



GREENING DEVELOPMENT

A discussion document for the management of
green issues on housing developments

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Please note:

All views and opinions expressed in this proposal are purely those of the author. The content cannot necessarily be taken to represent the specific policy of any of JP Associates' developer clients.



Background

This proposal was written as a result of an enquiry made by a developer client to the author. The developer wanted to know how tree survey data and any other arboricultural information could be integrated into project documentation so that accurate information could be available to the whole project team. This would then improve inter-departmental discussions on any topic where trees are, or should be, a relevant factor.

The efficient integration of green issue information has underpinned all of JP Associates' work over recent years. Based on this experience, the suggestion for discussion is that a formal 'green issue project management plan' be produced for every development scheme. This would form the basis for a management statement, which in turn would shape management policy.

The plan

The green issue project management plan should include all green issue information relating to any particular development. The level of integration should be extended to include hedges, important ecological and habitat information, land designations and any other green issue information as well as soil data (types and strength) and the definitive legal boundaries.

Any consultants dealing with green issues on a particular project should provide pertinent information and recommendations from their reports to be included in the plan. The plan would be distributed to the whole project team.

Management statement

All pertinent information and recommendations should be discussed at project team meetings with all departments and relevant consultants. From this discussion a 'green issue management statement' would be agreed. This should identify any necessary green issue management work and the appropriate safeguards and remedial operations involved. The statement should be regarded as being development policy that may well have significant and far-reaching implications.

The statement should be realistic and achievable but must have substance to show genuine intent to implement the developer's green issue policy and relevant local and national policies.

Management policy

The management plan and statement should form the basis for a developer's 'green issue management policy'. A central element of the policy should be an independently administered monitoring process designed to ensure that all aspects of the policy are implemented, both at individual project level and across the whole of the company's development portfolio.

Green issue manager

A partner consultant should be retained as a 'green issue project manager' to implement the policy. The manager's role would be similar to a quality or client manager. He or she would ensure that green issues are represented discretely at management level.

The principal roles of the green issue manager would be to:

- prepare the green issue management plan and statement
- lead any pre-construction green issue discussions
- advise the project design team on all aspects of the implementation of green issue policy



- monitor the site during construction to ensure that all aspects of the project statement are implemented and in line with the developer's wider green issue policy
- act as a contact point for Local Planning Authority (LPA) officers and all other parties over any green issue.

The manager should have the authority to insist that all green issue recommendations are followed and should be consulted before any work that has green issue implications is undertaken.

The green issues aspect of development - in particular with greenfield development - is likely to become far more important. By voluntarily adopting a scheme such as this, developers would gain an important political and commercial advantage over competitors.

Having been involved in many developments for national, regional and private developers, JP Associates has identified several problem areas that this scheme seeks to rectify:

- green issue information is often not clearly presented in one document and circulated to all appropriate parties
- work details agreed during the planning negotiations are not always carried out, or are undertaken without complying with an agreed method statement
- trees and other green issues are still not regarded as sufficiently important
- the exact position of a project's legal boundaries are often not known and this can have significant consequences for the management of trees, hedges and green issues
- sales staff are often unaware of the protected status of trees or of the background to certain discussions, and promises to potential purchasers over tree pruning/removal can be difficult, or impossible, to negotiate.

Summary

The following points should be considered when discussing this idea further:

- any non-compliance to the green issue statement should be rectified immediately
- the green issue manager should report at technical director/manager level, not to site or build managers or surveyors and commercial managers where build programmes and budgets can be more of a deciding factor
- this scheme is ahead of current requirements but if the development sector doesn't 'green up', tougher measures than these could be imposed
- although this scheme may reduce margins in the short term it represents a more sustainable approach and this, in the long term, will help to ensure returns
- a system of incentives could be introduced to reward sites with a good green issue record
- the whole scheme could be used as part of a sales/PR strategy
- once prepared the green issue statement should be widely published, perhaps submitted as part of the supporting documentation for the planning application and could also be used by the sales team.

As with any business management policy this proposal and any scheme that is derived from it must be flexible. JP Associates would welcome comment on any aspect of this document or its practical implementation in development projects.

