

EXCELLENSE

building skills – changing places | **issue 6**

new school
of thought

**re-imagining design
for education**



also inside

- public sector investment
- school grounds



in the news...

If you have any news stories you'd like to share, email: southeastexcellence@seeda.co.uk

Brighton's 'Alex' wins PM's prize

The new Royal Alexandra Children's Hospital in Brighton has won the 2008 Prime Minister's Award for the Best Public Building. Coming top out of 21 entries, the 'Alex' as it is known locally, has also won three other awards for its outstanding design.

Sponsored by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and the Office of Government Commerce, the award, part of the British Construction Industry Awards, recognises high-quality design and effective delivery, including efficient procurement; economic and social value. It acknowledges good team work between client, designer and contractor; sound financial management and whole-life value for money; and sustainability.

The Alex was designed by BDP, the largest interdisciplinary practice of architects, designers, engineers and urbanists in Europe, and built by Kajima Partnerships at a cost of £37million.

BDP selected a design theme which captured Brighton's nautical spirit, creating a giant ark full of animals. Its nautical form, with white concrete



panels and bright bands of colour, reflects its Brighton setting, and the sundeck play area commands panoramic views of the sea. The 100 patient beds are arranged in single, two-bedded and four-bedded units; the aim was to give every bedroom a sea view and ensure that all inhabited rooms – even the operating theatres – had a window. Furniture has been specially designed for children (child-scaled) and every in-patient bed has its own pull-out bed for a parent. Family accommodation on the top level includes en-suite bedrooms, kitchens, living rooms and terraces.

Praising the Alex, Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, said: "This award showcases what can be achieved when high-quality design is coupled

with highly effective delivery. I hope that the Alex will prove to be an inspiration to other planners, developers and architects." Added CABE Chairman, Sir John Sorrell: "The hospital adds the right touch of gaiety to both the children's experience and the Brighton seafront, with a design successfully responding to the needs of children and young people, their families and the hospital staff. They were fully involved in the project from the start, through a Children's and Young People's Board."



"It's what it does, not simply what it looks like" is the thinking behind a major new collaboration to develop the resources to help create public spaces that live for their communities. 'Places from Spaces', initiated by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), is being delivered by the Solent Centre for Architecture and Design (SCA+D) and Kent Architecture Centre with the cities of Brighton, Portsmouth and Southampton and their respective Universities. The aim is to use a site, already planned for redevelopment, in each locality, and use new methods to determine the best design for each.

SCA+D's Phil Smith explains: "Too often, public spaces, such as squares or streets, are designed more for how they look than how they really work and add value to the life of their communities. Everybody involved in the development of the public realm must understand that design is as much about making things work as the aesthetics."

So far there have been workshops in each location with the local academics and planning professionals,

supported by specialists in place planning. They have also engaged with other academic programmes in the US and Finland, as well as studied projects in cities in Northern and Southern Europe. "One of the main aims of the project will be to transfer knowledge between the Universities and the local authorities," adds Phil. "Students will play a major part helping to develop project proposals as temporary interventions in each location. This will help them develop practical project skills such as responding to a client brief and presenting design concepts and ideas to mixed audiences."

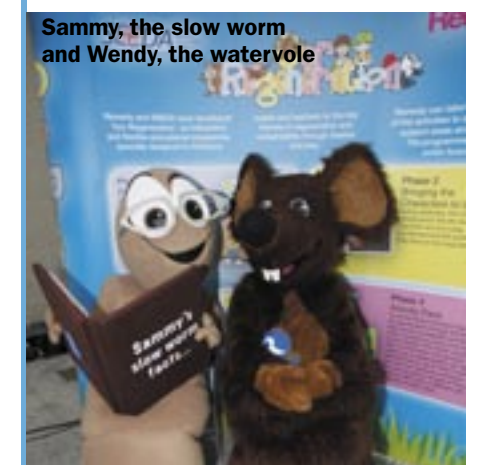
The outcomes will be community engagement programmes in each city in summer 2009 to test the principles being developed as well as guide the design brief for each site. "We will be testing theories through live modelling to see whether a street market might work or whether the space could work for public meetings or performance for example," says Phil. "At the end, I hope we'll have helped to create three great public spaces as well as resources which can be used widely by others in the future."

the regeneration game

New ways of engaging school children in learning about sustainable regeneration have been pioneered at the Thames Gateway project at Queenborough and Rushenden on the Isle of Sheppey in Kent.

