



# Greenwich Millennium Village

## 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2009

### Produced by

#### URBED

26 Gray's Inn Road  
London WC1X 8HP  
t. 020 7831 9986  
f. 020 7831 2466

e-mail: [n.falk@urbed.co.uk](mailto:n.falk@urbed.co.uk)  
website: [www.urbed.co.uk](http://www.urbed.co.uk)

Images: Robert West, Greenwich  
Council and URBED

### Contents

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Overview      | 1 |
| Background    | 3 |
| Impact        | 4 |
| Good practice | 5 |
| Sources       | 6 |
| Appendices    | 7 |
| Appendix A    | 7 |

March 2009



# Greenwich Millennium Village

## DISCUSSION DRAFT

This report is based on a study tour and workshop held at the Work and Learn Centre near Greenwich Millennium Village on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2009. It benefited from contributions from officers at Greenwich Council, Moat Housing Association, Greenwich Millennium Village Development and Management Company, and the Homes and Communities Agency, as well as previous research. This short report provides an overview, followed by the background, impact, good practice and sources.

## Overview

Greenwich Millennium Village is an award winning development of what was formerly the largest gasworks in Europe on the Greenwich Peninsula in South East London. Some 13,000 homes are planned for the 300 acre site, and currently half of the Millennium Village has been completed. It lies across a park from the music venue O2 (formerly the Millennium Dome) and North Greenwich station on the Jubilee Line. Hence from being a remote and hostile location, it has been turned into an attractive and highly accessible place, just 20 minutes from Central London and one stop from the business quarter at Canary Wharf. The declared aim was *'to create linkages between different users and create more vibrant places... we believe that a healthy community is an inclusive community'*.



The scheme consists of a series of high rise apartment blocks around a traffic free core, which includes a co-located primary school and health centre. Some local shops and restaurants are expected to open soon, and the village benefits from an ecology park. In fact one-sixth of the peninsular is given over the parkland and open space. Innovative elements include the creation of a mixed community, with social housing scattered and indistinguishable from the private housing, a Combined Heat and Power system (CHP) with four 'engines', underground or concealed car parking which has to be

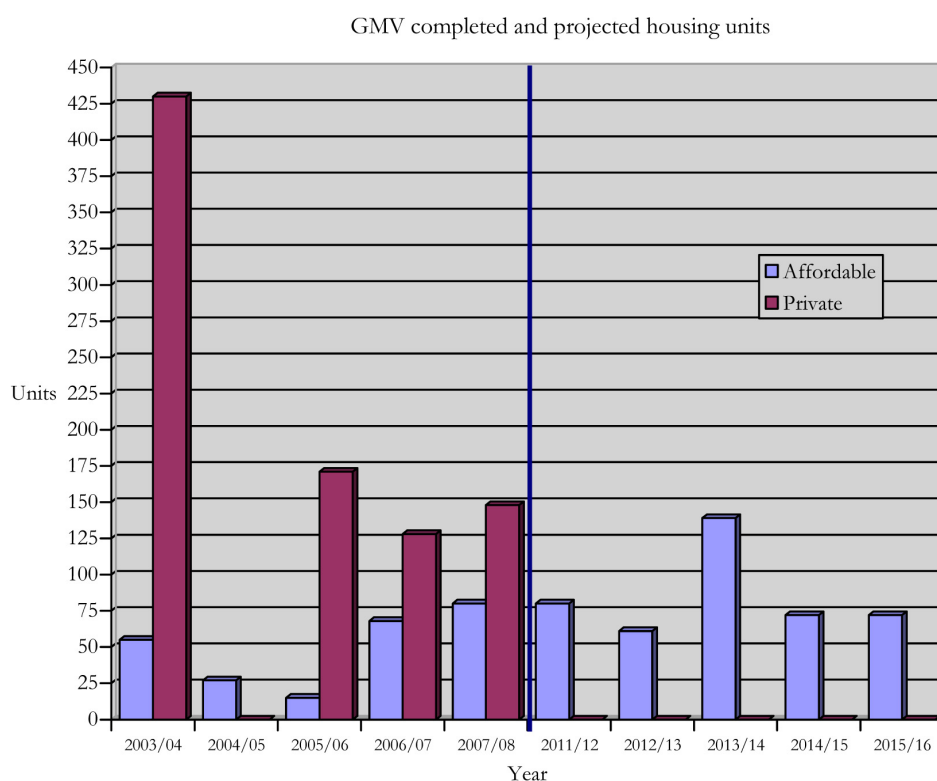




paid for by occupants (£17,500 per space plus a service charge but there are car share spaces available), and a management company.

