



**COUNTRYSIDE**

Places People Love

## Countryside 'Homeowner's Guide'

(Version 5 – July 2019)



### 1. Introduction

**Countryside welcomes you to the web based Homeowner's Guide.**

The **Homeowner's Guide** has been specifically designed to complement your **Homeowner's Pack/USB** (which would have been handed to you on the day of legal completion) by providing you with additional or more detailed general "Homeowner" information and guidance. Together the "**Pack/USB**" and the "**Guide**" aim to provide comprehensive information that you need to know about your property, as well as some local information relating to your development and the surrounding area.

Both the "**Pack/USB**" and the "**Guide**" also contain details about your warranty and provide contact numbers for both day-to-day issues and for emergencies should they occur. Information is provided in the **Homeowner's Pack** of the design and construction details of your specific property together with some advice on how best to look after and maintain it. Additionally, the relevant manufacturers' instruction manuals (e.g. cooker, freezer, boiler etc.) are all contained within your **Homeowner's Pack wallet**.

Both the "**Pack/USB**" and the "**Guide**" also provide information to help raise your awareness to safety related items, we therefore advise you to read them both through carefully, referring back to them should any questions or queries arise in the future.

It is intended that this document will be updated as changes require, ensuring that you have access to the most current guidance and information relevant to your new home.

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### 3. Countryside Customer Service Teams

Countryside aims to provide our customers with exceptional places to live, work and enjoy with quality new homes supported by the best possible service. Customer Satisfaction is a main priority with our Customer Service Teams who take responsibility for resolving any after-sale problems should they occur with your new home.

If you do have a problem, please put your concerns in writing via e-mail. This will enable us to maintain your correspondence in your specific plot file for any future reference that may be required by the team.

Please refer to your Homeowners Pack/USB for contact details of your specific Countryside Customer Service Team.

#### **Southern Region**

Countryside  
Customer Service Team – Customer Service Department  
Countryside House  
The Drive  
Brentwood  
Essex  
CM13 3AT

Telephone: 01277 260000

**Emergency Helpline: 0345 245 8260**

#### **Northern Region**

Countryside  
Customer Service Team – Customer Service Department  
Countryside House  
301 Bridgewater Place  
Birchwood Park  
Birchwood  
Warrington  
WA3 6XG

Telephone: 0845 601 8352

**Emergency Helpline: 0845 149 0203**

For other contact information (specific to your development), please see the 'Useful Numbers' section of your **Homeowner's Pack**.

## 4. Your Warranty Information

Following the legal completion of your property and for a period lasting two years, Countryside will rectify free of charge:

- Any component failure in the structure/fabric of your new home occurring as a result of faulty materials
- Any defect resulting from faulty workmanship during the construction process.

From the date of legal completion/handover, for a full ten year period, the NHBC provides a structural warranty which gives insurance cover as follows:

- Major damage to the structure caused by non-compliance to the NHBC technical requirements
- Major damage caused by subsidence, settlement or heave of the subsoil
- Certain other items caused by non-compliance

For further details of the NHBC scheme and cover, you are advised to refer to your Buildmark document, as supplied by the NHBC and enclosed in your Homeowner's Pack.

### 4.1 The First Two Years of Ownership

As stated above, Countryside will remedy defects, free of charge, in materials and workmanship for a two year period, starting from the date of legal completion of your home.

If you have a problem you must report this in writing via e-mail any defect that is noticed as soon as possible after it has appeared, if you fail to do so it may mean that requests for remedial work could be delayed or refused. Add in photos to be sent where can. An authorised Countryside Customer Service Operative or a specialist (appointed by Countryside) must carry out any agreed remedial works during this two year period.

Countryside have provided you with a home built to rigorous standards and quality, but we would like to remind you that the finish of your new home is to a level of which an average craftsman is expected to achieve. Countryside will not be responsible for certain cosmetic matters, for example small cracks caused by shrinkage.

Items replaced under warranty are to be free from any manufacturing defects until the expiry of the original two year warranty, and any change of ownership/private letting of your home will not affect this warranty applying.

### 4.2 Items that are Covered as part of the Two Year Warranty

The following is not a full list of the items covered by the NHBC warranty (this would be too lengthy) but aims to provide some guidance to the types of defects covered. If you feel you have an issue that falls into these areas, you are recommended to report your concerns (as described earlier in this document) to the relevant Customer Service Team.

- All plumbing installation included as part of the standard construction of the home - this covers taps, pipes, pumps, valves, sanitary ware, central heating components etc.
- Defects arising with doors and windows that can be found to result from a manufacturing defect or to that of bad installation (excluding scratched glazing panels unless reported on the day of legal completion and noted on the Legal Completion). Refer to section 6.8 (Glazing) in 'Taking Care of your Home'

- Electrical wiring and components supplied (excluding light bulbs, transformers, kitchen extractor fans and appliances) during construction, and which are an integral part of your home (excluding components supplied by yourself following legal completion)
- Defects to kitchen units which arise during normal use, but not for damage reported after the legal completion date (or misuse)
- Problems with any part of the guttering or drainage, which cause drains to overflow and/or gutters to become ineffective (excluding blocked drains due to the homeowner's fault e.g. blockages caused by fatty substances being put down the drain, or blocked/overflowing guttering caused by leaves and other debris that have not been cleared as part of household maintenance). **If a request is made to Countryside to resolve such a problem, you may be charged for any costs incurred**
- Defective or loose roof coverings (excluding any damage caused by severe weather e.g. excessively high winds)
- Cracks (over 4mm in width) to internal walls. Cracks less than 4mm will be classed as being natural shrinkage, you are therefore advised to remedy these after a few months as part of the course of normal re-decoration
- Mortar cracking that is excessive or cracks in bricks, but this does not include single cracks which can occasionally happen
- Issues with garden walls, where settlement has taken place

### 4.3 Items that are Covered for One Year Only

Certain appliances may only be supplied with a one-year guarantee, the cover for these appliances is provided direct from the manufacturer check with your manufacturer's documentation and contact details provided in your Homeowner's Pack. Remember to also check the appliance manuals for any registration forms that you may need to fill in and return to the manufacturers to validate any relevant warranties. If you experience difficulty in obtaining the response required, please contact the relevant Customer Service Team.

