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Tories pledge to transform derelict communities

By Laura Sharman

Improving Britain's creaking transport infrastructure and creating a 'nation of homebuilders' are top priorities, according to the Conservatives.

Shadow Housing Minister, Grant Shapps, revealed that under a Tory Government, villages will be granted powers to expand by up to 10 percent over 10 years.

Local authorities will also be given financial incentives to build new housing by receiving match funding of the council tax revenue from the new homes for six years.

Shapps said: "We will give people something in return for development. When a community builds more homes, we'll match pound-for-pound the extra money that the area gets through council tax for six years.

"For the first time our Local Housing Trusts will give people the power to expand their villages by up to 10 percent over 10 years. At last people will be able to shape their own communities."

Shapps also pledged to scrap housing targets, abolish home information packs and get rid of Regional Spatial Strategies.

"We want to create nothing less than a nation of home builders," he concluded.



Redcar & Cleveland College demonstrates what can be achieved when there is a coordinated approach to creating a modern, sustainable and user friendly learning centre.

The college incorporates a variety of green features including solar panels, combined heat and power (CHP) boilers and rainwater harvesting systems, all within a building designed to provide the optimum environment for learning.

The designers incorporated many renewable technologies into the building. For instance, the CHP boiler not only heats the building, but also provides electrical power used at the college with excess sold to the National Grid. Additional electricity for power and lighting is generated by photo-voltaic solar panels on the roof. The toilets also use rainwater harvesting to reduce mains water consumption.

Redcar Borough Council commissioned Clerks of Works because it realised that, in reality, projects that are not independently monitored by professionals can result in numerous defects. Unfortunately these can have long-term effects on the functionality and performance of the building. In contrast, a well-designed and well-constructed building will be fit for purpose, easy to use and achieve optimum energy performance.

Redcar & Cleveland's new £26 million college is leading the way in green build technology and setting an example for other educational buildings. Here, **Tony Hickton** looks at how the vision for a sustainable and modern educational facility was delivered.

Clerks of Works on the Redcar & Cleveland College worked closely with the main contractor from the initial stages to ensure the building met these criteria. All of the activities from ground works and steelwork through to fit-out and completion were inspected. The brief from the client was to ensure that the building adhered to correct design and specification as well as achieving the required levels of sustainability.

Having Clerks of Works on-site helped the contractors as they found it created a much more coordinated and joined up approach between the various teams. For example, by working with each of the subcontractors, Hickton was able to provide the main contractor with early independent warning of problems concerning time, cost and quality.

This 'right first time' approach enabled them to avoid costly and

time consuming remedial activities later in the build, which ultimately meant fewer delays and better value for the client.

A Clerk of Work's objectivity means that the client or building designer will always know what the real picture is on site. This means that delays and waste are kept to a minimum and the client ends up with a project that reflected the original brief.

Sustainability and thermal efficiency were a central part of the college and the designers therefore incorporated a large amount of renewable technology externally. For example, the car park was constructed using a relatively new paving block system that allows rainwater to percolate through the surface to a gravel trap below, preventing flash flooding in the drains.

A vital role carried out by the Hickton on this large building was to ensure that all the parties on site worked together in a coordinated approach. This meant, for example, the wall and roofing contractors working together to achieve a more effective air tight seal, preventing warm air escaping and with it improving energy efficiency.

Often, when there is a lack of coordination between these two contractors, defects can lead to a poor seal where the two elements meet. This can mean the building fails its airtight test, requiring expensive remedial work. Undetected, the building will always perform below optimum thermal efficiency increasing running costs for the client.

The external walls and roof of this building were highly insulated and an essential role of the Clerk of Works was to ensure correct installation. The process was closely monitored to ensure maximum thermal performance.

Since its completion, Redcar & Cleveland College has become an exemplar of what can be achieved by sustainable design and a coordinated approach on site. The ultimate beneficiaries will be the students that use the college as it creates an environment much more conducive to learning as well as a building that has a reduced carbon footprint. ●



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