

****For Immediate Release****

THE CODE FOR SUSTAINABLE HOME

All is explained by TGR Expert David O'Rorke

What is the Code for Sustainable Homes?

It's an environmental assessment for the design and construction process of new homes, including both apartments and houses. It looks at a range of issues, split into the following categories: energy, water, materials, surface water run off, waste, pollution, health & wellbeing, management and land use & ecology. Credits are awarded for meeting the criteria of each issue and the total credit score is translated to an overall percentage. Depending on the percentage achieved, a rating is achieved, ranging from Code for Sustainable Homes levels 1 to 6. Though be warned that there are mandatory requirements that must be met to achieve each level of the Code.

Why would I want to have a development assessed?

If you're trying to build an environmentally sustainable home, it's a very useful structure around which to consider environmental issues. By setting out best performance benchmarks and prompting design changes needed to meet them it can help guide the design. And once built, the rating demonstrates through a verifiable method that the dwelling achieves a certain standard, which can be used as for marketing. It also acts as an indicator for the direction that legislation is headed. So for an architect to be able to design buildings to a high Code level now, they are likely to have a head start as Building Regulations become more demanding.

Furthermore, since May 2008 it's been compulsory for all new dwellings to achieve a Code rating and include the result in the Home Information Pack. At the moment there is a 'nil' rating that can be downloaded at no cost, so there is no need to actually carry out the assessment. The government has, however, set out a timeline for all dwellings to achieve certain ratings as mandatory.

What's the timeline for making the Code mandatory?

For affordable housing: It's been mandatory to achieve Code level 3 since 2007. From 2010, Level 4 will be mandatory and from 2013 it'll be Level 6.

For private housing: A minimum 'nil' rating has been required since last year. From next year this is scheduled to be Code level 3, level 4 from 2013 and level 6 from 2016/

Whether this schedule is realistic or feasible is another matter... many think that the government may not stick to this timeline.

How do I get a development assessed?

Appoint a Code for Sustainable Homes assessor! There are many out there, though be warned that their level of service may vary greatly: carrying out an assessment is a complex process so find a well experienced assessor - it will make your life much easier. They should then be able to take you through the process.

How long does it take and when should the assessment start?

The earlier an assessor is appointed and starts, the better. Ideally this would happen as early as RIBA stage B, at which point the requirements of the assessment can guide the design. If it's started too late then the design may have progressed to an advanced state from which some of the easiest and cheapest credits can no longer be achieved. The formal assessment then takes place in two stages: (1) a Design Stage review, to be completed once the design is finished and before work starts on site; and (2) a Post Construction Review, to confirm that everything has been complied with in the finished building.

How much is it likely to cost?

There is a compulsory fee for the certification body (either the BRE or Stroma), but because the assessment process is time consuming the major cost will be from the assessor. This will vary depending on the rating to be achieved and also on the number of units under assessment: single units may be very expensive on a per unit basis compared to the economies of scale for larger developments. In addition to these costs, there are likely to be some costs involved with designing and building the development to meet the requirements.

How can I find out more?

There's a huge amount of information available on the internet. The detailed assessment manual can be downloaded for free

from: http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/code_for_sustainable_homes_techguide.pdf

Or sign up for The Green Register's Sustainable Building & Services Course which covers the cover and much more! See www.greenregister.org.uk

About David

On completing an MSc in Environmental Technology with Distinction at Imperial College London, David was employed by the university to manage their contribution to an EC funded project called LEnSE (Methodology Development towards a Label for Environmental, Social and Economic Buildings), helping to develop a trans-European building assessment methodology.

David is now employed at Eight Associates, a team of environmental assessors that specialise in building design and eco-ratings. He has trained as an assessor for BREEAM Offices, BREEAM Industrial, the Code for Sustainable Homes and LEED, and has since been involved in dozens of assessments. These projects have been located around the country and range from large industrial developments to top-end residential refurbishments. This work involves running seminars, providing design advice and helping clients to reach their sustainability goals.

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Notes to Editor:

1. For press information please contact **Mel Woodland** on **0117 3773490** or **mel@greenregister.org.uk** or see the website at www.greenregister.org.uk. If you would like to arrange a press pass for any of our events (see the website) please contact me.
2. Build Up is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England's (HEFCE) Economic Challenge Investment Fund, and has been developed by the university alongside the City of Westminster's Westminster Works program. It is fully supported by industry partners including the Construction Industry Council, RIBA London, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and the Royal Town Planning Institute.
3. TGR has a core of expert trainers available as spokespeople to provide comment/quotes/technical articles on a wide range of green building issues.
4. The Green Register's Sustainable Building & Services course is the UK's longest running sustainable building training course.
5. The Green Register is an independent, not-for-profit company, launched in October 2000 by architectural practice Archipeleco. The organisation was given start-up funding and support by Southwark Building Control and Sustainable Energy Action.