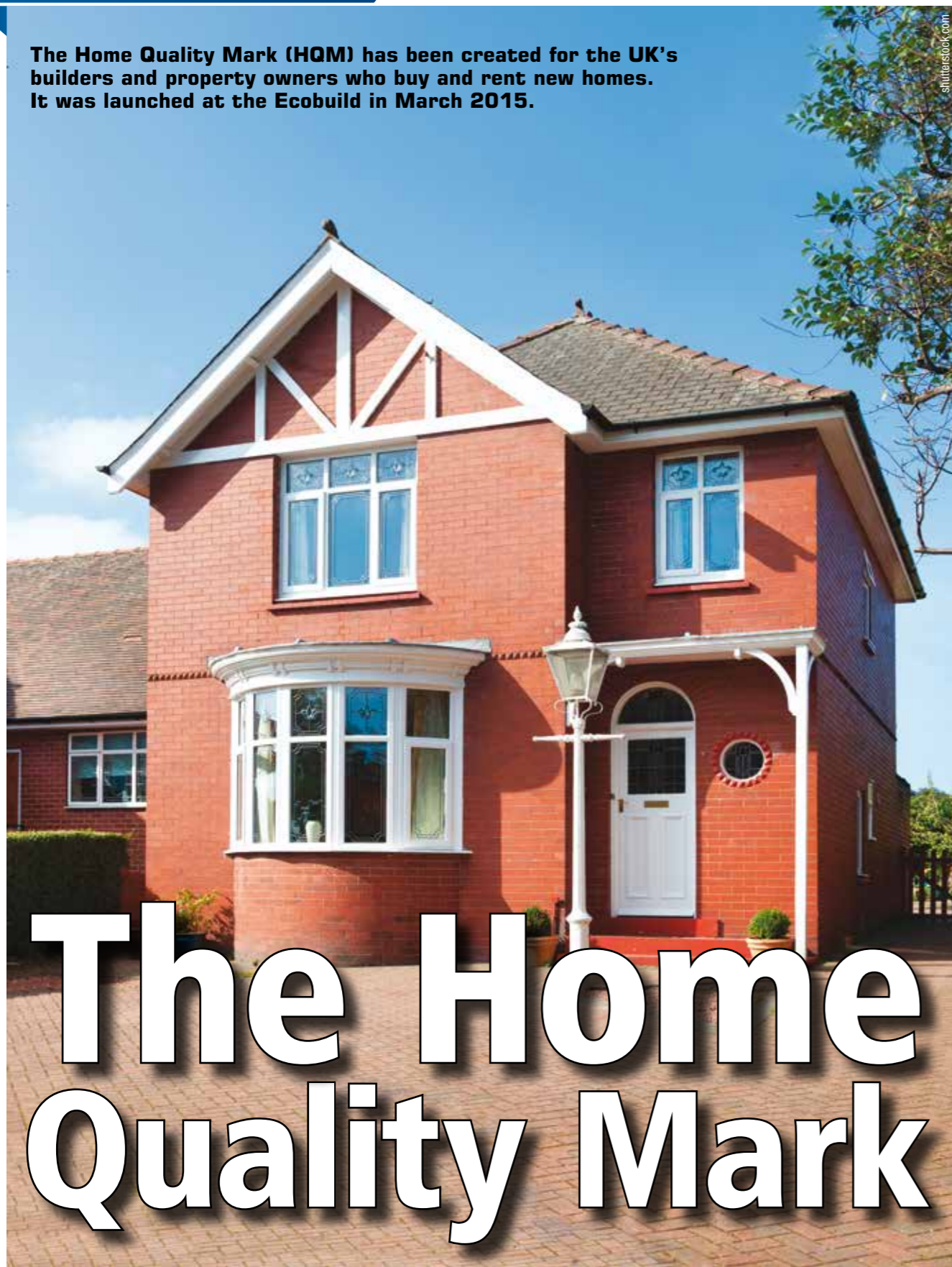


The Home Quality Mark (HQM) has been created for the UK's builders and property owners who buy and rent new homes. It was launched at the Ecobuild in March 2015.



