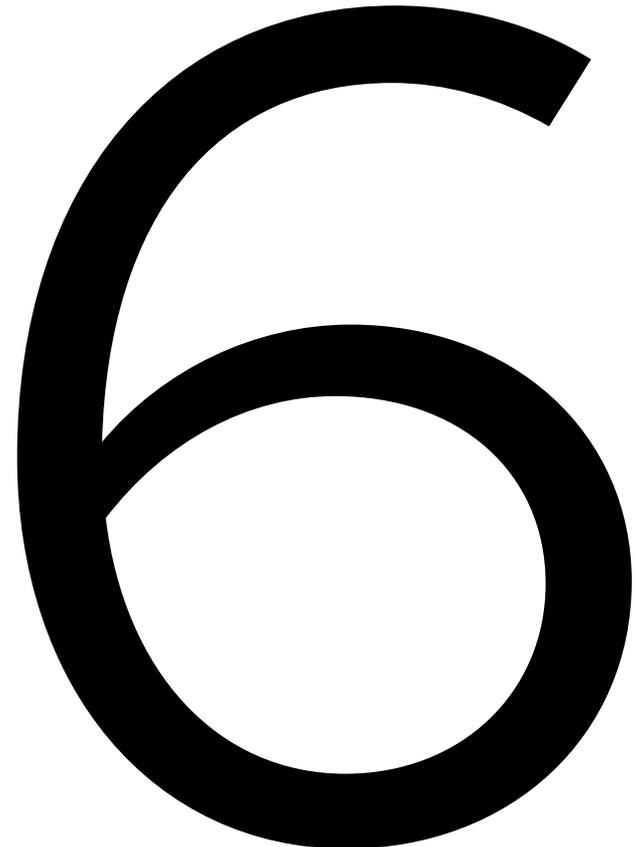
Above:
Reviewing
progress on site

Management and maintenance

- We will ensure that the management and maintenance of the spaces within new developments is both cost effective in use and to customers, and allows for the specific care of the planting and features that are unique to that place.
- Maintenance regimes will be developed for the design of each scheme that are sustainable, cost-effective and appropriate for the needs of each community, also considering the opportunities for customer stewardship.
- Community-led co-design and co-stewardship of identified external spaces within the public realm will be encouraged and supported by us with the infrastructure required.
- Certain identified spaces can be allowed to evolve organically over time with the support of the local community.
- Water use for irrigation purposes will be carefully considered at the start in the design of green spaces – consider water reduction and rainwater or grey water harvesting.

Sustainable future

We will take a sustainable approach to the delivery and running of homes and places to promote environmental sustainability.

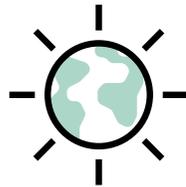


Sovereign homes will:



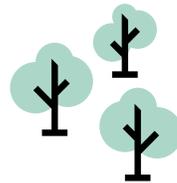
Be comfortable for the future

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.

Sovereign homes will: Be comfortable for the future



Left:
Cross Laminated Timber
(CLT) constructed
housing development

Fabric first approach

- Homes should be comfortable and affordable for customers and enable them to reduce their impact on the environment. All new homes should be constructed to the highest affordable standards of energy efficiency and, as a minimum, allow for the future implementation of renewable energy to reduce customers' costs and environmental impact.
- Homes will be comfortable for the long term. They will resist overheating or be well-ventilated. Homes will be designed to avoid the need for active cooling systems.
- Homes should be designed to reduce the consumption of non-renewable energy. The fabric-first approach should be optimised to maximise the performance of the built form before considering mechanical or electrical building services.
- Air-tightness, insulation, thermal mass of the building fabric, natural ventilation and optimising solar gain should be the first consideration.

Sovereign homes will: Be comfortable for the future

Fabric first approach targets

Improving fabric U-values

- Achieve low elemental U-values by optimising the insulation used (thickness and material).
- Effective use of thermal mass to help reduce peak internal temperatures.

