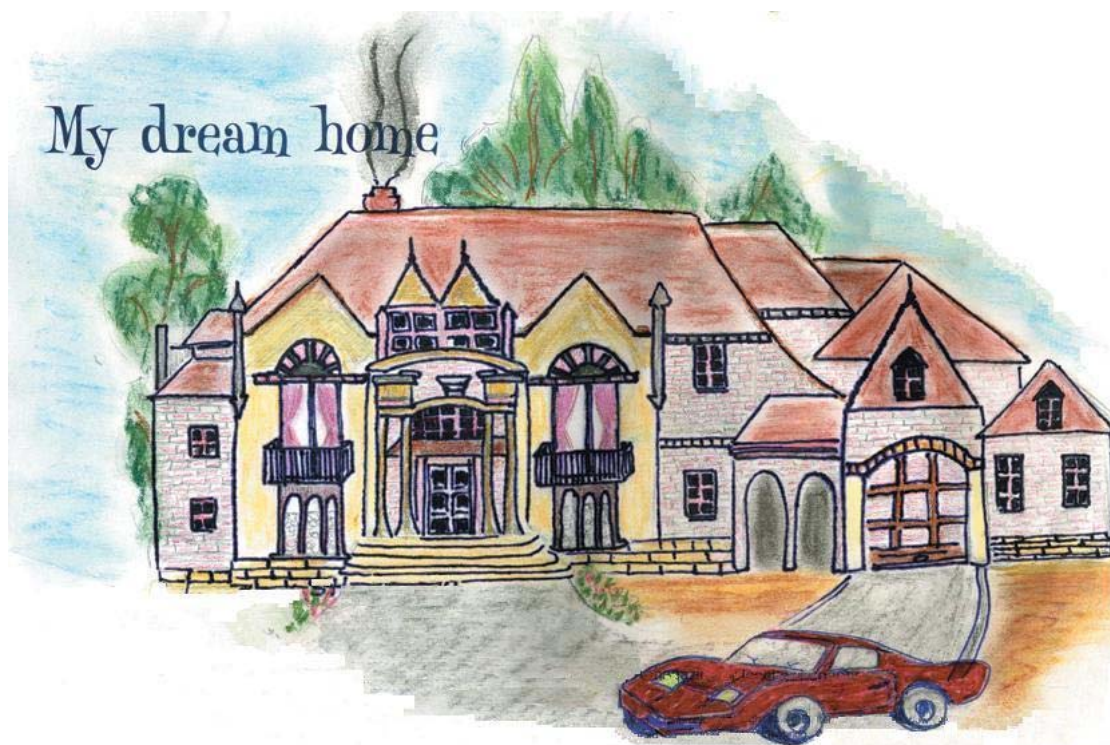


## Children's Dream Homes



**“The customers of the future are echoing their parent’s tastes for detached rural homes, bespoke yet traditional in design. There is no sign that neo-modernism has made its mark on the ideal home for these leisure-focused children.”**

Yolande Barnes, Director of Research

What will the home-buying consumers of the future want to live in? There are development sites all over the country of a size that will take upwards of 20 years to fully develop. Designs made now will be housing a generation who are still at school. What do these children want in a home and what are they likely to be looking for in the future?

Savills Research, with Design for Homes and Velux, attempted to find some answers by analysing nearly

4,000 children's drawings of 'dream homes'. The analysis revealed that there are considerable challenges ahead in reconciling what appears to be a national dream of the ideal home, held by both adults and children, and what is likely to be the social, economic and environmental reality of housing later in the 21st century.

Some 10,000 children, aged 5 to 13, from across the UK, entered a competition sponsored by Savills and

# Rural Idyll

Country Life to design their dream home. Later, Savills Research made an analysis of what the children drew. Just under 4,000 of the resulting pictures were examined and detailed information of the type, style and form of the building was recorded as well as internal and outdoor features. This was combined with a personal profile of the entrant, including age, sex, and location. The statistical realities of the UK housing stock were compared and contrasted to the children's idealised vision. The following results offer a unique insight into the ideals and vision of the next generation of future house-buyers.

