

# Housing Strategy and Development Briefing Note 15/12

Affordable Housing Development  
Silver / Gold Energy Efficiency Standards

October 2015



# Introduction

Welcome to a series of regular briefings prepared by the Housing Strategy and Development team on the big issues concerning housing. These briefings will be shared with staff, tenants and elected members and keep everyone up to date with regards the ever changing policy context that we are operating within.

The Housing Strategy and Development section is responsible for:-

- Providing the statutory strategic housing authority role within the local authority area;
- Strategic Housing Asset Management delivery;
- The delivery of the Council House New Build Programme and the delivery of the affordable Housing supply programme;
- Supporting the development of a culture of continuous improvement in Housing services and to facilitate opportunities to excel;
- Developing and implementing effective strategies for Housing and Community Safety Services within West Dunbartonshire;
- Developing the Council's housing strategy to ensure that it supports the delivery of our strategic priorities;
- Service development within Housing and Community Safety services; and Promoting effective management and the involvement of tenants across all aspects of Housing Services.

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## Briefing Note

### 1. Background:

This paper outlines the differences between Silver and Gold Energy Efficiency Standards as laid out in the current Building Regulations and notes some of the issues for West Dunbartonshire Council in considering upgrading from the Silver to a Gold Standard in terms of the new Design Standard for Affordable Housing.

### 2. Main Issues:

WDC is proposing to introduce a new Design Standard for all new affordable housing which is supported by an Affordable Housing Supply Programme grant.

As part of the proposed Design Standard it will be compulsory for new housing to meet the Silver Standard in terms of energy efficiency from 2016/2017.

The **Silver Standard** incorporates the following elements:

**Meet the Target Emissions Rate set within the Building Standards – this represents a 21% reduction in carbon emissions from the 2013 requirements**

**Have a low maximum annual demand for space heating (40kWh/m<sup>2</sup> for houses, 30kWh/m<sup>2</sup> for flats)**

**Have a minimum 5% annual energy demand for water heating from heat recovery or renewables**

**Use less water and, where there is a garden, include a water butt for outdoor use**

**Have a “quick start” guide and resource use display so occupants can optimise performance**

**Include a home office space (this is usually provided in the living room but sometimes in a bedroom).**

**Have better noise separation between properties and rooms between properties, benefit from a higher standard of natural light, and include a fused spur for an intruder alarm**

**Include for recycling by providing space internally**

(The **Silver Active** standard is the same as the silver level but, in addition, the dwelling includes the use of a low and zero carbon generating technology (LZCGT) in respect of meeting at least one of the aspects: Silver 1, Silver 2 or Silver 3. This level is primarily to assist local authorities to meet their obligations under Section 72 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 by identifying the use of LZCGT.

In this respect, LZCGTs include: wind turbines, water turbines, heat pumps (all varieties), solar thermal panels, photovoltaic panels, combined heat and power units (fired by low emission sources), fuel cells, biomass boilers/stoves and biogas.)

The second optional upper level 'gold' is a more demanding target. A third upper level called 'platinum' has been reserved for further recognition within the building standards system. At present, only the aspect of carbon dioxide emissions has been defined for the platinum level.

To meet the **Gold Standard**, homes must:

- Show a reduction of 27% in carbon dioxide emissions
- Have a low maximum annual demand for space heating (30kWh/m<sup>2</sup> for houses, 20kWh/m<sup>2</sup> for flats)
- Have a minimum 50% annual energy demand for water heating from heat recovery or renewables
- Use less water and, where there is a garden, include a water butt for outdoor use and contain at least 3 of the following 5 items:
  - water meter
  - WCs of average flush volume to be not more than 3.5 litres
  - wash hand basin taps of flow rates not more than 4 l/m and to kitchen or utility room sinks to be not more than 6 l/m
  - shower heads with maximum flow rate not more than 6 l/m
  - rainwater harvesting or greywater recycling system designed to provide water for toilet flushing.
- Have a "quick start" guide and resource use display so occupants can optimise performance. More information on these aspects is required of the Gold Standard.
- Include the home office space required of the Silver Standard as well as providing convenient secure mobility space to accommodate an electric wheelchair(s) and that could also be suitable for pram storage and the storage of a bicycle(s)
- Have enhanced noise separation, natural light, security and outdoor space standards than are stipulated for the Silver Standard
- As well as including for recycling of solid waste as per the Silver Standard, contain a design for deconstruction.

### 3. What it means for WDC:

In terms of comfort and affordability, making it mandatory for new affordable housing to meet the Silver Standard will be a significant benefit to tenants of new houses provided through the programme. It is estimated that the energy costs to households may reduce to as little as 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of their current figure.

Currently the Scottish Government allows an additional £4,000 grant for those new units reaching the Silver Standard. This assistance, combined with inclusion of sustainability principles from the outset of the design process means that the Silver Standard can be achieved in a cost effective and financially sustainable fashion.

While the Gold Standard improves on the Silver, it is considered that the additional costs would be significantly higher, not least because the supply availability of some elements required at this level may be limited. It is likely that the increased costs, both in construction and on-going maintenance, would be disproportionate to the benefits to tenants.

We would anticipate testing this with any future projects as we may expect construction methods and technology to catch up with the sustainable requirements.

In conclusion, it is considered that the achievement of the Silver Standard at this time represents a good balance between cost and performance... Going forward, and finances permitting, an incremental approach should be taken to improve on the Silver Standard and move towards the Gold Standard, as has been achieved at the Brucehill new build which meets the Silver *Active* Standard.

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