



Wave Homes on a rising tide

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Wave is more about a general approach than a particular technology. The lessons learned in the company's Phase I and II were transferred to Phase III, in which a prototype, replicable for factory production, incorporated the following:

- engineered timber sections as structural solutions
- closed panels, insulated and serviced
- floor and roof cassettes
- no internal supports
- a focus on assembly and jointing (interfaces between trades)
- sub-assemblies, resulting in increased productivity
- integrated, low-tech solutions which have plenty of scope to grow and improve.

Wave always looks for reduced production costs, increased product performance.

How does it do these things? Through lean processes, and early supply chain integration.

Rethinking Regulation

By James Woudhuysen, Professor of Forecasting and Innovation, De Montfort University, Leicester

Nothing certain but tax: under Section 106 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, agreements between developers and local councils accounted for 44 per cent of Britain's 29,000 completions of affordable housing in 2002/3. But government demands for tight, mixed, brownfield schemes and non-housing infrastructure exact a price. ¹ Developers are taxed to fund a few roads and **a lot more social engineering:** local authorities, the British Property Federation jokes, 'have used s106s inventively'. ² Now Gordon Brown, through a consultation launched in his pre-Budget report later this year, may go further even than Kate Barker's 2004 proposal for a **Planning Gain Supplement** on greenfield winners of planning permissions....

Hey, but whatever happened to **Mr Brown's first-time buyers?** In his March Budget, the premier-to-be doubled the zero-rate threshold for stamp duty to £120,000, so discriminating in favour of first-time buyers. But now, since it announced its 2006/08 National Affordable Housing Programme to build 70,000 homes for £3.9bn, the **Housing Corporation** has added Thames Valley police community support officers, British Transport Police and county council nurses to its list of **'key' workers** who will also enjoy positive discrimination.... The list of those designated 'key' is growing. From 1 April 2006 the ODPM's Key Worker Living scheme will embrace no fewer than **12 kinds of 'key' workers – including planners!** Minister of Housing Yvette Cooper enthuses that HomeBuy, the main provision of KWL, may help more than 100,000 new households by 2010. ³ But as the ODPM also reports, 'Homebuy does not – in the short and medium term – **increase the supply of housing**'. ⁴ And maybe **increasing the supply of housing** is, er, the **key issue**....

CABE says floods are good, but ducks are better: First, architect **Terry Farrell** wanted 90 per cent of the homes planned for the **Thames Gateway** to be crammed next to London – and the Commission on Architecture and the Built Environment backed him, comparing his urban densities with the low-rise delights of Kensington and Chelsea. Then CABE upheld Farrell's idea that the rest of the Gateway be made a regional park. CABE enthuses that a high proportion of the growth area would be designated as **'ducklands'**. There, apparently, 'the existing floodplain areas would be left free to flood'. This, CABE goes on, 'is a strong and simple idea, one that makes good common sense'. ⁵

Sit tight: From April 2006, suggest new **Draft approved documents for Part L revisions**, Britain's fewer-than-200,000 new homes each year will have to meet a higher level of **airtightness** than the country's stock of 25m old homes. ⁶ Testing will be mandatory on at least one unit of each dwelling type in every new development. As for the airtightness of the UK's existing housing stock – well, the ODPM hasn't yet drawn up a policy on that.... Anyway, won't a five or even two per cent level of unit testing for **airtightness**, which is what housebuilders are looking for, miss the majority of site-built details? Although such details are built to a notional level of quality, they also have to be done by hand, afresh, each time – and often by different personnel, too.... Air tightness ought to be about designing out the joints and interfaces between modules. For ever-improving tolerances, those modules should not so much be constructed on-site in the rain and mud, as assembled in the dry in modern factories. **Mass manufacture of homes** would do more to **meet every kind of performance requirement – not just energy ones** – than letting the old installed base drift on, exuding those satanic carbon emissions.

¹ Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research, University of Cambridge, and Town and Regional Planning Department, University of Sheffield, *Value for money of delivering affordable housing through Section 106*, ODPM, July 2005, pp5, 9, 31 and on

www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_planning/documents/page/odpm_plan_039124.hcsp

² BPF, *Don't kill the goose! The case for tariffs not tax*, 28 September 2005, pp5, 31 and on www.bpf.org.uk/

³ ODPM, *HomeBuy expanding the opportunity to own: Government's response to consultation*, 14 September 2005, and on www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_housing/documents/page/odpm_house_040286.hcsp

⁴ ODPM, *Evaluation of Key Worker Living: early findings*, Housing Research Summary, No 222, August 2005, p3, and on www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_housing/documents/page/odpm_house_040021.hcsp

⁵ Quoted in Roger Milne, 'Government advisors applaud Thames Gateway regional park plan', *Planning Portal*, 5 August 2005.

⁶ www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_buildreg/documents/page/odpm_breg_040269.hcsp