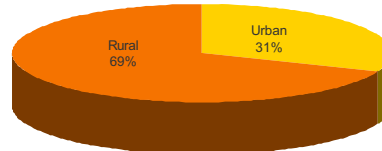
Given the increasing pressure for new homes in the UK, by the time these children are of a house-buying age they are most likely to be living in denser neighbourhoods in urban centres. If in a new house, they will be occupying buildings where energy and water saving features are de rigueur. Do children's images of their ideal, dream property, accompanied by their requirements for open space and other facilities match with this? Or will the ideal home be out of reach of even more of the population?

## Rural Idyll

Tasked to draw their 'dream' home, we can tell much about children's desires and aspirations for their future property. Focusing on the setting of the drawing (where it was possible to determine), rural homes were twice as prevalent as urban ones (see chart, above right). According to the Commission for Rural Communities 83% of people in urban areas would rather live a rural life. Rural living is aspired to, yet with planning density considerations and land availability, it is becoming less likely to be a reality for most of these prospective homebuyers of the future.

The design challenge has to be seen as one of greening urban spaces to provide some of the rural idyll and considering access to countryside or county parks in new settlements.

## Rural or Urban

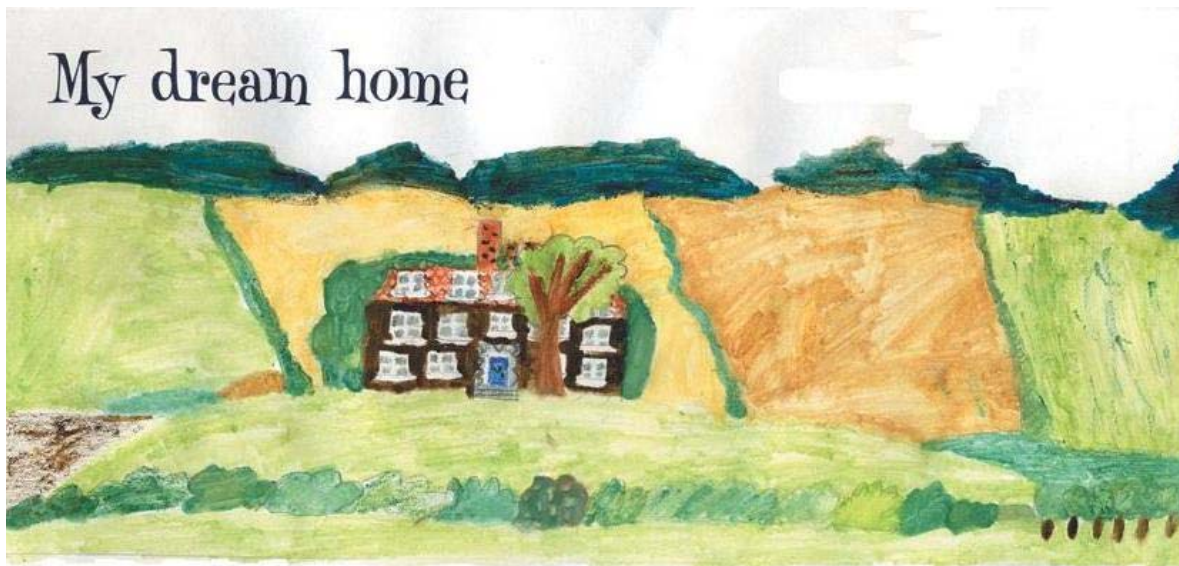


Source: Children's Dream Home Survey

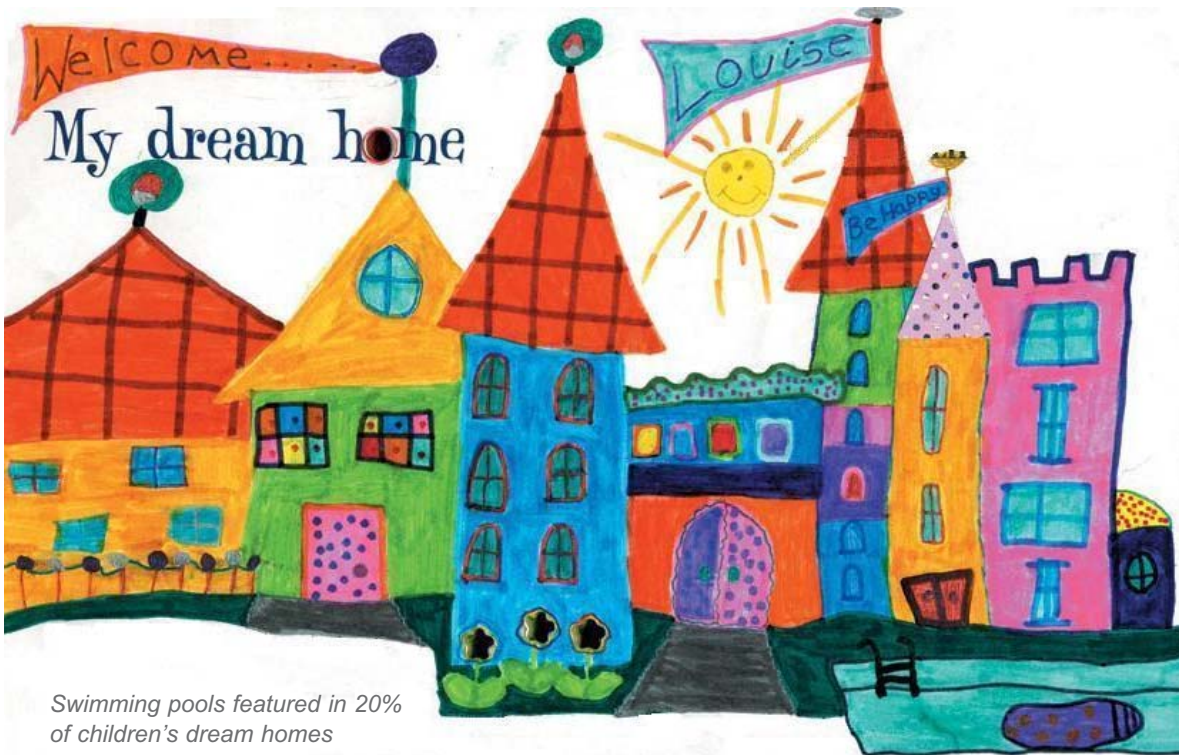