### 4.4 Items Not Covered

Your new home will have been designed and built to high standards. Note that Countryside or the manufacturer of components utilised in the home, cannot be held responsible for modifications made by the homeowner to the property which leads to problems or defects.

Countryside does not accept responsibility or liability in association with the following items:

- Normal wear and tear
- Damage caused by accidents or done on purpose
- Any form of misuse
- Deterioration or damage caused either by a result of neglect by the homeowner or by not undertaking normal maintenance
- Normal condensation and/or dampness
- Cracks arising from shrinkage (that are less than 4mm)
- Adverse effects on the home resulting from alterations/extensions being made to your home after the legal completion date.
- Costs/expenses incurred by the homeowner to fix a defect which has not been formally reported to and then approved by the Countryside Customer Service Manager
- Loss of enjoyment, inconvenience, distress or any other consequential loss suffered as a result of remedial works being progressed. (The proviso is that this work has been carried out with the intention of causing the minimum, reasonable disruption to the homeowner).
- Professional fees entered into by the homeowner in respect of a defect, other than those reasonably incurred with the express written consent of the Countryside Customer Service Manager

- Costs incurred by Countryside resulting from a call-out to attend defects created by the installation (which has taken place after legal completion) of a substandard product/fixture and not having been installed by Countryside or one of their agents. These costs may be charged back to the homeowner.

#### **4.5 The Warranty Guidelines**

To ensure that Warranty repairs will be quickly and efficiently carried out it is recommended that you follow the guidance set out below:

- Report defects in writing to the relevant Countryside Customer Service Team as quickly as possible, N.B. minor defects corrected early could prevent further problems occurring and future personal inconvenience
- Homeowners should ensure that sufficient insurance cover for the loss or damage of personal items/belongings, property, etc. has been obtained
- Check sections 4.3 & 4.4 to confirm items covered or not covered

#### **4.6 The Structural Warranty for Years 3-10**

This aspect of the cover is provided direct from the NHBC and is available to the customer from the end of the two-year warranty period for a further eight years, thereby bringing the total cover to ten years. The details of the NHBC Buildmark Warranty will have been provided to you via your conveyancer/solicitor.

#### **4.7 Countryside Emergency Helpline**

Our continued commitment to our customers means we have set up an out-of-hours emergency helpline that is active for the first two years following legal completion. Please refer to your Homeowners Pack/USB for contact details.

Prior to contacting the out-of-hours service please refer to the following section 4.8.

#### **4.8 Emergency Situations**

If the need arises to send someone to your home because of one of the situations listed below, we will try to be in attendance as soon as possible.

- Water Supply (a complete loss), firstly it is recommended that you check with the water supply company to confirm that the supply has not been deliberately turned off in order to proceed with maintenance or repairs, you could also check with a neighbour.
- Water Leaks, when they cannot be contained and are therefore causing damage to your home and/or other properties, or if water is affecting electrical equipment or cabling
- Heating and Hot Water, a complete failure of the heating/hot water system between the months of October and April (both inclusive)
- Power Supply (total loss), when there is a lack of power supply to the socket outlets (only considered as an emergency when there is a total loss throughout the property) which could not be rectified by the resetting of the master trip switch. You will have been informed of the master trip switch location during your Home Demonstration. It is recommended that you check with the electricity supplier that they have not

- isolated the mains supply in order to carry out repair work, or that there is a local power failure currently in place, you could also check with a neighbour
- Power Supply (partial loss), if a loss is only partial it will only be considered as an emergency when there is a potential safety hazard such as in lighting for a communal area such as a hallway
  - Faulty Locks, a faulty door or window lock causing a loss of security to your home
  - Roofs, the majority of roof problems will be classified as non-urgent
  - Dangerous Walls/Fences, these are classed as non-urgent unless they are considered to be dangerous to persons or to property

**N.B. Dripping Taps and Overflows are not considered as emergency situations. Call-outs to non-emergency situations could result in charges being sent to you.**

#### **4.9 Non-Emergency Situations**

- Power Failure - when there is only partial power loss to your home, e.g. some power sockets are working but not all
- Heating & Hot Water, a complete failure of your heating/hot water system between the months of May and September (both inclusive)

## 5. Advice on Rental & Covenants

### 5.1 Rental Advice

**If you have tenants in your property then it is recommended that your tenants read the information contained in this Homeowner's Guide and Homeowner's Pack in order that they can familiarise themselves with all maintenance instructions and any related safety information. Always ensure that you inform your tenant of any designated car parking space(s) and highlight the importance of not using other people's designated parking spaces.**

Consider taking out some form of maintenance contract as, from our experience, tenanted properties can suffer from some form of neglect especially from a maintenance perspective. Countryside cannot therefore be held responsible for any damage caused by failing to follow manufacturers' recommendations or instructions; this can result in a significantly reduced life-span for some types of fixtures & fittings.

Please note that should you decide to rent out your property, Countryside will only take instructions regarding any problems/defects arising from the original owner of the property and not via any agencies or tenants. Also, the 'Initial Guarantee Period' does not cover any damage caused by tenants through negligence, damage and poor maintenance. Communication/correspondence thereafter should be between the purchaser (or Managing Agent) and Countryside only, as no contract exists between Countryside and the tenants of your property.

