

CHANGES IN THE DOMESTIC SECTOR

This paper was put together following the CBx breakfast event in May 2015, to summarise the open discussion of what the changes would mean for the industry in terms of Housing Standards, implications to planning regulations and how to deliver energy efficiency by closing the loop.

The domestic sector has experienced numerous changes in government regulated polices and standards within the last few months. Between the event in May and the general election, many of the alterations which architects, developers and clients were trying to adapt to and incorporate into their planning and development process have already changed. While it would appear that the government is backing away from long-term policies that support renewable and low carbon industries, is the industry capable of pushing sustainability through into best practice regardless of lack of regulation?

“Despite the changes to planning policies aimed at simplifying the process of housing standards and planning applications, the recent rapid changes have instead added confusion to the process, all the while misplacing focus on the true raison d’être of creating sustainable homes in line with national targets.”.

- Emma Bleach, CBx

Key Findings:

- In March 2015, the Housing Standards Review (HSR), a process to deregulate and simplify the planning process, concluded. At the same time, a ministerial statement saw the withdrawal of the Code for Sustainable Homes apart from within the management of legacy cases.
- Of the 34 Code for Sustainable Homes issues, only 12 have remained in either Building Regulation or planning policy; and these are not regulated to the same previous extent.
- Additional technical standards are to be introduced including the Space Standard and planners will have the ability to enforce further technical standards via building control for both access and water consumption. However issues such as overheating, sunlight, and climate resilience etc have not been addressed and a lack of regulations or review will lead to increased inefficiencies and a worsening perception of new homes.
- In July 2015, a governmental productivity plan was published, withdrawing allowable solutions and the Zero Carbon Homes target. Whilst there had previously been concerns over whether “zero carbon” was achievable; concerns over the impact of these homes on lowering total UK emissions; and concerns about the exceptions of small site developments, the industry thought the targets were achievable and has spent eight years preparing for this ambitious policy move.
- Emphasis has been placed on voluntary standards to compensate for the lack of binding regulation. BRE have launched a voluntary Home Quality Mark (HQM) for new housing which aims to clearly indicate the



overall expected costs, health & wellbeing benefits and environmental footprint associated with living in the home. As with all voluntary schemes, it is not clear how effective the HQM will be in ensuring increased sustainability within the domestic sector but it might act as a useful benchmarking tool.

- Furthermore, the industry is calling for increased attention to closing the loop through reviewing occupant behaviour and building performance. By performing post occupancy evaluation, it is hoped that a greater understanding of what currently works and what does not might help inform future regulations, building practises and end user guides.

FULL REPORT:

<http://cbxchange.org/knowledge/white-paper-changes-in-the-domestic-sector-2/>

MORE INFORMATION:

www.cbxchange.org

@CBxchange