Enter Sammy, the wise slow worm and Wendy, the energetic water vole; they are working with regeneration ambassadors Becky, teenage promoter of sustainable ideals and Ricky, who wants to work in construction. It all started when each child at Queenborough School received a postcard to introduce the characters. Then Wendy and Sammy paid a visit to the school to take part in an interactive play to explain the messages about regeneration, sustainability, healthy eating and team working. After that came an oversized board game, where the children had to answer questions on the topics to play and move around from square to square.

The scheme has already been praised by Arup director, Peter Head, the new Thames Gateway Innovation Champion and, following a meeting of regional development agencies, two other regions are considering using the same approach. Jeff Ward, SEEDA's stakeholder manager for the Queenborough project, says: "It's a fun but flexible way of learning to which the school and the children have responded very positively."



built environment heroes: **Steve Clow**

Steve joined Hampshire Architects as a graduate from Glasgow University and for the last ten years has led its fast growing expansion. Hampshire County Council uniquely retains a large, vibrant Property Department extending a growing influence on the design and procurement of public sector buildings across the South East region.

His 'favourite' building is Hackney Community College, designed in collaboration with a local Hampshire private practice. Completed in 1998, it was influential in the development of his career in education design.



Pompey and Brighton won all

© Berkeley Homes/Simon Winson

City Point

© Stephen Mallaby/Barratt

Gunwharf Quays

City Point, Brighton, a transformation of railway sheds into a new residential area and Gunwharf Quays, the redevelopment of a former naval site in Portsmouth, have won two of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) 2008 Building for Life awards.

Celebrating house builders and housing associations which demonstrate a commitment to high design standards, good place making and sustainable development, the awards were chosen from 24 schemes to receive the CABE Building for Life Standard.

City Point, designed by Chetwood Architects and URBED, is part of the Brighton's New England development close to Brighton station. The whole site will be mixed use housing and retail plus some community use and offices for small businesses. 248 one and three bedroom apartments and

townhouses have been built, 70 per cent of these being owner occupied, with 30 per cent affordable; among other features is a car-free site, with parking only for disabled residents, as proximity to the station and local shops reduces the need for car ownership and there is a local car club. The area is divided into five blocks, each with a courtyard, with a landscaped garden providing a sense of identity; also they share communal landscaped roof terraces so residents can enjoy the views across Brighton. Energy-saving and sustainability ranks high with the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) rating, 'very good' to 'excellent'.

Gunwharf Quays in Portsmouth Harbour used to be HMS Vernon, a naval ordnance yard. It's a mixed-use housing scheme on a south-facing waterfront site and includes housing,

restaurants, leisure facilities such as cinemas, health clubs and a marina.

The development incorporates existing historic structures, part of the original storage area of Gunwharf, as well as waterfront features including a canal and marina. The main retail and leisure area was completed in 2001, opening up an access to the sea front, now used for local events such as street markets and festivals. The 875 apartments and townhouses are mainly owner occupied but with some affordable housing. The housing developments are grouped around landscaped plazas and squares.

Wayne Hemingway, chair of Building for Life, said "The winners show that the concept of creating places where it's possible to have access to leisure, public transport and employment is alive."

inside knowledge

In the present challenging times, how can public sector investment be targeted to combine stimulus to the economy and real place improvement?



"In today's climate, financial institutions, house-builders, local authorities and communities need greater confidence, greater support and greater certainty, so the creation of the HCA, the Homes and Communities Agency, is very timely.

It has an investment programme of £5.2 billion a year linking housing, regeneration and growth.

Our new community centred 'Single Conversation' will deliver an integrated approach to place-making with local authorities, housing associations, Regional Development Agencies and the private sector. HCA will provide skills and capacity as well as funding.

A period of economic uncertainty presents opportunities to focus on delivery structures and quality. It is high time there were changes made to the way we deliver housing in this country. We should extend the range of providers so we are not so reliant on just the top ten builders and we should improve the overall quality of the product. In this way, we could reshape our housing delivery so it is on a sound basis for the next 100 years. This is easier done in a down turn as people are prepared to listen to the public sector more."

