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savills

PART L 2026

Future Homes and Buildings Standards Guidance Note

SAVILLS EARTH

Foreword

The Future Homes and Buildings Standards (Part L 2026) are intended to set a pathway towards ‘net zero carbon ready’ buildings. The stated aim is that new buildings constructed to these standards should not require energy-related retrofits to align with the Government’s 2050 net zero vision, although it remains to be seen how fully this will be achieved.

In practice, this will continue to require a strong fabric-first approach, i.e., delivering high levels of insulation and airtightness, but the emphasis now shifts firmly towards fossil-fuel-free heating and hot-water strategies for all dwellings. In addition, the introduction of PV systems across all homes, becomes a key element of compliance. Efficient building services and reduced regulated energy demand remain central, following the energy hierarchy we’ve all gotten used to.

The Standards will impact the way we design buildings to minimise emissions arising from ‘regulated’ energy use (that attributed to heating, hot water, lighting, cooling, fans and pumps).

The Standards do not cover unregulated energy use (cooking, appliances, etc) as these are considered outside the influence of the design team.

The Standards also do not cover embodied carbon emissions; those arising from construction materials and processes, although the Government is slowly moving towards a consultation on measuring and reducing embodied carbon in the future.

Contents

01

IF YOU HAVE 5 MINUTES, READ THIS

Key Changes

Key changes

This document provides an overview of the newly released *Approved Document Part L: Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions* (March 2026), the latest edition of the Building Regulations that will come into force in England in 2027. Also known as "Future Homes and Buildings Standards". Two volumes have been published:

- *Volume 1: Dwellings, for homes,*
- *Volume 2: Buildings other than dwellings, which covers all buildings except homes.*

In practical terms, from 2027 new homes and non-domestic buildings will no longer use fossil fuel and will need to include renewables. For clients, this marks a clear shift in how projects will need to be planned, costed and delivered.

Part L 2026 moves beyond simply reducing energy use and instead focuses on cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Heating and hot water will now need to be powered by electricity, meaning low carbon systems such as heat pumps or communal and district heat networks. PV panels must also be integrated from the very start of the design process. This early shift in thinking will influence land use, servicing strategies and cost planning.

Although earlier consultation suggested stricter fabric standards, the Government has confirmed that the minimum fabric requirements will remain broadly aligned with Part L 2021. Compliance will depend on good insulation, airtight construction and thoughtful detailing to minimise heat loss at junctions. Fabric is still important, but low carbon heating and renewable energy will carry more weight in meeting the new carbon targets.

A key change is the much larger requirement for renewables. Most new homes will now need PV panels sized to around 40% of the ground floor area, although this requirement may be reduced where developers can demonstrate that it is not achievable. In practice, this makes PV a core design driver. as roofs will need to maximise usable area and avoid shading.

Design teams can demonstrate compliance using a new tool, the Home Energy Model (HEM). HEM is more detailed than the previous SAP methodology and may require more information and time to complete, meaning that earlier decision-making and closer coordination between disciplines will be essential. This is intended to give more accurate predictions of real-world energy performance.

The new rules take effect from 2027, with transitional periods in place for projects already in progress. From 24 March 2027 the rules apply to new non-high-risk buildings (definition of high-risk buildings provided on page 8), and from 24 September 2027 they apply to high-risk buildings.

In reality, any scheme now entering early design is likely to be built under the new standard.

In simple terms, Part L 2026 means cleaner heating, more solar PV and buildings that are futureproofed and cheaper to run. The direction of travel is clear and gives greater certainty for long term planning.

02

IF YOU HAVE 15 MINUTES, READ THIS

The updates in detail

The updates in detail

In June 2019, the UK made a legal commitment to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Currently, 25% of the country's greenhouse gas emissions come from the built environment.

On a global level, the World Green Building Council estimates that buildings are responsible for 39% of energy related carbon emissions: 28% from operational emissions such as energy needed to heat, cool and power them, and the remaining 11% from materials and construction.

Despite notable technical and regulatory progress in this sector, especially in recent times, a significant effort is still required to completely decarbonise new and existing buildings and align them with the national 2050 net zero strategy, which aims to electrify both transport and heating whilst decarbonising our electricity supply.

The following pages highlight the key aspects of the Approved Document Part L released in March 2026. Two volumes have been published:

- *Volume 1: Dwellings, for homes; and*
- *Volume 2: Buildings other than dwellings, which covers all buildings except homes.*

The first part covers the key changes in residential buildings, referred to as dwellings. The second part addresses non-domestic buildings.

Implementation

In the Spring Statement of 2019, the Chancellor announced the Future Homes Standard.

