

Moving Beyond Decent Homes Standard 2009

Creating the low carbon standard for social housing



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Accord Housing Group
 Birmingham City Council Housing Services
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Government Office for the West Midlands
 Homes & Communities Agency
 West Midlands Regional Assembly
 Sustainability West Midlands
 Tenant Services Authority
 West Midlands Centre for Constructing Excellence (WMCCE)

The case studies and associated costs and performance specifications described in this document are indicative and should only be used as such.



Foreword

The Vision of the Sustainable Housing Partnership (SHAP) is “To provide leadership in Sustainable Housing in the West Midlands by promoting, researching and disseminating best practice in the Environmental Social and Economic aspects of Sustainable Housing”.

In fulfilling this Vision, SHAP continues the excellent work of Sustainability West Midlands which established this as an important regional housing programme in 2006 since when three influential reports on all aspects of Sustainable Housing have been published which are available at www.shap.uk.com

The SHAP report in 2007/2008 showcased examples of best practice in Low Carbon Housing in the UK and Europe and then set targets to enable the West Midlands to meet the Government target that all new housing should be Zero Carbon by 2016.

But it also made a strong recommendation that SHAP should focus on the refurbishment and retrofit of the existing housing stock. This recommendation was enthusiastically adopted by the SHAP partners who then established the 2009 programme of best practice in retrofit.

The SHAP partners recognised that the Decent Homes Standard could be enhanced to establish a new environmental standard for existing housing and this led to the decision to prepare and publish the Beyond Decent Homes Standard. This is designed to be a practical tool for use by social landlords and the SHAP Partners have committed to the inclusion of the Standard in their Development Briefs and Asset Management Strategies, subject to appropriate funding.

Reflecting the partners commitment and SHAP's Objective to “Influence European, National and Regional Sustainable Housing Policies and Strategies” a submission was recently made to the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) Select Committee Inquiry on ‘Beyond Decent Homes: Decent Housing Standards post 2010’ and to the consultation on HM Government's Definition of Zero Carbon Homes.

I should like to thank the invaluable financial contribution of the Project Partners, the input and guidance of the Steering Group and participants in the Technical Workshop who are listed in the Appendices, Paul Sutton of South Shropshire Housing Association, who chaired the Technical Workshops and John Sharpe whose invaluable contribution has continued to make SHAP a success.

Finally, I should like to record our thanks to Nick Dodd and Charlie Baker from URBED and Ellie Horwitch-Smith from Faithful+Gould for their expertise in producing the Standard.

Alan Yates

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Introduction

The Beyond Decent Homes Standard is designed to set social housing on a course to support delivery of the UK's Low Carbon Transition Plan in which the Government expects the domestic sector to deliver a greater share of emissions reductions, of at least 29% on 2008 levels by 2020, with proposals that all homes undergo a 'whole house package' of improvements by 2030.

But it is about more than just carbon reduction. It is about continuing the drive for improvement started by the Decent Homes programme. Whilst substantial modernisation has taken place, new priorities mean that the 'thermal comfort' criteria no longer goes far enough. Never intended to be more than a minimum performance standard it has meant that opportunities may have been missed to comprehensively tackle fuel poverty.

This new Standard seeks to provide genuine equality of living standards for all social housing tenants. It aims to bridge the gap between modern social housing – some of the most energy efficient in the country – and the wider stock – still containing some of the poorest performing in the country.

It also seeks to capture the wider benefits of investment, not just for tenants and their landlords, but also the construction industry as it gears itself up to deliver a low carbon transition in the wider housing stock. This is because social

housing is in the best position to deliver greater carbon reductions, earlier and at lower cost.

Setting the Standard

The Standard looks to achieve stretch targets ahead of national commitments for carbon reduction, to be achieved in three stages linked to Energy Performance Certificate ratings::

Stage 1: Minimum Standard

All stock to achieve a minimum 42% reduction on 1990 levels by 2016 (SAP 75, Energy Performance Certificate rating C);

Stage 2: Work in progress

Asset management plans to achieve the 2025 target (Step 3) to be in place and substantial initial progress to have been made by 2020;

Stage 3: Approaching completion

Over 90% of stock to have achieved a minimum 80% reduction on 1990 levels by 2025 (SAP 85, Energy Performance Certificate rating B).