You are recommended to employ a reputable letting agent to handle the responsibility for your property and tenants. As part of the handover process of your property, all the equipment/features would have been demonstrated to you. If you therefore intend to rent out your property, it is your responsibility (or the Managing Agent's) to carry out any additional demonstrations (to tenants) of equipment and features relating to your property. Additionally, the location of communal items such as refuse arrangements or facilities etc. should be explained.

The purchaser could incur a charge from Countryside for defects reported within the 2-year warranty period that result from a misuse of equipment or from a lack of understanding of how they should be used. Therefore, in order to avoid this situation, it is paramount that any potential tenant has a thorough understanding of the property before they take occupation. Ensure that you inform the Managing Agent of the tenants' names, their start date and of your correspondence address, this information is key in support of any service charges that may apply.

In situations when you have employed the services of a Letting Agent please ensure that you also provide them with a copy of this section of the document, re-iterating the importance of advising the Managing Agent of new tenants' details as/when they take occupation. Your Letting Agent should be advised that they require the property owners written authorisation before any keys can be issued. Proof of identity will be required (note that business cards should not be accepted). The provision for ground rent and any associated service charges will remain the responsibility of the property owner.

### 5.2 Covenant Advice

Explanation, that the transfer of your new home contains positive and restrictive Covenants, will have been provided to you during the purchasing process by your solicitor. Covenants are legally binding provisions (to not do or to do something) e.g. no caravans/boats allowed on the drive or a requirement to maintain a specific boundary wall or fence.

Occupiers benefit from Covenants being imposed in the Transfer, as they ensure that the development maintains its originally planned design and appearance. Additionally, it is to avoid individual owners carrying out an act which may adversely affect (or have an impact) on his/her neighbours. When/if a Covenant is breached by a neighbour, to which you object, then you are entitled to take action as is deemed reasonable and necessary in the circumstances. However, note that Countryside will not be held responsible for the enforcement of Covenants. If you have a query about an application to remove a Restrictive Covenant (that applies to the Contract of Sale of your property) then please contact your solicitor to contact our solicitor / legal team who will provide you with the details of current application requirements and the associated fees.

### **5.3 Approval for Alterations & Extensions to the Property**

Prior approval from Countryside is required if you intend to alter or extend your property within ten years of its purchase. The Approval is not generally refused in situations where the design of the proposed alteration/extension remains in keeping with the design of the existing property, development and the immediate surroundings. Therefore, generally speaking, extensions should be designed with pitched roofs and external materials/finishes should blend or match with those of the property. Design of the fenestration should match the existing in terms of proportions, materials, colours and any relevant patterns of glazing details.

### **5.4 How to Apply for Approval**

Should you wish to obtain Countryside' approval for an alteration or extension, please email, providing full details (refer to section 5.5) to the relevant Countryside Division/contact points, as listed in your Homeowners Pack.

### **5.5 Some Examples of Alterations & Extensions**

#### **5.5.1 For Extensions, Conservatories, Garages or Car Ports**

Application must be made in writing, together with two copies of relevant drawings, plus a cheque for the sum of one hundred pounds (£100.00) inclusive of VAT. The cheque should be made payable to Countryside. Upon approval, one copy (of one of the drawings) will be stamped and then returned to you, Countryside will then retain the other copy on file. If your application is refused, Countryside will provide you with notification of the reason why, however you will be given an opportunity for resubmission and assessment of your amended application (this will be done at no extra charge).

#### **5.5.2 Fences and High Walls**

A fence or high wall to the front or side of the property where visible will require permission as detailed in 5.5.1 (inclusive of relevant drawings and fees).

#### **5.5.3 Additional Parking and Driveways**

If you require to create further off road parking by extending the width of the driveway on your property (in order to accommodate further vehicles), then this will also require permission as set out in 5.5.1 (inclusive of the relevant drawings and fee).

**Depending upon the works you intend to carry out to the property, you may also need to obtain planning permission and/or building regulation consent from the local authority. You are strongly advised to always check this out.**

## **5.6 Some Examples of Items which Require the Removal of a Restrictive Covenant on your Property**

### **5.6.1 Windows and Doors**

Any replacement windows or front doors should match the existing ones in both colour and their design.

### **5.6.2 Fences and Sheds**

Additions (minor ones) such as fences and sheds do require the permission of Countryside, however a rough sketch detailing the size and positioning of the fence or shed will be classed as sufficient detail.

### **5.6.3 External Aerials and Satellite Dishes**

A restriction applies on the erection of both television aerials and satellite receivers, on any part of the property which is visible from the development and applies to equipment that may cause interference and spoil enjoyment of the aspects of the surrounding development.

### **5.6.4 Estate Agent's Sales Boards**

If you decide to sell your home, you should note that the erection of 'For Sale' boards is not permitted; you should therefore ensure that your Estate Agent is fully aware of this.

### **5.6.5 Retrospective Permissions/Approvals**

If approvals for any of the above additions or alterations are not obtained, then you may experience delays and difficulties if/when you try sell your property. Retrospective permission from Countryside will need to be obtained in the same methods as outlined above, however the fee will be two hundred pounds (£200.00) inclusive of VAT in these cases.

## 6. 'Taking Care of Your New Home'

### 6.1 Moisture Arising from the Construction of your New Home

Newly constructed homes need gentle acclimatisation for the first few months of their life to enable them to dry out gradually. Therefore, you should note that when you move into your new home, moisture has already been absorbed by the building materials during construction and they will now be present. This moisture may not be able to be felt and it will not cause you any harm, but it does require a slow evaporation period, this is aided by being ventilated away. Evaporation (at a slow rate) will significantly help to minimise any potential cracking that is due to shrinkage. Keeping your home at a reasonably even temperature at all times, during the drying out period, will certainly help this to be achieved. Heating should at first be used sparingly, so that the building structure gently warms up and then gradually dries out.

