



Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

Matthew Pennycook MP
Minister for Housing and Planning
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London, SW1P 4DF

20 May 2026

Dear Matthew,

Housing Conditions in England: new-build homes

I am writing to you in relation to our inquiry on *Housing conditions in England*.

Our most recent session on Tuesday 14 April covered the quality of new homes, and this letter sets out some of our conclusions and recommendations from this session. Increasing the supply of good-quality, affordable homes will go a long way to help tackle the poor condition of some of the country's housing stock. The homes we build in this Parliament will be with us for decades to come, so it is critical that they are of good quality and fit for the future.

Delivering 1.5 million new homes

We welcome the government's national target to deliver 1.5 million new homes by the end of this Parliament. This is an ambitious target and housebuilding will need to ramp up to deliver it. The industry needs to build 300,000 new homes each year, on average, over the Parliament to reach the target, up from around 200,000 homes a year at present.

You have previously told us the government expects "large amounts" of housebuilding to be delivered in the later years of the Parliament.¹ Steve Turner from the Home Builders Federation (HBF) pointed out that there are "no indications at the minute of any significant uptick" on the number of homes being built, meaning the industry is already "well short" of the levels of house building needed to meet the 1.5 million target.² Jennie Daly, the Chief Executive of Taylor Wimpey, commented:

When sites are significantly delayed through the planning system, it leads to very intensive levels of delivery. That can have effects on the ability to smooth labour through what is a multi-trade process. At times, it can put pressure on quality.³

¹ Oral evidence: [Planning for 1.5 million new homes](#), 20 November 2024, HC 432, Q3

² [Q246](#) [Steve Turner]

³ [Q247](#) [Jennie Daly]



Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

The ministry has assured us that a “robust regulatory framework” will ensure the government’s commitment is delivered “safely and sustainably.”⁴ However, we are concerned there is mounting pressure on the industry to build new homes at pace and that this may compromise standards. The National House Building Council (NHBC) pointed out that this “increase in volume comes at a time of significant regulatory change, uptake of new technologies, skill and workforce shortages and the adoption of new, innovative construction systems.”⁵ The New Homes Ombudsman Service (NHOS) is of the view that there is a “real risk the rapid expansion in supply could be accompanied by a decline in quality.”⁶

Previous expansions in housebuilding have coincided with a drop in customer satisfaction with the quality of new builds. The NHBC Foundation reported that historically as “build volume increases, customer satisfaction decreases and the number of potential defects rises.”⁷ The HBF pointed out that between 2012 and 2015, a sharp increase in the number of homes being delivered coincided with a significant drop in customer satisfaction.⁸

The NHOS also told us most issues with new builds are “relatively superficial or avoidable.” However, they have seen a “steady number of significant issues” relating to major defects, safety issues (e.g. faulty fire safety equipment) and problems with damp and mould (e.g. due to poor storage of building materials, inadequately designed ventilation, or drainage issues).⁹ The NHOS added that certain issues with new builds, such as poor energy performance and overheating, are “not limited to visible construction defects” but can also stem from “poor specification and design.”¹⁰ The NHOS’s view is that “the prevalence of hazards in recently built homes points to systemic weaknesses in oversight and accountability during the construction process.”¹¹

Even if the incidence of serious or multiple defects is low, such problems can have a profound impact on buyers and public confidence in the market.¹² We heard that housing associations often report problems with the quality of new social homes and difficulties in getting problems fixed.¹³

Conclusion: We need to boost housing supply, but we must do so in a way that ensures the homes that are built are of good quality and reflect the needs of our population. A failure to do so could see us wasting money by building homes we will need to put right in the future. The government needs to go further to ensure there is a robust regulatory framework to ensure the quality of new homes built over this Parliament and beyond.

⁴ [The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government \[HCE 056\]](#)

⁵ NHBC, [Maintaining quality in the design and construction of 1.5 million homes](#), August 2025

⁶ [The New Homes Ombudsman Service \[HCE 040\]](#)

⁷ NHBC, [Maintaining quality in the design and construction of 1.5 million homes](#), August 2025

⁸ [Home Builders Federation \[HCE 009\]](#)

⁹ [The New Homes Ombudsman Service \[HCE 040\]](#)

¹⁰ [The New Homes Ombudsman Service \[HCE 040\]](#)

¹¹ [The New Homes Ombudsman Service \[HCE 040\]](#)

¹² [Q232](#) [Nigel Cates]

