

Securing green roofs without an adopted policy

- **Local authority area:** Sheffield City Council
- **Stakeholders:** Development Management officers, Environmental Planning Officers, developers

Summary

This case study describes Sheffield City Council's approach to securing green roofs on developments without having an adopted policy requirement.

Key learning points

- Good knowledge of the subject matter (or easy access to knowledge) is vital to securing benefits such as green roofs without a specific policy background in order for Development Management officers to convincingly negotiate with developers;
- Early negotiation is important to ensure that the cost plan for the development incorporates the provision of a green roof at the initial stage;
- Post-application follow up is important to ensure that the green roofs are implemented as approved.

Background

- Green roofs have a number of benefits. They can reduce and attenuate surface water run-off, help to improve air quality by absorbing particulate matter, and improve biodiversity by creating habitats. Green roofs can also help to minimise the urban heat island effect, and can reduce the need for heating and cooling within buildings, therefore reducing carbon emissions. The topography of Sheffield means that roofs in the valleys are highly visible, and well designed and constructed green roofs can make a striking visual improvement.
- Sheffield City Council has sought to negotiate the introduction of green roofs on major applications since 2005/6 without the benefit of a specific development management policy to require that they form part of the development. As an example, between March 2009 and December 2010, Sheffield City Council secured an in-principal agreement for the provision of green roofs on 24 major developments across the City.



Method

- Securing green roofs on major developments within the City without the benefit of a clear policy basis requires effective negotiation with developers at early pre-application stage. This includes explaining the benefits of green roofs for both the environment (reducing run-off, providing a habitat for wildlife and reducing energy expenditure and carbon emissions) and for the developer (such as reducing heating and cooling costs, extending the life expectancy of the roof membrane).
- The key barrier to overcome is the assumptions of developers/ applicants with regard to the more negative aspects of a green roof, principally in terms of the cost implication for the development and the impact on building structure and associated costs. In reality, a green roof can add as little as £1/m² per year to the cost of maintaining a standard roof.¹
- Key to the success of our negotiations was the in-house knowledge on green roofs and the ability to present the positive aspects of green roofs. In addition, a number of local architects have been supportive of our aspiration to achieve green roofs, which has been helpful in persuading their clients to move forward.
- The ambition to secure green roofs should form part of pre-application discussions.

Results - Key outcomes and impacts

- In the current economic circumstances, it has proved more difficult to secure green roofs in the absence of a specific planning policy, particularly within the retail sector. The Council is therefore proposing to include a requirement for green roofs as part of the Sheffield Development Framework.

Key contact

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References / Links

<http://livingroofs.org/>

<http://www.thegreenroofcentre.co.uk/>

¹ <http://livingroofs.org/2010030887/perceived-barrier/maintgreenbarr.htm>