The evaporating moisture should simultaneously be ventilated away, this will help to avoid problems with both dampness and condensation. The drying out process should be assisted by leaving windows and trickle vents open wherever/whenever possible and by utilisation of your home's heating system. Failure to acclimatise your property correctly could lead to some damage to finishes, materials and certain fittings. It should be noted that Countryside cannot be held responsible for damage of this type to your property.

### 6.2 Moisture Arising During Occupation

Steam and/or water vapour form condensation, which reverts back into water droplets on its contact with a cold surface. Persistent condensation can cause damage to wall coverings, ceilings, floor coverings, decorative aspects, bedding and clothing (and other aspects of the home itself). When the building materials have fully dried out, the current standards of insulation should ensure that you no longer experience problems with condensation. However, some normal daily activities (e.g. showers, baths, cooking and washing can produce an abundant amount of water vapour, which can lead to condensation within the home. The following guidance is aimed to help minimise these risks, specifically during the period that the home is drying out.

### 6.3 Helping Reducing Moisture Production

Heating, at a low level, is recommended to be maintained at all times during the drying out period of your new home. Even after this period is over, it is still recommended to provide a reasonable/moderate level of background heating throughout your home. Adequate ventilation is required in order to reduce the moisture that has been produced in your home. It should be noted that at times when the outside temperature is at freezing point, condensation can still take place on the inside of a double glazed window. If this occurs, then it is an indicator that the humidity of the property is too high. The following points should be noted:

- Newly built properties need to be ventilated considerably more than older properties with drying out times extending to twelve months or more, this also applies to alterations or extensions
- Brand new windows are significantly more airtight than older windows, therefore the requirement for sufficient ventilation is key to aid reducing moisture
- Air trapped behind thick/heavy close fitting curtains becomes cold and moist, this creates condensation on the window pane. To help with this trickle vents are fitted to provide background ventilation, ensure these stay open during the drying out period
- Problems with moisture increase with the lowering of room temperatures and decrease when the temperature is raised. Thereby a brief reduction in temperature at night can produce condensation on windows

## **6.4 Movement & Shrinkage in your Home**

Building materials do shrink as a result of the drying out process, specifically as the home becomes heated and occupied. This in turn, may then lead to small cracks appearing in certain materials around the home, it must be noted that these cracks are not the result of structural defects. The drying out duration depends upon adoption of the guidance described in the previous sections (refer 6.1 to 6.3) but on average this should take about 12 to 16 months. Any minor shrinkage cracks should be left for this period of time and then rectified with a suitable filler (available from most DIY stores). Some cracks may re-occur, due to continual movements, they can be filled/covered over once more as part of the normal cycle of home redecoration. Minor cracks almost inevitably appear; however, they are not classed as defects, therefore Countryside is not responsible for rectifying them.

### **6.4.1 Ironmongery**

External and internal ironmongery will normally have been treated with coats of clear hard lacquer. Abrasive cleaners and metal polishes should not be used to clean this ironmongery as this will almost certainly remove, or cause damage, to the lacquer. Protective lacquer can be damaged by contact with hard objects and is prone to wear and tear resulting from contact with keys and jewellery. This external ironmongery coating will (in most cases) break down after a certain period of time because of the effect of everyday atmospheric conditions.

### **6.4.2. Internal Doors**

Certain doors to your property may be fire doors (as per Building Regulations), they form part of your home's fire protection measures, therefore you must not disconnect any door closers nor prop doors open with door stops/wedges, or damage/remove any smoke seals.

Internal doors can be cleaned as necessary by wiping with a damp cloth, using polish is not recommended. Check and tighten the grub screws securing handles at least once per year.

### **6.4.3 Lubrication of Windows and Doors**

There are many items within your new property that will benefit from regular lubrication. Specifically, it is recommended that window hinges, door hinges, door closures and all latches are regularly lubricated to help keep the mechanisms in good working condition by using a proprietary lubricant.

### **6.4.4. Internal Fixings**

When securing mirrors, hooks, rails or hanging pictures, utmost care must be taken so as not to disturb any electric cabling, water pipes or gas pipes that may lie beneath the surface of the wall. Countryside strongly recommend that a suitable cable detector is utilised before drilling/screwing/puncturing the wall. Generally, plasterboard should be able to bear the weight of pictures and other light items by use of steel picture hooks or appropriate wall anchors.

### **6.4.5. Window Cleaning**

Conservatories should never be used as platforms for cleaning any of your homes upper floor windows or surfaces. It is recommended that you use a specialist contractor for the exterior cleaning of windows etc.

#### **6.4.6. Redecoration**

Countryside recommend that before redecorating your home you wait at least between 12- 16 months. This is to ensure the drying out process is complete. If paint is applied too soon it may crack as moisture in the construction material evaporates. In these circumstances Countryside cannot be held responsible for any damage to decorative materials which have been applied prior to the recommended timescales.

#### **6.5. Fitted Kitchen**

##### **6.5.1 Kitchen Appliances**

Information for the operation, maintenance and full details of the manufacturers' warranties can be found in the manufacturers' appliance manuals and documents enclosed with your Homeowner's Pack.

##### **6.5.2 Stainless Steel fittings**

Stainless steel fittings/accessories such as sinks, extractor hoods etc., should be cleaned with standard but non-abrasive household cleaners.

