



Actions speak louder . . .

Fact Sheet no.8: Quality housing at low cost

Description and analysis

If money were no object, wealthy people simply buy 'the best'. For construction of modern housing accommodation, the best in people's minds usually assumes imported materials. Products, which are suitable for temperate European climates and conditions, may however perform badly for instance in the humidity of an equatorial rainforest or in a desert climate. So the best solution for comfort and durability may be the tried and tested construction systems from the locality, usually based on materials to hand. Local knowledge of materials and construction may date back 1000 years so should not be ignored.

Design response

Traditional construction methods are non-modular, lacking quality assurance and are seen as un-progressive and poorly matched to modern consumer lifestyles. Rising aspirations involve both materials and methods. While a traditional mud or adobe brick for instance is irregular in form and material content, its modern equivalent can be produced in an accurate pressed form with raw materials obtained from a consistent, sustainable deposit. Changes in the 'detailing' of the building may change a temporary material into a permanent one.

Parry Associates technical input possibilities

The centrepiece of the Parry technical approach is the means to produce bricks, tiles and other building elements of a quality equivalent to modern factory production, but using equipment which operates effectively on a small scale, requiring easily learned skills. The approach also extends into the construction stage with basic design guidance and some simple template devices which greatly assist, for instance, the accurate positioning of the structural framework of the roof, making the adoption of tiling simple and straight forward.

Local resources required

If houses are constructed on sloping ground, at least some of the soil used to produce the walling materials can be taken from the materials excavated to level the site. Store-bought cement will be needed for exposed surfaces such as the roof and where the masonry is in prolonged contact with water such as below damp proof course. To make good concrete, good quality aggregates (sand and gravel) are required. If unavailable in pure form, these can be extracted by crushing and sieving the soil using simple machinery.

Potential local business response

The key to achievement of quality lies in the

J.P.M.Parry & Associates Ltd, Overend Road, Cradley Heath, West Midlands B64 7DD
Tel: +44 (0) 1384 569 171 Fax: +44 (0) 1384 637 753 E-mail: info@parryassociates.com

www.parryassociates.com

commitment of the building contractors to adopt or bring in higher levels of trade skills to make best use of modular, more regularly shaped building materials. The contractors will also need to be fully in tune with the more modern lifestyle aspirations of their customers, in specification of kitchens, bathrooms etc.

FACT SHEETS AVAILABLE

1. Import substitution
2. Livelihoods for the disabled
3. Mud and dust in hospitals, schools and offices
4. Low energy construction
5. Living with floods
6. Rural economic development and stability
7. Reviving a war-torn economy
8. Quality housing at low cost
9. Work for women
10. Roof structures without using timber
11. Living with diurnal extremes
12. Living with environmental extremes
13. Being prepared for the next Earthquake