Sustainability Statement Guidance

Planning applications for residential developments of 5 or more dwellings, or non-residential developments comprising upwards of 100 square metres floor space

- This guidance has been prepared to help applicants or their agents preparing a Sustainability Statement, where required to support planning applications for residential developments of 5 or more dwellings, or non-residential developments comprising upwards of 100 square metres floor space. For small developments (including householder applications) the Council has prepared a separate model sustainability statement.
- A Sustainability Statement is required to demonstrate you have incorporated relevant sustainable design principles into the design of your development in line with Policy SP5 of our Local Plan.
- Not all of the guidance sections will be relevant, and the level of detail will depend on the size and nature of your proposal and its impacts. Where you deem something irrelevant, please provide justification.
- Please be aware that standards set out in the Building Regulations may affect your design and you should consider how you will meet the required standards early in the design process. We strongly recommend the use of professional advice to help you prepare and submit your application.
- If you require more help, the Council offers a pre-application advice service: https://www.westberks.gov.uk/preapp

1. Introduction

West Berkshire Council are committed to delivering against the Climate and Ecological emergencies that it has declared supporting the key requirements and objectives set out in the NPPF (2024), the West Berkshire Local Plan (2022-2026) – SP5 and DM4, the Council Strategy and the Council's Environment Strategy and Delivery Plan (including the refresh 2025).

The NPPF outlines three pillars of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental, stating '… So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development…'

In July 2019, West Berkshire Council unanimously declared a climate emergency. As part of this commitment to act, we continue to work towards our target of achieving net zero carbon for Council activities by 2030 and to support, encourage and facilitate net zero across West Berkshire. We recognise that the task is significant and to achieve our ambitions everyone must work together.

Following the declaration and building on the work already underway, an Environment Strategy was written and published in July 2020. To support the objectives of the Environment Strategy, we produced a detailed Environment Strategy Delivery plan which states the actions, responsibilities and timescales required to achieve the intentions within the Environment Strategy.

The Council also declared an ecological emergency on 5th October 2023; this means we have recognised the urgency to protect nature and will take collective action to protect, conserve and enhance biodiversity locally.

In 2025, the Council undertook a review of the Environment Strategy and Delivery Plan, known as the Environment Strategy 2025 Refresh, which was approved by the Council's Executive in May 2022. The refresh takes stock of progress to date and builds on the many achievements, especially in the period 2020 to 2025.

The Environment Strategy and Delivery Plan is a key tool to support the Council in delivering on the detail in the Council Strategy (2023-2027), specifically 'Priority Area: 3. Tackling the climate and ecological emergency'.

2. Considerations

Consideration should be given but not limited to the following when preparing the Sustainability Statement in accordance with relevant national, regional and local policy/guidance requirements:

- Creating a High-Quality Built Environment.
  For example: Design, orientation/shading, natural environment/landscape.
- Safety and Security
  For example: perimeter fencing, lighting, CCTV (if needed), Secure by Design.
- Promoting health and wellbeing
  For example: Design layout to enable sufficient space; natural/appropriate lighting, noise levels during occupancy; creating a high standard of living for the community; air quality, soil and ground water contamination; visual impact.
- Accessibility to local services - promoting vibrant and engaged communities
  For example: proximity to shops/supermarkets, health facilities, leisure/recreation facilities and outdoor activity areas.
- Sustainable economic development (including short and long-term employment benefits)
  For example: employment benefits during construction; operational employment benefits and training (non-residential)
- Mitigating Climate Change – energy/fuel use and associated carbon emissions generated during construction and operation

For example: the energy hierarchy for operational energy (regulated and unregulated); energy/fuel use during construction such as transportation/vehicle movement and plant machinery

- Adaptation and resilience to climate change
  For example: flood risk and sustainable drainage; solar shading/orientation; the heat island effect and the use of green and blue infrastructure to mitigate.
- Sustainable Transport
  For example: walking, public transport, cycling and cycling facilities, Travel Plan, Electric Vehicle Infrastructure.
- Maximising the use of sustainable materials
  For example: reuse of materials; sustainable sourcing – UK Government Timber procurement policy and BRE Green Guide; durability and resilience of materials; use of low VOC emitting materials.
- Water use and conservation
  For example: non potable water (i.e. rainwater/grey water reuse) – building and landscaping; low flow devices automatic shutoffs or passive infrared sensor (PIR); water monitoring.
- Waste minimisation and increased recycling rates – construction and operation
  For example: Construction- Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP)/ Resource Management Plan (RMP); non-hazardous materials diverted from landfill; waste materials will be sorted into separate key waste groups; adequate storage. Non construction – adequate internal and external waste and recycling facilities and storage for the developments size.
- Conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment
  For example: enhancing green and blue infrastructure through the design and construction; Biodiversity Net Gain; Nutrient Neutrality; protecting the existing natural and historic environments during construction i.e. Code of Construction Practice Enhancing.