##### **6.5.3 Melamine Worktops & Splashbacks**

Abrasive cleaning agents, paint stripper/thinners, white spirit, nail varnish remover, acetone or any other similar chemical must not be used for cleaning melamine surfaces.

##### **6.5.4 Granite Worktops**

Granite worktops are robust, but care should still be taken. You are therefore recommended to always use saucepan or pot stands/trivets to help protect the surface and to wipe up spills immediately to avoid stains occurring. We recommend surface tops should be cleaned with warm soapy water and then polished with a dry soft cloth. Abrasive cleaning materials, bleaches, and chlorine based cleaning substances, alkalis (caustic soda), acids (e.g. spirits of salt) and any strong i.e. concentrated disinfectants should all be avoided at all times as surface damage is likely to take place. Chopping boards should be used for cutting or chopping food, you should never cut up food or other items directly on the surface of the granite worktop.

#### **6.6 Sanitaryware**

The following points and advice should be noted with regard to the sanitaryware in your new home:

- On the day of legal completion all sanitaryware must be checked by the homeowner, if there are any scratches, cracks or damage identified then this must be noted on the legal completion form
- The appropriate cleaning product must be used on baths (avoid abrasive materials in all circumstances) to avoid any damage or scratching. If acrylic baths (or basins/shower trays) have been fitted then you are advised to clean them regularly to help stop deposits building up, which in turn make the acrylic surface increasingly more difficult to maintain and keep clean
- Showers and shower trays are recommended to be cleaned with a soft damp cloth prior to their initial first use, this will help remove any dust or protective substances, it should then be wiped dry. Glass shower screens should only be cleaned with a

recommended proprietary glass cleaner (always avoid abrasive cleaners). Following each use, your shower enclosure and fittings should be wiped down and the shower tray cleaned with hot soapy water, before wiping it dry. Metal parts should also be polished with glass cleaner or a concentrated solution of vinegar and water may be used to remove any stubborn deposits of limescale. The area affected should be rinsed and dried afterwards. A regular clean of the shower tray and exposed part of the waste trap is recommended to help maintain effective drainage. Washing of the shower walls with a soft cloth and a mild detergent solution, in accordance with manufacturer's instructions is recommended (once again you are reminded not to use cream/abrasive cleaners)

- Bathroom fittings should be cleaned with a diluted solution of washing up liquid and then dried and polished with a soft cloth. It is not recommended that you use cream/abrasive cleaners, or any scouring products and care should be taken to avoid surface scratching as corrosion may result
- WCs can utilise bleach in the bowl part of the WC but this (or other strong cleaning compounds) must never be left overnight or mixed with different cleaners, as they can together produce toxic/poisonous gases. You must not put bleach products in the cistern otherwise damage could occur to the internal components
- Ceramic tiles require little maintenance except in areas where there might be a high use, e.g. showers (see above)
- It is recommended (at a minimum of three month intervals) a check is carried out for loose or damaged tiles and any missing grout. These should be replaced as required
- As a general guide household chemicals e.g. household bleach (except in the WC bowl), paint strippers/thinners, nail varnish remover, perfumes, aftershaves, hairsprays and strong disinfectants can potentially cause damage and therefore should not be allowed to come into contact with your sanitaryware

## **6.8 Glazing**

All windows must be checked on the day of legal completion by the homeowner and any scratches/damage reported and noted on your legal completion. Any window scratches reported after this time will not be the responsibility of Countryside Properties.

## **6.9 Mastic**

All mastic should be inspected at regular intervals (recommended minimum six monthly), and if found to be damaged or missing, replace where necessary.

## **6.10 Garden Care**

### **6.10.1 Turf that is Newly Laid**

Where appropriate, front gardens may have already been turfed for you. Alternatively, you also may have organised the turfing of your rear garden. In both of these cases please remember that all newly laid turf is a very delicate and fragile material and will certainly require looking after:

- You should avoid walking on newly laid turf until it has firmly rooted into the soil underneath (for turf to become established it takes around four weeks)
- The turf should be regularly watered as it will be prone to drying out and shrinkage
- In times of low rainfall, the new turf will require watering as a minimum twice weekly or more in very hot dry weather
- Do not cut the grass shorter than one inch for the first few months as this may cause "scorching" of the turf
- Dependent upon the weather conditions, undulations may appear in the newly laid turf because of the settling and shrinkage of the topsoil underneath

- Standard treatment is to top dress the turf with grass seed and peat, followed by fertilisation of the lawn

### **6.10.2 Fungi (Toadstools and Mushrooms) growing in Turf**

It is common for various forms of fungi to appear in turf, fields, parkland, woodlands and in most places containing any decaying plant and tree matter. The main reason for mushrooms and toadstools growing in turf is that there is an abundance of decaying plant matter ('thatch') on the surface of the turf which lead to damp and mouldy environments which are ideally suited for fungi to germinate and grow. Decaying plant matter should be removed using a rake which will also aerate the grass helping it to dry out and therefore rendering it difficult for fungi to grow.

### **6.10.3 Garden Water Conservation**

When planning your garden, to reduce water wastage, water saving ideas can be incorporated, e.g.:

- Installation of a water butt (for watering the garden and indoor plants)
- Use of mulch mats below bark chips (helps by reducing water evaporation)
- Lining hanging baskets and planters with polythene
- Choosing shrubs and plants that are tolerant to dry conditions

## 7. The Services & Systems of Your New Home

Your new home's systems will need to be maintained regularly, following the manufacturer's guidelines and recommendations. If this advice is not followed then neglect of carrying out regular maintenance could mean that the equipment warranties and/or guarantees are invalidated. The key contact numbers for these services will have been provided to you within your Homeowner's Pack.

