

Home Quality Mark guide

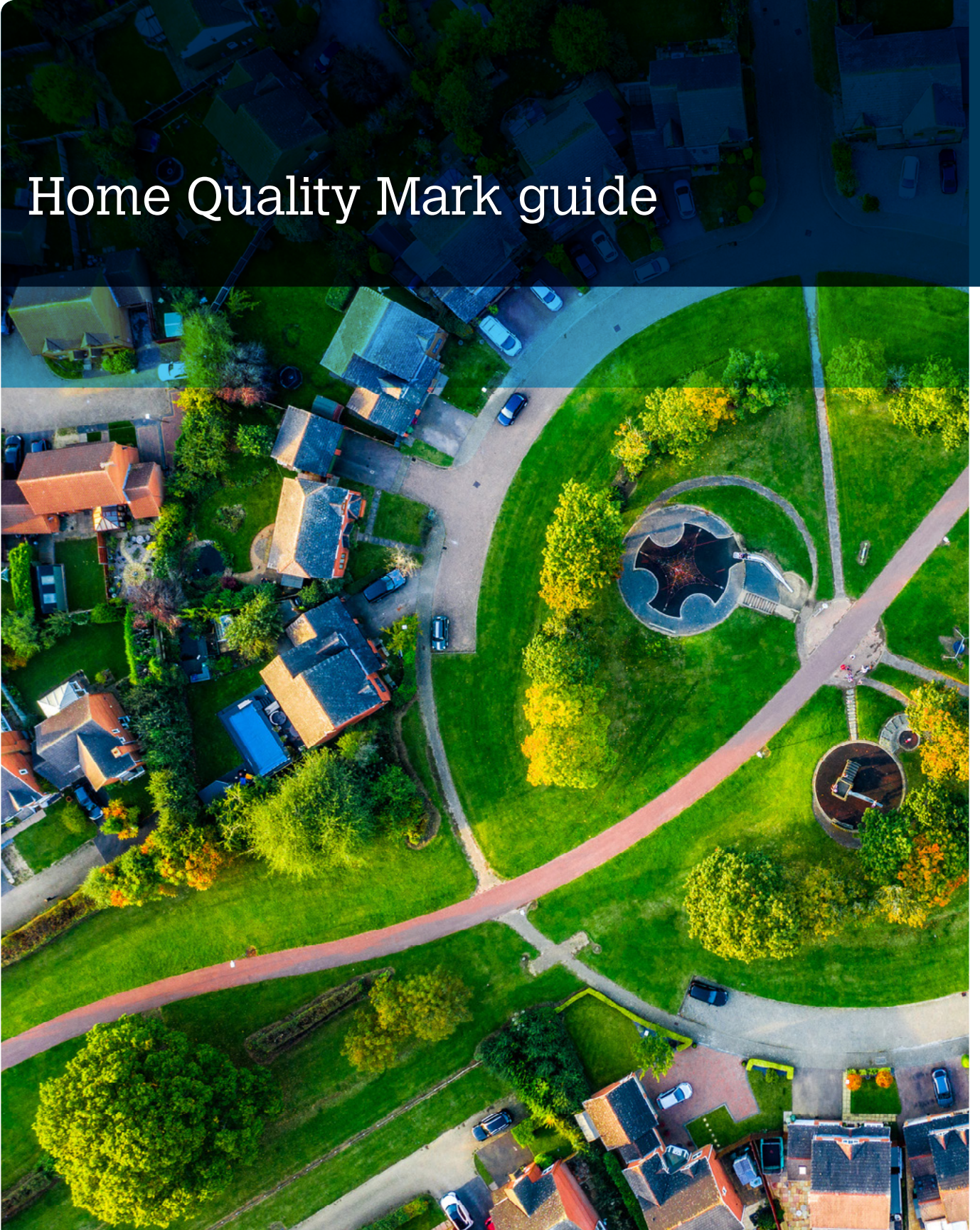


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Introduction

What is Home Quality Mark (HQM)?

Home Quality Mark (HQM) is a certification scheme for new homes, employing a simple 5-star rating system to rank homes based on design, construction, and sustainability. The scheme is independently assessed, giving confidence that every home with an HQM certificate has been objectively scored and meets standards significantly higher than minimum standards such as Building Regulations.

