



# Hertfordshire big ideas

**Hertfordshire Development Quality Charter**



**Hertfordshire  
Growth Board**

## INTRODUCTION



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# Hertfordshire Development Quality Charter

The purpose of this charter is to achieve a new benchmark for high quality and sustainable development in Hertfordshire.



**Foreword by Cllr Richard Roberts** Chair of Hertfordshire Growth Board and Leader of Hertfordshire County Council

**“This Charter has a simple ambition – to set and achieve a new benchmark for high quality and sustainable development.**

Most councils and many developers in the county have declared a climate emergency and are committed to becoming climate neutral within the next generation. The built environment is responsible for about 25% of greenhouse gas emissions, so one of the best things we can do is improve the construction, heating, cooling and powering of our homes and other buildings.

We also know that some people oppose new development because they are concerned about its quality, impact on its surroundings and lack of supporting facilities.

This Charter is therefore about achieving exemplary design quality and sustainability performance in new homes and buildings.

It is about making sure that building control compliance, planning policy, design quality and sustainability performance are more than the sum of their parts.

It is a commitment that anyone who builds in Hertfordshire will follow set processes in order to comply with planning and design policies and will seek to achieve high sustainability performance above the current minimums set by building regulations.

It is hoped that the Charter will be signed by all councils, housing associations and developers that are building in Hertfordshire.”

# Growth agenda

**Hertfordshire is planning to build about 100,000 homes and create about 100,000 jobs over the next 15 years. There are currently about 500,000 homes in Hertfordshire, so this is a significant increase.**

About half of this development will re-use brownfield land in our towns and villages, at gentle densities that will accommodate new residents and help to support local shops and services.

The other half will be in urban extensions on the edge of our towns and villages as well as some entirely new villages, with good walking, cycling and bus services to town centres, jobs and railway stations.

There are a number of new business parks, life science campuses and film/tv studios that will provide high quality jobs and work with local schools, colleges and universities to offer skills and training.

And all of this development will be supported by new schools, health care, transport, community halls, sports centres and other facilities.

Development is important in itself, to provide homes and jobs and support the socio-economic prosperity of the county, but it has to be done in a way that reduces carbon emissions and protects the air, soil, water, green spaces and natural environment we all rely upon.



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# Design

**Design is vitally important to ensure that developments are safe, sustainable and desirable place to live.**

High quality design refers to architecture and materials used to construct homes and buildings, as well as wider masterplanning factors such as layout and how the development works as a place.

The Government sets out national policies for design in its National Planning Policy Framework and the National Model Design Code.

Both documents emphasise the importance of distinctive places and beautiful buildings. *“Beauty is not a cost to be negotiated away: it is the benchmark that all new developments should meet, to turn a collection of buildings into a place, anywhere into somewhere and nowhere into home.”*

Each council in Hertfordshire has its own more detailed planning and design policies in Local Plans and other planning documents. These include targets for wider planning aspirations such as place-making, sustainable travel and affordable homes to help create communities where everyone has the chance to live.

🌐 [www.HertfordshireGrowthBoard.com](http://www.HertfordshireGrowthBoard.com)

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design**



# Design

Developers may also have their own in-house design standards. This Charter therefore focuses on the steps that we want developers to follow so that their proposals are as well designed as possible and can be commented on by the local community and scrutinised by planning officers and councillors.

This approach means that the Charter will remain valid as new policies and design codes are adopted.

## Charter Pledges

**All developers must submit a design and access statement to demonstrate compliance with national and local planning policies, the National Model Design Code and local design codes.**

**Major sites will submit a masterplan, which must be agreed in advance of or alongside a planning application.**

**Major sites will be informed by community engagement and a design review panel as part of the pre-application and planning application process.**



**Major sites must explain the long-term stewardship strategy for their development.**

**Developers must incorporate environmental management systems, considerate construction, social value and construction skills development into their business models.**

**All developments should achieve at least 10% biodiversity net gain for at least 30 years, in accordance with the DEFRA toolkit.**



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# Sustainability

**Current building regulations are the minimum standards that a development must achieve in order to be safe and well-built, but they do not set very ambitious sustainability standards given the scale of the climate crisis.**

There are a number of well-established industry standards – such as BRE Home Quality, LETI and Passivhaus for housing and BREEAM for commercial and industrial buildings – that can be used to rate the sustainability performance of development. Developers may also have their own in-house standards.

This Charter therefore places emphasis on industry recognised standards, rather than creating a bespoke standard for the county.

This approach means that the Charter will remain valid as building regulations are updated and new standards are created. It also makes it equally applicable for traditional, current and modern methods of construction.

A photograph of a young child with light hair, wearing a patterned jacket, holding a single green leaf in their hand. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting.

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sustainability**

# Sustainability

## Charter Pledge

**Developers must identify a sustainability standard that exceeds minimum current building regulations as part of their planning application and then use an industry-recognised process to demonstrate compliance with that standard upon completion of their development.**

There are a number of ways in which buildings can be made more sustainable, including location, orientation, placement of windows, thermal efficiency of walls and roofs etc, airtightness, thermal bridging, use of renewable energy and overall energy consumption.

