



# HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN HOMES

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

JULY 2016

### GLOBAL CAMPAIGN SPONSORS:

# BACKGROUND

Our home, both the location and the physical building itself, influences almost every aspect of our lives – from how well we sleep, to how often we see friends, to how safe and secure we feel. If we want to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, there can hardly be a more important place to start than the home: it is where most people spend most of their life.

Much work has been carried out on establishing the links between poor housing and ill health, and increasingly on the links between sustainable, well-designed homes and better health and wellbeing in residents. However, this evidence has not yet had an impact in the market.

This report is about beginning a concerted effort to shift the market towards a focus on the mental, social and physical health and wellbeing of the people who occupy the homes we build and retrofit.

It is aimed at all those with a role in developing, designing, delivering or managing housing, and is focused on general needs homes in the UK housing sector. We aim to gather and distil the most compelling evidence and advice about building and neighbourhood design features which can enhance the health and wellbeing of residents.

The report also explores the ‘value’ case for action. Through a combination of a literature review, dialogue with housing providers and dedicated consumer research undertaken by one of our task group members, Saint-Gobain, we demonstrate that there is a compelling business case for the industry to focus on health and wellbeing in residential property.

## What is health and wellbeing?

The World Health Organisation defines health not as merely the absence of ill-health but as “a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing”. Therefore, we have interpreted “health and wellbeing” to include social, psychological and physical factors.

Physical health can be described as the absence of disease, as well as optimal functioning of our body. Mental health is about much more than just the absence of mental illness: it encompasses positive issues such as peace of mind, contentment, confidence and social connection. Social wellbeing is determined by the strength of an individual’s relationships, and the way in which they function within their community.

It is important to note that health and wellbeing is influenced by a complex combination of genetics, behaviour and environmental factors. The built environment, and professionals who work in this sector, do not have an influence on all of these factors, but they do play a crucial enabling role.



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## KEY FINDINGS

- 1) **Construction and property professionals have an opportunity to dramatically enhance the lives of the people they design and build for.**

Whilst built environment professionals may not have direct control over the wide ranging determinants of health and wellbeing, the evidence highlighted in this report shows that the design and quality of a home and neighbourhood is a key contributor to the health and wellbeing of the people who live there.

- 2) **It is vital to consider all three aspects of health and wellbeing equally – mental, social and physical.**

The industry is, perhaps, more used to dealing with the environmental design parameters associated with physical occupant health, and while these aspects are critically important, they are only one part of the picture. In order to provide the most favourable environments in which people can flourish, it is vital to consider all three aspects of health and wellbeing equally.

- 3) **The emerging solutions to minimising the impact of the built environment on mental health are, largely, the same as those required to minimise the impact on physical health.**

Evidence shows that a single design feature, such as good daylight levels, good ventilation or the provision of open space, can have a simultaneous positive impact on mental wellbeing and physical health: therefore, these need to be considered early in the design process.

