

## PREFERRED DEVELOPER ANNOUNCED FOR FAIR MILE HOSPITAL SITE

The regeneration of the Fair Mile Hospital site in Cholsey near Wallingford has moved a step closer with the appointment of Linden Homes in partnership with **Thomas Homes** as the preferred development partner.

English Partnerships, the national regeneration agency and site owner, made the selection with English Heritage to ensure the new development takes full account of the need to preserve the Grade II Listed hospital buildings, which will be retained and enhanced by **Thomas Homes** as part of the overall scheme. The agency has also worked with South Oxfordshire District Council to develop the Conservation Plan and outline joint aspirations for a high-quality neighbourhood that increases the opportunities for home ownership.

The Fair Mile site has the potential to provide a significant number of the new homes required for the area, and the final numbers will be decided as part of the planning process. In total, 40 per cent of the homes will be classed as affordable, offering a mixture of social rented and shared-ownership. As well as delivering affordable homes, English Partnerships intends to use the site to help first-time buyers get a foot on the property ladder in an area of high demand.

Following a rigorous two-stage selection process, it was unanimously agreed that the bid from Linden Homes in partnership with **Thomas Homes** conforms to English Partnerships' national quality standards, including a commitment to sustainable development, construction efficiency and community engagement.

David Ashworth, English Partnerships' Area Director said he was very impressed by their submission. "The proposal meets all our design, environmental and sustainability standards and demonstrates a sensitive approach to the conservation of the Listed hospital buildings. We have selected a development partner who shares our aspirations for this remarkable site and understands its significance within the context of the wider area".

"As well as making more affordable homes available, our plans also include the provision of community and leisure facilities and we will make sure local people are kept informed as work progresses on the new development."

Chris Coates of Linden Homes said, "We are delighted to have been chosen, along with our partners, **Thomas Homes**, to deliver this important development opportunity and look forward to working again with South Oxfordshire District Council."

Hugh Thomas, Managing Director of **Thomas Homes** added, "The redevelopment of Fair Mile, together with our recent success at winning the redevelopment of the 'core area' of the Park Prewett Hospital site in Basingstoke, demonstrate our expertise in the sensitive conversion of historic buildings to provide much needed new homes".

John Cotton, Cabinet Member for Planning at South Oxfordshire District Council, said, "This is a very important development site in South Oxfordshire and we are expecting the very highest standards in the application from English Partnerships, Linden Homes and **Thomas Homes**. I look forward to a sensitive proposal that matches the District Council's strong desire to see the Fair Mile Hospital site back in use whilst protecting and enhancing the listed buildings and their setting."

It is English Partnerships' intention to create a 'flagship' development on the Fair Mile site that will be characterised by its sustainability and environmental features. These will include a minimum Eco Homes rating of "very good", the use of renewable energy and a 25 per cent reduction in CO2 emissions, along with tight measures to reduce water and waste on-site. English Partnerships will also be working with Linden Homes to provide commercial, community and leisure facilities to create a mixed-use, sustainable neighbourhood that integrates with the existing community in Cholsey.

The Fair Mile site forms part of the Hospital Sites Programme being run by English Partnerships to bring 96 former hospital sites back into productive use. Nationally the programme aims to deliver up to 14,000 new homes, including properties for first-time buyers.

Following negotiations with South Oxfordshire District Council, English Partnerships, Linden Homes and **Thomas Homes** will jointly submit a planning application to the Council next year, with the intention being that **Thomas Homes** will provide its expertise on the conversion element of the redevelopment.