In Spring 2023, a technical consultation on the proposed specification for the Future Homes and Buildings Standard was held.

Initially announced to come into force in 2025, the new edition of Approved Document Part L was released in March 2026, and transitional arrangements will be implemented in England in stages, depending on whether a building is classed as a higher-risk building under the Building Safety Act 2022.

A higher-risk building is a building that contains at least 2 residential units and is either at least 18 metres tall or at least 7 storeys. This definition does not apply to hospital, care home, secure residential institution, hotel, or military barracks.

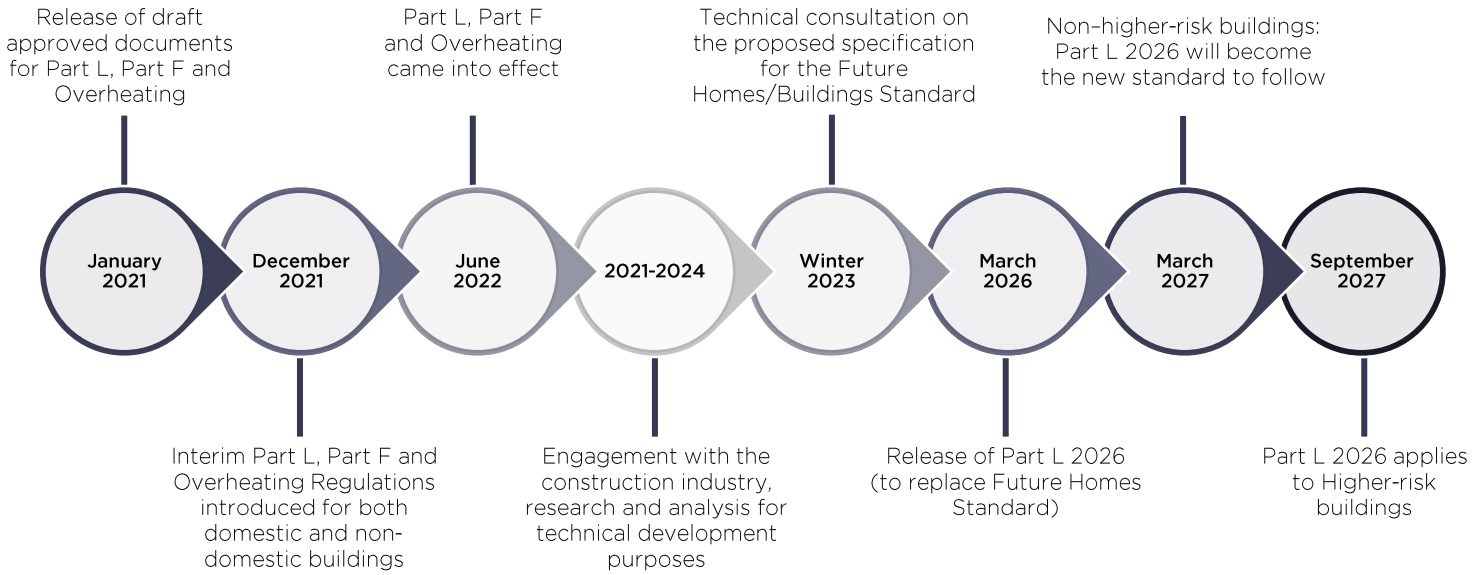
For non–higher-risk buildings, the Regulations do not apply for applications submitted to the relevant authority before 24 March 2027, provided that the building work begins before 24 March 2028.

For higher-risk buildings, the Regulations do not apply where a valid building control approval application has been submitted to the regulator before 24 September 2027. Once transitional protection begins, it will continue to apply to subsequent stages.

It should be noted that both these deadlines assume that applications are complete and are not rejected before, on, or after the specified dates.

After these dates, Part L 2026 will become the new standard to follow.

Timeline of implementation and changes to the Future Homes & Buildings Standard



Volume 1: Dwellings

From 2027, the Approved Document Part L 2026, Volume 1: Dwellings (Part L1) will mark a transition toward "nearly zero-energy buildings." This page sets out the key changes that will be applied.

Fossil fuel free homes

The key change is that the new regulation will require new homes to phase out fossil-fuel (Fuel CO_2 factor ≤ 0.086 $kgCO_2/kWh$ and primary energy factor ≤ 1.969 kWh_{PE}/kWh). With the ongoing decarbonisation of the electricity grid, homes built to the 2026 Part L1 standard are expected not to require energy-related retrofit, as they will no longer rely on fossil fuels for space heating or hot water. The carbon factor of electricity was reduced from 0.136 to 0.086 $kgCO_2/kWh$ in the latest version of SAP. Gas is 2.5 times more carbon intensive with an emissions rate of 0.214 $kgCO_2/kWh$.

