

## Consultation response

# The Thames Gateway design pact: summary of consultation responses

The Thames Gateway aims to be an international exemplar and a great place to live. CABE published a consultation draft of the Thames Gateway design pact in August 2008, which sets out how those delivering development in the Gateway can work together to achieve this ambition.

This document draws out the key findings of the consultation on the draft design pact.



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# 1 Executive summary

## Introduction

In November 2007, the Thames Gateway delivery plan made a commitment to produce a design pact for the Thames Gateway. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) produced a consultation draft of the design pact on behalf of Communities and Local Government (CLG) following initial consultation with a range of stakeholders.

This report is an analysis of the responses to the design pact consultation draft. The draft design pact was distributed to 106 stakeholders resulting in 53 responses received, giving a response rate of 50 per cent.

## Key findings

### Support for the pact

The findings have shown a strong appetite for a mechanism to raise the standard of design in the Thames Gateway. Seventy per cent of respondents supported the principle of the design pact, with only four per cent stating that they did not. Many respondents felt that the pact should be more ambitious, with an opportunity to make the Thames Gateway a national exemplar, distinct from other growth areas.

There were concerns, mainly from the development sector that the current market could make the implementation of the pact difficult. Other respondents thought that this was not the time to compromise on design quality.

### Response to the pact actions

An average of 43 per cent of respondents stated that they could undertake all the actions in the pact by 2010. An average of two per cent stated that they could not undertake any. The remaining 55 per cent stated that they could take the actions after 2010 or that they were not applicable. Respondents felt more able to fulfil the actions in section 1, Invest in quality, including design standards and processes (49 per cent by 2010), than section 2, Understand and enhance the identity of the Thames Gateway (38 per cent by 2010).

Responding to section 1, there was broad support for Building for Life and the Manual for Streets, and support for adopting higher standards that the pact specified under the Code for Sustainable Homes. Opinion on space standards and Lifetime Homes was more divided. Design review was welcomed broadly and clarity was called for on the process and roles of the national regional and local panels. Investment in skills and training was widely commented on as important for the successful delivery of the pact.

Section 2, Understand and enhance the character of the Gateway generated more diverse comments and respondents felt less able to take these actions overall, suggesting that more clarity is needed on these actions. Several respondents made reference to the need to refer to flood risk in the Gateway. More detail was called for on how the pact links to other environmental and

economic strategy including the Parklands strategic framework, the Eco-region prospectus and the Economic Development Investment Programme (EDIP). There was substantial direct support for actions to maximise the cultural value of the Thames Gateway.

### Delivery of the pact

It was evident that clarity is needed on how the pact will support a more consistent and efficient development process. Respondents requested clarification on how the pact will be delivered and enforced. Many respondents in the public sector asserted that the pact should be embedded into planning policy to ensure its delivery. Some requested practical support to resource this due to local capacity pressures.

Respondents felt that the pact needed to align with the new Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and with the policy of other key organisations including the regional development agencies and the Greater London Authority.

There were strong requests for support in delivering the pact, which included:

- A central point detailing resources available to support the delivery of design quality
- Training for local authority officers and members as a minimum
- Programme of support for design champions
- Set out design review service that includes local, regional and national panels
- Support for partnership working across sectors.

## 2 Introduction

In November 2007, the Thames Gateway delivery plan made a commitment to produce a design pact for the Thames Gateway.

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) produced a consultation draft of the design pact on behalf of Communities and Local Government (CLG) following initial consultation with a range of stakeholders.

The design pact fulfils the government's aim to produce a shared statement of ambition for quality places in the Thames Gateway. It also goes beyond this, offering practical advice on how to deliver successful places. The pact will help places to respond to the Thames Gateway's unique and varied landscape and character, and to realise their aspiration for quality, by demanding that new development meets a clear set of standards.

This report is an analysis of the responses to the design pact consultation draft. The design pact was distributed on 29 August 2008 to 106 stakeholders (see appendix 2) who were asked to answer a series of questions on the document through an online survey (see appendix 1) by 10 October 2008. Fifty three responses were received giving a response rate of 50 per cent.

# 3 Methodology

The primary method of consultation was through the use of an online survey, a copy of which can be found in appendix 1. Of the 53 responses, 15 were through the online questionnaire.

Thirty eight letters and emails were received from stakeholders. These responses have also been included in the analysis of the consultation responses.

In addition to the survey, CABE supplemented this with consultation meetings with six stakeholders. The responses made in these meetings have also been included as part of the consultation.

The organisation types used within the design pact consultation response are defined as follows:

- Government, including agencies with a national remit
- Regional development agencies (RDAs)
- Local delivery vehicles (LDVs)
- Local authorities, including district, borough and county councils (LAs)
- Developers, including private and registered social landlords
- Other, including sub-regional strategic partnerships, architecture centres etc.

A list of respondents can be found in appendix 2.

The responses received are set out here to reflect the sections in the survey. The summaries of each section aim to provide a balance of views and to state the majority view when there is one.

The following definitions explain how the analysis has been summarised:

**Some respondents:**

2 responses with similar content.

**Several respondents:**

3 responses with similar content.

**Many respondents:**

4 responses with similar content.

**Most respondents:**

5 or more responses with similar content.

# 4 Analysis of consultation responses

## Introduction

This section summarises all responses received. The design pact was sent to 106 stakeholders and 53 responses were received. This gives a response rate of 50 per cent.

The breakdown of responses by organisation type is shown in figure 1:

Responses from a broad range of organisations were received.

