



Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET - 10 FEBRUARY 2020
Report Number	AGENDA ITEM 9
Subject	RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE HOMES STANDARD
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Rachel Coxcoon Cabinet Member for Planning Policy, Climate change and Energy Email: Rachel.coxcoon@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	James Brain - Forward Planning Manager Tel: 01285 623427 Email: james.brain@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To update Members on the Government's proposed amendments to Building Regulations and seek agreement on a response.
Annexes	Annex A - Briefing note Annex B - Proposed response
Recommendation/s	<i>That Cabinet:</i> <i>(a) Notes briefing note at Annex A; and</i> <i>(b) Approves the proposed response at Annex B.</i>
Corporate priorities	To address the Council's commitment to tackle climate change and take a leadership role on the climate emergency in the Cotswolds.
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	Senior Officers Cabinet Member

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1.** The UK has set in law a target to bring all its greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. Homes - both new and existing - account for 20% of emissions; therefore the Government is looking to alter standards to deliver the 2050 target. The 2019 Spring Statement includes a commitment that, by 2025, it will introduce a Future Homes Standard for new build homes to be future-proofed with low carbon heating and 'world-leading' levels of energy efficiency.
- 1.2.** The Government has published a consultation proposing amendments to the Building Regulations Part L (conservation of fuel and power) and Part F (ventilation)¹. It sets out what it believes a home built to the Future Homes Standard will be like. For example, it expects that an average home built to it will have 75-80% less carbon emissions than one built to current energy efficiency requirements (Approved Document L 2013). It also expects this will be achieved through higher fabric standards and a low carbon heating system.
- 1.3.** The Government is expected to launch a further consultation in the coming months addressing existing domestic buildings, and new and existing non-domestic buildings.

2. THE FUTURE HOMES STANDARD

- 2.1.** A summary of the government's proposed New Homes Standard is provided at Annex A - this is chiefly based on a useful summary prepared by Somerset West and Taunton Council, although it has been revised to reflect Cotswold specific facts, issues and matters.
- 2.2.** The key points of the proposed response can be broken down to:
 - a) The Future Homes Standard should be brought forward before 2025, and if this is not possible then it should deliver zero carbon homes from 2025.
 - b) The Government is relying on decarbonisation of the electricity grid to progressively deliver the 75-80% carbon reduction proposed by the Future Homes Standard into a net zero carbon emissions over time. The preferred approach is to tackle carbon reduction at source to ensure that buildings do not require future retrofit.
 - c) The 2020 uplift proposals are not ambitious enough and through the removal of the 'Fabric Energy Efficiency Standard' could lead to worse fabric energy efficiency than is currently allowed through the existing Part L 2013. A focus on fabric efficiency is preferred as this can reduce heat and electricity demand as well as costs to the occupier and can negate the need for costly fabric retrofit in the future.
 - d) The consultation proposes two performance-based options for this interim uplift: Option 1 would achieve a 20% carbon reduction improvement over existing Building Regulations, whilst Option 2 would achieve a 31% improvement. The Council does not support either option and instead asks

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the Government to go much further. Reference is made to the emerging London Plan and the Milton Keynes Plan (Plan:MK), which respectively require a 35% and 39% improvement on current building regulations.

- e) The Council supports in theory the need to set a minimum target to ensure that homes are affordable to run; however, the proposal as presented is ineffective.
- f) The Council disagrees with the proposal to remove the ability for local authorities to set more ambitious local standards above and beyond Building Regulations and strongly requests that this ability is retained.
- g) The Council welcomes the Government's acknowledgement that there is currently an issue with developers "locking in" compliance with out of date regulations, and the proposal to address this to an extent on new developments. However, additional advice is required in terms of development viability and identifying potential ways to introduce improved requirements for large development sites with extant planning permissions.
- h) The Government should bring forward further proposals to ensure all new dwellings are also resilient to the climate change. Failure to do so could lead to future costly retrofit and may also lead to significant public health concerns.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. None associated with this report.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. None associated with this report.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. None associated with this report.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT (IF REQUIRED)

- 6.1. None associated with this report.

7. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS (IF REQUIRED)

- 7.1. Tackling the climate emergency is a priority in the Council's Corporate Strategy. Ensuring new dwellings are built to the highest possible sustainability standards is an important aspect of its mitigation and adaptation and for this reason it is important that the Council engages with this consultation. The response focusses on strategic issues raised by the consultation.

7.2. The Government's future homes standard will have a direct impact on carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. The Council challenges the Government's proposal to restrict the ability of local planning authorities to set higher energy efficiency or zero carbon standards and explains this is at odds with the overall direction of government policy on decarbonisation and localism.

7.3. Over time the Council will need to consider how it will check compliance with the new standards, particularly if they are locally set above national levels. Early engagement with the local Building Control sector, Planning and Climate Change Manager is recommended.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

8.1. None associated with this report.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1. None

(END)