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Commission for Architecture  
and the Built Environment

The government's advisor  
on architecture, urban design  
and public space

**Buildings and spaces:  
why design matters.**



**‘We know that good design provides a host of benefits. The best-designed schools encourage children to learn. The best-designed hospitals help patients recover their spirits and their health. Well-designed parks and town centres help bring communities together.’**

**Rt Hon Tony Blair MP  
October 2000**

**‘There have been some excellent examples of urban regeneration in recent years...but we still seem to fall short of what’s been achieved in cities like Stockholm and Berlin. Our objective should be to spread the best... beyond a few flagship projects and into every corner of our great cities.’**

**Rt Hon David Cameron MP  
September 2005**

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## Foreword

Britain is witnessing its largest public building programme for a generation. Every city, town and neighbourhood will see a marked change in its fabric over the course of the next decade.

The ambitious programme is producing 100 new hospitals, 3,000 new doctors' surgeries and the transformation of thousands of schools across the country. Equally significant are the one million new homes being built in the south and the renewal of thousands more in the north.

And of course there are the 2012 Olympics. Exciting plans will see both the creation of world-class sporting venues and unprecedented regeneration to the east of London.



Taken together, this programme represents an extraordinary opportunity to transform the fabric of the nation. It is an opportunity we must seize now, by promoting the very best in architecture and design quality at all levels. The design of homes, towns and cities affects everyone.

The places and spaces being created now must produce environments that people can thrive in and take pride in for generations to come.

At CABE, we strongly believe that design quality cannot be an optional extra. This short booklet, produced especially for MPs and peers, offers you evidence for why we think good architecture and design matter. We hope you find it useful.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Sorrell". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive script.

John Sorrell CBE  
Chair, CABE

Theatre NY 2

A black and white photograph of a double door. The door is dark with a lighter circular window in the center. Above the window, the text "Theatre NY 2" is visible. The door has a lock mechanism. To the right of the door, there are several white pipes and a fire extinguisher mounted on the wall. A traffic cone is on the floor to the left of the door. The floor is light-colored and the walls are white with a dark baseboard.



**‘Nurses constantly see how the design of their working environment impacts on staff and patients... campaigning to place this higher up the healthcare agenda is crucial and could make a dramatic difference.’**

**Dr Beverly Malone  
general secretary  
Royal College of Nursing  
November 2003**

**Healthcare**

## Healthcare

The NHS plans to open over 100 new hospital schemes by 2010. A small investment in good design can have major benefits. Patient recovery times can be reduced by well-designed healthcare buildings, while attractive, functional working environments help recruit and retain hospital staff.

- Eighty six per cent of directors of nursing say that hospital design is 'very important' or 'important' in relation to the performance of nurses, with the most crucial aspect being the design and organisation of the hospital environment.<sup>1</sup>
- Over 90 per cent of nurses and all directors of nursing believe that a well-designed environment is significantly linked to patient recovery rates.<sup>2</sup>
- The architect of the Advance Dental Surgery in Chelmsford, Essex, has calculated that the building's design gains an extra hour in work efficiency each day - that's six weeks a year - producing a significant return on the investment.





**'School buildings should inspire learning. They should nurture every pupil and member of staff. They should be a source of pride and a practical resource for the community.'**

**Department for Education  
and Skills, February 2003**

# Education

## Education

Government investment in school buildings reached £5.5 billion in 2005/06.

This included £2.1 billion for the Building Schools for the Future programme, which aims to renew or rebuild every secondary school in England within 15 years. Building good design into classrooms has a significant impact on pupil achievement and behaviour.

- A UK study of pupil performance has found that capital investment in school buildings had the strongest influence on staff morale, pupil motivation and effective learning time.<sup>3</sup>
- Studies on the relationship between pupil achievement and behaviour have found that test scores in well-designed buildings were up to 11 per cent higher than those in poorly designed buildings.<sup>4</sup>
- Approximately 60 per cent of students and staff have indicated that the quality of the building design had a positive impact on their choice of university.<sup>5</sup>



**'We all have to start  
demanding more, raising  
expectations and coercing  
builders into building homes  
that suit our needs.'**

**Wayne Hemingway  
designer and chair  
Building for Life initiative**

**Homes**



## Homes

The success or failure of a community is underpinned by the quality of the housing and the spaces around it. Good architecture affects our quality of life as well as property values. Yet CABE's ongoing housing audits have found that more than nine in ten new developments fail to measure up on design standards.<sup>6</sup>

