

CROSS PARTY GROUP ON ARCHITECTURE AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

MINUTES OF MEETING

Meeting: **Architecture and Design Scotland – “Is Our Affordable Housing High Quality Housing” held on 11 May 2005 in Committee Room 1, Scottish Parliament**

Our Ref: **EM NC R10-mins110505**

PRESENT

Alastair Cameron	Scottish Churches Housing Action
Alastair Hackland	Hackland-Dore
Alan McGuckin	Kingdom Housing Association
Allan Lundmark	Homes for Scotland
Alice McGlone	CEC Housing
Anita Rogers	SFHA
Anne Pattullo	Vivarium
Bill Banks	Kingdom H.A
Bill Byfield	Glasgow Housing Association
Cian Bowlay	Vivarium
Danny Bradley	Glasgow Housing Association
David Macdonald	Cockburn Association
David Orr	SFHA
Derek Logie	Rural Housing Service
Derek Nelson	Forestry Commission Scotland
Desdel Coote	SCSH
Donald Gorrie	MSP
Eleanor Scott	MSP
Eugene Mullan	Smith Scott Mullan Associates
F Lewis Bowen	Buccleuch Group
Gordon Smith	Communities Scotland
Graham U'ren	RTPI
Heather Chapple	Smith Scott Mullan Associates
Howard Liddle	Gaia
Hugh Hoffmann	Vivarium
Jack Hugh	Architect/EAA
Jim Cooke	Glasgow Housing Association
Jim Mitchell	Architecture Policy Unit, Scottish Executive
Joan Scott	Glasgow Housing Association
John Buchan	Michael Gilmore Associates
John Duff	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in Scotland
John Gerrard	Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland
John Lawson	IFA
Karen Anderson	Anderson Bell Christie
Liz McLean	East Lothian Council
Louise Wright	Scottish Executive
Mike Rumbles	MSP
Misia Jack	SFHA
Murray Tosh	MSP
Nora Radcliffe	MSP

Raymond Young	ATDS/Rural Housing Service
Richard Hamer	Ownership Options
Richard Lochhead	MSP
Robin Harper	MSP CPG Architecture and Built Environment
Sally Cowburn	Assistant to Robin Harper MSP
Sandy Murray	Tenants First Housing Association
Sebastian Tombs	RIAS/A&DS
Sefton Laing	Rocket Science UK Ltd
Sylvia Jackson	MSP
Tony Hutson	SFHA

APOLOGIES

Anne Crawford	SCALA/Edinburgh City Development
Linda Fabiani	SFHA
Karen Gillon	MSP
Fiona Hyslop	SFHA
Terry Levinthal	Scottish Civic Trust
Brian Lightbody	Michael Laird Architects
Rhona Macdonald	RICS Scotland
Des McNulty	MSP
Gordon Munro	City of Edinburgh Council
Irene Oldfather	SFHA
Sean O'Reilly	Institute of Historic Building Conservation
Harry Philips	Holmes Partnership/UDAL
John Swinburne	SFHA
Sue Stirling	Scottish Executive

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Cross Party Group Subscription Members

1.0 INTRODUCTION TO MEETING THEME

- Murray Tosh MSP welcomed the opportunity for a joint meeting of the Cross Party Group on Architecture and the Built Environment and the Cross Party Group on Affordable Housing. Creation of high quality housing and successful neighbourhoods is the aspect of architecture and the built environment which most influences peoples sense of well being. There is substantial investment currently/anticipated all of which demonstrate the importance of this discussion in the context of regeneration areas, a high demand for additional homes and the current stock transfer policy in affordable housing. Both affordable housing and the design of housing have substantial guidance and legislation in place and the theme of this meeting is to question “if it is working?” and “if not why not?”.

Murray introduced the following people/presentations which had been arranged to

raise many of the issues and to encourage a lively discussion:

- Sandy Murray, Tenants First Housing Co-op – Ballater Case Study Video
- Karen Anderson, Anderson Bell Christie – Design Quality
- Alan McGuckin, Kingdom Housing Association – Procurement
- Howard Liddle, Gaia – Sustainability

2.0 SANDY MURRAY, BALLATER CASE STUDY

Sandy showed a DVD which explained the design and procurement of affordable Housing in Ballater using a Dutch prefabrication technique.

3.0 KAREN ANDERSON, DESIGN QUALITY

Karen used a number of projects by her company and other designers to illustrate the added value which good design can bring to creating successful housing and neighbourhoods. The government funded aspect of affordable housing ensures aspects such as Housing for Varying Needs, appropriate energy rating and Secure by Design. She identified 4 aspects which would provide added value as follows:

- Creating identity and distinct places.
- Ensuring quality of housing layouts.
- Building communities.
- Maximising sustainable design.

Karen looked at examples of rural housing, small towns, suburban housing and city living to illustrate successful completed projects in these difference circumstances.

She completed her presentation with a brief commentary on the benefits of housing within, or adjacent to, listed buildings as a means of protecting our heritage. She highlighted the importance of planning and masterplans in the procurement of regeneration projects if the added value outlined in her presentation is to be achieved.

