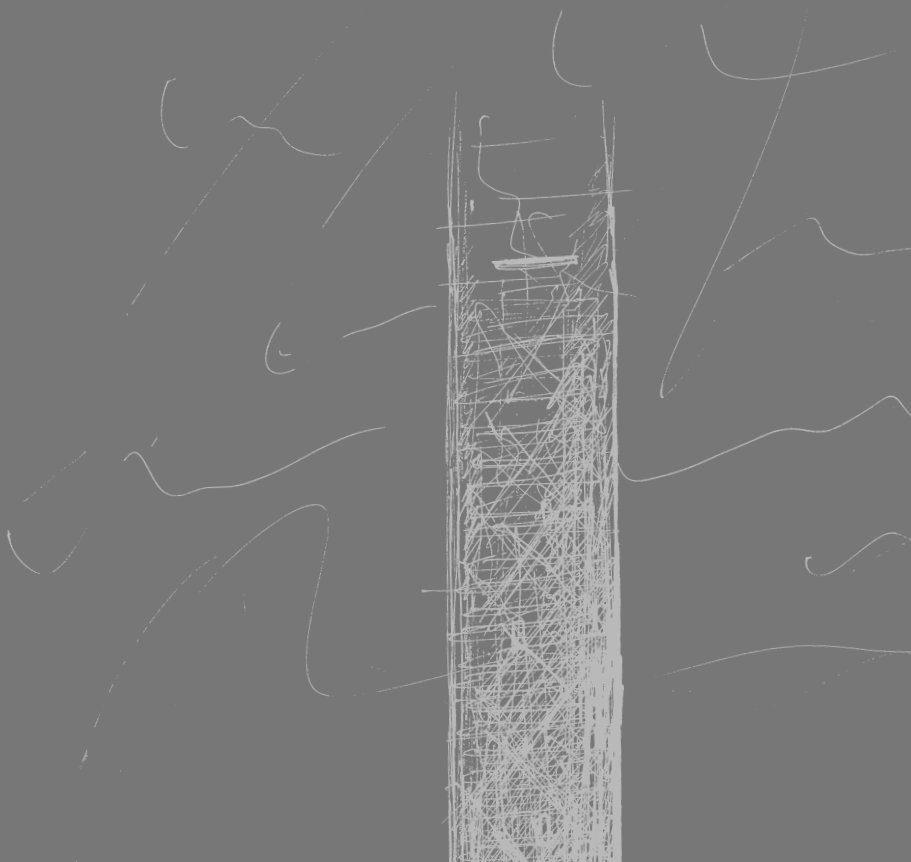




Royal Institute
of British Architects

Valuing Good Design



Valuing Good Design – an introduction

This is likely to be the first General Election in which the environment plays an equal role to that of health, education and the economy. We are members of the first generation who will knowingly leave the planet in a worse condition than that we inherited. We now have an equally historic opportunity to contribute to the sustainability of our planet's scarce resources. Architects have a responsibility to play their part.

The role of our buildings in developing this sense of responsibility is undeniable. The commitment of all political parties to deliver an increasing number of schools and hospitals over the coming years is a physical dividend of the longest continued period of economic growth in our recent history.

Architects are as responsible as doctors and teachers for delivering social and economic value to our society. Well-designed hospitals deliver better quality care, speedier outcomes and better value to the taxpayer. Imaginatively designed schools can enhance the quality of teaching and provide a safe learning environment. And well-designed homes can contribute to a sense of community, important for social inclusion and urban renewal.

The morale of those working in our public services is also vastly enhanced by the quality of the environment in which they work.

It is now time to assert the key challenges to Government, which are:

- ▶ How can we ensure that the values of our public services meet the value of good design?
- ▶ How can we ensure that good design is valued, not only for its own sake, but also economically, socially and environmentally?
- ▶ How do we find a sustainable solution to economic problems that helps to enhance community spirit and build a sense of civic responsibility?
- ▶ How can this work be achieved in a strategic, joined-up way across Government, to reflect the fluidity of building use in the light of the changing nature of our society?

The following recommendations are points on which the RIBA urges action and to which it is keen to contribute alongside public and private sector partners.

Marco Goldschmied, President, RIBA
May 2001

Key recommendations

The environment

- ▶ Develop a national programme of increased incentives to improve the environmental quality of existing building stock and new build – e.g. a system of energy rating with tax breaks.
- ▶ Initiate a strategic plan for implementing the new programme of public expenditure on public sector buildings to ensure the best match with objectives for improving the environment.
- ▶ Set a standard for reporting on environmental sustainability as part of the 'business bottom-line', alongside economic and social factors.

Exploiting the benefits of good design

- ▶ In line with the EU Council Resolution on architectural quality, introduce a national Architecture Policy to promote and secure the benefits of good architecture for the people of the United Kingdom.
- ▶ In recognising the work of Government in producing a comprehensive *Creative Industries Mapping Document*, seek to ensure the regulatory burden on these industries is minimised. The *Creative Industries Mapping Document* should become the annual report of the creative industries.
- ▶ Promote opportunities for supporting the export of UK architecture and engineering services.
- ▶ Encourage the appointment of design champions by the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and local authorities and publication of a design statement as part of their annual reporting processes.
- ▶ Appoint city architects as champions of good design and a resource for offering advice and information, working with others in the planning process as part of a team.

Social benefits

- ▶ Building on the work of Government departments (DCMS and DETR) and Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), reinforce the importance of design quality in PFI contracts, for the benefit of all the users and value for money.
- ▶ Promote recognition of health and education buildings as key resources and facilities to be used for the widest purposes by the community, including lifelong learning.
- ▶ Introduce a national strategy to eradicate fuel poverty, linked to an energy rating system.

Economic issues

- ▶ Provide guidance and support to those responsible for commissioning projects throughout the public realm to:
 - develop a client's brief that will elicit optimum solutions to their long term needs;
 - increase their understanding of the through life benefits of good design;
 - increase their capability to handle design selection.
- ▶ Request a National Audit Office inquiry into the economic effectiveness of good design in the public procurement process, with particular regard to design in schools and hospitals and the PFI process.
- ▶ Charge VAT on the design elements of design and build contracts.
- ▶ Provide VAT relief for people who own and /or maintain listed buildings in preparation for the 2003 review of the sixth VAT Directive.