The scheme was undertaken as a public private partnership through a joint venture between Taylor Wimpey and Countryside Properties (Greenwich Millennium Village Ltd) on land acquired and remediated by English Partnerships (now HCA). The affordable housing is being built in association with social housing providers Moat Housing. The scheme was planned by the Swedish architect Ralph Erskine, and has a continental look and feel.

By the end of March 2008 245 affordable homes had been provided, 175 homes available for affordable rent and 70 through shared ownership schemes (20% affordable housing set to rise to 35% on completion). Affordable units for the most part are indistinguishable from the private housing, layouts vary but generally blocks do not indicate the tenure of the people living in them. Units have sold well and there has been little or no resistance to living in a mixed tenure scheme.





## Background

The site was derelict for over 20 years and was heavily contaminated. English Partnerships assembled the site and used a variety of remediation techniques. Development became possible when the government decided to route the Jubilee Line connecting London Bridge with Canary Wharf and Stratford via the Peninsula, and to build a Dome to celebrate the Millennium on the meridian line that runs through the site. Though Greenwich has a rich history, it has suffered from the decline of the industrial belt that ran along the river, and the scheme was seen as a way of building high quality housing with a more mixed community than in other parts of the borough.



English Partnerships unusually not only commissioned the masterplan but also funded the basic infrastructure. This included new parks and also relocating an existing primary school as a means of building up the initial population. The scheme scores well on a number of basic points:

**Connectivity** North Greenwich is now very well connected by rail and frequent buses, as well as river buses every half hour. GMV is highly walkable with pedestrian and cycle routes covering the site, and as parking is concealed or at the edge, car use is effectively discouraged. The street infrastructure is to be adopted by the council and has been designed in consultation with them.

**Community** The key aspects of social infrastructure, a school and health centre and a supermarket (Sainsbury's 'eco-superstore') were provided from the start. Unusually the masterplan also provides for 'gossip spaces'. However the community centre, which is part of the third phase, has been delayed. The population is mixed throughout the scheme. Intensive local management and a Local Lettings Plan have helped make this work. A residents' association has been set up and there are resident directors involved in the management company. New residents are given a set of guidelines, which set out how the site operates and how residents are expected to behave. The developer has been responsive to residents concerns regarding future stages of development and has made some changes.



**Climate proofing** The scheme has been designed throughout to meet a BREAM 'excellent' rating. The homes are highly insulated, and also connected to a Combined Heat and Power system. There is no storage of water on the site due to risks of contamination. Waste is stored and removed via 'wheelie bins' as in the rest of Greenwich.

**Character** The whole development has a distinctive character thanks to the relatively tall apartment blocks with their colourful balconies and rendered exteriors. The views over water also help make this a special place. Many of the apartment blocks are built around communal courtyards with play areas.

It also provides a possible model for how to organise major developments in locations where no private developer would take the risks:

**Collaboration** The upfront investment in planning and the provision of infrastructure was provided by the public sector. The private sector has taken responsibility for driving development forward, including design, construction and sales. The site is managed through a management company representing the stakeholders, who in turn have appointed a private company Pinnacle to undertake the duties, which include acting as ‘concierge’. It was very much a showpiece scheme, promoted by John Prescott as Deputy Prime Minister.



**Cash Flow** The scheme has proceeded relatively slowly (about one-sixth the rate of an equivalent scheme in Stockholm). The first phase was ready for occupation several years after the Millennium, and though sales have been strong, it has not been very profitable for the developer. The housing association regards it as one of their best schemes, and it is very popular.

## Impact

Most people like the look of the development, which is quite different from most British schemes. Even on a poor day, there are people around, and on a good day or weekend the park is packed and the balconies well-used. The community appears to have got on



quite well, and the mix has not created sales difficulties. In part this is a result of intensive management, and community engagement. However there have been problems with people objecting to later phases and some residents have complained about the lack of greenery on the site. Also the service charge is very high (approximately £50 a week for social housing and £100 a week for private) in part due to the unexpected costs of CHP, and the costs of maintaining such an extensive public realm. The CHP system took eight years to get going, and is more expensive than relying on the grid, due to the tariffs, restrictions on ‘private wiring’ and the

electricity companies have shown a great reluctance to purchase surplus energy. The site also has a biomass fuelled boiler plant, which costs a third more to run than the CHP and they have had great difficulty getting enough wood pellets to run it. The scheme requires considerate behaviour, and does not allow for much personalisation.

The issue of slow rates of development have been due in part to difficulties with planning (a further phase has been subject to Judicial Review due to concerns from businesses on the wharf), changing requirements, high construction costs, and the difficulty of attracting owner occupiers to newly developed sites. It was considered to be much easier in Sweden as institutional investment in private renting is common. At present the first phase of the adjoining scheme, where Bellway Homes are developing 300 units has been put on hold by their bankers due to a lack of pre-sales. The site has been marketed in India and South Africa and 35 sales have been achieved.



