



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local
Government**

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Your Ref:

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Dear Cllr Smith and Cllr Brown,

Thank you for your email of 2 December regarding the Future Homes Standard and the work of the Oxfordshire Growth Board. As the issues you have raised are the responsibility of this department, I have been asked to provide a response, and I would like to apologise for the delay in responding to you.

The Government remains committed to meeting its target of net zero emissions by 2050 and recognises the important contribution that the energy efficiency of buildings has to make in meeting it. We must ensure that the energy efficiency standards we set through the Building Regulations for new homes put us on track to meet the 2050 target. By improving energy efficiency and moving to cleaner sources of heat, we can reduce carbon emissions and keep energy costs for consumers down now and in the future.

I am pleased to say that since we received your email, the Government has now published a full response to the Future Homes Standard consultation. We have confirmed that from 2025, the Future Homes Standard will ensure that new homes produce at least 75% lower CO2 emissions compared to those built to current standards. In the short term this represents a considerable improvement in the energy efficiency standards for new homes. Homes built under the Future Homes Standard will be 'zero carbon ready', which means that in the longer term, no further retrofit work for energy efficiency will be necessary to enable them to become zero-carbon homes as the electricity grid continues to decarbonise.

We must ensure that all parts of industry are ready to meet the Future Homes Standard from 2025, which will be challenging to deliver in practice, by supporting industry to take a first step towards the new standard. In 2021 we will introduce an interim uplift in Part L standards that delivers a meaningful reduction in carbon emissions and provides a stepping stone to the Future Homes Standard. From 2021, new homes will be expected to produce 31% less CO2 emissions compared to current standards. This will deliver high-quality homes that are in line with our broader housing commitments and encourage homes that are future-proofed for the longer-term.

The forthcoming planning reforms will clarify the longer-term role of local planning authorities in determining local energy efficiency standards for new homes. However, to provide some certainty in the immediate term, the Government has confirmed that it will not amend the Planning and Energy Act 2008, which means that local authorities will retain powers to set local energy efficiency standards that go beyond the minimum standards set through the Building regulations.

With regards to your particular concern on the supply of low carbon technology, the Government recognises the challenges of transitioning to low carbon heating, in particular for the replacement heating sector. However, we agree with the Committee on Climate Change that there is an opportunity to start to establish a mass market solution for low carbon heating with new buildings. The introduction of the Future Homes Standard will facilitate this. We are also aware that more needs to be done to build the necessary skills base by supporting existing workers in high-carbon roles to retrain and attract new workers into a thriving green jobs market. Across Whitehall work is underway to ensure that there is sufficient training capacity to expand the installer base and that standards are set so that installation quality is maintained for consumers.

Decarbonising almost all buildings, including existing homes, is essential to achieving net zero, with buildings as one of the biggest sources of greenhouse gas emissions. This will involve switching to low carbon heating and upgrading their energy efficiency, in line with the Government's ambition to improve as many homes as possible to EPC C by 2035. There are many challenges involved with this process, but our Heat and Buildings Strategy, to be published in due course, will set out the immediate actions we will take for reducing emissions from buildings.

Finally, I would like to thank you for taking the time to inform us of the work that the Oxfordshire authorities, Oxford City Council and your own Oxfordshire Growth Board are doing to reach net zero, especially in improving the energy efficiency of new homes. We will all have a role to play in reaching net zero, and we recognise that some are already leading the way in helping to achieve this goal. Most importantly, by continuing to set minimum energy performance standards through the Building Regulations, we will encourage all those involved in the construction of buildings to continue pushing the boundaries so that today's trailblazing examples of green innovation become the industry standards of tomorrow.

With thanks again for your time,

Megan Griffiths
Energy Performance of Buildings Division