



**Government response to the ODPM
Housing, Planning and Local
Government and the Regions
Committee Report on the Role and
Effectiveness of CABE**



**Government response to the ODPM
Housing, Planning and Local
Government and the Regions
Committee Report on the Role and
Effectiveness of CABE**

Presented to Parliament by the
Deputy Prime Minister and the First Secretary of State
by Command of Her Majesty
April 2005

© Crown Copyright 2005

The text in this document (excluding the Royal Arms and departmental logos) may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium providing that it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the document specified.

Any enquiries relating to the copyright in this document should be addressed to The Licensing Division, HMSO, St Clements House, 2-16 Colegate, Norwich, NR3 1BQ. Fax: 01603 723000 or e-mail: licensing@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk

Government response to ODPM Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Regions Committee Report on the Role and Effectiveness of CAFE

Introduction

The ODPM Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Regions Committee published its report on The Role and Effectiveness of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CAFE) on 9 March 2005.

The Government welcomes this report as a contribution to ensuring that the important role that CAFE has in raising the profile of architecture and urban design, and the design quality of new developments, can be undertaken with maximum effectiveness.

CAFE was established in response to the Government's 1998 Comprehensive Spending Review¹ that concluded that efficiency and effectiveness benefits would be gained from a series of structural changes to the way the Government provides funding and support to culture, media and sport. One of these structural changes included the "creation of a new national body with additional funding to champion architecture, taking on the Royal Fine Art Commission's current design review role, and the Arts Council's granted programme for architecture, but having a wider role than either existing body"

CAFE is thus an executive Non-Departmental Public Body set up by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) as the national champion for high quality buildings, places and spaces. DCMS acts as the principal sponsor department for CAFE. Since 2002 ODPM has provided additional funding by way of grant.

CAFE plays an important part in the delivery of Government's vision for securing better design quality and promoting architecture. In the five years since its establishment it has become an effective and well respected organisation that is making a difference. This was borne out by a recently completed independent stakeholder evaluation². This Select Committee follows on from this evaluation exercise, and from an independent audit of CAFE commissioned by DCMS and published in June 2004. Some of the Select Committee's recommendations echo the findings of these earlier studies, and work is already underway to take action.

The Government's response to each of the Select Committee's recommendations is set out in detail below.

¹ *The Department's Spending Review and Response – A New Cultural Framework*, DCMS, December 1998.

² *CAFE Stakeholder Review* conducted by Office of Public Management, March 2004.

Government's response to the Select Committee's conclusions and recommendations

The Effectiveness of CABA

Recommendation 1 (Paragraph 12): CABA is proving effective in improving the design quality of new development, particularly by supporting local authorities in securing higher quality area redevelopments. There is, however, considerable scope to improve the design quality of many new buildings, particularly housing developments. CABA should consider how it can be more effective in raising the general design quality of a broader range of developments.

The Government welcomes the Committee's recognition of CABA's effectiveness in improving the design quality of new development. We acknowledge that there is more work to be done, particularly in housing. Since ODPM started to work with DCMS and jointly fund CABA, activity on raising the design quality of development has grown. Housing is one of the key themes of CABA's current corporate strategy. In 2004/05 CABA's work in this area included research into the barriers preventing good design, an audit of housing design quality, training for house builders, the Building for Life standard to recognise high quality schemes and promotion of design quality to house buyers through the Homebuyer's Guide. All of these work streams will continue to be developed in 2005/06 and beyond. Government will be asking CABA to consider how these work streams can become more effective as they develop.

Recommendation 2 (Paragraph 13): The Government needs to monitor the use of the planning delivery grant to ensure that an increasing proportion is spent on improving local authority planning departments' performance not only in terms of speed in considering planning applications but also by more effective scrutiny of design quality. This will only be achieved by employing a diverse range of skills. CABA should also urge local authorities to employ a greater number of urban designers and architects.

