



Press Information

3 June 2008

Understanding why buildings fail the test of genuine sustainability – let's share this knowledge, says Inbuilt

Inbuilt has welcomed a CABE review of more than 700 large construction projects over the last two years, and the identification of common failings to deliver genuine sustainability. According to a report in the Guardian last weekend¹, CABE has concluded that fewer than 10 projects made sustainability a priority and it has accused developers of greenwash, preferring gadgets and microtechnology stuck onto buildings instead of more natural solutions.

However Inbuilt, the UK's first major sustainability design consultancy, is also calling for greater transparency of information about these projects, good and bad, more sharing of data in the development community, and the publication of better guidance for architects and housebuilders.

Dr David Strong, chief executive of Inbuilt, says: "I'm not surprised that some developers are reaching for green gadgetry rather than pursuing longer-term strategies to deliver genuine sustainability.

"Our own research has revealed the same issue, not just among commercial property developers but also among housebuilders who are unsure about what route to take to meet the regulations in 2010 and 2013, let alone the big target of zero carbon by 2016.² In fact, when we asked leading housebuilders about their ability to deliver zero carbon homes, their discomfort was palpable, expressed in warnings about the unrecoverable costs, the lack of reliable technologies, supply chain, skills or expertise, and the trouble accessing renewable energy sources.

"Designers and developers have been thrown a green gauntlet by Government and many are struggling to balance all the complex and inter-related factors that are involved in sustainability. At the moment the temptation for developers to jump on the first technical bandwagon is enormous. Any supplier that claims to deliver a solution that meets the regulations and looks anything like affordable is doing rather well.



“At Inbuilt we spend a lot of time explaining that genuine sustainability is low risk sustainability. It’s pragmatic and commercially compelling, and it doesn’t rely on untested technologies or gadgets. But it’s hard to prove this without the published evidence. And too much finger-pointing could make the industry very reluctant to reveal post-occupancy evaluation data. We want to see more sharing of real data and evidence about the performance of our buildings, not less.

“CABE and others should also encourage sustainability skills training, greater integration between mainstream architecture and buildings consultancies, and the promotion of ‘whole system thinking’ which is so vital to success in this area. Delivering genuine sustainability is much more than simply achieving a low or zero-carbon building, it’s also about addressing quality of life and wellbeing issues including; improved learning outcomes in schools, healing in hospitals, productivity in offices and safe and healthy homes.

“Our clients are not interested in greenwash or tokenism. They tell us the same things: the need for more published best practice, and a new type of professional, unbiased advice that fully integrates masterplanning and design skills at the earliest stages of their projects with the technical and scientific expertise of building services engineers and the sustainability skills of specialist green consultancies. That’s what Inbuilt was set up to deliver, and what I believe will be a more common approach in the future.”

Ends

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Notes

1. Guardian, 31 May 08 – ‘Developers accused of pursuing gadgetry instead of saving the planet’: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/may/31/greenbuilding.ethicalliving>
2. Inbuilt poll of volume housebuilders, Jan-Feb 08. Further details are available from the News page at www.inbuilt.co.uk

