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Council housing is the forgotten alternative to a system that subsidises rich landlords

DEBATE

Will the Green Deal mean much work for architects?

YES

Andrew Mellor
Environmental director,
PRP Architects



The Green Deal is not yet fully detailed, so we can't be definitive about the impact on architects until the full consultation. In its current proposed form the Green Deal will fund cavity wall and loft insulation, windows and heating controls. This programme will not achieve the emissions reductions required by the Climate Change Act or provide work for architects.

However, we will see Green Deal providers offering more measures through the utility companies' proposed eco subsidy programme, feed-in tariffs, the renewable heat incentive and other funding to provide whole house retrofits. Many of the organisations involved will employ or collaborate with architects.

In terms of aesthetics, taking a house-by-house approach could devalue the street scene and the value of homes. Architects could actually enhance the look and value of homes, and this could be extended to design guidance produced by local authorities.

The Green Deal may also provide work for architects because it applies to care homes, key worker homes and small businesses.

Architects will also have opportunities to incorporate the Green Deal into their services, including the development of whole house solutions, technical details and planning alterations to homes to accommodate new technologies. Those who benefit the most will be those who diversify their skills into areas such as life cycle costing, embodied carbon calculations, energy or carbon dioxide calcula-

debate about housing the poor. From now on, it is proposed, the state will shell out no more than £250 per week for a single flat, and £400 on anything larger.

It's classic Daily Mail. Why oh why should normal hard-working families slave away to subsidise rents for others — rents that sometimes end up in excess of the average salary? Perhaps because of the competition for column inches, the language of this debate has been purple. MP Diane Abbott spoke of the "cleansing of poor people" from smart neighbourhoods. Rather less expectedly, London

problem of housing the poor. I agree with the government on this one. Housing benefit isn't natural, or normal. It's not the feckless poor that it subsidises, it's the feckless rich, whose mortgages are being paid off by the state. Once upon a time, those who couldn't afford private rents lived in council housing, publicly owned, publicly designed and publicly maintained. Most of it was sold off in the Thatcher years, and replaced with housing benefit.

Now, one might argue that publicly owned housing was always going to be a bad investment:



The deal aims to make existing homes as efficient as the most eco-friendly new builds. Pictured: Bere Architects' Larch House.

NO

Brian Berry
Federation of
Master Builders



It will be builders rather than architects who will really benefit from the millions of jobs resulting from the Green Deal.

This is because the vast majority of work required to green our building stock consists of some form of insulation, which can be carried out easily by competent builders. Whether it is loft insulation or solid wall insulation, this work is the bread and butter of most builders. There are 26 million homes in the UK in need of retrofitting by 2030 and only for the more complex projects — which will be far fewer in number — will the services of an architect be required.

is a new market worth at least £3.5 billion every year. However, for the programme to be a success for both householders and reputable builders, there is a need to drive up standards to give the public confidence that those they employ have the ability to do the work that is required. The last thing that this country needs is a repeat of the botched insulation scheme in Australia, which resulted in 160,000 homes being fitted with sub-standard insulation that was of little benefit to the environment.

The fact that anyone can call themselves a builder in this country is the reason why the Federation of Master Builders, the UK's largest building trade association, is applying to the government to set up a competent person scheme for the general builder to carry out the Green Deal work.

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