



TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE GROUP

Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP,
Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport,
House of Commons,
London,
SW1A 0AA

27th July 2011

Dear Mr Hunt,

Re: TAG Response to Paul Finch Article in Architecture Journal of 14th July 2011

I write on behalf of the Traditional Architecture Group (TAG) to urge you to act on the attached article published in the Architects' Journal on 14th July by Mr Paul Finch, Deputy Chair of the Design Council with particular responsibility for the design review role of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). In the article Mr Finch stated, inter alia: "*One of the good things about the 2012 London Olympics is the realisation that we have a set of great buildings produced not by Quinlan Terry, Robert Adam, John Simpson, but by Hopkins, Hadid, Make... None of it endorsed by the Prince of Wales...*"

It is the policy of this and recent governments to favour no architectural style in planning decisions, as spelt out in Planning Policy Statement 1. Yet by contrasting some better known traditional architects with those working on the Olympics, Mr Finch has expressed his very clear bias against traditional architecture. Members of the TAG experience the effects of similar views to Mr Finch's on local design reviews, architectural awards and competition. TAG, on the other hand, has always championed pluralism in the built environment and believes that choice and diversity lie at the heart of any democratic system.

We were, therefore dismayed and alarmed by this overt prejudice expressed from the top of the government's own design watchdog. Mr Finch is not a private person and his position on the Design Council is well-known. His statement makes it clear not only to readers but to staff and members of the Design Review boards that there is a significant prejudice against one style or architectural philosophy at the highest level. We therefore urge you, as the minister responsible for the Design Council/CABE, to call on Mr Finch to retract publicly his highly prejudicial remarks and apologise for his poor judgement in making them. We also ask for your assurances that his views not be allowed to taint the planning system.

We are copying this letter to Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP with the request that, unless Mr Finch retracts his remarks, he instructs local planning authorities to ignore all CABE designs reviews on the grounds of clear and unacceptable bias.

We would welcome your early responses to this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Alireza Sagharchi RIBA, FRSA
Chairman, Traditional Architecture Group
A Linked Society of the RIBA

CC Rt Hon Eric Pickles, MP - Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
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