

WARM UP

1 Match these different kinds of houses with their definitions. Then read and check.

- 1 terraced house
- 2 detached house
- 3 tower block
- 4 semi-detached house

- a a very high multi-storey building
- b part of a row of similar houses joined together
- c a house joined to another one on one side only
- d a house which stands alone

GLOSSARY

backyard: *cortile*

council houses: *case popolari*

rundown: *malmesso, fatisciente*

girders: *travi*

Focus on: Houses in Modern Britain

Various types of architecture and housing can feature in city planning and in Britain there is a wide variety of houses to choose from depending on your location and requirements.



A **terraced house** is part of a row of similar houses joined together by their side walls, often forming one block with no space for a garden. They were built in the 19th century for the working class and most of them are constructed on two floors, with two rooms downstairs, and two rooms upstairs. At that time, there was no water supply and the toilet was outside in the backyard.

A **tenement** is a rundown brick building divided into low-rental flats located on several floors, whose facilities and maintenance leave much to be desired. Nowadays they have almost completely been replaced by new council houses, a form of low-cost housing built by local authorities.



A **tower block** is a very tall building of over twenty storeys, which is divided into flats and offices. Steel girders and reinforced concrete are used in their construction and they are called skyscrapers in the USA.

A **semi-detached house** is a house joined to another house on one side only, by a shared wall. They usually have an upstairs and a downstairs and a small garden, and can be found in the suburbs.





A **detached house** is a house which stands alone with nothing on either side. A garden usually surrounding the whole house keeps it separate from other houses in the street. They are mainly built in the residential areas of towns or cities.

A **cottage** is a small house in the countryside. Traditional cottages had a thatched roof. Nowadays many cottages have been renovated and have become very fashionable on the property market.



READING COMPREHENSION

2 **PET** Read the text and decide if the statements below are true (T) or (F). Then correct the false ones.

- 1 Terraced buildings were built in the second half of the 20th century.
- 2 Terraced houses each had their own water supply and indoor toilet.
- 3 Terraced houses are built in rows.
- 4 A tenement was usually built with bricks and had more than two floors.
- 5 Tower blocks are built of steel girders and reinforced concrete.
- 6 Semi-detached houses have four or more storeys.
- 7 Semi-detached houses are usually built in the city centre.
- 8 Detached houses are usually surrounded by a garden.
- 9 Cottages are usually in the countryside.
- 10 A cottage usually has a tiled roof.

T	F
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

VOCABULARY

3 Find the synonyms of the following words in the text.

- | | | | |
|---------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| 1 several | _____ | 5 dilapidated | _____ |
| 2 assortment | _____ | 6 outskirts | _____ |
| 3 necessities | _____ | 7 popular | _____ |
| 4 room | _____ | | |

WARM UP

1 Think of the differences between Italian and British homes. What kind of different flooring is used? Do most people in Italy live in a flat or a house? And in Britain? Where do the Italians and the English usually keep their washing machines? What do each prefer when decorating: wallpaper or paint?

GLOSSARY

glance: *occhiata*

amenities: *servizi*

appliances:

elettrodomestici

demure: *modesto*

kiln-fired tiles: *tegole in cotto*

The Main Differences between American and British Houses

At a glance you can see straight away that there are definite differences between American and British houses. This may be due to the raw building materials available in each country and because their economic potential is totally different. Various aspects can have an effect on the design of a house, but probably the greatest input comes from the culture of the country.

The USA is certainly one of the most powerful nations in the world, along with other oil producing countries, and this status is reflected in the grandeur of their homes which are equipped with all the amenities and appliances you can imagine.

The British, on the other hand, are renowned all over the world for being more conservative, and consequently this is also reflected in the design of their homes which are simpler and more demure than American ones. American and British homes ultimately express the imagination of the person who designed them in the first place.



Here is a summary of the main differences between the two types of homes.

Topic	British way	American way
Materials • frame • interior walls • roof	• breeze blocks, mortar • multi-layers of plaster • kiln-fired tiles	• wood, nails • drywall • shingles
Living space	essential for efficiency	large for comfort
Rooms	reception area dining area lounge	hall mud room dining room laundry room formal living room family room
Garage	room for one car only	room for two cars workbench
Amenities	wardrobe bath or tub cooker and fridge (taken with you if move house)	closets in bedrooms large shower or Jacuzzi lots of kitchen appliances (left there if move house)

READING COMPREHENSION

2 **PET** Read the text and look at the table, then answer the following questions.