¹³ [Q223](#) [Chloe Fletcher]



Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

Stronger routes for redress

In February 2024, the Competition and Markets Authority recommended the government introduce a single mandatory consumer code and establish a new statutory UK-wide ombudsman.¹⁴ The government has accepted this recommendation, but not yet set a clear timeframe for when the new ombudsman will be established.¹⁵ Overall, we heard that these reforms should simplify and strengthen the routes of redress available to new home buyers, although SMEs are likely to require more time and support than other parts of the industry to be ready to sign-up to a mandatory code.¹⁶ Nigel Cates from the New Homes Ombudsman Service – a voluntary industry-led scheme - told us there is currently a patchwork of consumer codes that create inconsistencies in the protection provided to new home buyers.¹⁷ However, the Consumer Code for Home Builders has argued that confusion surrounding the protections that exist have led to a “misperception that many buyers have no protection at all.”¹⁸ They previously warned the CMA’s recommendations risk weakening the protections that already exist.¹⁹

We heard very clearly that the same protections need to apply to everyone and that the statutory code also needs to be comprehensive.²⁰ This includes ensuring that it is applied across all tenures, not just for those buying new homes on the open market.²¹ For example, Chloe Fletcher, Head of Policy and External Affairs at the Chartered Institute of Housing, told us the statutory scheme needs to apply to “wider scenarios where a home is sold”, such as to an institutional investor or single landlord or a social landlord through a shared ownership scheme.²²

Conclusion: On balance, we welcome the establishment of a statutory ombudsman and a single consumer code. These reforms should go a long way to providing a simpler, stronger route of redress for those buying a new home.

Recommendation: The government must ensure the statutory ombudsman is fully established by the end of 2028/29 at the latest, with all developers signed up. In

¹⁴ Competition and Markets Authority, [Housebuilding market study: final report](#), February 2024,

¹⁵ [PQ 616](#) [New Homes Ombudsman] answered on 18 May 2026; [PQ 102928](#) [New Homes Ombudsman] answered on 13 January; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [UK government response to the Competition and Markets Authority’s \(CMA\) market study into housebuilding](#), October 2024

¹⁶ [Q254](#) [Stephen Teagle], [Q254](#) [Jennie Daly],

¹⁷ [Q228](#) [Nigel Cates]

¹⁸ Consumer Code for Home Builders, [Annual Report 2024/25](#), August 2025

¹⁹ Written evidence submitted by the Consumer Code for Home Builders to the Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities Committee’s inquiry on [Improving the home buying and selling process](#).

²⁰ [Q233-Q235](#) [Nigel Cates]; [Q235](#) [Chloe Fletcher]; [Q228](#) [Chloe Fletcher]

²¹ [Q254](#) [Stephen Teagle]

²² [Q235](#) [Chloe Fletcher]



Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

reply, we would welcome further clarity on the steps the government is taking to establish a statutory ombudsman and the single consumer code, including the content of the code and the timeline and support for SMEs to sign-up.

Accessibility standards for new homes

Part M4(2) of the Building Regulations sets the standard for accessible and adaptable dwellings, whereas Part M4(3) covers the requirements for wheelchair accessible dwellings. Local authorities currently have discretion to set the proportion of new homes locally that need to comply with these standards. Rather than mandating Part M4(2) for all new homes, the government is proposing to set a national minimum whereby 40% of new homes are built to this standard. The government is also not proposing to introduce a national minimum standard for the number of new homes that should be wheelchair accessible (Part M4(3)).²³

Part M4 (2): Accessible and adaptable dwellings

In 2022, the then Conservative Government committed to mandate Part M4(2) for all new homes, but this was not enacted before the 2024 General Election. Analysis by the Housing Made for Everyone (HoME) Coalition estimated that around 885,000 people could be living in accessible and adaptable homes if Part M4(2) became mandatory when the previous government committed to do so in 2022.²⁴ After waiting years for the policy to be enacted by the previous government, disability charities understandably feel let down by the government's recent proposal not to mandate the standard for all new homes.²⁵ The government has not provided sufficient information to justify how its proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework will deliver the "necessary levels of accessible housing."²⁶

We heard that there is a strong case for making it mandatory for new builds to comply with Part M4(2). Much of the country's housing stock is old and inaccessible.²⁷ The new homes built over this Parliament will only account for a small amount of the total number of homes in this country.²⁸ The UK Housing Review recently noted that disabled people are "increasingly forced to live in unsuitable homes, with significant impacts on their health."²⁹ The UK's population is also ageing fast and healthy life expectancy has fallen. In most places, healthy

