



Local Authority Edition

A guide to ourplace™
Helping you find your ideal place to live

What is ourplace™?

ourplace™ is an innovative new service that seeks to improve the design quality of new homes and neighbourhoods by providing home buyers with an easy to understand rating system. Our rating system is based on the Building for Life standard – the national standard for new homes and neighbourhoods.

Our philosophy is simple. We believe that if home buyers are offered an easy way to identify good design, design standards will be driven up by more discerning purchasers.

For the first time, home buyers will be able to find out how a particular development will potentially perform against the national Building for Life standard. Our simple and clear ratings certificates¹ will help home buyers to easily compare developments as they look for their ideal place to live.

ourplace™ complements efforts to radically transform the quality of new homes and neighbourhoods within England by encouraging better design by taking a brand new approach to improving standards.

ourplace™ is a design initiative, created and managed by North West Leicestershire District Council. It differs from other design initiatives that we know about as it is consumer centred.

Working alongside national and local design policies – and existing design award schemes, ourplace™ supports consumers in finding their ideal place to live. ourplace™ provides home builders with an added incentive to invest in better design, using ‘A+’ and ‘A’ ratings as a way of differentiating themselves from their competitors.

For the first time, home builders that invest in creating better designed homes and neighbourhoods will have recognition for good design when they need it – that being at the stage they’re selling new homes.

Building for Life is a scheme organised and established by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and the Home Builders Federation (HBF). Further details can be found at www.buildingforlife.org.

Front cover image courtesy of Davidsons Group, Ibstock, Leicestershire. www.davidsonsgroup.co.uk and Charnwood Borough Council.

1. The rating awarded does not necessarily imply that a scheme would merit a Building for Life award. Building for Life awards are only awarded post completion by the Building for Life partners (CABE and the HBF). The rating awarded does not represent the official opinion of CABE on the design quality of a particular scheme. CABE’s official view is expressed through its Design Review Panel. Any disputes relating to the rating should be directed to the Council’s accredited assessor, not CABE. Please also refer our ‘small print’ on the rear of this brochure.



A place with shops a short walk from home

Find your ideal place to live at www.findourplace.com

An easy to understand four tier rating system

ourplace™ involves the Council's Accredited Building for Life assessor assessing schemes against the national standard on the basis of evidence supplied by the applicant in their planning application.

If a scheme is granted planning consent (either by the Council or by virtue of an appeal decision), a certificate with one of four rating tiers will be issued to the developer to display in their Sales Office. This rating will also be published on our website.

If developers successfully demonstrate that their proposals would meet 14 or more of the criteria¹, they will be awarded either an 'A+' or 'A' rating. Currently only 18% of developments nationwide would meet these rating tiers². Developments that meet less than 14 criteria¹ will be awarded either a 'B' or 'C' rating.

The criteria are grouped into four chapters:

- **Environment & Community** considers issues such as whether the development provides (or is a short walk) from local facilities, such as schools, parks, play areas, shops and cafes. It also promotes an accommodation and tenure mix that reflects the needs of the local community.
- **Character** promotes the creation of developments that have a positive sense of identity, rather than the use of standard house types that have not been tailored to the locality - and are therefore more 'anyplace' than 'someplace'.
- **Streets, Parking & Pedestrianisation** encourages the creation of streets as social and play spaces rather than just places for cars to park and drive through.
- **Design and Construction** looks at the design and management of public spaces and the design of individual homes.

The 20 criteria are explained in detail at www.buildingforlife.org

Don't forget that to achieve a rating there are many criteria combinations - therefore it's important that you encourage developers to hold a copy of the local authority's Building for Life Assessment in the Sales Office. This way potential home buyers can see where a scheme performed well - and where it performed less well.

To find out which local authorities participate in the ourplace™ scheme visit: www.findourplace.com.

Please see the rating table on the rear cover for more details.

1. As determined by the Council's Accredited Building for Life assessor.

2. CABE (2007) Housing Audit, Assessing the Design Quality of New Housing in the East Midlands, West Midlands and the South West. www.cabe.org.uk/publications

3. Developers can usually choose any combination of the criteria although some local authorities may specify compulsory criteria.



A place of my own

Find your ideal place to live www.findourplace.com

Supporting better place making

Good design can help developers avoid costly delays, enabling them to realise the value of their assets sooner and help the country deliver the new homes it needs.

Homes and neighbourhoods that are well designed are also more likely to retain their value and increase in value over time¹.

ourplace™ supports efforts to improve the design of everyday places. The very first authority in England to use ourplace™ found a significant increase in design quality once the scheme was introduced.

Don't forget, ourplace™ cannot work in isolation, it needs to be supported by good in-house design expertise, pre-application guidance support for applicants and robust local policies.



1. CABE, (2006) The Value Handbook – Making The Most From Your Buildings and Spaces. www.cabe.org.uk/publications

2. Subject to licence. Licences only apply to a named development.

Opposite: Example of an ourplace™ rating certificate issued by South Derbyshire District Council.

Development Millbrook (Phase 1) Development location Melbourne, Derbyshire

Developer
Davidsons

has been awarded the following rating



To check the validity of this certificate and find out more about the rating scheme visit www.findourplace.com



Our small print
Certificates are intended for guidance purposes only. Ratings are based upon the national Building for Life standard and determined in accordance with information submitted by the developer to the local planning authority. Ratings are based on the information submitted as part of the approved planning application. An 'A+' or 'A' rated development may, but will not necessarily qualify for a Building for Life award. Building for Life awards are only awarded once the development is fully completed. The Building for Life partners are the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment and the Home Builders Federation. Whilst ourplace rating certificates are issued by an accredited Building for Life Assessor, ratings are not endorsed by the Building for Life partners. Accredited Building for Life Assessors are subject to annual audits to ensure that their ratings are consistent and objective. Neither the Council nor the Building for Life partners will accept any liability for developments that fail to meet the required standard post completion. Any enquiries relating to a certificate should be directed to the ISSUING council, not CABE.

