

BREEAM Communities

Integrating sustainable design
into masterplanning



What is it?

BREEAM Communities is a way to improve, measure and certify the social, environmental and economic sustainability of large-scale development plans by integrating sustainable design into the masterplanning process.

Who is it for?

The scheme is for developers, masterplanning professionals, local authority planners, local politicians, communities and relevant statutory bodies.

When can it be used?

BREEAM Communities is suitable for developments which are likely to have significant impacts on existing communities, infrastructure or the provision of local services. The scheme can be used for new mixed-use communities, or single-use developments of a significant size. It can also be used on regeneration projects where there are plans for significant change to the urban fabric.

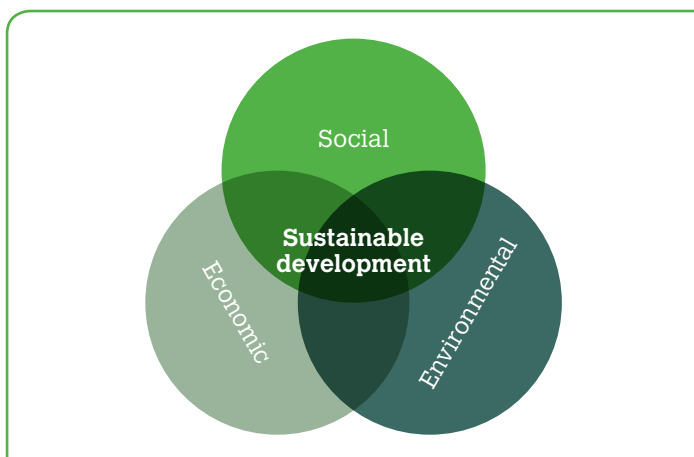
The scheme can be used both internationally and in the UK.

Why use it?

BREEAM Communities helps proposals move smoothly through the planning process by providing a common framework for project stakeholders. The project team, local authority planners, and statutory bodies are prompted to raise issues and integrate sustainable design solutions when there is ample opportunity to influence the masterplan.

By encouraging collaboration early in the process developers can achieve better outcomes for sustainability whilst building consensus with key partners. This can reduce costs by avoiding the need to re-work designs and plans at later stages. BREEAM Communities aligns to the key stages in the planning process and makes use of the studies and strategies normally done for planning.

By extending the established BREEAM methodology to masterplanning, BREEAM Communities provides a credible process to measure the sustainability of development plans.



BREEAM Communities gives equal importance to the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability.



How does it work?

The technical manual covers forty issues – addressing matters like housing provision, transport networks, community facilities, and economic impact – with equal weight given to environmental, social and economic factors. The scheme is designed to be flexible to reflect the unique challenges and opportunities on different development sites.


BREEAM Communities focusses on successfully engaging the community in order to create places which work now and in the future.

A suitably qualified professional will guide a development through the whole process and should be appointed as early as possible. Licensed BREEAM assessors are listed on www.greenbooklive.com.

How does it relate to sustainable building standards?

BREEAM building level schemes require detailed information on issues such as energy, pollution, and occupant health and wellbeing. The assessment criteria in BREEAM Communities consider these issues at the very early stages of design so credits achieved can be used to support and simplify a building level assessment.

Over half of the topics in BREEAM Communities are directly related to building level issues, providing significant value in helping to meet requirements in sustainable design and construction standards.



Case Study: Masthusen, Malmö, Sweden

This mixed-use development is located in the Western Harbour of Malmö, Sweden. The developer, Diligentia, has achieved an interim BREEAM Communities certificate with an 'Excellent' rating for the initial stages of the masterplan. This is the first certified project outside of the UK.

The site will accommodate approximately 700 residential units, 70,000 sq m of office space and 20,000 sq m of retail space.

Historically the land was used for industry, resulting in a lack of green space and wildlife habitats. The developer has committed to providing wildlife habitats and to plant over 90% native or ecologically appropriate species.

The developer, Diligentia, is undertaking another BREEAM Communities assessment on a site near Stockholm.