²³ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [National Planning Policy Framework: proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system](#), December 2025

²⁴ [Centre for Ageing Better \[HCE 031\]](#), para 39

²⁵ [Disabled people in England 'betrayed' by cuts to new-build accessibility targets](#), The Guardian, 19 December 2025; [Government announcement on M4\(2\) and M4\(3\) standards in the draft National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#), Habinteg, 18 December 2025

²⁶ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [National Planning Policy Framework: proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system](#), December 2025

²⁷ [Q239](#) [Chloe Fletcher]

²⁸ [Q239](#) [Chloe Fletcher]

²⁹ Chartered Institute of Housing, [The 2026 UK Housing Review](#), April 2026



Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

life expectancy has dropped to below the state pension age.³⁰ If they develop a health problem or serious injury, around two-thirds of people expect they may need major adaptations to their homes to continue to carry-out everyday tasks.³¹ Alarming, around 5,000 hours of additional primary care appointments for disabled people each year are due to injuries caused by poor accessibility in their home.³² Homes built to Part M4(2) would better meet the needs of older people and many of those with a disability.³³ Building homes to comply with Part M4(2) also makes them quicker and cheaper to adapt later. Habinteg told us homes built to this standard also reduce the need for domiciliary care and enable hospitals to discharge patients faster.³⁴

We did, however, hear some concerns from construction stakeholders about the impact mandatory Part M4(2) regulations may have on building new homes. Steve Turner, Executive Director at the Home Builders Federation, told us that building 40% of new homes to comply with Part M4(2) would be challenging for the industry as a whole, especially in light of the other pressures that are affecting the viability of house building in parts of the country.³⁵ The HBF explained that some of the larger builders are better placed to achieve the government's proposed minimum of 40% because the "scale of orders" they receive means that they can "make efficiency savings through their supply chain."³⁶ They suggested that it will be harder for SMEs to achieve this minimum level due to broader cost increases that are affecting viability.³⁷ Jennie Daly, Chief Executive of Taylor Wimpey, also told us that "in areas where viability is already challenged with low house prices and increasing costs of regulation, it could be the final element on a marginal viability."³⁸

Part M4(3): Wheelchair accessible dwellings

The government's proposals to the NPPF include a requirement for authorities to set out the proportion of new housing that should comply with Part M4(3).³⁹ This is a step our predecessor committee supported.⁴⁰ However, some have called for the government to go further to specify a minimum percentage of all new homes that should comply with Part

³⁰ [Healthy life expectancy trends in the UK: a watershed moment](#), Health Foundation, 26 April 2026

³¹ [Centre for Ageing Better \[HCE 031\]](#), para 40

³² Chartered Institute of Housing, [The 2026 UK Housing Review](#), April 2026

³³ [Habinteg \[HCE 073\]](#)

³⁴ [Habinteg \[HCE 073\]](#)

³⁵ [Q258](#) [Steve Turner]

³⁶ Letter from the Home Builders Federation to the Chair of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee on [development costs and accessibility](#) dated 1 May 2026

³⁷ Letter from the Home Builders Federation to the Chair of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee on [development costs and accessibility](#) dated 1 May 2026

³⁸ [Q257](#) [Jennie Daly]

³⁹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [National Planning Policy Framework: proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system](#), December 2025

⁴⁰ House of Commons Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee, [Disabled people in the housing sector](#), Seventh Report of Session 2023–24, May 2024



Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

M4(3).⁴¹ The Mayor of London's spatial development strategy, The London Plan, for example, requires at least 10% of dwellings to be built to this standard, with all other dwellings required to meet the requirements for accessible and adaptable dwellings, M4(2).⁴² Rather than a setting a national minimum percentage, the HBF's preference is for wheelchair accessible dwellings to be set on a "per site basis based on local need" because these homes are substantially more costly and challenging to deliver.⁴³ The HBF is of the view that homes built to Part M4(3) "are not suitable for the overwhelming majority of the market into which housebuilders are looking to sell their product."⁴⁴ Such homes are usually delivered by specialist partnership contractors, rather than general housebuilders. The HBF told us the standard:

