

HOUSING STANDARDS REVIEW (CODE FOR SUSTAINABLE HOMES)

1. BACKGROUND

New Forest District Council seeks to minimise the consequences arising from development on resource and energy consumption. All new development should be built to a standard which minimises the consumption of resources during construction and thereafter in its occupation and use.

Up to now Policy CS4 of the Council's Core Strategy has required that new homes meet requirements in the national Code for Sustainable Homes. This currently requires homes to be built to a Code Level 4 with a planning condition attached to residential permissions.

2. GOVERNMENT STATEMENT

On 25 March 2015 the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government published a statement of policy in relation to Housing standards (this follows the Housing Standards Review which began in 2013 and was completed earlier this year). The Government has now published final details of its proposed way forward. One of these is that the Code for Sustainable Homes has now been formally withdrawn.

Elements of the code will now be incorporated into building regulations, which will be retitled as new "national technical standards" and set at the equivalent of a Code Level 4.

From 1 October 2015, existing Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans, and SPD policies relating to water efficiency, access and internal space will be interpreted by reference to a new national technical standard. For the specific issue of energy performance, amendments to the Planning and Energy Act 2008 will be set out in the Deregulation Bill 2015. This is expected to happen alongside the introduction of the full requirements of a zero carbon homes policy in late 2016.

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Given the immediate withdrawal of the Code for Sustainable Homes it has been decided that New Forest District Council will no longer place a condition on planning permissions for residential development specifying this code requirement. Additionally, existing permissions with a condition specifying a code level can apply to have this varied. Whilst this is technically contrary to our adopted planning policy CS4 there is no point in us pursuing something which has been superseded by new government policy. Such conditions can be removed by way of an application for a non-material minor amendment.

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