Efficient systems

Low-carbon communal heat networks and district heat networks, whether sleeved or not, will provide a route to compliance. However, the main push is toward heat pumps replacing gas boilers and direct electric systems, with strengthened requirements for the installation, certification, inspection, and testing of these systems. System efficiencies are therefore improved (e.g., 250% for the notional heat pump in SAP10.3 against a current boiler efficiency of 89.5%) and pipework insulation standards are significantly increased (doubled for pipes diameter of less than 25 mm). The document also sets new performance standard for continuous decentralised mechanical extract ventilation systems to ensure high-efficiency operation (Specific Fan Power below 0.3 W/l.s).

Mandatory renewables generation

Another notable change is the introduction of a new requirement for on-site renewable electricity generation. In most cases, this means new homes must install a photovoltaic (PV) array sized to at least 40% of the ground-floor area (panel efficiency of 0.22 kWp/m^2). If this cannot be achieved, photovoltaic array can be limited to a "reasonably practicable area" of roof based on minimum offset requirements, and evidence should be provided. Home batteries are optional and renewable technologies are not limited to being installed on the building, e.g., ground mounted solar PV can be included in the assessment.

New calculation models

Two approved methodologies may be used for compliance and rating: the current Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP), updated to version 10.3, and a new Home Energy Model (HEM), cloud-based tool available by autumn 2026. HEM improves accuracy through more detailed inputs, including half-hourly timesteps, local weather data, detailed dwelling characteristics, and comprehensive building-services information. It also enhances heat-loss predictions using thermal zoning and precise fabric parameters resulting in more granular and reliable energy-performance modelling. Seen as a positive step, especially for PV generation considerations, this however requires more detailed inputs and closer coordination during design.

Same metrics

No changes are introduced for the domestic performance-based metrics, i.e., the Target Emission Rate (TER), the Target Primary Energy Rate (TPER) and the Target Fabric Energy Efficiency rate (TFEE).

While a metric such as Energy Use Intensity (EUI), which has been introduced by some local councils, would have helped drive reductions in energy use and associated carbon emissions, it has not been adopted here.

Part L: 2013, 2021, 2026

In order to reach the 2050 net zero emissions target, the energy performance targets outlined in the Building Regulations are subjected to frequent updates.

As an interim measure leading up to the implementation of Part L1 2026, an update to Part L1 was introduced in 2021. Homes constructed to the Part L1 2021 standard were expected to generate 31% fewer carbon dioxide emissions compared to the 2013 standards. Homes built under the 2026 standard are expected to produce 75% less greenhouse gas emissions than those built to 2013 standard, a significant jump.

Partially achieving compliance with Part L1 requires an energy assessment that compares actual building emissions to those of a 'notional' building. The specifications for the notional dwellings for 2013, 2021 and 2026 are outlined in the table in the following page. It is important to note that these specifications do not refer to mandatory construction standards (also known as limiting standards which are higher than the notional standards, see page 11. No changes are proposed to the limiting standards.

The Buildings Regulations England Part L (BREL) report, along with photographic evidence, will need to be submitted to the building control body and the building owner as evidence of compliance with energy efficiency targets in order to close the performance gap between the design and as-built performance.

Notional building fabric and systems performance for a new dwelling

Element	Part L 2013	Part L 2021	Part L 2026
External wall u-value	0.18 W/(m² K)	0.18 W/(m² K)	0.18 W/(m² K)
Roof (flat/pitched) u-value	0.13 W/(m2 K)	0.11 W/(m² K)	0.11 W/(m² K)
Floor (ground/exposed) u-value	0.13 W/(m² K)	0.13 W/(m² K)	0.13 W/(m² K)
Window u-value	1.40 W/(m² K) *double glazing*	1.20 W/(m² K) *double glazing*	1.20 W/(m² K) *double glazing*
Rooflight u-value	1.40 W/(m² K)	1.70 W/(m² K)	1.70 W/(m² K)
External door u-value	1.00 W/(m² K)	1.00 W/(m² K)	1.00 W/(m² K)
Air permeability rate	5.0 m³/(h.m²) @50Pa	5.0 m³/(h.m²) @50Pa	4.0 m³/(h.m²) @50Pa
Ventilation system	Natural ventilation with extract fans	Natural ventilation with extract fans	Decentralised Mechanical Extract Ventilation, SFP = 0.15 W/(l/s)
Space heating source	Condensing gas boiler, 89,5% efficiency	Condensing gas boiler, 89,5% efficiency	Low carbon heating (heat pumps 250%, or district heating)
Heating mode of delivery	Standard radiators	Low temperature heating	Low temperature heating
Wastewater heat recovery (WWHR)	N/A	Yes, 36% efficiency	Yes, 50% efficiency – for dwellings with more than one storey
Y-value for thermal bridging	0.05	0.05	0.05
PV installation	Yes	Yes, 40% of ground floor area, facing SE/SW	40% ground floor area ÷ 4.5 (for houses) 40% dwelling floor area ÷ number of storeys ÷ 4.5 (for flats)
Lighting	Low energy lighting	Efficiency of 80 lm/W	Efficiency of 120 lm/W

