

HousingNorthwest

An Introduction to the Code for Sustainable Homes

10 January 2008

Notes from the morning session

The Code for Sustainable Homes

Gina Yuzbasioglu, Energy Saving Trust (EST)

EST is a not for profit independent private company which aims highlight practical measures to reduce carbon emissions. They have produced over 90 practical guides and offer different online tools (e.g. boiler wizard) and training events. Website: <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/>.

Advice:

- Don't rule out masonry – good way of getting thermal mass into a building
- Think before you decide to use red brick and stone – but don't give up on aesthetic standards

Influencing the inception stage

Matthew Wilkinson, Broadway Malyan

Some good reasons for developers to build sustainably are that it could lower costs and the opportunity for good PR.

Advice

- Make sure objectives are kept to throughout the project
- Choice of site: score more highly if build on sites with low ecological value; some objectives are easier to achieve on different sites
- The brief: include important elements in brief; can't negotiate at later stages
- Have inter-disciplinary design teams
- Provide robust arguments at crucial stage

New Islington

Claudia Gilbert, Urban Splash

New Islington was a 'Millennium Community' project – one of 7 in the country. Development built on the former Cardroom estate, which suffered from high levels of abandonment. 10-15 minute walk from the city centre. 30 acre site.

www.housingnorthwest.co.uk

Features:

- Mixed-use and tenure. Site has strong commercial uses.
- Made use of existing assets of the site – the canal. New community based around water
- Made best use of existing sunlight
- Self-build homes – buy a plot in a terraced row – buyer can choose own architect.
- Homes designed to be adapted as new technologies emerge

For more information, visit: www.newislington.co.uk

**Sustainable housing development -Selwyn Street, Oldham
James McMillan, Great Places Housing Group**

The site area was close to Oldham town centre and was overcrowded with a lack of high quality open space. The importance of consultation with local residents throughout the project was paramount.

The Award winning scheme in Oldham looked at how other developments had failed in not catering for the needs of the local people. So the scheme placed emphasis on the importance of the views of the local population during the consultation process as 'Locals know best'.

The area itself had major problems of overcrowding especially amongst the ethnic minority community. The scheme looked to tackle this by knocking through numerous properties to create much larger properties.

The finished scheme was under a lot of constraints: cost, building quality, sustainability and density were high on the group's agenda. A lot of the design was specific to the BME client Group. There was consultation on the open space which finally ended up as multi-use space. Final score was Eco Homes 'excellent' (the overall Ecohomes rating for the development was 71.55 with 70 being seen as good quality score).

Ecohomes consultation commented on the positive housing features on the site:

- underground car parking which was placed under the housing
- Solar Panels
- Wind Generators

One Ecohomes issue was water consumption. This could be attributed to practices of some of the Islamic residents (e.g. washing three times daily, washing-up under running water, larger households) and the generally larger sizes of their households.

Wind turbines were placed on high points of the properties and provided just over 1.256 KW of power. Problems from the turbines came not from the turbines themselves but from the reliability of the supply company.

There was consultation on the open space within the area. SRB (Single Regeneration Budget) funding used to start an open space project on Selwyn St and the formation of Coppice Park. Coppice Park was not intended to be a play area - was designed for open use and contained a few features built to be indestructible such as concrete seating etc which was selected to reduce damage and vandalism.

The work which has taken place within the area has seen the value of the housing increasing on average by 15% (CABE Study)

Morning Q& A session

Q: Are there existing/planned Incentives for developers to adhere to the Code/sustainable practices?

Matthew Wilkinson: Not mandatory for developers until 2010. That means developers and others have two years to 'try it out'.
A good idea would be better mortgage deal for more efficient homes.
It will be legislation that housing must be airtight and insulated.

Q: If Level 6 of the Code is hard to achieve within urban areas, does this mean it's unachievable?

There were mixed views from the panel:

Government deliberately set a high standard to 'point developers in right direction'. Technology must catch up.

Gina Yuzbasioglu: Level 6 is achievable. The vast volume of out of town dwellings can reach Level 6 with good advice from a qualified person.

Brien Sexton - commented that the key message was that practical ways of thermal insulation

Q Who's monitoring the Code?

There are accredited assessors. BRE provides auditing.

Matthew Wilkinson: How people use buildings has greater impact.
Regulation is a powerful tool and can encourage the construction industry to be involved. Corporate Responsibility policies of organisations need to be scrutinized. If a firm commits to something in their CR policy, you should encourage them to adhere to this.