The proportion of respondents who stated in their letters that they support the principle of the pact is illustrated in figure 2. Respondents to the online survey who answered that they would be prepared to support the design pact by formally signing up are also included in the analysis as supporting the pact.

Seventy per cent of respondents gave a statement of support, with only four per cent stating that they did not support the pact.

Respondents were asked **“Did you understand the aims of the design pact?”**

All 15 respondents (100 per cent) through the online survey understood the aims of the design pact.

Respondents were asked **“Did you understand what actions you will need to take when it is published?”**

The key used in figure 3 to identify respondents' understanding was as follows:

**1 – Didn't understand at all**  
**5 – Completely understood**

Eighty seven per cent of respondents indicated that they understood some, most or all of the actions required in the pact. None indicated that they did not understand.

Figure 1: Breakdown of responses by organisation type

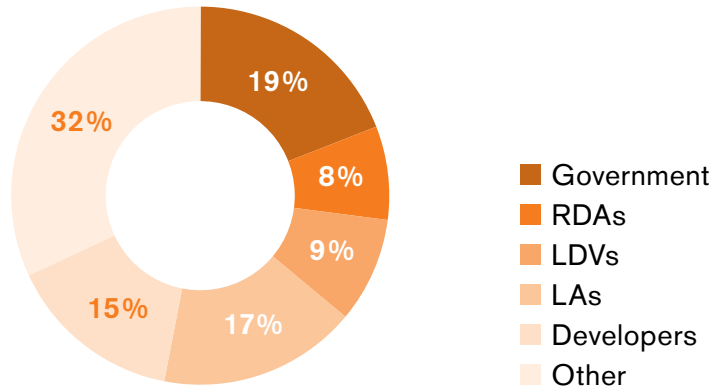


Figure 2: Indications of support for design pact

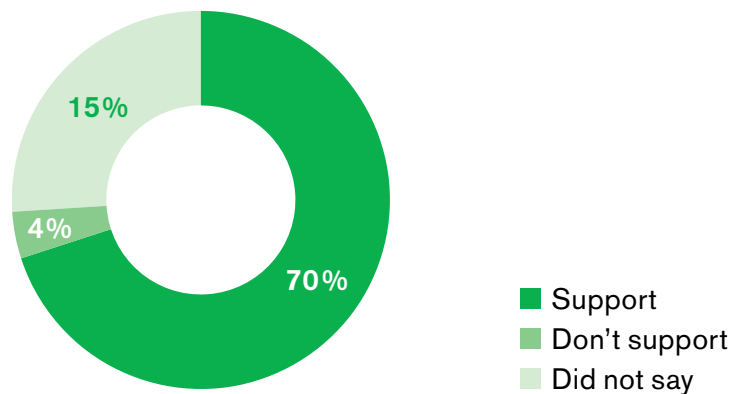
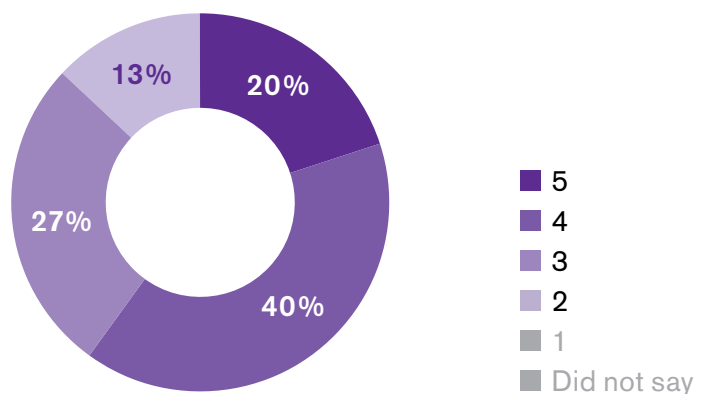


Figure 3: Level of understanding for required actions



## Main findings

### Question 1: About the design pact

When asked for comments on this section, many respondents felt that the pact needs to be a clear statement that ambitious standards will apply across all development in the Thames Gateway.

*“The pact should articulate more clearly the need for a real step-change that encompasses all aspects of design in the Thames Gateway – means ensuring Thames Gateway standards are exemplar and enhanced above and beyond national requirements”. (Local delivery vehicle)*

Some respondents reinforced that its status and success would be dependent on high level support. There were calls for clarification on the pact’s implementation, what support will be available for stakeholders to deliver the standards and for consistency of implementation.

Developers and local authorities had concerns that the pact would put additional pressure on them. Developers are working within a struggling market and local authorities are already overstretched.

*“There is little real support for local authorities that may want to refuse development on the grounds of low quality”. (Local authority)*

Additional observations noted that this section was text heavy; that it would benefit from the inclusion of a map of the Thames Gateway; that it would be helpful to include a diagram of the planning and development process and that sub-regional economic partnerships should be referenced.

### Question 2: Context of the design pact

Most respondents felt that existing planning policy should be referenced more comprehensively, specifically Planning Policy Statements (PPS) 7, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 22, 23 and 25.

Several respondents felt that London’s distinct policy context and governance structure needs to be recognised.

Others felt that other strategies, policies etc should be referenced, including sustainable communities strategies, local development frameworks and designing in health and children’s play strategies, Kent and Essex design guides, the Thames Gateway Delivery Plan, the Williams Report and the Economic Development Investment Programme.

### Question 3: Principles

Some respondents felt strongly that the commitment to achieving quality and sustainable development should not be compromised by the downturn in the market.

One respondent (local delivery vehicle) suggested that a statement of commitment by government would be helpful and provide some clarity as to why the Thames Gateway should have different aspirations to the rest of the country.

