

# PRESS RELEASE

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## MASONRY CONSTRUCTION PROVES SUSTAINABILITY CREDENTIALS

The “Better Buildings - Better Lives” report by the Sustainable Building’s Task Group has been welcomed by the Traditional Housing Bureau (THB) for highlighting the importance of sustainable forms of buildings and warning against the “spectacular failures of the building boom of the 1960s”.

The report makes reference to the important part the planning system has to play in the promotion of sustainable building practices “by encouraging higher standards of building performance than the minimum required through Building Regulations”, something which Barry Holmes executive director of the THB points out masonry construction has been doing for years: “Modern masonry construction already outperforms many of the lightweight prefabricated building methods currently favoured by ODPM as being sustainable solutions. Masonry has excellent thermal, acoustic and fire resistance and has the additional benefit of beating the current recommended 60 year lifespan making it a better long term sustainable option.”

With predictions for extreme climatic variation, concerns were raised within the report about the durability of building methods, particularly in relation to building on flood plains, and recommendation was made that Building Regulations should require the use of appropriate flood resistance materials in these instances.

Again, Barry Holmes feels this is where masonry construction proves itself the preferred option: “No building structure will prevent damage to the interior décor but with a masonry construction the structure itself will remain sound, and will

not be subject to the concerns over rotting that can affect other materials. Brick and block walls will not warp if dried out quickly either.”

Importantly, the report recognises that in order for more houses to be built with sustainable principles a greater amount of information needs to be placed in the public domain in order for public opinion to be a driving factor: “the housing market lacks the features of choice, reliable labelling, product information and comparability which characterise consumer-led markets in most other goods – goods that account for a considerably smaller proportion of household expenditure than does housing and which do not share housing’s significance as a long-term investment.”

The public’s right to know the construction methods of their home in order to make an informed choice is an area that the THB has long been campaigning for as Barry Holmes explains: “The majority of mortgages are repayable over 25 year periods and these decisions are often made on the basis of scant information with little awareness of the present and future benefits of their home as a place to live, bring up a family and as a financial investment. More focus should be placed on the performance aspects of homes and how the construction method relates to this.

We are confident that introductions such as The Home Improvement Pack and the Private Members Bill brought by Andrew Stunnell MP (Sustainable and Secure Buildings Bill) will do much to help this process and push modern masonry construction to the forefront as the best performing long term sustainable, durable and financially viable option.”

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