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Update to the Air Source Heat Pumps Planning Regulations

Quick guide

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Introduction

On 29th May 2025 the UK government introduced a major regulatory change to accelerate the adoption of low-carbon heating in domestic properties. The update, part of the Warm Homes Plan, removes key planning restrictions that previously hindered the installation of many air-source heat pumps (ASHPs) and air-to-air heat pumps especially in dense housing areas.

This article explores the implications of the new rules, which will play a critical role in delivering energy efficient homes across the UK.

What has changed from the previous regulations?

The government removed some requirements for ASHP installation. This is because the requirements have previously presented significant barriers to installation, especially in terraced or urban housing where space is limited and where maximum generation was not utilised.

The amendments to the regulations remove:

- **1-metre boundary rule:** ASHPs can now be installed closer to property boundaries without planning permission. This makes it easier to find suitable installation locations, especially in smaller, terraced or urban housing areas
- **Limitations to size:** The allowable size for ASHP units on dwelling houses has been increased from 0.6m³ to 1.5m³, allowing for larger, more efficient models
- **Number of ASHPs for detached homes:** Two ASHPs can now be installed to detached homes without planning permission
- **Lack of support for air-to-air heat pumps:** The new rules also mean air-to-air heat pumps, which can provide both heating and cooling, can be installed without planning permission
- **Non-user friendly adoption:** A new framework will ensure that ASHPs are installed smart-ready, enabling them to be used with smart technology for optimal energy consumption and cost savings

Now, as long as noise limits are met, ASHPs can be installed without planning permission, even close to neighbouring properties.

Why was this change introduced?

The regulations often forced homeowners and housing providers to apply for planning permission to install ASHPs, leading to:

- 8–10 week delays
- Inconsistent decisions from local councils
- Increased costs and uncertainty

By removing these rules, the government aims to streamline installations, reduce red tape, and support its target of 600,000 ASHP installations per year by 2028.

What considerations remain within the regulation?

Housing associations should still consider carefully the allocation of ASHPs to properties in cases where the following regulatory terms are applicable:

- Noise compliance still applies, which may limit options in high-density areas
- Legal and tenure complexities (e.g., leasehold or mixed-tenure buildings) may still pose barriers
- Upfront costs remain high, especially for large-scale retrofits
- Planning permission will still apply to those with planning constraints, such as listed and conservation area buildings

How does this affect housing associations?

Planning Simplification

- No need for planning permission in most cases
- Enables installations in previously excluded properties, such as flats or terraced homes
- Faster project timelines and reduced administrative overhead

More Viable Retrofit Projects

- Housing associations can now consider portfolio-wide upgrades without worrying about boundary constraints
- Easier to plan bulk installations across estates

Simplified compliance with energy efficiency legislation

- Upgrading to a ASHP provides a practical way to enhance property energy ratings by improving EPC ratings and MEES compliance.
- Helps landlords align with anticipated net zero regulations, making housing stock more resilient to future environmental and legislative requirements.

Conclusion

The 29 May 2025 regulation change marks a turning point for low-carbon heating in the UK. For housing associations, it removes a major planning hurdle and makes it easier to deliver energy-efficient, future-ready homes.

Links to other resources you may find useful:

- [Property Mark – Planning restrictions scrapped](#)
- [NESTA - The UK government just changed home heating rules in England - here's what you need to know](#)
- [BBC - Planning change to make installing heat pump easier for millions](#)



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