



The Healthy Homes Bill

A bill that transforms the regulation of the built environment to ensure that new homes and neighbourhoods support their residents' health and wellbeing

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Introduction to the Healthy Homes Bill

Introduction

Every year we build thousands of new homes and neighbourhoods in England which damage the life chances and wellbeing of their residents. The consequences of this affect us all, and will be with us for generations. This situation calls for a radical change to the way in which we regulate the quality of the built environment across our housing system, planning systems, and other regimes. This bill sets out to ensure that the health of residents is at the heart of the government's decisions on these topics, and is protected by legislation.

This document introduces the Healthy Homes Bill (page 1), sets out its contents (pages 4 to 9), and provides explanatory notes for each of its clauses (pages 10 to 16).

Substandard homes damage lives and make society less resilient

It has been well understood for more than a century that where we live has [profound effects on our health](#) throughout our lives, both in terms of our short-term safety and long-term quality of life. We know, for example, that substandard housing increases the likelihood of respiratory, cardiovascular and communicable diseases, [as well as mortality](#). We also know that poor quality housing is associated with [poor mental health](#), and can cause stress, depression and anxiety. Outside London [more than 75%](#) of the homes expected to be built by 2030 will be unsuitable for people who have limited mobility. And, across England, [children living in substandard housing](#) face up to a 25% higher risk of severe ill-health and disability during childhood and early adulthood, as well as lower educational attainment, and greater likelihood of unemployment and poverty. Our neighbourhoods are also crucially important to our mental and physical wellbeing. [Those which discourage walking](#) and have poor cycling infrastructure can have negative impacts on residents' mental wellbeing and increase the risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and musculoskeletal conditions.

But unhealthy homes and neighbourhoods do more than damage individuals' mental and physical health, as important as this is. They also impact society as a whole, making it less efficient, resilient and productive. A 2016 report by BRE found that poor-quality housing puts serious strain on emergency services and [costs the NHS £1.4bn a year](#) while cramped housing conditions deny people the economic benefits of having the space to be productive and creative in their own homes. Indeed, Covid-19 has made very clear the vital role that good quality housing – with adequate internal space and plentiful natural light, with access to balconies, private or shared gardens, public parks, and other green spaces – plays in ensuring that people, communities and economies are healthy, resilient, and equipped to withstand major shocks such as disease outbreaks.

The scale of the problem in England

Despite the fact that the links between our health and our homes are well understood, too many houses and neighbourhoods built today damage their residents' wellbeing and life chances.

[A review](#) by the Campaign to Protect Rural England and Place Alliance of 142 developments in England built by large volume housebuilders, published in January 2020, found that 75% of them were of mediocre or poor design. Judged against the government's National Planning Policy Framework, one in five of these schemes should have been refused planning permission. The communities in these places will face the negative impacts of poor design for decades.

Many of the starkest examples of poor-quality new housing have been enabled through the relaxation of the planning system in the form of permitted development rights ('PDR'). Since 2015 these allow offices and warehouses to be converted into homes without planning permission, and from 2020 will also apply to two-storey extensions to existing houses, shops, and the demolition of commercial buildings and rebuilding as homes.

The TCPA's [Raynsford Review](#); a large-scale study [by Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors](#) (RICS); and research commissioned by the [government itself](#) have each encountered many examples of office-to-residential PDR conversions which resulted in 'homes' that had very small or no windows and no access to private or communal outdoor spaces, playgrounds or greenspace. Some were located [in the middle of busy industrial estates](#). Only 22% of the schemes examined in the government's own research met the Nationally Described Space Standard, and only 3.5% have access to private amenity space.

As a recent investigation [by the BBC found](#), many PDR conversions are used by councils to provide 'temporary' accommodation for the most vulnerable in society, leaving many with no choice but to live in these unacceptable conditions. The Grenfell tower fire was a tragic example of just how dysfunctional our approach to regulating the built environment has become, and how devastating the consequences can be.

A Healthy Homes Act

The poor quality of many homes being built today is even more shocking because in some important aspects we have gone backwards over the last century. The 1919 Housing and Town Planning Act – the origin of council housing in the UK – fulfilled Lloyd George's commitment to 'homes fit for heroes' by introducing standards on space and design, as well as energy, transport and green space. These design standards shaped hundreds of thousands of council homes built between the wars and made an enormous difference to thousands of lives. The standards survived in different forms until 1980, when all mandatory standards were abolished. Forty years later there are still no legally enforceable standards for many aspects of housing design and construction.

