



BREEAM[®]

Using local plans to encourage sustainable construction practices

Local Planning Authorities across the UK have a responsibility to secure solid progress against the country's targets to reduce carbon emissions and address climate change impacts. What can they do to ensure sustainable construction practices are embedded in non-residential development?

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Local Plans – using BREEAM as a tool to embed sustainability

Local Planning Authorities across the whole of the UK have a responsibility to secure solid progress against the country's targets to reduce emissions, in line with the 2008 Climate Change Act. They also have a duty to adhere to S19 of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, which specifies that planning policy must contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change. BREEAM was first developed in the wake of the energy crisis in 1990, and thus has a strong, head-on approach to tackling climate change.

How can BREEAM help to encourage sustainable construction practices?

The holistic approach of BREEAM drives design for climate resilience, energy performance, the embodied impact of materials, flood risk, water scarcity, and overheating. It also advocates better management processes throughout the design and build processes, ensuring an overall high-quality outcome across the built environment. It allows clients, project teams and facility managers to be certain that the required standard of environmental best practice is being adopted on their project.

BREEAM can therefore be incorporated into Planning Policy to address the responsibilities bestowed upon LPAs in their drive to reduce emissions and deliver more sustainable development outcomes. Some LPAs vary their minimum BREEAM standard requirements according to the location of the development. For example, a development proposal in a rural area with infrequent transport links could score poorly under the BREEAM Transport section, so lower ratings could be set for this while still setting challenging targets for the other sustainability aspects.

Alternatively, LPAs may vary their minimum BREEAM standard requirements according to the size of the development; unit numbers, development type or floor area. This allows for more flexibility with economies of scale and the inherent restrictions that may affect some smaller developments. A policy that doesn't take economic viability into account may be found to place an 'undue burden' on developers and hence be susceptible to appeal.

When incorporating BREEAM into Local Plans, the LPA should ensure that the requirements are outlined visibly and credibly within the policy wording of the Local Plan. When a condition to build to one of the BREEAM standards is not also clearly supported by the adopted Local Plan, it is more likely to be successfully challenged. LPAs must also note that BRE cyclically reviews and updates schemes, which should be worded appropriately within the Local Plan and allowances given as necessary when schemes are updated.

BREEAM requirements in the South West of England

Several Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in the South West are currently in the process of going through a Local Plan review and consultation phase, some have very recently adopted new Local Plans, and some have had their Local Plan in place for years. The majority of these Local Plans specify BREEAM requirements for new developments in one form or another, as shown in the table overleaf.

Table 1: Current Local Authority BREEAM requirements in the South West

Authority	BREEAM Standard	
	Very Good	Excellent
Forest of Dean		Can be used as a substitute to current requirements in policy
Gloucester, Cheltenham, Tewkesbury	No BREEAM requirements	
Stroud	No BREEAM requirements	
Cotswold	No BREEAM requirements	
South Gloucestershire	Encouraged (Major developments only)	
City of Bristol		Expected (Major developments only)
Wiltshire		Required on all development
Swindon		Expected (Major developments only)
Bath and North East Somerset	No BREEAM requirements	
North Somerset	Required on all development over 500m ²	Required on all development over 1000m ²
Sedgemoor	Expected on all development	
Mendip	No BREEAM requirements	
South Somerset		Required on all development
Taunton Deane	BREEAM encouraged but no rating specified.	
West Somerset	No BREEAM requirements	
North Dorset	No BREEAM requirements	
Purbeck	Expected on all development under 1000m ²	Expected on all development over 1000m ²
Poole	Expected on all development under 1000m ²	Expected on all development over 1000m ²
Bournemouth	Encouraged on all non-domestic developments	
Christchurch and East Dorset	BREEAM encouraged but no rating specified.	
West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland	No BREEAM requirements	
Plymouth	BREEAM encouraged but no rating specified.	
South Hams, West Devon, Plymouth	No BREEAM requirements	
North Devon	Expected on all development over 999m ²	
Teignbridge	No BREEAM requirements	
Torbay	BREEAM encouraged but no rating specified.	
Mid Devon		Required on all development over 1000m ²
Exeter		Required on all development, to be zero carbon from 2019
East Devon	Required on all development of more than 1000m ²	
Isles of Scilly	No BREEAM requirements	
Cornwall	No BREEAM requirements	