
The Farrell Review of architecture and the built environment

A response from the Berkeley Group



This document contains the Berkeley Group's response to the Farrell Review and the results of our latest market research exploring Londoners' attitudes to architecture and design.

We focused our response
to the Farrell Review on
one question (Q1.2)

How can the 'everyday' quality of our housing, public spaces and buildings be significantly improved?

Berkeley believes that the quality of places and buildings should be at the heart of local plan-making and decision-taking. Eight actions can help achieve this:

1. Embed the idea of Social Sustainability into the design and planning of all new housing and mixed-use development.
2. Engage with the community at the earliest stage and design in a collaborative way.
3. Empower the public and their decision makers to contribute effectively by routinely offering them design training.
4. Enhance the culture, competence and capacity of planning authorities.
5. Ensure that design review is adequately resourced and widely available.
6. Establish consistent design standards which are clear in their purpose, aim high and allow for imaginative solutions.
7. Design and build for the long term.
8. Use public land and publicly funded projects to demonstrate how good new housing can be.

Embed the idea of Social Sustainability into the design and planning of all new housing and mixed-use development.

Social sustainability is about people's quality of life, now and in the future. It describes the extent to which a neighbourhood supports individual and collective well-being. It combines design of the physical environment with a focus on how the people who live in and use a space relate to each other and function as a community.

It is enhanced by development which provides the right infrastructure to support a strong social and cultural life, opportunities for people to get involved, and scope for the place and the community to evolve.

Focusing on quality of life and community strength can deliver real benefits by ensuring that new communities maintain their value over the long term. It means that new housing developments are more likely to become successful places, supporting residents to cope with the increasingly complex societal changes the UK will face over the next decade.

The 'social role' of sustainable development is defined on page 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012). When local authorities and communities evaluate proposals, they should now be looking beyond the environmental impact and seeking new development that delivers positive social outcomes.

There should be active encouragement for development proposals to demonstrate how social sustainability will be nurtured in their design and then measured over time.

A proven methodology for measuring social sustainability is already available, developed by the University of Reading and Social Life with the Berkeley Group. A case study showing how this works in practice, focused on the regeneration of Kidbrooke Village in the Royal Borough of Greenwich, is available here:

<http://www.berkeleygroup.co.uk/media-centre/reports-and-magazines>

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Engage with the community at the earliest stage and design in a collaborative way with stakeholders.

Development works best as a three way partnership between land owners, the Council and the local community. Land owners and Councils have a duty to lead. Local communities should be seen as essential partners and involved from the outset of a project. Understanding their experience of a locality and its culture, and their aspirations for its future, are an essential part of the process.

There should be active encouragement for an engagement strategy to accompany all applications (other than the most minor), setting out what has taken place, how this has influenced proposals, and what the on-going arrangements for engagement will be.

The regeneration of Woodberry Down in Hackney offers a strong example of best practice, available here: <http://www.berkeley-group.co.uk/media-centre/reports-and-magazines> This process involved a dedicated engagement team, based on site, and a residents design panel.

3

Empower the public and their decision makers to contribute effectively by offering them design training.

People can participate more effectively in discussions and workshops if their understanding of architecture and placemaking is enhanced. Education should start early - at school. Learning about the built environment, and using it as a resource for teaching other subjects, should be actively encouraged in schools, particularly at key stage 2 and 3. This will also help deliver the outcomes Government seeks from the National Curriculum.

Most adults also benefit from support and training. It helps everyone contribute effectively to debates about the merits of new development. On some sites, Berkeley has paid for structured training, facilitated by an architect, to enhance residents' design skills, helping them assess architectural drawings and read two dimensional plans with confidence.

Above all, local councillors and Planning Committee members deserve support. They have to make critical decisions on increasingly complex development proposals. An ongoing programme of design training should be promoted by the Local Government Association and run by organisations such as the RIBA and the RTPI. This should be mandatory for anyone acting as the chair of a Planning Committee and available to all councillors acting in a relevant capacity.

