

One thing we have learnt this week – Goldsmith Street is the future

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Another week and another look at architecture. This

time its Goldsmith Street in Norwich. Last time I had a quick look at refurbishment. Refurbishment is clearly more eco friendly with the rider that it maybe very difficult to get to very high levels of energy efficiency. There is no such excuse for new build, except there is. The UK government cut the mandatory need for very highly efficient housing in England and there seems to be no particular laws in Scotland either. So its impressive that Norwich council when they decided they had to build new council housing after many years of not doing so designed Goldsmith Street to [passive house](#) standard. But it goes beyond that with some very thoughtful design. For starters the bins are hidden. A nice touch. Passive houses at least in this country have a reputation for being clunky looking. Although personally I think they look OK. They are usually on their own as solo 'Grand Design' projects. This project is bigger. There are three rows that back onto each other. Space needed thinking about. The architects packed them in tighter than they would normally do (14m apart). There were two issues that immediately arose. The first is privacy. This was sorted by designing the placement of windows to minimise overlooking. The second which is very important to passive design is the capture of natural light for solar gain. The architects cleverly angled the roofs so that the terraces to the north or not blocked by the ones to the south in winter. I know how much difference solar gain makes. There is another advantage to this from the design point of view. It gives some variety to the housing. The houses were clearly demanding for the builders to construct. The passive design calls for very level of air tightness. But this attention to detail has paid off. They look OK and the bills will be no more than £150. The only question is why all houses are not being built to this standard. Neil

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