- A MORI poll has revealed that nearly three in four members of the public believe that well-designed houses will increase in value more quickly than average.<sup>7</sup>
- Properties adjacent to good-quality parks have a 5 to 7 per cent premium compared to identical properties in the same area outside the vicinity of the park.<sup>8</sup>
- Good design is at the heart of the new planning system. Planning policy makes clear that 'good design ensures attractive, usable, durable and adaptable places and is a key element in achieving sustainable development. Good design is indivisible from good planning'.<sup>9</sup>





# Crime prevention

**'In an environment which is well designed, attractive, clearly defined and well maintained, people are likely to take pride in their surroundings...feel comfortable and safe and have a sense of shared ownership and responsibility.'**

**Association of Chief Police Officers  
March 2004**

## Crime prevention

Reducing crime rates is not just about more police and CCTV. It is also about good design. The quality of public space and buildings sends a clear message about how much an area is valued and cared for. It sets the standards of tolerable behaviour in the community and prevents further decline.

- Research from London shows that 39 per cent of women feel unsafe in the capital's green spaces, and 89 per cent say more staff would help them feel safer. CABE is campaigning for on-site staff in every significant urban park in England during daylight hours.<sup>10</sup>
- Birmingham City Council has achieved a 70 per cent drop in theft from shopping bags by increasing the lighting of the city's street markets and widening footpaths from two to three metres.<sup>11</sup>
- Research from Northampton has shown that crime is reduced in areas where the front windows of houses face each other across the street, creating a system of 'mutual surveillance'.<sup>12</sup>





‘Good design ensures attractive usable, durable and adaptable places and is a key element in achieving sustainable development.’

Office of the Deputy  
Prime Minister, 2005

# Environment

## Environment

Good-quality design can encourage living and working patterns that mean less car use, reduced consumption of natural resources and increased biodiversity. This will be good news for future generations.

- Compact neighbourhoods that integrate parking and transport infrastructure encourage walking and cycling – resulting in 43 per cent less fuel consumption.<sup>13</sup>
- Brighton’s Jubilee Library, winner of the 2005 Prime Minister’s Better Public Building Award, has halved carbon emissions and can recycle rainwater, making it one of the country’s most energy-efficient public buildings.
- The new Home Office buildings in central London have gained a ‘BREEAM’ certificate of environmental excellence. They are split into three blocks, each with an atrium providing access to natural light. They also incorporate low-energy technology.





**‘Communities are about more than just buildings. We need to create high-quality public space that is inspiring as well as safe, accessible and sustainable.’**

**Rt Hon. Tessa Jowell MP  
culture secretary  
February 2006**

**Community**

## Community

**Good design should not be confined to iconic buildings in big cities. High-quality public buildings and open spaces, where local residents can meet and socialise, give communities a sense of pride and belonging.**

- **Ninety-one per cent of people think that well-designed and maintained parks affect their quality of life.<sup>14</sup>**
- **Peckham Library in south London, winner of the 2000 Stirling Prize for architecture, has seen annual visits increase from 171,000 to 500,000, and book loans rise from 80,000 to 317,000 over the same period.<sup>15</sup>**
- **A survey of disabled and deaf Londoners has found that accessibility problems prevent more than half from visiting friends and prevent 40 per cent from visiting a tourist attraction or going shopping.<sup>16</sup>**

EXIT

A black and white photograph of an office hallway. The hallway is lined with cubicles on the right side. Each cubicle is enclosed by a glass partition on top and a solid, light-colored panel on the bottom. The glass panels are held in a dark metal frame. The hallway extends into the distance, with more cubicles visible. On the left side, there is a dark door with a small window. Above the door, the word "EXIT" is written in white capital letters. The ceiling is visible, showing exposed pipes and several ceiling-mounted light fixtures. The floor is dark and appears to be carpeted. The overall lighting is somewhat dim, with the primary light sources being the ceiling fixtures.



**'After nearly 50 years of frustration, we realised...that the message on design and creativity and its importance to the quality of life and the economy in our country had been well understood by the government.'**

**Sir Terence Conran, designer  
December 2005**

# Economy

## Economy

Investment in the layout of the working environment can directly affect the success of a business. It can act as a powerful way for a company to project its brand, as well as delivering higher staff productivity. And good urban design boosts the economic well-being of our towns and cities.

