

APARTMENT SCHEME IN OXFORD COULD BE A WINNING DESIGN

Housebuilder Thomas Homes has begun work on Parkview, an apartment development set at the foot of Headington Hill in Oxford.

The scheme has already been shortlisted for the Housing Design Awards, a prestigious awards scheme sponsored by the Royal Institute of British Architects, National Housebuilding Institute and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The awards promote excellence and sustainability and continue to point the way forward for high quality housing design.

The development location is within a Conservation Area of Oxford, and lies next to a Grade II listed parish church, largely historic housing stock and a public park. Chris Brotherton, Land and Development Director of Thomas Homes, explains it is an excellent example of how, given the right approach, developers can work closely with architects and planners to gain planning approval for contemporary and exciting schemes in sensitive locations.

The first step involved a thorough and contextual analysis of the site and surrounding area carried out by architects Spratley & Woodfield. This enabled a series of initial massing studies and sketch proposals to be prepared exploring the various limitations and opportunities of the site and its context.

Using the latest computer aided design, modelling and visualisation tools, these initial proposals were developed in three dimensions to allow a complete understanding of the schemes layout and external appearance.

Early representation of the scheme in this way enabled valuable early discussions with the council and planners alike.

The techniques employed by the architects ensured a complete integration of the three-dimensional design, development and visualisation process. This seamless integration has proved to be especially crucial within tight urban locations where innovative solutions are required to ensure that available space on brownfield sites is maximised, whilst satisfying the various criteria of massing and orientation, daylight and overlooking issues.

The proposals were founded and developed on the basis of contextually responsive principles. Whilst the architectural form and language is undoubtedly contemporary, it defers to its historic context by virtue of its scale, rhythm, predominant materials and detailed treatment.

The buildings impact was considered from both short and longer distance views. Of great importance was the visual impact of the new development from the nearby listed church.

A sequence of accurate views was prepared, showing the proposal through the tree screen at the churchyard boundary. Similar 'photomontages' were prepared from vantage points of the main highways and public spaces around the site.

It is not surprising that even at such early stages of construction this strikingly modern scheme has already provoked much interest from potential purchasers, with ten of the fourteen apartments now reserved. Hugh Thomas, Managing Director of Thomas Homes, believes "it will be a stunning building once completed next year".

For further information on this and other developments, call Thomas Homes on 01488 649820 or visit the website at www.thomashomes.co.uk.