

New Code for Sustainable Homes Technical Guide

As you are no doubt aware Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH) Assessments have become a legislative requirement for all new dwellings built after 1st September 2010. These assessments attach additional time and costs to new housing projects and have had a significant impact on the approach to the design of new houses.

Since the legislation was introduced in September 2009 (for new housing of 5 or more dwellings) and subsequently applied to all new housing from single dwellings upwards from September 2010, the majority of Code Assessments have been registered and assessed under the May 2009 (Version 2) of the CSH Technical Guide. This document sets out the criteria for the various credits which are required to reach the different levels of the Code and thus is the fundamental benchmark on which Code scores are based.

With the increasing focus on sustainable development throughout the UK, other changes affecting the development process have been introduced. In particular, the introduction of an updated version of the Building Regulations in October has brought about a change in the CSH process which has been amended to reflect the new Regulations. As such the BRE and Department of Communities and Local Government have just published the November 2010 version of the Code for Sustainable Homes. The revised Technical Guidance document and accompanying summary of changes are available to download via the following links:

Technical Guidance:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/codeguide>

Summary of Changes:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/codeguidesummary2010>

Impact Assessment:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/codeimpactassessment2010>

Due to the introduction of the New Building Regulations and the alignment of the November 2010 CSH Technical Guide with Part L of this document the process of achieving the required Code Level 3 will become more onerous. This is because the required number of points to achieve Code Level 3 has remained the same as before yet the process of achieving these points made more difficult for the following reasons:

- The Base level for energy improvement under the ENE 1 category has been raised by 25% under the new Building Regulations. Due to the base level of the previous Building Regulations Part L2006 the 31% improvement as previously required scored 6 credits under this issue. However the same improvement would now only result in 1 credit being scored (which equates to an 8% improvement). The Welsh Assembly Government have recently published a Policy Clarification Letter to this effect stating that the developments assessed under the Technical Guide will not be required to score 6 credits / a 31% improvement as stated previously under legislation but rather the new comparable score of 1 credit / an 8% improvement. Whilst the 8% improvement may appear to equate to a 33% improvement under the previous version of the code, from discussions with the

WAG Planning Policy team and also from information contained within the letter it is stated that this is not the case as the allocation of credits above the new base rate means that the new 8% improvement is comparable to the previous 31% improvement. What is clear is it can be safely assumed that 6 credits will not be realistically achievable without significant cost (resulting in a 59% improvement over the NEW Building Regulations which equates to an 84% improvement over the Part L2006 Building Regulations) and as such credits will have to be sought elsewhere within the Code.

Policy Clarification Letter:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/policy/policyclarificationletters/2010/cl0410/?lang=en>

- The ENE 2 category has been altered from a focus on the Heat Loss Parameter (HLP) of buildings to fabric efficiency and the number of credits achievable has been raised from 2 to a range of 3 – 9 credits in order to compensate for the loss of credits under ENE 1. However, schemes assessed under the May 2009 version of the Code tended to score a total of 8 credits under ENE 1 and 2. In order to achieve the same credits under new version of the Technical Guide, the same development would have to score between 7 – 8 credits which is at the top end of the range and likely to be more time consuming and costly.
- The weighting factor for the conversion of credits into points score for the Energy (ENE) and Waste (WAS) categories has been reduced. As such the total points scored across all credit issues within these categories will be reduced.

As a result the introduction of new November 2010 Technical Guide will increase the difficulty in achieving Code Level 3 in what is an already demanding process. However the Department of Communities and Local Government have provided the following statement:

*"It is now possible to register projects against the November 2010 scheme version. **There will be a transition period of one month where registrations are more flexible to allow developments to be registered against the May 2009 scheme version**, where the applicable requirements are met. After this date, all new assessments registered on the online system will be automatically registered against the November 2010 version. However, it will still be possible to manually register against the May 2009 scheme version indefinitely where evidence is provided demonstrating that the development will be assessed under Building Regulations Part L 2006. Transitional registration arrangements are as follows:*

1. Registering New Assessments

Registering against the May 2009 version of the Code:

All new assessments registered between 11/11/2010 and 09/12/2010 using the online reporting system will be registered against the May 2009 version

of the Code by default. After 09/12/2010 evidence must be provided to demonstrate that the development will be assessed under Building Regulations Part L 2006 to register against the May 2009 scheme version."

However please be aware that this may have implications in terms of the SAP Assessments which are required to be undertaken as part of the Code Assessment. This is because the May 2009 version of the CSH Technical Guide requires that SAP 2005 worksheets be used. However if the scheme is registered under the new Building Regulations then SAP 2009 worksheets must be used to comply with Building Regulations. Please see the formal response from the BRE below:

"If the assessment is registered under the May 2009 version of the guidance, the calculation methodology must be carried out in accordance with this version of the guidance therefore SAP 2005 worksheet must be provided and used to complete the calculation regardless of the version of the Buildings Regulations the dwelling is registered to (this may require two sets of SAP calculations to be completed). If an assessment is registered against the November 2010 scheme version, then SAP 2009 must be used to assess against this version of the Code.

If the development you are referring to is registered to adhere to the 2010 building regulations, but registered to the May 2009 version of the guidance, then the client has two options:

1) Continue assessing the development under the May 2009 version of the guidance and producing two sets of SAP calculations. SAP 2005 calculations would be required to assess the development against May 2009 (SAP 2009 cannot be used to assess May 2009 or any previous versions of the Code), and SAP 2009 calculations will be required for the purposes of building control.

2) Alternatively you can re-register your assessment under the November 2010 version of the guidance and in this instance only one set of SAPs would be required and the development would be assessed under the new version of the guidance."

As such, please be advised that if you wish to have a scheme assessed under the May 2009 Version of the Code this will need to be registered with a Licensed Code Assessing Body prior to 9th December 2010. In addition to our competitive and highly successful Planning Service, Asbri Planning also offer a professional and friendly Code for Sustainable Homes Assessment Service which includes sound advice and guidance on how to achieve the Code Level you are seeking. Achieving the Code also requires the expertise and knowledge of a number of other professionals including SAP/Energy Assessors, Ecologists and Engineers. Our team has good working relationships with a number of locally based specialists and can help you to put together a professional team that is best suited to your needs.