The Planning Delivery Grant (PDG) is not ringfenced and, therefore, there are no conditions as to the particular services that the Grant should be directed to. Consequently monitoring takes place on this basis. However, there is an expectation that the funding should be committed to planning services. The incentive for authorities to spend the money in this way is that they will not receive further reward unless they maintain good performance or continue to improve.

Evidence from PDG research carried out in 2003/4 reveals that, despite the lack of conditions on how the funding is used, almost all of it was spent on planning, and that 46% of the grant was committed to improving the skills of staff. Some of the skills acquired will assist Local Authority staff to meet timescale targets, which is in itself a quality issue, and does not compromise on quality in decision making.

The Planning Delivery Grant also helps to underpin wider planning improvements and the money is spent not just on improving activities and skills within Development Control, but on a range of activities designed to improve the quality of planning services. In addition, a small proportion of the grant is directed into funding national initiatives, such as the Planning Advisory Service, postgraduate planning bursaries and distance learning. All of these national initiatives have positive outcome and enhance skills at a local level.

Under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment system, in 2004 the Government introduced for the first time Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 205³ to assess whether quality systems are in place in authorities that will lead to quality outcomes. BVPI 205 will help to motivate improved awareness of the importance of design quality by focusing on the need for local arrangements to access specialist advice from either a qualified architect, urban designer or landscape architect on design at all points in the local planning process from preparation of the local development plan to determination of all types of applications.

For the last three years CABA has also been prioritising work to raise the level of skills within Local Authorities, and continues to work on this area. It does this in a number of ways, including:

- i. fostering and supporting design champions. A recent survey has shown that 67% of local authorities have a design champion, as opposed to 20% in 2001. 66% of those design champions have been appointed as a result of a CABA initiative;
- ii. providing training for local authorities and others. CABA provided 3,000 training days in 2004/05 and is now working closely with the Academy for Sustainable Communities to develop the design training available to local authorities;
- iii. advising local authority building clients through the enabling programme; and
- iv. creating a better understanding of the need for cross disciplinary working and promoting a diverse range of skills throughout the authority – for example, ensuring that key professionals such as highways engineers have an understanding of the principles of good urban design.

This work not only improves the range of skills, but also encourages local authorities to make greater use of qualified design specialists.

Recommendation 3 (Paragraph 14): The Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Bill proposes to make CABA a statutory corporation. The Government should take this opportunity to define its objectives more clearly and increase its transparency.

The Government believes that current provisions set out in the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill (Part 8) clearly define the objectives of CABA, and has no plans for amendment. The general functions of the Commission are set out in Clause 88, and will be the promotion of education and high standards in, and understanding and appreciation of architecture, and the design, management and maintenance of the built environment. It is not intended that statutory status will affect CABA's role in practice; it will continue to discharge its functions and its day-to-day activities will be the same as before. CABA's valuable role as a non-statutory consultee for planning purposes will not change.

As an executive non-Departmental Public Body, CABA is already required to operate in a transparent manner. However, if the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill is passed, CABA's accountability to Parliament will be enhanced through the Comptroller and Auditor General taking over the audit of CABA. Also, by putting CABA's functions in statute, this will ensure that there will be an opportunity for Parliamentary debate if in the future it is proposed to change them, thereby providing better transparency.

³ Best Value Performance Indicators for 2004/2005: Supplementary guidance & feedback document Chapter 4.3, page 14. www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_localgov/documents/pdf/odpm_locgov_pdf_028068.pdf.

The Governance of CABE

Recommendation 4 (Paragraph 23): Much progress is being made in implementing the recommendations in AHL's audit report for DCMS on conflicts of interest. These procedural changes could avoid some future potential conflicts of interest. The DCMS and CABE now need to consider a more radical review of the organisation's style to change public perceptions and to make it a more accountable and transparent organisation. This would enable it to play an enhanced role as adviser to central and local government and developers on design issues.

As an executive non-Departmental Public Body, CABE is already required to operate in an accountable and transparent way. The Government welcomes the Committee's acknowledgement that progress is being made in implementing the recommendations of the AHL report⁴. We believe that these changes need time to settle down before a further review is undertaken. We shall be considering other ways of enhancing CABE's accountability and transparency.