HQM is designed to provide a trusted mark of quality that consumers can rely on, and that housebuilders, developers, and housing providers can benefit from. It offers recognised and trusted certification that providers can use to demonstrate the quality of their homes to potential buyers and tenants. It also assures investors, lenders, and insurers that homes have been built to a high standard.

Planning authorities and communities can use the HQM to recognise developments that meet high standards of quality and sustainability and national and local policy. The HQM's technical criteria build on national standards and regulations, and good and best practice in the industry, to effectively and efficiently assess new homes throughout England, Scotland, Wales, and now Northern Ireland.

Relationship with BREEAM

HQM comes from the same product family as BREEAM, the world's leading sustainability assessment method for master planning projects, infrastructure, and buildings. Both HQM and BREEAM share a commitment to driving sustainability in the built environment. However, while BREEAM covers a wide range of building types, including commercial and public buildings, HQM is specifically tailored for new homes.

Third-party certification, science, and robustness

HQM includes the same level of third-party certification, science, and robustness as BREEAM. It's not simply a developer/client self-certifying – but rather an objective, independent and verifiable claim. This robust certification process ensures that homes are healthier, more comfortable, and have lower running costs.



Why HQM?

Beyond regulation: HQM's added value

While building regulations set the minimum standards for home construction, the Home Quality Mark (HQM) provides assurance that the quality of the building goes above and beyond these requirements. HQM enables developers to show how they have used best practices in new home construction, promoting higher standards of design and construction for the benefit of homeowners and the wider community.

ESG principles and indicators

HQM is aligned with Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles, enabling developers and investors to show their commitment to these values. HQM's comprehensive assessment covers a wide range of ESG indicators, from energy efficiency and biodiversity to health and wellbeing, providing a holistic view of a home's sustainability and social impact.

Why the Build to Rent sector is using HQM

The Build to Rent (BTR) sector is the fastest-growing market within HQM, with increasing adoption due to its comprehensive approach to quality and sustainability. HQM, coming from the same suite of schemes as BREEAM, provides a robust, third-party certification that verifies the performance of new homes, making it an invaluable tool for BTR developers and investors. Its alignment with the focus on customer satisfaction, long-term value, and corporate responsibility further underscores its significance in driving sustainable and successful BTR developments.

By incorporating HQM into their projects, BTR developers can differentiate themselves in a competitive market, attract socially conscious tenants, and showcase their commitment to delivering high-quality, sustainable homes. This rapid uptake in the BTR sector demonstrates the sector's recognition of HQM as a trusted and effective standard for assessing and certifying the performance of their developments.

Moreover, HQM is recognised as a provable way to demonstrate that sustainability goals have been incorporated into a development. This adds another layer of credibility and assurance for both developers and tenants.

If you're interested in providing high-quality and sustainable homes, we encourage you to reach out to the HQM team or visit our website at www.bregroup.com/home-quality-mark/ to find a licensed HQM assessor. With HQM, you can help meet the ever-growing demand for affordable housing while ensuring sustainability and quality objectives are achieved.

Quality with the customer at its core

HQM is designed with the customer at its core. It provides clear and independent information about a home's expected costs, health and wellbeing benefits, and environmental footprint, helping homebuyers and renters choose homes built to a higher standard.

Sign of a better home

An HQM rating is a sign of a better home. It indicates that the home has been independently assessed and found to meet high standards in a wide range of areas that contribute to the overall quality of life for its occupants.

This includes not only the expected areas of performance and sustainability, but also extends to aspects of the home that are sometimes overlooked yet are crucial to the comfort and wellbeing of its residents.

With an HQM rating, you can be assured of a home that prioritises:

- **Comfort:** Our standards ensure that HQM homes provide a comfortable living environment, with considerations for temperature control, lighting, and noise levels.
- **Security:** HQM homes are designed with safety and security in mind, incorporating features that help to protect residents and their belongings.
- **Storage:** Adequate and well-designed storage space is a key feature of HQM homes, helping to reduce clutter and make the home more functional and enjoyable to live in.
- **Resilience:** HQM homes are built to be resilient to future climate risks, including measures to increase resilience to flooding, overheating, and other climate impacts.
- **Outdoor Space Quality:** HQM recognises the importance of quality outdoor spaces for health and wellbeing. HQM homes are designed to provide access to outdoor spaces that are safe, secure, and enjoyable to use.

