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Energy Advice Drop In
The Wellbeing Centre
Church Stretton
Thursday's 10.00 – 12.00

StrettonClimateCare
Solutions for a Sustainable Future

INFORMATION SHEET No. 47 DATE OF ISSUE May 2025

Searching for a new property

"It's not all about just a nice view and large kitchen diner"

The purchase of a new home is probably the biggest investment you will ever make, a decision that is sometimes made the moment you step over the threshold. A decision of the heart overriding the practicalities of living in the property.

Below are some ideas worth listing to think about before viewing a potential new home. If there is something you don't understand, seek further advice in advance. Stretton Climate Care's energy advice information sheets can be found at https://strettonclimatecare.org.uk/publications/

- With energy costs so high and the need to move towards a low / zero carbon future, when viewing a potential new home, in addition to considering how many bedrooms, how much character, how big the rooms are etc. and though such things are of course important, we would urge you also think about the potential your future home has to be made energy efficient. Perhaps factor in the likely costs of necessary / potential retrofit improvements. Below are some pointers to help you think differently about your future home and questions to ask as you view. Answers which may well also help your bank balance in years to come.

- What material is the house constructed from? What is the current Energy Performance (EPC) rating? This is a crude guide as to how energy efficient the property is. A is excellent, G is very poor. The average rating for homes in the U.K. is D. The higher the score, the less it should cost to heat. Can the seller show you last year's energy costs? An EPC will suggest potential energy efficiency improvements and give a very rough idea of the costs and energy savings. EPC certificates can be found at https://www.gov.uk/find-energy-certificate

- If a new build, what is the SAP score? * see notes.

- How well is the property insulated, including the loft if there is one? Are any ceilings sloping and if so are they also insulated? Are the walls solid or cavity? If cavity, is the cavity insulated and if solid is there any solid wall insulation? Generally properties built since 1986 will have insulated cavities.

- How big are the rooms and how high the ceilings? It's an obvious point but the larger the rooms, the more they will cost to heat.

- What is the heating system? Gas, oil, storage heaters, infra red, open fire places, a wood burning stove, a heat pump or even a mixture of sources? How old is the system etc? Where does the pipework run if in the future it needs modification? Is there an airing cupboard and hot water tank? Has the heating been serviced annually? (not necessary with storage heaters and infra red.) Storage heaters can be expensive to run and gas or oil burn a carbon-based fuel which adds to your carbon footprint. A heat pump, especially using renewable electricity can

provide zero carbon heating and they are VERY efficient, as much as 300+%. One Kilowatt (unit) of electricity will produce at least three kilowatts of heat.

- Glazing. Single, double or even triple? Which rooms will get direct sunlight? South facing windows can offer solar gain in the winter months but may require shading to prevent overheating in hot summer weather. Are there opening windows which can help create a through draught during hot weather? Older wooden or metal window frames and outside doors can be draughty.

- Is there a conservatory? Is it suitable for all year round use, adequately heated in winter and not over heated in the summer?

- Are there existing solar photovoltaic or solar hot water panels or is there the potential to install them? What is the elevation of the roof? (south facing roofs offer the best potential.) Is the roof construction sufficiently strong to take the additional weight of panels? Could the panels be ground mounted if the roof is unsuitable? Is there an outbuilding which might be suitable for panels? If P.V. panels exist do they have a MCS certificate, is there any arrangement for the export of surplus electricity and what income does it generate?

- Is there a domestic storage battery? This can, if charged from excess P.V. panel electricity and or low tariff electricity, greatly reduce electricity bills.

- How good is the ventilation? Are there trickle vents with the double glazing, are there any signs of damp, heavy condensation or mould and what is the cause? Is there perhaps a mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system or extractor fans in bathroom and kitchen?

- What installation certificates, warranties, maintenance contracts etc. are there? Are any missing. If so, why? If there is a heat pump, will clear operating instructions be available?

- Is the property in a conservation area or is it listed? There may be restrictions as to any wanted building improvements.

- Is the building on a flood plain or near a watercourse? Is there any history of flooding and have any flooding mitigation measures been installed. Don't forget that as the climate changes, extreme rainfall and flooding potential will increase and flash flooding can occur almost anywhere.

- Does the property have an electric car charging point? Is it or the heat pump and battery if fitted *smart* ready?

- Does the property have disabled access. If not, how easy might it be to install and are the doors, external and internal wide enough to take a wheelchair with the necessary turning space?

- Are there any substantial trees near the property? Could they hit the building if blown down and might root spread affect foundations or drains?

- Is the garden suitable for your needs e.g. size and space for vegetable beds etc.

- Is any nearby open land likely to be affected by future development?

- Take photos to help remember what you saw, especially if visiting several properties.

* *SAP calculations are required for all new builds and look at: construction materials heating systems efficiency, solar gains from openings (windows) in the property, thermal insulation, renewable energy technologies, the fuel used to provide water and space heating, lighting and ventilation, and air leakage. Scores from 1 -100 with 100 the best and costing nothing to run. If over 100 then the building is self-sustaining and generates extra energy.*

16.05.25.

Caution - Please Read this:

Our Advice Note has been carefully prepared and is, as far as we know, accurate at the date of publication. However, things change very fast in the world of technology and in government schemes. Sometimes parts of Advice Notes become outdated and may not offer best advice very soon after publication. We do our best to keep them up to date with the limited resources we have. Furthermore, our advice may not be appropriate for your circumstances. We advise that you get advice from a relevant expert before making changes. We may be able to offer further advice or make suggestions on who to contact if you get in touch with us. We are not technical experts but have many years of offering common sense advice and we recommend you should not rely on our Advice Note alone for making decisions. The Centre for Sustainable Energy www.cse.org.uk and Energy Savings Trust www.energysavingtrust.org.uk good sources of information.