Some respondents had concerns about the pact’s second principle “Understand and enhance the identity of the Thames Gateway”. These

concerns included the clarity of actions and the section’s greater weight in terms of length over the “Investing in quality” section.

Some respondents questioned the reference to reinforcing local distinctiveness for all development.

*“Would question the emphasis on ‘local distinctiveness’ and ‘local identity’ with no apparent equal reference to the need to transform places with often poor local identity and little positive sense of distinctiveness”. (Developer)*

Additional requests were made to include Civil Engineering Environmental Quality Assessment (CEEQUAL) standards within the pact and to add another principle of ‘Shared vision’.

### Question 4: Shared undertakings

Some respondents welcomed the pact, and thought that it would remove some uncertainty from the planning process, but would need support.

Some respondents thought that the pact needed to be more aspirational, but noted that there was the risk that it may be seen as optional.

One respondent (local authority) requested flexibility in the standard whereas another felt that the pact was inappropriate in the current climate.

*“While the high level aims of the proposed design pact are in principle laudable, they do not... pass the test of practical, efficient delivery and a de-risked business climate for home builders and other developers”. (Developer)*

One respondent (local authority) also commented that the pact needed to recognise the unique role of London, the Mayor and the GLA family.

Some respondents felt that the pact should look beyond just housing and include reference to mixed use.

### Question 5: Design pact actions

#### Invest in quality

##### a. Meet recognised design standards

Respondents were asked “**When do you feel your organisation will be able to take these actions?**” The breakdown is detailed in figure 4:

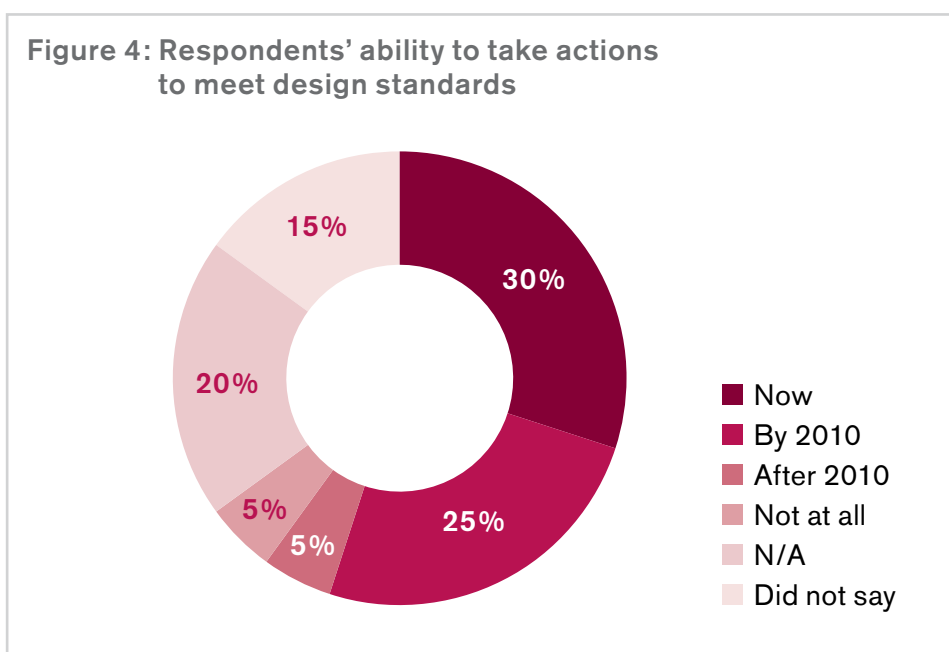
Fifty five per cent of respondents said that they would be able to meet the design standards now or by 2010, with only five per cent not at all able.

#### General comments

Several respondents felt that the standards in the pact should be embedded in the planning and development process and needed political support to drive forward.

One respondent (developer) felt that the standards would serve as a material disincentive to developers. Another (other) queried whether they were achievable in the current climate.

**i) All housing developments to be constructed to a quality that would achieve Building for Life silver standard with an increasing number achieving gold standard.**



Several respondents commented that they were already using this standard and welcomed its inclusion.

*“Building for Life silver/ gold requirement is the most challenging and worthwhile element of the pact, this is supported on the basis that good design need not necessarily increase development cost and may add value”. (Local delivery vehicle)*

Others thought that the standard was useful but there are practical issues around its use as a tool to assess completed developments for the following reasons: it will incur an increase in workload for local authorities; trained Building for Life assessors will be required and there can be differences in interpretation if using as a tool for refusing schemes.

Some respondents thought that this standard could threaten delivery and that there were some grey areas and differences in interpretation.

**ii) All housing to be Code for Sustainable Homes level 3 or above and BREEAM Very Good for other building types.**

Most respondents questioned whether level 3 was sufficient to meet the aspirations of the Eco-region, as building regulations will require level 3 by 2010. Some organisations are already working to level 3 and suggested more challenging targets to 2016.

Others welcomed the policy to create a level playing field between the market and social housing development but felt that it needed to be reinforced through national policy with some flexibility.

Some respondents queried how this would be supported through the development industry.

*“Concerned there will be increasing pressure to lower standards as private developers offload schemes to RSLs”. (Developer)*

**iii) All homes to meet the Lifetime Homes Standard.**

Some respondents stated that this standard is included in their policies already, particularly in the London Plan.

One respondent (developer) had concerns that it would impact negatively on new homes and reduce density and therefore housing numbers.

iv) All housing developments to define minimum space standards for acceptable floor areas, with reference to English Partnerships or National Housing Federation standards, or other recognised standards.

