

# Building Health

Creating and enhancing places for healthy, active lives

## Blueprint for action



## ***Building Health – An introduction***

The **National Heart Forum** is the leading alliance of over 45 national organisations working to reduce the risk of coronary heart disease in the UK.

**Living Streets** is the champion of streets and public spaces for people on foot, working on practical projects to create safe, vibrant and healthy streets for all.

The **Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)** is the Government's advisor on architecture, urban design and public space.

Together we share an interest in nurturing an environment that has a positive impact on public health.

*Building Health* is the result of a partnership of these three organisations. The project sets out to increase awareness of the public health role of organisations concerned with urban design and improving the public realm, in particular in relation to population levels of physical activity, and to facilitate implementation of good health-promoting practice.

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Designed by Information Design Workshop

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The full report, *Building Health: Creating and Enhancing Places for Healthy, Active Lives: What Needs to Be Done?*, can be downloaded from [www.heartforum.org.uk](http://www.heartforum.org.uk), or [www.livingstreets.org.uk](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk) or [www.cabe.org.uk](http://www.cabe.org.uk).



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## Acknowledgements

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*Building Health* is the result of a partnership of the National Heart Forum, Living Streets and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), and we are grateful for the input received from staff members of all three organisations.

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# Introduction

Two hundred years ago, physical activity was a necessity of life, with most work involving physical labour, and walking the predominant mode of transport. Today, we have removed many opportunities for physical activity from our lives, and low levels of physical activity now represent a significant public health challenge in the UK and around the world.

Evidence shows that regular physical activity contributes to the prevention and management of over 20 conditions and diseases, including coronary heart disease, diabetes, certain forms of cancer, and overweight and obesity. But how do we increase physical activity in today's busy world? In recent years there has been an increasing focus on the links between the built environment and physical activity – looking at how the layout of towns, cities and buildings can create everyday opportunities to be physically active. This field has enormous potential to influence population levels of physical activity and thereby improve health.

The National Heart Forum, Living Streets and CABI came together to explore this issue and commissioned *Building Health: Creating and Enhancing Places for Healthy, Active Lives: What Needs to Be Done?* That report, which is available from the National Heart Forum at [www.heartforum.org.uk](http://www.heartforum.org.uk), includes papers from leading experts and campaigners specialising in specific aspects of the built and natural environment. Each was asked to consider the main issues that may be contributing to the decline in rates of physical activity, and to suggest specific, practical and focused recommendations to reverse the trend. The recommendations were refined at an expert consensus meeting in December 2006, when a number of recommendations were identified as being high priority for action, in terms of potential impact and feasibility. These are highlighted in the text.

Those recommendations form the basis of this *Blueprint for Action*, which outlines key steps that Government, local authorities and professional organisations should take to increase levels of physical activity. The *Blueprint for Action* has been written for policy-makers, town and transport planners, architects, developers and public health professionals interested in creating a more activity-friendly environment, and will be used as the basis for an ongoing programme of advocacy and campaigning.

The detailed action plan on pages 6-19 of this *Blueprint for Action* needs to be seen in a broader context. There are enormous pressures on many parts of the public and private sectors, and a complex interrelationship between many aspects of public policy. At the expert consensus meeting, delegates outlined the following themes that should be considered when initiating a programme of change.

# The context for change

**Climate change and public health: converging policies.** Some see climate change and obesity as the two key issues of public policy in the 21st century. Shifting travel patterns from the car to walking and cycling addresses both issues.

**The policy-action gap.** Many aspects of public policy are supportive of the creation of environments for healthy physical activity. It is the translation of these principles into action on the ground that frequently causes problems. Local authorities are often the key agent of change, and yet it is becoming increasingly difficult to influence their agendas.

**The funding gap.** There are huge gaps in funding for modifications to the physical environment which would make it more conducive to healthy living. Many green spaces and facilities are being closed down and it is often difficult to secure funding to replace them.

