

Sent by email on 10 March 2026 to designquality@communities.gov.uk

Good afternoon,

This email sets out the response of the Institute of Acoustics (IOA) to the Design and Placemaking PPG.

Summary

The IOA supports the intent of this PPG with its emphasis on the importance of well-designed places.

The recognition of the impact that noise can have on development needs to be managed as part of the process is welcomed.

However, the IOA feels that there is an opportunity with this PPG to bring to greater prominence the principles of Good Acoustic Design.

Background

The Institute of Acoustics (IOA) is the UK's professional body for those working in the fields of acoustics, sound, noise and vibration. Members of the Institute work on a variety of projects to which this draft PPG will apply, in the capacity of both assisting developers meet their proposals and as regulators evaluating the merits of them.

The IOA's response has been compiled by an experienced group of about a dozen members and the response reflects their views.

The response has been approved by the IOA's Executive Committee on behalf of the IOA's Governing Council.

The focus of the IOA's response is on one particular aspect regarding Good Acoustic Design.

The main comments from the IOA

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However, the IOA feels that there is an opportunity with this PPG to bring to greater prominence the principles of Good Acoustic Design.

Good Acoustic Design

As indicated elsewhere in the draft PPG on Design and Placemaking, careful planning of a development from site location, through concept design, site layout and materials selection can greatly improve acoustic conditions and the management of

noise. Following the principles of good acoustic design can substantially reduce the requirement for, and the costs of subsequent noise mitigation measures that may need to be retrospectively applied to a development, or that may even mean that a particular development cannot proceed.

In achieving Good Acoustic Design, there is a hierarchy of noise management measures that the IOA believes developers and LPAs should be encouraged, or even required, to follow, as set out below, in descending order of preference:

- i. Maximise the spatial separation of noise source(s) and receptor(s).
- ii. Investigate the necessity and feasibility of reducing existing noise levels and relocating existing noise sources.
- iii. Use existing topography and existing structures (that are likely to last the expected life of the noise-sensitive scheme) to screen the proposed development site from significant sources of noise.
- iv. Incorporate noise barriers as part of the scheme to screen the proposed development site from significant sources of noise.
- v. Use the layout of the scheme to reduce noise propagation across the site.
- vi. Use the orientation of buildings and their internal layout to reduce the noise exposure of noise sensitive rooms, e.g. bedrooms and living rooms.
- vii. Use the building envelope (facade) to mitigate noise to appropriate levels, as required by policy.

Good Acoustic Design is a process that should begin as soon as land is under consideration for development. The timeline for Good Acoustic Design starts with the strategic definition phase and continues until the finalised design is completed. Both internal and external spaces should be considered in this process.

The IOA strongly believes that the development of this PPG provides the ideal opportunity for the design process to assist with the effective management of noise. (The impact of noise is the second worst environmental pollutant after air quality). Ideally there would be a separate section on Good Acoustic Design based on the text above.

The principles of Good Acoustic Design have been in existence for a number of years and can be found in guidance published by the IOA and others nearly 10 years ago. However including them in this PPG would enable Good Acoustic Design to be integrated into the whole design process and aid sustainable development.

Without the inclusion of Good Acoustic Design into this PPG, the current unsatisfactory situation would remain of developers presenting their acoustic consultant with a fixed

layout and simply asking what needs to be done to get this through planning. Such an approach can lead to less healthy homes, by limiting the noise mitigation to the need for closed windows and associated ventilation and overheating issues. Furthermore, it can hinder the development of housing altogether.

If officials would like to meet with the Institute of Acoustics to understand further our views on this issue, we would be delighted to attend such a meeting either in person or online.

Regards

Stephen Turner

S.W.Turner MA, MSc, HonFIOA

Former President of the Institute of Acoustics

For and on behalf of the Institute of Acoustics

cc President of the Institute of Acoustics

President-Elect of the Institute of Acoustics