

STORE DETECTIVES

Colwyn Foulkes and Partners has won planning permission for a £10 million Private Finance Initiative police station development above a new Marks & Spencer store on London's Tottenham Court Road. The scheme will provide a headquarters for the British Transport Police as well as a police station and a store. Completion is set for autumn 2002.

ARCHITECTURE WEEK IDEAS

The Arts Council and the RIBA are gearing up for Architecture Week 2001, and have issued a call for events along this year's main themes of housing, children and new technology. Ideas can be registered online at the website at www.architectureweek.org.uk in advance of the week itself, which runs from Friday 22 June until Sunday 1 July. Events that have already been pencilled in include 'Architect in the House' and 'Architect in the Office', which last year together raised £40,000

HODSON TO DESIGN ECO HQ

Grimsby-based practice Hodson Design has been commissioned to design a £500,000 low-energy building for the Ecology Building Society, which specialises in financing development which encourages ecological principles. The scheme will aim to dispense with heating by pumping air through the ground and capturing heat from people and computers. There will also be a circular straw-bale meeting room.

ANIMAL TRAINERS

Birmingham practice Temple Cox Nicholls has been picked for a £100 million PFI contract to design a new animal training centre for the Ministry of Defence in Leicestershire. The centre, in Melton Mowbray, will be rebuilt to provide new living accommodation, animal training facilities and a vets' surgery.

OLYMPIAN EFFORT

Work on FaulknerBrowns' £7 million Olympic swimming pool for Loughborough University started on site this week. Sports minister Kate Hoey turned the first turf on Monday and the scheme is scheduled for completion in July 2002. It follows the completion of the practice's 50m pool, ready for next year's Commonwealth Games in Manchester.



The wraps are off at HLM Architects' top-secret Joint Service Command and Staff College. The PFI scheme is valued at £500 million over 30 years and brings together the Army, Navy and Air Force in a giant 44,000m² combined residential training facility at Swivenham, near Oxford. The building is designed around a series of south-facing courtyards and features a library, mess and a 450-seat conference centre. HLM chairman Chris Liddle, is profiled on page 24.

Raynsford's own department threatens good design pledge

Housing minister Nick Raynsford's latest attempt to improve housing design in the UK was hit by claims last week that the government's own planning inspectorate is undermining him.

The AJ has learnt that England's newest city, Wolverhampton, is considering taking the inspectorate to court after it overturned the council's decision to reject a suburban residential scheme.

The council's chief planner, Costas Georgioui, described the houses as 'a bog standard development' which failed to take account of distinctive local features and lambasted Raynsford over the inspectorate's 'tragic decision' at a conference on housing design last week.

'The community is upset, the council is upset,' he told the minister. 'They say what is the point in following government guidance when the planning inspectorate contradicts the backing to good design you claim to give.'

He said the council's submission in defence of its decision included a string of references from recent government policy documents, such as the Urban White Paper and *By Design*. The council is now taking legal advice.

The confrontation followed demands from Raynsford for housebuilders and local authorities to follow government planning guidance and improve the design of new housing.

He lashed out at 'standard anywhereville dreariness' of recent schemes by volume housebuilders and challenged local authorities to 'have the courage to say no to bad ideas that undermine housing planning guidance PPG3'.

PPG3, revised one year ago this month, demands better designed housing which uses more brownfield land.

'People have become fed up with what new house building has done across the country,' he told a national conference on housing design quality 'There is a backlash against unimaginative and poor quality design generated through the predict and provide process. If what we build today is to be of enduring quality, we have to ensure applicants take good design seriously. We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to get planning for housing right. We must convince a

worried public that this job can be done, properly.'

Raynsford also reiterated his call for higher-density housing and rejected planning policies which demand new housing to be at the same density as existing buildings.

'I am not advocating a "back to the 1960s" future of high-rise developments,' he said. 'My aim is places designed around the needs of people.' However, he did admit that achieving a change in culture at the planning inspectorate, for which he is responsible, is 'like turning round a supertanker'.

Robert Booth

Northern Europe holds the key to quality housebuilding

Housebuilders and local authorities should look to the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden for architectural expertise, according to Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment chief executive Jon Rouse.

Rouse is a long-term admirer of Dutch urban design in particular and said that the northern European countries could provide a basis for better housing design in the UK. He also rubbished the focus on Barcelona as a model for better housing design in the UK.

Housing is one of the building types in most urgent need and over the next 10 years the population of London alone will grow by 800,000.

'There is a lot we can learn from this part of Europe,' he told the audience of housebuilders and local authority planners at a housing conference last week. 'Don't worry too much about accusations about jollies, just get over there, see the architects and see the local authorities. I am tired of people going on about Barcelona as the climate and the culture does not make it a particularly appropriate comparison.'

He also called for housebuilders to 'open their doors and establish partnerships with local and national architects'.

The international approach reflects the fact that CABE has no responsibility to promote the UK profession and its own value statement makes it clear that 'we are for architecture, not for architects'.

The comments came as CABE revealed it is planning to almost double its scrutiny of housing design in the next year.