BREEAM Communities – Tool Summary

Authors

Name	Organisation	Origin
-	BRE Global Ltd	Industry

Info

Date:
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Place of origin:
London, United Kingdom

Homepage:
http://www.breeam.org/page.jsp?id=117

References:
- BRE Global, 2009. BREEAM Communities Technical Guidance Manual.
- Cotter, E., 2009. Creating Sustainable Communities, London, UK.

Latest use:
2009 – MediaCityUK
http://www.mediacityuk.co.uk/media-room/press-releases/13/mediacityuk-is-global-leader-for-green-communities.htm

Download:
http://www.breeam.org/filelibrary/breeamcommunities/SD5065B_-_BREEAM_Communities_Technical_Guidance_Manual.pdf

Description

"BREEAM Communities is an independent, third party assessment and certification standard based on the established BREEAM methodology. It addresses key environmental, social and economic sustainability objectives and planning policy requirements that have an impact on proposed development projects within the built environment. Credits are awarded in eight categories according to their performance against defined sustainability objectives and planning policy requirements. These credits are then added together to produce a single overall score on a scale of Pass, Good, Very Good, Excellent and Outstanding. The operation of BREEAM Communities is overseen by an independent Sustainability Board, representing a wide cross-section of construction industry stakeholders."

Aims of BREEAM Communities:
- To mitigate the overall impacts of development projects within the built environment
- To enable development projects to be recognised according to their environmental, social and economic benefits to the local community
- To provide a credible and holistic environmental, social and economic sustainability label for development projects in the built environment
- To stimulate demand for sustainable development (and sustainable communities) within the built environment
- To ensure the delivery of sustainable communities within the built environment

Objectives of BREEAM:
- To provide market recognition to sustainable development projects ß To ensure best practice is incorporated in sustainable development projects

- To set criteria and standards surpassing those required by regulations and challenge the market to provide innovative solutions that address the sustainability objectives of development projects
- To raise the awareness of planners, developers, occupants, consultants and policy makers of the benefits of sustainable developments
- To allow organisations to demonstrate progress towards corporate sustainability objectives

"The BREEAM Assessor Manuals are technical guidance documents which have been created to aid licensed BREEAM Assessors in carrying out Assessments. Please note that the manuals and the information detailed therein has been designed for, and to be used by trained and licensed BREEAM Assessors.
The core BREEAM Communities Assessor Manual is 'freely' available as a complete document on the BREEAM website. Individual technical guidance issues for each category are directly linked to the BREEAM Communities Assessment Tool – only qualified BREEAM Communities assessors have access to the Assessment Tool and the additional technical guidance issues.
Note: This document must be used by non assessors for reference only (in accordance with the Terms and Conditions of use)."

Key Theoretical Background

"BREEAM is tailored to the specified planning policy requirements for specific English Regions", thus the theoretical background is implicit in current local, regional and national policy documents from the UK, but also to some academic or industry research. It's well documented in this respect. However its benchmarks are said to surpass those basic policy requirements.

SUD Framework

Is based on a framework of eight categories:

1. climate and energy (CE) – addresses built form mitigation and adaptation issues;
2. place shaping (PS) – addresses local area design and layout;
3. community (COM) – addresses consultation and local community involvement;
4. ecology (ECO) – addresses protection of the ecological value of the site;
5. transport (TRA) – addresses sustainable transport options;
6. resources (RES) – addresses sustainable use of resources;
7. business (BUS) – addresses local and regional economic issues;
8. buildings (BLD) – addresses overall sustainability performance of buildings.

Each category addresses a series of main issues - here the assessment criteria – which include a range of assessment criteria with benchmarks – here the indicators.