It is time to recapture the spirit which brought about 'homes fit for heroes' and the huge step forwards in housing quality that it represented. This bill offers the government a powerful way to do this, and to deliver on its commitments to create beautiful, successful, places. At its heart, it puts into law a series of basic principles, which together define what constitutes a healthy home and neighbourhood. These evidence-based principles are, we believe, the absolute minimum the public expect from their homes. All government departments would be required

to have regard to the principles when making policy, as would all public authorities that have responsibilities relating to planning and the delivery of housing.

The bill also places a new duty on the Secretary of State to secure the health, safety and wellbeing of people in relation to buildings, and on local authorities to plan for affordable housing in a way that supports the long-term health, safety and wellbeing of residents.

These changes and others proposed by the bill would transform the way we regulate the built environment. They would bring certainty and coherence to a fragmented system, and prepare it for the challenges of future pandemics and climate change.

A route towards fundamental, practical change

Some may question whether new legislation is needed to achieve what this bill sets out to do. We believe that only legislative change is commensurate with the scale of the challenge we face. We need to fundamentally reform how we regulate the built environment, not make further incremental policy changes to an already fragmented system.

That these proposals are ambitious should not obscure that they are necessary, practical, and common-sense. While the benefits this bill could bring to individuals, the economy and the health and social care systems are huge, the path of action we outline is relatively simple. And the basic, minimum, standards the bill proposes for new housing are just that – basic and minimum; they concern, for example, access to natural light, accessibility, and freedom from air and noise pollution. The public would be rightfully outraged if they realised how many new homes currently fail to meet them, and that they are not required by law.

Covid-19, the Grenfell disaster and rising public anger demonstrate the need for profound change in the way we regulate the built environment. Now that the government itself has recognised that many new homes are simply not good enough, it must make good on its commitments by delivering a Healthy Homes Act.

With the support of many other organisations, the TCPA will [promote this bill throughout 2020](#) and beyond, work with parliamentarians to amend forthcoming legislation in line with its principles, and lay it before parliament as a private member's bill in the House of Lords in 2021.



Healthy Homes Bill

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Make provision about the delivery of decent homes. It sets out the principles that define a decent home and mechanisms for how those principles will be implemented for all new housing and neighbourhoods. It also sets out how development plan documents should be developed to meet the housing needs of residents.

BE IT ENACTED by the Queen’s most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

PART 1

DUTY TO SECURE HEALTHY HOMES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS

1 Duty on the Secretary of State

(1) It is the duty of the Secretary of State to secure the health, safety, wellbeing and convenience of persons in or about buildings and of others who may be affected by buildings or matters connected with buildings.

PRINCIPLES OF A HEALTHY HOME

2 Policy statement on healthy homes principles

(1) The Secretary of State must prepare a statement in accordance with this Act (the “policy statement on healthy homes principles”).

(2) The statement must explain how the healthy homes principles are to be interpreted and applied by Ministers of the Crown in making, developing and revising their policies.

(3) The statement may explain how the principles will be implemented and adhered to in a way that takes account of the development’s urban, suburban or rural location.

3 Meaning of ‘healthy homes principles’

(1) In this Act “healthy homes principles” means the principles -

- (a) all new homes must be safe in relation to the risk of fire,
- (b) all new homes must have, as a minimum, the liveable space required to meet the needs of people over their whole life-time, including adequate internal and external storage space,
- (c) all main living areas and bedrooms of a new dwelling must have access to natural light,
- (d) all new homes and their surroundings must be designed to be inclusive, accessible, and adaptable to suit the needs of all,
- (e) all new homes should be built within places that prioritise and provide access to sustainable transport and walkable services, including green infrastructure and play space,
- (f) all new homes must secure radical reductions in carbon emissions in line with the provisions of the Climate Change Act 2008,
- (g) all new homes must demonstrate how they will be resilient to a changing climate over their full life time,
- (h) all new homes must be built to design out crime and be secure,
- (i) all new homes must be free from unacceptable and intrusive noise and light pollution,
- (j) all new homes must not contribute to unsafe or illegal levels of indoor or ambient air pollution and must be built to minimise, and where possible eliminate, the harmful impacts of air pollution on human health and the environment, and
- (k) all new homes must be designed to provide year-round thermal comfort for inhabitants.

