

Using a sustainability checklist to monitor planning applications

- **Local authority area:** Sheffield City Council
- **Stakeholders:** Planning Service

Summary

To monitor Development Management's performance in delivering sustainability policy aims, to provide corporate returns on carbon reduction, and to enable quarterly review of performance.

Key learning points

- Identified patchy achievement of some strong policy requirements and apparently straightforward sustainable design targets. Gave Area Team managers information on performance to take up with teams, to encourage greater achievement.
- Had to create separate reporting mechanism and analysis. A business support officer collates the information on behalf of the whole team.
- Can be a problem getting case officers to remember to complete sustainability checklists for applications.
- Some officers are sceptical about what achievements are down to policies and negotiation and what would have been provided by the developer anyway, and whether or not commitments conditioned are actually being delivered e.g. renewable energy.
- It is important to visit completed developments that have gone through this process to check these points out, where possible.

Background

- The checklist is used to assess how well developments are performing against Sheffield's sustainability planning requirements, and how Development Management officers are implementing the policies.
- It addresses the desire to have service plan targets in Development Management that reflect the quality of outcomes we are trying to achieve and our planning priorities.
- It also meets the corporate requirement to report back on carbon reduction.

Method

- The checklist (see Appendix 1) was developed by Development Management and Forward Planning officers.
- It lists the sustainability requirements in the Core Strategy policies, and additional sustainability features that are achieved by negotiation.
- Each feature has been given a score, and overall each development should be achieving a minimum of 10 points in total, to show that it is achieving a reasonable level of sustainability. Where a development is achieving fewer than 10 points, a justification must be provided to explain why.

Result - Key outcomes and impact

- We have a better understanding of the extent to which our sustainability requirements are being achieved, and we have information on which particular features are being achieved more or less often. This helps us to understand where we may have particular training needs, and where we need to provide better guidance and advice to developers.

Key contact

Name	Graham Withers
Post title	Business Manager, Development Management
Email	graham.withers@sheffield.gov.uk
Telephone number	0114 203 7642
Address	Howden House 1 Union Street Sheffield S1 2SH

References / Links

See Appendix 1

APPENDIX 1

Sheffield City Council's Sustainability Checklist

DEVELOPMENTS ACHIEVING A BASKET OF QUALITY INDICATORS ON SUSTAINABILITY IN 2010/11

(To be completed by case officer and passed to Team Manager with recommendation. To be input into Uniform (GIS) when decided. Service plan targets highlighted in grey.)

Application Number:	Input into Uniform:	Yes / No		
A. CORE STRATEGY REQUIREMENTS				
For significant developments' (5 + dwellings & 500 + sq m)			Not applicable	Score
CS64 - Sustainable design				
BREEAM ¹ Very Good for commercial development		Score 3		
BREEAM Excellent		Score 4		
Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 for residential development		Score 3		
Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 and above		Score 5		
CS65 a) - Renewable energy generation				
Min 10% of predicted energy needs from decentralised & renewable or low carbon energy		Score 3		
Less than 10%, but a feature such as a solar panel or a wind turbine		Score 1		
CS65 b) Carbon reduction				
Min of 20% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions, including above provision		Score 3		
Explanatory comment if 'No':				
A reduction of less than 20%: less than 10% (1); 10 – 20% (2)		Score 1-2		
(A) Achieves a minimum of 7: Yes / No		Total score		

¹ Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (Information, including the Code or Sustainable Homes, at www.breem.org/page.jsp?id=86)

B. BY NEGOTIATION For significant developments' (5 + dwellings & 500 + sq m)		Not applicable	Score	Not viable
1.	Green Roof		Score 2	
2.	Sustainable Drainage (including reduced run off) ...		Score 1	
3.	Enhanced Biodiversity		Score 1	
4.	Waste Recycling Scheme		Score 1	
5.	Connect Sheffield Contribution		Score 1	
6.	Travel Plans or Smarter Choices Strategy		Score 2	
7.	Sheffield Car Club Contribution		Score 1	
8.	Cycling Facilities		Score 1	
9.	Grey Water Recycling		Score 1	
10.	Local Employment Initiatives		Score 1	
B) Achieves a minimum of 3: Yes / No			Total score	
(A + B) Achieves a combined score of:				
(A + B) Achieves a minimum of 10: Yes / No				
Explanatory comment if 'No':				

NB A high score does not necessarily mean that a proposed development is sustainable: the proposal has to be assessed against all aspects.