Trevor Beattie, Director of Strategy, Policy, Performance & Research at the Homes and Communities Agency



"Certainly, there's a concern that reduced public sector funding will affect RDA-championed initiatives designed to stimulate the economy and deliver planned growth.

But continued public sector funding will remain a catalyst for future private sector investment, especially for improvements to the public realm, creating new spaces for people to use and enjoy and removing unwanted eyesores and derelict areas which lower the value of urban areas. A low-cost, high-benefit interim solution would be to create safe areas to encourage familiarity and their reuse. But this must happen now, so the environment is changed and can become a new canvas for future regeneration.

Regeneration projects, such as Southampton's proposed Cultural Quarter and Regional Business Centre, provide a clear message to the private sector that the City Council are directly investing to replace lost economic activity. And this will lead to further regeneration and generate market confidence. The City Council has also committed further investment to create a cleared site with links through to East Park, highlighting the positive aspects for a future mixed-use development which will incorporate an Arts Complex."

Colin Wilkins, Director & Head of Development, Savills (L+P) Ltd., Southampton



Over the past few months, much has been written about public sector investment in stimulating the economy – from supporting banks to bringing forward infrastructure programmes.

To be honest, I'm not sure I agree with the traditional view that public sector investment can provide real "stimulus to the economy." However, I'm absolutely of the view it can do two key things; it can take some of the "rough edges" off the worst effects of an economic downturn, through helping the construction industry and providing additional medium term employment; it can also set about improving the quality of

life in, say, education and health. This provides both a sense of confidence and hope, as well as replenishing the built infrastructure for social development.

It's the latter that can seriously challenge the worst and most pernicious aspect of a recession – loss of public confidence. If there are visible signs of improvement to the supportive infrastructure that society provides to look after itself, there is a better chance of a feel good (or at least a feel-slightly-better) factor, that promotes both investment and expenditure.

Peter Drummond Chief Executive BDP

design for teachers

Two new initiatives to take design in the built environment into the classroom are being launched. A new website **www.engagingplaces.org.uk** will help schools connect with their local heritage and architecture. It's an on-line resource for schools

providing a national database of heritage/built environment curriculum resources. The aim is to support the Departure Culture Media and Sport's 'Learning outside the Classroom' manifesto by encouraging schools to bring the topic into the timetable.

In the South East, the Solent Centre for Architecture & Design (SCA+D) also offers an Education Partner Programme for teachers to help them deliver learning about their local built environment.



cool schools by design

the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme is one of the most ambitious public building projects ever.

In the South East, the scheme is already into its second stage in Kent, with Southampton and Portsmouth prioritised to follow. Other parts of the South East will benefit in later phases, either directly, or indirectly, as part of a wider education-led regeneration programme, where further investment is secured in areas such as infrastructure, services and housing as a result of education based investment. The Government says design excellence should be at its heart – will it be?

Over the next 15 years, the aim is to build or refurbish 100 per cent of secondary and 50 per cent of primary schools to create a learning environment to match

the new educational vision of personalised learning for all. That's a major challenge for designers and architects. A 'first year report' from the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE's) Schools Design Panel published last July had a distinct feel of 'could do better'. "But," says Rachel Toms, CABE's senior design review advisor "it was early days in the programme; when we see designs being revised and coming back for a second or third review, we see significant improvements."

Partnerships for Schools (PFS), the Government agency delivering the programme, confirm the initial progress. New schools now demonstrate the impact of design on

pupil engagement and aspiration. One of the first to open, the Bristol Brunel Academy, not only won a RIBA award but had a "new learning environment increasing students' sense of pride, enjoyment and safety while reducing bullying and graffiti" - according to independent research by the National Foundation for Educational Research; as PFS Director of Design, Mairi Johnson, says: "With a response like this, high quality design is non-negotiable."

In fact, there has been almost a deluge of action to help embed good design as standard in the next generation of schools. Jane Briginshaw, Head of Design at the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), says that

the BSF is part of the Government's transformation of teaching and learning. "Design is essential. It won't always be 30 pupils in rows of desks with the teacher in front; teaching might be in small groups, outdoors, alone at a computer – all of which will impact on design. Sometimes the teaching environment will need to change to match the vision for personalised learning where the child determines the curriculum best suited to him or her."

