

Jon Bodington, Managing Director,
AES Sustainability Consultants
discusses the advantages of engaging
early with your sustainability consultant.

The early bird...

Everyone accepts that the UK is struggling with a severe housing shortage. The Government's response has been to push for the housebuilding industry to increase volume to deliver up to one million homes by 2020. However with the cost of materials increasing and with skills shortages putting pressure on wages, developers are under increasing pressure to maintain margins as well as increase output.

So, it is easy to see why some in the industry want to water down some of the sustainability targets. While it is unclear what leaving the EU will mean for legislation, in the meantime UK Building Regulations still need to be followed and targets achieved. This is where engaging with an experienced sustainability consultant can really pay dividends for the builder.

Fabric first

Early engagement with your sustainability consultant is key to

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ensuring that sustainability targets are achieved with minimal additional cost. Adopting a fabric first approach is now widely agreed to be the most sustainable way to achieve energy and carbon reductions. However, this means considering the whole design and specification rather than simply installing a couple of photo voltaic panels in the roof.

An expert consultant should have an in-depth knowledge of building physics and be able to make sensible recommendations as to how the design and specification can be modified to achieve maximum benefit. They should provide a holistic solution that considers any other targets that need to be achieved beyond just energy and CO₂ reductions, such as Home Quality Mark, Code for Sustainable Homes or BREEAM targets.

Focus on quality

As the volume increases within the construction industry some have a concern that build quality and detailing will slip even further. The work of the Zero Carbon Hub to investigate the gap between design and as built performance made uncomfortable reading for many.

All too often changes are made to the design and specification without the energy assessor being consulted. These can have a detrimental effect on the end performance of the property. If we are to move toward a time when the public can rely on their EPC to

accurately reflect the property they've purchased it's important to engage with your sustainability consultant throughout the whole process from planning through to completion.

Control heat loss

As the specification of major building elements such as walls and floors improve, the heat lost through linear thermal bridging is becoming increasingly significant. A quality consultant will accurately assess the linear thermal bridging and advise on ways to improve detailing rather than simply applying default worst case values.

Another important benefit of employing a good consultant is that they should highlight any potential risks such as overheating. As we move towards more airtight properties with lower thermal mass this is becoming an increasing concern.

Any solution should take all these factors into account, be cost effective, simple to build, improve saleability and last the lifetime of the property. The good news for developers and builders is that engaging with good sustainability consultants early on may cost a little more initially but can save you considerable amounts of money in the long run.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

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