

**WORKING QUICK  
WORK OF IT:** The  
entire team of  
workers needed to  
complete the houses  
on Skelton Road,  
Diss.  
Below, an architect's  
vision of one of  
the completed  
homes.



**DISS**

**EDP 6/3/09**

# From plot to finished home inside a week

Low-energy eco-homes that take a matter of days to build will be cutting the cost for tenants of a south Norfolk housing charity.

**By CELIA WIGG**

Saffron Housing Trust said they were delighted by the speedy construction method that is being trialled at Skelton Road, Diss, where a pair of super-insulated homes are rapidly taking shape.

Thermos flasks which use thermal insulation to enable liquids to remain hot or cold for hours.

"There are only about 7,000 passive houses throughout Europe and, as far as I know, we are the first housing association to build them. It's just a speedy, clever way to build," he said.

The component parts are driven on to the site, and include 14 prefabricated panels from Sweden with triple-glazed windows already installed, ready for lifting into place by crane.

Saffron researched different methods of construction, bearing in mind the impact on tenants of the credit crunch and current high fuel costs. And it was agreed that the eco-homes designed by UK firm CLS were what was required.

Other energy-saving features include under-floor heating powered by an external air-source pump, and a vapour barrier in the walls which keeps out the damp and seals the house to keep it insulated.

"Saffron has never built passive houses before so it's a learning curve and we are spot on schedule," Mr Daniels added. "It's working out extremely well and by the end of May tenants will be able to move in, and the next ones we build will be quicker. I think the building costs are very comparable with traditional methods, and it's a better property."

But it is the speed of construction that has surprised neighbours, who have been taking photographs as the two properties virtually materialise before their eyes.

Diss town councillor Graham Minshull, a member of Saffron's board of trustees, is equally enthusiastic about the project.

"People living next to the site were amazed as they thought workmen would be on site for months," said David Daniels, chairman of Saffron Housing Trusts' development group.

"It is so much quicker. We put the concrete down last week, and the basic house will be finished, by the end of today. It means instead of taking about a year from identifying a site to people moving in, if all goes well we can do it in about three months," he said.

"The foundations took three days and are now in the third day of construction and are nearly finished. So its six days start to finish to get it water tight."

He likened passive home technology to that employed in