

## TRADITIONAL HOUSES or something else?



BRE publication 469, 2004, ....'Non-Traditional Houses' (cost £275) lists approximately 450 different types of dwelling, from the *Shipston Aluminium* where only one example was built, to the *Easiform Type II* where over 100,000 were constructed between 1920 and 1970.

Many types, such as *Airey* (26,000 examples); *Cornish Units* (30,000), *Orlit* (17,000) and *Unity Types I and II* (19,000) are designated "defective" under the Housing Defects Act 1984 (now part XVI of the Housing Act 1985) and are not regarded favourably for mortgage lending until repairs/upgrading have been completed under an approved scheme.

Others, such as the steel-framed *Dorlonco*, comprising elements of rendered EML and clinker block, or the *Easiform Type II*, of in-situ cast cavity concrete construction, have problems and, whilst not designated 'defective' under the Act, are nevertheless regarded as poor security by most lenders and will be valued accordingly.

By way of example, BRE 469 describes *Easiform Type II* as affected by ...."complete carbonisation of concrete cover to dense RC external walls particularly in properties built before 1960" meaning that any steel reinforcement, wall ties and the EML bonding between outer and inner leaves at joints between 'lifts', are likely to be corroded but difficult to assess when carrying out a non-invasive survey.

Similar comments apply to the *Dorlonco* where the steel frame, which is concealed within the structure and may not be obvious within a roof void, tends to suffer minor to severe corrosion of the RSJ stanchions, particularly at the bases, as well as corrosion of wall ties.

Type-identification and even recognition of some types of non-traditional housing can be difficult, particularly where roofs are of low-hipped construction and access within the void is limited. The matter becomes more complex where - in the case of *Dorlonco* houses - the outer walls are clad in stone or brick and initially can appear as traditional cavity construction. Recognition of *Easiform Type II* can also be difficult, where outer walls superficially resemble cavity block construction except for being marginally thinner in width.

Members are reminded, in a recessive market, to take care when inspecting former local authority housing stock, particularly when carrying out a survey on an unfamiliar estate. Anything that appears 'odd', or different, usually is. If in doubt, a call to the local Building Inspector or Council Housing Manager can often reveal useful information and save grief by avoiding a possible PI claim for mis-description and over-valuation.

### Useful Guidance

BRE publication 469, 2004, ....'Non-Traditional Houses' (cost £275)

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