

## Easing planning for modular homes can help councils meet land supply targets

Local authorities could more easily meet their housing targets by introducing a "front-loaded" regime for modern methods of construction (MMC), including the use of local development orders (LDOs), according to a new report published by Arup in May 2019.

In its study, [\*How Modern Methods of Construction can deliver 'more' through the planning system\*](#), multi-disciplinary consultancy Arup said that local authorities "are under pressure to achieve annual targets but the long lead-in time for housing schemes makes it increasingly difficult to meet five-year land supply requirements".

It adds: "Local authorities are therefore facing the penalty of the National Planning Policy Framework's 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' and loss of control. The faster rate of construction and absorption of MMC homes can help resolve this."

The report goes on to say that combining LDOs with design codes would help maintain quality while speeding up housing delivery.

LDOs, first introduced in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, provide upfront planning permission for specified types of development in defined locations. They are intended to streamline the planning process by removing the need for developers to make separate planning applications within the site in question.

The report said that planners have nothing to fear from standardised design approaches, citing the "pattern book" approach of many previous generations of housing.

Arup's report stated: "Planning delays and planning risk are consistently cited as some of the biggest challenges faced by developers. MMC homes, using pre-agreed design specifications, could speed up decisions, streamline the rest of the process and reduce risk."

The move would remove the burden of case-by-case consideration by planners about what constitutes good design, the report said.

To maintain the reputation of MMC, planning authorities might consider producing guidance to distinguish between MMC homes used for temporary and "meanwhile" uses from permanent uses, the report said.

Incorporating digital designs for MMC homes into councils' digital platforms could "completely transform" the planning system, the report went on to say.

It said: "Design evolution could be made more transparent by using digital platforms to demonstrate massing and cladding options and planning consent could be secured through semi-automatically generated reserved matter applications sent straight to the production line."

At the beginning of June 2019, [a proposed 44-story modular tower in Croydon](#) won the best planning application category in *Planning* magazine's Planning Awards.

Last month, a report suggested the creation of a "[floating modular homes development](#)" in Swansea Bay.

A briefing on what planners need to know about modular homes can be found [here](#).