Senior Lecturer in Architecture at the University of Portsmouth, Catherine Teeling, agrees: "Our vision for the work places of the future needs to allow for flexible working patterns by providing adaptable and supportive environments." She also argues that the opportunity should be taken to cement the place of the school in the community by pursuing the principle that the design of a school space should make it flexible enough to be used for a whole range of community activities. That principle will drive engagement with all stakeholders in developing briefs for the design of schools. "When considering the effectiveness of a new building, the views of the users and other stakeholders with expert opinions will play a much greater role in future," says Mairi Johnson of PFS.

joined up design

The Sorrell Foundation was set up ten years ago to champion good design in schools and created the 'joinedupdesignforschools' model to investigate the process of engagement with the principle stakeholders – the students who consume education. Consulting over 25,000 pupils, the Foundation has identified 100 issues which they have encapsulated in 15 principles of good design (see box on page 9). These issues included social areas, learning spaces, environmental impact, the role of the school in the community and disabled access.

CABE's Rachel Toms says the 'must-haves' include a well organised building with clear navigation so visitors know where to come and new pupils can find their way around easily. "Avoid nooks and crannies, create a range of learning spaces, make these flexible so that they can be easily adapted for any



Pioneering school within a school

future ICT innovation for example," she advises. But it is also as much about common sense in using design to make a school work.

help at hand

And there is plenty of help available. CABE provides support to local authorities as they choose a client design adviser and shortlist teams of contractors and designers, as well as giving feedback on the design quality of the proposals. The DCSF has commissioned the international design and workplace change consultancy, DEGW, to prepare "The Space for Personalised Learning Project." By consulting with key stakeholders in ten pilot projects, the study will determine how the whole school environment can support personalised learning. Findings will be reported as the project

progresses and the finished report will provide a framework of best practice for use in future projects.

Local authority procurement consortium, 4ps, is also offering advice and support to the authorities involved - dealing not only with design but also the major project management issues such as skills, letting contracts and so on. The other main guidance will come from learning from existing BSF projects – the PFS design team

“When considering the effectiveness of a new building, the views of the users and other stakeholders with expert opinions will play a much greater role in future.”

Mairi Johnson of PFS



© David Barbour/BDP

The inaugural RIBA Sorrell Foundation Schools Award was presented to BDP in 2007 for its work on the Marlowe Academy in Ramsgate, especially in its engagement with the pupils.

This new City Academy combines a learning hub with a branch library, adult education facilities, sports hall and performance spaces. The design, on a level open site, arranges the teaching as separate faculties (arts, science and humanities) in three curved wings, which enclose an arena for social activities, with the auditorium, library and gymnasium close by. The top-lit arena with its timber-grid shell roof is a grand space for whole school assemblies and performances. The traditional corridor, with its associated problems of congestion, inefficiency and bullying, has been replaced by a series of social and learning spaces.

regularly speak at conferences and seminars while their website will feature an increasing number of case studies and best practice advice.


rocket science?

Nor surprisingly when identifying what students want, they say they want a sustainable school. As children learn better in a well lit space, optimising daylight is a must, while good ventilation is essential to avoid drowsiness caused by high levels of carbon dioxide. The design of dining halls and social areas plays an important role in creating an uplifting and characterful school which students and staff can feel proud of. Outside spaces should facilitate outdoor learning, exercise and relaxation, for different sizes of groups.

There are grants available for carbon reduction programmes and even a 'carbon calculator', a software package designed for DCSF to help decide options for carbon reduction. The main aim is to ensure energy efficiency, and to consider low or zero carbon generation such as renewables or combined heat and power. "But," says CABE's Rachel Toms, "don't

make a token gesture; if you have a windy site, consider installing a large wind turbine - it should be cheaper in the long term as smaller turbines produce only small amounts of power."

All agree that design is essential to the creation of schools which will deliver 21st century learning. But is it enforceable? "The DCSF and PFS will shortly be introducing a set of minimum design standards, and projects which don't meet these will go back to the drawing board," says Mairi Johnson at PFS. "With 42 BSF

schools now open, we are now in a much better position to ensure that knowledge and experience are shared throughout the BSF community, and this will only increase as we feedback the lessons learned through our Post Occupancy Evaluation. PFS has a role to play, along with CABE and other external advisers, but the drivers of good quality, transformational school design has to be the clients - that is the local authorities and the schools themselves." 