**Shifting perceptions.** There needs to be a re-think so that activity-friendly public space is seen less as a luxury and more as a public health resource, and treated accordingly and protected, rather than being sold as a commodity. The value of high-quality public space is in the long term and should not be subjected to short-term economic considerations.

**The tipping point.** We need to seek a critical, positive ‘tipping point’ in public policy development, and take opportunities in current changes in the planning system, such as the drafting of new planning policy statements, or the release of new guidance such as the *Manual for Streets*.

**Health inequalities.** Many aspects of public policy on the environment do not have an explicit focus on reducing health inequalities. It will be critical to audit the development of any new policy on the environment to assess the impact it has on health inequalities.

**Joined-up policy.** The area is an excellent example of the need for joined-up government. This is not just a health issue – it requires a real joined-up action from all Government Departments that have an influence on shaping the world in which we live.

**Public Service Agreement.** There is an urgent need for a new cross-governmental public service agreement that focuses on the relationship between the environment and healthy physical activity.



# 1 Strategic

# planning



Strategic planning includes city, county and regional planning policy, embracing the dimensions of transport, housing, employment, services and environmental protection. In the UK context it therefore includes Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs), Local Transport Plans (LTPs) and Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). These set the context for more detailed and focused local-level planning.

Strategic decisions in the three key policy areas of housing, economic development and services, and transport are likely to influence levels of physical activity in the population. For example, if households are constrained by the housing market to live in places that are far away from their main connections with shops and workplaces, this will affect their travel mode choices and their degree of car dependence. In terms of economic development and services, government policy now actively discourages out-of-town retail provision. However, business parks – which are mostly

designed for ease of car access and are inconvenient and sometimes inhospitable for pedestrians and cyclists – continue to proliferate. The growth of transport is predominantly in the form of more and longer car trips. The vicious circle of growing car dependence, land-use change to facilitate car use, and increased inconvenience of non-motorised modes leading to further rises in car ownership, with its knock-on effects on climate change, is widely recognised. Furthermore, evidence shows that some transport schemes designed to ease congestion and reduce carbon emissions – bypasses, ring roads and park and ride schemes – even appear to have contributed to an overall decline in active travel.

The UK has a sound strategic planning system in place. The problem is not so much one of structures and broad principles, but interpretation and implementation – the policy/action gap.



## Government

**1.1 All Government Departments should be required to apply a 'health check' to every investment programme they initiate, focusing on the impact that the programme will have on levels of physical activity and other aspects of health.** This might be through a Health Impact Assessment, or a greater focus on health within Strategic Environmental Assessments. This applies particularly to the Treasury and major spending departments such as the Department for Transport, Department of Health, Department for Education and Skills, and Department of Trade and Industry.

**1.2 The Government should strengthen the guidelines for Community Strategies, Local Transport Plans, Regional Spatial Strategies, Local Development Frameworks, and Sustainability Appraisal to make health and physical activity (in partnership with sustainability) a key goal.**

**1.3 The Government should change the remit of arms-length organisations in public and privatised sectors ('quangos' and non-departmental government bodies) to include an obligation to promote active living and reduce greenhouse emissions.** This should also include organisations such as Royal Mail, health authorities, local authorities (in particular education authorities), water and energy agencies, transport authorities, Natural England, the Housing Corporation, Network Rail, and Regional Development Agencies.

## Government, professional organisations and universities

**1.4 The Government should promote, with professional organisations and universities, the integration of health-promoting principles in education and training for professionals such as transport engineers, town planners and environmental scientists.** This should include undergraduate and postgraduate education and continuing professional development. For example:

- Transport engineering should embrace transport planning, and should recognise the promotion of active travel as a key goal.
- Town planners should have health and well-being as their prime outcome, with a focus on understanding the development needs of each age group and type of household, based on real knowledge of travel behaviour.
- Environmental scientists (who are involved for example in Sustainability Appraisals or Environmental Impact Assessments) need to gain greater understanding of what makes for a healthy human habitat, and rebalance assessment so that human health is properly valued.