It is possible that if the scheme had developed at twice the rate, it might have achieved a critical mass before the recession hit. It would have also secured better value from the investment in remediation and in opening the underground station. Though the public investment by EP of £225 million is expected to be worth £500 to £600 million in 20 to 25 years, if the time period had been halved, the cash flow would have been

much more fundable, and the community would have been able to enjoy better facilities much earlier.

## Good practice

The scheme has a number of elements that might be replicated including:

1. **Upfront funding of social infrastructure**, which helped attract families to live there early on
2. **Allocation agreements**, which sought to achieve a balance of households, along with prohibitions on bulk purchases to avoid a dominance of buy to let investors
3. **Neighbourhood management**, which helps to coordinate different services, such as the police and ensures that the newly developed area receives sufficient attention from the local authority. All the stakeholders agree that intensive management has been key to the success of the scheme.

4. **Quality estate management**, which provides more than just good maintenance.  
Indeed once a good local person had been taken on as manager, he was described as  
*'the heart and soul of the community'*
5. **Traffic taming**, thanks to a design which puts most car parking underground.

## Sources

[www.buildingforlife.org/case-studies/maurer-court/introduction](http://www.buildingforlife.org/case-studies/maurer-court/introduction)

[www.englishpartnerships.co.uk/greenwichpeninsula.htm](http://www.englishpartnerships.co.uk/greenwichpeninsula.htm)

[www.englishpartnerships.co.uk/gmv.htm](http://www.englishpartnerships.co.uk/gmv.htm)

[www.moat.co.uk/PropertiesAndDevelopments/Pages/GreenwichMillenniumVillage.aspx](http://www.moat.co.uk/PropertiesAndDevelopments/Pages/GreenwichMillenniumVillage.aspx)

[www.urbandesigncompendium.co.uk/greenwichmillenniumvillage2](http://www.urbandesigncompendium.co.uk/greenwichmillenniumvillage2)

*Greenwich Regeneration*, brochure available from Greenwich Council, Dec07



# Appendix A

## Greenwich Millennium Village

### 23 March 2009

## Participants

Gill Ackrill, Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager, Greenwich Council  
Mark Baigent, Director of Greenwich Waterfront & Strategic Regeneration, Greenwich Council  
Marc Dorfman, Assistant Director Planning & Regeneration, Haringey Council  
Nicholas Falk, Director, URBED  
Sue Foster, Director of Place Shaping and Enterprise, LB Enfield  
Karen Galey, Head of Economic Regeneration, Haringey Council  
David Hennings  
Tom Jeffrey, Director, Environment, Culture and Public Participation, Croydon Council  
Shifa Mustafa, Assistant Director of Development, Waltham Forest Council  
Simon Powell, Senior Regeneration Manager, Homes and Communities Agency  
Daniel Ratchford, Strategic Director of Environment and Leisure, LB Sutton  
Robert West, Assistant Director Planning, Culture and Environment Directorate, LB Camden  
Peter Willis, Development Director, Greenwich Millennium Village  
Anne Wyatt, Project Manager, URBED

## Apologies

Chris Donovan, Assistant Director (Strategy, Planning & Regeneration), Bexley Council  
Pat Hayes, Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing, Ealing Council  
Colin Lovell, Head of Land Use Planning, Transport for London  
Mark Lucas, Head of Regeneration, Redbridge Council  
Seema Manchanda, Assistant Director (Strategic Planning & Regeneration), Islington Council  
Bernadette Marjoram, Interim Head of Physical Regeneration and Development, Newham Council  
Stephen McDonald, Strategic Director of Major Projects, Southwark Council  
Randall MacDonald, Head of Strategic Projects, Hackney  
Darren Richards, Head of Planning and Transportation, LB Sutton  
Chris Shellard, Interim Chief Officer, LB Redbridge  
Brendan Walsh, Director of Regeneration and Community Development, Ealing Council

## Series six

### Possible themes

- Future of housing
- Unpicking stalled development

- How do you shape the uplift
- The push towards sustainable targets
- Neighbourhood management

**Possible meetings**

- Building Research Centre, Innovation Park, Watford – 12 demonstration eco-homes
- Cambridge – Accordia and Cambourne
- Paddington Basin
- Redbridge – West Ilford and Valentines Mansion restoration project
- Croydon
- Islington - Arsenal Football Stadium redevelopment and surrounding area
- The Netherlands

Next meeting in May, venue and date to be confirmed