- 1 Apart from cultural background, what other two aspects influence the American way of house building?
- 2 Describe what materials are used in the construction of British homes.
- 3 How do the public rooms in an American home differ from those in a British one?
- 4 When Americans move house what do they take away with them and what do they leave and how does this differ from British customs?

VOCABULARY

3 Match these words or expressions from the text with their definitions.

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 1 workbench | a <input type="checkbox"/> building material shaped like a brick and made of ashes. |
| 2 laundry room | b <input type="checkbox"/> an area in the house where you can leave dirty or wet clothes and shoes. |
| 3 shingles | c <input type="checkbox"/> a mixture of lime or gypsum with sand and water, applied to walls and ceilings. |
| 4 plaster | d <input type="checkbox"/> thin, oblong pieces of wood or slate used to cover roofs. |
| 5 breeze blocks | e <input type="checkbox"/> a sturdy table used by a craftsman for his work. |
| 6 mud room | f <input type="checkbox"/> the room where clothes are washed and dried. |

EXAM PRACTICE – WRITTEN EXAM

4 **A** Write a short description of an American house, then one of a British home (150-200 words). Compare them, highlighting the differences and what characteristics they have in common if any, then explain which one you would like to live in and why.

WARM UP

1 The following words or expressions may be used to describe life in the country. Match them to their opposites.

- 1 quiet
 - 2 fresh air
 - 3 boring
 - 4 isolated
 - 5 few career opportunities
 - 6 only local people
-
- a cosmopolitan
 - b crowded
 - c high employment rate
 - d pollution
 - e exciting
 - f noisy

GLOSSARY

layouts: *disposizioni*
at the rear: *sul retro*

Poundbury and the Duchy of Cornwall

Poundbury is a combined urban development of town houses, cottages, shops and light industries, designed for the Prince of Wales by architect Leon Krier, on the outskirts of the Dorset country town of Dorchester. The intended aim was to show how traditional architecture and modern town planning could be used to create a flourishing new community, where people could live and work in close proximity.



The Duchy of Cornwall

Poundbury has now become world famous as a model of urban planning. A major problem nowadays is how to satisfy the demand for more homes without destroying the countryside. Many cities, towns and villages are surrounded by spreading suburbs which have absolutely nothing in common with the heritage of the area where they are located. Over the last few years, several town planners have tried to change this trend by exploring different layouts, architectural styles and an effective combination of the use of structures and facilities. Poundbury is the latest project to challenge the current conventions of planning and development following this new trend.

The Duchy of Cornwall, a 600 year-old private estate was inherited by the Prince of Wales as Heir to the Throne and he is actively involved in improving the estate for future Dukes. The Prince of Wales' book *A Vision of Britain* published in 1989, re-examined many of the accepted rules of urban and rural planning and redefined development standards. Instead of segregating users, different types of property are mixed throughout Poundbury. Private and council housing are also intermixed and built to the same quality and design standards. Commercial buildings, from factories to offices, sit among residential areas, with shopping, community and leisure facilities. The street layout creates interesting spaces among the buildings and is a natural speed deterrent. Parking facilities and services are mostly confined to landscaped courtyards at the rear. The architect, using local and sometimes recycled materials, has drawn on the rich heritage of Dorset and in particular, on the attractive streets of Dorchester itself.

ACTIVITIES

READING COMPREHENSION

2 Read the text and answer the following questions.

- 1 Have private and council houses been built separately in Poundbury?
- 2 What's one of the most important issues to be dealt with in town planning nowadays?
- 3 Why in your opinion has Poundbury become world famous?
- 4 Do you agree with the idea of satisfying the increasing demand for new houses without destroying the countryside? Why?
- 5 What do you think about using local and recycled materials for house building?

WRITING

3 **FCE** You see this announcement about a competition in your local newspaper: 'Our Local Community is in need of change! Tell us how your community should be improved and we will print the best article.' Write your article (120-180 words).

The Poundbury Master Plan

Dorset is a county full of history and natural beauty.

The Duchy of Cornwall has owned land here since 1342, and like many towns in the southwest, Dorchester has gradually expanded, although it is still one of the smallest county towns in England.

