

The future of sustainable housing: creating a new standard

Industry workshops – October & November 2014

About the workshops

In October and November 2014, BRE conducted a series of workshops related to the development of a consumer-focused standard for new housing in the UK. The intention of the new standard is to encourage ongoing sustainability, in light of the Government's intention to wind down the Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH).

Assessors, local authorities, developers, designers and architects were invited to the workshops to gather insights from a variety of professional backgrounds involved with developing housing, in order to help shape the direction of the new standard. These workshops follow on from a consultation conducted in May 2014 (click [here](#) for summary).

Other workshops with housebuyers and tenants are being held towards the end of 2014, and the outcomes from these events will be considered alongside these industry findings.



Overview of consultation responses

Over 75 people attended and contributed to the workshops which consisted of exercises that posed questions relating to:

- drivers for a voluntary standard
- support needed from BRE
- topic issues that should be included in the new standard
- ways to demonstrate value and ideas for what it should be called.

Feedback was collected from group discussions and feedback forms collected at the end of the sessions.

Summary of responses

While discussion was broad, a number of recurring themes emerged relating to what the scheme should include, how it should be delivered and what challenges need overcoming:

- Effective marketing appropriate for target audience (e.g. through branding)
- Promote tangible benefits to consumers and developers, including cost (e.g. reduced bills)
- Long-term vision for the scheme, supported by education and maintenance
- Differentiation from other housing
- Quality
- Balance simplicity and flexibility
- Maintain a genuine drive to push the sustainability standards
- Align with other BRE schemes and standards of sustainability that are already well known (e.g. EPCs)

The need for **effective marketing** was a prominent theme throughout the workshops. Respondents frequently noted that BREEAM/Code is largely unknown to consumers and as the new standard is consumer-centred, a recognisable branded product needs to be established. Linked with this were the suggestions that the **tangible benefits** (e.g. reduced flood risk, lower energy bills) of using the new standard need to be effectively illustrated; particularly in terms of **value** and **quality** compared with other homes. This re-iterates what was found during the summer consultation.

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Promoting a **meaningful drive for sustainability** in housing was identified as a main challenge. Some suggested it may encourage developers to use the new standard, as a way of setting themselves apart from competitors.

Long-term vision for the scheme was regularly considered. A consistent suggestion was that the new domestic scheme should **align itself** with existing standards of sustainability that are already well known to consumers (e.g. EPCs, EU Energy labelled goods) as well as ensuring compatibility with other BRE schemes (e.g. BREEAM Domestic refurbishment). It was suggested that this would assist in marketing the new standard, and would help to maximise long-term benefits.

Respondents were also asked what issues should be included and excluded from the new standard. Issues most frequently included were **energy, water** and **space**, which are all currently considered in the CSH. Other proposed issues, not covered by the Code, included **overheating**, consideration of **local context** and emphasis of **maintenance** to help occupants get the most out of their home.

Various process and technical improvements were also suggested including: more assessor flexibility, incremental scoring, adaptable credit criteria, improved response time to technical queries, simpler online tools and others.

We wish to thank everyone who contributed to the consultation. While this summary cannot be comprehensive, all comments received have been noted and will be taken into account in the next stage of developing the new standard.

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