### 7.1 Your Electricity supply - IMPORTANT

**Remember that, although electricity is taken for granted as part of everyday life, it can be highly dangerous and can kill. Some key points to be aware of:**

- The electricity supply enters your home through a cable into the electricity meter, both the cable and the meter are the property of your electricity company and must never be interfered with.
- All other cables and equipment within your house are your sole responsibility
- Wires from the electricity meter enter the consumer unit which contains the on/off switch controlling the main supply of electricity to your new home.
- The consumer unit also consists of a number of circuit breakers/trip switches, the function of these are to provide protection to the individual wiring circuits within your home.
- The circuit breakers/trip switches are sensitive pieces of equipment, and in instances such as light bulbs blowing, or electrical appliances suddenly becoming faulty, can result in the circuit breakers tripping
- The individual circuit breakers will have been labelled with the description of the circuits/equipment that they protect and control
- Electrically operated smoke detectors will also have been fitted to your new home. Incorporated within these smoke detectors is the provision of a battery back-up in case there is a mains electrical power failure
- A sound (continual bleep) will be generated from the smoke detector in cases of battery failure. If this occurs the batteries should be replaced with new ones as soon as possible. If the smoke detector continues to bleep this may indicate a buildup of dust in, around or on the smoke sensor, vacuuming the dust from the sensor can usually cure this problem
- Kitchens are provided with fused connection units, socket outlets and isolators to kitchen appliances. Kitchen power supplies have been installed to serve the following items: dishwashers, washing machines, fridges, etc., these are controlled by the kitchen appliance control panel (a switched fused connection unit located above the kitchen worktop). The kitchen fan is controlled by the cooker hood switch
- Bathrooms - fans come on automatically with the light switch and can be switched off by a local wall mounted switch. It is normal for these fans to run for a period of time after the light has been switched off. Bathrooms are provided with shaver sockets.

### 7.2 Some Key Points to Note

- Always ensure that you isolate (switch off) the mains supply on the consumer unit before embarking upon any work to any of the electric circuits
- Electrical appliances must be unplugged before working on them
- Always follow the manufacturer's guidelines and instructions
- The correct amperage wiring for an appliance must always be used
- The correct amperage fuse for appliance plugs must always be used
- Do not exceed the manufacturer's recommended maximum lamp wattage
- Any special electric shaver points are only for the use of electric shavers
- Do not take electric fires, hair dryers or other electrical appliances into the bathroom

- Do not attempt to dismantle any electrical equipment unless you are a suitably qualified electrician or electrical engineer
- Familiarise yourself with how to reset the trip switch (in the consumer unit)
- Maintain a battery operated lamp/torch alongside the consumer unit for use in emergencies

**HEALTH & SAFETY FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS IS PARAMOUNT, IF YOU DO NOT KNOW, OR ARE UNSURE HOW TO DO A JOB, REGARDLESS OF HOW SMALL IT MAY APPEAR, YOU MUST CALL A QUALIFIED ELECTRICIAN. IT MUST ALSO BE NOTED THAT ANY MODIFICATIONS/ALTERATIONS TO THE ELECTRICAL INSTALLATION OF YOUR PROPERTY WILL INVALIDATE YOUR WARRANTY AS PROVIDED**

### **7.3 What to do if there is Complete Power Failure**

- Firstly, check with the electrical supplier that the supply has not been turned off by them to carry out any repairs or maintenance. Contact details for your supplier may be found at the top of a recent electricity bill. N.B. the number may also be found in your Homeowner's Pack (as long as you have not changed your service provider/supplier)
- A blown fuse could have caused the power failure by causing the consumer unit to trip the master switch (located on the consumer unit). In order to identify a blown fuse, firstly remove all plugs from sockets, secondly reset the master trip switch and then, one by one replace all plugs into the sockets, the faulty appliance/plug will become obvious when the trip switch trips out again. Once this has been established replace the correct amperage fuse into the plug, reset the trip and plug the appliance back into the socket
- If you have carried out the above two steps, and the power supply is still off, either (in office hours) contact the relevant Customer Care Team, or (out of office hours) contact the emergency service provider as previously detailed.

### **7.4 What to do if there is a Partial Power Failure**

- If there has been a partial loss to some socket outlets, carry out the steps above and following these checks, if there still no supply then contact the relevant Customer Care Team
- In case of bad reception from your satellite system or a loss of signal to the television aerial outlet, contact your supplier such as Sky, NTL. If it is not relating to this (during office hours) contact the relevant Customer Care Team, if it is out of hours, then contact the emergency service provider as previously detailed.
- If your smoke alarm continues to make a bleeping noise (as outlined in section 7.1) this normally means that the backup battery needs replacement. If the problem still persists after replacing the battery, then contact the relevant Customer Care Team
- If the garage light is not working when it is switched on, check the isolator and/or trip switch located in the property to ensure that it is switched on. If the problem persists (after confirming switched on) then contact the relevant Customer Care Team
- If the extractor fan in the bathroom is not working, locate the isolator switch outside of the bathroom and confirm that it is switched on, if it is, and is still not working, then contact relevant Customer Care Team

### **7.5 Your Gas Supply**

Mains gas is supplied to your home via pipes, a gas meter and control valve, these can normally be found located on an exterior wall. Meter readings can be read/noted from this point. An earth bonded cable will be found attached to the main pipe coming out of the meter and into your home. Protection of the internal gas pipe work (from accidental contact

with exposed power cables from becoming electrified) is provided by this cable. This earth bonded cable must therefore not be removed.

