
Net Zero Carbon Buildings Framework

In 2019, UKGBC published the [Net Zero Carbon Buildings Framework Definition](#) to provide the industry with clarity on the definition of net zero carbon buildings. It sets out high-level principles for achieving net zero carbon for construction and operational energy, with the intention that further detail and stricter requirements would be developed over time.

Following on from UKGBC lead market analysis in 2021 on the next steps needed, in May 2022, a cross-industry initiative was launched to develop the UK's first Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard. Leading industry organisations BBP, BRE, the Carbon Trust, CIBSE, IStructE, LETI, RIBA, RICS, and UKGBC have joined forces to champion this initiative.

Whilst significant progress has been made in defining what 'net zero' means for buildings in the UK, the [market analysis](#) showed a clear demand for a single, agreed methodology. The [UK Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard](#) will enable industry to robustly prove their built assets are net zero carbon and in line with our nation's climate targets.

The outputs from the development of the Standard are due to be made available in early 2024. Whilst UKGBC's Net Zero Carbon Buildings Framework (i.e., [this webpage](#)) remains current, it is likely that when the Standard's outputs are published, the Framework will evolve to continue to provide guidance supporting buildings in achieving net zero carbon (complementing the Standard). Specifically, the Framework Definition in its current form is anticipated to be superseded by the Standard, but the supplementary guidance documents will continue to support stakeholders in designing, delivering, and operating buildings in line with net zero carbon.

Implementation Guidance (applicable from November 2023)

- We will no longer include buildings 'verified' as NZC on the 'Verifying net zero carbon buildings' web page.
- We will not be recognising any further buildings as NZC verified on our website
- The term 'verified' should not be used in the context of buildings designed, delivered, and operated in line with our Framework Definition
- Formal communication guidance for buildings in design/construction/prior to 12 months operation is available in the table below.

Communications & Marketing Guidance

Many organisations have rightly been keen to profile their ambitious achievements and showcase how they have aligned their projects with UKGBC's Framework. Since its launch in 2019, UKGBC has always stated how vital it is that any communications around net zero are specific and transparent to avoid misinterpretation.

As we transition to the Standard becoming the industry's leading definition of a net zero carbon building, and the new bar which has been set for industry, this change in positioning must be reflected in how industry communicates their achievements.

The guidance on the following page has been prepared to support industry during the transition period (2023-4).

Any public announcement should unambiguously provide clarity on exactly what the claim relates to, with a link to the supporting report. Some of the key parameters that should be made clear are:

- **Type of net zero achievement** i.e., construction or operational energy,
- **Building type** e.g., office, residential, retail, industrial etc.,
- **Scope** e.g., tenancy, base building, whole building, portfolio etc.,
- **Dates of achievement** e.g., 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 (for operational energy).

As we wait for the Standard to be published, from the start of 2024, UKGBC will no longer encourage its members and wider industry to make public announcements where the sole purpose of the announcement is to communicate the net zero carbon status of their project in accordance with UKGBC's Framework. For example, distributing a press release to specifically announce their project is net zero carbon in line with UKGBC's Framework.

However, we recognise businesses will want to refer to their project's sustainability credentials within wider marketing materials, which is acceptable and the wording in the above guidance table should be used.

UKGBC will no longer provide supportive quotes or commentary for public announcements.

Once the Standard has been published in 2024, public claims of Net Zero Carbon which are in line with UKGBC's framework will no longer be credible as the Framework will be retired.

Any organisation who has previously aligned their project with the Framework is encouraged to deliver the necessary steps needed to align with the Standard and complete the verification process.

Project state	What information is required to make a public claim	Example wording to use
<p>Projects at late stage design or in construction/pre completion stage.</p> <p>Unverified.</p>	<p><u>Construction-related claims:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage 4 LCA confirming upfront embodied carbon • Contractor’s ERs including a clause that all materials and products specified will be in line with the Stage 4 specification with the embodied impact of any changes to be raised to the Client for approval prior to implementation • Commitment to conduct post-construction LCA confirming as-constructed upfront carbon • Commitment to offset all upfront carbon in line with UKGBC’s carbon offsetting guidance • Stage 4 predictive energy model (in line with CIBSE TM54 or similar) • For commercial offices, predictive energy model to show anticipated performance in line with UKGBC Energy Performance Targets for Offices 	<p>X development has been designed to achieve Net Zero Carbon – Construction in line with the UKGBC Framework.</p>
	<p><u>Operational energy related claims:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage 4 predictive energy model (in line with CIBSE TM54 or similar) • For commercial offices, predictive energy model to show anticipated performance in line with UKGBC Energy Performance Targets for Offices • Contractor’s ERs including a clause that all materials and products specified will be in line with the Stage 4 specification with the impact of any changes to be assessed using an updated predictive energy model and discussed with the Client for approval prior to implementation • Commitment to procure energy and/or offset any operational carbon after 12 months of occupation in line with the UKGBC guidance 	<p>X development has been designed to achieve Net Zero Carbon – Operational Energy in line with the UKGBC Framework.</p>
<p>Post-completion stage & verified by a third party.</p> <p>Operational for less than one year (unverified).</p>	<p><u>Construction-related claims:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As per existing guidance 	<p>X development is Net Zero Carbon – Construction in line with the UKGBC Framework.</p>
	<p><u>Operational energy related claims:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-construction (as-built) predictive energy model (in line with CIBSE TM54 or similar) • For commercial offices, predictive energy model to show anticipated performance in line with UKGBC Energy Performance Targets for Offices • Commitment to procure energy and/or offset any operational carbon after 12 months of occupation in line with the UKGBC guidance 	<p>X development has been designed to achieve Net Zero Carbon – Operational Energy in line with the UKGBC Framework.</p>
<p>Post-completion stage & verified by a third party.</p> <p>Operational for one year with data operational data verified.</p>	<p><u>Construction-related claims:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As per existing guidance 	<p>X development is Net Zero Carbon – Construction in line with the UKGBC Framework.</p>
	<p><u>Operational energy related claims:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As per existing guidance 	<p>X development is Net Zero Carbon – Operational Energy in line with the UKGBC Framework.</p>