

RIBA Manifesto 2017: Building Global Britain



Introduction

The built environment plays a crucial role in how people understand and value the world around them.

As the UK negotiates a new relationship with the EU and the rest of the world, the quality of the places in which we live, work and play will be a reflection of our ambition and success.

Better environmental standards in housing can bring down energy costs for consumers.

Well-designed neighbourhoods can create better health outcomes for children and adults.

The development of new high-quality, affordable homes can alleviate the housing crisis and unstick some of the UK's productivity problems.

Better design of public buildings like schools, museums and hospitals can inspire communities and is a better use of scarce public money.

Support for innovation in flood defences can catalyse the UK's export potential in new technologies.

Architects are at the forefront of innovations that allow the UK's built environment to work for communities across the country. The sector is also a beacon for the UK globally, flying the flag for quality, creativity and innovation.

Brexit represents challenges and opportunities for architects. Our built environment can support and create happy, sustainable communities, but that requires a stable UK economy with a capacity to grow, access to the right skills and talent as well as world-leading research and innovation.

This year, the RIBA published *Global By Design*, which outlines how the Government could ensure that the UK's globally competitive architecture sector continues to thrive post Brexit.

To create the communities that we need and secure the UK's reputation as a global hub for innovation and creativity, the RIBA believes that a new vision for the UK should:

- Grow the UK as a global trading nation
- Put local people at the heart of the planning system
- Deliver good quality homes that meet the needs of society
- Build schools that are better spaces for learning
- Show leadership in resilient infrastructure.

Grow the UK as a global trading nation

UK architecture is a global success story.

UK architects are ambassadors for creativity and innovation abroad, leading the way in creating a better built environment. With **1 in 5 architects indicating that they are interested in exporting**, more can be done to unlock the sector's potential.¹ This includes further mutual professional recognition agreements in key territories across the world.

The architecture sector is at its best when it supports diverse talent. Currently 25% of registered architects are from the EU, people that are using their talent to boost British businesses every day. Greater flexibility in routes to qualification is also needed to support people from all backgrounds to access the profession.

To ensure that the sector can continue to make the best of new opportunities at home and abroad, the RIBA recommends:

- Working with EU governments to quickly confirm the status of non-UK EU nationals in the UK
- Supporting new routes to qualification, including apprenticeships, and pressing ahead with analysing new routes to qualification
- Ensuring that the existing mutual professional recognition agreement with the EU stands as part of the Brexit negotiation
- Exploring and developing new mutual recognition agreements in other key trading nations
- Providing support to the trade ambitions of architecture practices of all sizes with more targeted advice and support from the Department for International Trade.

1 in 5 architects are interested in exporting services

Put people at the heart of the planning system

The planning system works best when it matches the needs of local communities with the best built environment expertise to foster support and trust.

England has this year seen the election of new metro mayors, and devolution deals with combined authorities are unlocking potential for greater economic autonomy across the country. The next step should be to support a further transfer of powers on housing and planning from Westminster to our local communities and regions to help shape a better built environment.

A planning system that is supported by local people will only be possible with higher levels of public trust. Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) agreements should not be subject to commercial confidentiality, which allows some developers to weaken their obligations to deliver benefit to communities from new developments. Existing Government rules on disposal of public land are currently a missed opportunity to strengthen public trust with a more strategic approach to housing and by delivering social as well as economic value.

To create a planning system that puts people at its heart, the RIBA recommends:

- Entering into dialogue with new and existing authorities, to support a more robust package of devolved housing and planning powers
- Ending the use of commercial confidentiality for viability assessments in Section 106 and CIL negotiations
- Introducing a requirement to consider social return where public land is disposed of, following the same approach as the Social Value Act.

Delivering social as well as economic value

Good quality homes that meet the needs of society

Feeling settled in a well-designed home has become an unachievable dream for many people in the UK.

The current housing crisis is the result of decades of fragmented policy-making by successive governments. Its impact has been affecting our quality of life and our social cohesion for some time – it now threatens our economic productivity.

