

# Planning for sustainable design and construction

## Interim Guidance

Guidance produced to assist developers in addressing sustainability implications in planning applications.



## Introduction

1. This guidance has been produced to assist developers in addressing sustainability implications in planning applications. It includes a checklist of matters to be addressed before applications are submitted. Braintree District Council is a signatory to the Nottingham Declaration which acknowledges the increasing impact that climate change will have on our community during the 21st century and commits the Council to tackling the causes and effects of a changing climate on the District. This is reinforced by the objectives and targets of the Braintree District Council Sustainable Energy Strategy. Achieving more sustainable design and construction will make a significant contribution to this. See [www.est.org.uk/housingbuildingslocalauthorities/NottinghamDeclaration](http://www.est.org.uk/housingbuildingslocalauthorities/NottinghamDeclaration)

2. Environmental sustainability can be addressed in 2 ways:
- 1) By the geographic location of new development - which in Braintree's case has been established through the Braintree District Local Plan Review 2005; and
  - 2) By minimising the environmental impact of developments, through careful attention to design and construction methods, as well as the longer term occupational needs of a building.

This guidance seeks to secure environmental benefits on sites where the principle of development is considered acceptable.

3. The first General Development Principle of the Braintree District Local Plan Review 2005 is that all new development should be sustainable. The Local Plan Review contains a number of policies that seek to ensure that the use of natural resources is minimised, not only during the construction phase of development, but throughout its operational lifetime and this guidance flows from them, in order to clarify the Council's requirements.
4. A checklist can be found within this document which must be completed for all developments and it provides a framework

for writing a Sustainable Design and Construction summary. Therefore this document also acts as a benchmark against which the local planning authority can assess how environmentally sustainable a development is.

5. It applies to all planning applications that require a Design and Access statement. The Council also expects these to include a Sustainable Design and Construction summary.
6. Proposals that are considered to fall within the 'major' development category, i.e. 10 dwellings or more, and commercial and retail developments over 1000m<sup>2</sup> floor area should be subjected to an EcoHomes or relevant BREEAM assessment. They should achieve a VERY GOOD rating. Similar standards will be applied to mixed-use developments.

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## Sustainable Development Policy

### National Policy

7. Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (PPS1) sets out national policy on the delivery of sustainable development. It states that sustainable development is the core principle underpinning the land use planning system.
8. Planning Policy Statement 3(PPS3): Housing states "Local Planning Authorities should encourage applicants to bring forward sustainable and environmentally friendly new housing developments, including affordable housing developments and in doing so should reflect the approach set out in the forthcoming PPS on climate change, including the Code for Sustainable Homes".
9. Planning Policy Statement 22: Renewable Energy (PPS22) and its companion guide seek to ensure that the development of renewable energy, alongside improvements in energy efficiency make a vital contribution to the Government's aim of cutting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 60% by 2050.
10. Bearing in mind the Energy White Paper target of generating 10% of UK electricity from renewable energy sources by 2010 and 20% by

2020, it is imperative that Braintree District Council actively promotes energy efficiency and renewable energy generation as part of its planning function. PPS22 states that local planning authorities and developers should consider the opportunity for incorporating renewable energy projects in all new developments.

11. Flooding has been a particular problem in parts of Braintree District in recent years. Planning Policy Guidance note 25: Development and Flood Risk (PPG25) seeks to reduce developments that are harmful in this respect and encourage sustainable urban drainage techniques that can also be of wildlife benefit. The planning system must also promote water efficiency, which is particularly pertinent bearing in mind that Essex imports 50% of its water resources in the summer months.

## Regional Policy

12. The Draft East of England Plan (Go-East December 2006) is based on the principles of sustainable development with Policies ENG1 and ENG2 setting out the requirements for energy efficiency and renewable energy in new developments.

## Local Policy

13. The key policies within the Local Plan Review that actively support and aim to promote sustainable development in line with Government Planning Policy are:
  - RLP9 - Design and Layout of Housing and Mixed Use Areas
  - RLP65 - External Lighting
  - RLP69 - Sustainable Drainage
  - RLP70 - Water Efficiency
  - RLP73 - Waste Minimisation
  - RLP74 - Provision of Space for Recycling
  - RLP76 - Renewable Energy
  - RLP77 - Energy Efficiency
  - RLP90 - Layout and Design of Development
14. Criterion 3 of RLP 9 requires housing and mixed-use developments to incorporate measures to maximise energy and water efficiency, provide sustainable drainage systems, minimise waste, and incorporate facilities which assist recycling, enhance and create wildlife habitats, and promote sustainable forms of transport. Policy RLP90 largely reflects these requirements for all types

of development, with the other policies elaborating upon their specific subject area.