## Leisure

Perhaps not surprisingly, being children, there was a strong interest amongst the entrants in leisure features, 20% of children included a swimming pool in their drawing. Inside the home, games rooms, followed by home cinemas were top priorities, reflecting the increasing popularity of home cinema systems and games consoles. There are lessons for designers and home providers here. The amenities and facilities provided in a neighbourhood are going to be as important in 'families' purchasing decisions as the home itself. When providing homes for families, it seems that a naive extrapolation between household numbers and bedrooms will not make for homes of sufficient size to accommodate the leisure needs of growing children.

Whilst it is not realistic for most homebuyers to have their own private pool for example, it is evident from this survey that developers must consider factoring in



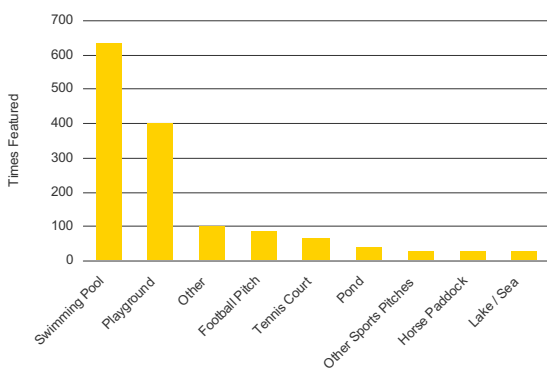
# Leisure



Swimming pools featured in 20% of children's dream homes

access to pools and other facilities in their developments (with provision for the ongoing management of them). The commercial success of the scheme will be increasingly tied into the desires and wellbeing of residents. More readily achievable is the provision of playgrounds and sports pitches, both of which feature highly in entrant's drawings. As the chart below illustrates, aside from the 20% who included a swimming pool, 11% featured a playground, 2% drew football pitches, 2% tennis courts, 1% included other sports pitches, and 1% a horse paddock.