**1.5 Public health training needs to embrace an understanding of what makes for healthy towns and cities, so that public health specialists can be actively involved, for example, in developing Community Strategies and Local Development Frameworks.**



# Urban planning

The fountains, water features, lawns and paved areas in Peace Gardens, Sheffield, make it an attractive area for walking and social interaction.

The way a place is planned can have an enormous influence on how easy it is to walk around. 'Walkability' refers to the general attractiveness of a place to movement on foot. The decrease in walkability over recent years has resulted from decades of planning during which provision for pedestrians and cyclists was prioritised way below that for motor vehicles. People tend to walk more in mixed-use developments, where more than one land use can be found in the same location – for example, where residential, retail and office development are combined in the same area. Also, denser residential development tends to

create the demand for more local shops, as each dwelling is, on average, closer to the shops, and people are therefore more likely to walk to them.

Since the 1990s, the planning policy tide in the UK has turned decisively in favour of mixed-use, higher-density developments and the healthy modes of transport, but the application of this policy remains sporadic and often half-hearted. The tools are available, but they too often remain in the toolbox. Recent trends towards a return to lower densities and a growth of out-of-town shopping centres need to be resisted.



## Department for Transport

**2.1 The Department for Transport (DfT) should require local authorities not only to adopt the policy of prioritising pedestrians and cyclists in their transport policy statements, but also to produce an assessment of whether they have delivered that aspect of the policy as part of their annual plan** (whether Local Transport Plan, Borough Spending Plan or local implementation plan). This should include a breakdown of transport (and other) expenditure by transport mode benefited. Accordingly, the DfT should increasingly allocate proportionately more funds to supporting walking and cycling.

**2.2 The requirement for stand-alone Travel Plans for all significant trip-generating developments should be scrapped. Instead, Transport Assessments should be based on the achievement of a set proportion of journeys by each mode (e.g. walking, bike or car) to be agreed with planning authorities early in the planning process.** Too many Travel Plans are added on to the end of Transport Assessments and never acted upon. The initiatives in Travel Plans should be serious proposals which feed into the trip generation and modal split assumptions of the Transport Assessment itself.

## Government

**2.3 The Government should update Planning Policy Guidance 13.** A new Planning Policy Statement 13 should provide a much more robust basis for limiting car-dependent development, for using parking controls as a tool to discourage unnecessary car travel, and for promoting travel by non-car modes.

**2.4** The Government should sponsor the development of a robust and meaningful methodology for assessing the public transport accessibility of any given location. Current methodologies such as average walk times to bus stops are inadequate, although they do at least establish the principle. The Government should then require local planning authorities to define their areas in terms of public transport accessibility and to adopt minimum requirements for development types and densities (and maximum permitted parking levels) for each accessibility level. This will help to ensure that highly accessible areas are developed in ways which fully use the public transport services that are available, and discourage car ownership accordingly.

**2.5** The Government should commission or support research into, and dissemination of, good practice as regards the successful combination of low-car or car-free development, the

introduction of new local on-street parking controls (e.g. through Section 106 agreements), and the acceptance of legal agreements preventing occupiers of the new development (e.g. residents) from obtaining parking permits for such controlled areas.

## Local authority planning departments

**2.6** Local authority planning departments should require promoters of residential developments above a certain threshold size to prepare a statement explaining how residents would be able to walk, within a specified time, to a specified range of local services and facilities – for example, to a food shop, primary school or health centre. In due course, it should no longer be possible to build new homes in or on the edge of urban areas where the private car would be the only genuinely attractive option for travel for such basic needs. Such a policy tool could have a similar effect on residential development to that of the ‘sequential test’ on retail development (in which certain types or locations of land are developed before others, such as brownfield land before greenfield sites).

Urban planning needs to promote ‘walkability’. People will be more likely to walk if areas and streets are designed so that they are attractive to movement on foot.





An impression of how Exhibition Road in London could be transformed. The removal of road markings, traffic signals, signs, high kerbs, bollards and barriers can dramatically change the relationship between people, places and traffic. Speeds reduce, and the driver becomes a part of his or her surroundings.

