**Terms of Reference - Construction Quality Sub-group**

**Context**

A YouGov survey for the HomeOwners Alliance found that only one in five respondents would prefer to buy a new build property to a home built ten or more years ago and almost two in five identified poor build quality as a disadvantage of new homes[[1]](#footnote-1). The 2015 National New Home Customer Satisfaction Survey, carried out by the Home Builders’ Federation (HBF) and the National House Building Council (NHBC), found that 93 per cent of those who bought new homes reported problems to their builders – and that over a third of those who reported problems reported 11 or more. This survey also indicates a drop in occupants’ satisfaction with new homes over recent years.

Issues of quality in construction have been highlighted by recent investigations and media coverage, including the following:

* In 2015, the All Party Parliamentary Group for the Built Environment, chaired by Oliver Colville MP, established a Commission of Inquiry into the quality and workmanship of new housing in England in 2015, in response to the rising level of complaints that MPs were hearing from constituents who had bought new homes. The Group published its report, *More homes, fewer complaints*, in summer 2016, offering a range of recommendations intended to ensure a fairer deal for home buyers.
* In February 2017, the Financial Times reported that buyers of homes built by Bovis, across the country, were finding their properties to be of poor quality and sometimes unfinished. Those affected formed a Bovis Homes Victims’ Group.
* The Guardian recently published two reports highlighting defects related to construction standards in both rented and shared ownership properties in London managed by a number of housing associations, including Catalyst, Clarion, Notting Hill, One, Sanctuary and Wandle. These featured three particular developments: Catalyst’s Caulfield Park, Clarion’s Orchard Village and One’s Suttons Wharf North.

The sorts of faults identified in these reports included gaps through which vermin had entered properties, defective plumbing that caused floods and/or outages in hot water supply, faulty seals that resulted in leaks, and doors and gates that broke frequently. Residents and their advocates were critical not just of these faults, but of the ways in which housing associations and housebuilders responded, or failed to, when residents raised complaints.  
   
Such faults are of concern for a range of reasons:

* They have a detrimental impact on the health, wellbeing and potentially the financial security of residents of new properties.
* Where public funds have been invested in development, homes that are constructed poorly represent poor value for money.
* They may provoke hostility to the scale of development of homes that London needs.

**Issues for consideration by the sub-group**

The sub-group should consider the following issues:

* How widespread are issues of poor construction quality in new homes in London? And has this changed in recent years?
* What are the most common issues encountered?
* Why are issues of construction quality occurring, including the roll of materials used, builders’ skills, and processes deployed? And has this changed in recent years?
* What provision is in place for prevention, remedy and redress? And how sufficient is this provision?
* What can be done to minimise the occurrence of defects in new homes?
* How do homebuilders and housing associations respond to reports of defects and has this changed in recent years?
* What can be done to improve the quality of responses when residents report defects?
* What is the relationship between improving quality of new build homes and shift to precision-manufactured homes?
* How is policy driving decision-making amongst developers in terms of quality?
* What does good practice look like? How can that be shared and replicated?
* How does building in London with higher density requirements and a different approach to design and size affect quality?

The sub-group will build on the findings and recommendations of the Construction Skills sub-group, given that some of the issues that it is considering – for example, skills shortages in the construction sector may be contributing to problems of construction quality and a move to greater precision manufacturing of homes may help to improve construction quality.

The issue of fire safety is outside the remit of the group, not least because this will be considered through the Public Inquiry into the fire at Grenfell Tower and through the national review of Building Regulations. The group will not directly examine wider issues of quality of new homes such as environmental performance or space standards.

**Outputs**

The sub-group will prepare a report for the Homes for Londoners Board, with a particular focus on any proposals to ensure the highest possible construction quality of new homes and to ensure that, where defects do occur, residents receive a prompt response and effective solutions.

**Format/research methods**

This project will not require any new primary research. The main focus of study will be discussion and other engagement with organisations that build, market and manage new homes or represent those who do and bodies that play a part in the existing framework for preventing and providing redress for defects.

It has been agreed that Gary Ennis, Regional Managing Director London & Southern, Barratt Developments will chair the sub-group, with a link back to the board provided by Paul Hackett, Chair of G15, CEO of Optivo and Homes for Londoners Board member, as Vice-Chair of the sub-group. Other members of the group are proposed as follows:

* g15 – Paul Hackett (Chair)
* The Home Builders’ Federation – Steve Turner (Director of Communications)
* The National House Building Council – Ian Davis (Operations Director)
* The Building Research Establishment – Gwyn Roberts (Homes & Communities Lead)
* The Construction Industry Council – Graham Watts (CEO)
* Local Authority Building Control – Paul Everell (CEO)
* The Institute of Clerks of Works and Construction Inspectorate – Rachel Morris (CEO)
* Mount Anvil – Peter Gore (Delivery Director)
* L&Q – Nicholas Cursley (Strategic Services Director)
* The National Housing Federation – Amy Simmons (Head of Policy)
* Consumer Code for housebuilders – Noel Hunter (Chairman)
* Lewis Silkin – Clare Reddy (Partner, Real Estate)
* Homeowners Alliance – Paula Higgins (CEO)
* Which? – Peter Moorey (Head of Campaigns)
* Wates – Adrian Fennessy (Operations Director)
* Clarion – Joyce Ferguson (Director - New Projects)
* London Borough of Brent – Alice Lester (Head of Planning, Transport and Licencing)

1. HomeOwners Alliance, ‘The HomeOwner Survey 2017: Issues, trends and how we feel about our homes’, 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)