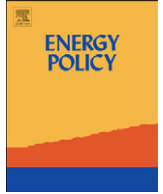


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Introduction to Section 8—The regulatory context

Both the buildings we occupy and the energy they use are subject to a wide range of rules and regulations. For buildings, the main form of regulation is planning consent, which takes effect when a building is designed. Once it is in place, it is subject to a wide range of market forces, which may cause it to be altered or even destroyed. In the future, we can expect the planning system to evolve in response to climate change and many other forces. The Merton Rule, which promotes renewable energy in new developments, may be formalised and made more demanding, and there may be new requirements to articulate the government's commitment to a low-carbon economy. Adams considers the future of planning in terms of the property and land market, while Crawford and French assess its effect on technological innovation in buildings.

In addition, climate change, buildings and the environment, areas in which the UK is likely to be much influenced by future European directives, translated into UK legislation and practice is discussed here by Ekins and Lees. There are already directives in place which oblige the developers of buildings to ensure that they install the best energy technology not only when they build a new building, but also when they refurbish an existing one. This measure may well put considerable pressure on developers and owners of buildings who have previously had little incentive to refurbish in an environmentally conscientious fashion. It might even help solve the incentive problem of rented property. At the moment, the owner of a rented building has little incentive to reduce its energy consumption as the occupier pays the bills, while the occupier may not have the right to alter the building and may not be staying long enough for it to be worthwhile.

As well as buildings, the energy networks that supply them are regulated, often with a view to increasing competition and preventing abusive monopolies, and to help ensure security of supply. In future, security of supply is likely to become more of a concern as the energy mix of the UK becomes more complex. Jamasb discusses the future of energy regulation, with a stress on the governance of energy networks.