4 Policy statement on healthy homes principles: process

- (1) The Secretary of State must prepare a draft of the policy statement on healthy homes principles.
- (2) The Secretary of State must consult such persons as the Secretary of State considers appropriate in relation to the draft statement.
- (3) The Secretary of State must lay the draft statement before Parliament.
- (4) If, before the end of the period of 21 sitting days beginning with the day after the day on which the draft statement is laid—
 - (a) either House of Parliament passes a resolution in respect of the draft, or
 - (b) a committee of either House, or a joint committee of both Houses, makes recommendations in respect of the draft, the Secretary of State must produce a response and lay it before Parliament.
- (5) The Secretary of State must lay before Parliament, and publish, the final statement, but not before—

- (a) if subsection (4) applies, the day on which the Secretary of State lays the response required by that subsection, or
- (b) otherwise, the end of the period of 21 sitting days beginning with the day after the day on which the draft statement is laid.

(6) The Secretary of State may revise the policy statement on healthy homes principles at any time (and this section applies in relation to any revised statement).

(7) “Sitting day” means a day on which both Houses of Parliament sit.

5 Policy statement on healthy homes principles: effect

(1) A Minister of the Crown must have regard to the healthy homes principles when making, developing or revising policies dealt with by the statement.

(2) Relevant responsible authorities must have regard to the policy statement on healthy homes principles when discharging their duties under the planning, building, and public health acts.

(3) “Relevant responsible authorities” include but are not limited to-

- (a) local planning authorities,
- (b) public health authorities,
- (b) urban development corporations,
- (c) new town development authorities,
- (d) the planning inspectorate, and
- (e) Homes England.

6 Annual monitoring

(1) The Secretary of State must prepare a progress report for each annual reporting period.

(2) A progress report for an annual reporting period is a report on progress made in that period about the extent to which all new homes approved and completed during that period have met the healthy homes principles under section 2.

(3) A progress report must include specific consideration of how the approval and creation of new homes has met the needs of those with protected characteristics under section 4 of the Equality Act 2010.

(4) A progress report will include consideration of how progress could be improved.

(5) The Secretary of State must –

- (a) arrange for the progress report to be laid before Parliament, and
- (b) publish it.

HEALTHY HOMES COMMISSIONER

7 Establishment

(1) There is to be an office of the Healthy Homes Commissioner.

8 Primary function: securing healthy homes

(1) The Healthy Homes Commissioner's primary function is ensuring the promotion and implementation of the Healthy Homes principles.

(2) The primary function includes promoting awareness of the Healthy Homes principles in England.

(3) In the discharge of the primary function the Healthy Homes Commissioner may, in particular—

(a) advise persons exercising functions or engaged in activities affecting the delivery of homes on how to act compatibly with the Healthy Homes principles;

(b) advise the Secretary of State on the effective implementation of Healthy Homes principles;

(d) consider the potential effect on the healthy homes principles of government policy proposals and government proposals for legislation;

(e) bring any matter to the attention of either House of Parliament;

(f) investigate the availability and effectiveness of complaints procedures so far as relating to the healthy Homes principles;

(g) investigate any other matter relating to the implementation of the Healthy Homes principles;

(h) publish a report on any matter considered or investigated under this section.

PART 2

PLANNING FOR HEALTHY AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

9 Duty on local planning authorities to plan for affordable housing needs

(1) In section 19 (Preparation of local development documents) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 after paragraph 19(1E) insert -

“(1F) Development plan documents must (taken as a whole) include policies designed to meet the housing needs of the local planning authority’s area in such a way as to secure the long-term health, safety and wellbeing of residents. In meeting such needs planning authorities must have particular regard to ensuring that housing is affordable to those on average and below-average household incomes.”



Healthy Homes Bill: Explanatory Notes

What these notes do

These Explanatory Notes relate to the Healthy Homes Bill for England, version 5, as published by the Town and Country Planning Association in August 2020. They set out more detail on the current policy context for housing standards and explain the approach set out in the bill.

Policy context: The current approach to securing decent homes

The government's existing approach to securing decent homes and communities is fragmented and spread across: the building regulations regime; planning; the Health and Safety Executive; and a variety of other legislation. The nature of these 'requirements' is highly variable. For instance, some duties in planning law, such as the requirement to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development as part of the plan making process¹, are effectively meaningless in practice. Brexit adds further uncertainty about the future direction of UK regulation.

