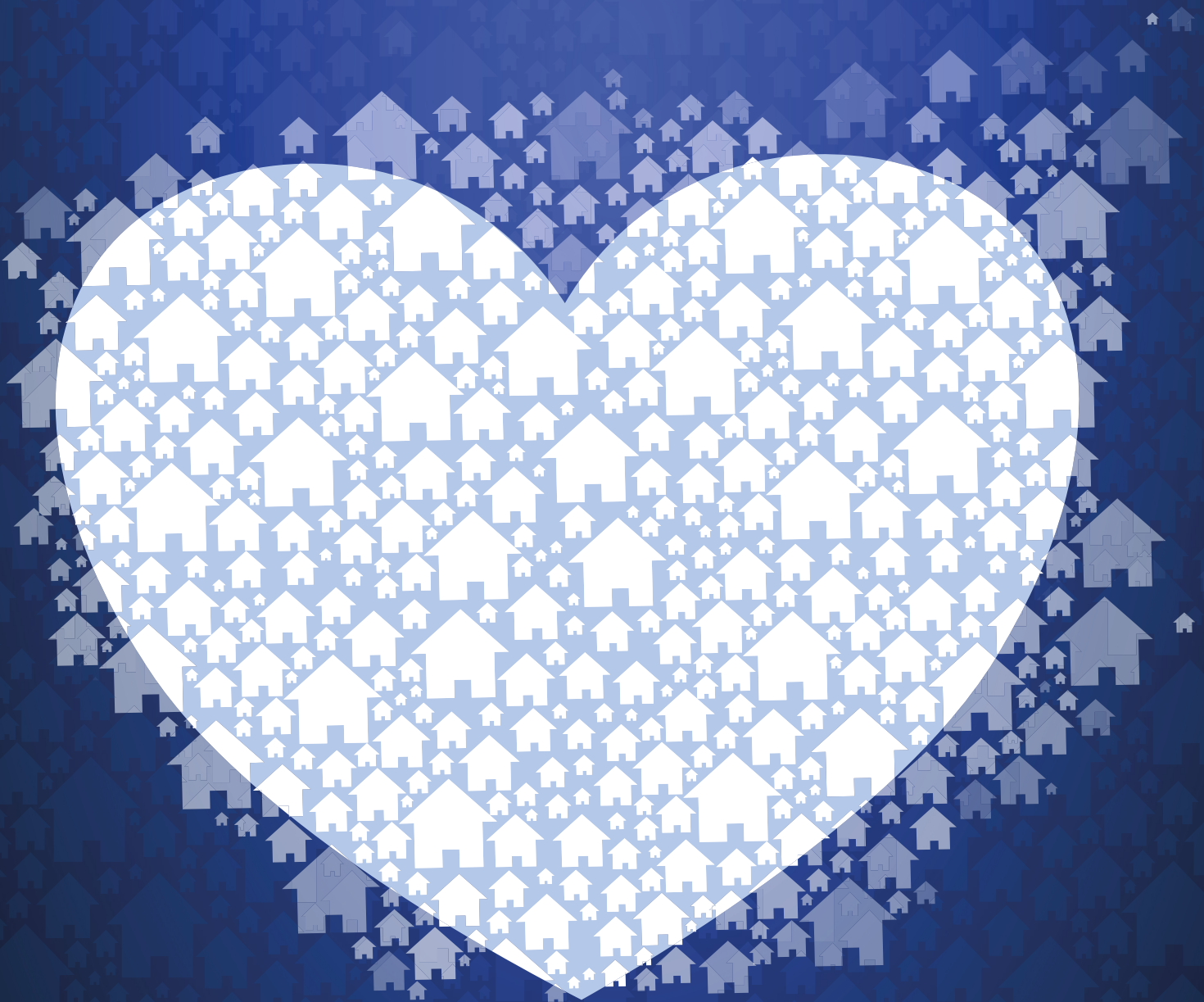


# Scottish Housing Day 2022

A case for new sustainable housing standard



## This year, for the 7th annual Scottish Housing Day, we are focusing on the importance of sustainable housing - building on 2021's climate change theme.

To mark the day, we have prepared this paper setting out some of the principles that we believe should inform a new sustainable housing standard for Scotland. The report offers a new view on what we should expect our homes to provide, in order to be truly sustainable. The six indicators (affordability, net zero, space standards, accessibility, resource use and health and wellbeing) were established by the Scottish Housing Day working group but the findings are informed by feedback from three focus groups. Two hosted online by CIH and Scotland's Housing Network and one hosted by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service Scotland, TPASS, in person. They were attended by tenants, landlords and housing professionals in June 2022. In total, 59 people took part in these groups.

In addition, we conducted an online survey that was shared amongst the membership of the Scottish Housing Day steering group and the housing sector; 58 people responded. Participants in both the survey and focus group were self-selecting and not necessarily representative of the housing sector at large.