By choosing an HQM-rated home, you're choosing a home that goes above and beyond in delivering a high-quality living environment.

Better reputation, lower risk and happier customers

For developers, an HQM rating enhances reputation, reduces risk, and leads to happier customers. It demonstrates a commitment to quality and sustainability, which differentiates a developer in the market, attracting socially conscious buyers and tenants, and increasing customer satisfaction.

HQM mitigates several key risks for developers. By prioritising quality construction and sustainability, it reduces the risk of costly construction defects and future retrofitting. It also minimises the risk of non-compliance with evolving environmental regulations and standards. Furthermore, by considering factors important to homeowners, the environment, and wider society, which are often overlooked by regulations, HQM reduces the risk of reputational damage from negative environmental or social impacts. This comprehensive, holistic approach also minimises the risk of unintended consequences that can arise from focusing on a single issue, thereby creating a positive impact on both the developers' business and the customers they serve.

Opens up green finance

HQM-rated homes can open opportunities for green finance, as they meet the high sustainability standards often required by green mortgages and loans. This can make it easier for homebuyers to secure financing and for developers to attract investment.

Leading the way to zero carbon

HQM not only supports the drive towards zero carbon but also aligns with BRE's wider Net Zero Carbon (NZC) initiatives. It promotes energy-efficient design and construction, encouraging the use of renewable energy, reducing carbon emissions, and improving energy performance. By incorporating HQM into BREEAM projects, developers can demonstrate their commitment to sustainable building practices, achieving BREEAM excellence and contributing to national and international climate goals.

Resilience to climate change

The Home Quality Mark (HQM) promotes resilience to climate change by encouraging the consideration of future climate risks in the design and construction of new homes. This includes measures to increase resilience to flooding, overheating, and other climate impacts, helping to ensure that homes are fit for the future and customers to buy with confidence.

While reducing a home's effect on the environment is crucial, it is equally important to make sure a house is resilient to the effects of climate change. As the demand for housing grows, the amount of available space reduces, pushing an increasing number of developments onto areas prone to flooding. Increasing resilience to flooding can drastically reduce the risk of homes becoming flooded, and so the need for lengthy, expensive repairs. In essence, resilience will be critical in preventing financial and health disasters, making it a key aspect of sustainable home development.

Protecting and improving nature and delivering biodiversity net-gain

HQM recognises the importance of nature and biodiversity. It encourages the protection and enhancement of local ecosystems, the creation of green spaces, and the delivery of biodiversity net-gain, contributing to healthier and more sustainable communities.

Supports a culture of quality and sustainability

By promoting higher standards of design and construction, HQM supports a culture of quality and sustainability in the housing sector. It encourages continuous improvement, innovation, and best practice, driving up standards across the industry.

Puts policy and principles into practice

Housing remains a significant issue for both local and national policy. With the government having pledged to build 300,000 homes a year by the mid-2020s, the scale of the housing issue is immense. In England alone, an average of 159,000 extra homes are provided each year, compared with an estimated need for between 240,000 and 340,000 new homes.

Key policies such as the Clean Growth Strategy, the Environment Bill, the National Design Guide, Future Homes Standard, and NHS Healthy Towns all aim to address this demand. These policies not only focus on increasing the availability of housing but also emphasise the need for quality and sustainability.

The Home Quality Mark (HQM) plays a crucial role in this landscape. It helps to put these policies and principles into practice, aligning with key objectives on housing, sustainability, and wellbeing. HQM provides a practical tool for implementing sustainability principles in new home development, ensuring that the homes being built are not just numerous, but also high quality and sustainable.

How are homes assessed?

What is assessed?

The Home Quality Mark (HQM) provides a comprehensive assessment of a new home's performance. This includes the home's design and construction quality, and its environmental footprint. The assessment also considers the home's impact on the occupant's health and wellbeing, as well as its resilience to future climate change.

The HQM assessment covers a wide range of categories, including energy, water, materials, space, transport and movement, outdoors, safety and resilience, comfort, quality assurance, construction impacts, and customer experience. Each category is assessed using a set of detailed criteria, providing a holistic view of the home's performance. The assessment is most effective as part of a two-stage process.

