

Security: an estate-wide concept?

Most of us are accustomed to thinking about home security on an individual basis but a combination of well established design practices and the advent of new technology is allowing builders to consider the subject from the perspective of entire residential developments, writes Alex Carmichael, Technical and Membership Services Director, British Security Industry Association



It is now more than 20 years since the concept of crime prevention through environmental design began to be taken seriously in the UK. Since then, the idea that the physical layout of streets and the creation of defensible space around individual structures has a measurable impact on crime and the fear of crime has changed from a theory to an accepted design principle. Time and again, research and practical examples show that vulnerability and fear are significantly reduced by addressing security at the design stage. The evidence is particularly strong in relation to refurbished housing estates, where major reductions in crime have been achieved.

The advent of digital technology and communications media, such as Video Over IP, has advanced the concept by adding affordable new possibilities to the equation, including the feasibility of built-in remote security surveillance of entire new housing developments.

Closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras can now be monitored and recorded online over limitless distances and are extremely cost-effective. Such advances offer significant potential, both for the creation of secure environments and in terms of marketing new residential development.

Many house builders are already familiar with the commercial advantages of incorporating security at the design stage, for example by

following guidance in areas like physical security, lighting and intruder alarm protection.

By including security at the design stage, housebuilders are not only making cost-savings, but also increasing the saleability of properties.

Physical security measures are a key element of this and provide a backbone to any property's security. Ensuring that high quality windows, doors, locks, window locks, fencing, gates and security lighting are fitted will protect the properties during construction and during the property's lifetime. Intruder alarms are also an essential element of security. It is important that alarms are installed by quality companies to the latest industry standards.

Including security measures in design and building schedules also has clear advantages over the retrofitting of hardware and cabling such as security-rated locks and alarm systems. The advantages become even clearer when extended to more comprehensive security issues such as area-wide surveillance. Providing the necessary infrastructure from the outset may also have major cost implications in terms of site security. It is often overlooked that construction site security need not always be simply an end in itself. There are three elements to this:

Cost. The ability of security technology to prevent loss and delay in residential construction – itself a benefit to the eventual buyer – may extend to the security of the completed site. Good

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Secured by design... the award winning Park Central regeneration project in Birmingham, which has transformed a once run down area of the city



prevention and deterrence are essential and security fencing and CCTV surveillance are a good examples of this. Why pay for two security systems – one for the site and one for the finished construction – if one system or substantial elements of it will address the needs of both?

Marketing. Builders are of course well aware of the value of the construction site itself in selling the product and the location. Construction sites are natural sources of curiosity. Passers-by always want to see what is being built and buyers place a premium on sites with effective security. By bringing security online during the construction phase, rather than waiting until the end to switch on something that could have been protecting the site, developers can acquire a new marketing tool and deliver robust testing of the security measures at the same time.

Deterrence. Just as good construction site security can promote the desirability of the finished product, so it can help the criminal fraternity to get used to the idea that effective measures are in place. A system that protects the construction site – then becomes part of the finished product – obviously maintains its deterrent impact for the benefit of the buyers. And a system with a proven ability to prevent loss and delay in construction might also provide some impressive statistics to compare with local crime figures generally.

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