However CABE's stakeholder review in 2004 indicates that perceptions of CABE are positive – for example 94 per cent of national, regional and local partners expressed satisfaction with CABE's performance. Therefore we do not agree that the way CABE currently operates detracts from its role as an adviser to central and local government or the public on design issues.

Recommendation 5 (Paragraph 24): With the involvement of experts active in the property development field as CABE's Commissioners and in other capacities, the danger of perceptions of conflicts of interest is much greater than with many other public bodies. Whilst Nolan principles are relevant, a higher level of supervision of Commissioner interests and transparency is required. As proposed in the AHL report, CABE must make its register of Commissioner interests readily available on its website as a matter of urgency. The AHL report has served as an important review of the effectiveness of CABE's internal procedures for handling conflicts of interest. The DCMS should require an annual external review to ensure that the new procedures are preventing conflicts of interests arising and to consider whether any other measures are necessary.

The Government agrees that the involvement of experts active in the field of architecture and the built environment on the Board of CABE – which has contributed significantly to its success – carries with it an increased potential for perceptions of possible conflicts of interest. The existing guidance on managing conflicts of interest already sets high standards, and Commissioners should not be involved with the consideration of schemes in which they have an interest. However, as the Tenth Report of the Committee of Standards in Public Life⁵ notes, "A very real challenge faces public bodies in how to involve people with current and relevant expertise in non-executive roles, while at the same time ensuring no conflict or perception of conflict between public and private interests". It recommends that all public bodies should adopt the best practice described in the AHL report, as CABE has itself.

⁴ Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment – Audit of Conflicts of Interest, June 2004; Report by AHL Ltd, HC 678 available at www.culture.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/84650D6D-FB77-417F-9002-E23437B736A2/0/CABEAudit5th.pdf.

⁵ Getting the Balance Right – Implementing Standards of Conduct in Public Life January 2005, Cm 6047.

The AHL report recommended that “CABE should further consider the need to make the register of interests more publicly available, for example, by putting it on the website” (paragraph 18.13). CABE’s register of interests has always been available for public scrutiny. An electronic or paper copy of the register can be ordered via a link on CABE’s website⁶.

The AHL report found that CABE had established procedures for declaring interests and managing potential conflicts that were generally sound. As the supplementary memorandum submitted to the Committee by DCMS (CAB 33(a)) shows, in the light of the report, CABE’s procedures for recording and managing potential conflicts of interest have been strengthened. In line with a recommendation of the AHL report (paragraph 21.10), CABE’s annual internal audit plan now includes a review of conflict of interest management. CABE’s internal audit is undertaken an external firm of chartered accountants (currently RSM Robson Rhodes LLP). The Government and CABE will look to the internal audit reviews to monitor whether the procedures are effective and to suggest if further measures are required such as future external reviews.

Recommendation 6 (Paragraph 28): With Commissioners serving for four years and members of the Design Review Panel serving for three years, it will take time for the balance of interests to change. The DCMS should limit the number of Commissioners with commercial interests. DCMS should consider increasing the number of Commissioners to bring in more diverse interests more quickly.

The maximum number of Commissioners is set at 16, its current complement. An amendment of CABE’s Articles of Association⁷ (8.2) would be required to increase this number. The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill as drafted also sets the maximum number of Commissioners at 16. However, if passed, it will have a provision which will allow the Secretary of State by order to increase the number of Commissioners. Government will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the size of the Commissioners grouping, but the Government’s current view is that 16 is the appropriate maximum for a body of CABE’s size.

However, the balance of the board has changed since the AHL report was published last June; there have been two appointments including the new chairman, John Sorrell. These have increased the number of Commissioners with a non-commercial, public sector background. The Committee may wish to note that there are currently no developers serving on CABE’s board of Commissioners. To ensure that CABE maintain an appropriate balance the Government will continue to keep the composition of CABE’s board under review as serving Commissioners complete their terms.