Reducing thermal bridging

- Continuous insulation to minimise heat losses at junctions.
- Addition of insulated shades and storm doors to reduce overheating and thermal bridging through windows and doors.

Improving air tightness

- Good site management and building standards.
- High quality of workmanship.
- Aim for an air tightness close to PassivHaus standards.

Providing energy-efficient ventilation systems

- Trickle vents and bathroom extractor fans should be avoided and replaced by whole house ventilation systems.
- MVHR can offer significant reductions in overall energy use especially when combined with low levels of air leakage (located in an accessible space for ease of use by customers).
- At the same time, fresh filtered air is supplied to the room contributing to a healthy indoor environment. Heating costs can also be reduced.

Making use of services improvements and using other energy-efficient technologies

- High efficiency lighting appliances.
- Improved sensors and control systems to optimise system performance.
- Good energy rating household appliances.

Below:
CLT homes under construction



6

Sovereign homes will: Be comfortable for the future



Left:
Water saving
measures

Minimising energy use

- The building fabric is designed to maximise efficiency and reduce requirement for space heating. Reducing water use will also save energy needed for hot water, and minimise costs for customers.

Minimising water use

- Showering is one of the leading ways we use water in the home, accounting for 20 percent of residential indoor water use. Selecting showers with a lower flow rate has benefits relating to both reduced water use and reduced hot water energy.
- The design of roofs and gutters need to take additional rainfall into consideration, and the collection and use of rainwater should be considered.
- Water bills can be reduced by half by reusing rainwater in toilets, washing machines and outdoors.

Reduction of energy and water use by engaging customers

- Facilitating early engagement and conversations will provide customers with advice to help change patterns of energy and water use.
- Changing behaviours can make a significant contribution to climate change and a zero carbon or carbon positive future. We will provide the best up-to-date information to our customers.

Sovereign homes will: Have a simple approach to moving towards zero carbon

Climate change

- We aim to have homes which do not contribute negatively to climate change and which are resilient to its impacts.
- Reducing the contribution of new homes to climate change means aiming for zero carbon dwellings. Initially zero carbon for regulated energy, then zero carbon for all energy including appliances, and finally zero carbon for all energy used to build the dwelling as well.
- Climate change may lead to increased rainfall during the winter months, and higher temperatures during the summer months as well as increasingly violent storms.
- Our long-term target is to achieve zero carbon homes which save energy and create an equal amount of energy that they use on an annual basis. We are committed to achieving net zero carbon by 2050.
- Off-site manufacture, modular and full pre-finished volumetric construction achieves high levels of carbon-reduction and long-term sustainable benefits.
- The circular economy will be considered through each stage of the design process, recycling and reusing as much material as possible.



Left:
PV panels carefully
located on roofs

Sovereign homes will: Have a simple approach to moving towards zero carbon

Steps to achieving zero carbon

The aim will be to meet and exceed the EU, UK, London and Bristol targets by 2030 and to reach the RIBA 2030 Climate Change Challenge targets. This will ensure that a climate change of more than 1.5OC will be avoided.

Both RIBA Challenge 2030 and housing legislation suggest that no new gas installations are proposed by 2025. The operational energy, embodied carbon and potable water use should gradually be reduced.

- In addition to the fabric first criteria, overheating, daylight and air quality matters will be taken into consideration and any issues will be resolved at the very early stages of the design.
- Based on the suggested Pre-Manufactured Value progress (PMV), 95% of all dwellings are encouraged to replace most of traditional practices with off-site activity.
- A fabric first approach will be initially adopted, prioritising design and construction that minimise the need for heating and cooling.

Finally, an aim of producing 100% Building Information Modelling models by 2030 has been set.



Right:
Modular homes
under construction

Image credit: ilke Homes

Sovereign homes will: Have a simple approach to moving towards zero carbon

Embodied carbon

As well as construction, there is a move to a more holistic, whole life definition of sustainability. Embodied energy and carbon will be minimised as far as practicable by:

- Using lower carbon and recycled content materials and locally available materials where possible.
- Re-using materials if possible.
- Minimising waste.
- Designing the buildings to be able to change their use over time to minimise future refurbishments.
- Transporting materials with low-carbon vehicles.

