



Blenheim Estate - Park View - Woodstock – Oxfordshire

A scheme provided by the Blenheim Estate that provides a mix of affordable housing to meet the needs of the local community and market housing, providing a financial and social return on investment



Developer – Blenheim Estate

Partners

Pye Homes
West Oxfordshire District Council
Community First Oxfordshire

Scheme outline

Recognising the acute need for affordable housing in West Oxfordshire, the Blenheim Estate took a decision to develop Park View built under Blenheim Estate Homes, on land owned by the Blenheim Estate. Pye Homes constructed the homes and the Estate took ownership in 2018. Blenheim have made 50% of the homes available as affordable homes which encompasses both affordable rent homes at 40% below market rent and shared ownership homes, where homeowners have the opportunity to staircase to 100%. The remaining 50% of the development is sold on the open market.

The affordable rented properties are let at 60% of market rents and managed by the in-house Estate team, supported by an additional housing employed by the Estate. However, the allocations for the affordable homes are made by the District Council

There was extensive community engagement through the development of a Community and Infrastructure Delivery Plan, which was supported by staff from Community First Oxfordshire. It involved public consultation events, surveys, direct contact with local groups and targeted

consultations with young people. The Estate now has a dedicated part-time community officer working within Woodstock.

A Section 106 agreement secures the affordable homes in perpetuity and as the Estate is not a Registered Provider the Right to Acquire does not apply. The affordable rented homes owned by the estate are initially offered on a 12 month probation. If that is completed successfully the homes are let on a 5 year tenancy. These are reviewed at the end of the term to check the tenants still meets the requirements for affordable housing. The shared ownership buyers can purchase 100% of their home, but the Estate has a pre-emptive buy back and re-market it on a shared ownership basis.

Good practice

This is an exemplar of where a large Estate has recognised and responded to rural affordable housing needs. In so doing they have developed a model that allows a financial return on investment in both financial terms and their objectives to support the local community. They worked closely with the local authority to identify a suitable site, agreeing the design and Section 106 agreement. Underpinning the scheme was extensive community engagement which used a range of techniques to reach and gain the views of all members of the community

Funding

The Estate accessed private finance to develop the affordable homes, but a business case still had to be made for the development. Using the same proportion and mix of affordable homes on the site they were able to generate a commercial return from the affordable homes.

Quotes

Roger Field - Blenheim Estate - Property Director and Chief Operating Officer

“Blenheim has an absolute commitment to provide high quality, affordable properties for local people which will enable young families to remain and work within the local community.

“Developments like those we are creating in Woodstock and Long Hanborough have been specifically designed to address the long-term issue of a lack of affordable housing within West Oxfordshire,” he added.