The first stage involves an assessment during the design stage to recognise high standards of design being met and to identify any opportunities to improve the design and planning for the project.

The second stage involves an assessment during the construction stage to meet high standards and make improvements. This stage confirms that commitments made in the design phase were met adding to the robustness of the standard.

Sources of information

The HQM assessment is based on a variety of sources of information. This includes technical specifications, design drawings, and other documentation provided by the developer or design team. It also includes on-site inspections and post-construction testing, ensuring that the home's performance is verified in practice as well as in theory.

The assessment is carried out by a licensed HQM assessor, who is trained to apply the HQM methodology and standards. The assessor's role is to gather and review the necessary information, carry out the assessment, and provide the final HQM rating. The credibility and consistency of the assessment and rating is a fundamental part of HQM. The evidence, science-based criteria and independent assessment underpin the scheme.

For an up-to-date list of licensed HQM assessors and certified projects, visit the website at www.greenbooklive.com.



HQM categories

The Home Quality Mark (HQM) assessment covers a wide range of categories that reflect the key aspects of a home's performance. Each category is assessed using a set of detailed criteria, providing a comprehensive view of the home's quality, sustainability, and impact on occupant wellbeing.



Transport and Movement

This category evaluates a home's proximity to public and sustainable transport options and local amenities. It considers walking and cycling routes, public transport links, and the availability of local services and facilities.

In the context of the '15 Minute City' concept, this category gains additional relevance. The 15 Minute City is an urban design approach that promotes mixed-use, community-based, and environmentally friendly infrastructure. It envisions a city where all residents can access school, work, shopping, and leisure activities within a 15-minute walk or cycle from their homes.

An efficient, sustainable, and appealing active transport network is at the heart of any successful 15 Minute City. High-quality bike lanes, safe pedestrian areas, and green spaces are critical to make short journeys practical and enjoyable.

HQM aligns with these principles, encouraging the development of homes in locations that support the ideals of the 15 Minute City, promoting sustainable transport and local amenities.



Outdoors

This category evaluates the quality and accessibility of outdoor spaces associated with the home. This includes private gardens, communal outdoor spaces, and local green spaces. It also considers the home's impact on local biodiversity and the provision of nature-friendly features.



Safety and Resilience

This category assesses the home's resilience to future climate risks, such as flooding and overheating, and its provisions for home security. It considers factors such as flood risk management, thermal comfort, and security measures.



Comfort

This category evaluates the home's indoor environmental quality, including factors such as daylight, noise, air quality, and thermal comfort. It considers how these factors contribute to a comfortable and healthy living environment.



Energy

This category assesses the home's energy performance, including its energy efficiency and use of renewable energy. It considers factors such as insulation, heating and cooling systems, lighting, and appliances.



Materials

This category evaluates the environmental impact of the materials used in the home's construction. It considers factors such as the lifecycle impacts of materials, the use of responsibly sourced materials.



Space

This category assesses the home's space standards, including the size and layout of rooms and the provision of storage space. It considers how these factors contribute to a comfortable and functional living environment.



Water

This category evaluates the home's water efficiency, including the use of water-efficient fittings and appliances and the provision of water recycling systems. It considers how these factors contribute to a reduced environmental impact and lower water bills.



Quality Assurance

This category assesses the quality of the home's design and construction process. It considers factors such as the qualifications and experience of the design and construction team, the use of quality management systems, and the provision of customer information and aftercare.



Construction Impacts

This category evaluates the environmental impact of the home's construction process. It considers factors such as waste management, pollution control, and the protection of the local environment during construction.



Customer Experience

This category assesses the quality of the customer's experience, from the initial purchase through to aftercare. It considers factors such as the provision of customer information, the handling of customer enquiries and complaints, and the quality of aftercare services.

Benefits of HQM

The Home Quality Mark (HQM) provides a range of benefits for homeowners, developers, and the wider community. These benefits fall into three main categories: environmental, health and wellbeing, and economic.

Environmental benefits

HQM promotes sustainability in new home construction, contributing to environmental protection and the fight against climate change. It encourages energy and water efficiency, the use of sustainable materials, and the protection and enhancement of biodiversity. By reducing the environmental footprint of new homes, HQM supports the transition to a sustainable future.