**If there is concern that there may be a gas leak then it is imperative that you must follow your local gas supplier's emergency procedures. Under these conditions YOU MUST NOT use any electrical appliances (inclusive of light switches).**

## 7.6 Your Water Supply

- Cold mains water is supplied, by your local water company, via an underground service pipe that has a stop valve at the boundary of your property. This stop valve is for the use of the water company in an emergency
- The property is provided with an externally located water meter
- The flow of cold water as it enters your property is controlled by the main stop valve, which is usually located under/within the sink unit, allowing the system to be isolated for maintenance purposes or in an emergency
- Separate stop valves are fitted on the cold water supply pipework serving the hot water installation, making it possible to isolate each section should leaks occur
- Not all properties have a cold water storage tank. This is dependent upon the design of the hot/cold water and heating system
- All stop valves and taps should be operated at least once a year to help maintain them in prime working order

## 7.7 Some Important Points to Remember Regarding your Water Supply

- Your new home's pressurised water system installation must be checked at least annually by a "Gas Safe" register approved plumber, to help maintain efficiency
- In winter months, when you are away from home for more than a day or so, it is advisable to make arrangements for someone to keep an eye on your home in case of leaks due to frozen pipes. Programming the boiler to switch the heating on for a minimum of an hour a day will help to prevent frozen pipes
- If you believe that your water pipes have frozen, you are advised not to run any hot water taps, as this could lead to the hot water cylinder collapsing
- Isolate parts of the system you need to work on by closing the relevant stop valves
- Staining of the bath or basin can arise from continual dripping taps therefore you are advised to get them repaired quickly
- Any external taps should be turned off and drained via the internal stop valve (usually located under the kitchen sink), this should be done before onset of winter
- Identify pipe runs by using a pipe locating device before fixing any carpets or over coverings requiring nailing or screwing
- Your warranty could be at risk of being invalidated if any alterations are made to the plumbing installation at your property
- **A qualified plumber should be called if you are unsure of how to deal with a particular plumbing problem**

## 7.8 Resolving Problems

- If there is a complete loss of mains water supply, then firstly check with your water supply company that the supply has not been turned off by them to either carry out repairs or maintenance. Check also that the main stopcock has not been turned off by another member of the household. If it has not and if it is within office hours contact the relevant Customer Care Team. If it occurs out of office hours, then contact the emergency number provided
- Contact details for your supplier may be found on recent water supply bills. N.B. the number may be found in your Homeowner's Pack (if you have not changed supplier)

- If water is leaking and cannot be contained, (and it is causing damage), and/or likely to reach an electrical fitting then turn off the electricity supply at the mains located on the consumer unit (refer sections 7.1 and 7.2). Locate the stopcock for the mains water supply into the property and turn it off. Contact the relevant Customer Care Team, (if out of office hours contact the emergency service provider as detailed)
- If you experience a blocked foul water drain, (that is causing flooding or overflowing either internally or externally), in office hours contact the relevant Customer Team, outside office hours contact the emergency service provider as previously detailed
- If the outside tap is not working, first check if the stop valve under the sink is turned on (in the on position it runs in a line with the pipe). If found to be on, contact the relevant Customer Care Team
- If the external overflow pipe for the toilet has water coming out of it firstly check that the ball valve is not stuck. If after checking the problem still exists, then contact the relevant Customer Care Team
- In cases of toilets not flushing or appearing to be blocked then in office hours contact the relevant Customer Care Team, or for problems arising out of hours, contact the emergency service provider as previously detailed

### **7.9 Your Waste Water**

Kitchen and bathroom waste water travels via plastic pipework directly into the underground drainage system or into a communal soil stack (this usually runs vertically between properties on several floors). Maintenance responsibility of all fittings and associated waste plumbing is the homeowners. For a localised blockage, seek a competent plumber's advice.

### **7.10 Hot Water & Heating**

Installed in your Countryside home is a central heating system, which utilises hot water which has been heated by a boiler. This water is then pumped through the heating system which is installed throughout your property. Via a pre-set electronic programmer and thermostat, variable on/off, continuous settings and temperature variations for the central heating can be set/controlled. Instructions for the use of your boiler and programmer can be found in your Homeowner's Pack. The boiler is covered by the manufacturer's warranty and, in common with any gas appliance, will require regular maintenance thereafter to ensure safe and efficient operation. The operating manual for the system will be found enclosed in your Homeowner's Pack and we **strongly recommend** that it is read carefully.

Pressurised systems supply water directly from the mains supply to the boiler. In this instance there is usually no need for a tank or pipework in the loft, this therefore minimises the risk of freezing pipes in times of extremely cold weather.

### **7.11 Some Important Points to Note:**

- Never obstruct the boiler flue
- If signs of corrosion or a leak appears have it checked by an expert
- Help avoid freezing pipes by not leaving your property without heating for more than a day or so in the winter period, (therefore consider programming the central heating system to operate for at least an hour a day)
- All pressurised systems should be serviced annually by a "Gas Safe" registered plumber, you should never attempt to service it yourself
- Faults in any of the electrical parts of the heating system should be repaired by an approved plumber/electrician
- The valves at the top of radiators should not be painted over, these are bleed valves which allow the release of trapped air from the radiator
- The initial 2-year warranty arrangement covers your new home's central heating system. However, the cover does not extend to any routine servicing requirements, therefore we advise you take out a service care plan for your heating system

- **Servicing of your central heating system annually, is considered to be the minimum requirement, if this is not carried out your manufacturer's warranty may be invalidated.**

### 7.12 Resolving Problems

- If you experience complete failure of the central heating and/or hot water system, then firstly check that the failure is not caused by any local supply of electricity or gas or from the programming of on/off times (refer to the boiler information and/or instruction booklet). If the problem has occurred within office hours, then please contact the relevant Customer Care Team. If out of office hours, then contact the emergency service provider (as previously detailed). **It should be noted that cover may apply for a period of 12 months only for this item**
- If the immersion heater is not working then check that the spur switch (usually located in the cylinder cupboard) is switched on, if it is on and the problem still exists then please contact the relevant Customer Care Team
- If the external overflow pipe (for the central heating) is running water, then please contact the relevant Customer Care Team. **It should be noted that cover may apply for a period of 12 months only for this related item**

