

BUILDING ACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

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"Where we live and work is potentially the largest, most powerful factor in determining how active we are. An attractive, safe and accessible environment can inspire even the least active people – those who stand to gain the most from a more active lifestyle – to incorporate small but significant amounts of activity into their lives. I support ukactive's policies to challenge and enable architects, designers and town planners to create their own innovative solutions to the inactivity crisis."



PLACES FIT FOR LIVING

All new developments and regeneration projects should be challenged to promote the local community's ability to be active through new and existing formats.

Fig 15.



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INTRODUCTION

Public Health England's landmark document *Everybody Active, Every Day* made clear that the built environment should make activity the easy and enjoyable choice. The accessibility, safety and attractiveness of the built environment are potentially the most influential factors in determining a community's local activity levels, and as more and more people gravitate toward cities, it is crucial that cities themselves, as well as the buildings and micro-communities therein, are built to inspire activity and support healthy lifestyles.

There is now a broad consensus that architects, designers, developers and town planners should be challenged to take advantage of the vast resources of the built environment and use it to its fullest potential in order to support the meeting of local health outcomes.^{30 31} Through innovative planning and management of the local environment alongside public health practitioners and physical activity providers, areas can be designed to encourage more physical activity and play a major role in improving community wellbeing.

³⁰ RIBA. City Health Check: How Design Can Save Lives and Money (December 2013). <<https://www.architecture.com/Files/RIBAHoldings/PolicyAndInternationalRelations/Policy/PublicAffairs/RIBACityHealthCheck.pdf>>. [accessed 05/10/15]

³¹ All-Party Commission on Physical Activity, Tackling Inactivity – A Coordinated Approach. (2014). <<https://parliamentarycommissiononphysicalactivity.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/apcopa-final.pdf>>. [accessed 05/10/15]

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Where we live affects how active we are. Government and local authorities should raise physical activity and public health as a priority in the design of the built environment, including in towns, cities, business parks, new buildings and developments, and open spaces.

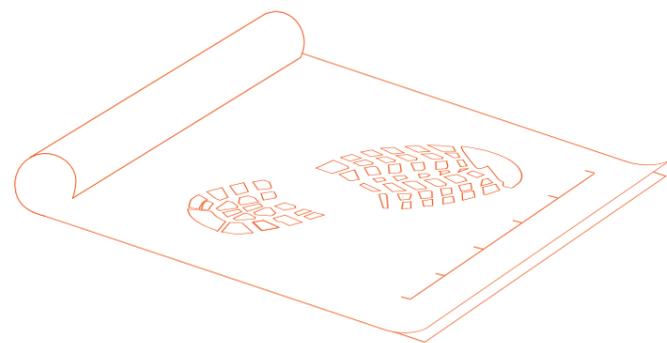
>> To raise the understanding of what works, research should be prioritised into what is best practice when designing active environments, conducting a review of existing evidence nationally and internationally, and resourcing the ongoing evaluation of promising pilot initiatives and practices such as externally visible stairs or skip-stop elevators. It should establish usable guidance so that local planners and public health practitioners can effectively 'fitness test' new developments.

>> Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies should include a dedicated analysis of the local built environment in regards to its accessibility and usability for active lifestyles. They should create specific targets to redesign and improve the local area accordingly in partnership with town planners and local developers.

>> All new developments and regeneration projects should be challenged to promote physical activity and active travel through the existing Design and Access Statement, to ensure they will have a positive, rather than negative, influence on the local community's ability to be active. Local authority planning departments should be required to report the potential public health impact of large-scale planning applications.

>> The work of the Government Science Office Foresight Programme, which has looked into the cities of the future, should be given a wider audience and used to shape policy thinking behind a long-term investment programme to redesign the cities in which we live to promote physical activity as the norm.

TO RAISE THE UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT WORKS, RESEARCH SHOULD BE PRIORITISED INTO WHAT IS BEST PRACTICE WHEN DESIGNING ACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS.



2 Everybody Active, Every Day highlighted the need for innovative thinking and new networks of expertise to design and build active environments. It is crucial that architects, designers and town planners have a strong understanding of the evidence base and how active environments can be designed, and are armed with the tools to do so.

>> The Department for Local Government and Communities, alongside Public Health England, should commit to developing and delivering – with the support of local partners – a series of guidance, tools and resources for planning, construction and spatial development professionals. These will develop an improved awareness of the public health impact of the built environment and begin to regulate practice, taking inspiration and best practice from successful international examples such as New York City's Active Design Guidelines for Architects.

>> A senior town planner should sit on local health and wellbeing boards to ensure the practicalities of delivering wellbeing-friendly new building works, and that all local decision making regarding health promotion factors in the built environment.