One respondent (local authority) queried how this could fit in with existing local development framework processes.

Some respondents thought that there would be difficulties with tenure blindness as there are differences in space standards between private and social housing.

Some respondents found this undertaking unclear and that specifying one standard would be preferable.

*“One standard, preferably the highest, should be promoted”. (Local authority)*

Others suggested that a more flexible approach to set local standards would be helpful.

Some respondents felt that it could affect delivery in the Thames Gateway.

v) Use Manual for Streets guidance for the design of urban streets.

This was welcomed by most respondents. One respondent (local authority) requested clarification on its application.

*“Clarification required on areas to which it should be applied as too prescriptive for many non-standard conditions and could hinder innovative design”. (Local authority)*

vi) Integration of tenure: developments to be tenure blind and with limits on the numbers of social rented units grouped together.

Several respondents supported this, although there was a request for more detail and clarification using examples of good practice and on the practical implementation of integration of tenure.

*“Tenure blind is a well accepted design principle however, reduction in numbers of social rented units to clusters of six is likely to be unacceptable to [registered social landlord]”*

*RSL management systems as well as being very difficult to achieve in design terms except for very low density developments”. (Developer)*

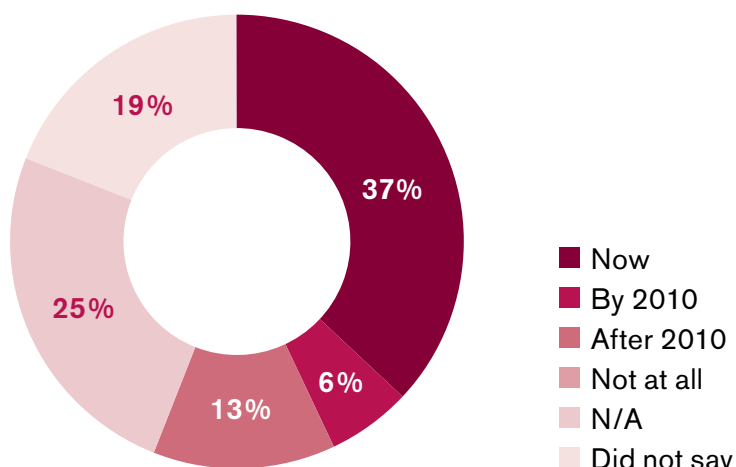
Many respondents had difficulties with the maximum grouping of six social rented units; seeing this as prescriptive, difficult for registered social landlords to manage and hard to achieve in higher density development.

b. Adopt processes and invest in resources that support quality place-making.

Respondents were asked **“When do you feel your organisation will be able to take these actions?”** The breakdown is detailed in figure 5:

Forty three per cent of respondents stated that they could undertake actions by 2010. Thirteen per cent stated that they could after 2010. No respondents stated not at all.

Figure 5: Respondents’ ability to take actions to support placemaking



## **General comments**

Several respondents referred to the benefits of early, pre-application discussions with relevant organisations, including government agencies, regional bodies.

One respondent (local authority) identified work that they had been undertaking with partners in Essex to produce development briefs and visions, and that this model of working may be useful in the Thames Gateway.

### **i) Ensure design champions are in a position to influence schemes at all levels.**

Some respondents wanted further details on the process and value of appointing design champions at every level.

Some respondents also queried what support would be available from CABE and how local authorities would resource this.

*“Key to implementation will be whether or not local authorities are able to devote sufficient resources to employing or commissioning a design champion and then supporting them; I’m not sure the resources currently exist”. (Other)*

One respondent (local authority) requested reference to the role of the Planning Inspectorate and support for councils to refuse applications on design grounds.

### **ii) Ensure land in public sector ownership is protected by a binding but flexible master plan before disposal (including design and development briefs).**

Many respondents supported master plans in public sector ownership, provided that there was acknowledgement that this should be the case for significant sites. It was also noted that this should be extended to sites in private ownership.

*“Public sector agencies who hold land should be encouraged to see the development process through, only signing away a freehold once a development is delivered, if at all”. (Local authority)*

Some respondents also commented that it is important to have flexibility within the master plan to recognise development drivers and that they should be supported by a financial appraisal to ensure that it is deliverable.

One respondent (developer) did not support commissioning a multidisciplinary team, including urban designers, seeing this as unnecessary.

It was also suggested that reference should be made to the use of character area statements and streetscape manuals to guide development.

### **iii) Quality design and access statements to be produced and reviewed for all schemes, and state the intention to meet design standards.**

One respondent (local authority) welcomed the ability to refuse schemes without a good design and access statement and requested support on early intervention.

Some respondents requested further details on the requirements for design and access statements.

### **iv) All significant schemes to be submitted to design review regional or national panels.**

Most of the respondents were supportive of the use of design review panels and felt that reference should be made to the use of local panels and other initiatives to supplement the work of the national and regional panels.

Some respondents requested further clarification on the remit, funding, appointments, skills and processes of the panels.

*“An active response from developers to design review panels depends on the panels’ availability, skills and commitment to an interactive process”. (Developer)*

### **v) Work with partners across sectors and scales to ensure a vision is shared and implemented.**

This undertaking was welcomed by many of the respondents, particularly between developers and local authorities/local delivery vehicles at an early stage. Respondents also asked how local authorities could be supported to achieve this.

Some respondents noted that a joint plan to guide a coherent and consistent approach to planning in the Gateway, could supplement the London Plan and regional spatial strategies already in existence.

One respondent (local authority) commented that using existing initiatives and partnerships could support this.