Input

This assessment method is designed for final stages of design, just before planning submission. Therefore it requires an extensive list of information about the project, the process and its stakeholders in form of evidence for assessment. This supporting evidence can take a variety of forms (letters, drawings, maps, photos, reports, etc.).
Based on this evidence every indicator receives a rating:

1. Minimum – Mandatory
2. Good
3. Best

There is an Excel spreadsheet/tool only available to recognised assessors to input the data and calculate the results.
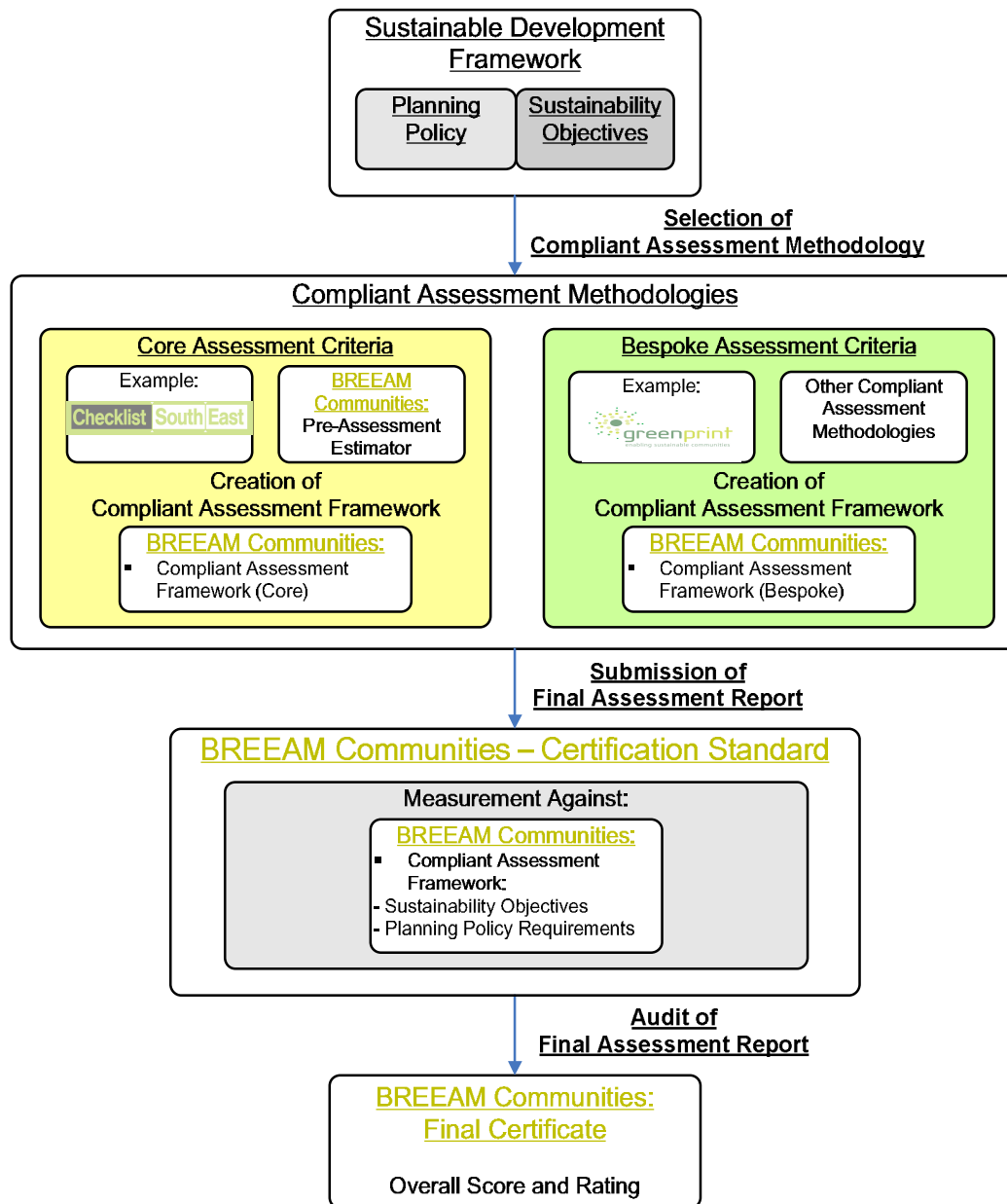
Methods

