

Building for a Healthy Life (BfHL) Validations

A validation looks at whether a scheme, as approved through the planning process, is likely to be a good place to live by assessing it against the 12 BfHL criteria. It is intended to give confidence to the local authority and prospective residents about the home builder's ability to design and build new homes well. As such designs submitted for validation should show what will or has been built.

Unlike BfHL assessments done earlier in the design and planning processes, the validation is not intended to advise on improvements to the scheme, although it could highlight lessons for future developments.

How it works

1. An informal view

If a homebuilder is unsure if their scheme is likely to achieve the BfHL standard they can ask for an informal view. For this they will need to send the validator the basic scheme information listed below*.

There is no charge for an informal view, neither is it binding.

2. Validation assessment

If a full validation is required, the homebuilder should provide the following information. If information is not available, we will not be able to confirm a scheme meets the required standard for one or more criteria

Basic information listed below:

- The home builders own assessment against the BfHL criteria

- Landscaping plans

- Levels and sections showing how these are dealt with

- Land use, tenure and home type mix

- Connections by different transport modes

- Public, private and shared open space provision

- Location of surrounding community services

- Boundary details

- Parking arrangements and details

- Highway layouts and details

- Building elevation, plans and sections

- Architectural and material details

- Any other information the validator will need to be able to understand the scheme and assess it against BfHL criteria

The information provided should relate to what will be built. So, material from outline planning permissions, early Design and Access Statements or masterplans, although useful, should be marked as superseded where the scheme has changed since their production.

If large packs of material are being presented it is helpful if the homebuilder provides a list of which pages/plans which relate to the BfHL criteria.

When presenting their own assessment, it is most useful if homebuilders explain how they have met the criteria and give details of any particular circumstances that they feel should be taken into account. For example, a site may not have good public transport links but was allocated for housing by the local plan.

The validation will be done by at least 2 assessors as a desktop exercise. They will mark each criteria as follows:

- Green – sufficient quality
- Amber – not clear of sufficient quality
- Red – not sufficient quality

Where insufficient up to date information is provided for any particular criteria, it will be marked as amber.

The cost for most desktop validation is £1,800.00 plus VAT. However, if the scheme is large or complex or the validation requires a site visit there may be additional costs. The validation will take up to 4 weeks. If a faster review is required, this can be arranged for a higher fee.

3. Reviewing a validation

Once the initial validation has been carried out, the home builder might want to provide additional information and/or discuss the scheme with the assessors to ensure the designs are sufficiently clear to them.

An iterative review of the validation can be done if new information is provided. This means an initial score can be upgraded if, for example, landscaping or highway design details become available or are improved.

***Basic scheme information**

- Name of site & address
- Local Authority & PA number(s)
- Stage – On site/detailed/outline planning with reserved matters?
- Developer
- Number of units (market & affordable split)
- Phase, if part of a larger scheme
- Area/Density (if applicable)
- Layout plan (illustrative elevations)
- Public transport (rail, bus routes/stops, cycle routes, etc.) – on site or nearby
- Open space & amenities – on site or nearby