There are at least six main approaches that exist to setting standards in the built environment:

1. Building regulations

Designed to create a 'reasonable' level of health and safety, these regulations are based on enabling primary legislation and secondary statutory orders. The regulations in each order are expressed at a high level and interpreted through the government's 'Approved Documents'. These are not an absolute set of standards in any real sense but offer a measure of flexibility around compliance subject to an inspection regime. Inspection involves an element of professional judgement as to what 'reasonable' might mean.

This inspection regime has been part privatised. Building regulations can apply to certain operations in the conversion of existing buildings to residential use, but they are not always as strong as what is required for 'newly erected dwellings'. The conversion of existing buildings to residential use will normally require actions classed as building operations and building regulations will apply.² There are, however, three main problems with building regulations as a means of securing the health and wellbeing of end-users:

- The regime is not founded on absolute safeguards but on 'reasonable' compliance with regulations;
- The regulations are limited in extent and focused on building fabric. While they do include a minimum level of energy performance (Part L), they do not deal with health and wellbeing but focus on reasonably safe outcomes. For example, they do not

¹ Section 39(2) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

² New homes achieved through conversions do not have to meet Category 1 of ADM – the most basic level of accessibility.

require new homes to have any natural light, meet internal minimum space standards, or set standards for indoor air quality; and

- The enforcement regime has flaws with significant cultural problems of non-disclosure by parts of the development industry and wider perceptions of trust³. The current government's consultation 'Building a Safer Future: Proposals for reform of the building safety regulatory system', aims to deal with some aspects of these flaws but does not address the wider health and well-being of people.

2. National planning standards

The boundary between building regulations and planning requirements is unhelpfully blurred. There are no legal duties in planning law which require any minimum standards in the built environment. There is a legal duty on good design during the plan making process⁴, but this is not defined in a way which makes it useful. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)⁵ and Planning Policy Guidance (PPG)⁶ contain high-level policy on design, but no minimum standards.

The government decided not to proceed with requirements in England for zero carbon homes⁷ and the legal requirement for sustainable urban drainage schemes. In comparison, national standards on a range of issues exist in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in the form of national and regional planning policy and legislation⁸.

3. Technical housing standards

The government sets out technical standards for new homes, including a Nationally Described Space Standard (NDDS)⁹. This is not mandatory on local planning authorities, but if a local planning authority wishes to adopt a space standard it has to be the NDDS. The NDDS has to pass through the local plan viability test, so it can be difficult to require if developers argue that meeting the standard is too expensive, for instance in areas where land values are low. It is worth noting that these standards do not cover external storage, for bikes or bins for example.

The government has also stated the following in relation to the Nationally Described Space Standard¹⁰:

The optional regulations and space standard can only be applied where there is a local plan policy based on evidenced local need and where the viability of development is not compromised.

4. Local planning requirements

Local authorities have limited abilities to adopt standards in Local Plans. Significantly, all policy must pass through the NPPF viability testing regime. Guidance is also clear that local evidence

³ See TCPA, [Raynsford Review of Planning: Final Report](#), November 2018 and as identified in [Building a Safer Future. Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety: Final Report](#). Cm 9607. Hackitt Review. May 2018.

⁴ Section 39(2A) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended.

⁵ MHCLG, [National Planning Policy Framework](#), February 2019

⁶ MHCLG, [Planning Practice Guidance](#).

⁷ HM Treasury, [Fixing the Foundations: creating a more prosperous nation](#), July 2015

⁸ For example, Schedule 3 to the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 came into force in Wales from 7th January 2019 making sustainable urban drainage systems a mandatory requirement for all new developments.

⁹ DCLG, [Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard](#), March 2015

¹⁰ See appendix 5 [here](#).

must be used to justify and standards that are included in a development plan (see, for example, point 3 above). In some areas barriers are more practical, for example in relation to the maintenance of green and play space.

Currently, local authorities have no effective control over development delivered through permitted development rights, which means for some areas they do not control the standards of many new housing units currently being delivered.

5. Voluntary cross-sector standards

In relation to all the main standards identified above there is a wealth of professional advice. National planning policy suggests the use of assessment frameworks such as Building for a Healthy Life (previously titled Building for Life 12)¹¹, which is endorsed by the house building industry. This framework sets out 12 questions about urban design with a traffic light system for compliance. This process can be conducted by the developer and does not set minimum binding standards. There also remains a body of archived standards from various government agencies.

All of these additional standards have limited weight in the planning process. It is interesting to note that the RICS guidance on viability testing¹² has a powerful status in decision making despite having no formal policy or legal status.