# Streets and the public realm

Streets make up the most accessible and familiar component of our shared public space – what is often referred to as ‘the public realm’. As streets become less attractive, people are less inclined to spend time in them for social activities, and walking and cycling rates decline.

Over recent years, traffic engineering, which developed as a discipline focused closely on the efficient movement of motor vehicles, has become a separate profession from those other professions responsible for the public realm such as architecture, landscape and urban design. The policy of segregation – where traffic movement was kept separate from social exchange and interaction – established in the 1960s, appears to be at least partly responsible for the rapid decline

in levels of walking and cycling. The need for underpasses, overbridges, traffic signals, barriers and controls, implicit in achieving segregation, has reduced accessibility for non-motorised traffic.

The awareness, acceptance and implementation of the principles of shared space, and the creation of a public realm free of barriers for simple day-to-day movement and interaction, are essential if we are to achieve a step change in the quality and coherence of the UK’s public realm, and a more welcome and inclusive environment. To achieve this, the Government, local authorities and professional organisations need to take action at three parallel levels – the political level, the professional level, and with the public.



## Government

**3.1** The Department for Transport and Department for Communities and Local Government should carry out a review of their guidelines for the design of streets, public spaces and rural lanes, following on from the recent publication of the *Manual for Streets*, which gives guidance on effective street design. This should emphasise the principles of shared space, and the creation of a public realm free of barriers for simple day-to-day movement. The *Manual for Streets* should be expanded to cover higher-order streets and roads.

**3.2** The Government should give local authorities discretion to design streets appropriate to local circumstances and context. The Government should have central control over design standards only for motorways and trunk roads, and the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions order should be revised so that it does not apply to the urban environment.

**3.3** The Government should transfer responsibility for streets and public spaces from the Department for Transport to the Urban Policy Unit within the Department for Communities and Local Government, which in turn should develop close working arrangements with the Department of Health.

Remodelled in 2001, Blackett Street in Newcastle-upon-Tyne has no physical barriers or formal pedestrian crossings, yet injury accident rates have fallen despite an increase in the volume of pedestrians.

Far right: Seven Dials, in Covent Garden, London, was remodelled in 1996 to encourage human presence at the foot of the column in the centre, creating a safe and efficient traffic intersection.

## Local authorities

**3.4** Every local authority should be encouraged by Government to publish a 'public realm strategy', which encourages the informal and unconstrained use of streets and public spaces. Many local authorities already have a good public realm strategy, including Kensington & Chelsea, Southwark, and Nottingham City Council.

**3.5** Local authorities should take action to break down the conventional divide between traffic engineers and urban design. This should be done by introducing new organisational structures, new training arrangements, and fresh approaches to professional definitions. Procedures such as 'safety audits' and 'risk assessments' should be radically overhauled to take account of findings relating to risk compensation.

**3.6** Local authority planning departments should give their support to key exemplar schemes that involve local participation in the management and maintenance of streets and public spaces, in order to build confidence among the public that a civilised public realm is a realistic possibility. Such schemes should include not just urban centres but also rural villages and suburban communities. There is no shortage of enthusiastic candidates among communities across the UK.



## Professional organisations

**3.7** Professional associations such as the Institute of Highway Incorporated Engineers (IHIE), the Institution of Highways and Transportation (IHT), and bodies such as the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and those representing the design professions need to make major changes to adapt their organisations to respond to a policy based on *integration* of traffic movement and social exchange and interaction rather than *segregation*. This should be based on the concept of a 20mph speed limit in built-up areas. Welcome initiatives by English Heritage and CABI (the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) have begun to combine the training of both sides of the divide.

**3.8** Changes should be made to the education of urban planners, urban designers and traffic engineers to focus on the relevance of the public realm for the health agenda. This may also be part of the remit of the Academy for Sustainable Communities in their role of advancing the Egan report, which considered the skills needed to help deliver the vision and aims of the government's Sustainable Communities Plan.

