Key Updates to Building Regulations

Future Homes Standard 2027

Key regulatory changes, timelines, and what they mean for your next project.

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abbeyconsultants.co.uk | +44 (0)1923 274 427 | sam.higgs@abbey-consultants.com

Key Regulatory Changes

Net Zero Ready Homes by 2027

From March 2027, all new homes in England must comply with the Future Homes Standard. This requires significantly enhanced energy efficiency, low-carbon heating systems in place of gas boilers, and the integration of on-site renewable energy generation.

Transition from Gas Boilers to Low-Carbon Heating

Gas boilers will no longer be permitted in newly built homes. Developers will be required to install heat pumps or alternative low-carbon heating technologies as standard. These new homes will deliver substantially lower operational costs and reduced carbon emissions due to improved insulation and system efficiency.

Solar Photovoltaics as Standard

The new regulations mandate the installation of solar PV panels on most new residential properties. As a guideline, approximately **40% of suitable roof or floor area** should be allocated for panels, with reasonable flexibility based on design constraints. This will enable homes to generate renewable electricity on-site, lowering energy bills and supporting wider decarbonisation goals.

In practice, this will usually mean solar photovoltaic (PV) panels on the roof of each house or apartment building. The government's guidance deems the requirement met if the PV array area is about 40% of the dwelling's floor footprint (i.e. PV panel area ≈ 0.4 × ground floor area). There is flexibility: if design constraints (roof shape, orientation, shading or desire for architectural features) prevent hitting 40%, a smaller installation can be acceptable as long as it's a "reasonable" output. If a roof can't accommodate a very small array (~720 kWh/year, roughly 2 panels), then no PV is required because the effort would yield minimal benefit.

Tall buildings (with a storey >18 m, e.g. high-rise flats) are exempt from the on-site renewables mandate, acknowledging the practical difficulty of large PV systems on tower blocks.

Improved Ventilation in Airtight Homes

Under the Future Homes Standard and the ongoing Part L trajectory, new dwellings are typically designed to:

- Achieve very high levels of airtightness (often ≤ 3 or ≤ 2 $m^3/h \cdot m^2$)
- Utilise low-carbon heating systems such as heat pumps
- Have significantly reduced space-heating demand

As airtightness standards increase, it becomes essential that ventilation systems are carefully designed, correctly installed, and properly commissioned to maintain good indoor air quality. Solutions may include background ventilation (such as trickle vents) or mechanical systems, including Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR), particularly in highly insulated homes.

While traditional System 1 and System 2 ventilation may still be technically permissible, compliance with energy performance requirements becomes increasingly challenging at lower air permeability

levels. In practice:

- **Centralised Mechanical Extract Ventilation (cMEV)** may be acceptable, but typically results in higher ventilation heat losses and makes Part L compliance more difficult.
- **Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR)** offers clear advantages by recovering heat from exhaust air, reducing DER and TPER values, and aligning more closely with SAP 10.3 and forthcoming Home Energy Model (HEM) assumptions.

Ventilation Strategy by Airtightness

AIRTIGHTNESS TARGET	VIABLE VENTILATION OPTIONS
> 5 m³/h·m²	Natural ventilation / dMEV
3–5 m³/h·m²	dMEV / cMEV
≤ 3 m³/h·m²	**MVHR (normally required)**

New Compliance Tools

The industry is transitioning to updated energy assessment methodologies under the Future Homes Standard. **SAP 10.3** is currently in use, with a next-generation **Home Energy Model (HEM)** due to be introduced for compliance calculations. During the transition period, both tools will be permitted; however, HEM will ultimately become mandatory. Early familiarisation with HEM is therefore strongly advised.

Government has confirmed that HEM will become an approved calculation methodology no earlier than three months after publication of the Future Homes Standard response. Once approved, SAP 10.3 and HEM may be used in parallel during a defined dual-running period, which will last for a minimum of 24 months.

Implementation Timeline

1. Future Homes Standard Launch – HEM Not Mandatory

The Future Homes Standard comes into force on:

- 24 March 2027 for non-higher-risk buildings (non-HRBs)
- 24 September 2027 for higher-risk buildings (HRBs)

At launch, SAP 10.3 is the only methodology guaranteed to be available, and HEM will not be mandatory. SAP 10.3 is explicitly retained at this stage to avoid disruption to the industry.

2. HEM Approval – Earliest Timing

Government has stated that HEM will become an approved methodology no earlier than approximately three months after publication of the Future Homes Standard response (March 2026). Approval does not mean HEM becomes mandatory; it simply marks the start of the dual-running period.

3. Dual-Running Period (Critical Phase)

Once HEM is approved:

- SAP 10.3 and HEM will operate in parallel
- Either methodology may be used for compliance
- The dual-running period will last for a minimum of 24 months, which is explicitly guaranteed

4. HEM Becoming Mandatory

HEM will only become mandatory once all of the following conditions have been met:

- HEM is approved and technically stable
- At least 24 months of dual running has elapsed
- Government confirms industry readiness
- A minimum of six months' formal notice is given prior to withdrawal of SAP 10.3

FHS Implementation Timeline

March 2026 – Policy Finalised
The Government publishes the FHBS consultation response and lays regulations in Parliament. Industry is given a one-year lead time to prepare for new rules.

24 March 2027 – New Standards Become Law
Future Homes Standard regulations take effect for all new non-Higher-Risk residential building work in England. Part L & F 2026 and the new renewable energy requirement are legally in force from this date. This marks the start of a 12-month transition period.

24 Sept 2027 – Higher-Risk Buildings (HRBs)
For Higher-Risk Buildings (e.g. residential buildings 18m+ tall), the FHBS regulations apply from 24 Sept 2027. Projects involving HRBs must have a valid Building Control application ("Gateway 2" for safety) in before this date to use old 2021 standards; otherwise they must comply with the new standards.

24 March 2028 – Transition Period Ends
Deadline for transitional arrangements on standard (non-HRB) projects. A development must have submitted building regs plans by 24 March 2027 and begun construction on each building by 24 March 2028. Any new dwelling not started by this date must fully comply with the 2027 FHBS standards. After March 2028, no extensions or exemptions apply.

Need help preparing for the Future Homes Standard?

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Abbey Consultants will continue to monitor the development and implementation of the Future Homes Standard and will issue further guidance and technical updates as additional information becomes available. Our team remains committed to supporting clients through the transition to these new regulatory requirements by providing clear, practical, and up-to-date advice.