Design Review

Recommendation 7 (Paragraph 36): To maximise the impact from its limited resources, CABE should consider fewer schemes and increase the quality of the consideration given to those remaining schemes. The value of the pin-up sessions appears extremely dubious. These sessions cannot provide the basis for an informed view of a scheme and they put excessive influence in the hands of a few unaccountable people. We recommend that this practice is discontinued.

⁶ www.CABE.org.uk.

⁷ *Memorandum and Articles of Association of Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment*, Registered Company number 3831652, incorporated on 20 August 1999.

The Government agrees that resources available to CABA should be applied effectively. To facilitate this CABA has developed a set of approaches for Design Review that focus effort. In this way the programme is tailored to ensure proper consideration of a wide variety of development schemes at a range of scales. Accordingly, if selected for review, schemes can follow one of three routes.

- i. Full monthly Panel meeting – attended by the Chairman of Design Review Panel and members, staff and visitors presenting their schemes (around 75 schemes are considered in this way each year).
- ii. Panel meeting – attended by the Chairman of Design Review Panel and members, staff (around 75 schemes are considered in this way each year).
- iii. Weekly review meeting – attended by the Chairman or deputy and staff (around 300 schemes are considered in this way each year).

There is huge demand for CABA's design review services. The weekly review meetings (referred to by Committee as 'pin-up' meetings) provide an effective method of providing valuable advice to a large number of schemes. The criteria for assessing the quality of a scheme are consistent across the different types of review, and frequently a weekly review meeting will deal with schemes previously subject to review by the full Panel, enabling developers to discuss without delay design improvements resulting from earlier advice.

The Government does not accept that a few unaccountable people are given excessive influence. In fact all three methods of review are 'fit for purpose' and serve as effective tools whereby CABA can arrive at an opinion which informs advice issued to the various parties to the potential development. The Design Review Panel is directly accountable to the Commission, which on the basis of a public recruitment process is appointed by DCMS in consultation with ODPM, and is responsible to them.

CABA undertakes regular reviews of its stakeholders' views⁸ of Design Review. A recent survey showed that 87% of Design Review clients were very, or quite, satisfied by the Design Review process.

Recommendation 8 (Paragraph 37): The work of the regional design panels could be extended to offer advice to developers and local authorities on emerging schemes. CABA should look at passing down consideration of planning applications which are not of national significance to these panels.

The Government supports the growth of local and regional design panels with the capacity to offer a high standard of design advice on projects. However the direction that the Government has set for CABA⁹ makes clear that, as a national body, CABA should influence nationally important strategic projects *and* those that have significant local impact.

The Government is clear that the benefit of setting up regional and local review functions will lie in extending the opportunity whereby developers can seek advice. It is not a question of development schemes being 'passed down' to such panels, but rather of these panels developing the capacity to take on local and regional schemes for themselves.

⁸ CABA Stakeholder Review conducted by Office of Public Management, March 2004.

⁹ Letter to Chief Planning Officers from Christopher Bowden, Head Of Division, Development Control Policy, DETR 15 May 2001.

CABE already works with the design panel in the South East and on the basis of this experience will be considering what more it can do to foster and support the development of further panels. The Government is monitoring this work, and will consider how the use of regional panels should be supported based on the experience of the South East panel. This will, however, be subject to consideration of the resource implications.

Recommendation 9 (Paragraph 40): Pre-planning discussions between developers and CABE are helping to improve the quality of subsequent planning applications but there are sometimes problems in the way they use CABE's advice. As a spur to encourage developers to create high quality designs at the outset, CABE should, as a matter of course, publish its pre-planning advice letters unless there are overwhelming arguments to keep them confidential.

As the Committee recognises, there are significant benefits to developers receiving advice in-confidence at an early stage of the design process before a planning application has been submitted. It is at this point that CABE is most likely to be able to influence the design and to achieve improvements without the developer incurring costs. Because CABE is able to offer its often critical advice in-confidence at this sensitive early stage, developers are able to improve their schemes without suffering adverse publicity, which could be commercially damaging.