We know that high quality, inclusive, mixed tenure development helps communities to flourish. It also helps tackle many of the challenges that society faces, supporting health and wellbeing, giving families space to thrive, reducing energy demand, and lowering the cost of social care. Yet estimates suggest that **poor quality housing still costs the NHS £2.5 billion a year.**²

Housing standards set a benchmark for decent living, provide vital protection for consumers and certainty for the industry. Some of the UK's largest house builders have proactively adopted space standards in recent years, leading the way in providing homes for buyers and renters which support health and wellbeing over the long term.

When demand outstrips supply, some may argue that deregulation is the answer. Rather than increasing availability or affordability, this simply leads to a race to the bottom – leaving a legacy of inadequate poor quality housing that will cost more to run and maintain over the long term. In order to support the development of high quality homes across the country, the RIBA recommends:

- Establishing a Chief Built Environment Adviser to raise design awareness and coordinate policy across government
- Prioritising the delivery of a wide range of homes, available under a wide range of tenures
- Protecting and strengthening national standards for internal space, accessibility and sustainability
- Demonstrating leadership by prioritising long-term value above short-term gain.

Poor quality housing costs the NHS £2.5bn a year

Build schools that are better spaces for learning

Schools should be safe, encouraging spaces for children to learn. The best school buildings support student engagement and attainment, and improve staff morale.

Our education system is facing serious challenges. The UK must provide the additional **420,000 new school places needed by 2021**, while simultaneously addressing the poor learning and teaching conditions in many parts of the country.

Spending on school buildings can help deliver better value for money. Good school design could have prevented at least £150 million from being spent annually on unnecessary maintenance and services. ³ Evidence-based design can help school leaders minimise spending over the long-term whilst delivering a positive learning environment.

Currently, the lack of connection between the financing, design, construction and operation of buildings means that little evidence is gathered on how school buildings perform against the predictions made during its design. This is a significant missed opportunity to help local leaders utilise the best evidence to inform decision making.

To support the development of safe, well-designed schools, the RIBA recommends:

- Recognising the role of good design and quality in school buildings to support the best outcomes for pupils and teachers
- Supporting a standardised approach to Post Occupancy Evaluations (POE) and dedicated funding to ensure that data collection is robust
- Publishing the outcomes of school POE reports to strengthen transparency and public trust and ensure that future projects learn from previous successes and mistakes.

420,000 new school places are needed by 2021

Leadership in resilient infrastructure

Understanding the alignment between infrastructure and urban development is critical to reach solutions to many of the challenges we face, from flooding to energy supply.

Water Sensitive Urban Design can offer smart ways to develop communities while protecting them from flooding. Innovations in procurement, construction methods, materials and design can help households bring down domestic energy consumption and costs. Design-led infrastructure developments can be key to overcoming community concerns surrounding new housing developments.

By supporting more robust data collection, the UK's public sector can provide a knowledge base which puts the UK at the cutting edge of finding solutions through the built environment.

A nation which invests in a smarter built environment is also investing in global leadership in cutting-edge infrastructure.

New markets for innovative solutions to issues, from air pollution to climate change, are opening up around the world. RIBA members are already leading the way in delivering innovative approaches to resilient infrastructure development.

To ensure that the UK's infrastructure system supports the nation's strength in innovation and export opportunities, the RIBA recommends:

- Adding housing policy to the remit of the National Infrastructure Commission and ensuring that future infrastructure schemes include details of their impact on housing supply
- Supporting knowledge and best practice in energy performance of new and existing buildings, through active Post Occupancy Evaluation of publically funded buildings
- Requiring that publicly funded investment supports the upgrade of existing building stock, minimising energy demand of new buildings and driving up standards and quality to ensure buildings perform as designed
- Exploring the potential of multifunctional flood defences to improve the UK's resilience to flooding events.

¹ RIBA – 'Global by Design: How the Government can open up new opportunities for UK architects' (2017)

² Government Office for Science – 'Future of an Aging Population' (2016)

³ RIBA – 'Better Spaces for Learning' (2016)

Find out more and get involved:

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