**Housing Standards**

**The first (March) and second (September, technical) Housing Standards Review Consultations and 2015-18 Affordable Homes Programme – October 14**

The outcome of the first Housing Standards Review (HSR) consultation to streamline standards for new homes was published in a [written Ministerial Statement](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/stephen-williams-announces-plans-to-raise-housing-standards) on 13 March 2014.

This set out that the majority of proposals from the review are to become part of building regulations during the remaining period of this parliament.

Following this announcement, the HCA published an addendum to the 2015-18 Affordable Homes Programme prospectus on our website which clarifies the technical requirements that bidders will be expected to meet or consider in submitting their bids. <http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/ourwork/affordable-homes-programme-2015-18>

A second HSR **technical** consultation was issued on Friday 12 September, with an accompanying [written Ministerial Statement](http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-vote-office/September%202014/12%20September/3-Housing-Standards.pdf) and [press release](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/slashing-red-tape-to-boost-british-housebuilding), and closes on 7 November 2014.

The consultation contains detail regarding: a Nationally Described Space Standard and building regulation documents dealing with accessibility, water efficiency, security and solid waste storage. (It also gives sets out additional detail in respect of energy efficiency).

There is no conflict with the approach set out in the addendum to the AHP 2015-18 Prospectus, with specific notes on the code for sustainable homes, energy performance, water efficiency, security, accessibility and space standards remaining current. However this set of FAQ has been updated to answer specific questions where information has been revised since the first consultation or specific processes have been confirmed.

Further detail in respect of specific topics, transitional arrangements and timing are covered in the HSR partner briefing. **[DN: Add Link to document on website]**

**General**

**Q1** *Although some elements of the Housing Standards Review (HSR) have now been clarified, the outcomes of the technical HSR consultation have not yet been published. How do I know what standards to use when bidding under CME?*

**A1** As well as reviewing the information contained within the addendum to the Affordable Homes Programme 2015-18 prospectus, prior to submitting bids, bidders should consider the options outlined in the [technical housing standards consultation paper](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/housing-standards-review-technical-consultation) to help inform their view, alongside, importantly, their own internal design briefs and their own consideration of the needs of their residents.

Providers may also wish to discuss their proposals with their local planning authority in respect of the authorities approach towards the nationally described space standard and the use of optional building regulation requirements for accessibility and water efficiency. Transitional arrangements for implementation of the HSR are attached in our partner briefing. **[DN: Add Link to document on website]**

**Q2** *Do homes still have to provide for example, sheds and compost bins?*

**A2** In current and earlier programmes providers have had to provide sheds and compost bins to achieve minimum HQI scores and points under the Code for Sustainable Homes. This level of detailed requirement will cease for the AHP 15-18. Providers will, of course, want to review the quality of the housing they build and the potential needs of future residents.

**Q3** *As housing standards are now to be consolidated and become part of building regulations does that mean we no longer have to apply for waivers?*

**A3** Current standards contained within the Design and Quality Standards (April 2007) still apply for the 2011-15 Affordable Homes Programme. Waivers still need to be requested when appropriate for schemes which receive funding under this programme.

For those bids being submitted for the 2015-18 Affordable Homes Programme, including for CME, no standards are required by the HCA above those proposed to be contained in the Building Regulations or in some cases, local planning policy (the nationally described space standard and optional building regulations in respect of accessibility and water efficiency). Therefore waivers will not be required from the HCA where allocations are made as a result of those bids.

**Note, however, that once bidders have submitted proposed scheme details which the HCA subsequently accepts, these will be a contractual requirement and subject to our usual variation and compliance audit procedures.**

**Q4** *Do the expected technical requirements for grant funded schemes set out in the 2015-18 AHP prospectus addendum and technical HSR consultation also apply to nil grant schemes through section 106 (either as part of an initial bid, or as the subject of future market engagement)?*

**A4** The addendum does not set any minimum requirements above those to be contained in Building Regulations (including optional requirements for accessibility and water efficiency) or local planning policy (nationally described space standard), and therefore applies to all homes within a partner’s bid including nil grant homes. The technical HSR consultation also follows this approach; its proposals apply cross tenure.