Making CABE's advice public at the pre-planning stage would deter developers from bringing schemes forward for scrutiny at precisely the point when CABE can influence them most. This would be counter-productive to the Government's aim of improving design quality. Once a scheme is the subject of a planning application, CABE's views on it (in the form in which it appears in the planning application) are published.

However, as the Committee recognised, in the period before a planning application triggers the full publication of CABE's views, there have been a small number of incidences in the past when developers have selectively published CABE's confidential advice without permission. To avert future recurrence of this situation, CABE now offers advice on a number of strict conditions: 1) applicants may not publicise CABE's views without CABE's consent; 2) applicants must inform CABE when their project enters the public domain, at which point CABE makes its views known, and 3) CABE's views, including any offered in-confidence, are always copied to the local planning authority, and to English Heritage and/or the Greater London Authority where they have an interest.

However, Government is keen that the lessons of design review are made public and, indeed, that they reach as broad an audience as possible. To this end we have funded CABE to publish an ongoing series of documents which draw together the experience of the Panel across a wide range of different projects¹⁰.

Recommendation 10 (Paragraph 42): We welcome the fact that appointments to the Design Review Panel have been opened up to public competition. To ensure that CABE is not perceived as favouring one style of architecture over another, it should appoint members who appreciate a range of architectural styles.

¹⁰ See for example *Design Review-ed Issue 2 – CABE 2005* www.cabe.org.uk/data/pdfs/DesignReviewed2.pdf.

The Panel's role is to assess quality rather than style, examining whether a project 'in the round' is a good one. The Panel looks at each project on its merits, and applies a set of publicly available criteria¹¹ by which it assesses their quality. Therefore it would not be appropriate to recruit Design Review Panel members on the basis of their stylistic preferences.

The Design Review Panel is made up of experts drawn from a variety of professions and backgrounds, and most of them have undergone professional training. Traditionally, design training will cover many different styles, and most of the Panel will have an appreciation of architectural/design history and the many architectural styles that have been popular (and less popular) over the course of time. Based on the Panel's advice, CABE has commented favourably on many 'traditional' schemes and unfavourably on many 'modern' ones.

Recommendation 11 (Paragraph 48): Local authorities are giving considerable weight to CABE's views when making decisions on planning applications so it is vital that it is made clear to them how those views have been reached and how they should be treated. CABE's submissions to local authorities should include a detailed note on the meeting where the scheme was discussed, including the names of those attending it. DCMS and ODPM should jointly issue guidance on how local authorities should treat CABE's views.

The addition of CABE to the list of Non-Statutory Consultees was notified to Chief Planning Officers by way of a letter from DETR in May 2001¹². As the letter states, guidance on non-statutory consultation is set out in DOE Circular 9/95¹³.

Based on this guidance, it is clear that CABE's advice to the Local Planning Authority may be a material consideration. Local Authorities, therefore, are able to give weight to CABE's advice that is appropriate to the particular application under consideration, although there is no definitive list of what might be material. Ultimately, only the Courts can define what is 'material' in a particular case.

CABE's submissions to local authorities do now provide the names of those who attended the relevant Design Review, and CABE is considering additional ways of ensuring that its views are always expressed clearly. However the purpose of the Design Review Panel is to offer expert advice to CABE, so that CABE can form its corporate view of a development project under consideration. It is this corporate view, not the views of the individual Design Review Panel members, that is expressed in CABE's opinion letters and which becomes a material planning consideration. The Government therefore consider that it is not appropriate to attribute individual Panel members' views. To do so would potentially inhibit experts becoming involved and lead to greater resource requirements to fulfil additional administration.

ODPM and DCMS will consider whether there is a need to clarify how CABE's views should be treated through the issue of further guidance in addition to the existing letter and standard guidance in non-statutory consultation.

¹¹ See *Design Review* – CABE 2002. www.cabe.org.uk/pdf/design%20review.pdf.