## Leisure Features



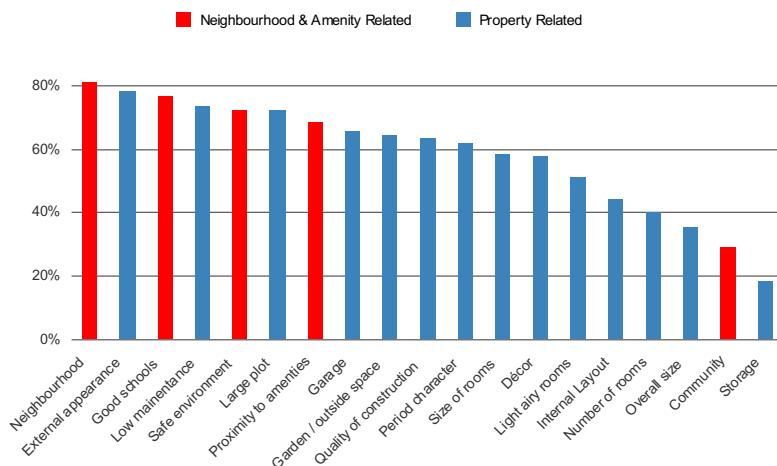
Source: Children's Dream Home Competition

The inclusion of these amenities and facilities in the children's ideal is perhaps an indication of what is important outside the average home as well as what is desired inside a dream home. This resonates with the findings of an adult survey (Savills Occupiers' Survey 2007), which revealed that neighbourhood and access to amenities ranked as far more important to the average UK householder than the size or type of property that was occupied (see chart, following page). The response of children to traditional neighbourhoods, where play parks, swimming pools, football pitches and other leisure facilities are available to them on foot or by bike may be more important than the appearance, size or type of property they live in.

This dissonance between household size and space required is also evidenced by the likelihood of accommodation being needed by non-human residents. About 20% of children featured animals in their drawings. Of these the most popular were horses (25%), and dogs (17%). Keeping these farmyard animals is clearly not a realistic aspiration in the high density living spaces we expect to see built in the future. Stabling a horse in an average house – even if it is 'family size' – would make a difficult living arrangement. However, the presence of outside space and cage-size nooks and alcoves becomes important for the many children whose animals are an integral aspect of their ideal home. These children expect themselves to be accommodation providers for their pets, 18%

# Eco Features

## Occupier's Survey 'Wish List'



Source: Savills Research Occupier's Survey

provided dedicated housing for them in the form of outbuildings, stables and kennels.

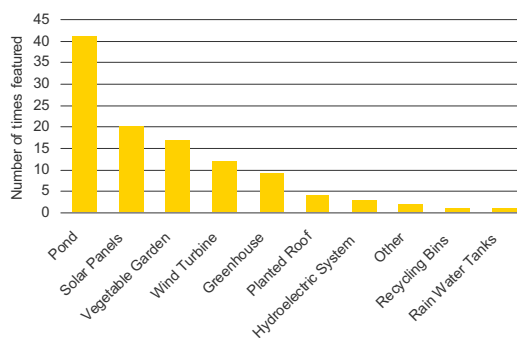
### Eco Features

The Savills Occupiers' survey of UK households found that those with school-aged children are much more likely to rate environmentally-friendly features of a house as important than older or childless households. It is perhaps surprising that only 3% of children in the dream home competition included eco-features in their designs. This suggests that either these initiatives are not reaching the homebuyers of the future, or are not considered to be a key element in an 'ideal' home. This small 'deep green' group of entrants reflects accurately the proportion of the home buying public that Savills Research have established as those prepared to pay for environmentally friendly features in their own homes.