4.0 ALAN MCGUCKIN, PROCUREMENT

- Alan provided information on 2 recent initiatives which have involved the use of procurement techniques to improve standards. The first is the LARACH Alliance which is an informal group of 6 Housing Associations which share the aims of improving product quality and sustainability, improving the procurement process and encouraging innovation. A few practicalities of this approach were as follows:
 - 3 year funding programme.
 - Limited number of contractors selected on quality price basis.
 - Use of Key Performance Indicators and Eco Homes rating.
 - Develop standard house types and specifications.
 - Partnering approach including development of an open book approach to

pricing.

His view was that this has been a qualified success and has been more involved than originally envisaged.

The second project is a local procurement initiative in Fife where the Council chose to select a few preferred housing developers to develop projects on behalf of the smaller more locally based housing associations.

In summary Alan raised a number of points for consideration.

- One of the main constraints in delivering affordable housing is land availability.
- Public bodies could be more pro active in land banking.
- Use of affordable housing requirements as part of the planning system will help to generate the number of units, but are the targets viable? This policy could encourage landowners not to release land and what are the ramifications of this?
- Mismatch between quality of product produced by housing association and standards being achieved in private developments. He suggested joint ventures may encourage improvements in this respect but ultimately legislation is likely to be required.

5.0 HOWARD LIDDLE, GAIA – SUSTAINABILITY

- Howard drew on his European experience to highlight some harsh facts in relation to sustainable design techniques. While there has been a substantial number of publications and increased profile of sustainable design the proportion of projects which are actually delivered in this respect in the UK (i.e. 2-3%), has not changed in the last 30 years. To Howard's dismay a piece of German research has illustrated a similar situation in Germany, a country which we would look to for best practice in this respect.
- Howard highlighted that, despite the fact that 85% of people said they would be prepared to pay 5% more for a sustainable house design, neither Government, procurement organisations or the construction industry are mainstreaming the green agenda.
- Howard finds that sustainability is regularly referred to in project briefs but rarely delivered in the final building.

6.0 DISCUSSION OF ISSUES

- Murray Tosh thanked all speakers for their thought provoking contributions and chaired a question and answer session on the topic. There was a broad discussion with input from a wide range of people, the key points raised were as follows:
 - The principles of prefabricated housing were discussed, concern was raised about the quality of design which can be achieved. It was acknowledged that

for improved sustainability the factory which constructed the housing should be located in Scotland. The principle of prefabricated timber kit housing is a well established and effective system within Scotland.

- The difference between prefabrication and “off site” construction was highlighted. Approximately 30% of building materials are currently wasted on site. Management of health and safety concerns is easier in a factory environment. The average age of people on site is 50 years old, young people do not want to do this type of work.
- The importance of long term investment in the industry was highlighted. The benefits of proper research and development was acknowledged as part of a consistent, structured programme of training.
- Land shortage is a serious issue with the value of the land as high as 40% of the sale value of a property.
- The house buying public do not ask about the energy rating of housing.
- It was noted that there are other drivers which influence housing such as stock market view of the housing industry, insurance company view and the valuation profession.
- There was a call to publicise projects which had endeavoured to innovate including information on appropriate evaluation of the process.
- Some people felt that the current funding regime at Communities Scotland did not support additional costs as a result of sustainable design. It was suggested that the assessment of value within housing should include a whole life costing analysis.
- A suggestion that all housing should have an “energy rating” which would substantially raise the profile of this issue with house holders.
- The value of healthy buildings was highlighted Howard outlined a project carried out by his Practice for housing with low toxins, many of the occupants had experienced improved health and required less medication, thereby providing a direct financial benefit from the high quality design.

7.0 SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES

- Richard Lochhead, MSP requested a 10 point plan for MSP’s to inform them of the key issues in relation to high quality design of affordable housing and guide legislation accordingly. The following points have been identified from the meeting discussion and subsequent e-mails received on this topic:
- A statutory requirement for comprehensive masterplans for areas of housing over 50 units.
- A holistic approach to design of neighbourhoods which enhances existing identity or creates new distinct places.

- Use of existing Community Planning Partnership to ensure full engagement of local communities in the design of housing.
- Move towards longer term (say three year), funding programme.
- Funding based on programmes not specific projects.
- Incentives/encouragement to develop modern methods of construction.
- Amending the Building Regulations to include quite strict sustainability standards (eco-homes as minimum).
- Demanding BREEAM follow up survey as a norm and stopping BREEAM from issuing anything other than a conditional standard at design stage.
- NO MORE POLICY documents – go straight to Implementation Plans with detailed indicators and performance standards which have to be met and measured.
- Across the board policy of Building for 200 years.
- Toxic labelling for buildings.

8.0 NEXT MEETING

- To be advised

9.0 CONCLUSION

- Robin Harper thanked the speakers of their presentations and all present for their attendance and input. The meeting was closed at 7.30pm