**Q5** *Following publication of the addendum and the HSR technical consultation, where bids have already been worked up and prepared for submission as part of 2015-18 CME, can they continue to apply the DQS and HQI standards?*

**A5** Yes, bidders are welcome to base their bids on the previous standards. However they will wish to carry out their own comparison exercise to ensure that bids conform to the addendum and consultation proposals noting that the Design and Quality Standards (April 2007) and HQIs no longer apply for the 2015-18 Affordable Homes Programme.

The prospectus and addendum also note that bidders should take into account local planning policy and, importantly, resident need in preparing bids.

**Space Standards**

**Q6** *Which space standards should I use to design schemes for 2015-18 AHP CME? The WMS refers to a new national described space standard but doesn’t set out what it is.*

**A6** No specific space standards have been set in the 2015-18 AHP. However, the second HSR technical consultation sets out an updated [nationally described space standard](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/housing-standards-review-technical-consultation) and HCA will **benchmark** submitted unit sizes for 2015-18 CME bids against this, hence bidders are required to submit the unit sizes they are proposing for individual homes. This allows unusually large, or unusually small homes to be identified, and where necessary, the HCA will seek to understand the reasons for any significant variations.

During the 2015-18 AHP **initial** bid round, the HCA benchmarked submitted unit sizes against the [Level 1 space standard](http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/sites/default/files/our-work/level_1_space_standard_hca_addendum.pdf) set out in the first consultation stage of the HSR.

Once bidders have submitted proposed unit sizes which the HCA subsequently accepts, this will be treated as a contractual requirement and subject to our usual variation and compliance procedures. Schemes which have already received funding under the AHP 2011-15 should continue to meet HQI space standards as set out in the Design and Quality Standards (April 2007).

**Q7** *How will HCA assess the design and quality aspect of bids when there is still uncertainty regarding adoption by local planning agencies of the nationally described space standard and optional building regulations in respect of accessibility and water efficiency?*

**A7** HCA’s aim is to ensure that, so far as possible, value for money assessments are made on a broadly comparable basis, for example, by considering the average m2 per person housed of a scheme, and taking that into account in our view of the value for money of the grant requested.

Future AHP bids will need to comply with any updates on space standards and optional building regulation requirements in respect of accessibility and water efficiency once further decisions have been made, including any local plan standards once determined and in place at the point that the CME bid is submitted.

**Q8** *Why do I still need to input space and layout data if there are no longer minimum standards?*

**A8** While the HCA has not set requirements with regard to space and layout; we will continue to gather information on some aspects (such as bedroom sizes) at detailed scheme stage in order to carry out benchmarking of bids on a like for like basis against HSR proposals.

**Q9** *We were working on a scheme for submission under AHP 2015-18 CME and referring to the Level 1 space standard but this has now changed. Should I review my scheme and start again using the national space standard or can my scheme still be benchmarked against the Level 1 requirements?*

**A9** As the space standards set out in the HSR consultations are not mandated under the 2015-18 AHP starting again is unlikely to be necessary. Bids submitted for CME will be benchmarked against the [nationally described space standard](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/housing-standards-review-technical-consultation) set out in the HSR technical consultation as opposed to the Level 1 requirements. This approach allows unusually large or unusually small homes to be identified, and where necessary, the HCA will seek to understand the reasons for any significant variations.

**Accessibility**

**Q10** *How do we know which accessibility standards to apply for schemes? Will we still have to meet the requirements Lifetime Homes and the Wheelchair Design Guide?*

**A10** Where Lifetime Homes and wheelchair housing requirements form part of existing planning consents these requirements will still need to be met.

There will be no additional requirements above Part M (Access to and use of buildings) of the Building Regulations for access standards for grant-funded homes. Any provision of adaptable homes or Wheelchair Accessible homes should be in line with the proposals set out in the technical HSR consultation which details building regulation optional requirements for accessibility (categories 2 and 3). These categories will not be universally mandatory but local authorities will be able to adopt them to meet local needs subject to viability and needs testing.

As part of bids, bidders will still confirm whether any homes on a scheme will be wheelchair accessible.

**Code for Sustainable Homes, Energy Performance and Allowable Solutions**

**Q11** *If the Code or Sustainable Homes ceases to exist, what about timing in terms of local planning requirements and conditions?*

**A11** Responses to the technical HSR consultation will be considered and form a statement of policy which the Government intends to issue in early 2015, subject to Parliamentary approval of the necessary acts.

