



The Green Guide to Housing Specification



Linked to EcoHomes and also sponsored by NHBC, The Green Guide to Housing Specification provides guidance to designers and specifiers on the environmental impacts of common specifications used in housing.

Containing over 150 specifications, the Guide covers typical wall, roof and floor constructions, as well as including other elements such as kitchen units and landscaping. Environmental impacts rated include climate change, fossil fuel depletion, toxicity, waste disposal and minerals extraction.

The Guide provides information for each specification and environmental impact by using a simple A B or C Rating, where A represents good environmental performance. There is also an overall summary rating weighted to demonstrate the performance of each specification. EcoHomes (BRE's environmental rating for homes) includes credits for selecting high performing specifications for key building elements using this guide.

The Green Guide to Housing Specification (price: £35) and EcoHomes (price: £25) can be purchased from the BRE website, or by contacting BRE at the address below.

For further information contact BRE on:

T +44 (0) 1923 664462
F +44 (0) 1923 664103
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www.bre.co.uk/breem

To purchase publications please use the following web address

www.ask.bre.co.uk/bookshop

or contact:

CRC Ltd, 151 Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4GB

T +44 (0) 20 7505 6622

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EcoHomes – How to get an Assessment

EcoHomes is a straightforward, flexible and independently verified environmental assessment method, with environmental performance expressed on a scale of Pass to Excellent, and depicted by sunflowers, see below:

Pass  Very Good 
 Good  Excellent 

It is an easily understood, credible label for new and renovated homes including houses, apartments and sheltered accommodation.

Assessments are undertaken by licensed assessors, who are trained and monitored by BRE. A list of individuals and firms licensed to undertake EcoHomes assessments is available from BRE.

A workbook is issued for each development. A sample of this workbook, which illustrates the level of information required, is available from the BRE web site.

To complete an assessment, the developer enters information on the design and specification into the workbook and passes this to the assessor. The assessor checks that the relevant information has been provided, and completes the workbook, determining the rating achieved. This is then returned to BRE for quality assurance and certification. All EcoHomes assessments are covered by BRE's stringent quality management procedures adopted to ensure a consistent approach and level of service.



Different Stages of Assessment

As the housing sector makes extensive use of standard specifications and house types, the assessment process can be carried out in three stages:

Stage 1 – Assessment of specification:

Many issues can be assessed from the general building specification provided that they are applicable to the whole development; e.g. types of material used.

Stage 2 – Assessment of house types:

For standard house types other issues can be assessed once only for each house type; e.g. energy efficiency.

Stage 1 and 2 can be carried out without reference to a specific site, so avoiding duplication on different developments, and keeping costs to a minimum.

Stage 3 – Assessment of development:

This stage completes the assessment as it covers all remaining issues, such as ecological value of the site and transport.

Formal assessment of a development is carried out by BRE when all stages are completed.

Typical fees

Licensed assessors will be able to provide a quote for the assessment process, which will be dependent on the size and complexity of the site, specification or house types. The assessment does not include detailed advice on how to achieve the best rating, however, assessors are able to provide this service for an additional fee and developers are encouraged to make use of this.

For a typical 40 unit housing development, with four different house types, which has not had the specification or house types assessed previously, the typical cost would be £1100 + VAT

This includes provision of an official BRE certificate for the development, with an original of this being produced for each house unit.

Although EcoHomes can be used at anytime during the design stage, developers are encouraged to consider the issues at the earliest opportunity to maximise the benefits.

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EcoHomes – The Environmental Rating for Homes

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Pass  Very Good 
 Good  Excellent 

It is an easily understood, credible label for new and renovated homes including houses, apartments and sheltered accommodation. It rewards developers who improve environmental performance through good design, rather than high capital cost solutions. Benefits include:

- Demonstrating sustainability credentials to planning authorities to assist a smooth passage through the planning process.
- Demonstrating “green” credentials to investors helps to minimise investment risk and increase the appeal to ethical investors.
- Demonstrating superior environmental design to customers, resulting in:

- Reduced running costs through greater energy and water efficiency, and reduced maintenance
- Healthy, comfortable and flexible internal environments
- Access to local amenities
- Less dependence on the car
- Allowing developers to be one step ahead of regulation

EcoHomes assessments can be carried out at the design stage in a similar way to a SAP rating. Every house type on a site is considered, but the award is given for the whole development. This enables developers to use the result to promote whole sites - every house that is part of the development has the same rating.

EcoHomes considers the broad environmental concerns of climate change, resource use and impact on wildlife, and balances these against the need for a high quality of life, and a safe and healthy internal environment. All the issues in EcoHomes are optional, making it flexible and enabling developers to adopt the most appropriate aspects of sustainability for their particular development and market.

The issues assessed are grouped into the seven categories below:

- Energy
- Water
- Pollution
- Materials
- Transport
- Ecology and land use
- Health and well being

Background/Technical Credentials

EcoHomes, sponsored by NHBC, is the homes version of BREEAM (the BRE Environmental Assessment Method). BREEAM leads the world in setting benchmarks for the environmental performance of buildings. It is independent, authoritative and based on many years of construction and environmental research carried out by BRE, the construction industry and Government.

EcoHomes assessments are available through organisations licensed by BRE. Details of these organisations, and how to get an assessment are available from BRE.

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