

**B.E.V.E.L.  
11 ADDERLEY STREET  
LIVERPOOL**

---

**EXPERT WITNESS REPORT**

---

**Peter McLachlan FRICS**

McLachlan Associates  
Chartered Building Surveyor  
Third Floor  
53 Hamilton Square  
Birkenhead  
Wirral  
CH41 5AS  
Tel: 0151 650 2244  
Fax 0151 650 2255

September 2005

Ref: 3304

**B.E.V.E.L  
EDGE LANE WEST**

**CONTENTS**

<b>SECTION</b>	<b>ITEM</b>	<b>PAGE NOS.</b>
1	Introduction	1
2	Instructions	1
3	Documents Referred to	1-2
4	Summary and Conclusions	2-3
5	Site Inspection	3
6	Assessment of current Housing Stock condition	4-5
7.	Suitability of Existing Stock	6
8	Statement of Compliance	7
9	Statement of Truth	8
Appendix 1	Experience, Qualifications and Speciality of the Writer	

## **1.00 INTRODUCTION**

**1.01** I am a Chartered Surveyor, a Fellow of the Building Surveyors Faculty of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, and have over thirty years experience in all aspects of building maintenance and construction, both traditional and contemporary.

**1.02** I have 35 years experience in Building Conservation, refurbishment and maintenance, much of this gained in Social Housing in the Kensington fields and Toxteth areas of Liverpool.

**1.03** A brief Professional C V is appended to my report, to which reference may be made, as necessary.

## **2.00 INSTRUCTIONS**

**2.01** Verbal instructions were given by Ms Elizabeth Pascoe on behalf of the Better Environmental Vision for Edge Lane Group (BEVEL), to prepare an Expert Witness Report regarding the general condition of the properties affected by the Planning Application numbers 05S/0207 and 050/0206 – Edge Lane West Liverpool.

**2.02** The focus of my Report to respond to the suggestion that the properties affected by this proposal are unfit for habitation and beyond economic repair and obsolete.

## **3.00 DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO**

**3.01** I have not been provided with any formal documentation regarding these proposals but have been provided with a plan prepared by BEVEL showing the properties which would be demolished as part of the planning application in connection with road improvements to Edge Lane.

**3.02** The plan indicates some 367 dwellings which would be demolished and I understand that some of these would be replaced with modern housing.

#### **4.00 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

**4.01** Reaching my conclusions I have not taken into account social and environmental issues and have focused on the viability of the properties and their degree of obsolescent.

**4.02** A large proportion of the properties have been neglected and are currently vacant, these would need to be completely refurbished but are capable of being brought up to a very acceptable standard of accommodation although clearly their energy performance could not match modern construction.

**4.03** This of course could be said about the vast majority of housing throughout the United Kingdom.

**4.04** With a few exceptions where significant work would be necessary including repairs because of subsidence and structural defect, the majority of properties are capable of straight forward refurbishment and in fact a large proportion already have the basic provisions of a damp proof course, a sound roof and the basic amenities.

**4.05** Clearly in cost terms the properties could be refurbished for a fraction of the price of demolition and rebuilding. The cost of demolition and rebuilding of a typical terraced house using RICS VICS figures is in the order of £100,000 whereas refurbishment costs in the region of £30,000 per dwelling to bring them up to the national Decent Homes Standard.

**4.06** Inevitably there will be some costs involved in environmental works and in the upgrading of the infrastructure but in terms of feasibility this approach has been adopted all over the country for a number of years with measured success.

**4.07** My conclusion is therefore that the properties to some extent are currently obsolete but their obsolescence is not irreversible and they can be refurbished to provide excellent affordable accommodation at relatively modest cost.

## **5.00 SITE INSPECTION**

**5.01** My site inspection took the form of an external assessment of the exteriors of the properties made from ground level together with detailed inspection of a sample of the properties, some of these inspections having been carried out under previous instructions for other clients with properties in the area affected.