From the date of the statement only standards set out in the Building Regulations optional requirements, the associated Approved Documents and the nationally described space standard should be applied in planning conditions for new housing development.

As many of the requirements of the Code for Sustainable Homes will be consolidated into the Building Regulations, the Code will be wound down from the time the statement is made (early 2015). (There will be arrangements in place to deal with legacy requirements in relation to the Code).

From the date of the statement and until the building regulations and nationally described space standard come into force (6 months) local authorities should have regard to the forthcoming requirements. For example where plan policy requires a Code for Sustainable Homes level only energy and water efficiency should apply.

From the date of the statement local planners will continue to be able to set and apply policies in their local plan requiring development to comply with energy efficiency standards that exceed the energy requirements of building regulations until the zero carbon home policy has been put in place (anticipated late 2016). From that point, the energy efficiency requirements in building regulations will be set at an equivalent to Code level 4.

**Q12** *What is the zero carbon homes standard? What are Allowable Solutions?*

**A12** The zero carbon homes standard will require house builders to decrease all carbon emissions from energy arising from fixed heating and lighting, hot water and other fixed building services (e.g. ventilation) in new homes. The zero carbon policy requires some of the carbon reductions to be achieved on the site of the home, which is done in two stages:

(i) Fabric Energy Efficiency standard (insulation etc.)

(ii) Carbon Compliance (on-site renewable technologies and\or additional fabric energy efficiency).

The remaining carbon can be abated off-site through ‘Allowable Solutions’. These are off-site projects or measures that reduce carbon emissions by offsetting some of the emissions from the new homes they build and contribute to them meeting the zero carbon homes standard.

For further information refer to: Next steps to zero carbon homes – [Allowable Solutions: Government response and summary of responses to the consultation July 2014.](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/327842/140626_Government_Response_to_Consultation_-_Next_Steps_to_Zero_Carbon_H__FINAL.pdf)

**Water Efficiency**

**Q13** *If the Code no longer exists, what level of water efficiency should be provided? What about schemes which have already received funding?*

**A13** It is planned that a new optional, higher level of water efficiency will been introduced into the building regulations of 110 litres/person/day (lpd), as set out in draft by the HSR technical consultation. Proposals are that this can only be applied in areas with specific local needs (such as water stress) and will be specified as a planning condition by the local authority. All other schemes should meet current minimum requirements of 125 lpd.

As a result, bidders for the 2015-18 programme will not be required to meet targets higher than 110 lpd. Schemes which have already received funding under the AHP 2011-15 should continue to meet the lpd required to ensure compliance with the Code level confirmed at firm scheme stage. (105 lpd for Code Level 3 which equates to 110lpd when an additional 5 lpd is added to cover external water use similarly to building regulations).

There are no requirements for rainwater or grey water harvesting.

**Security**

**Q14** *Does HCA still require bidders to achieve the physical aspects of Secured by Design?*

**A14** For the 2015-18 AHP, HCA will no longer require partners to achieve the physical aspects of Secured by Design as this was embedded within the Code for Sustainable Homes (this does not preclude partners opting to adopt Secured by Design if they wish to).

Bidders should put forward bids based on the new draft building regulation, Part Q published as part of the HSR technical consultation. This includes the requirements of Publically Available Specification (PAS) 24:2012 doors and windows. Doors and windows registered with Secured by Design will meet PAS 24 requirements.

Current 2011-15 AHP schemes will still have to meet standards agreed at firm scheme stage and any local authority planning conditions.

**Waste**

**Q15** *Have there been any changes to building regulation requirements for waste?*

**A15** The changes to Part H set out in the HSR technical consultation add clarity in respect of design and provision of amenity. Bidders should take into account local planning policy and resident need in preparing bids.

**Other**

**Q16** *What about the other topics that were considered in the standards review as part of the consultation that have not been mentioned?*

**A16** While the HCA will not set requirements with regard to elements of layout or lighting, it will continue to gather information on some aspects (such as bedroom sizes) at detailed scheme stage. It will also continue to gather data on Building for Life 12 assessments, but will not set requirements in this area.

Government considered a range of other issues in the Housing Standards Review consultation but will not be taking forward any work on these topics before the end of this Parliament in 2015.

**Q17** *Will bidders still have to provide information regarding whole life costs?*

**A17** Yes, additional bidding requirements have not altered as a result of the HSR proposals.