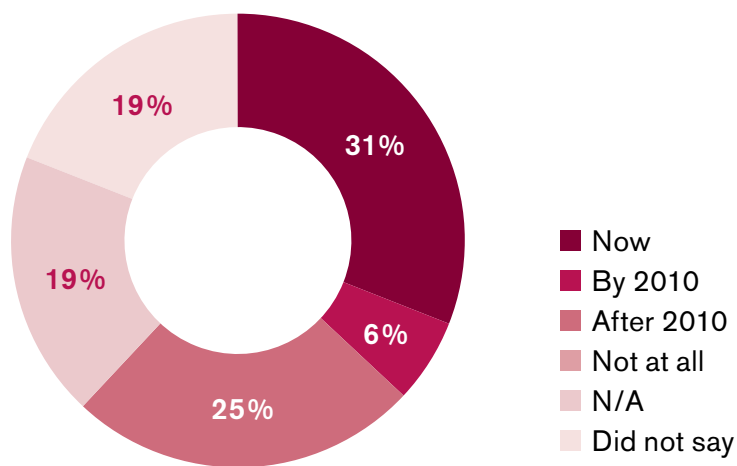
### **vi) Invest in skills and training for decision makers and delivery teams. Ensure elected decision makers and staff have the**

skills to judge and drive up the quality of proposals.

Investment in skills and training was important to most respondents and seen as key to the delivery of the pact. They requested further details and support from CABI on specific training on Building for Life, Code for Sustainable Homes and Lifetime Homes.

*“There is a pressing need to train councillors in understanding the principles of good placemaking”. (Developer)*

Figure 6: Respondents’ ability to take actions to reconnect with nature



## Understand and enhance the identity of the Thames Gateway

### a. Reconnect with nature: celebrate the role of the river and estuarine landscape.

Respondents were asked “**When do you feel your organisation will be able to take these actions?**” The breakdown is detailed in figure 6:

Thirty seven per cent of respondents stated that they could undertake these actions by 2010. Twenty five per cent stated that they could after 2010. No respondents stated not at all.

### General comments

Several respondents suggested reference to other tools and strategies: Natural England’s Landscape Character Assessment tool; the South East and East of England sustainability checklists; BRE Green Print tool; Eco Towns green infrastructure guidance; East London Green Grid and the East Thames Strategy.

One respondent (government) queried whether the document was assuming that landscape and natural environment are the same thing.

Another respondent suggested this needed to be embedded in future policy reviews.

*“This is a long term aspiration and needs to be embedded in future policy reviews to have any real meaning or impact”. (Local delivery vehicle)*

Another respondent (regional development agency) also suggested that integrating sustainable flood risk management should be integral to all masterplan and designs.

Another respondent (Other) suggested that further consultation should be made with the Wildlife Trust and RSPB.

**i) Ensure all interventions consider the estuary context: the river is at the heart of the Gateway’s landscape, history and identity.**

Some respondents commented that the design pact saw the Thames Gateway as a single place but the river has a different role and context in London, Kent and Essex. One suggested:

*“Instead local authorities should be encouraged to explore and build on their own unique heritage and environment in supporting development”. (Local authority)*

Another requested more clarity on how this can work in each area.

Others suggested that more focus was required on the natural environment, that sustainable urban drainage systems can make a contribution to this undertaking and that we need to ensure that access to the estuary is maintained.

**ii) Realise the Parklands vision, ensuring that green infrastructure is retained, enhanced and managed to secure a wide range of multifunctional benefits and to strengthen the integrity and sustainability of the whole estuarine system.**

Some respondents requested more clarity on the Parklands concept in the design pact.

Some respondents commented on the role of local authorities; that they would need funding support to help achieve the Parklands vision and that they should assess the existing quality of parks and green spaces.

Several respondents requested reference to other partnerships and initiatives: Greening the Gateway Partnership and the Green Grids.

Several respondents also referred to climate change and flood risk, which should also include reference to construction methods to meet flood risk issues. One also suggested rewording the undertaking to:

*“Realise the Parklands vision, ensuring that the quantity and quality of green infrastructure is increased, enhanced, and managed to secure a wide range of multifunctional benefits, including climate change adaptation that ultimately strengthens the ecological integrity and functionality of the river and its floodplain habitats”.* (regional development agency)

iii) Use the designation as an eco-region to explore new ways of living and working in the natural environment. Development in the Gateway will need to rethink how resources are used, land is developed, buildings constructed, energy created and places connected, recognising the role of natural systems in mitigation and adaptation.

Some respondents requested more clarity on the eco-region concept and vision in the design pact.

One respondent (government) thought that the actions on local authorities and regional development agencies needed to be stronger, and that as a minimum they should review existing processes and practices to enable effective sub-regional working.

One respondent (local delivery vehicle) stated that they were already working on projects that supported the eco-region concept.

South Essex put themselves forward to develop as an eco-region.

One respondent (other) requested reference to the Department for Transport guidance on ‘Building sustainable transport into new developments: A menu of options for growth points and eco-towns’.