¹² *Letter to Chief Planning Officers* from Christopher Bowden, Head Of Division Development Control Policy, DETR 15 May 2001.

¹³ See also '*Statutory and Non-Statutory Consultation Report*' DETR, January 2001 – www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_control/documents/contentservertemplate/odpmv_index.hcst?n=2510&l=3.

Recommendation 12 (Paragraph 49): CABE suggests that many of the criteria and procedures it uses are set out in public documents. Even so, there remains a lack of clarity regarding the criteria it uses to determine which projects it comments on, the consideration given and the basis of its comments. CABE should consider how it can set out these criteria and demonstrate how they are applied more clearly.

The criteria used by the Design Review Panel are set out and explained in considerable detail in *Design Review (2002)*¹⁴. The Government considers that these criteria are thorough, clearly expressed and strike a good balance between enabling Panel members to express expert advice and setting the framework in which they do so.

Government will ask CABE to ensure that these criteria are disseminated more widely and, in publishing the outcomes of the process, should focus on issues of application of the criteria.

Recommendation 13 (Paragraph 50): The most effective method to demonstrate how CABE's Design Review Panel reaches its views would be to open up the meetings to the public. We welcome the Minister's commitment to open up the deliberations of the Design Review Panel. However, he is proposing that the public would only be allowed in occasionally. The Design Review Panel, like a local authority planning committee, should be open to the public unless there are exceptional reasons, such as confidential issues being on the agenda. CABE should be required to draw up guidelines for when the Committee should not be open to the public.

The Government is clear that the role of the Design Review Panel is not analogous to that of a local authority planning committee. A local authority planning committee exists to take decisions on planning applications affecting the local community. PPS1¹⁵ sets out that community involvement is vitally important to planning, and that local authorities should develop a clear understanding of the make up, interests and needs of the communities in their areas. Government therefore believes that this public engagement is best carried out at the local level.

Government consider that the complete opening of CABE's Design review meetings to the general public could confuse the roles of the two different processes, and would restrict the free and frank exchange of expert opinion that is critical to the evolution of CABE's views. This would therefore reduce the effectiveness of the Design Review process, and thus the quality of advice provided to local authorities. However Government will have further discussions with CABE over the next few months on this subject.

CABE is looking to improve the range of ways in which it explains design review processes. It will also consider further how Design Review Panel meetings could be opened up, especially for educational purposes.

CABE provides its views on development projects for two principal purposes:

- i. to advise local planning authorities, acting as a non-statutory consultee in the planning process; and
- ii. to advise architects and developers to help them improve the quality of their proposals, thereby allowing CABE to fulfil its role of improving the quality of architecture and design in the built environment.

¹⁴ See *Design Review* – CABE 2002. www.cabe.org.uk/pdf/design%20review.pdf.

¹⁵ *Planning Policy Statement 1* – ODPM 2005 www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_planning/documents/page/odpm_plan_035506.hcsp.

To meet these aims CABE set up the Design Review Panel, an expert advisory group that is used to inform the views of a non-departmental public body. It is important to draw a distinction between the views of CABE which are recorded and reported and become a material planning consideration, and those of individual experts who express an opinion before a conclusion is reached as to the content of CABE's advice.

CABE and Historic Buildings

Recommendation 14 (Paragraph 56): CABE's priority is to consider the quality of new buildings but it must resist promoting them. CABE's lack of consideration of the context of schemes, particularly those involving historic buildings, can mean that its comments have less validity. It should demonstrate that it has considered the impact of new buildings on their surroundings, which will require undertaking site visits. To ensure a well rounded assessment of major development proposals at the outset, CABE should work with English Heritage on considering individual proposals.

The Design Review Panel always considers projects in their context. However, CABE will be considering ways to ensure that its Design Review advice letters make this clearer in future.

CABE continues to work with English Heritage on the consideration of individual proposals and English Heritage representatives are routinely invited to all relevant Design Review Panel meetings. CABE will be considering ways of deepening this working relationship.