Health and wellbeing benefits

HQM contributes to healthier and happier communities. It promotes the creation of homes that are comfortable, safe, and connected to local amenities and green spaces. It also encourages the consideration of future climate risks, helping

to ensure that homes are resilient and fit for the future. By focusing on the wellbeing of occupants, HQM supports the creation of homes that people love to live in.

Economic benefits

HQM can deliver economic benefits for homeowners and developers. For homeowners, an HQM-rated home can mean lower running costs, a healthier living environment, and a home that holds its value. For developers, HQM can enhance reputation, attract socially conscious buyers, and open up opportunities for green finance. By demonstrating a commitment to quality and sustainability, HQM can contribute to the long-term success of housing projects.

HQM and BREEAM: A closer look

Home Quality Mark (HQM) and BREEAM are both leading sustainability assessment methods for buildings. While they share a common commitment to driving sustainability in the built environment, they have distinct focuses and applications.

Similarities and differences

Both HQM and BREEAM assess buildings on a wide range of sustainability criteria, including energy and water efficiency, materials, waste, pollution, health and wellbeing, and ecology.

However, while BREEAM covers a wide range of building types, including commercial and public buildings, HQM is specifically tailored for new homes. HQM also places a greater emphasis on customer experience and aftercare, reflecting its focus on the homebuyer and renter market.

Potential applications and benefits

The alignment between HQM and BREEAM presents opportunities for developers and investors. For example, a developer could use BREEAM to demonstrate the sustainability of a mixed-use development, while using HQM to highlight the quality and sustainability of the residential units. This could provide a comprehensive sustainability narrative that appeals to a wide range of stakeholders. The alignment also supports the sharing of best practices and the harmonisation of standards across the building industry. This can drive up overall standards of sustainability and quality, benefiting the environment, building occupants, and the wider community.

The powerful alignment between HQM and BREEAM creates a wealth of opportunities for developers and investors seeking to showcase their commitment to sustainability

and quality. By leveraging both certifications strategically, developers can craft a comprehensive sustainability narrative that captivates stakeholders and sets their projects apart.

Imagine a mixed-use development where a developer wishes to highlight the sustainability aspects of the entire project. BREEAM, known for its holistic approach to assessing environmental, social, and economic impacts, can be employed to showcase the sustainable features of the commercial and public spaces within the development. This demonstrates a dedication to sustainable practices that extend beyond residential units.

To truly emphasise the quality and sustainability of the residential units, the developer can turn to HQM. With its robust and reliable third-party certification, HQM verifies the performance of new homes, providing a clear signal of the development's commitment to delivering high-quality living spaces. By utilizing HQM in conjunction with BREEAM, the developer can weave a comprehensive sustainability narrative that resonates with diverse stakeholders, including prospective homeowners, investors, and local communities.

Moreover, the alignment between HQM and BREEAM facilitates the sharing of best practices and the harmonisation of sustainability standards across the building industry. This collaboration drives continuous improvement and raises the bar for sustainability and quality benchmarks. As developers and professionals exchange knowledge and insights, innovative solutions and approaches gain wider adoption, benefiting the environment, enhancing the well-being of building occupants, and positively impacting the wider community.

Implementing HQM

Implementing the Home Quality Mark (HQM) involves a series of steps, from the initial registration of the home to the final certification. It also requires the involvement of a licensed HQM assessor, who carries out the assessment and provides the final HQM rating.

Steps to certification

Registration: The first step in the HQM process is to register the home with the HQM scheme. This involves providing basic information about the home and the development and paying the registration fee.

Pre-assessment: The licensed HQM assessor carries out a pre-assessment to identify the potential HQM rating of the home. This involves reviewing the home's design and specifications and providing advice on how to improve the home's performance.

Assessment: The assessor carries out the full HQM assessment. This involves gathering and reviewing detailed information about the home's design, construction, and performance, and scoring the home against the HQM criteria.

Certification: Once the assessment is complete, the assessor submits the assessment to the HQM scheme for quality assurance. If the assessment is approved, the home is awarded its final HQM rating and certificate.

Training for assessors

Becoming a licensed HQM assessor involves completing a training course and passing an examination. The training covers the HQM methodology and criteria, the assessment process, and the use of the HQM software. Once licensed, assessors are required to maintain their competence through continuing professional development.