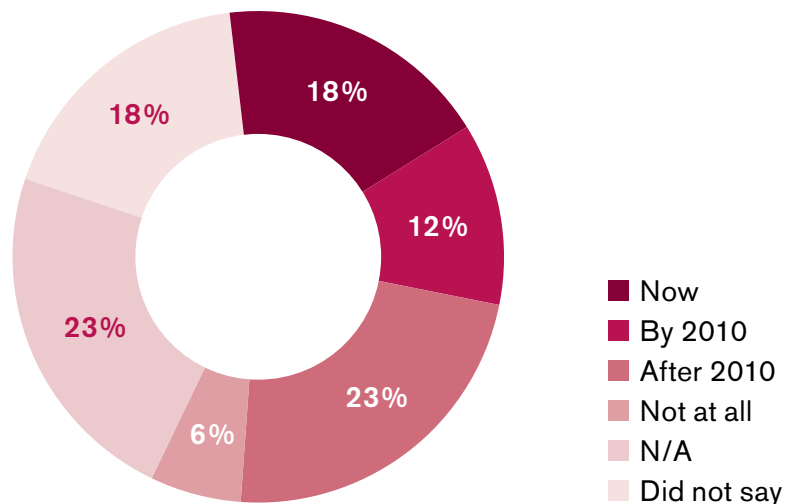
One respondent (government) requested reference to climate change at the end of the undertaking.

**b. Redefine work: provide the right conditions for businesses, both big and small, to thrive and prosper.**

Respondents were asked “When do you feel your organisation will be able to take these actions?” The breakdown is detailed in figure 7:

Thirty per cent of respondents stated that they could undertake these actions by 2010. Twenty three per cent stated that they could after 2010. Six per cent of respondents stated not at all.

Figure 7: Respondents’ ability to take actions to redefine work



**General comments**

Some respondents said that this section should refer to the Economic Development Investment Programme (EDIP). The EDIP also sets out investment plans for each regional development agency area, and it was felt that the proposed open-ended Places Fund would not be appropriate in addition to this.

One respondent (local delivery vehicle) felt that reference to mixed use development was required here. Another thought that reference needed to be made to recent research into changing working patterns and design.

Another respondent (local authority) questioned whether redefine work captured the aim of this section, and suggested that:

*“...is it more a matter of creating the right physical environment to help attract businesses and to help them thrive”. (Local authority)*

**i) Clearly define and communicate the unique offer that places and the built environment in the Gateway can make to businesses and other investors. This is rooted in an understanding of the qualities of each place, including housing, health, education and cultural facilities in addition to their historic and future economic strengths. Heritage is a driver for recovery and change.**

One respondent (local delivery vehicle) noted that they already have systems in place to secure appropriate infrastructure through a planning obligations strategy, a delivery and investment strategy and masterplanning.

Some respondents thought that the pact was too prescriptive and should be based more on context and that it would put further, unnecessary tests on the local development frameworks.

Another respondent requested reference to Essex County Council's work of historic characterisation for South Essex.

**ii) Develop new and existing enabling infrastructure, including buildings, landscape, transport, and IT services, to enable local businesses and communities to thrive economically.**

Some respondents requested the inclusion of environmental infrastructure in this undertaking, including reference to energy, water and waste.

One respondent (developer) requested clarification of processes to secure stakeholder consensus on what is needed for a site, and felt that this could add another layer of process.

Another respondent (local authority) thought that this was duplication of local authority requirements in terms of infrastructure.

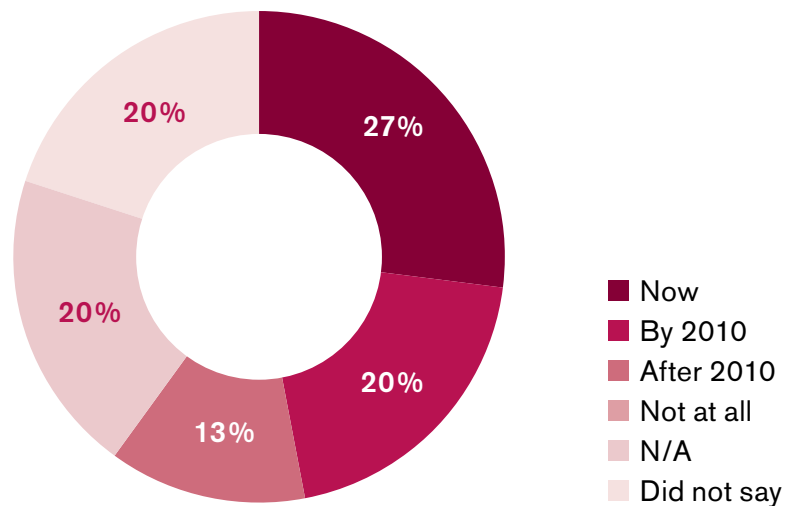
One respondent (local authority) requested clarification on the 'sub-national review consultation paper' referred to in the pact.

**c. Reassert cultural identity and cohesion: recognise and maximise the value of the cultural diversity of places and people in the Gateway.**

Those respondents that responded using the online survey were asked **“When do you feel your organisation will be able to take these actions?”** The breakdown is detailed in figure 8:

Forty seven per cent of respondents stated that they could undertake these actions by 2010. Thirteen per cent stated that they could after 2010. No respondents stated not at all.

**Figure 8: Respondents' ability to take actions to reassert cultural identity and cohesion**



## General comments

One respondent (regional development agency) thought that this section's actions could connect more to wider strategic work in the Thames Gateway, but did not specify which.

Another (other) thought that there should be reference to social and community enterprise to help create a cohesive community.

**i) Ensure that the distinctive cultural identity of places in the Gateway is understood. Recognise the historical influx of new people and the cultural richness that the mix of diverse, old and new communities brings to the ongoing cohesion of places. Recognise that as well as differences there are also common elements of culture and community identity across the Gateway region, for example, the historic connection to the estuary landscape and its trade. Exploit opportunities to link cultural development across the Gateway.**

There was direct support for the reinforcement of cultural identity from several respondents, who confirmed that identity was important. Some felt that further acknowledgement of the diversity of the Thames Gateway was required.