### 7.13 The Radiators

The heating within your home is provided via radiators fed by the boiler (where fitted). The radiators have been set and pre-balanced in accordance with your central heating system's design/instructions. However, you may on occasion notice that a radiator is failing to heat up. A build-up of air pressure can be the cause of this, and this problem can usually be overcome by releasing the trapped air. This is achieved by (a competent individual) turning the valve in the top corner of the radiator with one of the supplied radiator keys. If a radiator is removed for, say, decoration purposes, both valves should be turned to the off position and the radiator drained into a suitable container. **Please check your Homeowners Pack for more information.**

### 7.14 Ventilation

Electric fan units provide the extraction required to both the bathroom and cloakroom areas. These are operated via the light switch and manual wall controller. If any of these units stop functioning, then switch off the unit at the local isolator and seek advice from a suitably qualified appliance service engineer. **You must not try to dismantle any electrical equipment, unless you are a suitably qualified electrician or electrical engineer. Please check your Homeowners Pack for more information.**

### 7.15 Your Television

Aerial sockets for your TV will have been installed in your home in accordance with the design specification. These are connected via coaxial cable ready for the provision and connection of an internal aerial in the loft (within houses) by an aerial installer. You should remember that the erection of an external aerial may be subject to local authority and/or Countryside' permissions and control. These restrictions are intended to prevent the detrimental impact of multiple aerials on the external appearance of developments for the benefit of all residents. Within flatted developments a communal aerial will be provided connected via an aerial feed into an aerial socket in your home. **Please check your Homeowners Pack for more information.**

### 7.16 Communications Services (e.g. Telephone & Broadband)

Your new home already has the facility for your British Telecom line. To set up the initial telephone services, please make contact with British Telecom - Telephone: 0800 800 150, it should be noted that **connection charges may be applicable.**

## 8. 'Important Health & Safety Information'

### 8.1 Safety on Site

Following on from taking ownership and familiarisation with your new home and environment, it is very important to note that you may still be living on a “live” working construction site. Very quickly you may seem to have settled in, and when the development has been completed you will barely remember that you were at one time living amid building activity. Until such time and the construction works have completely finished Countryside would like you to take very careful note of this section and to be prepared to take several sensible precautions in the interest of your safety and those around you.

- Countryside considers the Health & Safety of its employees and customers of paramount importance and will have made every effort to ensure that the area of the development in which you live, is safe for you specifically, whilst it is still undergoing construction activities
- Safety inspections will take place on a regular basis to ensure that the appropriate level of safety is maintained. In the interests of safety, we would strongly suggest that you do all you can personally to minimise and reduce the chances of injury or damage to yourself, others and your personal property
- It is important to note that construction sites can be both dirty and noisy. This can be the result of the need to provide access for site related traffic e.g. heavy plant, cranes and machinery. It is therefore inevitable that there will be times when both the movement of building materials and construction activities could lead to minor inconveniences to yourself. Therefore, we would like to offer our apologies and can confirm that we will always try to keep you updated should anything be programmed which may possibly affect you in some way
- Please note that it is your responsibility to ensure your family, friends and visitors, (particularly children), are all aware of the potential dangers of living/visiting on a building site. Children (and adults) should not wander around sites unsupervised. Pets must also be kept under supervision, or, ideally, kept indoors until the site is safe
- Ensure that you and any of your visitor's park only in the allocated/designated areas to avoid causing an obstruction to roads being used by site construction traffic
- Additionally, there may be areas of your development which are still under construction and fenced off. Access to all such areas is strictly prohibited
- From previous experience we know that building developments have always acted as a magnet to children, who will treat them like an adventure playground. In reality every year, irrespective of all the measures taken by developers, accidents and damage can, and do, happen with children being injured, or even killed, by misadventure on building sites. **DO ALL YOU POSSIBLY CAN TO PREVENT AND AVOID YOUR CHILDREN/FAMILY BEING ADDED TO THESE TERRIBLE STATISTICS**

### 8.2 Prevention of Fire

All new homes which Countryside build are fitted with fire detection alarms that emit sound in instances when a fire has been detected. These detectors are powered by mains electricity but have a battery back-up facility. The units should be tested regularly following the manufacturers' guidelines and instructions, with the batteries being replaced as required, and/or in line with manufacturers' recommendations.

Fire Doors (where fitted) consist of special seals and self-closing mechanisms that form an integral part of their functionality in the event of a fire breaking out. These doorways must

therefore remain unobstructed with doors in the closed position. This is especially relevant at night when occupants may be sleeping. The removal of self closing hinges could mean that your home insurance is invalidated in the event of a fire.

### **8.3 Electrical Safety**

Before contemplating or making any changes to the electrical installations within your new home you need to be made aware that, for your own health and safety, restrictions exist as to what you may do, prescribed by covenants contained in the Purchase Contract and government legislation (in force from 1 January 2005). A leaflet explaining the regulations, 'New Rules for Electrical Safety in the Home', produced by the Department for Communities & Local Government, can be viewed online at [www.communities.gov.uk/electricalsafety](http://www.communities.gov.uk/electricalsafety) or alternatively obtained from your local authority.

### **8.4 Useful Contact Numbers**

Local numbers covering amenities such as; Doctors, Hospitals, Pharmacies, Opticians, Schools, Local authorities, and taxis etc. will be found in the relevant Appendix of your specific Homeowner's Pack.