Limiting building fabric and systems performance for a new dwelling			
Element	**Part L 2013**	**Part L 2021**	**Part L 2026**
External wall u-value	0.30 W/(m^2 K)	0.26 W/(m^2 K)	0.26 W/(m^2 K)
Roof (flat/pitched) u-value	0.20 W/(m2 K)	0.16 W/(m^2 K)	0.16 W/(m^2 K)
Floor (ground/exposed) u-value	0.25 W/(m^2 K)	0.18 W/(m^2 K)	0.18 W/(m^2 K)
Window u-value	2.00 W/(m^2 K) *double glazing*	1.60 W/(m^2 K) *double glazing*	1.60 W/(m^2 K) *double glazing*
Rooflight u-value	2.00 W/(m^2 K)	2.20 W/(m^2 K)	2.20 W/(m^2 K)
External door u-value	2.00 W/(m^2 K)	1.60 W/(m^2 K)	1.60 W/(m^2 K)
Air permeability rate	10.0 m^3/(h.m^2) @50Pa	8.0 m^3/(h.m^2) @50Pa	8.0 m^3/(h.m^2) @50Pa

Volume 2: Buildings other than dwellings

Similarly to Part L1, Approved Document Part L, Volume 2: Buildings Other Than Dwellings will transition non-domestic buildings toward low-carbon systems from 2027.

Building services requirements

Although the scope of changes in this volume is more limited than in Part L1, Volume 2 continues the shift toward electric and low-carbon heating and hot-water systems in non-domestic (revised carbon factors are the same as those applied to dwellings). This includes the adoption of heat pumps and low-carbon communal or district heat networks, with consideration covering backup systems.

The document sets minimum requirements for heat-pump efficiencies (aligned with Ecodesign standards) and introduces enhanced controls, including recommendations for smart-meter-ready system design.

It also establishes a new compliance checkpoint relating to vertical transportation, ensuring these systems meet updated performance.

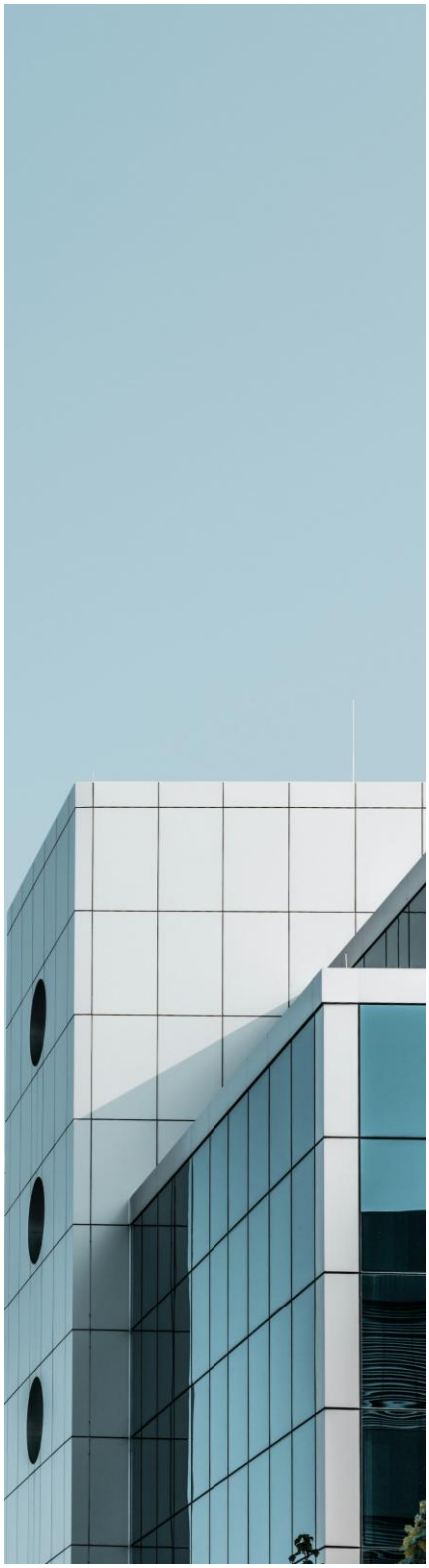
Compliance assessment

The specifications for the notional non-domestic buildings under Part L2 2013, Part L2 2021, and Part L2 2026 are summarised in the table on the following page. These notional specifications do not represent mandatory construction standards (the limiting standards). The limiting standards remain unchanged, as noted on page 15.