Some respondents felt that that public art could make a contribution to local distinctiveness and sense of place. In particular:

*“Essex County Council has a unique public art programme ‘genius loci’ which is working across Essex with leading artists,*

*architects, engineers and local people. A Thames Gateway-wide initiative might be appropriate”. (Local authority)*

Some respondents queried whether it was appropriate to ‘demand’ cultural impact assessments. Another (developer) also wanted clarification on the nature of the document. One respondent (other) suggested that the impact assessment could focus more on cultural provision and infrastructure instead.

One respondent (local authority) commented on the targeting of Section 106 monies for cultural infrastructure, which always has competing demands. Another (local authority) commented that as the Thames Gateway is rapidly changing, consideration should be made for directing Section 106 towards medium term goals rather than long term.

Some respondents acknowledged that they already had cultural strategies in place to support this undertaking and that links should be made in the pact.

**ii) Engage with the existing community and consider the needs of new residents when developing new plans.**

Several respondents thought that there should be stronger reference to using more challenging methods of engaging communities.

*“...should be emphasising active engagement, particularly through design-led processes, rather than basic consultation”. (Other)*

There were some comments about the robustness of research required, and how this would be monitored. One respondent (local authority) commented that RDAs could oversee consultation techniques and skills development.

**iii) Design to respond to and enhance the unique cultural and environmental characteristics of individual places. Encourage community pride and husbandry of places by providing a sustainable mix of public and private sector developments. Design settlements that are safe and attractive for all parts of people's lives – live, work and play. Ensure that the design and planning of places and settlements recognise the specific and changing demands of people's cultural and leisure needs.**

One respondent (local delivery vehicle) directly supported this undertaking.

Other respondents requested reference to community safety and the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990 for new development.

**iv) Integrate new and existing communities. Prioritise development of new neighbourhoods next to existing settlements in a balanced way. New communities should contribute to the social infrastructure of existing places and communities but not overwhelm them, encouraging cohesion between communities. Provide the highest quality public realm to enable interaction within communities and**

between diverse groups, ensuring easy access to social infrastructure, such as parks, schools and health centres.

Some respondents directly supported this undertaking.

*“Ensuring community infrastructure is delivered with new development should be an action for LDVs/ [local planning authorities] LPAs and developers”. (local delivery vehicle)*

One respondent (other) thought that the introduction of community development plans could help engage new and existing communities to build a new community. Another respondent (developer) thought that physical links to public space, facilities and services should also be referred to.

One respondent (government) suggested that the pact should include how Energy Service Companies (ESCOs) set up for new development could supply services to existing communities.

**v) Encourage more sophisticated development models where developers and landowners have a long term commitment to place-making and the community, for example, by creating community trusts.**

Several respondents directly supported the use of community trusts but would welcome further clarification on this.

*“...this is an innovative approach that should be progressed in order to take control of neighbourhoods etc to the local level”. (Developer)*

One respondent (developer) thought that establishing a community trust is not always appropriate, where other measures for long term management are in place.

### **Question 6: Delivery of the design pact**

#### **Do you have any comments on the monitoring and evaluation proposals for the design pact?**

Some respondents thought that monitoring should include more than just the Building for Life standard. One respondent (local authority) also commented that Building for Life can be subjective. A set process was also called for all to work to, to ensure that the correct information would be available for the assessment from the start.

One respondent (developer) made reference to the need for independent review and the use of design review panels for smaller schemes.

#### **How do you currently monitor design standards?**

Several respondents stated that they were already using standards to monitor design quality.

Some respondents stated that they were already using internal and external design reviews to monitor design quality.

One respondent (local authority) stated that they were using Building for Life criteria to set a baseline for monitoring design quality for Essex with the Essex Planning Officers Association.

CLG and CABE will offer a programme of support to help organisations take the actions in the design pact. Please let us know what support you would find helpful.

Many respondents suggested that working together to review and support the implementation of the pact would be helpful.

*“Support the establishment and maintenance of a design network in the Essex sub region of [Thames Gateway] TG – would be helpful in embedding the pact with key decision makers, especially LAs”. (local delivery vehicle)*

Most respondents requested training for officers, members and boards, particularly in Building for Life, study tours and across the planning and regeneration sectors.

Some respondents requested a central point which detailed resources available to support the delivery of design quality.

Design for London, Kent Architecture Centre, Essex Design Initiative, Urban Design London, ATLAS and Inspire East all offered their support in helping to deliver the aims of the pact.

These covered design review, briefing, surgeries, masterplans, training, monitoring, frameworks for delivery, design guidance, study tours and networks.

Are there any other comments you would like to make on the design pact?

Many respondents used this section to restate areas which they felt to be important.

Several respondents requested that the pact should be embedded within the planning policy for it to be effective. One (local delivery vehicle) added that more incentives would be helpful to drive this through across sectors.

*“Welcome the reference to the pact being a material consideration but this can only be effective if the shared undertakings have sufficient weight as part of the development plan policy framework”. (local delivery vehicle)*

Some respondents felt that the pact needs to consider how it will fit with the role of the new Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and the role of London and the Mayor.

Some respondents suggested that exemplars (perhaps using public sector land) could be helpful in demonstrating the aims of the pact.

Some respondents restated concerns on the additional costs and resources to deliver the pact, especially in the case of developers. There was a request to speed up the development process but to also consider commercial viability.

Some respondents requested funding and support for local authorities to implement the pact. This included training.