**3.9** Local authorities should give their support to successful UK examples of attempts to improve the public realm. In addition, there needs to be further publicity and public discussion of the experience of mainland Europe in this area. This would significantly increase both awareness and confidence in local ability to transform and improve public space.





# 4 Walking and cycling



Walking and cycling have seen a sustained decline in the UK over the past 50 years. The growth in motorisation not only shifted the balance towards sedentary forms of travel, but also created a car-dominated road environment, which feels hostile and unattractive to the pedestrian and cyclist. Policy-makers and planners in transport, land use and development control have tended to create transport systems which favour the car. Furthermore, much of the transport policy, guidance and research has taken into account only motorised transport (private and public), and has ignored walking and cycling.

Alongside efforts to reduce traffic volumes and speeds, greater priority should be given to walking and cycling, not just in the wording of policies, but also in the guidance for implementing them. Investment priority needs to be given to active and clean modes of travel.



## Cross-Government

**4.1** Government Departments – the Treasury, Department for Transport, the Home Office (and the Police Forces), Department of Health, Department for Communities and Local Government and Department for Education and Skills – should establish strategic plans on the promotion of walking and cycling, commit significant resources to these, and research and monitor the outcomes. Best practice in this area could be developed, initially, at town level, through the concept of adequately-resourced ‘healthy travel towns’.

**4.2** Each of these departments should identify within its sector all subsidies to private motor traffic, such as workplace car-parking below market rate, car allowances above marginal mileage cost, and private use of company vehicles. It should ensure the removal of those subsidies, or should offer equivalent or higher value inducements to users of public transport, and to those walking and cycling.

**4.3** The Government should require that all projects which benefit from Exchequer or Lottery funding for capital investment should be required, by contract, to guarantee walking and cycling access, to defined minimum standards. Projects should not be funded unless they can demonstrate that additional motor traffic will not be created during their operation.

## The Treasury

**4.4** The Treasury should make due allowance for the promotion of walking and cycling in the Comprehensive Spending Review, and make the budget allocation for each relevant Government Department conditional on the Department’s recognising it as a priority.

**4.5** The Treasury should: raise fuel taxes; reinstate the fuel price escalator (to send a clear message that the cost of motoring will progressively rise); remove VAT on bikes and cycling equipment; and reduce the amount of tax payable, for example, on cycling allowances. Raising taxes on fuel may be considered unpopular, but would send clear signals about prioritising walking and cycling.

## Department for Transport

**4.6** The Department for Transport (DfT) (in conjunction with other departments, notably the Department of Health) should set demanding targets for the share of trips made by walking and cycling, over a range of terms up to 25 years. They should allocate transport budgets to walking and cycling proportionate to their target share, and performance-manage local authorities against these targets.

**4.7** The DfT should publish clear guidance on traffic reduction, speed management, and road space reallocation from motorised transport to walking and cycling.

**4.8** The DfT should include consideration of the potential health impacts as an integral component of any impact assessment carried out on policies, programmes and major schemes.

## Department of Health and the NHS

**4.9** The Department of Health and the NHS should remove all financial inducements to employees to use private motor transport (such as provision of car parking at below market rate), and replace them with incentives to walk and cycle.

**4.10** The Department of Health and the NHS should also review operating policies, such as transport and travel guidance to staff, car and cycle allowances, working practices and dress codes.

## The Home Office and the Police Forces

**4.11** The Home Office and Police Forces should improve enforcement of traffic law. They should move towards adopting ‘Vision Zero’ road safety principles, as implemented in Sweden. Vision Zero starts from the assumption that eventually no-one will be killed or seriously injured within the road transport system.

## Department for Communities and Local Government

**4.12** The Department for Communities and Local Government should establish a nationwide programme of Community Street Audits, as piloted by Living Streets, and provide guidance on their use.

**4.13** The Department for Communities and Local Government should develop and implement planning guidance prioritising walking and cycling. This could include, for example: minimum cycle-parking and maximum car-parking standards for new developments; standards of connectivity to ensure successful mixed-use development; high densities; and use of 20mph as a default speed limit.