The scheme provides specific benchmarks and values to achieve based on policy and best practice guidance, e.g. CABE, Urban Design Compendium. These are described in much detail with references to relevant policy and research.
The methodologies to guide the development process pre-assessment are to be chosen by the development team from a very short list of "compliant assessment methodologies", which includes Regional Sustainability Checklists, e.g. SEEDA, and leaves the door open for more methodologies to be approved as compliant and used in the future.

"Other compliant assessment methodologies may be used after being submitted to BRE Global for approval. Each approved compliant assessment methodology must meet the following qualification requirements3:

a)   It covers the scope of assessment as outlined within the core categories of the BREEAM Communities standard

b)   It provides information on the process that will be used to determine the final assessment criteria and the resulting compliant assessment framework

c)   It outlines how representative stakeholders will be engaged and consulted to assist in determining the final assessment criteria and the compliant assessment methodology

d)   It ensures that the final assessment criteria and the associated compliant assessment framework will be created independently from the development project team

e)   It demonstrates that a qualified BREEAM Communities assessor will conduct the assessment against the final criteria and the compliant assessment framework

f)   It identifies how the performance of the development project will be measured against the common metric specified within the BREEAM Communities certification standard"

The scheme itself has an elaborate procedure with various stages and defines a sustainable urban development framework.

Output

BREEAM Communities Rating	% score
UNCLASSIFIED	<25
PASS	≥25
GOOD	≥40
V GOOD	≥55
EXCELLENT	≥70
OUTSTANDING*	≥85

The main output is a certificate for the project with a score rating in %.
"The final score calculated by the BREEAM assessor is a measurement of how well the planning application and its supporting documentation have performed against the complete range of assessment criteria at the point of planning submission." There are additional requirements for achieving a BREEAM *Outstanding* rating.
Other output is the large collection of document produced to support the assessment and certification process.

BREEAM Communities – Tool Review

General

Overall this framework seems a bit rushed, maybe in response to LEED-ND? It covers a lot but at an uneven level of detail, probably reflecting the strengths and experience of BREEAM.

Application (Scale and Design Phase)

BREEAM Communities is an elaborate procedure to be done at the end of the process by an expert, and is not a design support tool. There are references to the SEEDA checklist, also developed by BRE, for detailed information on issues and for guidance during the development process. Refer to the Tool review document of the checklist for more details.
It covers a range of scales, and each assessment criteria specifies which scales it refers to. "Where the development requiring assessment is outside of UK it can be assessed using the BREEAM Communities International scheme", to be customised for a project, country or region.

Sustainability Principles

Although inspired in the obvious 3 themes it starts by defining a set of 8 categories of sustainability. Makes it more detailed, maybe less compatible. The references are many and clear, the structure is less clear.

Assessment Criteria

The structure is not as clear as in others. There are many overlapping levels and criteria can contain indicators from the 8 different categories.

Indicators and Methods

Each indicator has a list of direct links to sustainability checklist questions, the "real" tools for use during the design process, and policy and research references.
Most indicators are about showing evidence about the development programme of the project and that certain impact studies have been carried out. The document might be more relevant to formulation than to evaluation of the design. Although the criteria are shared it has very few design indicators.

Output

Apart from the classification ratings, it is not explained how the rating of each individual indicator adds up to the final percentage, nor the weight given to the different indicators. This is not a design support tool, but a certification procedure in support of a planning application. On the contrary, the design and development processes must support it by providing all the required information.

Specific topics

Urban Form

Very few indicators relate to urban layout, land use location. Some relate associated with buildings and a very local scale. It shows that this is not made to support the design process.

Mobility and Accessibility

Quite a few indicators related to transport infrastructure and facilities, also some relating to the quality of the service, linking to the context and region.

Local/Global Context