Recommendation 15 (Paragraph 60): We welcome CABE's recent initiative to set out its policies on historic buildings. These policies should be developed and form the basis for all its decisions. It should demonstrate that it is adhering to them and, on the occasions when its views contradict them, offer a full explanation. CABE should work within the statutory designations set down by other public agencies. Its role is not to assess the value of the historic environment but to ensure that new schemes enhance it.

The Government welcomes the Committee's support for CABE's published policy on the historic environment, which CABE will continue to apply. The Government also welcomes the recognition that it is not CABE's role to assess the value of the historic environment but rather to assess the quality of development proposals and what they can bring to that historic environment. As indicated above, CABE works with English Heritage on the consideration of individual proposals and English Heritage representatives are routinely invited to all relevant Design Review Panel meetings. CABE will be considering ways of deepening this working relationship.

Recommendation 16 (Paragraph 62): CABE should ensure that members with expertise in the historic environment and conservation are present at all meetings of the Design Review Panel.

The recently appointed Chairman of the Design Review programme, Les Sparks, is also a Commissioner of English Heritage. This illustrates the significant emphasis that CABE place on ensuring proper consideration of heritage matters. The Design Review programme will endeavour to ensure that each Panel session includes professionals with expertise in the historic environment, and to this end English Heritage are invited to send a representative to all relevant Design Review sessions.

Design and Government Programmes

Recommendation 17 (Paragraph 65): The PFI funding mechanism does not give sufficient weight to the design of public facilities. The Government needs to review PFI to consider how design can be better incorporated into the procurement process. The fundamental role of CABE in overseeing the design quality at a national level should be recognised and it should be involved in the procurement process from the outset.

The Government recognises that CABE has an important role to play in overseeing the design process, and ODPM and DCMS have worked to ensure that CABE can play a full role in achieving this. CABE has work underway to ensure that design plays a full part in all Government procurement processes, including within PFI projects. For example, work with Her Majesty's Treasury and the Office of Government Commerce to develop policy in these areas. This is set out in the joint CABE/OGC publication¹⁶.

This report makes clear that it is possible to achieve design excellence through the PFI process. It sets out best practice approaches to ensure that this objective can be achieved. As one of the joint authors of this report CABE works to ensure that the best practice is applied, particularly in terms of client development.

CABE also works with individual government departments, providing advice to initiatives such as LIFT and Buildings Schools for the Future to ensure that, whatever the procurement method, design is central to the process.

Recommendation 18 (Paragraph 67): The Government's initiative to create a model £60,000 house may secure low cost housing. However, while price is very important, it should not be at the cost of creating poorly designed homes that will not last, leading to the need for redevelopment within a very short time, and so fail to create sustainable neighbourhoods. CABE needs to be given a clear role in vetting the schemes. Homes of sufficiently high quality must be achieved within the target cost.

The ODPM *Sustainable Communities Plan*¹⁷ makes clear that good quality design is a prerequisite in creating sustainable communities, and in transforming communities to reverse the legacy of neglect of urban design quality and under investment.

The Design for Manufacture competition takes forward these aspirations. It has a stated aim of showcasing how to build cost-effectively across a range of housing types, without sacrificing quality. It will focus on capturing the benefits from modern construction and on stimulating public discussion about what Homes for the 21st Century should be like. *Homes for All: a five year plan*¹⁸ makes it clear that the aim is to enhance the environment – creating better neighbourhoods of sustainable quality across social, economic and environmental objectives.

CABE will be invited to join the judging panel for the competition.

¹⁶ *Improving Standards of Design in the Procurement of Public Buildings* – CABE/OGC – 2002 – www.cabe.org.uk/pdf/CABETOC.pdf.

¹⁷ *Sustainable Communities: building for the future* – ODPM 2003 – www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_communities/documents/page/odpm_comm_022184.hcsp.

¹⁸ *Sustainable Communities: Homes For All: a five year plan* – ODPM 2005, available at www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_about/documents/divisionhomepage/033928.hcsp.