BREEAM Communities and local authorities

Local authorities play a key role in delivering sustainable communities through planning policy and development management. In some cases they may also be leading the masterplanning process. This method can be initiated by local authorities through planning policy or on council led development projects.

Bristol City Council requires a BREEAM Communities assessment on all 'super major' developments through planning policy (Core Strategy, adopted June 2011). "We wanted to make use of nationally recognised standards in line with the National Planning Policy Framework," says Celia Beeson of Bristol City Council. "Our own checklist made it difficult for case officers to be clear on what the development was actually going to do. The national standards ensure that the development has undergone a credible and transparent process to assess sustainability."

In Belgium, the city of Antwerp and the Flemish region are developing Blue Gate Antwerp - a brownfield site in the south of the city centre - into an eco-effective business park. They are proposing that the potential private partners develop the site according to BREEAM Communities.

What are its benefits?

For Developers

- Offers cost savings by promoting sustainable design from the earliest possible stages.
- Progresses proposals more efficiently through the planning system by involving key stakeholders early in a proactive and collaborative approach.
- Simplifies BREEAM building level assessments, supporting higher ratings.
- Adds value to the development by encouraging the design of places where people will want to live, work and play.
- Presents promotional opportunities using the recognised and trusted BREEAM brand.

For Local Authorities

- Provides an internationally recognised set of outcomes that the planning authority can use to define sustainable development at the neighbourhood scale.
- Clarifies what the development proposal will achieve so a case officer can quickly assess performance against key sustainability objectives.
- Allows local decision-makers and community representatives to quickly understand the proposal's benefits and potential.
- Provides a measurable target for monitoring and reporting against objectives in local authority strategies.

For Masterplanners

- Focuses dialogue between the developer and the local authority, facilitating agreement over what can be achieved on the site.
- Overcomes 'silo working' among design professionals, saving time and costs.
- Provides a level of credibility and transparency to a development proposal.
- Sets a clear framework for community and stakeholder engagement, allowing positive discussion about the benefits of new communities.

"BREEAM Communities is about developers and planners working together to achieve the most sustainable outcomes for major sites. It's a solution to help move projects through the planning system and should be welcomed by everyone with an interest in securing sustainable communities."

Sean Nicholson, Technical Director, WSP

BREEAM Communities is an assessment method that helps professionals design places that people want to live and work in, are good for the environment and are economically successful.

How can it be used internationally?

BREEAM Communities 2012 is available for use anywhere in the world through a simple 'bespoke' assessment process. There are currently developments in Sweden, Norway, Belgium and Turkey undergoing this process, with others expected to follow.

Bespoke criteria tailor the technical manual so that key issues and challenges in the country/region are fully recognised, including:

- location and current use of the development site,
- local climatic conditions (including microclimate and potential impacts from climate change),
- land use pressures,
- local and national planning policies,
- cultural, economic, social and environmental differences that are relevant to masterplanning.

To begin the process of developing bespoke criteria for your international project, please contact us for an application form at breeam@bre.co.uk.

How is it different from earlier versions of the scheme?

BREEAM Communities was initially launched in 2008. The 2012 scheme has been significantly streamlined, simplifying the assessment process for all involved. Based on feedback, BREEAM Communities is less prescriptive, allows greater flexibility for exploiting site specific opportunities, and integrates better with the planning process. Some of the key changes include:

- Better alignment with the masterplanning process including a new three-step process to address the long timescales and potential for phasing on large sites.
- Fewer assessment issues, categories and mandatory requirements.
- Improved integration with building level BREEAM schemes.

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“BREEAM Communities provided us with an ideal opportunity to review how we develop sustainable communities in Sweden. For us, it’s the optimal tool for collaboration between authorities and the developer.”

Anders Nilsson, White Architects

Where can I learn more?

More information, including a video introduction, case studies, and an interactive copy of the technical manual, can be found on our website: www.breeam.org/communities.

We also run training courses throughout the year, including three-day courses for new BREEAM Communities assessors and one-day sessions for planners, consultants or local authority officials who want an overview of the scheme. Full details of all upcoming courses are available at www.breeam.org/training.

Front cover image: Farrells

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