Positive and negative impacts should be detailed.

Please be aware that standards set out in the Building Regulations may affect your design and you should consider how you will meet the required standards early in the design process1. In all cases we recommend the use of a professional advice to help you prepare and submit your application and maximise the sustainability credentials of your scheme. You can search the following directories to find a professional with sustainable buildings expertise -
https://www.greenregister.org.uk/search
https://www.aecb.net/
https://www.climatechangeandyourhome.org.uk

A glossary of terms and links to sources of further information can be found at the end of this document.

3. Glossary

Circular Economy
The circular economy is a model of production and consumption, where materials are retained in use at their highest value for as long as possible and are then reused and recycled.

Embodied carbon
Embodied carbon may be defined as the carbon footprint of a material. It considers the amount of greenhouse gas emissions that are released throughout a production supply chain to produce a material or product. It considers all extraction, transport, processing and fabrication activities of a material or product.

Energy Hierarchy
The Energy Hierarchy sets a tiered approach to reducing carbon dioxide emissions in the built environment. The first step is to reduce energy demand (be lean), the second step is to supply energy efficiently (be clean) and the third step is using renewable energy (be green). Further advice is set out in the M4 Position Statement.

Flood Risk Zones
There are areas within the District which are in the Environment Agency's Flood Zone 3 where there is a more significant (1%) chance of flooding from the River Thames in any one year. There is also a small
section within Flood Zone 2 with a moderate (0.1%) chance of flooding in any one year. If you are in a flood risk area you may need specialist advice for certain types of development, especially basement development and you may wish to incorporate flood resistance and resilience measures as part of the design. A Flood Risk Assessment may be needed. See Environment Agency Advice - https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-assessment-standing-advice#advice-for-minor-extensions

MVHR (Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery)
An efficient way to provide ventilation, is through a MVHR system. The equipment circulates air in a dwelling using a small fan, whilst recovering the heat from inside so it is not lost.

Renewable Technologies
Renewable energy is derived from a source that is continually replenished, such as wind, wave, solar, hydroelectric and energy from plant material, but not fossil fuels or nuclear energy. Energy consumption can be reduced by generating energy using renewable technologies. Although not strictly renewable, geothermal energy is generally included. You can also read Energy Saving Trust advice - https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/energy-at-home/generating-renewable-electricity/

Passive Building design
Passive design uses layout, fabric and form to reduce or remove the need for mechanical cooling, heating, ventilation and lighting demand. This may include measures to control solar gains such as solar shading and natural ventilation strategies.

Photovoltaics (PV)
Photovoltaic cells convert sunshine directly into electricity. See Energy Saving Trust for information - https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/advice/solar-panels/

VOC
Abbreviation for Volatile Organic Compounds which can release easily into the atmosphere and can in some cases cause health problems and ozone depletion. Low VOC mostly refers to paints and other products that have a very low or zero VOC, e.g. sealants, adhesives and cleaners. These are better for both the environment and living organisms.

Zero Carbon
Causing or resulting in no net loss of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. A zero carbon building is one with zero net energy consumption or zero net carbon emissions on an annual basis.

4. Sources of further advice and information

The following may be useful –
Planning Portal Advice on Greener Homes
https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200140/greener_homes
Energy Saving Trust Advice https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/
Living Roofs website
https://livingroofs.org/

Advice on Sustainable Drainage and Rain Gardens
https://www.susdrain.org/delivering-suds/using-suds/suds-components/infiltration/rain-gardens.html
https://www.susdrain.org/delivering-suds/using-suds/suds-components/source-control/source-control.html

Advice on historic buildings, refer to Historic England Guidance:
Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings

LETI Climate Emergency Retrofit Guide - advice to help develop a retrofit plan and adopt best practice targets for constrained (e.g. buildings in conservation areas or listed buildings) and unconstrained building types.

West Berkshire Biodiversity Net Gain and Nutrient Neutrality Guidance
https://www.westberks.gov.uk/article/42551/Biodiversity-and-the-Natural-Environment