4

Enhance the culture, competence and capacity of planning authorities.

Building more homes and better places depends on a Council's ability to show leadership and make decisions quickly. Solving the current housing crisis demands a shift in political culture, and planning teams in local authorities with enough resource to be strong partners.

Our experience is that when planning teams are adequately resourced and have the expertise to recognise and enable good design, then high quality developments are delivered much more quickly.

Councillors themselves must also engage more - and earlier - in the planning process so they understand proposals for their area from the start.

For example, in the London Boroughs of Southwark and Tower Hamlets, applicants can present emerging proposals to the planning committee, while the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham holds site review meetings with members to brief them on major development proposals. Likewise, in the Borough of Lambeth, regular technical briefings with members help to maintain their engagement throughout the process. These kinds of opportunities enable early feedback on Members' concerns, priorities and positive aspects of the proposals.

Changing the culture of planning is just as important as getting the policy framework right.

5

Ensure that design review is adequately resourced and widely available.

An effective system of design review which results in support for a well-designed scheme gives confidence to both the developer and the planning authority. This produces better and swifter decisions.

Consulting an authoritative design panel should be encouraged for medium and large scale developments and the panel's support for a proposal should be seen as a material consideration by the planning committee.

Panels must have a substantive level of expertise, have local representation, and be administered by a body accountable for the quality of service. It is our view that developers will contribute to the cost of a review system if they have confidence in its effectiveness.

6

Establish consistent design standards which are clear in their purpose, aim high and allow for imaginative solutions.

We believe that the space standards promoted in the London Plan have improved the quality of housing in the Capital. This part of London's Housing SPG has a clear objective, based on evidence. Although the minimum areas are significantly larger than the prevailing sizes constructed at the time of publication, they allow designers freedom to find the best solution.

Logically, if this has worked in London it should be considered nationwide. The need to provide the right amount of habitable space is the same throughout the country. It would therefore be rational to set national mandatory standards for minimum areas and ceiling heights in all new build housing.

In general, when standards are based on inflexible rules they stifle the opportunity for innovation, making it hard to respond to the individuality of a site. They can even result in designs which miss the original aims of the standards.

However, in our experience, standards can support good design when they avoid duplication, are not overly prescriptive and use a *required score* methodology.

7

Design and build for the long term.

The quality of new residential development has come a long way in the last ten years. The standard of architecture and urban design in British housing has improved dramatically since the Nineties. But the issue of long-term management and maintenance remains unresolved.

In the first instance, places and buildings must be designed with an understanding of how they will be managed in the future and with the flexibility to accommodate change. This ranges from the use of materials and construction with a long life-cycle, to leaving space for uses which have not yet been envisaged. No one knows who will be living on a new development in ten years time so we have to design for adaptation.

Building for the long-term is often done better on major projects with a single landowner, or by a partnership of landowners, with a long-term commitment. They have an incentive to design and build with future maintenance and management in mind, and they are able to use the experience of early phases when planning later development. Clearly, when a developer retains an investment in a location for a decade or more they have good reason to think in terms of stewardship.

The real challenge lies in motivating speculative development to operate this way too. Berkeley usually creates a single set of management arrangements delivered through one external managing agent, covering the oversight of public space, the buildings and internal areas. We look for a long-term relationship with managing agents so that they understand our business and ambitions.

Increasingly, we also look to create structures and governance arrangements that allow residents to manage aspects of a development. At the Hamptons, for instance, in South West London, service charges go towards the community hall, park and wetlands. Once St James has left the site, the upkeep will be run by a management company which reports into a Residents Association. This gives the residents a controlling influence over public space. More detail on this site can be found here:

http://www.berkeleygroup.co.uk/media/pdf/1/6/St_James_development_at_The_Hamptons.pdf



Use public land and publicly funded projects to demonstrate how good new housing can be.

The importance of good design and the built environment needs to be championed by the Government - across Government. One of the biggest opportunities to do this lies in the use of surplus public land.