[...] requires the home to be 100% step free i.e bungalow or ground floor apartment only; demountable and reduced kitchen work top heights, raised sockets and lowered switches, electronic door openings & video from bedroom to front door, internal parking space for a disabled buggy, wet rooms, landing areas, platforms and extended door canopy's, handrails, special toilets and bathrooms as well as widened corridors and doorway widths.⁴⁵

Conclusion: We are not convinced that the government's proposal for 40% of new homes to be built to comply with Part M4(2) will deliver the increase in accessible homes our country needs. We are also disappointed that the government is not planning to introduce a national minimum percentage of new homes that should be wheelchair accessible. We intend to explore these issues further at the final session of our inquiry in July. In the meantime, we would be grateful if the ministry could set out in reply:

- **the government's rationale for proposing to set the national minimum at 40% of new homes.**
- **whether mandating Part M4(2) for all new homes would compromise the delivery of the government's 1.5 million new homes target.**
- **the implications of establishing a minimum percentage of new homes that should be wheelchair accessible.**

⁴¹ [Disabled people in England 'betrayed' by cuts to new-build accessibility targets](#), The Guardian, 19 December 2025

⁴² Mayor of London, [The London Plan: Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London](#), May 2021, page 132

⁴³ Letter from the Home Builders Federation to the Chair of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee on [development costs and accessibility](#) dated 1 May 2026

⁴⁴ Letter from the Home Builders Federation to the Chair of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee on [development costs and accessibility](#) dated 1 May 2026

⁴⁵ Letter from the Home Builders Federation to the Chair of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee on [development costs and accessibility](#) dated 1 May 2026



Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

Overheating

We are pleased the government has committed to undertake a comprehensive technical review of Approved Document O, which is intended to ensure new homes are designed and built to mitigate the risks of overheating. This is a relatively recent addition to the building regulations, having only come into effect in 2022. The NHOS told us that new-builds “suffer from design choices that exacerbate overheating during extreme weather.”⁴⁶ They pointed out that last summer investigations revealed some new homes reaching temperatures of “35°C or more during summer heatwaves.”⁴⁷ We have been informed of other investigations that also found homes reaching high temperatures.⁴⁸ The Chartered Institute of Housing told us there is “very limited evidence that homes built to Part O will be resilient to the higher temperatures and more frequent heatwaves that a world of 2°C or 3°C warming will contain.”⁴⁹ They called for Part O and the wider building regulation regime to be “stress tested” to understand if homes built to these standards will be able to cope with extreme weather events.⁵⁰

Conclusion and recommendation: We are concerned that new homes are being built that do not sufficiently mitigate the risks of homes overheating. The technical review of Part O should rigorously stress-test whether the requirements in Part O are sufficient for the higher temperatures that the UK could be exposed to as a result of climate change.

Streamlined approach to the introduction of regulatory changes

The NHBC argued that, while regulatory changes are necessary to drive improvements in the quality of homes, the process by which new regulations are applied “could be streamlined to minimise their impact.”⁵¹ Richard Smith, Head of Standards, Innovation and Research, at the NHBC outlined the need for a more structured approach to regulatory change. For example, he told us that:

We are seeing a change that has just come out in relation to the future homes standard. That could have an effect of changing a number of house types. We could then see a change for M4(2), which would change house types. Then we may have a change for part K, which will change the house types. If those three regulatory changes came out at the same time, there would be one change to house types. It would incorporate the stairs, the M4(2) requirements and the future homes standard. A bit more of a structured approach in relation to the regulatory changes would go a long way and help a lot.⁵²

⁴⁶ [The New Homes Ombudsman Service \[HCE 040\]](#)

⁴⁷ [The New Homes Ombudsman Service \[HCE 040\]](#)

⁴⁸ [Q242](#) [Chloe Fletcher]

⁴⁹ [Chartered Institute of Housing \[HCE 037\]](#)

⁵⁰ [Chartered Institute of Housing \[HCE 037\]](#)

⁵¹ [National House Building Council \(NHBC\) \[HCE 045\]](#)

⁵² [Q245](#) [Richard Smith]



**Housing, Communities
and Local Government
Committee**

Conclusion and recommendation: A more structured approach to regulatory change could help minimise the impact of new regulations on the industry. We would welcome the government's assessment of the feasibility of streamlining changes to the Building Regulations to reduce the regulatory burden on housebuilders, and help deliver 1.5m new homes.

We would be grateful for your response to our conclusions and recommendations by Monday 22 June.

Yours sincerely,

Florence Eshalomi MP
Chair, Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee