QUALITY

THE KEY TO DELIVERING MORE HOMES

PRINCE’S FOUNDATION
FOR BUILDING COMMUNITY
Britain needs more homes, and we need to find a way to not only meet that demand, but to do so in a way that helps create beautiful, affordable and sustainable communities. For too long Britain’s housing need has not been met with appropriate consideration for these factors, fostering antipathy for new developments and hindering the acceptance and delivery of new homes.

Through our Enquiry by Design (Ebd) process we have engaged with communities across the world, giving them a say in the planning process. The successful outcomes of these projects highlight the value of extensive community engagement, its direct relationship to the acceptance of new developments and their subsequent success in the market place.

This report presents evidence assembled by The Prince’s Foundation on three exemplar builds (Highbury Gardens, Islington, London; The Kingston Mills development, Bradford on Avon; and the Westoe Crown Village development in South Shields), demonstrating that sincere efforts to involve communities, whilst designing to a local context, can help developers attain planning approval and improve commercial viability.

Earlier research by The Prince’s Foundation and Savills (Valuing Sustainable Urbanism, 2007) comparing the commercial viability of well-designed, high quality masterplanned schemes found a premium of between 18 – 48 per cent for the mixed use, mixed income projects when compared to conventional developments within the same market area. A subsequent report (Delivering Sustainable Urbanism, 2010) identified delivery structures for such projects that allowed for both quality control and value creation. The case studies presented here build upon that research and are able to show where such developments have successfully been delivered in the UK, despite challenging economic circumstances.

Focusing on lessons learnt from these award-winning developments is particularly timely, as planning reform in England is attempting to simultaneously foster more community engagement, improve the design quality of new developments and deliver more homes. The three projects presented here offer a solid evidence base, proving that delivering these three desired outcomes is possible. By masterplanning these developments, and working closely with the local community we can help landowners wishing to capture both the medium and long-term premiums that come with quality developments, whilst ensuring we are delivering desirable places people want to call their home.
“Like many fine buildings of the past, Highbury Gardens will stand the test of time; retaining its presence and elegance for years to come.”

ELLIOT LIPTON, MANAGING DIRECTOR, FIRST BASE

Highbury Gardens is a high-quality, mixed-tenure residential development, which blends the best of traditional architecture with functional contemporary living. Delivered by First Base, in partnership with the Homes and Communities Agency and affordable housing partner Southern Housing Group, its success highlights the importance of collaboration between the public and private sectors in bringing well-designed homes to the capital.

The Prince’s Foundation for Building Community helped to ensure Highbury Gardens was designed to be a lasting new place. Following collaborative, developer-led workshops with the local community and the Highbury and Islington Council, The Prince’s Foundation produced a design brief and assisted in the selection of the architect, Porphyrios Associates, who took the project forward.

Breathing life into what was a Brownfield site, the £35 million development consists of 119, one, two and three bedroom homes, built around a spacious and maturely planted courtyard. Designed for longevity, both physically and culturally, Highbury Gardens contributes to wider regeneration, helping to preserve and enhance the character of Holloway Road, while offering high quality and genuinely sustainable homes.

**INTRODUCTION**

Highbury Gardens consists of robust, well-built, energy efficient buildings. 20 per cent of its energy demand is met by on-site renewable energy, while other energy efficiency measures such as solar thermal panels on the roof reduce carbon emissions by 16 per cent.

To achieve the highest quality alongside commercially viability, modern construction methods such as modular bathroom pods and off-site production techniques were used, reducing delivery time, improving build quality, and ensuring on-budget completion.

**DESIGN STATEMENT**

Well-considered design was critical to the success of the development and its acceptance within the community, and the experience brought to the project by Porphyrios Associates proved vital to this end. Embedded between two conservation areas of Georgian and Victorian architecture, while situated on the urban environment of the Holloway Road, Highbury Gardens responds to its context by marrying the best of the London vernacular architecture with functional, sustainable living.

**MARKET ACCEPTANCE**

Planning approval for this complex site was gained through extensive engagement with the local community and the quality of the subsequent design. As a result, 75 per cent of the homes were sold within three weeks of the development launching, with the scheme being fully sold within 2 months of completion. The private homes sold at 20 per cent above local comparables, demonstrating the value of quality design, which has also been recognised by a string of industry awards.