In 2012, the Government's Expert Advisory Panel identified 18 sites nationally with the capacity for 23,000 new homes that could be brought forward in the next 2 years. We note with concern the slow pace at which this opportunity is being grasped and the apparent lack of appetite in the Ministry of Defence and Department of Health to engage.

Swift use of surplus public land can not only help address the housing crisis, it can be used to demonstrate how good new housing can be. It can help shift public attitudes to development and help to raise the universal standard of new housebuilding. This is not a new idea: English Partnerships sought to deliver exemplar developments (such as Allerton Bywater). But it is equally valid to current Government initiatives, such as the Deputy Prime Minister's plans for new garden cities.

The Government should expect high quality design from the private sector and ensure it from all projects originating in the public sector. The bidding process for release of public sector land must give adequate weighting to design quality and be used to embed ideas such as social sustainability. The Government above all has a reason to balance the immediate financial return against the long term value of a well-designed neighbourhood.

Appendix

Londoner's attitudes to architecture and design

Introduction

Background

In 2013 the Berkeley Group sponsored the London Festival of Architecture. Berkeley wished to measure opinion in Greater London about how important, or not, architecture and design is to peoples' lives.

- The research involved 500 online interviews with members of the Ipsos Access Panel.
- The sample was representative of the Greater London population in terms of age, gender and whether they lived in Inner or Outer London.
- Data has been weighted to the known population profile (by age, gender, tenure and area).
- The survey was conducted between 24-27 May 2013.
- Results are subject to sampling tolerances; e.g. +4.4% for a 50% finding.
- Where results do not sum to 100% this may be because of rounding.
- Full data tables are available at: www.ipsos-mori.com

Good architecture & design is considered important to London's success and to local areas

Six in ten London residents (62%) say good architecture and design is important to the success of London rating this as 7-10 in a 1-10 scale where 1 is not at all important, and 10 is very important.

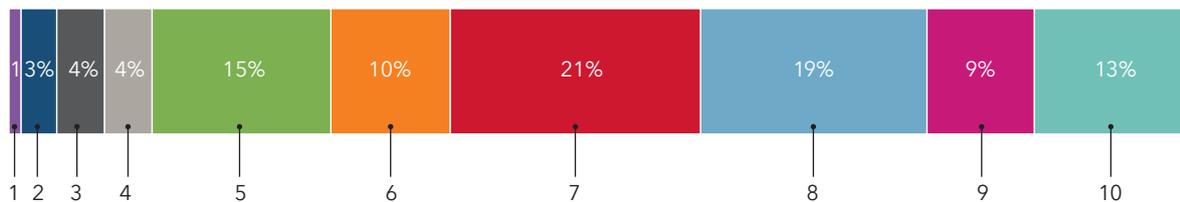
By contrast, 9% rate it 1-3.

Seven in ten (71%) say it is important that buildings and public spaces in their local area look good and work well.

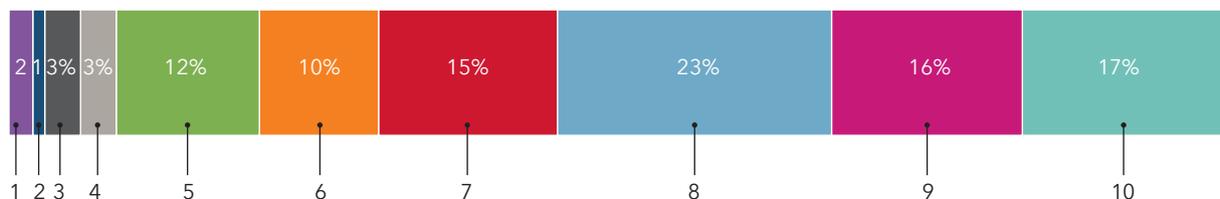
How important ...

(on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all important and 10 is very important)

... is good architecture and design to the success of London?



