

PRESS RELEASE

Mayor's Housing Design Guide sets high standards for future London housing and an end to hobbit homes

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The London Housing Design Guide was launched today at the London Housing Strategy Conference in Croydon. The LDA commissioned mæ to work with them to develop the Guide, which simplifies the range of other housing design guidance, such as Lifetime Homes and Housing Quality Indicators. It aims to set a new benchmark for the design and quality of London's housing, by clarifying what is expected from the outset of a new development.

The Guide makes the position of London's Mayor clear – the architectural, environmental and aesthetic quality of homes will be a key consideration in housing investment and planning decisions. Despite current economic conditions, London will not be taking the approach of relaxing or lowering standards to reduce regulatory burdens and transaction costs on developers. Whilst appreciating the difficulties confronted by the development industry at the moment, the standards set out here should act as incentives to investment rather than as burdens on resources. Developers' costs are often more affected by changing requirements than by upfront quality thresholds, and early clarity on standards and consistency in maintaining them will actually increase certainty and reduce costs.

Boris Johnson, Mayor of London said: *"I am determined to deliver the highest quality homes for the long term, innovating in the best tradition of this unique city, and using all the tools available to make this happen. To continue to build cramped 'hobbit homes' is indefensible."*

He goes on to say *"The publication of the draft London Housing Design Guide underpins a commitment to the promotion of excellence in design quality and sustainability for all new housing."*

mæ LLP architects, who were commissioned to develop the Guide by the London Development Agency's design resource arm 'Design for London', reviewed over 300 existing housing design requirements, identifying conflicts between standards and undertaking design testing where needed to determine what would be appropriate for London.

Alex Ely, Partner at mæ said: *"The resulting Guide has distilled the plethora of existing guidance into a more manageable set of key requirements, focusing on the factors that will make the most difference to the quality of housing within the unique context of London."*

The guide is based around 6 themes, taking in issues of delivering housing at appropriate densities, providing family housing, the importance of well proportioned

streets, access to local transport, services and amenities, and how the size and flexibility of space, daylighting, and access to adequate private open space all contribute to creating sustainable and tranquil homes. It sets minimum standards in a number of key areas including: internal space standards, balcony sizes, dual aspect, floor to ceiling heights, quantity of storage space, and the number of units off a corridor.

Much of London's recently built housing has been of poor quality*, with space standards that are well below the European average**. It is therefore hoped that this Guide will help to ensure that London's growing population is housed well, and in a manner that befits a world-class city.

Notes to Editors:

- The London Housing Strategy Consultation Conference will launch a draft version of the London Housing Design Guide for consultation. Initial responses will feed into the consultation process for both the draft Guide and the wider London Housing Strategy. The event is being run in partnership with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and will be chaired by Sunand Prasad, President of RIBA and member of the Mayor's Design Panel.
- The GLA and HCA will use the Guide and its requirements as the basis for funding allocations in London. It is also intended to become a London Plan Supplementary Planning Document.
- mæ is an innovative young architectural practice set up in 2001 by partners Michael Howe and Alex Ely. They have considerable experience in housing design, and are on architect panels for: East Thames Group, Swan Housing, Southern Housing, the London Development Agency and Sheffield City Council. They are currently working with Urban Design London delivering a series of urban design foundation training and planning workshops for London's 33 Local Authorities. Full details of mæ's work can be found on their website at www.mae-llp.co.uk.
- mæ has written a number of best practice publications for CABE (the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) including 'Delivering Great Places to Live' and developed policy such as the Building for Life Standard for CABE and the HBF. Through their work advising government and its agencies they are tuned into changing policy contexts and the market forces that shape housing demand and house building opportunities.
- * Less than 20% of recently completed developments in London were rated as good or very good by CABE.
- ** New homes in London have some of the smallest rooms in Europe – with an average size of a newly built home of only 76m², compared with 109m² in Germany and 88m² in Ireland. A study in 2004, 'Crowded House' by Shelter, evidenced that overcrowding can lead to serious long-term health issues.
- For further information contact Alex Ely on 020 7704 6060 or email office@mae-llp.co.uk