Housing Standards Handbook
A good practice guide to design quality for affordable housing providers

Levitt Bernstein
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Foreword

Our publications regarding housing standards have been considered as the go-to guides since they were first published in 1998. The most recent edition, *Standards and quality in development*, was published in 2008. Since this time, the world of planning policy and housing standards has been apace with change and following the Housing Standards Review earlier this year we thought it was time to update the guide.

The National Housing Federation is proud to present the new and improved *Housing Standards Handbook*, which reflects the latest standards and best practice. It is easy to navigate and each chapter breaks down the standards to show whether standards are applied nationally or locally, along with some best practice guidance. There is a checklist in the appendices containing all the standards listed in the book – this provides a useful tool for use throughout the lifecycle of a project.

Housing associations are committed to building high quality homes and places that residents can be proud of. In the last edition, I wrote that we have a role to play in continuing to raise benchmarks not simply amongst the affordable housing sector, but across the whole housebuilding industry. Recent changes to the planning system, and the urgency to get more homes built mean that this is more important than ever to ensure that increased delivery does not impact on quality.

Thanks must go to authors Levitt Bernstein, and also to many of our members who have taken the time to review drafts and input into the new version, in ensuring that it is relevant and reliable. We hope, like the previous versions, this proves an invaluable resource which continues to help us improve the quality of the places we create and live.

David Orr
Chief Executive
National Housing Federation
Acknowledgements

The authors

Levitt Bernstein is an architectural practice with expertise in urban design, landscape architecture, sustainability and research. Housing accounts for the majority of their projects, with social housing particularly close to their hearts, but they are also active in many other sectors, including arts and education.

Acknowledged experts in the field of housing standards, Levitt Bernstein use their experience to test theories, advise government and other organisations, contribute to national debate and help shape housing policy. Most importantly, they make sure that this accumulated knowledge shines through in the homes and places they create. They know that good design enriches lives and adds value beyond its cost, with nothing demonstrating this more powerfully than good housing. For this reason, we are delighted that Levitt Bernstein have authored this handbook for the National Housing Federation.

The work has been led by Julia Park, Head of Housing Research. Other members of the drafting team include Clare Murray, Head of Sustainability, Glyn Tully, Head of Urban Design, Andy Jobling, Technical Manager, and Kate Digney, Associate, who leads their landscape team.

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Part I
Introduction

The purpose of this handbook
- Why now?
- What it covers
- Its status and how it relates to other documents
- How to use it

The role of standards in promoting good design
- Why design matters
- How standards help
- Voluntary consumer-focused initiatives

Government policy on housing standards
- Background
- The National Planning Policy Framework
- The Housing Standards Review (2012-15)

Taking a long-term view
- Designing for low management and maintenance
- Service charges
- Future-proofing