The Home Quality Mark

The HQM is a national standard which helps builders to show the high quality of their builds on the marketplace. Also, it gives house buyers the confidence about the home design, built and running costs. Moreover, the HQM will show the home sustainability, resilience to flooding, energy saving or digital technology connectivity. Homes marked with the HQM sign will be cheaper to run, better located, more adjustable to climate changes. The HQM has been launched by BRE and together with BREEAM forms standards of quality and sustainability. BRE is owned by the BRE Trust, a registered charity that works to improve the quality and sustainability of buildings and built environment.

The rating will be given by independent qualified and licensed assessors who will check and score key aspects of the home. Indicators for the assessment includes aspects important for householders, developers and designers like for instance the running costs, maintenance costs, impact on health and wellbeing, sustainability and impact on the environment. To sum up the score and the HQM will provide information about the quality, performance and features of a new-build home.

What to take into account to build the Home Quality Mark home? Many house builders are constructing high-quality homes, sometimes even exceeding Building Regulation requirements in some aspects. However, they do not have the appropriate measurements of quality to convince customers of their benefits. The Home Quality Mark consists of two elements, a five-star rating giving a clear overall assessment of the home's quality, and indicators focussed on specific aspects relevant for home occupants, contractors and designers.

The elements assessed are divided into three categories:

Knowledge sharing - collaboration of architects, contractors, clients and householders

The higher quality homes can be achieved through the informative decisions all the way from the project start to finish. Such decisions require the collaboration, training and qualification and efficiency.

The key assessments points in this aspect will include:

- the verification of the communication effectiveness between all parties involved during the project management,
- the verification of the efficiency during the construction process like energy and water waste or reusable materials,
- The level of contractors and workforce skills and training provisions.

The quality of the home is checked during the building handover. Testing and assessing the performance of all systems are done to ensure all services are fully functional. There will be verification of support given by a contractor to a householder on how everything works. The HQM will outline the measures for homes like monitoring and control



system that provides information on maintenance requirements of homes.

Our surroundings - compatibility of homes with present and future surroundings

This section outlines the assessments points for homes that are compatible with the surroundings:

The awareness of the condition of land, flood risk, security, privacy and nuisance, infrastructure and water or energy supplies or drainage and sewage arrangements.

The design and character of the home to complement the existing area, a local character which can be achieved thanks to engagement with local

authorities and various bodies.

Maximising quality external space to use without compromising on internal space, access to digital infrastructure, the transport provisions, cycling and pedestrian facilities, car parking and electric charging, etc. Local amenities such as healthcare and education facilities, shops and banks, parks and leisure places.

My home - the provision of living spaces that are comfortable, healthy, cost effective and have reduced environmental aspects.

This section outlines the performance measurements for homes relating to energy, comfort and overheating like

- *air quality* - provision of an adequate ventilation
- *lighting* - access to natural light and energy saving lighting design with accessible controls
- *noise* - sound insulation, layout design to minimise external noise
- *temperature* - overheating avoidance by proper installation of insulation and ventilation
- *cost efficiency* - installation of controls to efficiently manage home
- *sustainability* - rewarding use of renewable energy sources, reduction of pollutants, reduction of CO2 emissions and other pollutants

The first house built to the HQM standards was the three bedrooms detached house built in Watford at the BRE Innovation Park. The Wienerberger e4 brick house was designed in partnership with Arup and is one of the first to achieve the HQM sign. It meets requirements of sustainability and cutting running costs while promoting health, wellbeing and quality of life. The Innovation Park is home to the examples of sustainable buildings, landscape designs and hundreds of pioneering low carbon materials and technologies.

HQM registrations are FREE until 31 October 2016. To register a project, you need a licensed HQM assessors – details of which can be found at the website www.greenbooklive.com and to download the technical standard visit www.homequalitymark.com. The Assessor will take the applicant through the registration process and start the process of carrying out the assessment on the project.

(source: www.homequalitymark.com)