

BRIEFING NOTE:

The Code for Sustainable Homes

The Government must compel private developers to meet the same environmental standards as housing associations

The National Housing Federation represents 1300 independent, not-for-profit housing associations in England and is the voice of affordable housing. Our members provide two million affordable homes for five million people.

Housing associations already have high eco-standards

Housing associations have already been building their homes to high environmental standards - over 90% met the Eco Homes 'very good' standard in 2007. Now the standard will be even higher. As from 1 April 2008, housing associations have been required to reduce carbon emissions by 25 percent in all new homes.

We welcome the challenge. Eco homes cut both carbon emissions and fuel bills - with 20 percent of housing association residents living on just £80 a week, high energy efficiency standards are vital.

Lion Court
25 Procter Street
London WC1V 6NY

Tel: 020 7067 1010
Fax: 020 7067 1011

Email: info@housing.org.uk
Website: www.housing.org.uk

The Code for Sustainable Homes

To help meet its CO₂ targets, the Government launched the Code for Sustainable Homes in 2006, setting new environmental standards for house building. The Code measures the sustainability of a home against nine categories - energy/CO₂, pollution, water, health and well-being, materials, management, surface water run-off, ecology and waste.

The Code uses stars to communicate the overall sustainability performance - from one to six stars. The overall rating is on the 'whole home' as a complete package.

It is proposed that all new homes will eventually have a Code rating (much like the energy efficiency rating on domestic appliances). The theory is that consumers will put pressure on private house builders to build to a higher standard.

All homes built with grant are now required to cut carbon emissions by 25 percent over current standards in line with Level 3 of the Code. From 2011 we will be cutting emissions by 44 percent in line with Level 4 of the Code, and by 2015 it is intended that all housing association homes will meet Level 6 of the Code (the toughest level), meaning they will be zero-carbon.

One timetable for housing associations, another for private developers

We are concerned, however, that the Government is not asking private developers to begin cutting emissions until 2010. They will then be working to a slower timetable towards zero-carbon housing than housing associations.

Table 1: Carbon emission reductions timetables for housing associations and private developers

Code Level	Housing associations comply by	It is proposed private developers comply by
3 (25% CO ₂ reduction)	2008	2010
4 (44% CO ₂ reduction)	2011	2013
6 (zero-carbon)	2015	2016

Find out more about our 'Green Homes Now!' campaign at www.housing.org.uk/greenhomes

Lower standards for private developers are holding back housing associations and the green technology industry

With three-quarters of the house building industry lagging behind, the cost of green technology will remain high. Supply chains and materials will remain expensive until the whole construction industry is kick-started into action.

Housing associations are being used as guinea pigs. We build our homes for people on lower incomes, and can least afford the extra cost of being pioneers. Private developers, with a later timetable, will reap profits from our efforts.

Impact on the environment

The National Housing Federation has estimated that over 40m tonnes of carbon will be emitted over the lifetime of new homes built before 2016. Almost 25 percent of this – 9.8m tonnes – could be saved if private developers abided by the same carbon cutting timetable as housing associations. This is equivalent to 12m passenger flights across the Atlantic.

There is also concern that unless private developers start building greener homes now, the Government will miss its target of zero-carbon housing by 2016. *At present there is simply not a sufficient level of commitment amongst private house builders.*

So what are the extra costs?

According to Housing Corporation, achieving Level 3 on all aspects of the Code will add an extra £5,059¹ to the cost of building a home. The bulk of this is used to reach the Energy/CO₂ target, at £3,692 per home.

What can the Government do?

The Government must review the timetable for the implementation of the Code for Sustainable Homes and compel private developers to build to the same environmental standards as housing associations.

By requiring ALL house builders to meet the same standards at the same time, supply chains could be quickly established and costs reduced across the industry. A buoyant green technology industry would not only benefit the environment but would also help tackle fuel poverty through reduced energy consumption.

Private developers build around 120,000 homes a year – if they committed to Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes right now, each one of these homes would produce 25 per cent less CO₂ in every single year of their existence.

TAKE ACTION! Please write to the Housing Minister, Caroline Flint MP, urging her to compel private developers to build to the same environmental standards and timetable as housing associations

¹ based on homes compliant with the 2006 building regulations