Marlowe Academy, Ramsgate

© David Barbour/BDP

don't ignore the grounds

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) says some school grounds look more like "edge of town retail parks rather than lively educational establishments" All involved in the development of the Building Schools for the Future programme agree that what goes on outside the school buildings is just as important.

A scheme set to go national in 2010 will challenge schools to think outside. Grounds for Optimism', a competition championed by urban design guru Wayne Hemingway, was launched in September in the South East and Yorkshire and Humberside and will go national in 2010.

Grounds for Optimism, which is run by the Solent Centre for Architecture and Design (SCA+D), aims to inspire students in secondary schools to create a new sense of learning space in their grounds. The challenge for schools is to see how they might develop ideas to make the most of their school landscape. Any design could include learning or play areas, outdoor art galleries or just places in which to relax, with the project intended to inspire students to develop new skills - not just in art and design but in planning and community engagement.

Mark Drury, of SCA+D, who conceived the idea for the competition and is co-ordinating the project, says: "The interest in the competition already has been brilliant - we're getting lots of enthusiastic phone calls from would be entrants who clearly not only want to improve their school grounds but also want a stimulating new way of learning."

For more information visit:
www.groundsforoptimism.org.uk 



School grounds at Pinewood Infants School, Hampshire

What children want:

The Sorrell Findings

Colour: they want to brighten up their schools and use colour to enhance atmosphere and mood

Communication: they want to tell pupils, teachers, parents and the community what is going on

Dinner Halls and Canteens: they want a civilized lunchtime with less chaos and more time to relax

Furniture: they want comfortable, ergonomic furniture for work and relaxation

Inclusion: they want everyone's physical and ethnic needs to be taken into consideration

Learning spaces: they want modern, flexible, air-conditioned, inspiring places to learn.

Reception areas: they want parents, new pupils, the local community and visitors to feel welcome

Reputation and identity: they want to be proud of their school and sure of what it stands for

Safety and Security: they want to feel safe in school and traveling to and from school

Sixth-form spaces: they want rooms where they can socialize and work on their own

Social spaces: they want sheltered spaces to 'chat and chill' during break

Storage: they want secure places to put their books, stationery, equipment, bags and coats

Sustainability: Pupils want schools to be energy efficient with lower carbon emissions, better air quality and more recycling

Toilets: they want toilets to be hygienic and safe

Uniforms: They want comfortable, smart, cool-looking clothes that they will be proud to wear

making it happen



Pinewood Infants School, Hampshire

In Kent, Southampton, Portsmouth, Windsor and the County of Hampshire, Building Schools for the Future (BSF) is happening now. It's a live learning experience.



Everest Community College, Basingstoke

what you want

The golden stepping stones of these projects are beginning to emerge; Hampshire County Council's Architects Department have an excellent record in schools design which they will be putting at the disposal of schemes in the County. Hampshire is also working with Partnership for Schools (PFS) through the auspices of Improvement and Efficiency South East to create a design and delivery model that any authority in the region could benefit from. They firmly believe that joining together will produce better buildings more quickly and at reduced cost.

Steve Clow, Head of Architecture, says their projects always start with a feasibility study which includes consultation with the school staff, pupils and governors as well as the local community and the County's Childrens' Services Department. "This way we can develop the project brief as well as try to match the expectations of the stake holders with the funding. We also begin as we mean to go on – by consulting with them all the way through the process."

Kent's BSF Programme Manager, Karl Limbert, (who moves to Southampton this year to head their BSF programme) agrees: "There is no one size fits all formula; we encourage all our schools to participate by identifying their own unique stakeholder groups and then work closely with them all the way."

What the stakeholders want should then be merged with the educational vision. Karl Limbert explains: "Our educational model is quite innovative; people learn in different ways, at different speeds so they will need different teaching styles, in turn meaning different teaching spaces." To help them understand what design can do, there are plans for special training courses targeting senior teachers, so that they are better equipped to understand the BSF programme, and to become more informed clients when it comes to negotiating the design of their school.

