



## Manuel Camisuli: minimising the visual impact

Manuel Camisuli Andaluz was born in Gibraltar. He registered as an architect in 1968 after studying in Glasgow and London. In 1970, he returned to Spain and formed a team of professionals with whom he carried out innovative residential projects not only in Spain but also in countries including Kenya and Saudi Arabia. From the start, his work has won recognition for featuring a clear environmental consciousness.

Manuel Camisuli is openly critical of much local development, believing that traditional architecture has been reduced to a set of clichés that have exercised an excessive influence on design. Tradition should have been interpreted in a more profound manner so as to develop a richer local style better suited to the climatic and social conditions of the area. He further believes that a sense of scale has been lacking. Local architects should look for new and appropriate designs rather than attempting to apply the traditional designs of the Andalusian single-family home to the large multi-family developments that are so common in our area.

To the architect, luxury residential complexes need not spoil the natural environment. "I should like to see future local development go toward a total integration with natural surroundings. In this way, we can make more harmonious and acceptable the introduction of high-density developments in an environment increasingly pressured by construction." One main and straightforward technique is gradated construction, or buildings that espouse slopes and valleys rather than break their flow. Local examples from the architect's own studio include the Bahía Romana project, just west of Estepona, where a series of buildings are nestled into the littoral landscape. He also cites as another positive example Melvin Villarroel Roldán's Kempinski Resort, whose gently rising beach-side gardens and buildings are well-integrated into the land.

As to the development of infrastructures, Manuel Camisuli would like to see a more integrated vision: "We must start from the concept of a linear city, which is what we are creating on the Costa del Sol. Once we accept this, we will begin to implement regional rather than municipal plans." The main problems with town plans is that they are short-term and do not use this linear coastal approach: "The only way planning works is when you dream 10 or 20 years ahead and you zone an area. Forward planning is necessary before immediate commercial interest gets in the way. Such long-term regional plans can influence logical infrastructure initiatives such as the construction of the coastal train." The Andalusian government's new *Ley del Suelo* mandating towns to zone with a view to limiting sprawl lacks teeth precisely because it does not impose regional and long-term planning. Commercial demand is too strong to be curbed by mere municipal town plans and urban law.

The architect goes on to explain that, in Estepona, residential parcels are zoned in one of two ways, either open for high-rise developments or reserved for scattered individual housing. Whilst far less in demand in areas such as Marbella, these *casitas* are an important part of the culture in Estepona. Unfortunately, these zones are often neglected and a certain anarchy reigns within them. The *casitas* tend to be built illegally, lacking a proper infrastructure, which in turn creates problems affecting