Examination of these dream homes with eco-features does reveal that some children are very eco-aware. Typically these children were in the upper age groups, 72% aged between 8 and 11. Entrants depicted a wide range of features for renewable energy production and food production to 'green roofs' (see chart, right). In addition, ponds, an easily achievable eco-feature leads the list followed by solar panels, a means of energy production, now widely recognised as a feasible source for home energy. Vegetable gardens were also featured, suggesting a growing awareness of food sourcing and indeed the love of gardening. Overall, the wide range of eco features suggests high awareness, but only amongst the 'deep green' minority.

Looking more broadly at other amenities, 87% of children featured no provision for parking, just 10% included a garage, whilst 91% neglected any form of motorised transport in their pictures. As these children are not of driving age, it seems vehicular transport is not at the forefront of their conscience. This news may encourage those who are seeing to restrict car usage. If the children of today can be accommodated in sustainable neighbourhoods where walking and cycling are not only normal but also feasible because mixed use puts accessibility to amenities within reach, they may grow up with a much lower propensity to jump in a car and drive to other places to meet their daily needs and desires.

### Eco Features



Source: Children's Dream Home Competition

# The Designs

## Eco Outlook

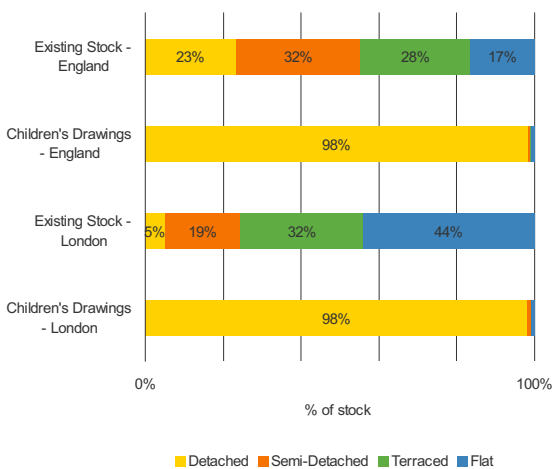
According to the Sustainable Development Commission, domestic dwellings account for 27% of the UK's carbon emissions. They consume three times the amount of energy used by all the country's cars combined. The government has recognised this, and is driving towards zero carbon housing standards for new homes by 2016. In addition, it has introduced a number of strategies such as Home Information Packs, which include an Energy Performance Certificate, to improve the energy efficiency of existing homes.

With only 3% of drawings including eco features, this low awareness suggests that there should be a greater effort in educating children and their parents, especially the case if the government is to find widespread and long-term 'buy in' from the British public on its environmental initiatives for housing. This is particularly important as the Code for Sustainable Homes means that new homes of the future will be characterised by features such as CHP units, solar heating, energy and water saving.

## The Designs

The children's home designs were diverse, ranging from farms and castles to complete fantasy structures. This analysis is designed to reveal the common trends in order to tell us something about children's preferences and characteristics as a whole.

### Existing Housing Stock and Children's Dream Homes



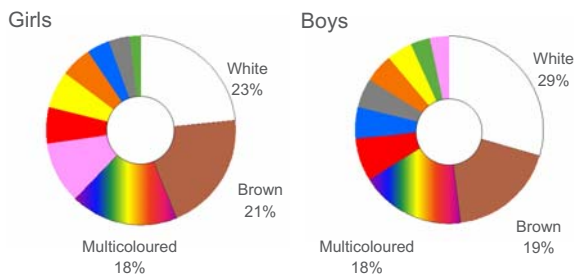
Source: Children's Dream Home Competition / Housing Statistics 2007, CLG & National Statistics, 2007

When it comes to ideal homes, detached houses dominate the findings. The children's ideal is one of self contained sites without any shared walls. Some 98% of entrants drew a detached home, with just 1.5% drawing a semi-detached or terraced house, and a mere 0.5% featuring a flat. Even at this young age, an ideal home is considered to be a stand-alone structure, an island of privacy without shared walls or boundaries. Just 12% of the sample drew a boundary wall or fence, the focus for the majority was on the home itself, the property's relationship with it's neighbours was so insignificant it was not even given consideration. Spaces of private ownership are idealised, without interference from neighbours or the wider world.