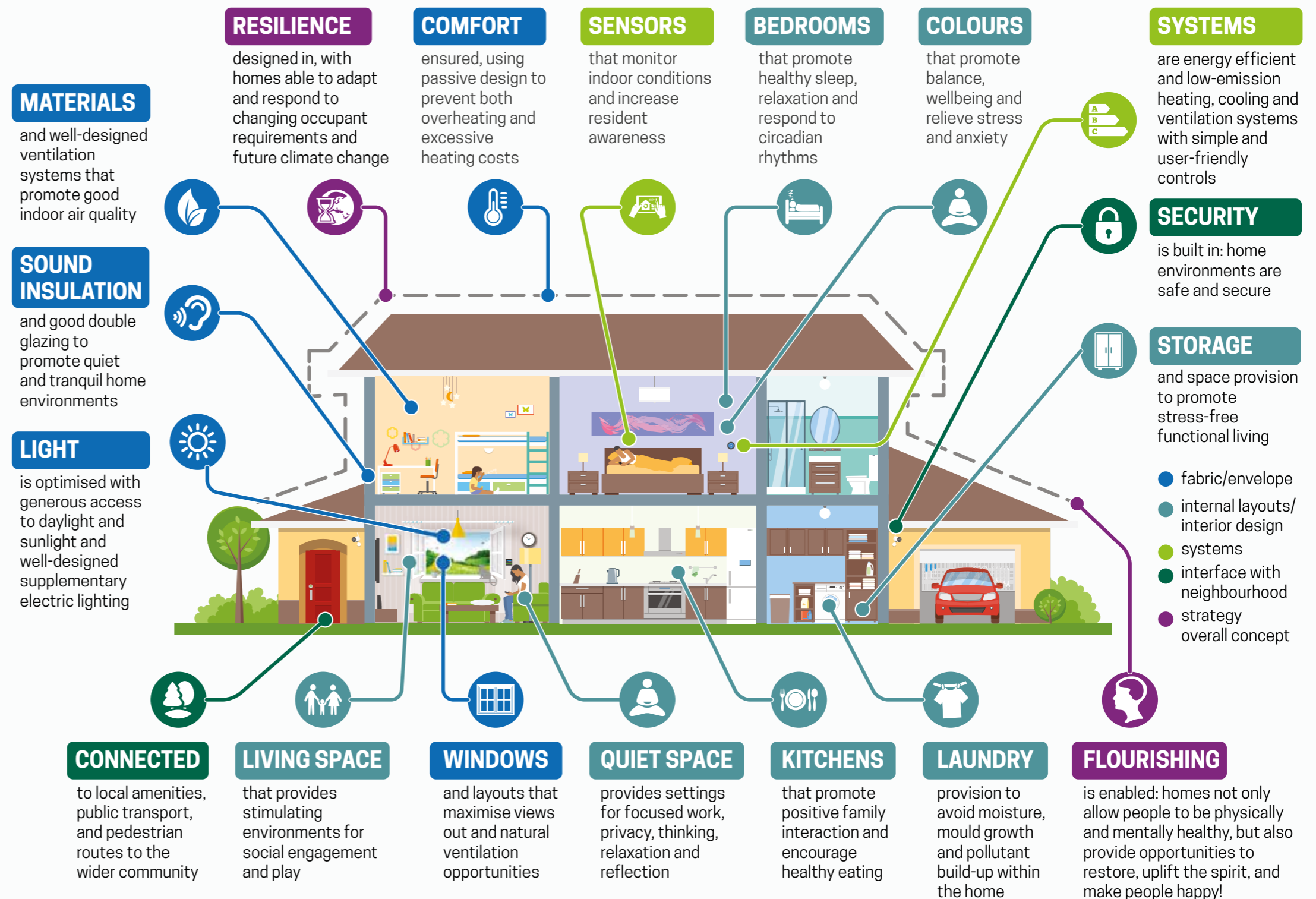
- 4) **Many of the design features which enhance health and wellbeing also bring positive environmental benefits.**

For example, better daylighting can also reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions, and the provision of green space can enhance biodiversity. However, we need to be aware of and address possible tensions – such as balancing the need for more energy efficient homes with the need for improved air quality through adequate ventilation and air filtration.

- 5) **Consideration of health and wellbeing is increasingly influencing consumers' buying and decision-making processes, spanning generations and consumer demographics.**

The results of our consumer research clearly demonstrate that UK consumers want a home that contributes to their health and wellbeing. Over 30 per cent of home owners would be willing to pay more for this, with nearly as many renters prepared to pay higher rent for such a home

## WHAT IS A 'HEALTHY' HOME?



## KEY ACTIONS REQUIRED

Reaching a tipping point in the demand for and supply of healthy homes requires action across all parts of the housebuilding value chain:

### For clients, developers and housing associations

- Engage designers early in the development process, to undertake assessments and analysis of opportunities to promote health and wellbeing for residents
- Factor in ability to deliver health and wellbeing objectives in to selection of construction team and ensure that construction monitoring services are engaged
- Provide residents with easy-to-understand operational and maintenance information so that they are able to maximise the health and wellbeing benefits of their home
- For mixed-use and multi-residential developments engage property management services to ensure the development is well maintained and safe, helping to enable social interaction, and active use of outdoor spaces
- Undertake post occupancy evaluation, ideally with the design and construction team, to learn and share lessons

### For designers and contractors

- Act as an advocate for healthy, sustainable design and challenge the client to be as ambitious as possible
- Put residents' health and wellbeing at the heart of building and neighbourhood design, including consideration of changing future needs
- Select materials and systems that are robust, low maintenance, low emission and resource efficient
- Commit to strategies for testing and commissioning the construction so that the homes meet the intended functionality and performance

### For agents and advisors

- Ensure all staff have appropriate knowledge on key trends, design standards and changing householder aspirations on health and wellbeing
- Act as an advocate to developer clients on consumer trends, and the importance of health and wellbeing
- Reflect health and wellbeing of developments in pricing and marketing strategy

## WHAT IS A 'HEALTHY' NEIGHBOURHOOD?





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