*“Consideration needs to be given to the additional resource implications for both public and private sector organisations”. (developer)*

Some respondents suggested the alignment with regional spatial and economic development strategies.

Some respondents requested further clarification on how the pact will be delivered and enforced.

Some respondents requested more reference to climate change and links to the eco-region prospectus.

Some respondents suggested changes in the way the pact is written to reflect the processes of development, and the HCA and Regional Spatial Planning.

# 5 Key findings of the consultation

## Support for the pact

The findings have shown a strong appetite for a mechanism to raise the standard of design in the Thames Gateway.

Seventy per cent of respondents supported the principle of the design pact, with only 4 per cent stating that they did not.

Many respondents felt that the pact should be more ambitious, with an opportunity to make the Thames Gateway a national exemplar distinct from other growth areas.

There were concerns, mainly from the development sector that the current market could make the implementation of the pact difficult.

Other respondents thought that this was not the time to compromise on design quality.

## Response to the pact actions

An average of 43 per cent of respondents stated that they could undertake all the actions in the pact by 2010. An average of 2 per cent stated that they could not at all. The remaining 55 per cent stated that they could take the actions after 2010 or that they were not applicable.

Respondents felt more able to fulfil the actions in section 1, Invest in quality, including design standards and processes (49 per cent by 2010), than section 2, Understand and enhance the identity of the Thames Gateway (38 per cent by 2010).

There was broad support for Building for Life and the Manual for Streets, and support for adopting higher standards than the pact specified under the Code for Sustainable Homes.

Opinion on space standards and Lifetime Homes was more divided.

Design review was welcomed broadly and clarity was called for on the process and roles of the national regional and local panels.

Investment in skills and training was widely commented on as important for the successful delivery of the pact.

Section 2, Understand and enhance the character of the Gateway, generated more diverse comments. Respondents felt less able to take these actions overall, suggesting that more clarity is needed on these actions.

Several respondents made reference to the need to refer to flood risk in the Gateway.

More detail was called for on how the pact links to other environmental and economic strategy including the Parklands strategic framework, the Eco-region prospectus and the Economic Development Investment Programme (EDIP).

There was substantial direct support for actions to maximise the cultural value of the Thames Gateway.

## Delivery of the pact

It was evident that clarity is needed on how the pact will support a more consistent and efficient development process.

Many respondents in the public sector asserted that the pact should be embedded into planning policy to ensure its delivery. Some requested practical support to resource this due to local capacity pressures.

Respondents felt that the pact needed to align with the new Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and with the policy of other key organisations, including the regional development agencies and the Greater London Authority.

Respondents requested clarification on how the pact will be delivered and enforced.

There were strong requests for support to deliver the pact, which comprised:

- A central point detailing resources available to support the delivery of design quality
- Training for local authority officers and members as a minimum
- Programme of support for design champions
- Set out design review service that includes local, regional and national panels
- Support for partnership working across sectors.

# 6 Appendices

## Appendix 1: Copy of online survey

**Please read the following sections of the Thames Gateway design pact:**

- About the pact
- Key principles
- Shared undertakings
- In the Actions section, read the individual actions that apply to your organisation – these are colour coded to help you

**We would like your comments on the pact. In particular we want to know:**

- if it is easy to understand
- whether you feel your organisation will be able to take the actions set out in the pact
- what support you will need to take these actions

**Please give your comments on the following sections below:**

**About the pact**

**Key principles**

**Shared undertakings**

**Actions to reconnect with nature**

**Actions to redefine work**

**Actions to reassert cultural identity and cohesion**

**Monitoring and evaluation**

**Please let us know what support you would find helpful to support you to deliver the actions in the pact, and create high quality places in the Thames Gateway**

**Please give us any other comments you would like to make below**

## Appendix 2: List of respondents

### Name and Type of Organisation

#### Government

English Heritage  
 English Partnerships  
 Environment Agency  
 Home and Communities Agency (set up team)  
 Home Office  
 Housing Corporation  
 Natural England  
 Planning Inspectorate  
 Sustainable Development Commission

#### Local authorities

Dartford Borough Council  
 Essex County Council  
 Gravesham Borough Council  
 Greater London Authority (GLA)  
 London Borough of Barking and Dagenham  
 London Borough of Bexley  
 London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham  
 London Borough of Newham  
 Southend Borough Council

#### Others

Alastair Pollock  
 Anonymous  
 ATLAS  
 Buglife  
 Greenwich University  
 Heritage Lottery Fund  
 Howard Stoate MP  
 Inspire East  
 Kent Architecture Centre  
 London Cultural Consortium  
 London Play  
 Navigant Consulting (Tim Williams)

#### Regional development agencies

Design for London  
 East of England Development Agency (EEDA)  
 London Development Agency  
 South East England Development Agency (SEEDA)

#### Developers

Circle Anglia  
 Fairview New Homes  
 Family Mosaic Housing  
 First Base  
 East Thames Group  
 Home Builders Federation  
 Land Securities  
 Southern Housing Group

PCT Network  
 SHELTER  
 Sustrans  
 Thames Gateway London Partnership  
 Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership  
 Urban Design London

#### Local delivery vehicles

Kent Thameside Regeneration Partnership  
 London Thames Gateway Development Corporation  
 Medway Renaissance Partnership  
 Renaissance Southend  
 Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation

**This document is an analysis of the responses received from stakeholders to the consultation draft of the Thames Gateway design pact. Overall CAFE received a positive response to the design pact, showing a strong appetite for a mechanism to raise the standard of design in the Thames Gateway. The document will be of interest to all those involved in development in the Thames Gateway.**

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