

This report has been prepared by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport for:

The Better Public Buildings Group chaired by Lord Falconer.

The Group embraces:

The Cabinet Office

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport

The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions

H M Treasury (Office of Government Commerce)

The Ministry of Defence

The Department of Health

The Department for Education and Employment

The Department of Social Security

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment

The work of the Group is closely associated with the Movement for Innovation and the Achieving Excellence initiative.

The text was written by Paul Finch, a member of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, drawing on material previously prepared by members of the Better Public Buildings Group.



Foreword by the Prime Minister

Better Public Buildings

100 years ago public buildings were often the pride of Britain's towns and cities. Schools, railway stations, post offices and libraries set high standards of building design that the private sector tried to emulate. The best embodied a strong sense of civic pride.

More recently, however, the public sector has too often been associated with poor design and bad management. Too many of the housing estates, schools and hospitals built in the second half of the twentieth century were ugly, ill-suited to the needs of their users and costly to maintain.

Yet we know that good design provides a host of benefits. The best designed schools encourage children to learn. The best designed hospitals help patients recover their spirits and their health. Well-designed parks and town centres help to bring communities together.

It is widely believed that good design is a costly luxury. But this is simply not true. As Sir John Egan's report 'Rethinking Construction' demonstrated, best practice in integrating design and construction delivers better value for money as well as better buildings, particularly when attention is paid to the full costs of a building over its whole lifetime.

That is why I have asked ministers and departments across government to work towards achieving a step change in the quality of building design in the public sector. The government is already substantially increasing capital spending. I am determined that this additional money should be well spent, leaving behind a legacy of high quality buildings that can match the best of what we inherited from the Victorians and other past generations. And I am determined that good design should not be confined to high profile buildings in the big cities: all of the users of public services, wherever they are, should be able to benefit from better design.

The good news is that a lot of progress is already being made, helped by the new Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment which is bringing some of the best architects together with schools, courts, Sure Start centres and benefit offices. Through the Achieving Excellence initiative, government organisations have started addressing their performance as clients by setting measurable targets and objectives with a strong focus on lifetime costs, quality and design. As this report shows, there are some outstanding examples for the rest of the public sector to learn from.

Over the last few years Britain has benefited from a host of new landmark buildings, many of them funded through the lottery. Now we need to apply the same energy and imagination to improving the tens of thousands of everyday public buildings which play such a vital role in our lives.

Tony Blair