## Department for Education and Skills

**4.14** The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) should explicitly recognise the importance of walking and cycling – on the way to and from school, within the school day, and in curriculum activity. They should establish national and school-level policies and programmes to promote walking and cycling and to discourage use of sedentary, motorised modes of transport.

**4.15** The DfES should ensure that these policies and programmes are linked into all aspects of educational policy and into school, college and university management, with clear links between policies and measures addressing health, sustainability and climate change, citizenship and estates management.





# Urban green space

Urban green space includes public parks – which account for one-third of all urban public green space in England – as well as playing fields, nature reserves, allotments and cemeteries. There has been a steep decline in the quality of public parks during the last quarter century, with only 18% now described by their local authority as being in ‘good’ condition. Of the remaining ‘fair’ (69%) and ‘poor’ (13%) parks, more than 70% were described as either ‘stable’ or ‘declining’ in quality. There is a higher prevalence of parks described as ‘poor’ in poorer urban areas.

The more attractive parks and urban green spaces become, the more people are likely to use them

for physical activity, as well as to benefit their mental well-being. Parks and green spaces have further advantages: they are a widely distributed resource; they offer opportunities for volunteer and community engagement; and they provide respite from pollution and noise, contributing to improvements in respiratory health and reductions in stress.

Substantial additional resources are needed to achieve major improvements, and to get closer to optimising the value of the country’s heritage of parks and green spaces. Investing in parks and green spaces should be seen as an investment in public health.

## Department of Health

**5.1 The Department of Health should revise its spending priorities to provide significant funding for the better management and maintenance of the urban green infrastructure, as a direct investment in public health.** This additional funding should be allocated to local community trusts, based on existing cross-authority parks forums, which would release the additional revenue funds to match current local authority budgets pound for pound. An agreed programme of work should include investment in raising skills in the management and maintenance of parks and green spaces, and in the design of health promotion initiatives in those spaces.

## Department for Culture, Media and Sport

**5.2** The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) should recognise public parks as an important part of cultural, leisure and tourist provision, particularly in their role in promoting health and well-being, and should offer direct support to the Institute for Sport, Parks and Leisure.

**5.3** The DCMS should re-prioritise distribution of National Lottery funds to 'good causes' in order to guarantee continuation of the Parks for People programme of the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund, and extend it to non-heritage green spaces, particularly those in areas of greatest social deprivation.

## Local authorities

**5.4 Local authorities should re-structure their departments to bring together into one unit all those responsible for the planning, design, management and maintenance of parks and urban green spaces. This should be seen as a green or natural 'public realm'.**

**5.5 Local authorities should develop partnerships with local, regional and national organisations to enable joint funding and ownership of programmes to improve parks and green spaces and to maximise their health benefits.**

**5.6** Local authorities should appoint an executive cabinet member with a specific responsibility for green infrastructure, making close links with the portfolio for public health, including links to healthy food production through gardens and allotments.

## Department for Communities and Local Government

**5.7** The Department for Communities and Local Government should take the lead in the Living Places consortium of Government Departments to press for new service level agreements under the Comprehensive Spending Review which reflect the importance of good parks to the Government's Liveability, Choosing Health, Urban Regeneration and Respect agendas, and should set clear targets for improvements in the care of the green environment.

**5.8** The Department for Communities and Local Government should require the Academy for Sustainable Communities and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) to raise skill levels in the care of parks and green spaces, particularly in the design of health promotion initiatives in those spaces.

## Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

**5.9** The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs should ensure that Natural England has a strong remit to promote healthy recreation in the natural environment of towns and cities, through local area agreements.



# 6 Outdoor playing space

Outdoor facilities include, for example, playing fields, recreation grounds and play areas, for both children and adults. The potential health benefits of outdoor play in natural settings include: increased levels of physical activity and fitness; positive views towards taking physical activity; activation of higher cognitive processes and healthy brain development; and promotion of and



It is important not to lose or dispose of local outdoor facilities to fund capital developments such as centralised indoor facilities.

improved healthy well-being through childhood and young adulthood.

