

The Future Homes Standard national consultation and response

A note from Oxford Friends of the Earth

The government consultation on the proposed Future Homes Standard runs until January 10th.

At the time when we should be moving towards zero carbon homes as a standard the proposals in this exercise are simply inadequate. Every new home that is built to use energy unnecessarily is adding to the climate problem.

We should look to mobilise the maximum possible response from groups and organisations concerned about the climate emergency. The consultation is here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/the-future-homes-standard-changes-to-part-l-and-part-f-of-the-building-regulations-for-new-dwellings>

While this consultation is primarily aimed at property developers, builders, construction industry professionals etc., environmental organisations and local authorities are also listed, and the document recognises that ‘specific elements may be of interest to members of the public’.

The core of the Future Homes Standard (to be introduced in 2025) is summed up as ***“we anticipate that an average semi-detached home built to meet the Standard would produce 75- 80% less carbon dioxide emissions than one built to the 2013 Part L requirements”***. This is not a satisfactory response to the climate emergency.

While the consultation is quite detailed there are two key questions where any individual or group can respond.

Question 1 is:

Do you agree with our expectation that a home built to the Future Homes Standard should produce 75-80% less CO2 emissions than one built to current requirements?

It suggests three possible answers:

- a. Yes
- b. No – 75-80% is too high a reduction in CO2
- c. No – 75-80% is too low a reduction in CO2

If no, please explain your reasoning and provide evidence to support this.

We should strongly encourage ‘c’ as a response and produce summary evidence that anyone can use.

Question 4 relates to the fact but some local authorities are looking to set higher standards for new buildings. Part of this new proposal would stop them doing that. The question is

When, if at all, should the government commence the amendment to the Planning and Energy Act 2008 to restrict local planning authorities from setting higher energy efficiency standards for dwellings?

Again there are suggested answers:

- a. In 2020 alongside the introduction of any option to uplift to the energy efficiency standards of Part L
- b. In 2020 but only in the event of the introduction of a 31% uplift (option 2) to the energy efficiency standards of Part L
- c. In 2025 alongside the introduction of the Future Homes Standard
- d. The government should not commence the amendment to the Planning and Energy Act

Please explain your reasoning.

This needs some expert advice but the core position must be that this standard should be the bottom line rather than a top-line restriction. It might be a good move to suggest that local authorities could formally opt in setting a higher-carbon standard. The idea that local authorities should be restricted in their attempts to cut carbon makes little sense from the climate perspective. The key response here would be 'd' – again some expert advice needed on the reasoning.

There are other issues in this – not least the timing. 2025 is some way off and we should be pushing for more rapid action.

Councils are responding. One example is Oxfordshire County Council that has a motion tabled asking the Leader and Cabinet Member for the Environment to write to the Secretary of State “*requesting that the government ensure that the full ambition of these proposals is delivered and that the Future Homes Standard is set as a ‘minimum’ rather than ‘ceiling’ standard leaving open the opportunity for higher standards to come forward. We also urge government to bring forward the introduction of this standard before 2025, by which time large numbers of Oxfordshire’s new homes will already have been built.*” The motion is from the Cabinet Member for the Environment.