Metrics

Energy assessment and rating of non-domestic buildings will continue to be produced using SBEM, the non-domestic version that implements the National Calculation Methodology and is published on the NCM website.

Although the industry has advocated for the introduction of an Energy Use Intensity (EUI) metric the government has not adopted this approach. No change to the metrics used for compliance: Target Emission Rate (TER)Target Primary Energy Rate (TPER).



Notional building fabric and systems performance for a new non-domestic building

Element	Part L 2013	Part L 2021	Expected Part L 2026*
External wall u-value	0.35 W/(m² K)	0.26 W/(m² K)	0.26 W/(m² K)
Roof (flat/pitched) u-value	0.25 W/(m2 K)	0.18 W/(m² K) – flat 0.16 W/(m² K) – pitched	0.18 W/(m² K)
Floor (ground/exposed) u-value	0.25 W/(m² K)	0.18 W/(m² K)	0.18 W/(m² K)
Window u-value	2.20 W/(m² K) *double glazing*	1.60 W/(m² K) *double glazing*	1.60 W/(m² K) *double glazing*
Rooflight u-value	2.20 W/(m² K)	2.20 W/(m² K)	2.20 W/(m² K)
Swimming pool basin u-value	0.25 W/(m² K)	0.25 W/(m² K)	0.25 W/(m² K)
Other types of windows (roof windows, curtain walling)	2.20 W/(m² K)	1.60 W/(m² K)	1.60 W/(m² K)
External door u-value	2.20 W/(m² K)	1.40 W/(m² K)	1.40 W/(m² K)
High usage entrance door u-value	3.50 W/(m² K)	3.0 W/(m² K)	3.0 W/(m² K)
Vehicle access door u-value	1.50 W/(m² K)	1.30 W/(m² K)	1.30 W/(m² K)
Air permeability rate	10.0 m³/(h.m²) @50Pa	8.0 m³/(h.m²) @50Pa	8.0 m³/(h.m²) @50Pa
Ventilation system	Mechanical ventilation	Mechanical ventilation	Mechanical ventilation
Space heating source	Condensing gas boiler, 91% efficiency	Condensing gas boiler, 93% efficiency	Low carbon heating (heat pumps or district heating)
PV installation	Yes	Yes	Yes

*The NCM Modelling Guide 2026 was not yet released at the time this note was issued.

Limiting building fabric and systems performance for a new non-domestic building			
Element	**Part L 2013**	**Part L 2021**	**Part L 2026**
External wall u-value	0.35 W/(m² K)	0.26 W/(m² K)	0.26 W/(m² K)
Roof (flat/pitched) u-value	0.25 W/(m2 K)	0.18/0.16 W/(m² K)	0.18 W/(m² K)
Floor (ground/exposed) u-value	0.25 W/(m² K)	0.18 W/(m² K)	0.18 W/(m² K)
Window u-value	2.20 W/(m² K) *double glazing*	1.60 W/(m² K) *double glazing*	1.60 W/(m² K) *double glazing*
Rooflight u-value	2.20 W/(m² K)	2.20 W/(m² K)	2.20 W/(m² K)
Swimming pool basin u-value	0.25 W/(m² K)	0.25 W/(m² K)	0.25 W/(m² K)
Other types of windows (roof windows, curtain walling)	2.20 W/(m² K)	1.60 W/(m² K) *or Window Energy Rating Band B*	1.60 W/(m² K) *or Window Energy Rating Band B*
External door u-value	2.20 W/(m² K)	1.60 W/(m² K)	1.60 W/(m² K)
High usage entrance door u-value	3.50 W/(m² K)	3.0 W/(m² K)	3.0 W/(m² K)
Vehicle access door u-value	1.50 W/(m² K)	1.30 W/(m² K)	1.30 W/(m² K)
Air permeability rate	10.0 m³/(h.m²) @50Pa	8.0 m³/(h.m²) @50Pa	8.0 m³/(h.m²) @50Pa

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