

New Homes Standards

Technical Information Note 06/2015

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Contents

1. Introduction
2. National Technical Standards 2015
3. Home Quality Mark
4. Further Information
5. References

This information Note aims to inform LI members on the current situation linked to the winding down of the Code for Sustainable Homes and the development of National Technical Standards in England and Wales.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Code for Sustainable Homes was introduced by Government in 2007 as the national standard for the sustainable design and construction of new homes. The Code aimed to reduce carbon emissions and promote higher standards of sustainable design above the minimum standards required by Building Regulations.
- 1.2 The content and need for the Code were reviewed and consulted upon as part of the Government's Housing Standards Review (The Review). In 2015, The Review concluded that the multitude of local and national standards was over-complex and there was some unhelpful duplication in the many guidance documents and Local Plan requirements. The Review therefore recommended that essential standards such as access, security, energy, water, and waste were consolidated at a national level into Building Regulations and that Internal Space requirements were specified at a national level within Planning Practice Guidance. These new and amended standards were termed the National Technical Standards.
- 1.3 The Review's recommendations were implemented in March 2015 through amendments to the Climate Change Act 2008 and the Deregulation Act 2015, requiring Local Planning Authorities to specify the new National Technical Standards within their planning policies. This included the winding down of the Code with a legacy period to permit current planning and funding requirements to be met.

2. National Technical Standards, 2015

- 2.1 These include the following:
 - New mandatory security requirements for doors and windows within Building Regulations (Building Regulations 2010 - Part Q: Security, 2015 Edition)
 - New optional higher standards of accessibility within Building Regulations where the local plan identifies a local need for housing for elderly or wheelchair users except where the site topography or flooding risk prohibits step free access. (Building Regulations 2010 - Part M: Access to and use of buildings, 2015 Edition) *
 - New optional higher standards of water efficiency within Building Regulations in areas facing water shortages. This will be equivalent to Code For Sustainable Homes Level 3-4 (Building Regulations 2010 - Part G: Sanitation, hot water safety and water efficiency, 2015 Edition) *
 - New optional national internal space standards incorporated into the local plan where there is an established local need, where it is viable in terms of land supply and affordability and where there is a reasonable transitional period following adoption of a new policy to enable developers to factor the cost into future land acquisitions. *
 - Clarification of waste storage design and access requirements within Building Regulations to ensure that they are considered in every new housing development (Building Regulations 2010, Part H, Drainage and Waste Disposal, 2015 Edition)
 - Setting energy efficiency targets within Building Regulations at a level equivalent to Code

for Sustainable Homes Level 4. Local Authorities will not be able to require higher overall home energy targets.

* Planning authorities may opt into the optional higher technical standards within their local plan, where they have demonstrated that local need exists and related local plan policies are justified and viable. The optional requirement only applies where a condition that the dwelling should meet the optional requirement is imposed as part of the process of granting planning permission.

3. Home Quality Mark

3.1 BRE estimates that approximately 30% of the content of the Code for Sustainable Homes will be incorporated the New Technical Standards and Planning Policy and is therefore developing its own environmental labelling system, similar to appliance labelling, termed the 'Homes Quality Mark.'

3.2 The Mark is being developed to enable consumers to evaluate and drive demand for greener homes, for house builders to demonstrate their environmental credentials and by housing associations to specify the quality of the homes that they require. Homes built to the Mark, will be independently evaluated by licensed BRE Global assessors.

3.3 The Home Quality Mark will use a simple 5-star rating to demonstrate the performance of the new home over 3 broad categories and clearly set out the results in a way that the consumer can easily understand. The 3 categories will be:

- Knowledge Sharing
- Our Surroundings
- My Home

3.4 'Knowledge Sharing' promotes good processes and ensures that the performance gap between what is designed and what is built is minimized. This will be achieved through rewarding:

- Effective project management and engagement between the design team and constructors
- Training of site operatives
- Managing waste, water and energy usage throughout the construction process
- Testing, commissioning and monitoring strategies for new homes to ensure that everything is working as designed
- Homeowner support and guidance on operation of new home

3.5 'Surroundings' promotes homes that respond to their existing and future context. This will

be achieved through rewarding:

- A survey of land condition (contamination, flood risk, security, privacy, nuisance), water, electrical, drainage and sewage infrastructure and landscape and ecological value
- Engaging with community and local bodies
- Creation of homes which fit in with local character and near to public spaces
- Maximising external space for occupants without compromising on internal space
- Providing access to digital infrastructure, allowing for home-working
- Access to public transport and cycle and car parking provision
- Ensuring resilience of home and neighbourhood to flooding
- Designs which take account of the relationship of home to street and public realm, ensuring that these areas are secure, overlooked, well lit and design-out hiding places and unused space
- Protection and maintenance of natural features during construction works and in-perpetuity
- Appointment of experts to determine existing site value, opportunities for enhancement of site and local area where appropriate

3.6 'My Home' promotes homes that are built to ensure they provide spaces that are healthy to live in but also don't cost the earth. This will be achieved through rewarding a home that provides:

- Adequate air quality and controllable ventilation as appropriate to the season without compromising the cost of heating
- Access to light and easily controllable artificial light where needed
- Layout and construction that minimizes noise from the surrounding area
- Reduced energy usage, pollution and CO2 output and controls which optimize efficiency of home
- Cost effective and appropriate renewable energy sources
- Insulation and minimising the risk of overheating
- Specification of durable products and materials with low environmental impact, sustainably sourced with full consideration of the life cycle costs.
- Resilience to environmental damage, flood and wear and tear

- Efficient use of water, recycling where appropriate and monitors for leaks
- Accessible living and storage space which is adaptable to meet owners changing needs

3.7 In addition to an overall 5 star rating of performance based on the full set of issues covered, the Home Quality Mark will also include a set of more focused indicators to draw out the value of the scheme to occupiers. The following example indicates how these indicators might be presented in the final scheme:



(Image Courtesy BRE, used by permission)

3.8 The Mark was formally launched to the house building industry on 3rd March 2015 at Ecobuild. The scheme will be operational from October 2015. Full technical guidance on how the Home Quality Mark works will be released for consultation in summer 2015.

4. Further information

4.1 For further information go to www.homequalitymark.com or contact Linda McKeown, BRE email: mckeownl@bre.co.uk. Tel 07772228768.

5. References

- <http://www.homequalitymark.com>
- <http://www.slideshare.net/HomeQualityMark/bre-homes-quality-mark>
- <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/housing-optional-technical-standards/>
- <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/>
- <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>

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