This, of course, is in sharp contrast with the reality of UK housing stock. Most tellingly, only a tiny fraction of children drew their ideal home as a terraced, semi-detached house, or a flat. An analysis of actual housing stock in England (see chart, below left) illustrates the stark difference between this ideal and reality. Semi-detached homes, which barely figure in the children's drawings, are by far the most prevalent housing type (32% in England overall). While 98% of children in London drew detached homes, in reality just 5% of London homes are detached.

Perhaps most notable is the almost complete exclusion of flats from the children's ideal homes, yet between 2006 and 2007 this type of building accounted for 47% of all new homes built in England (CLG, 2007). This is in contrast to the children's deeply conservative view of the ideal home. Some 87% of dream homes comprised of a single building, a 'house', with 73% presenting this in a traditional cellular layout. A contemporary, open plan layout made it into just 16% of the drawings. House colour was split between the conservative and the extrovert. Multicoloured accounted for 18% hinting that some future homeowners might appreciate coloured facades. But designers who want to play it safe would go for neutral colours. White and brown facades accounted for 26% and 20% respectively.

### Use of Colour in Elevations



Source: Children's Dream Home Competition

# Conclusions

Gardens were proportionate in size to the building drawn – 41% medium sized, 34% large, 25% small. The important lesson here is perhaps that not every household wants a vast garden. Setting may be more important.

Water features and swimming pools are desirable for a significant minority, 6% of drawings included a pond, 1% rivers, lakes and other bodies of water, and 20% featured a swimming pool.

## Adaptability

Around 53% of drawings included roofspace that could be deemed habitable. Of these, 30% being actively used as living space. Roofspace is evidently seen as a natural extension of the home amongst this group, encouraging for the high-density living possibilities of the future.

The realities of modern living and the premium paid for additional floor areas, does seem to have impinged on the imaginations of the children expressing themselves. Interestingly, the use of roofspace differed significantly from region to region. Perhaps not surprisingly, children in London seem more aware of its use with 28% including rooftop living in their design, compared with 18% and 19% in the South East and South West respectively. More puzzling perhaps is that those in the East Midlands and East were most aware of optimising floorspace with 34% and 31%, respectively, showing habited rooftops.

The fact that mansions have a strong presence in the sample reinforces the fact that the drawings are of dream homes and not 'homes that you think you might be able to afford in 30 years time!' This is also a common response of surveys of adults, when asked what people would want their home to be without reference to cost or other mundane realities

of life.

What this survey shows is the aspiration of future home buyers. The challenge for housing design is to provide the open space, privacy and insulation that buyers associate with detached property, but in other types of accommodation. The design challenge is considerable.

## Conclusions

This study is an esoteric snapshot of children's attitudes to homes but it reveals some aspects of their desires which may shape housing demand for years to come.

Childhood is an impressionable time, the social, cultural and built environment in which they grow up in has far reaching implications on lifelong tastes, stylistic favour and purchasing decisions. By understanding what the children of today perceive to be key features of the perfect home, planners, architects and housebuilders can better understand the requirements for future house design.

What becomes apparent from the survey is that children are inheriting many of the attitudes of their parents in their responses to housing design and provision.

There are elements of this potential future demand that will be increasingly difficult to fulfil in the provision of new supply. This suggests that demand for some second-hand stock will only increase with resulting upward pressure on prices. Other needs, desires and aspirations could be accommodated within new housing if new and innovative design methods are adopted but the innovative housebuilder's greatest challenge is always likely to be the ingrained attitudes of the British house buying public.

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