The main problems related to the provision of outdoor playing space are: the continuing loss of outdoor recreational facilities; outdoor facilities being replaced by indoor provision (which is more expensive to provide and maintain); facilities for children being provided at a cost and under lock and key as opposed to open-access provision; and the location of equipped play facilities in central locations at the expense of very local provision, sometimes accompanied by the removal of facilities. These factors all work to reduce healthy outdoor activity, particularly for the young.



## Government

**6.1** The Government (through the Department for Communities and Local Government) should ensure that legislation to protect playing fields held for public recreational purposes considers all potential recreational needs in terms of access, quantity and quality. It should also ensure that, in the case of disposal of playing fields, the proceeds are secured for reinvestment in outdoor facilities.

**6.2** The Department for Education and Skills should extend the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, which provides legislation to protect school playing fields, to cover independent schools, sixth form colleges and academies. Currently, the Act's requirement that local authorities, school governing bodies and foundation bodies must apply for consent to dispose of school playing fields, applies only to maintained schools.

**6.3** The definition of 'playing fields' should be standardised. The Government and Sport England define a playing field as an area of at least 0.4 hectares, whereas in the education system it is defined as at least 0.2 hectares. The 0.2 hectares definition should be adopted, in order to protect local land for sport and play for children and the less mobile.

**6.4** The Government should require that all projects which benefit from Exchequer or Lottery funding for capital investment in outdoor sport, play or recreational facilities should be required, by contract, to guarantee and protect the defined use, public accessibility, the land and facilities, and the re-use of any proceeds from income from the facilities. As far as possible, the aim should be for replacement outdoor facilities of at least the same size, of better quality and still serving the same catchment areas. The National Playing Fields Association\* should be invited to advise on this.

## Department for Communities and Local Government

**6.5** **The Government should review its planning policy on open space, sport and recreation, with a greater emphasis on public health. In England, the Department for Communities and Local Government should publish a new Planning Policy Statement, PPS17, which should reverse the current policy of allowing outdoor facilities to be lost as long as there is 'a benefit to sport'.** In other words, indoor facilities should not be regarded as an adequate substitute for outdoor facilities. Sport England, as a statutory consultee on developments on playing fields, should take this into account.

**6.6** The Department for Communities and Local Government should establish scrutiny arrangements for planning applications relating to all types of outdoor public space including open space, green space and playing fields. CABE Space should be invited to help with this as a statutory consultee. Currently, Sport England is a statutory consultee only in the case of planning applications for playing fields. It should also be consulted on applications related to other open space or green spaces that fall outside the definition of playing field.

**6.7** The Department for Communities and Local Government should enforce the requirement on local authorities to undertake local assessments of need and determine local standards for open space, covering accessibility, quality and the range of activities offered.

## Department for Culture, Media and Sport

**6.8** The Government, through the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), should establish a national strategy for play in England – based on the needs of children to develop through play and recreation in non-educational settings – leading to relevant policies and funding streams. The Big Lottery Fund has led the way by providing £155 million, including some £15 million for Play England over the five years from 2006 to 2011. The Government will need to

consider taking up funding and responsibility thereafter.

**6.9** In the light of the importance of sport, play and recreation to health, education, quality of life, the environment, the economy and citizenship, the Government should look afresh at the merits of establishing services for 'leisure' on a statutory basis. The DCMS should invite the professional body for those working in the sector – the Institute for Sport, Parks and Leisure – into early discussions about this.

## Local authorities

**6.10** Local authorities should link policy on open space to transport policy. Open space should be accessible for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport, and have adequate cycle parking, and promote active travel.

**6.11** Local authorities should continue to seek developer contributions under Section 106 agreements of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 for outdoor sport, play and open space facilities, whether on- or off-site. Greater networking is needed to ensure dissemination of good practice and maximum community benefit. If the Planning Gain Supplement proposals published by the Treasury in 2006 proceed, open space should be excluded from any calculations.