The Mayor of London celebrated Highbury Gardens’ design in the 2012 London Planning Awards, where it was recognised as ‘Best New Place to Live’, and praised by Boris Johnson for its “compelling approach to elegance and sustainability in inner city living”. The development also picked up the accolade of ‘Best Affordable Housing Project’ at the London Evening Standard’s New Homes Awards, where it was commended for its “…large and tranquil inner courtyard garden, which resembles a secluded square.”

**KEY INFO**

**DEVELOPER:** First Base

**PROJECT PARTNERS:** Homes and Communities Agency, Southern Housing Group

**ARCHITECT / MASTERPLANNER:** Porphyrios Associates

**AWARDS RECEIVED:** Best New Place to Live (London Planning Awards, 2012), Best Affordable Housing Project (London Evening Standard New Homes Award, 2012), Best Design For 4 Storeys or More (Housebuilder Awards, 2012)

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“It is clear... what a difference both these new residential, and commercial activities, and the wealth of public open space have been able to offer the town.”

EDWARD NASH, SENIOR PARTNER, NASH PARTNERSHIP

INTRODUCTION
The community engagement process for Kingston Mills was initiated by The Prince’s Foundation for Building Community, and taken forward by the architect, Nash Partnership and the developers; Galliford Try and Linden Homes. The initial community consultation workshop aimed to engage the local community and build consensus amongst residents about solutions that would solve a traffic problem in the town of Bradford on Avon, where an increasing amount of residents felt unsafe as pedestrians.

The outcomes of this workshop acted as a catalyst for the regeneration investment at the Kingston Mills area, where the Nash Partnership and the developers continued their community engagement work. Despite initial scepticism towards any development in the area, the discussions stemming from the workshops played a key part in the creation of a design plan addressing the needs, concerns and desires of the local population whilst incorporating and celebrating the area’s rich architectural history.

The result is a high-density, mixed-use, riverside quarter of 174 new homes, including a significant element of affordable houses, offices, shops, cafés, restaurants and public spaces, all acting as a regeneration catalyst for the town.

DESIGN STATEMENT

Heritage-led regeneration and a riverside location provided the inspiration for this contextual development, occupying five-and-a-half acres in the very centre of the historic town of Bradford on Avon.

As a contaminated flood plain site, with many historic buildings in need of repair, and with poor access and boundary constraints the site presented significant challenges in incorporating lower value uses. Using a creative, constantly reviewed, design approach based on physical models, the developer and masterplanner evolved a scheme of high-density development acceptable within the heart of such a historic town. High levels of engagement, and meaningful interaction with the local community proved essential not only in securing support, but also in shaping the character of the development. Listening and responding to local input gave the design a distinct sense of variety, similar to the reactive nature of the existing built environment in the surrounding historic areas.

MARKET ACCEPTANCE

Amongst numerous awards the development received the ‘Best Local Regeneration and Renewal’ accolade from the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) in 2010.

According to RTPI judges: “The development will enhance the physical environment of this long derelict site... The approach to site planning and design is excellent, being both sensitive and creative in its response to the surroundings.”

Figures have proven the market to reflect this, as the development sold well and has continued to be delivered throughout the recession. The creation of public urban spaces and a new high street have allowed for the local community to take advantage of emerging commercial possibilities. Despite some difficulties in filling all available office space, the take up of street level business space has been good, and spaces such as Lamb Yard have flourished, providing local shops, café space and a growing monthly farmers market.

KEY INFO

DEVELOPER: Galliford Try and Linden Homes
PROJECT PARTNERS: Bradford on Avon Development Trust
ARCHITECT / MASTERPLANNER: Nash Partnership
AWARDS RECEIVED: Best Mixed Use Development Award and Best Conversion Award (British Home Awards, Sunday Times, 2012) Best Local Regeneration and Renewal (Royal Town Planning Institute, 2012)
George Wimpey has brought new life to the former colliery site through innovative design and creative thinking... creating a fantastic new community on the South Shields sea front.

IAN MALCOLM, DEPUTY LEADER, SOUTH TYNE & WEAR COUNCIL

Westoe Crown Village

INTRODUCTION

The One Northeast Regional Development Agency and South Tyneside Metropolitan Council partnered with The Prince’s Foundation for Building Community to lead the transformation of this brownfield site into a beautiful, sustainable community as part of English Partnership’s Coalfield Regeneration Strategy.