- Considering modular off-site construction systems.
- Detailing to be long life and robust.
- Maximising structural efficiency, since most of the embodied carbon lies in the structure.
- A whole life carbon analysis (LCA Analysis) of building elements can incorporate all the above. A target of 300kgCO₂e/m² for domestic buildings as set by RIBA will be aimed for.
- Current dwellings use approximately twice that amount, so a 100m² home will use 60 tonnes of CO₂ before it is occupied.
- A new home will use approximately 3.5 tonnes of CO₂ every year, so over a 30 year period a new home costs approximately 95 tonnes including the CO₂ from construction.
- To achieve zero carbon homes we will need to generate renewable energy from the new homes and to offset the CO₂ produced during their construction.
- Cost and other potential design implications will be carefully examined for each solution.
- Cost in use to be reviewed at each gateway stage.

Below:
Sustainable building
fabric



Image credit: Greencore Construction

Sovereign places will: Promote a healthy environment

Approach to Sustainability

- A sustainability strategy for each site covering carbon emissions, ecology, materials, water use and flooding.
- For flooding resilience care should be taken to assess the risks of individual sites over the long term, and where development is happening in flood risk areas, then ensuring that materials and systems are chosen to be resilient and that access to the homes can be maintained during flood events.
- The landscape should use biodiverse systems like swales to cope with rainfall instead of underground systems, as swales and suds create interest and variety in the landscape and add to the richness of a place.
- Landscape design and tree planting to provide shading in summer, reducing impact of wind on heat loss, and increasing resilience of ground conditions.
- Efficient landscape irrigation: mindful zoning of plants of similar water needs.



Left:
Plenty of natural light
and ventilation

Sovereign places will: Promote a healthy environment

Material selection

Choose materials of low-embodied energy.

- Minimise use of concrete: concrete is very energy intensive. Timber on the other hand has a negative footprint at the product stage due to the trees sequestering CO₂e.
- The embodied impact of the choice of material for floor coverings provided to new homes should be considered along with ongoing maintenance and cost in use.
- If carpets are required, effort should be made to ensure they have an Environmental Product Declaration. Hemp and other similar materials are all low impact alternatives to wool/nylon carpets.
- Timber cladding in facades: picking the cladding with the lowest impacts can present significant savings both initially at product stage and over the life cycle as that cladding gets replaced. Cladding should be appropriate for the location of the building (weathering in coastal locations does not lend itself to timber) and safety of the material in relation to the building type must be addressed.
- Recycled landscape materials: use of recycled aggregate in landscaping. Depending on site (or local availability) recycled aggregate can often be a cost neutral (or even cost-benefit) alternative.



