

## A GUIDE TO THE CODE FOR SUSTAINABLE HOMES

Our homes account for around 27% of the UK's carbon emissions, a major cause of climate change. The Department for Communities and Local Government laid the foundations for greener housing when it launched the Code for Sustainable Homes in 2007. Since May 2008 all new homes have been required to have a Code rating and for a Code certificate to be included within the Home Information Pack (HIP).

The minimum standards for compliance with the Code have been set above the current requirements in the Building Regulations covering the use of energy in the home and strategies to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. This will enable it to become the platform for future improvements to the Regulations.

Homes designed to meet the Code are more energy and water efficient, produce fewer carbon emissions and are better for the environment. Code homes also encourage their owners to live a more sustainable lifestyle and are built in a more efficient way, using materials from sustainable sources. This creates less waste and also means Code homes have lower running costs.

The Code sets minimum standards for energy and water use and the rating a home receives depends on how it measures up in nine categories with points assigned to each of the following:

- Energy and CO2 Emissions
- Water
- Materials
- Surface Water Run-off
- Waste
- Pollution
- Health and Wellbeing
- Management
- Ecology

Not all the categories carry the same importance. For example, minimum standards for energy and water efficiency have been set at each of the Code's six levels. House designers must also achieve minimum standards for materials, surface water run-off and waste to achieve Level 1. But there are no minimum standards set for the pollution, health and well-being, management and ecology categories. In practice builders aiming for Level 1 will probably ignore them, and achieving points in these categories will only become a factor when aiming for Level 2 or higher.

Achieving Level 1 for energy and water (a 10% improvement over 2006 Building Regulations) must involve investment in higher thermal insulation, improved fabric air permeability, and the use of flow reducing or aerating taps throughout. But then designers can opt for a higher star rating by improving on the minimum standards for energy and water and by addressing different issues.

To rise to Level 3, a home will need to be 25% more energy efficient compared to Part L 2006. This may require investment in district heating, or low carbon technologies such as solar thermal panels or bio-fuel boilers, dual-flush toilets, and improved surface water and waste management. Extra points can be gained from investment in providing drying space (obviating the need for tumble dryers), providing a room that can be set up as a home office, and the use of more environmentally-sound materials.

Level 6 – the zero-carbon level – will require the use of solar panels, bio-fuel boilers or wind turbines in order to replace entirely the energy taken from the national grid. The additional points to achieve a six-star rating require investment in energy efficient appliances, reduction of surface water run-off, and the application of a site waste-management plan.

Building to the Code can be seen as a mark of quality as well as a legal requirement as the Government pushes for its 2016 zero carbon targets. People are becoming more environmentally conscious and there is a growing appetite amongst consumers for more sustainable products and services including homes that offer reduced environmental impact and lower running costs. Developers can use building to the Code for Sustainable homes as a way to differentiate themselves from their competitors and offer greater appeal to the market.

LABC New Home Warranty have a team of accredited assessors who can provide designers, developers and contractors with advice on how best to achieve the required Code rating. Were appointed our assessors will also issue Interim Code certificates and perform a post-completion check to verify the rating before a Final Certificate is issued.

For further advice please contact Developer Support Services at LABC New Home Warranty ([services@labcnhw.co.uk](mailto:services@labcnhw.co.uk)) or call 0845 054 0505.

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