

GOOD EARTH

## One with nature in your new home

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A Zero Energy Development housing society in London lives differently.



**ENVIRONMENT FRIENDLY: A housing colony that hopes to make a difference.**

Imagine living in a home where you generate your own energy, re-use your waste, and harvest your water from the rain? Where the furniture is made from recycled material, and the windows and walls so designed that the house is cool in summer and warm in winter? Where the bulbs use one-hundredth of the electricity that our ordinary light bulbs today use?

This seemingly impossible dream house is becoming a reality in many parts of the world. One full housing society, called BedZED, has just come up in London, U.K., and already over 60 families are staying in it. "Bed" stands for Beddington, the locality in London where it is situated, and "ZED" stands for Zero Energy Development. The entire colony uses no fossil fuels like petroleum and coal and oil. Rather, it uses a mix of solar panels, large windows to capture natural light, and a generator run on waste. These houses use only 10 per cent of the heating energy that is used normally.

### Simple applications

Water too is sparingly used, after the rain is collected on the roofs. The bathroom toilets are designed to use only half of the wasteful amount of water we use in our normal flushes. Wastewater is treated at BedZED through biological means and re-used in the houses. All the families are also encouraged to adopt environmentally friendly lifestyles, e.g. using public

transport and bicycles as much as possible, buying organic food, switching to electric cars, setting up office as close to home as possible to reduce transportation needs, and so on.

It is interesting that much of this does not use ultra hi-tech, but mostly common sense applications with and appropriate technologies. As many people working on such solutions will tell you, the thing most missing in our world is just that: common sense! For instance, a skylight (a window on the roof) is enough to bring in light into the house that you don't need to use bulbs and tubelights through the day.....a lot of our traditional houses had such a feature. Or, it is so easy to put our wet kitchen waste into a pot and make it into compost (you can speed this up by using earthworms), which can be used in your or your housing society's garden.

So, BedZED may be in London, nowhere near where we live in India... but surely we can also start demanding that our architects and builders start using common sense and easily available technologies to make our lifestyles a bit more friendly to the earth?

### **What can I do?**

- Explore your neighbourhood to see if anyone is doing rooftop water harvesting, recycling waste, using solar energy, or other environment friendly solutions.
- Ask builders or architects you know, or see working near your house, whether they are using such solutions?
- Do what you can to minimise your use of resources use water and electricity sparingly, recycle paper and other materials, cycle or walk as much as you can\_and ask all your friends and your parents to do the same!

*In collaboration with Kalpavriksh Environmental Action Group*