Together with developer George Wimpey The Prince’s Foundation facilitated a series of workshops to develop a masterplan and breath new life into the site of a former colliery. The masterplan aimed to apply sustainable urban design principles alongside extensive social infrastructure, and building on the site commenced in 2002.

The result is a project comprising 670 social, rented, shared-equity and private market homes with wider community amenities including a primary school, community centre, small business facilities and retail space. This scheme has succeeded in effectively coupling the regeneration of a previously derelict site with community-inspired design to create a sustainable, mixed-used development.

DESIGN STATEMENT

Westoe Crown Village aimed to combine stylish, modern homes with traditional community spirit and ample green space. The development encompasses a wide variety of housing, appealing to homebuyers on all rungs of the property ladder. The 17-hectare development celebrates its coastal setting through a long, formal esplanade whilst coupling this with a series of more sheltered community spaces such as squares, crescents and a central circus.

Together with George Wimpey, The Prince’s Foundation aimed to refine and simplify the standard designs of the homes, using fewer house types but applying enhanced detailing to add the development’s distinctive design.

Increased walkability, cycle routes and the use of Home Zone principles have contributed to the transformation of a former industrial site into a sustainable, commercially viable and eco-friendly community.

MARKET ACCEPTANCE

The successful regeneration of the site has received critical acclaim, recognised with the British Home Builder’s Federation Award in 2007 and the Pride in Job award in 2010, amongst other commendations.

Through the English Partnership Regeneration Strategy, and with the help of One Northeast, Taylor Wimpey, Three Rivers Housing Association and many others this development not only found a new use for a previously contaminated site, but has now become a thriving community that includes a 5,000ft² superior community centre, an elderly care home facility and public art project celebrating the site’s industrial history.

KEY INFO

DEVELOPER: Taylor Wimpey
PROJECT PARTNERS: One Northeast, Tyne and Wear, Three Rivers Housing Association
ARCHITECT / MASTERPLANNER: The Prince’s Foundation, Taylor Wimpey
AWARDS RECEIVED: Best British Home Builder’s Federation Award (2007), Pride in Job Award (NHBC, 2007)
This report shows that developers who commit to community engagement and a design-led approach can emerge with planning approvals where others have failed.

It also shows that good design can be achieved on a budget, and that smart sourcing and value engineering can play a role, along with efficient urban design and simple clean architecture, in delivering quality while managing costs.

The country’s economic downturn has, naturally, had its effects as well, with the uptake of retail space being slower than expected in some cases. Despite this, the widespread acceptance and the ultimate delivery of these developments can be counted as a success, presenting us with valuable information for the housing debate going forward.

The past two years have seen an incredibly public debate about growth, with a clear recognition that Britain needs more housing supply for economic growth and to meet the needs of families for affordable places to live. At the same time, people want to preserve their quality of life and protect the countryside. In the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), there has been an effort to deliver on both of these objectives, through simultaneously simplifying the planning process and strengthening provisions for community engagement and design quality.

Along with three other non-profits, The Prince’s Foundation has been working for the past two years with local authorities and neighbourhood groups to implement the new neighbourhood planning provisions of the NPPF. In workshops from the Home Counties to the Northeast and the Southwest, we are finding that if one engages with a NIMBY (Not In My Backyard), they often recognise that their communities have to grow to remain healthy.

Most often it is the quality of growth that they object to, as it is felt to ruin the character of their communities, stimulate unwanted traffic and litter the landscape. We are finding that people will accept quality growth, and that they seek assurances through planning that builders will deliver nice developments that reflect the character of existing homes and neighbourhoods, with walkable streets that lead to nearby amenities and provision for schools and other infrastructure.

Neighbourhood planning offers the chance to set such standards and move from Not in My Backyard to Yes in My Backyard. These case studies provide evidence that, in a widely varied set of places, people will say yes to development if they are treated with respect and the development fits the place.

CONCLUSION
THE PRINCE’S FOUNDATION
for BUILDING COMMUNITY:
TRANSFORMING LIVES through ENGAGING EDUCATING and EMPOWERING PEOPLE

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