

## DEBATE

# Can Cabe be effective if it has to be self-financing?

YES

**Brian Waters**

President, Association of Consultant Architects



Not so long ago planning was seen as a public service and charging a fee to submit an application would have been unthinkable. Today we are facing charges to make planning appeals.

The Tory green paper on planning makes great play of the importance of 'good design' but seems to think it can be reduced to policy by codification. To be more than "motherhood and apple pie" such proclamations have to recognise that the assessment of good design is to some extent subjective and so demands peer review and subtle judgement. Worryingly the green paper makes no reference to either design panels or Cabe.

As its chairman Paul Finch argues, Cabe is already self-financing. Of its £12 million annual budget much comes from providing design advice to such bodies as the Courts Service and the HCA under "service level agreements".

Design review, which is paid for by the DCMS, has to meet targets such as numbers of reviews and the proportion outside of London, like any other contract.

So should design review carry a fee? Cabe's first chairman Stuart Lipton says "People won't pay to have their heads chopped off." Well it happens with planning refusals and soon will with appeals. But these are statutory obligations. If Cabe were to become a statutory body then the law could require reviews and Cabe could charge for them. The Tories would be happy to have got rid of a quango too!

But the best answer may be to accept that Cabe is already self-financing and to leave well alone.



Viñoly's walkie-talkie was revised following Cabe's design review.

NO

**Roger Zogolovitch**

Director, AZ Urban Studio



Cabe must continue to offer independent design advice. It is the only public agency devoted to championing design. If it were to be funded by private sector fees this impartiality would vanish.

In the charged atmosphere of planning, where yet more policy merges daily, we are in danger of the development control process defaulting to the lowest common denominator.

In the second decade of the 21st century do we really want to be remembered as a culture that built the most unremarkable or ersatz buildings of their generation? My answer is a clear and decisive "no".

Cabe brings design review panels that identify the good from the bad. They encourage and assist

local authorities to be brave and support good design when it is presented.

Our towns and cities remain our collective concern. These places need to respond to development pressure to fit our growing and changing communities. That change has impact. It is understandable that political pressure will seek to resist the impact of development by an "architecture of ease". This leads us to the "design dumb" response.

The need for good architecture and development is vital. Our buildings must serve to meet the challenge of the future pattern of our lives.

We need an independent strong and healthy Cabe to make us feel comfortable with proposals that will go on to mark our future heritage.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**Add your views at [bdonline.co.uk](http://bdonline.co.uk)