

# The Art of the Possible

Working together to deliver rural housing to meet local needs  
and sustainable communities



## Working with Estates

### Affordable Housing Case Study...

#### Blenheim Estate - Park View - Woodstock – Oxfordshire

The award-winning Park View scheme developed by Blenheim Estate is an exemplar of action by a large Estate to meet rural affordable housing needs. It provides a mix of affordable housing to meet the needs of the local community and market housing. In so doing the Estate has developed a model that allows a financial return on investment and meets their objectives to support the local community.



### Homes to meet local housing needs

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.

Blenheim have made 50% of the homes available as affordable homes which encompasses both affordable rent homes at 60% of 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.

## Managing and retaining the affordable homes for the future

The affordable rented properties are managed by the in-house Estate team, supported by an additional housing officer employed by the Estate. However, the allocations for the affordable homes are made by the District Council.

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 to re-market it on a shared ownership basis.

## Engaging the Community

Underpinning the scheme was extensive community engagement through the development of a Community and Infrastructure Delivery Plan. With support from 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.

## Working with the Local Planning Authority

Blenheim worked closely with the local authority, West Oxfordshire District Council, to identify a suitable site and agree the design of the Section 106 agreement. Pye Homes constructed the homes and the Estate took ownership in 2018. The effectiveness and success of this partnership working was recognised in 2021 when Blenheim Estate won the prestigious WhatHouse? Best Partnership Award and the EG Public/Private Partnership Award.

## Financing the scheme

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

Capturing the drivers for the scheme, Roger Field, Property Director and Chief Operating Officer of the Blenheim Estate says,



“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.

Testimony to the Estate’s success have been the comments of the residents of the affordable homes, such as these remarks made by a couple moving into one of the shared ownership homes,

“After establishing our roots in Woodstock over the past several years, we were reluctant to relocate, however, house prices were shooting up and the reality of securing a property in our beautiful town was becoming increasingly difficult.” said Harley.

“When the opportunity of shared ownership became available at Park View, we jumped at the chance. Owning our first perfect home together within a community we know and love has been a dream come true for us.”