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Rating system	How this development is rated	Compare this development against the regional and national ratings	
		Regional *	National *
A+ 'Very good'		3%	5%
A 'Good'		6%	13%
<small>Schemes above this line meet the national standard for well designed homes and neighbourhoods</small>			
B 'Average'		40%	53%
C 'Poor'		51%	29%

* Source: Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (2007) Housing Audit, Assessing the design quality of new housing in the East Midlands, West Midlands and the South West. www.cabe.org.uk

Have you got what it takes to create great places?



Good design needs good design teams. We suggest that local authorities and developers determine whether they have access to the right skills (either in-house or externally) to help them create the well designed places¹.

Developers will also need to ensure that they provide their design teams with the freedom to create great places, inspired by and responsive to the site and its context.

We strongly recommend the use of talented urban designers², architects, landscape architects and inspired highways engineers who are committed to creating places that lift people's spirits, are physically and psychologically accessible to everyone and promise to stand the test of time.

Applicants are encouraged to submit their own Building for Life assessment as part of any Design and Access Statement, providing robust evidence for each of the criteria they consider their scheme to meet. Further guidance and best practice examples can be found on our website.

1. Capacity Check is a method of appraising urban design skills within your organisation and/or your external consultants. See www.capacitycheck.co.uk

2. We recommend that you use Recognised Practitioners in Urban Design. Recognised Practitioner status is awarded by the Urban Design Group. See www.udg.org.uk



We've designed our brand and associated marketing material to appeal to a broad range of home buyers and express the Building for Life criteria in a way that is easier for home buyers to relate to their own lifestyle aspirations. Our current range of lifestyle images reflect a range of the Building for Life criteria from each of the four section headings: a. Environment and Community b. Character c. Streets, Parking and Pedestrianisation d. Design and Construction. As the scheme expands additional lifestyle images will be added to extend criteria coverage.



ourplace™

“It’s important that we create homes that offer generous spaces for the fun things in life, such as baking cakes with the kids”

James Wilson
Managing Director, Davidsons
ourplace™ Ambassador

A new way to make design more commercially appealing

All rated developments will receive a complimentary certificate to display in their Sales Office from the local Building for Life assessor (subject to the local authority participating in the ourplace™ scheme).

If developers receive an ‘A+’ or ‘A’ rating they will be invited to maximise the marketing opportunities available².

By purchasing a licence agreement from ourplace™, developers can maximise the opportunities available. The income from licence fees covers the cost of developing and operating ourplace™ and enables us to extend ourplace™ to other local authorities for free.

The licence fee is payable based on the number of properties on a given development (charged on market rate sale units only).

By opting to maximise the marketing opportunities available developers will be able to:

- Use the ourplace™ logo on marketing materials, from price list to Property Guide publications.
- Hyperlink their development from the listing on the ourplace™ website.
- Purchase a wide range of branded ourplace™ merchandise – they simply place the order and wait for the items to arrive. Selected items can also be customised to accommodate their own logo.
- Local authorities participating in the ourplace™ scheme can purchase branded items if they wish, customising selected items with their own Council logo.

Local authorities that participate in the ourplace™ scheme are encouraged to provide short coaching sessions for Sales Teams to help them understand more about the scheme and the national standards – in turn, helping them to explain the benefits to potential home buyers.

1. CABE (11.08.09) ‘New homes are too small for everyday life, say residents’ www.cabe.org.uk/publications

2. Subject to licence. Licences only apply to a named development.

Our four rating tiers

Number of Building for Life criteria met (/20)	Building for Life band tier	ourplace™ rating tier
16 +	Very good	A+
14 - 15	Good	A
10 - 13	Average	B
0 - 9	Poor	C



ourplace™ seeks to encourage and inspire people to create and expect places that contribute positively to our everyday lives and support our natural, built and social environment.

Interested in joining the ourplace™ scheme?

It's free for local authorities to join the ourplace™ scheme. To join or find out more contact ourplace™, we're more than happy to answer any questions you may have. Visit www.findourplace.com for our contact details or call 01530 454 545.

To join you will need an in house Building for Life Accredited Assessor. If you decide that ourplace™ is for you, we'll ask you to sign a simple licence agreement. We'll then provide you with a website log on and all the material you'll need to operate and publicise ourplace™ in your area.

CABE are offering Building for Life assessor training to every local authority (England only). To find out more visit www.buildingforlife.org

ourplace™ was created and is currently being piloted by North West Leicestershire District Council in partnership with CABE. The pilot programme is growing fast with ourplace™ already in use across two English counties.

BUILDING FOR LIFE

Building for Life is the national standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods.



ourplace™ was created and is managed by North West Leicestershire District Council.

www.nwleics.gov.uk

Our small print

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North West Leicestershire District Council kindly acknowledges the support of CABE, the National Forest Company, Davidsons Group and our volunteer models in the production of this publication and associated publicity. All images are copyright of North West Leicestershire District Council unless otherwise stated. ourplace is a trademark and © North West Leicestershire District Council. www.nwleics.gov.uk. Local Authority version July 2010.