

The Chief Planning Officer  
Local Planning Authorities in England

May 2011

Dear Colleague

### **Design and Planning**

I wrote to you on design matters in 2009 and it is appropriate for me to write again now to bring you up to date on changes that have occurred since then. One thing that has not changed is the importance this Government places on the achievement of well designed homes and high quality places. High quality design has a crucial role to play in delivering prosperity and inward-investment, as well as ensuring that your area is an attractive and functional place for people to live. With the passing of the Planning Act 2008, local authorities are required in primary legislation, to have regard to the desirability of achieving good design and this still applies.

The emphasis however will now change, away from a more central Government led approach to one where communities are working with local authorities, developers and other local bodies and are taking the lead in designing their areas and are accountable for their decisions. We are therefore radically reforming the planning system to give neighbourhoods far more ability to determine the shape of the places in which their inhabitants live and we need local authorities to support communities to be able to do this.

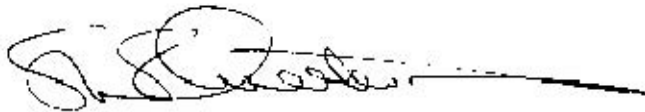
In order to achieve all of this, we are very clear that you will need access to good design expertise and support. This has been readily available up until now through CABE. Following the review of government budgets it has been decided that CABE can no longer be supported in its current form. However, Housing Minister Grant Shapps recently confirmed his support for the Design Council to take on CABE's activities on design for homes and neighbourhoods. We believe that combining the strengths of both organisations will mean that much of the excellent work CABE has already undertaken in this area can continue. In particular, the Design Council will:-

- Provide support for and encourage design review of new housing, neighbourhoods and mixed development schemes particularly at the local level
- Provide support for and encourage and enable others to provide design advice at local level and to communities who wish to engage in this area.
- Provide support for and encourage design review for nationally important schemes

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The Design Council is well placed to build on the strong legacy left by CABI and lead work across the industry to create a new model for providing services in this area and I encourage you to make the most of the support and expertise it can offer.

For more information about how the Design Council can help you, please email [cabe@designcouncil.org.uk](mailto:cabe@designcouncil.org.uk) or telephone Diane Haigh, Director of CABI at the Design Council on 020 7420 5200 or visit the website on [www.designcouncil.org.uk](http://www.designcouncil.org.uk)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Quartermain', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**STEVE QUARTERMAIN**

Chief Planner

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