Essex is a county of many challenges. With the need to plan for 180,000 new homes, high land and house prices, a focus on housing numbers rather than creating great places and has led to some developments being completed at both high financial cost at the expense of quality.

This is of great concern as it prevents the creation of high-quality, balanced communities for people to enjoy, live and work in. And it was recognised that this was also increasingly resulting insufficient infrastructure and affordable housing requirements being properly addressed. And this lack of focus on place making to secure the right levels of infrastructure is also increasing turning local communities against new developments and economic growth.

In 2016 a dual agenda was initiated to bring about change and deliver good quality development. It was recognised that changes to the operating system in Essex needed to be made. It was also recognised that Essex has the legacy of the Essex Design Guide (EDG) which has pioneered local design, creating space for innovation and encouraging high-quality development. The EDG has always been about more than architecture – it is about creating distinctive places that people want to live, building communities and making sure that the infrastructure and facilities are in place at the right time. Since the first iteration of the Guide it has gained both national and international recognition and today the Guide is still regarded as required reading for those responsible for designing new communities.

The EDG was produced collaboratively, led by Essex County Council and the Essex Planning Officers Association (EPOA) working with 30 different partner organisations including BRE. Whilst some housebuilders are working to produce good quality homes, the County Council and EPOA are working with BRE to embed the Home Quality Mark (HQM) as a means to recognise quality.

Developed by BRE, one of the world’s leading building science centres, and a range of industry partners, HQM is the national quality mark for homes, giving consumers a better choice for a healthier, smarter and more sustainable new home. HQM does this by providing impartial information on a new home’s quality. It will indicate to householders the overall expected running costs, health and wellbeing benefits, and the environmental footprint associated with living in the home. It will also highlight benefits such as access to local amenities and the quality of the local neighbourhood.

For housebuilders, HQM provides robust, third party certification of the quality of a new home, enabling you to communicate to potential buyers. For investors, lenders, insurers and planners, HQM provides a benchmark of quality, managing and reducing risk over the long-term. For consumers, HQM provides a trusted mark of quality.

“Well done BRE for your work on the Essex Design Guide. The process itself is as important as the end product. The guide has become a blueprint for making the ‘right places for the right reasons’ with the best possible outcomes. It sets a very high bar for new developments in Essex. Let’s hope we can replicate its success elsewhere.”

Graham Thomas, Chairman of the Essex Planning Officers Association
Trusted expertise you can build on

Benefits

HQM is a holistic standard for new housing development that supports the delivery of high quality and better performing homes, that are good for people, places and the environment. HQM’s quality indicators and consumer focus is an ideal fit for the EDG, helping to communicate the benefits of more sustainable development to all stakeholders – planners, developers, members of the public and others.

HQM is helping Essex County Council and the EPOA communicate the value of quality in homes and establish a platform at county level which provides the basis for local planning authorities to drive implementation. HQM provides an established framework whereby Essex can continue to promote high quality development whilst providing space for innovation.

For more information on EDG go to www.essexdesignguide.co.uk. For HQM go to www.homequalitymark.com.

25% of the pop. of Gtr Essex will be 65 yrs+ by 2036

New homes need to reflect this market requirement

180,000 new homes

Required in Greater Essex by 2036

UK+
Top destination for culture, innovation & character

At least 8 new settlements

Delivered at scale, to TCPA Garden Communities standards

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Get in touch

For information on BRE’s services for the property and real estate sector go to www.bregroup.com/sectors/property

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