## Sport England

**6.12** Sport England should work with the relevant governing bodies of sport and the National Playing Fields Association\*, to develop a quality standard for access to sporting facilities by active, non-motorised travel modes, and should deliver this to Government by a defined date. A relevant indicator is currently being developed under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment initiative within the leisure block. This deals with access to at least three of six sporting facilities, within 20 minutes' travel time, at least one of which can be quality-assessed to an agreed standard. Playing fields and sports pitches are one type of facility but no suitable quality standard exists for these.

\* The National Playing Fields Association has now changed its operating name to Fields in Trust (FIT).



# Building design

In recent years, new architectural forms have emerged that are often labelled as ‘soulless’ or ‘inhumane’ for their excessive scale, deep plans (multiple-floored buildings with low ceilings and large floor areas), and lack of natural light or materials. The extreme examples are business park offices, retail sheds, or ‘super-hospitals’, but this approach is also tending to filter through to all scales of development with negative impacts on health, mainly due to their focus on the car as the dominant mode of transport.

Construction and delivery systems are geared up to providing both commercial and residential accommodation of standardised design, following a pattern across the country. Obvious examples are the retail or business ‘boxes’ – steel-framed sheds with glazed, steel or brick skins – which are still being built, along with the ubiquitous brick-faced detached estate houses built by our major

homebuilders. In this planning model, the only physical activity enjoyed by building users is likely to be the walk from the car to the entrance.

Another issue is the use of lifts and stairs in large buildings. Disability Discrimination Act legislation has focused attention – and design budgets – on access and lifts, often to the detriment of stairs, resulting in the lift becoming the standard form of access for all users, thus taking away another opportunity for everyday activity.

The design of buildings is closely related to issues of urban design and town planning. Despite government guidance on the subject, it is still uncommon for new building at any significant scale to reflect the national agenda promoting pedestrian-friendly, human-orientated development, which can help to strengthen and foster community.

## Government

**7.1** The Government should promote the adoption of stronger local area planning frameworks, including Local Development Orders (LDOs) that guarantee the delivery of a consistent approach to urbanism, establishing the framework for consistent, high-quality town-making (whether brownfield, urban extension or regeneration) and helping to create places where people can be physically active.

## The Treasury

**7.2** The Treasury should remove the requirement to pay VAT on refurbishment of property, strengthening the business case for retention of urban forms that are walkable, location-efficient centres.

## Department for Communities and Local Government

**7.3** The Department for Communities and Local Government should, through its Planning Policy Statements, give greater support to medium-density, mixed-use development with access to high-quality public transport within a 1km walk. The development of more ‘residential ghettos’ – housing with poor services and facilities – should be discouraged.

**7.4** The Department for Communities and Local Government should produce guidelines, to accompany building regulations, that give clear direction to those working within traditional build and renovation to achieve the energy efficiency targets for new building.

## Local authority planning departments

**7.5** Local authority planning departments should be encouraged to move from a reactive planning mechanism to holistic engagement from the start of the development process (the Enquiry by Design approach). This is in line with current statutory guidance on collaborative planning.

**7.6** Local authority planning departments should consider Local Development Orders (LDOs) on larger developments. An LDO goes further than a masterplan because it enables the form of development to be approved even if it is to be delivered through successive phases. These phases then do not require individual permissions. LDOs can embrace the consultation process – which becomes mandatory at the outset. They also facilitate the implementation of quality guidelines, specifically design codes, which create more legible, harmonious streets and public spaces.

## Professional organisations

**7.7** Architects should re-consider the place of stairs within buildings, and investigate innovative approaches, such as creating attractive central stairs, alongside the traditional lift and fire escape.

**7.8** The British Institute of Facilities Management should develop guidance on maximising human movement and interaction within buildings.

**7.9** Professional bodies responsible for architectural education should make a further change of emphasis in architectural education (and continued professional development) towards:

- architectural literacy
- contextualisation
- building residential density
- building for flexibility
- a loose-fit, long-life approach to energy efficiency, moving away from forms driven by current technologies
- design codes for urban places, and
- holistic planning, and community and stakeholder participation.

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