6. Garden City Principles

The Garden City Principles¹³ - referenced in national policy and guidance - are applicable at a range of scales and contexts, including the renewal of existing places. They are a framework rather than a detailed set of standards and are accompanied by guidance which includes some benchmark standards - for example on provision of social housing, greenspace and energy¹⁴.

In contrast, the Healthy Homes principles are intended to provide a minimum standard for housing safety, performance and resilience, design and layout; they provide a baseline from which the more ambitious and transformational Garden City principles can be developed.

Commentary on provisions of the bill

Clause 1: Duty on the Secretary of State

At present there is no overall legal obligation on ministers in the planning acts or building control acts to secure the health, safety and wellbeing of individuals and the wider community. There is no obligation in planning law and this requirement is one of a number of issues in the 1984 Building Act where a minister may prepare regulations. The key point is to ensure that health and wellbeing are the clear legal priority for both systems.

Clause 2: Policy statement on healthy homes principles

¹¹ Design Council, *Building for Life 12 (third edition)*, 2015

¹² RICS, *Financial viability in planning*, August 2012 [updated version awaited at the time of writing]

¹³ See 'The Garden City Principles' on the TCPA's website [here](#).

¹⁴ See the TCPA's guidance for delivering new garden cities [here](#).

Clause 2 requires the Secretary of State to publish a policy statement on the healthy homes principles. This statement would explain the meaning of the healthy homes principles in practice and how these principles would be used and implemented.

Subsection (2) provides specific information on what the healthy homes principles policy statement must include. The policy statement will provide guidance on the interpretation and proportional application of the principles in relation to the development of policies by Ministers of the Crown. The statement will set out how ministerial government departments should interpret and apply specific healthy home principles when developing and implementing new policies, as well as updating existing policies. It may also set out the need for regulations or secondary legislation to be updated in order to implement the principles.

Subsection (3) sets out that the Secretary of State may explain in the statement how the development's location should be taken into account by Ministers of the Crown, when they are interpreting and applying the healthy homes principles. For example, it may be necessary in a rural area to apply a specific principle in a different way from homes being built in an urban location.

Clause 3: Meaning of 'healthy homes principles'

Clause 3 defines a set of principles which taken together define what constitutes a healthy home. They draw on research that highlights the profound impact homes can have on people's health, safety, wellbeing and life chances.

The clause sets out a core list of principles for the Secretary of State to develop into a policy statement on how healthy homes will be delivered in the future, whether those homes are built or developed from existing buildings. These principles should serve as a foundation for the development of policy and law that delivers high quality, decent homes that benefit people and communities.

The healthy homes principles are principles which will act as a foundation for decision-making about new housing. There is no single agreed definition or set of principles about what constitutes a healthy home, so the policy statement produced by the Secretary of State under clause 2 will include a fuller definition of each of the healthy homes principles and the Secretary of State can decide to include wider principles and policies if necessary.

The meaning of the individual healthy homes principles, as initially set out in the bill, is as follows:

- 1. All new homes must be safe in relation to the risk of fire:** All new homes must be safe and comply with a robust and comprehensive set of fire regulations, which prioritise people's safety over all other considerations.
- 2. All new homes must have, as a minimum, the liveable space required to meet the needs of people over their whole lives, including adequate internal and external storage space:** All new homes must comply with the government's Nationally Described Space Standard for room sizes and internal storage. They must also provide for external storage so that bins and bicycles and pushchairs do not have to be stored in the open.
- 3. All main living areas and bedrooms of a new dwelling must have access to natural light.** This is critical to people's mental and physical health.

4. **All new homes and their surroundings must be designed to be inclusive, accessible, and adaptable to suit the needs of all:** New homes and the environments within which they are built should aim to create social and safe places for all sections of society, including those protected under the Equalities Act 2010.
5. **All new homes should be built within places that prioritise walkable services and sustainable transport:** Major housing developments, defined as 10 or more homes, should have access to public services, including but not limited to, a primary school, public transport, health services and a convenience store, within 500 metres.
6. **All new homes must secure radical reductions in carbon emissions in line with the provisions of the Climate Change Act 2008:** All new homes must help the country achieve the provisions of the Climate Change Act. This should include, as a minimum, being delivered to zero carbon standard and being capable of being energy positive.
7. **All new homes must have walkable access to green and play space:** All new homes must have accessible green and play space within 500m. Access to such space is important for people of all ages and the space must be open to all, regardless of tenure or income.
8. **All new homes must demonstrate how they will be resilient to a changing climate over their full life time:** All new homes must be resilient to climate change for their full design life. These measures must include the implementation of green sustainable urban drainage schemes and other design measures to ensure thermal comfort.
9. **All new homes must be built to design out crime and be secure:** When people feel insecure and unsafe in their home or neighbourhood it can have serious impacts on their mental health.
10. **All new homes must be free from unacceptable intrusive noise and light pollution:** In order to secure people's health and wellbeing homes need to secure a tranquil environment.
11. **All new homes must not contribute to unsafe or illegal levels of indoor or ambient air pollution and must be built to minimise, and where possible eliminate, the harmful impacts of air pollution on human health and the environment:** Exposure to air pollution has a direct impact on people's health and can create chronic health conditions.
12. **All new homes must be designed to provide year-round thermal comfort for inhabitants:** Both overheating and cold can have a major impact on health and wellbeing, particularly for those suffering from fuel poverty.

