

17 June 2019 by Mark Wilding

One of the country's leading planning schools is to carry out an audit of design quality in housing developments across England, it has been announced.



New homes: Bartlett School of Planning embarking on a national review of housing design quality. Image: CPRE

The audit will be conducted by University College London's Bartlett School of Planning and funded by the countryside campaign group the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) and the Place Alliance, a non-profit network whose supporters include the Planning Officers Society, Civic Voice, and the Local Government Information Unit.

Design audits were previously carried out by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), a government design adviser that was disbanded in 2011.

CABE conducted three regional audits, which together covered the whole of England, between 2005 and 2007.

The CPRE said the new audit would use CABE's methodology to assess at least 100 large residential projects across England and is intended to provide data to allow comparisons between regions and different approaches to development.

According to CPRE, the external residential environments of developments will be assessed against 17 criteria including housing types, community facilities, public transport, highways, parking, environmental impact, landscape, character, and architectural quality.

The Bartlett School of Planning will be supported by professional advisers from consultancies Arup, JTP, Spawforths and URBED, and a network of volunteers, CPRE said.

An advisory group includes the Home Builders Federation, the Urban Design Group, the Academy of Urbanism, the Design Council, the UK Green Building Council, and the Institute for Highways and Transportation.

CPRE said work is expected to be completed in the autumn and the results will be submitted to the government's Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission.

The project will provide an opportunity to "look back and see how the design of housing developments has changed over the last decade", said CPRE, and "provide a baseline against which to measure progress on place-making in new housing development".

Matthew Carmona, professor at the Bartlett School of Planning, is leading the research. He said: "We know much about the numbers of houses we are delivering nationally, but almost nothing about their quality.

"This housing design audit represents an ambitious attempt to address that gap and provide a baseline from which to make more informed judgements in the future about the standard of housing design that we should be expecting, both nationally and locally."

Design quality has been cited as a key aspect of government housing policy by ministers James Brokenshire and Kit Malthouse.

Last month, Malthouse told an audience of planners and architects that design quality would be crucial to overcoming the concerns of homeowners about the impact of development.

"A critical part of the mission to get to this mythical target of 300,000 houses a year is, if we're going to get local people to accept those houses, we have to build something they're going to like," he said.

The housing minister has also pledged that the government's housing delivery test will not be allowed to compromise the design quality of new homes.

A *Planning* feature looking at how inspectors are interpreting new design quality policies in the 2018 NPPF can be found [here](#).

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