



Councils: Planning Applications and Sustainability

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Research suggests that many people would find it easier to build and retrofit their homes sustainably if Council policies, plans and processes were more supportive of sustainable design. Even when policies are neutral or supportive of sustainable building, Council administrative processes can be a disincentive.

Yet, Councils willing to successfully promote more sustainable homes in their districts can make it easier for homeowners to build and retrofit more sustainable homes.

Council officers have told us that there is strong interest in sustainable building within councils, but many feel that they are only at the beginning of the journey. Currently, there are limited resources, knowledge gaps, and a generally piecemeal approach to policy initiatives to support sustainable residential building.

Another obstacle is the current budget crunch, Councils not being too prone to engage funds into new ventures when they are sustaining cuts in budgets.

At a minimum cost to the taxpayer, Poune Asset Management's goal is to develop tools Councils can use to review and refine their own procedures, processes and regulations.

Why should Councils promote sustainable homes?

For councils, there is a strong **value case** for being involved in promoting more sustainable homes in their boroughs and cities. Sustainable homes promote the health, economic efficiency, and environmental well-being of our communities. As a consequence, they can reduce demand for infrastructure and services provided by Councils.

There is also an increasingly good **legislative basis** for Councils to promote more sustainable building choices, and there is a range of tools that Councils could employ to this end.



Opportunities exist, and to mention a few, we have:

- Council strategies
- Regulation
- Design guidance
- Economic tools
- Community education
- And - importantly - Councils' own administrative practices.

The second part below was updated in April 2012 following the publication of a comprehensive research paper by Poune Asset Management, allowing for download on our website in the “Information” and “Download Centre” pages.

What can Councils do?

Although there is no single, simple mechanism for Councils to implement, they can capitalise on the numerous small opportunities that exist across all aspects of Council operations, to develop a comprehensive and effective approach to encouraging more sustainable homes.

Building on the policies and programs that are already in place in many Councils, there is considerable scope to strengthen and extend the range of initiatives that Councils offer.

Building sustainable homes: a resource manual for local government

Based on our research with local government, in sustainable renovation and in defining what makes a sustainable home, we have summed up the core of our research in a guide:

“Policy Options for Sustainable Homes: A Resource Manual for Local Governments”

This Resource Manual sets out to assist Councils to:

- 1) Understand the context:
Why we need sustainable homes and what is the value to councils of promoting sustainable building.
- 2) Define the outcomes:
What makes a sustainable home?
- 3) Establish the basis for action:
What are the legislative prompts for Council action?
- 4) Evaluate the options for action:
A detailed assessment of the initiatives that Councils could develop, identifying the scope, pros and cons of the different methods.



Getting planning consent to build a new house or make renovations to an existing house or flat can be a frustrating process. Trying to incorporate sustainable features and new sustainable technologies such as solar water heaters or rainwater tanks can add to this frustration. And yet it is in the interests of homeowners, local councils and the whole country to encourage homes that are built and renovated to a high standard of sustainability.

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