

Energy Assessment Guidance updates - Part L 2021 of building regulations

Background

The Mayor has declared a climate emergency and has set a target for London to be net zero by 2030. This puts London at the forefront of global cities and UK action on climate change. The Mayor's London Plan ensures that the planning system is playing its part in achieving the net zero target.

On 15 June 2022, national building regulations were updated to enhance energy performance standards for new buildings through Part L 2021. A new Part O 2021 was also introduced, updating requirements to tackle overheating.

The Mayor's Energy Assessment Guidance¹ has been updated to explain how London Plan policy should be applied now that these regulations have taken effect. This note summarises the key updates. An updated spreadsheet to report carbon emissions has also been published, which planning applicants should submit as part of the energy strategy² when these are required. As the accompanying Part L 2021 software is not yet available, planning applicants should continue to use the 2020 guidance, spreadsheet and the Part L 2013 methodology until the software is available. Once the software is available, the updated guidance and spreadsheet should be used for all Stage 1 application submissions.

Part L 2021 is a stepping-stone towards the Future Homes Standard and Future Buildings Standard which the Government is expected to consult on in 2023 and introduce in 2025. London's approach will be updated further once these standards are agreed.

The Mayor's net zero carbon target for major developments

The updated guidance confirms that all major developments in London must continue to meet the London Plan net zero carbon target by following the energy hierarchy (Policy SI 2), the heating hierarchy (Policy SI 3) and by maximising on-site carbon reductions. Planning applicants will be expected to demonstrate that at each stage of the energy hierarchy they have maximised opportunities for carbon reduction to achieve as close to zero as possible. An on-site carbon reduction of at least 35 per cent beyond Part L 2021 of building regulations should be achieved. Once it has been demonstrated that carbon reductions have been maximised, any remaining emissions to zero should be offset by a contribution to the relevant borough's carbon offset fund. Applicants should also continue to meet the energy efficiency targets (Policy SI 2) and undertake dynamic modelling as part their energy strategy to reduce the risk of overheating (Policy SI 4).

Applying London Plan policy

- **Achieving on-site carbon reductions:** the on-site carbon reductions that can normally be achieved over Part L 2021 will vary for different development types:

¹ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/pre-planning-application-meeting-service-0>

² As above.

- Residential developments are expected to be able to achieve on-site savings beyond the minimum 35 per cent improvement, so we have introduced an additional percentage improvement benchmark of 50 per cent plus which these developments should be aiming to achieve. Meeting the energy efficiency target may now be more challenging initially, but it is essential that planning applicants reduce energy demand as far as possible to avoid high energy bills for occupants.
- Initially, non-residential developments may find it more challenging to achieve significant on-site carbon reductions beyond Part L 2021 to meet both the energy efficiency target and the minimum 35 per cent improvement. This is because the new Part L baseline now includes low carbon heating for non-residential developments but not for residential developments. However, planning applicants will still be expected to follow the energy hierarchy to maximise carbon savings before offsetting is considered.
- Developments connecting to gas-based district heat networks (DHNs) may also find it more challenging to achieve significant on-site carbon reductions beyond Part L 2021 until the decarbonisation strategies for these networks begin to take effect. Developments in Heat Network Priority Areas (HNPAs) are expected to connect to a network where possible to support London's decarbonisation provided the network has a decarbonisation strategy, that it does not exceed the CO₂ emission and primary energy factors set out in Part L 2021, and that any expansion in the capacity of the network to serve a new development is from a low carbon heat source.
- Over time it is expected that performance against Part L 2021 will improve to enable these developments to achieve closer alignment with the energy efficiency targets and the minimum 35 per cent on-site improvement due to technological improvements and as costs come down. We will monitor this progress and may update the benchmarks to reflect these improvements as appropriate. In the intervening period applicants should continue to aim to maximise on-site carbon reductions as far as possible.
- **Reporting Energy Use Intensity (EUI) and space heating demand:** to support the energy efficiency targets and to protect occupants from high energy bills, we have introduced a requirement in the guidance for applicants to report the Energy Use Intensity (EUI) and space heating demand of the development. Applicants must still report compliance against the percentage improvement target, which will complement these new reporting requirements to ensure energy efficiency is maximised and provide a more accurate indication of performance.
- **Overheating:** Dynamic overheating modelling using CIBSE guidance will continue to be required as part of the submission of the energy strategy, and accounting for the limits that Part O 2021 places on the choices available when undertaking a CIBSE assessment.

Contact

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