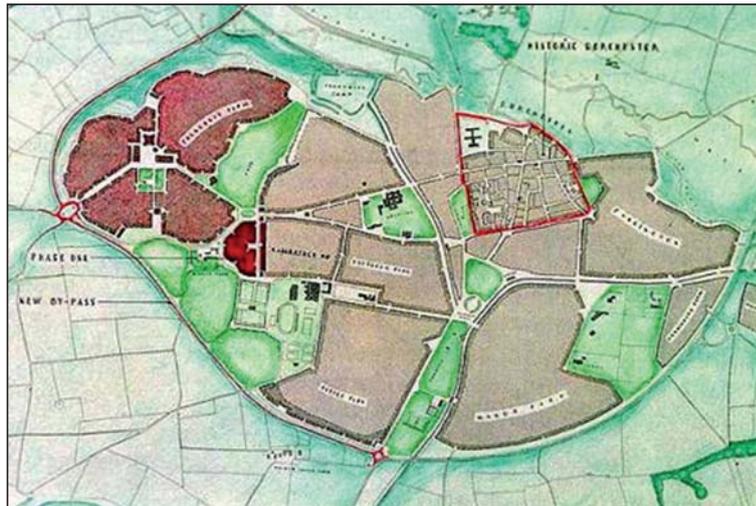
The Prince of Wales was determined

to make Poundbury an urban, rather than suburban extension to the existing town, by meeting the demands of the 21st century and at the same time maintaining past traditions.

In 1988 The Prince of Wales appointed the architect and urban planner Leon Krier to prepare the overall development concept. Krier is well known in Europe and America for his excellent traditional urban design. This time the challenge was to create an independent new extension to the town within the context of traditional Dorset architecture. In 1989, the Master Plan was presented at the Planning Weekend attended by the Prince of Wales. It divided Poundbury into four distinctive quarters and construction of the first phase was started in October 1993. Each quarter includes traditional characteristics of the English townscape and many houses are situated in mews, lanes, squares and courtyards which all relate to each other and create interesting spaces.

Poundbury is not just about architecture. It is a high density urban area which is also an attractive, modern and pleasant place to live, work, shop and play in. Emphasis is placed on the quality of design and materials, landscaping, and attention to detail. A feature of Britain's industrial past was that factories were traditionally located far from housing, whereas nowadays the service sector and high technology industries provide much of the employment in Dorset, which can happily co-exist with residential areas, thus reducing work travel time.

People come first in Poundbury, where creating a thriving community is the number one priority. Poundbury architecture is unashamedly traditional and takes full advantage of local Dorset materials like stone and slate. Larger commercial centres are to be found on the edge of town for easy access and are designed to create a kind of perimeter which conceals car parks and any unsightly equipment. Council houses count for 20% of the total housing in Poundbury which has adopted the unique policy of making them the same as private houses so that they mingle perfectly in the same area. Landscaped courtyards provide parking space as well as playrooms and workshops, which satisfy the demand for flexible living arrangements and allow people to work from home. Poundbury demonstrates that it is possible to build high quality, traditional housing at affordable prices, and provide new factory and office premises at competitive terms within the context of a completely different urban design.



GLOSSARY

townscape: *paesaggio urbano*

mews: *antiche scuderie*

lanes: *vicoli*

thriving: *prospera, fiorente*

slate: *ardesia*

unashamedly: *senza vergogna*

premises: *locali*

MORE ABOUT...

A **'duchy'** is a territory ruled by a duke or duchess. There are two royal duchies in England, the Duchy of Lancaster and the Duchy of Cornwall. The Duchy of Lancaster belongs to the sovereign whilst the Duchy of Cornwall belongs to the sovereign's heir, Charles, Prince of Wales.

READING COMPREHENSION

1 Read the text and answer the following questions.

- 1 What was the challenge Krier had to face in designing Poundbury Master Plan?
- 2 What advantages does the layout of Poundbury ensure?
- 3 What does Poundbury demonstrate?
- 4 How is the traditional English townscape reflected in each quarter?

VOCABULARY

2 Complete the following questions and answers.

- 1 Who _____ the Prince of Wales appoint to _____ Poundbury development _____ 1988?
He _____ Leon Krier.
- 2 How many _____ was Poundbury _____ into?
It was divided into _____ distinctive _____.
- 3 Where _____ factories located in the _____?
Factories were traditionally _____ far from _____.
- 4 What _____ of materials have _____ used?
Local _____ materials like stone and _____.

EXAM PRACTICE – WRITTEN EXAM

- 3 A** Write a short essay (150-200 words) comparing Italian houses with American and British ones. You should include both what they have in common and their differences.