We recognise that different standards have different levels of rigour, and therefore want developers to focus on achieving the highest possible performance for carbon emissions from regulated energy.

This process should also consider embodied carbon and the lifetime of the development. Buildings should be designed to endure and be capable of adaptation for different uses and occupants.

The ultimate objective is to reduce the use of fossil fuels.



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# Technical Information

Current sustainable construction principles are set by the national Building Regulations Part L which includes guidance on insulation, air permeability, ventilation, boiler efficiency and solar heat gain.

A new dwelling must be built to a minimum standard in terms of primary energy rate, emission rate and fabric energy efficiency rate when compared to a notional dwelling using the SAP standard assessment procedure. The building control body must be informed of the target rate and as-built rate.

The Government's Future Homes Standard seeks to improve upon building regulations, so that new homes generate 75-80% less carbon by 2025, and are able to become zero-carbon without any further refurbishment as the electricity grid continues to decarbonise. It also allows local councils to set higher standards for their areas if they wish.

The Government's Future Buildings Standard proposes new energy and ventilation standards for non-domestic buildings and a pathway for zero-carbon ready buildings.

The Building Research Establishment (BRE) describe their Home Quality Mark as the badge of a better home, which provides impartial information on design, construction and sustainability. It comprises a five star rating of the home's quality and scores for costs, wellbeing and environmental footprint. It uses a home energy performance ratio compared to a building regulations notional home. BREEAM is a similar sustainability assessment method for commercial and industrial buildings. BREEAM Communities is a framework for the masterplanning of new communities and regeneration projects.

LETI (the London Energy Transformation Initiative) is a grouping of councils and developers seeking to develop a zero carbon building standard. Their Climate Emergency Design Guide considers both embodied and operational carbon. It expects medium and large scale housing schemes to achieve high fabric u-values, air tightness, thermal bridging, window areas and use of renewable technologies to reduce regulated energy consumption to 35 kWh/sqm/year and space heating demand to 15 kWh/sqm/year.



# Technical Information

The Passivhaus system is a robust scheme that requires high levels of insulation, high performance windows, airtight building fabric, thermal bridge free construction and mechanical ventilation and heat recovery. It enables homes to reduce primary/unregulated energy demand to 120 kWh/sqm/year and space heating demand to 15 kWh/sqm/year.

For clarification, regulated energy is energy consumption from controlled fixture and fittings which are inherent in the design of the building such as heating, lighting and hot water, and unregulated energy is energy consumption from operation systems that cannot be controlled by building regulations such as lifts, cookers, refrigeration, IT equipment, servers, etc.

It is understood that BRE, LETI, RIBA, The Carbon Trust and others are working on a new Net Zero Carbon Building Standard.

The NPPF Prospectus identifies scope for a national development management policy to set higher sustainability targets.

**Hertfordshire Building Futures** is a council partnership which provides resources to help promote, facilitate and recognise high quality development. It comprises a sustainable design toolkit, a design review panel and an awards process.

**The Code of Considerate Practice** embodies high standards for the way the construction industry should work and operate, to respect the community, care for the environment and value the workforce. Developers may also have their own in-house standards.

**Biodiversity Net Gain** is a way of leaving the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand. The Environment Bill requires all planning permissions to deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain for at least 30 years, alongside a wider duty for public bodies to conserve and enhance biodiversity in their areas.



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# Implementation

## This section explains how the Hertfordshire Development Charter will be implemented:

- Hertfordshire Growth Board to formally endorse the Charter.
- Hertfordshire councils to sign the Charter.
- Council-owned development companies to sign the Charter.
- Housing Associations to sign the Charter.
- Developers to sign the Charter.
- Landowners to sign the Charter.

Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd and St Albans / Watford shared building control service to sign the Charter as interested parties.

Individual councils as local planning authorities should endorse the Charter in some way, such as adopting it as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and/or incorporating it into planning policies, design policies and local design codes. There is also scope for the sustainability standard proposed by a developer to be set via a planning condition.

Developers who sign the Charter will be formally recognised on the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Development Board (HIDB) website and are welcome to use it as part of their promotional material.



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# Implementation

Developments that comply with the Charter will be formally commended and automatically put forward for the Hertfordshire Building Futures Awards. There will be a distinct award for schemes that comply with the Charter.

Hertfordshire Growth Board to operate the Charter by asking developers to demonstrate compliance with its requirements. This will include evidence of corporate social values, membership of the Code of Considerate Constructors or similar and certification of sustainability performance using an industry recognised standard.

Hertfordshire Growth Board will work with Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd and St Albans / Watford shared building control service to record how many homes and buildings in the county are built above building regulation standards. There is scope for both of these bodies to offer a confirmation service to help developers prove that their buildings have achieved a high sustainability standard.

Hertfordshire Growth Board will explore the merits of a 'carbon fund' to help retrofit older homes and buildings. Older buildings are less sustainable than newer ones, with more scope for carbon savings, so there is scope to seek funding from new development to help upgrade older properties. This action might have particular merit once building regulation standards are enhanced.



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