

Reducing Risk on BREEAM Projects

How project teams can reduce risk, avoid common pitfalls,
and deliver BREEAM certification with confidence.

Why This Guide Exists

BREEAM is the world's leading sustainability assessment framework for buildings. Demand for certified projects is rising - driven by planning requirements, investor expectations, and growing regulatory pressure across the built environment.

Yet despite its widespread adoption, many projects still fall short of their target rating. Credits are lost. Delays occur. Costs increase.

In most cases these problems are avoidable. They stem not from fundamental design failures, but from unfamiliarity with the process, poor coordination between disciplines, and decisions made too late to course-correct.

This guide identifies the five most common reasons BREEAM projects go off track - and sets out practical steps teams can take to reduce risk and deliver certification with confidence.



Where BREEAM Projects Go Wrong

01 The team isn't familiar enough with BREEAM

Assumptions from other certification schemes lead to missed credits, incorrect documentation, and late-stage surprises.

02 "We'll deal with it later" - leaving it too late

BREEAM is structured around project stages. Credits missed at concept design are often impossible to recover.

03 Sustainability is treated as extra work

When BREEAM is seen as an add-on rather than a core objective, it gets deprioritised - causing delays and documentation gaps.

04 Procurement decisions cost credits

Materials specified or substituted without checking environmental certifications can significantly impact the final rating.

05 Lack of coordination across disciplines

Key decisions made without BREEAM input, conflicting consultant information, and incomplete documentation create risk at assessment.

What This Means for Project Teams

These risks affect all parties involved - clients, project managers, design teams, and contractors. When BREEAM goes off track, the consequences are real:

Failure to achieve the targeted BREEAM rating

Delays during design or at certification stage

Cost and programme impacts from late changes

Increased administrative burden across the team

Often the challenge isn't the building itself - it's how the BREEAM process is managed. The right approach, started early enough, removes most of these risks before they materialise.

How to Reduce Risk

01 Engage Early & Set Clear Direction

Early engagement at concept design stage allows teams to set realistic BREEAM targets, define roles and responsibilities, and identify risks before they impact cost or programme. This is also where projects can secure valuable Management credits through structured sustainability engagement.

02 Integrate BREEAM from Day One

Projects perform better when BREEAM is embedded into standard design and delivery processes - not treated as an add-on. Align design decisions with BREEAM requirements, incorporate sustainability into specifications and procurement, and plan evidence and documentation from the outset.

03 Maintain Oversight Through Design & Construction

Risks can emerge at any stage - through design changes, procurement decisions, or site activities. Ongoing monitoring ensures design intent is maintained through to construction, site decisions do not undermine earlier work, and issues are identified and resolved early.

04 Use BREEAM AP Support to Improve Outcomes

A qualified BREEAM Advisory Professional provides structured support across both design and construction. Critically, appointing a BREEAM AP at the appropriate stages can contribute directly to achieving Management credits - offering a clear and measurable benefit alongside improved project certainty.

About Lawler Sustainability

Lawler Sustainability is an independent sustainability and building services consultancy working across Ireland and the UK. We support project teams at every stage of design, procurement, and construction - from early-stage strategy through to certification. Our BREEAM services are built around practical, project-specific support - helping teams avoid the risks described in this guide and deliver the rating they are targeting.

BREEAM AP Support

Qualified Advisory Professional support across design and construction stages, including Management credit contribution.

Certification Services

Full BREEAM assessment and certification support from registration through to final certification.

Early-Stage Coordination

Structured sustainability engagement at concept design stage - setting targets, defining roles, and identifying risks.

Project Support

Ongoing BREEAM monitoring, documentation management, and procurement advice through design and construction.



Discuss Your Project

If you are planning a BREEAM project and want to reduce risk from the outset, we would be happy to discuss your project and how we can help.

Whether you are at early concept stage, mid-design, or approaching certification, Lawler Sustainability can provide the right level of support to keep your project on track.

Get in touch

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