

Meaningful Learning Experiences

Strategic Commitment	✓	Part of a careers initiative across Greater Manchester
Curriculum Provision	✓	Providing a real brief for a KS4 vocational course
Employer Partnerships	✓	Involving a small firm based in Andalusia, Spain
Reflective Young People		
Informed Career Choices	✓	Showing skills developed in the course are used for real

Spanish holiday villa brief provides an engaging brief for Construction students in Bolton

St Catherine's Academy in Bolton offers a range of vocational options at Key Stage 4, including Construction. The options booklet explains that, *'You will have the opportunity to develop and learn construction skills and practises. You will learn and develop the technical skills and knowledge needed involved in construction projects.'*

The brief for this project focused on *'Assignment Learning Aim B, C - Designing buildings that meet the clients brief'* and the teacher stated, *'This is a skill that is required within the construction industry, the work is normally undertaken by an architect and utilising his experience and hopefully visual aids to illustrate the process.'* – hoping that, *'Better understanding of construction design process and meeting the needs of the client which will push up grades.'*

Based in Andalusia, Spain, Eco Vida Homes designs energy efficient villas in Marbella. The firm's English commercial director and quantity surveyor provided background information about the business and a client brief for a large villa.

After learning the basics about construction and technical drawings, the students completed a worksheet to explain how the client brief was going to be met and produced their own drawings. A selection of work was then sent to Eco Vida Homes, who provided email feedback, including practical details, such as, *'Layouts have to take into consideration the solar orientation'* and *'There may also be practical considerations such as a big rock in the middle of the site, a steep slope or a protected tree.'* The expert feedback was used to help students improve their final piece of work.

Benefits for the Students

- *'I feel privileged because he's an expert and he has given good feedback so I can improve the areas I need to improve on.'*
- *'It feels good because he's one of the top people – looking at my work – judging it.'*
- *'It makes it easier for us to progress because we're being told about things by a person in construction.'*
- *'I've already had feedback from my teacher, so it would be a different perspective and I'll be able to do more.'*
- *[The real client brief] '... shows you how people actually want it.'*

Benefits for the School

- The project supported the Careers Leader's plan to build strategic links with local employers and embed careers within curriculum learning (Gatsby benchmark 4)
- With 80%+ of students at the school on Pupil Premium and with low levels of student and parental engagement and student aspiration, the project helped to present a positive picture of career opportunities and show that classroom learning can be applied beyond school.

Benefits for the Employer

Eco Vida Homes is a small firm with a big mission, to encourage change in the Spanish property market, particularly by responding creatively to each client's brief and by bringing eco-friendly construction methods into the mainstream. The company – and so its commercial director – are therefore very busy. Classroom resources used existing information from the firm and feedback for the students was sent via email.



Here are some key points when interpreting the client's brief for your students:

- We need to understand our clients deeply and find out not just what they want but also why they want it if we are to advise them well.
- If it's a home this means asking them for photos and drawings. We need to find out how they live (do they shower in the evening or the morning) how many people live in the house, what age they are, and how they live. We use a questionnaire (example attached) and meetings.
- There are architects who don't want their clients to give them too much detail because they believe that they, the architect, should be free to do the design as they see fit. In my opinion this is ok for a public building or a museum but not for someone's home.
- The success of your design will depend on how well you have understood the clients' needs.
- Your design is also confined by the legal limits (the planning regulations relevant to the plot: amount you can build, height, distance from boundaries, footprint etc) Your client might not be aware of these.
- Your design will be confined by the client's budget. Every line on your drawing implies a cost of tens if not hundreds of thousands of pounds.
- There may also be practical considerations such as a big rock in the middle of the site, a steep slope or a protected tree.
- All layouts have to take into consideration the solar orientation, maybe the views, neighbours access and, as before, the lifestyle of the inhabitants: do they prefer the best view at breakfast or in the evening?
- When you present your ideas to your client you should always explain why. This might not be obvious with just the drawings. It's also a good discipline while you are designing. Ask yourself why am I doing it this way and rehearse your explanation to your client.
- Be prepared to protect the client against their own ideas. They may want something quite firmly but be mistaken. This requires professionalism and tact.

I have noticed that one of the designs has a bathroom/ WC with direct access from the kitchen. I believe this contravenes the building regulations for hygienic reasons in the UK

By way of anecdote we have just completed a villa in which our client insisted on a bathroom / WC open plan in the bedroom. It's behind a glass partition but otherwise open plan. We advised against it. It's not illegal. What do you think? Would you have a WC / bathroom open plan in the bedroom?

Have fun with the designs - let your imagination run free!

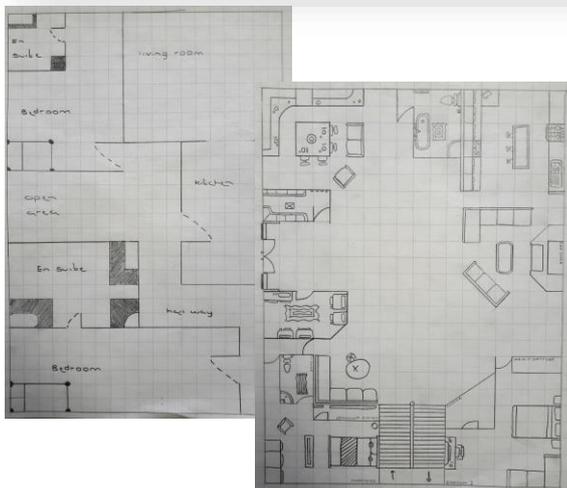
Warm regards

John

John Wolfendale

Commercial Director

Eco Vida Homes



Year 10 Construction students were sent a client brief for a villa in Marbella by Andalusia-based Eco Vida Homes. Students' designs and rationales received email feedback from the firm's commercial director, a qualified quantity surveyor. Students were then able to further improve the work they finally submitted.