



Courtesy: Sarah Considine, GLA

## Housing Design Guidance & Standards

15/09/2021

- **It's time for the development sector to move beyond 'working to the standard' and no more, seeing them as a springboard, not a ceiling.** We are facing changing times – people will need greater flexibility going forwards, for our health, and to protect the climate. Standards and guidance need to work at every scale – design codes are place based rules which can also help.
- **Standards have changed over the years and vary whether you are inside or outside London.** London has led the way with the London Plan documents, alongside the good growth agenda and London Plan Guidance, supported by the Mayor's Design Advocates and emerging tools such as the Delivering Quality Homes handbook.
- **London has a clear spatial vision and roadmap used by authorities to use design to determine where growth can be located.** London's strength in the area of guidance and standards complements the national picture, informs it and draws from national guidance, sitting under the NPPF and drawing from both the National Design Guide and now also the National Model Design Code. The mutual relationship can be a strength to help the practice of design quality 'step up'.
- **Standards and guidance are not only about compliance – to work well they need to sit alongside and process to support quality at every stage.** Quality can easily be eroded through the development process – policy in the London Plan sets out how quality can be maintained. The process needs to tackle key issues at the right time and very often early in the development process, leading to easier compliance with guidance and standards further down the line – up from work for an easier ride further on! The Delivering Quality Homes Handbook asks clients to define quality outcomes and move beyond minimum standards in their design thinking and quality processes.
- **Good work on standards can be eroded by different standards for permitted development – use can be made of prior approval to maximise adherence; however, this can be limited due to the restricted scope.** And there is a postcode lottery for deprived areas when it comes to standards, watch out if you see this happening in your area.
- **Standards are pointless unless they are adhered to and monitored to see they are working.** We can't assume that all bases in design will be covered. You need to watch for the aspects which *aren't* subject to standards, such as the size of a living space – these are the areas that are likely to be squeezed. However, challenges of meeting standards can result in really interesting spaces. And when reviewing design standards, some flex is needed – limited exceptions can be made where the overall outcomes far exceed those the standard would provide.



*Courtesy: Sarah Considine, GLA*

## Speakers:

**Elanor Warwick**, Head of Strategic Policy & Research, Clarion Housing

**Sarah Considine**, Senior Project Manager, GLA

**Elliot Kemp**, Policy Team Leader, GLA

**Alan Smithies**, Senior Strategic Planner, GLA

**Alison Mayer**, Senior Area Manager – North West Area Team, Housing & Land, GLA

**Valerie Conway**, Development Consultant, David Lock Associates

**Debbi Lloyd**, Development Consultant, David Lock Associates

**Antje Saunders**, Director, Allies & Morrison

**Luke Dewey**, Senior Associate, Metropolitan Workshop

**Attendees: 91**