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## Policy Implementation

15. This guidance has been produced to assist with the implementation of the approved policies and set out the standards that will be sought. In particular the Council will be seeking to ensure that:
  - a minimum of 10% of energy requirements for certain developments is provided from renewable resources on site
  - housing developments of 10 units or more achieve a very good Ecohomes rating
  - commercial developments to achieve a very good BREEAM rating

Guidance has also been included within Essex County Council's draft Urban Place Supplement (UPS) to the Essex Design Guide. See [www.the-edi.co.uk](http://www.the-edi.co.uk)
16. Local planning authorities will in many cases also seek new housing developments to follow the Government's voluntary Code for Sustainable Homes when launched (likely to be Spring 2007).

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## EcoHomes

17. EcoHomes assesses the environmental performance of residential developments and gives them a rating from Pass through to Excellent. The Housing Corporation requires all new schemes funded by them to meet EcoHomes Very Good standard.
18. On 13th December 2006 the Government launched a new Code for Sustainable Homes. The Code will replace EcoHomes for new homes in England from 15th April 2007 and will run as a fully functional scheme from April 2008. This guidance will be updated in March 2007 and reflect the new code. Further details of the Code can be found at [www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/code\\_for\\_sus\\_homes.pdf](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/code_for_sus_homes.pdf).
19. Benefits of EcoHomes include demonstrating:
  - Sustainability credentials to local planning authorities to make the passage of planning applications smoother;
  - Green credentials to investors who seek to minimise risk and to increase the appeal to ethical investors;

- Superior environmental design to customers resulting in reduced running costs through greater energy and water efficiency;
  - Healthy comfortable and flexible internal environments;
  - Easy access to local amenities with less dependence on the motorcar.
20. EcoHomes considers the broad environmental concerns of climate change, resource use and impact on wildlife and balances these against the need for a high quality of life and safe and healthy internal environment. A fuller explanation of the BRE EcoHomes assessment can be found at [www.ecohomes.org](http://www.ecohomes.org)
21. Braintree District Council requires all housing developments of ten units or more to meet an EcoHomes VERY GOOD rating and expects the credit Pol 4 to be achieved, which relates to renewable and low emission energy sources. This is in addition to any gains of energy efficiency from compliance with Part L of the Building Regulations.
22. Pol 4 can be awarded where at least 10% of total energy demand for a development is supplied from local renewable sources. An excellent guide on how to achieve this 10% target has been produced by the Energy Saving Trust entitled Meeting the 10 per cent target for renewable energy in housing - a guide for developers and planners (2006 Edition), this can be viewed on their website [www.est.org.uk/housingbuildings](http://www.est.org.uk/housingbuildings).

23. On completion of a SAP or relevant assessment to determine the energy needs of a building, applicants may well find that a simple solar hot water system is all that is required in order to meet this requirement. In addition renewable energy measures do not necessarily have to be applied to all units in order to meet the 10% requirement.

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## BREEAM

23. The Building Research Establishment has developed an environmental assessment method (BREEAM) for each type of commercial development. It is considered appropriate that such an assessment should be carried out for developments of over 1000m<sup>2</sup> of floor area. Again at least a VERY GOOD rating should be achieved, with the relevant renewable energy credit being achieved. Assessments under BREEAM take into account many issues that EcoHomes covers as well as looking at facilities management. As there is a different assessment type for each form of development it is not appropriate to go into detail here, but information can be found at [www.breeam.org](http://www.breeam.org).

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## The Checklist

24. The Sustainable Design and Construction checklist should be completed for all developments that require a Design and Access Statement. It should be submitted with a sustainability summary for which it provides a framework. The sustainability summary is expected to form part of the Design and Access Statement.
25. The checklist is divided into different subject areas (based on EcoHomes) under which are a series of questions. It is intended to assist developers to take account of sustainability at the design stage, to ensure that environmental features are not just an afterthought, but an integral part of the development project.