- Local business in Coventry city centre have benefited from a 25 per cent increase in visitors on Saturdays after the local authority improved pedestrian walkways, built a new civic square and repositioned street furniture.<sup>17</sup>
- Birmingham has risen from thirteenth to third in a poll of best places to shop since the arrival of its new Bullring centre and flagship Selfridges store.<sup>18</sup>
- Nearly half of British managers would give up a week's annual leave for a better office, and many would give up £1,000 in salary or the benefits of private medical insurance in exchange for upgrades to their workspace.<sup>19</sup>

## Where CABA comes in

CABA is the government's advisor on architecture, urban design and public space.

Each year, we advise on 500 projects in 250 different local authority areas. To date, we have influenced over £20 billion of government spending on building projects. And 95 per cent of people who read our publications say they put our advice into practice.

### Health

The hospitals and primary care buildings we have seen will have an impact on up to 20 million people each year, across nine regions. CABA's design review panel has commented on proposals for 43 hospitals and other health buildings.<sup>20</sup>

### Education

We have given design advice on over 300 Sure Start projects and 181 school buildings. The primary and secondary schools we have seen will impact on around 130,000 people each year.<sup>21</sup>

### Homes

CABA is working with the major housebuilders to improve the design of new homes across the country. Through our Building for Life programme, run in partnership with industry, we set standards and showcase high-quality new developments.

### Parks and spaces

We encourage excellence in the planning, design, management and maintenance of parks and public spaces. More than nine in 10 local authorities find our advice useful.<sup>22</sup>

### Skills and learning

We run professional training to help build capacity and supply learning resources for schools. And we fund a national network of architecture and built environment centres, helping to reach a quarter of England's population.

### Design champions

Two thirds of local authorities have now appointed a 'design champion', mostly as the result of a CABA initiative.

## Where MPs and peers come in

MPs and peers can help develop the way the public sector, businesses and the wider community think about the design of our towns and cities.

You can raise awareness about the benefits of quality design, challenge existing approaches that don't work, and push for stronger recognition of design quality at every stage of policy formation.

If you want to find out more about CABE or how we can help you, contact our chair, John Sorrell, at 1 Kemble Street, London WC2B 4AN, telephone 020 7070 6700, email [jsorrell@cabe.org.uk](mailto:jsorrell@cabe.org.uk).

## What you can do

- advocate the appointment of senior-level design champions in both public and private sector, and ensure that the local authorities in your area appoint one
- nominate good developments in your constituency for national design awards, such as the Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award, organised by CABE and recognising excellence in building design
- if new schools are being built in your constituency under the Building Schools for the Future programme, ensure that design quality is on the agenda of heads, governors and local education authorities
- encourage local councillors, especially those on planning committees, to use the resources available from CABE to help inform their decisions.

## Contacts

### Government departments

#### Health

Department of Health

[www.doh.gov.uk](http://www.doh.gov.uk)

#### Education

Department for Education and Skills

[www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)

#### Homes and community

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)

[www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)

#### Crime prevention

Home Office

[www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk)

#### Environment

ODPM (see above) and Department for

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

[www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

#### Economy

HM Treasury

[www.hm-treasury.gov.uk](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk)

#### CABE's sponsor department

Department for Culture, Media and Sport

[www.dcms.gov.uk](http://www.dcms.gov.uk)

## Related organisations

Architecture and Design Scotland

0131 556 6699

[www.ads.org.uk](http://www.ads.org.uk)

Civic Trust

020 7539 7900

[www.civictrust.org.uk](http://www.civictrust.org.uk)

Design Council

020 7420 5200

[www.designcouncil.org.uk](http://www.designcouncil.org.uk)

Design Commission for Wales

029 2045 1964

[www.dcfw.org](http://www.dcfw.org)

English Heritage

020 7973 3000

[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

Landscape Institute

020 7299 4500

[www.l-i.org.uk](http://www.l-i.org.uk)

Royal Institute of British Architects

020 7580 5533

[www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com)

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**'Design is not incidental to modern economies but integral; not a part of success but the heart of success; and not a sideshow but the centrepiece.'**

**Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP  
September 2005**

**'I believe that design plays an important part in our everyday quality of life. It defines our homes, our communities and our own space in a way which is both very personal and fundamental to a good society.'**

**Sir Menzies Campbell MP  
January 2006**