Karl says this should not be prescriptive and whatever design brief emerges should then be the challenge for the architect or designer. As the design develops, stakeholders should be as involved as they can be, working with the designers to ensure the reality is as near the initial vision as possible; at the same time funding must be matched to aspiration.


devil in the detail

There's a watchword which could be introduced at this point which is integration. Steve Clow emphasises that Hampshire tries to get the whole team in place early – the architect, the engineers, the quantity surveyors, interior and landscape designers. "They all need to be aware of the total project and work together to develop what can be done. The outcome can then be a whole rather than later having to add a bolt-on."

They also include the contractors as early as they can and the more the contractor knows in advance, the fewer difficulties seem to emerge. Karl Limbert agrees: "During the design period, we bring the contractors in to work with the designers early so all aspects of the project can be worked through together to achieve the best outcome. We also use our own experience and knowledge as overall project managers to help both learn lessons from earlier projects." By integrating the whole process, it is also easier to plan budgets and minimise risk.

how green is green

Today, too, the desire for sustainability cannot be ignored. Schools are one of the most positive advocates for the environment and, as far as funding permits, schools of the future will have to reach the highest levels they can. Kent aims for Carbon Neutral schools, if it's affordable, and specifies Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) 'very good', often achieving 'excellent'. Hampshire follows similar lines: "We're looking at all the factors for sustainable buildings from solar panels to energy saving light systems," says Steve. "Wherever we can, we use the most advanced technologies available and affordable we can."

Everyone wants to see a transformed vision of school-making and all involved with the BSF programme seem determined to deliver the dream. It is achievable. 

“Our educational model is quite innovative; people learn in different ways, at different speeds so they will need different teaching styles, in turn meaning different teaching spaces.”

**Karl Limbert
BSF Kent**



Everest Community College, Basingstoke

All you need to know about the what, who, when and how of the built environment.

events

For more details, go to: www.southeastexcellence.co.uk/events

11th February 2009

The role of Building for Life in planning policy
London

24th - 25th February 2009

Planning for Non-Planners
London

12th March 2009

Understanding Developers - who they are and how they make development happen
London

24th - 25th March 2009

ParkCity - investing in communities as if the environment mattered
London

contact

Abigail Lee

South East Excellence
Project Co-ordinator

☎ 01483 484265

✉ abigaillee@seeda.co.uk

Angharad James

Urban Renaissance
Development Manager

☎ 01483 470108

✉ angharadjames@seeda.co.uk

If English is not your first language we can provide a summarised version of this document in Punjabi, Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu, Polish and Bengali. The document is also available in large print, Braille, disk and audio cassette.



SEEDA support in difficult times

South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) with its partners and Business Link are engaged in ensuring the maximum support for individuals and businesses through the downturn. The South East Accord between SEEDA, Job Centre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council will provide advice for those facing redundancy to help them find new jobs or to re-train, as well as advising companies how to manage workforce down-sizing.

For more information on redundancy support, contact Janine Hobbs on: 01483 470169 or email janinehobbs@seeda.co.uk. SEEDA, working with Business Link and UKTI, also offers a range of support services which can help companies looking for finance, needing business advice or looking for new markets.

For details of help, contact Phil Bailey on: 01483 484227 or email philbailey@seeda.co.uk.



web wishlist

Log on now to www.southeastexcellence.co.uk to complete our quick questionnaire on what you think about, and what extra information you need from our website!

skills help at hand

To help tackle the shortage of built environment skills in the South East, a programme to train RICS Technically Qualified Surveyors is set to take its first students in September 2009. Funded by SEEDA, this is a work-based apprenticeship scheme being run through the Association of Building Engineers (ABE). Employers and anyone interested in applying should contact Louise Braybrook on: 01604 404121 or email louise.braybrook@abe.org.uk

rules of engagement

Next spring, South East Excellence will be publishing a guide to the best rules for governing relationships between developers and elected members. A successful series of seminars, held in the autumn, enabled developers and Councillors to work out the best approaches. Among the 'top tips' to emerge were -

1. Councillors can, and need, to engage in pre-application discussions of major proposals to provide greater understanding and consistency to the planning process. Cabinet, Leaders as well as Planning Committee members and Ward councillors all need to be involved.
2. Developers need councillors to lead on what communities need, and the earlier this happens, the better to maximise community benefits.
3. Developers will benefit from better understanding the local authority's issues provided they are willing to listen and adapt.
4. Greater involvement helps build trust and transparency and is vital to ensure local government is seen to be open.