Timeline for interventions to improve the housing stock to EPC B

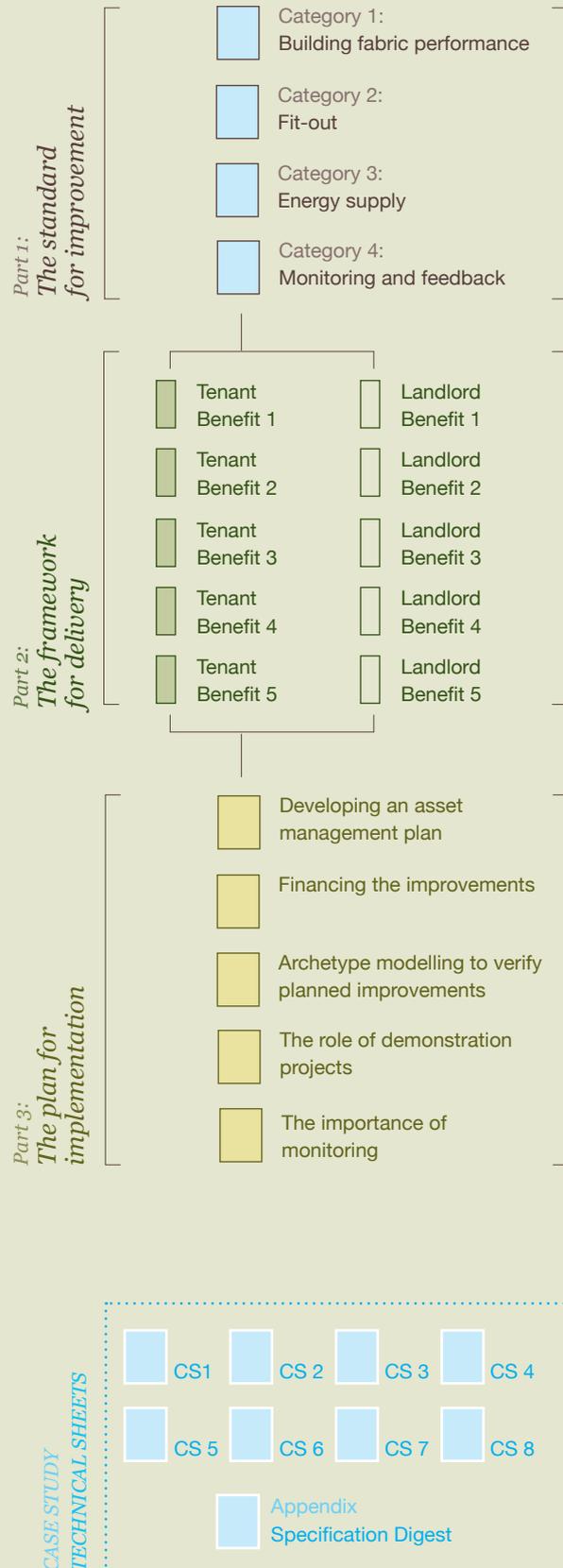
Structure of the Standard

The Beyond Decent Homes Standard has three components, each of which have been designed and tested in conjunction with the project partners in order to take them ‘beyond decent homes’. They are:

- 1. Standard for improvement:** The performance standards and requirements for a ‘Beyond Decent Homes’ property under four categories;
- 2. Framework of benefits:** The framework for capturing the wider benefits of investment to the benefit of tenants, landlords and the local economy;
- 3. Implementation plan:** The plan for programming investment in order to meet the 2016, 2020 and 2025 milestones;

Only by seeing the low carbon transition as a staged investment programme can the wider benefits to both tenants and landlords be realised, and the impact of the spend captured to the benefit of the local economy.

The Standard is supported by an evidence base consisting of eight case studies. Each case study was used to test and develop the overall approach. Technical Datasheets and a Specification Digest for the case studies are presented as appendices to the Standard.



Reflecting current thinking

Whilst the Standard seeks to break new ground it has not been developed in isolation. From the outset it has been developed and steered with the direct input of West Midlands social landlords and the region's HMR pathfinders, and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and the Tenants Services Authority (TSA) have contributed their expertise. The HCA and TSA positions on social housing retrofit support and reinforce this Standard.

