

Building Regulations

This note supports the Written Ministerial Statement made by the Minister for Communities on 13th March 2014. It sets out how each of the themes covered in the Housing Standards Review consultation are to be taken forward.

Access

Minimum access standards in Part M (Access to and use of buildings) will be retained. In addition, an optional level of accessibility will be introduced in Part M which will set out criteria for age friendly, accessible and adaptable housing. We will also set out within Part M an optional standard which will set out criteria setting out the specific needs of wheelchair adaptable and accessible housing.

These optional levels would not be universally mandatory, but local authorities will be able to adopt them to meet local needs, according to local circumstances or individual needs, and subject to viability testing.

Security

The Government recognises the value of a single minimum security standard for new homes, based on industry's best practice. The Government is considering the evidence on whether such a standard should be applied to all new homes, as a Building Regulation applied nationally or whether it would be more proportionate if applied on a local basis.

Water

We propose to introduce a new, tighter level of water efficiency into the Building Regulations, to be set at 110 litres/person/day (lpd). This would be an optional higher level in addition to the current level of 125 lpd which could only be applied in areas with specific local needs (such as water stress). This would be chosen by the local authority. Government is considering the best way to define areas of water stress to ensure this works in practice.

Energy

We propose a "Building Regulations only" approach, with no optional additional local standards in excess of the provisions set out in Part L of the Regulations.

In Budget 2013 the Government reaffirmed its commitment to implement the zero carbon homes policy for new homes from 2016. This will be achieved through a strengthening of the energy performance requirements in Part L of the Building Regulations (incorporating carbon compliance, energy efficient fabric and services), and the delivery of allowable solutions.

Space

We believe that it is right that local communities and neighbourhoods have the ability to shape the nature of new development in their local areas. However, a proliferation of localised and varying space standards creates a potentially significant barrier to delivery of

housing. We will therefore develop a new national standard – not a Building Regulation - which will offer a consistent set of requirements with regard to the internal area of new homes. This will have two different sets of specifications, based on a consolidation of existing space standards used by authorities across the country. Application of the standard will be optional for local authorities to use and they will need to justify its application according to evidenced needs and subject to local plan viability testing. This will help to balance the needs of local communities whilst ensuring that the home building industry can deliver at volume in a cost effective manner.

Other Standards

Government considered a range of other issues in the Housing Standards Review consultation. The Government is not taking forward any work on these matters during this Parliament.