Conclusion

The future of HQM

Home Quality Mark (HQM) is set to play an increasingly important role in the housing sector. As the demand for sustainable, high-quality homes continues to grow, HQM provides a robust and comprehensive assessment method that can guide developers, inform homebuyers and renters, and drive up standards across the industry.

HQM is also well placed to support the transition to a zero-carbon future. By promoting energy-efficient design and construction, and by encouraging the consideration of future climate risks, HQM can help to ensure that new homes are fit for the future and contribute to the fight against climate change.

Invitation to join the HQM journey

We invite all stakeholders in the housing sector to join us on the HQM journey. Whether you're a developer, a homebuyer, a renter, a policymaker, or an industry professional, we invite you to explore the benefits of HQM, to learn from the best practices it promotes, and to contribute to the creation of homes that are better for people and the planet.

Ready to Make a Difference?

Are you ready to create homes that are high-quality,
sustainable and desirable?

HQM@bregroup.com

Resources for further reading

Home Quality Mark technical manual:

Access the comprehensive [Home Quality Mark Technical Manual](#) for England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, which serves as a guide for sustainable housing assessments.

Getting Green Finance and Mortgages with the Home Quality Mark:

Discover the benefits of sustainable housing with [Getting Green Finance](#), which provides information on green finance and mortgages.

Tackling the Under-supply of Housing in England:

Explore the [House of Commons Library report](#) on the challenges and solutions for meeting the UK government's goal of building 300,000 new homes annually.

BREEAM Tools:

Utilise [BREEAM Tools](#) to support sustainability efforts in the built environment, including a new platform and an API for integrating BREEAM data.

Green Home Finance Principles:

Read the [Green Home Finance Principles report](#) by the Green Finance Institute for guidelines on financing green home projects.

Green Book Live:

Search for qualified HQM assessors and certified developments on [Green Book Live](#), a valuable resource for sustainability professionals.

Santander Group Green, Social and Sustainability Funding Global Framework:

Delve into the [Santander Group report](#) for an analysis of their Green, Social, and Sustainability Funding Global Framework.

Essex Home Quality Mark:

Learn about the collaboration between the Essex Design Guide and BRE to develop the [Essex Home Quality Mark](#), aimed at sustainable housing.

Policy Playbook by UKGBC:

Gain insights into sustainable development policies with [Policy Playbook](#), focusing on carbon reductions, overheating risks, and performance assurance. Utilised by planning authorities.

ESG Services for Residential Real Estate:

Understand the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria in residential real estate with this [ESG Services guide](#), outlining services and certifications including the Home Quality Mark.

Glossary of terms

Home Quality Mark (HQM): An assessment method and certification scheme for new homes, which focuses on health and wellbeing, environmental footprint, and the cost of running a home.

BREEAM: Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method, a sustainability assessment method for masterplanning projects, infrastructure and buildings.

Zero carbon: A state where the net amount of carbon dioxide or other carbon compounds emitted into the atmosphere is zero. This can be achieved by balancing carbon emissions with carbon removal or offsetting carbon emissions to make a product, service or building carbon neutral.

Resilience to climate change: The ability of a system or a home to withstand, recover from, and adapt to the effects of climate change.

Biodiversity Net-Gain: An approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before. It ensures that habitats for wildlife are improved and left in a better state than they were pre-development.

ESG: Environmental, Social, and Governance. These are the three central factors in measuring the sustainability and societal impact of an investment in a company or business.

BTR sector: Build to Rent sector. It refers to the growing market of purpose-built residential properties, designed for rent instead of for sale.

Third-party certification: An independent assessment declaring that specified requirements pertaining to a product, person, process, or management system have been met.

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS): A natural approach to managing drainage in and around properties and other developments. SuDS work by slowing and holding back the water that runs off from a site, allowing natural processes to break down pollutants.

Life Cycle Assessment (LCA): A technique to assess environmental impacts associated with all the stages of the life-cycle of a commercial product, process, or service.

Environmental Product Declaration (EPD): A standardised way of quantifying the environmental impact of a product or system.

Life Cycle Costing: The total cost of ownership over the life of an asset, including costs of acquisition, operation, maintenance, conversion, and disposal.