As noted in the Foreword, SHAP has already taken the opportunity to submit evidence to the new inquiry by the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Committee on "Beyond Decent Homes: decent housing standards post 2010". It has been recognised that the SHAP Beyond Decent Homes Standard is likely to contain valuable data and information for the Committee and accordingly submissions will be made to inform the inquiry.

The Standard has been designed to reflect the technical methodology used in a number of recent studies, including the Welsh Assembly's 'Sustainable Refurbishment Standard' and the Housing Forum's 'Sustainable improvement of the existing

housing stock' Working Group.

The Association for Environmentally Conscious Builders (AECB) and the German PassivHaus Standards, with their focus on demand reduction, have also formed a key reference.

Furthermore, it draws upon an accepted suite of refurbishment specifications and measures, as promoted by a series of publications including the Energy Saving Trust's 'Refurbishing dwellings' best practice guide and the Homes and Communities Agencies 'Fit for the future' retrofit manual, as well as pioneering refurbishment projects by West Midlands social landlords including Accord Housing Group, Black Country Housing Group and Castle Vale Community Housing Association and Sandwell Homes.

Additional consideration has also been given to the social, economic and environmental impact of improvement specifications, given the need for implementation across many thousands of homes. This reflects the approach promoted by stock management tools such as Ecohomes XB, but goes further by considering the wider potential benefits to tenants, landlords and the local economy.

Policy position statement

Homes and Communities Agency



As the national housing and regeneration agency, the HCA is working with government departments to help develop policy and strategy in respect of the environmental performance of our existing homes, and will play a significant role in implementing policy solutions.

The HCA's Corporate Plan for 2009-11 states that it will "develop a strategy to encourage and implement reductions in carbon emissions and to maximise the environmental efficiency of existing

housing stock and neighbourhoods." This has started with the delivery of the Social Housing Energy Saving Programme to install cavity wall insulation in hard to treat properties.

The HCA is encouraged by the work and commitment of regional groups such as the Sustainability West Midlands Sustainable Housing Action Partnership, and expect that that this will make a valuable contribution to policy and strategy development.

Methodology and Evidence Base

The framework for the Standard was developed with the input of over forty stakeholders from the West Midlands at three separate workshops between April and July 2009. Representation included Local Authorities, Regulatory Bodies and Social Landlords (see Appendix 1 for a complete listing).

The detailed evidence base for the Standard was developed with the input of the five partner West Midlands social landlords – Accord Housing Group, Family Housing Association, Sandwell Homes, South Shropshire Housing Association and Wolverhampton Homes.

Eight case studies of representative property archetypes were nominated by the partners (see Appendix 2 for details). For each case study the improvements and specifications required to deliver 42% and 80% carbon reductions against each properties performance in 1990 were tested.

Detailed analysis was carried out using detailed SAP 2005 assessments, supplemented by estimates of household elec-

tricity use informed by published data from the Oxford Environmental Change Institute and the Government's Market Transformation Programme (MTP).

This allowed the performance in 1990 and 2009 to be modelled and combinations of future measures to be applied and tested. This was based on the following information:

- **As-built specifications:** In order to determine the specific construction details, including non-traditional forms;
- **Improvement works to date:** In order to identify the extent of performance improvements prior to 1990 and between 1990 and 2009;
- **Future improvement specifications:** Identification and adaptation of, for the most part tried and tested, specifications under the four categories of improvement.

The proposed set of improvements for each property were the subject of a detailed costing exercise and, based on the lifespan of the existing building components, a fifteen to twenty year schedule of improvements was then drawn up.

Policy position statement

The Tenant Services Authority



Reducing carbon use in social housing will play a key role in achieving government's target of 80% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050. We are working with government to develop standards that will achieve this target for social housing. It is vital to our task of achieving carbon emissions reductions in a rational, joined up way, that we do this within a coherent framework for regional and local strategies .

The analysis and evidence that SHAP have undertaken to formulate the 'Beyond Decent Homes' standard is an essential contribution both to our work to establish a policy framework that will deliver our national objectives, and to ensure that the landlords we regulate are able to provide homes to their tenants that they can afford to heat and run.