**5.02** All of the subject properties therefore were inspected in this way.

**6.00 ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT HOUSING STOCK CONDITION**

- 6.01** The properties in question are largely conventional Victorian 2 storey terraced dwellings built around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.
- 6.02** There are some older properties, some in Royston Street date from 1874 and there are larger terraced and semi detached houses facing onto Edge Lane towards the east end of the proposed redevelopment.
- 6.03** A large number of properties particularly to the south of Edge Lane have already been vacated and are currently boarded up. The remainder however fall into two fairly distinct categories, those which have been subject to only normal repair and maintenance and maybe considered to be shabby and those which have been refurbished and upgraded and now have new windows, roofs and internal improvements including bathrooms and central heating.
- 6.04** From my knowledge of the area and similar properties located close by in Toxteth and Kensington I am familiar with the likely inherent and predictable defects which can be present in properties of this type.
- 6.05** Typically outriggers can be expected to settle since foundations are often shallower as the outrigger sections tend to have solid floors whereas the main properties have floors of suspended timber which include deep foundation.

- 6.06** Another area where common defects can be found is at roof level where roof spread can be a problem causing eaves to be forced outwards with corresponding distortion of the roof line and ridge.
- 6.07** This type of defect is often associated with roof replacement due to changes in loading.
- 6.08** I reported in detail on over 50 properties in the Kensington Field area where this type of problem has been identified and specified suitable economic and practicable remedial works, none of the properties which I have inspected have required any form of rebuilding.
- 6.09** In addition to the general and predictable defects some properties are affected by local ground conditions, bomb blast and general neglect.
- 6.10** No doubt as part of an overall strategy some properties would be in such poor condition as substantial refurbishment and some reconstruction work would be necessary. From a visual inspection however I found no properties which were not capable of retention even though individual costs may be disproportionate.

## **7.0 SUITABILITY OF EXISTING STOCK**

- 7.01** There are two main property types, the larger of which front onto Edge Lane itself, with smaller property types providing terraced accommodation to the adjacent roads.
- 7.02** The larger property types such as those fronting onto Edge Lane can be economically and effectively remodelled and refurbished to provide self contained apartments consisting of one and two bedroomed formats. We have been involved in the conversion of these in the locality for both the social and private housing sectors.
- 7.03** The conversion of larger properties to form self contained flats can assist with the provision of suitable and affordable accommodation for the modern demographic of fragmentary families.
- 7.04** The smaller property types such as those located to the adjacent roads are suitable for refurbishment up to an acceptable standard for modern and affordable housing. As has been done for several social landlords within Liverpool, this can be done with minimal remodelling works.
- 7.05** In summary, with regard to the suitability of existing properties for the adaptation, a saving of approximately 65-75% may be made over the cost of demolition and replacement with new build developments.

**8.00 STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE**

**8.01** My report complies with the requirements of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, as set down in 'Surveyors Acting as Expert Witnesses : Practice Statement.'

**8.02** I understand that my duty in providing written reports and giving evidence is to help the Court, and that this duty overrides any obligation to the parties who have engaged me. I confirm that I have complied with that duty.

**8.03** I have endeavoured to include in my report those matters, which I have knowledge of or of which I have been made aware, that might adversely affect the validity of my opinion.

**8.04** I have indicated the sources of information that I have used.

**8.05** I have not, without forming an independent view, included or excluded anything which has been suggested to me by others.

**8.06** I will notify those instructing me immediately and confirm in writing if for any reason my existing report requires any correction or qualification.

**8.07** I confirm that I have not entered into an arrangement where the amount or payment of my fees is in any way dependent upon the outcome of the case.

**9.0 STATEMENT OF TRUTH**

**9.01** I confirm that insofar as the facts stated in my report are within my own knowledge, I have made clear which they are and believe them to be true, and that the opinions I have expressed represent my true and complete professional opinion.

**9.02** If, for any reason, I subsequently believe that my report requires correction or qualification, I will advise those instructing me immediately.

**Peter McLachlan FRICS .....**

**Chartered Building Surveyor**

**20<sup>th</sup> September 2005**

**APPENDIX 1**

**Summary of Experience**

**Qualifications**

**And**

**Speciality of the Writer**

**APPENDIX 2**  
**Digital Photographs**  
**of the**  
**Property**  
**Taken by the Writer**