Above:
Homes under construction

Left:
Timber frame homes



Sovereign homes will: Empower customers through technology



Use of technology

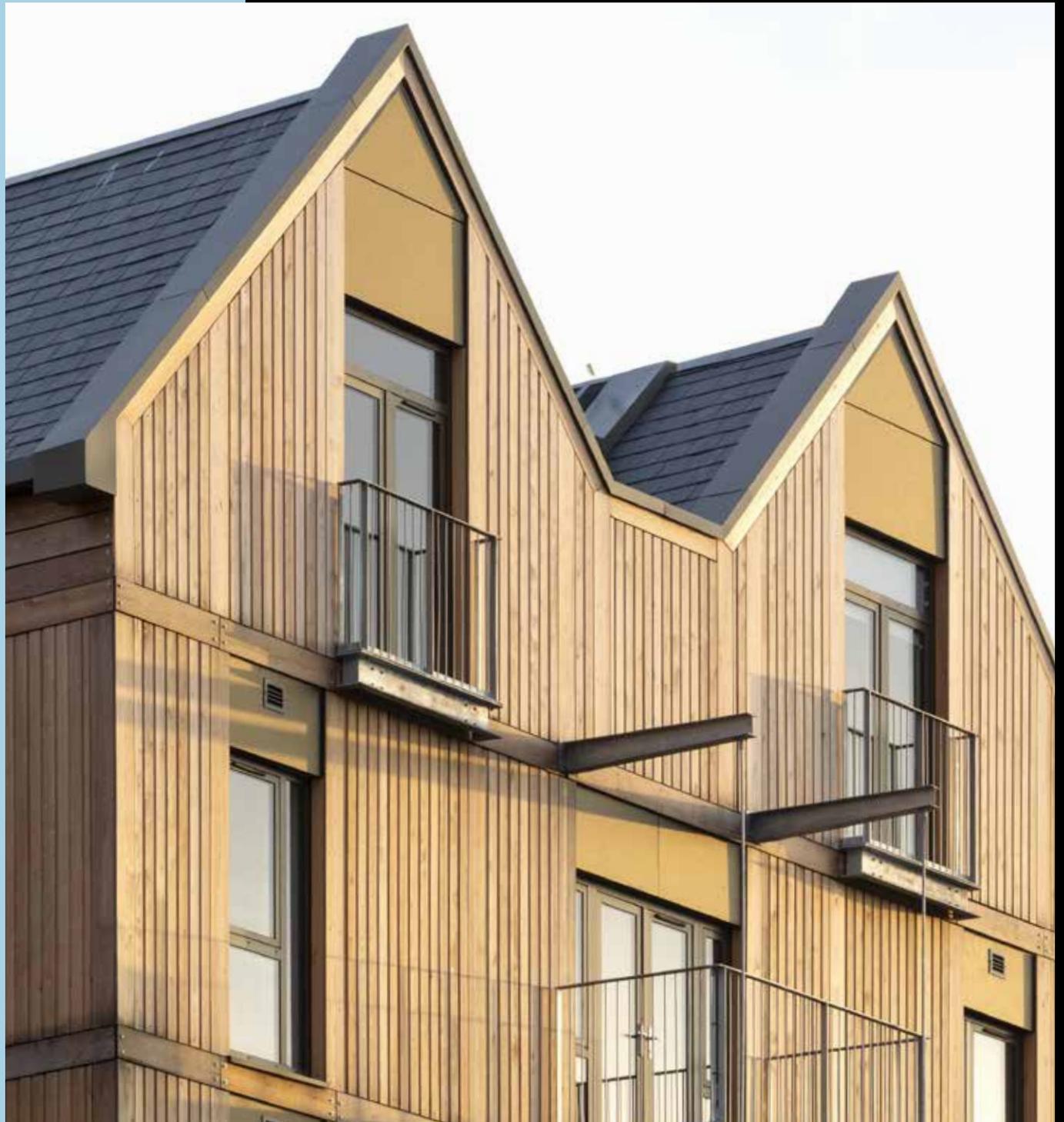
- The improvement of the National Grid with the introduction of PV panels and wind turbines means that electricity is the green fuel of the future. From 2025 new homes will not use gas and we will move to electricity for heating and cooking. This will mean the widespread adoption of heat pumps for domestic heating and hot water.
- As more PV systems are added to the grid and as more nuclear and wind turbines are added, homes will become greener.
- New technology should be smart in design and usage to minimise the need for customer interaction.
- We can expect new technologies such as storage batteries to be common in homes as we use more electric vehicles and charge them overnight.
- Appliances and Smart controls: high efficiency appliances may be offered as an upgrade package for purchasers if not within budget.
- Smart controls: ability to control heating remotely via mobile phone will improve convenience and savings.



Left:
Air Source Heat
Pumps

Far left:
Integrated
Photovoltaics

Image credit: HTA Design



To find out more about Sovereign's Homes and Place Standard, please contact us:

Email: HomesandPlace@sovereign.org.uk

Sovereign Housing Association Ltd

Homes and Place
Sovereign House
Basing View
Basingstoke RG21 4FA

Phone: 0300 5000 926

Sovereign Housing Association Limited is charitable
CORP-31322 May21inh