... is it that the buildings and public space in your local area look good and work well?



Base: 500 online interviews with adult (16+) residents in Greater London, 24-27 May 2013
Source: Ipsos MORI for Berkeley Group

People say architecture & design affects their quality of life

Just under six in ten Londoners (59%) believe the quality of architecture and design affects their overall quality of life.

- Those living in Outer London are more likely to say architecture and design have no or not much effect on their quality of life (44% vs 32% in Inner London).

Those living in private rented housing are more likely to say it affects them 'a great deal' (23% vs 13% for owner occupiers).

Those living in semi-detached or detached housing are the most likely to say it doesn't affect them at all (14% vs 6% for those living in an apartment or flat).

To what extent does architecture and design in London affect your overall quality of life?



Base: 500 online interviews with adult (16+) residents in Greater London, 24-27 May 2013
Source: Ipsos MORI for Berkeley Group

On balance, Londoners feel building fewer homes with higher design standards is better for London

Respondents were given the estimated number of new homes London needs (32,000 new homes a year*) and asked 'Thinking now about getting the balance right between the quality and the amount of new housing, which, if either, of the two options do you think would be best for London?':

- Build fewer homes with higher design standard
- Build more homes with lower design standards
- Neither of these
- Don't know

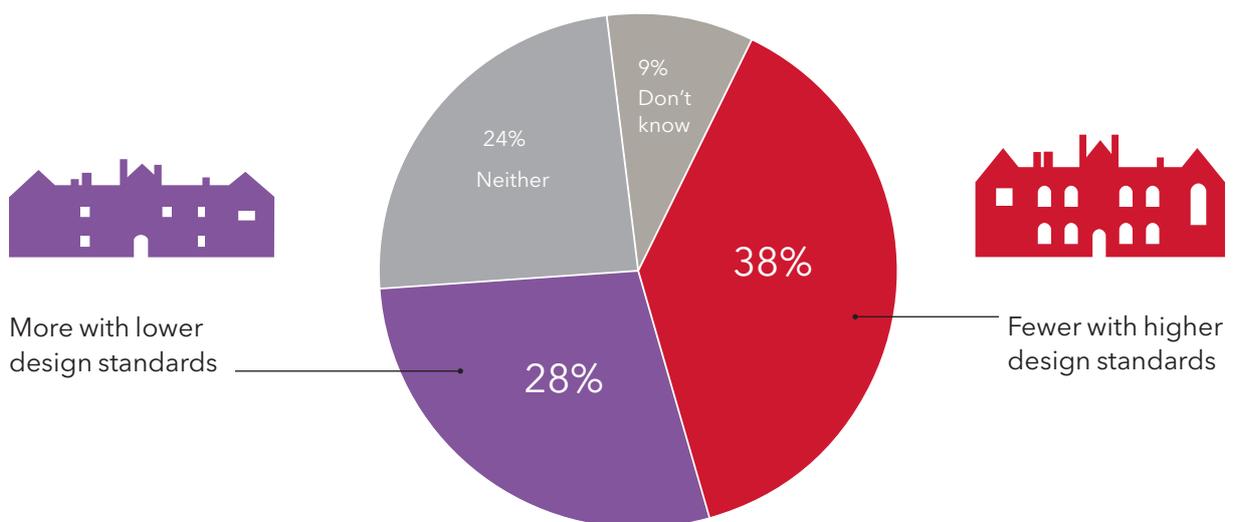
Nearly four in ten (38%) think building fewer homes with higher design standards would be better for London compared to 28% who think building more homes with lower design standards would be better.

24% choose neither of the options and 9% answered 'don't know'.

These patterns in opinion are fairly consistent across different groups of Londoners but :

- Those aged 55 or older are more likely to say neither of the options is best for London (32% vs 24% overall).
- Those who say design does not affect their quality of life at all are more likely to say building more homes with lower design standards is best for London (42% vs 28% overall).

What would be better for London?



