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Towards Zero Carbon Homes in England? From Inception to Partial Implementation

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Abstract

In 2007, the UK Government announced an ambitious zero-carbon target for all new housing in England. This paper shows how the definition and its associated policies emerged from discourses of environmental policy innovation; how the problem subsequently became framed as one of mainstreaming, consequent upon the apparent success of experimental schemes and defined in more detail through the interaction between pressure group politics and the technical analyses that accompanied the government's consultation exercises. Finally, it shows how regional and local variations in housing and property markets are likely to influence the ease of zero carbon development. The analysis uses concepts drawn from both the science and technology literature and the literature on policy implementation.

Keywords:

Notes

¹ The principles of the Passivhaus are explained at the relevant UK website. Available at <http://www.passivhaus.org.uk> (accessed April 2010).

² 'OECD work on green growth'. Available at http://www.oecd.org/document/10/0,3343,en_2649_37465_44076170_1_1_1_1,00.html (accessed March 2010).

³ Information available from the UK Parliament website. Available at <http://services.parliament.uk/hansard/Commons/ByDate/20090707/writtenanswers/part019.html> (accessed November 2009).

⁴ Home Builders Federation (2007) Callcutt Review of Housebuilding Delivery. Submission by the Home Builders Federation London, HBF.

⁵ The Merton rule and other similar initiatives are explained in more detail in the case studies on the website of the Energy Savings Trust, notably 'Energy in planning and building control Merton's renewable energy planning condition'. Available at <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/business/Business/Information-centre/Publications-and-Report-Library/Publications-and-Case-Studies> (accessed April 2010).

⁶ 'HBF—Private developers fully committed to greener homes'. Press release 21 September 2007. Available at the website of the Home Builders Federation at <http://www.hbf.co.uk/Press-Releases-1a7d51f> (accessed May 2010).

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⁸ Frohmann, B. 'Taking information policy beyond information science: applying the actor network theory'. Canadian Association for Information Science, 23rd Annual Conference, Edmonton, Alberta, 7–10 June 1995. Available at http://www.cais-acsi.ca/proceedings/1995/frohmann_1995.pdf (accessed April 2010).

⁹ Department of Communities and Local Government press release, 13 December 2006. Available at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id = 1002882&PressNoticeID = 2320> (accessed May 2007).

¹⁰ CIOB (Chartered Institute of Building) Policy statement August 2008 'The definition of zero carbon'. Available at <http://www.ciob.org.uk/about/ciobpolicies/policysd> (accessed April 2010).

¹¹ Ministerial statement, 16 July 2009. Available at the website of the Department for Communities and Local Government at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/statements/corporate/ecozerohomes> (accessed July 2009).

¹² Ministerial statement, 16 July 2009. Available at the website of the Department for Communities and Local Government at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/statements/corporate/ecozerohomes> (accessed July 2009).

¹³ Presentation by J. Fox, Head of Sustainability for Barratt Developments, given at Sheffield Hallam University, 22 January 2009.

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