These principles cannot be changed without primary legislation.

Clause 4: Policy statement on healthy homes principles: process

Clause 4 sets out that as part of the development of the healthy homes principles policy statement, the Secretary of State must publish a draft and consult appropriate parties. The Secretary of State must follow a specific process each time the policy statement is updated. Parties will be consulted as appropriate to provide the Secretary of State with views on the potential impact of the updated policy statement.

Subsection (2) requires that the Secretary of State must consult on the draft policy statement with those who are considered to be relevant.

Subsection (3) requires that a draft must be produced and laid before parliament for their consideration. This must take place before the policy statement is finalised.

Subsection (4) sets out provisions for cases where parliament chooses to respond to the draft policy statement, either by passing a resolution in respect of the draft policy statement, or recommending changes to the statement, within the period of 21 sitting days after the draft statement has been laid. The Secretary of State is required to lay a response to any resolution passed or recommendations made by parliament.

Subsection (5) requires the final published healthy homes policy statement to be presented to parliament and published. The Secretary of State must not publish the final statement before laying a response, if required under subsection (4), or otherwise, before a period of 21 sitting days has passed since the draft statement is laid. This is intended to allow parliament sufficient time to scrutinise the draft policy statement.

Subsection (6) clarifies that the policy statement may be revised at any time, but that the above requirements in this clause still apply and the same process must therefore be followed by the Secretary of State in order to revise the statement.

Subsection (7) clarifies the meaning of 'sitting day' for the purposes of this clause.

Clause 5: Policy statement on healthy homes principles: effect

Clause 5 makes it clear that both Ministers of the Crown and those with responsibility for planning must have regard for the healthy homes principles policy statement. It should, therefore, be taken into consideration at both the national and local level.

Subsection (1) clarifies that ministers must have regard to the healthy homes principles policy statement when making, developing or revising policies dealt with by the statement. This means that in the development of policy, policy-makers must consider the healthy homes principles policy statement and follow the approach which is set out in the statement.

Subsection (2) clarifies that relevant responsible authorities must have regard to the healthy homes principles policy statement when they are undertaking their duties and responsibilities in relation to the planning acts.

Subsection (3) defines what is meant by 'relevant responsible authorities'.

Clause 6: Annual monitoring

Clause 6 establishes a duty on the Secretary of State to produce a progress report for each annual reporting period (subsection (1)) about the extent to which all new homes approved and completed during the reporting period have met the healthy homes principles (subsection (2)).

Subsection (3) also requires that progress reports consider how the new homes approved and completed during that period have met the needs of groups with protected characteristics, as defined by section (4) of the Equality Act 2010. These characteristics relate to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. And subsection (4) requires that the progress report considers how progress could be improved.

Subsection (5) requires that the Secretary of State's reports must be laid before parliament and published.

Clauses 7 and 8: Establishment and powers of the Healthy Homes Commissioner

The purpose of the Healthy Homes Commissioner is to provide a framework for accountability, and a source of independent expert advice to the Secretary of State as to where the principles are being effectively implemented and what legal and policy change may be required. The commissioner also has a role to provide advice to the wider sector on detailed implementation.

Clause 9: Duty on local planning authorities to plan for affordable housing needs

Clause 13 places a legal duty on local planning authorities in relation to meeting housing needs. Subsection (1) requires local planning authorities to plan for the long-term and full range of housing needs in the area, with a particular emphasis on the provision of genuinely affordable homes. This clause restores a definition of affordable homes which is based on people's income so that planning authorities can meet the real housing needs of their communities.



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