Base: 500 online interviews with adult (16+) residents in Greater London, 24-27 May 2013
Source: Ipsos MORI for Berkeley Group

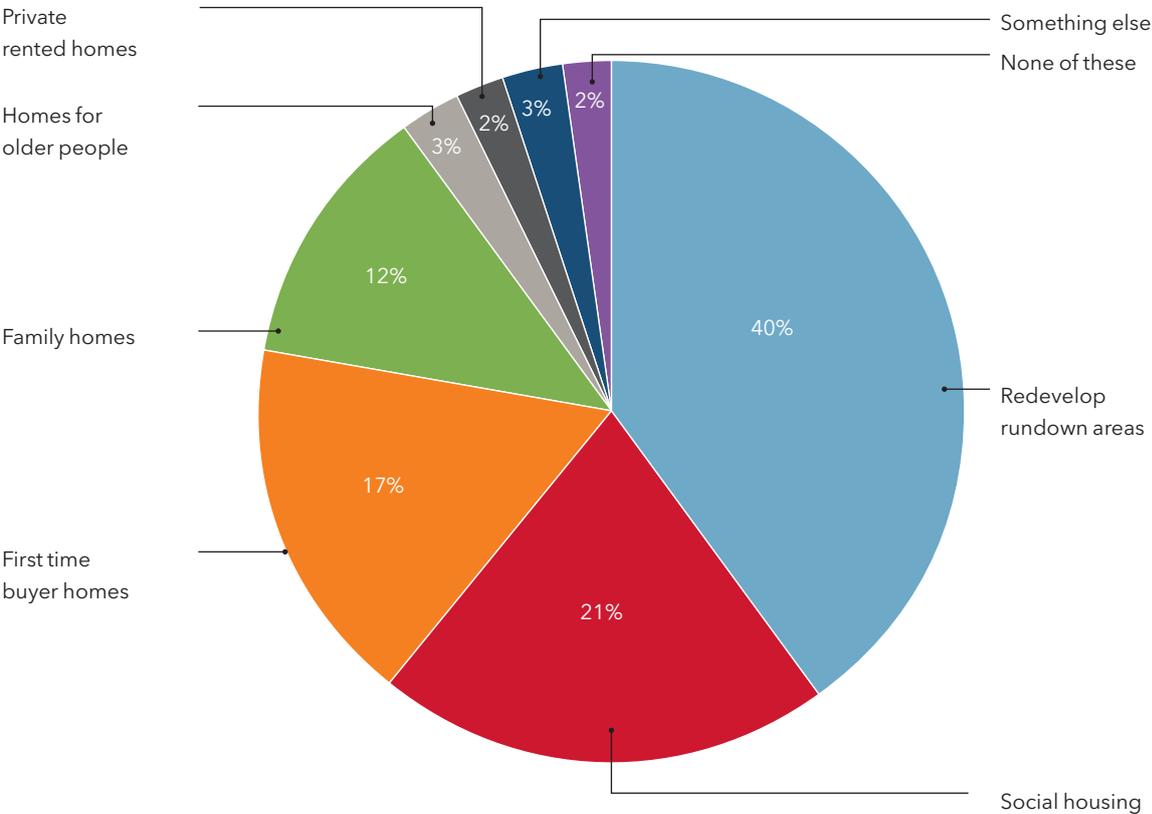
Londoners' circumstances determine what type of home building they think the Mayor should prioritise...

40% of Londoners prioritise re-development of run down areas rather than a type of tenure or new home.

There are no differences in priorities between inner/outer London, nor by the type of property people live in, but priorities *do* reflect personal tenure circumstances:

- Owner occupiers' priority is redeveloping rundown areas (47% prioritise this option vs 40% overall).
- Those living in social housing prioritise more social housing being built (39% vs 21% overall).
- Those living in private rented housing and those aged 16-34 want more homes for first time buyers (26% and 24% respectively prioritise this compared to 17% overall).
- Those with children living at home want more family homes (19% vs 12% overall).

Which one should be the Mayor's priority?



Base: 500 online interviews with adult (16+) residents in Greater London, 24-27 May 2013
Source: Ipsos MORI for Berkeley Group

Apartments/flats and terraced housing top the list for types of new build

Apartments/flats, terraced houses and semi-detached houses are the most mentioned properties which should be built: they are identified from a list by 52%, 41% and 36% respectively.

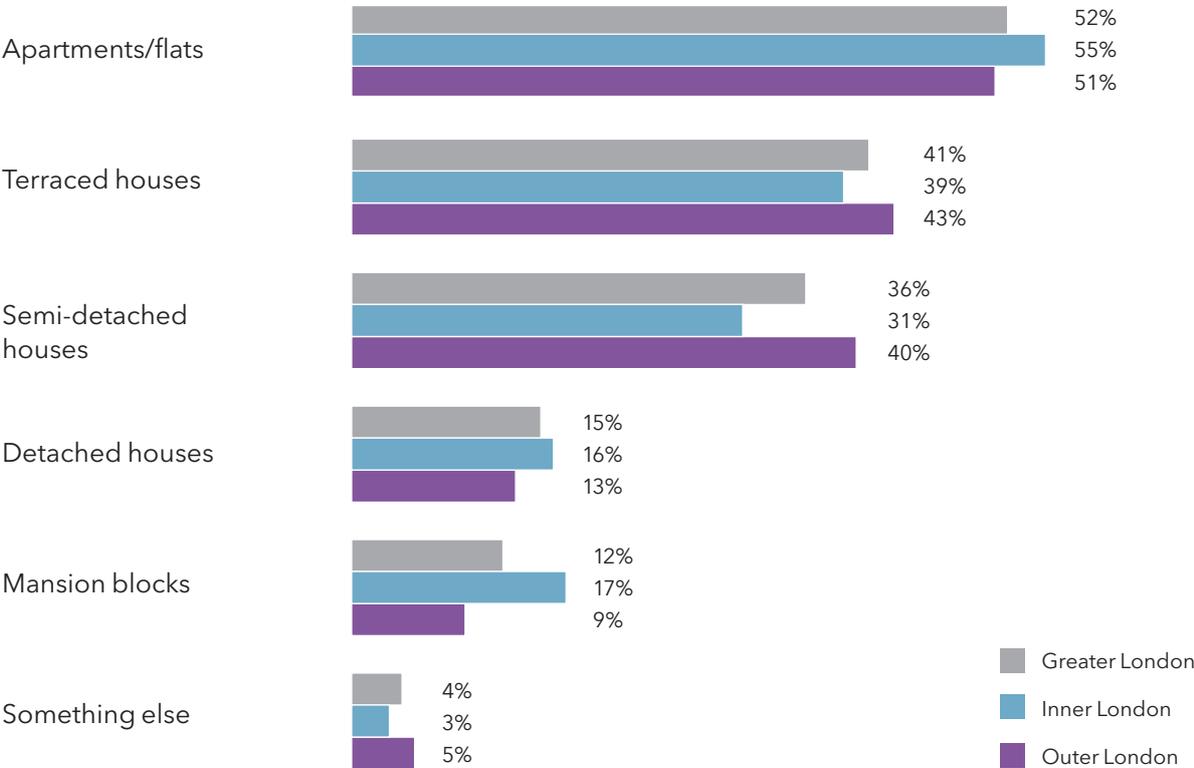
The type of property people think should be built reflects their own property type:

- 64% of those who live in flats say more flats are needed.

- 50% of those who live in terraced houses say more terraced housing is needed.
- 52% of those who live in semi-detached or detached houses say more semi-detached homes are needed.

Those living in Inner London are more likely to feel that more mansion blocks should be built (17% vs 9% in Outer London).

What kind of housing should be built?



Base: 500 online interviews with adult (16+) residents in Greater London, 24-27 May 2013
 Source: Ipsos MORI for Berkeley Group