The organisational members of the Scottish Housing Day working group are: Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO), Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), Citizens Advice Scotland, Existing Homes Alliance, Scottish Association of Landlords (SAL), Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA), Scottish Government, Scottish Housing Network (SHN), Tenant Participation Advisory Service Scotland, Under One Roof, the Wheatley Group and Homes for Scotland.

### What is sustainability and why does it matter?

When we discuss sustainability, we are talking about homes that are

- environmentally sustainable and will support our net zero ambition,
- economically sustainable in that we use only the required resources to build and the home does not require excessive levels of maintenance ongoing maintenance, and
- social sustainability in that the homes support and build social cohesion and improve the housing outcomes for those living in them.

By focusing on sustainability, we can set out high minimum standards for quality, energy-efficient homes in communities that thrive and supporting our collective ambition for housing.

### Affordability

Feedback from the focus group and online survey considered affordability the most important aspect of housing sustainability. There is ongoing discussion about how to improve affordability considering the cost-of-living crisis (including a Scottish Government working group looking at a shared understanding of affordability) and recognition that, while there are ways to measure and define affordability, confusion over definitions is inhibiting helping households with housing costs. Feedback from the respondents considered the following as key criteria for affordable housing:

Essential	Desirable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Household can meet rent or mortgage payments without regularly having to cut spending on household essentials like food or heating</li> <li>Household is not worried that rent or mortgage payments could rise to a level that would be difficult to pay</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Household can meet rent or mortgage payments without regularly preventing participation in social activities</li> </ul>

Respondents also suggested a range of means to achieve these housing outcomes including:

- Adequate support package/services in place to support households to pay for white goods, hardship payment for energy costs.
- Build more social housing so there is greater choice of affordable homes for people at all income levels, creating genuinely mixed communities.

There is also recognition that many tenants who rent their home may require access to financial support in retirement to meet their housing costs. There is no prescription from respondents about how the issue of affordability should be defined or addressed, but an acknowledgement that it must be viewed as a priority for the Government.

### Net zero

Respondents noted the need to reduce the carbon footprint of housing stock, and in a way that does not impoverish tenants and homeowners. It is recognised that retrofitting low carbon heating systems and energy efficiency measures can be expensive (and there is a concern that it can be less effective in older buildings) so there is a need to ensure adequate financial support and advice so people understand the most appropriate solutions for their home.

The requirement that new buildings consented from 2024 will have to use heating systems which produce zero direct greenhouse gas emissions will drive low-carbon heating alternatives. However, there is a need for these new heating systems to be cost effective both to install and to operate. As such, feedback from respondents considered the following as principles with regards to moving to meeting net zero targets in the housing sector.

Essential	Desirable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All homes should have improved energy efficiency measures ahead of new heating systems</li> <li>New heating systems should not lead to fuel poverty</li> <li>The home can be heated safely and effectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All heating systems should be low or zero carbon</li> <li>Householders are supported to get the best heating system for their type of housing and know how to work their heating systems.</li> </ul>

Respondents also noted the need to improve standards of existing stock, but they also recognise that transforming the heating systems across these properties will require a mix of grant support and investment from landlords and homeowners.

## Case Study: West of Scotland Housing Association Passivhaus development

West of Scotland Housing Association (WSHA) has started to welcome the first tenants to its landmark Passivhaus social housing development in Glasgow's East End.

The development, the largest of its kind in Glasgow, comprises 36 flats, over six storeys. It has been created to meet Passivhaus Standard which reduces the building's carbon footprint and contributes towards the Scottish Government's target for emissions from heating buildings to reach zero by 2045. The ultra-low energy buildings require little energy use for heating or cooling which, in turn, helps address fuel poverty.

Passivhaus developments are a key part of WSHA's Green Strategy which highlights how it will achieve a greener and more sustainable future in the coming years.

As a Development Partner of Hubwest Scotland, the project was procured through its pre-procured Contractors Framework, and CCG (Scotland) Ltd was appointed as the preferred developer. The project was funded with Scottish Government grant of £4.3 million through Glasgow City Council's Affordable Housing Supply Programme as well as WSHA's private finance.

### Space Standards

The pandemic has created a new appreciation of what people want from their homes. There is now increased demand for space for home working and for access to outdoor space, which can support good mental health and wellbeing. There is notable support among respondents for balconies and outdoor space, and a clear expectation that all homes should at a minimum have enough bedrooms for all members of a family.

Feedback from respondents considered the following as key aspects of space standards.

Essential	Desirable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The number of bedrooms in the home is adequate for all members of the household</li><li>• There is adequate internal storage space for the household</li><li>• There is outdoor space for clothes drying and outdoor/travel equipment</li><li>• There is space in properties to allow for adaptations should householders require</li><li>• There is space for members of the household to study or do work or homework if they need to</li><li>• Space to prepare and eat a meal</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There are enough bathroom facilities for everyone living in the household to be able to use them</li><li>• The home has access to outdoor space, for example a private or shared garden, or balcony</li><li>• Space to host visitors</li></ul>

There is also a recognition that although these space and size standards may be difficult to apply to existing homes - that this should not preclude them from applying to new homes- as per the example above with the new homes no longer having gas or oil heating systems from 2024.