Recommendation 19 (Paragraph 68): The design quality of the new housing in the Growth Areas in the South East will be crucial to the long term success of the programme. With the Government's urgency to boost housing development and the use of offsite manufacturing, there is a danger that design quality will suffer. CABE should be monitoring very carefully the design quality of the new housing, particularly those built using offsite manufacturing

ODPM reaffirmed, in *'Homes for All: a five year plan'*, the commitment set out in the 2003 *'Sustainable Communities Plan'* to ensure delivery of high quality homes. It made clear that the take-up of modern methods of construction should go hand-in-hand with the promotion of high standards of design.

Indeed, a research study carried out by CABE¹⁹ to look at the design implications of the use of modern methods of construction showed no clear evidence of a link between design quality and the use of specific construction techniques.

The recent audit of housing design quality by CABE²⁰ showed that only 17% of the new developments sampled were judged to be good. However the majority (61%) were of average quality. CABE are already working closely with ODPM and key agencies and delivery partners to put in place the measures to deliver better quality and address the findings of this audit.

To support this, ensuring design quality in growth areas will be a priority area for the ODPM funding agreement with CABE for 2005-6. Work will include:

- i. working to improve sustainability of built environment – CABE will prioritise the promotion of design quality that will contribute to the delivery of sustainable development, and environmental sustainability including:
 - the development of neighbourhoods designed where possible to ensure efficient re-use land and buildings, and that help to develop and preserve local ecosystems and biodiversity,
 - the creation of sustainable local developments that mix uses, integrate public transport and encourage walking and cycling,
 - new developments designed for longevity, flexibility and adaptability, with an understanding of the effects of climate change;
- ii. improving skills, on which CABE places significant emphasis. CABE will continue with the established programme of Urban Design training including another in the successful series of summer schools. The Government has also asked CABE to work closely with the new Academy for Sustainable Communities to develop a working protocol and to deliver a number of training programmes; and
- iii. work with developers including the hosting of training events for senior managers and board members from major volume housebuilders, and work with the House Builders Federation to foster higher quality design in housing.

¹⁹ *Design and Modern Methods of Construction* – CABE 2004, available at www.cabe.org.uk/data/pdfs/CABE_MMC_Exec.pdf.

²⁰ *Housing Audit: Assessing the Design Quality of New Homes* CABE 2004, available at www.cabe.org.uk/data/pdfs/housing_audit_2004_summary.pdf.

However, as part of the Growth Areas agenda, ODPM is already putting in place an arrangement for a new programme in the newer Housing Growth Areas. This will make it possible for local authorities and local delivery vehicles bringing forward new projects to benefit from CAGE's enabling expertise, including the provision of practical advice, and assistance to develop programmes that ensure from the outset proper consideration of design. This will allow CAGE to take forward the Committee's recommendation.



Published by TSO (The Stationery Office) and available from:

Online

www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Mail, Telephone, Fax & E-mail

TSO

PO Box 29, Norwich NR3 1GN

Telephone orders/General enquiries 0870 600 5522

Order through the Parliamentary Hotline *Lo-Call* 0845 702 3474

Fax orders 0870 600 5533

Email book.orders@tso.co.uk

Textphone 0870 240 3701

TSO Shops

123 Kingsway, London WC2B 6PQ

020 7242 6393 Fax 020 7242 6394

68-69 Bull Street, Birmingham B4 6AD

0121 236 9696 Fax 0121 236 9699

9-21 Princess Street, Manchester M60 8AS

0161 834 7201 Fax 0161 833 0634

16 Arthur Street, Belfast BT1 4GD

028 9023 8451 Fax 028 9023 5401

18-19 High Street, Cardiff CF10 1PT

029 2039 5548 Fax 029 2038 4347

71 Lothian Road, Edinburgh EH3 9AZ

0870 606 5566 Fax 0870 606 5588

TSO Accredited Agents

(see Yellow Pages)

and through good booksellers

ISBN 0-10-165092-2



9 780101 650922