The feedback aligns with the approach taken by Glasgow City Council where, since 2018, any new developments funded through its Affordable Housing Supply Programme have had to meet the Glasgow Standard, which exceeds the Scottish Government’s corresponding requirements for a range of sustainability measures with regards to space size, layout, storage and accessibility – though it is important to recognise the higher capital costs that result.

## Case Study: Blackwood Design Guide and Helenvale Development

The ground-breaking ‘Blackwood House & Design Guide’ offers a blueprint for constructing accessible and connected homes that enable people to live as independently as possible and to self-manage health and wellbeing without the requirement for major alterations or adaptations. The guide builds on the experience of co-designing homes with customers and architects. It sets out key design principles and includes layouts for units of different sizes that include space standards, energy efficiency standards, outline specifications for components and technology, and options for construction such as off-site manufacturing.

To accommodate the ‘Glasgow Standard’ for accessible design, the guide drew on the Helenvale development, which included underfloor heating and solar panels to meet proposed future energy efficiency standards in support of Scotland’s net zero ambitions. One tenant who had lived in a care home for six years prior to moving to Helenvale spoke of her delight with her flat and that her family could now visit her in her own home. She also spoke about how independent she now is and about looking forward to her future. Additionally, the development has helped create a financially sustainable model of independent living.

### Flexible/accessible living

Among respondents there is desire and expectation that they can remain at home as they age, noting a lack of wheelchair/mobility-friendly properties which is exacerbating the challenge for those with specific accessibility requirements.

Essential	Desirable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No accessibility worries about leaving or entering the home</li> <li>• The home is suitable for the current age and/or disability related needs of everyone in the household</li> <li>• Adaptations, where required, are allowed so tenants can remain in their homes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The home can be adapted if required</li> <li>• Householders can live there at different ages and stages of life</li> <li>• Properties constructed and cabled for digital connectivity</li> </ul>

New homes are built to the latest standards set by government and thus already provide some flexibility to suit varying levels of need without the requirement for major alterations or relocation. As the Scottish Government conducts a review of housing for varying need standards, it is considered that, where possible, these principles should be applied retrospectively to existing stock.

## Resource use

For many respondents this characteristic is the least important as it is seen as a broader societal issue rather than just a housing issue. However, it is noted that it can have a big impact on householders as it can lead to ongoing remedial work where things must be replaced. Best practice for development of housing is not well known and as such respondents made the following.

Essential	Desirable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Housing construction should minimise its carbon footprint</li><li>• Living in the home does not utilise unreasonable resources</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Home should be built from sustainable materials</li><li>• Consider quality over long term and cost of replacement parts and maintenance</li></ul>

These principles are already often applied in the housing sector but the right support and market access must be available to developers to build more housing that is less resource intensive and more sustainable.

## Tenant and customer wellbeing

Respondents noted a number of health and safety concerns that they felt were fundamental to having enhanced wellbeing in their home. They felt these were core in order to have sustainable, high quality healthy households.

However, there were also some other asks that while not essential they felt would help them become connected to their community. Some of these repeat what has been discussed earlier with regards to access to communal outdoor space or being connected to local amenities, services and transport.

Essential	Desirable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The home is free from safety hazards such as faulty wiring or fire risks</li><li>• The home feels physically secure</li><li>• The home is free from mould or damp problems</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The home is in a good location - with a local bus route, access to services and access to employment opportunities and green spaces</li></ul>

The essential concerns raised by respondents are already included within existing housing standards and all customers and tenants should expect them met or be able to raise a complaint with the appropriate landlord/supplier if they are not met. The bigger challenge is connecting a home to a community. Central to this is having a well-staffed planning resource and appropriate investment in infrastructure so that housing is not built in isolation.

## What next

The priorities noted in this paper reflect what landlords, tenants and housing practitioners want to see to improve housing sustainability.

Encouragingly, the Scottish Government commitment to a new housing standard in Housing to 2040 is an opportunity to improve standards and experiences across both the private and social sectors. Our feedback shows that housing professionals, tenants and customers are ambitious about the scope for a new standard and the transformative effect it could have on Scotland's housing stock and its people.

But achieving lasting change will require regulatory and other policy reforms. The exact nature of these will depend on the Scottish Government's ambition for the new standard and the level of investment it is willing to make.

As such, we want to see the Scottish Government begin work with the sector to establish what a new standard will include. We are already making progress towards such a standard with the Heat in Building Strategy setting out new minimum requirements on EPC rating and, as noted above, work is ongoing on developing a shared understanding of affordability and reviewing Housing for Varying Needs.

But we are yet to discuss what new space standards may look like, what principles should underpin the standards and ultimately how will they be paid for. We look forward to working with the Scottish Government and to start to consider our collective ambitions for a new Housing Standard.



# Scottish Housing Day 2022

