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University of Cambridge Community North West Cambridge Development

About the project

Summary

The North West Cambridge Development (NWCD) is a new urban extension to Cambridge covering 150-hectares for a future community of approximately 8500 people. The scheme includes 3000 homes, 2000 postgraduate student rooms, 100,000 sqm of academic and research space, community facilities and infrastructure. The vision is to create a new district centred around a mixed academic and urban community: a place that will be an exemplar of sustainability.

Extensive engagement with local stakeholders, community leaders and politicians through long-term dialogue and collaborative planning, alongside new community infrastructure and significant monetary investment in this new part of Cambridge for the benefit of new and existing community has laid strong foundations for a thriving community.

Opening in 2017, the first phase includes 700 affordable homes for University staff, 325 student rooms, supermarket, shops, community centre, Doctors' surgery, alongside infrastructure and 24 hectares of open space. The University-sponsored primary school opened in 2015 serving a local catchment.

Project partners

University of Cambridge is the principal developer of the site.

The results

The problem

The success and growth of the University is linked directly to its ability to attract and retain the best possible postgraduate students and postdoctoral researchers who undertake research that directly changes society for the better. The University and the City have no other sites suitable for this combination of uses, and the University has allocated its greatest undeveloped land resource at the NWCD to meet these needs. Cambridge's contribution to local, national and international economy is currently constrained by a lack of adequate or affordable accommodation for: postgraduate students; postdoctoral researchers; permanent staff; and expansion space for research.

The approach

The University has put the community at the heart of its development proposals for the NWCD and proved itself to be a responsible developer: its unique position in the local community affords a long-term perspective to place-making. Through extensive collaborative practice and knowledge exchange amongst partners, including



Profile

- Higher Education
- 11000 staff members inc. 4000 post-doc researchers
- 18000 students
- Rural & Urban – Transforming farmland into an urban environment



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industry experts, academic departments, post-doctoral staff and students as future residents, community leaders and local neighbours, the University has demonstrated an original approach to development planning. The University has invested in the vital community infrastructure at the start of the development, which is a testament to place-making that commercial developers generally find financially unviable. By delivering key social infrastructure at the outset including the University-sponsored school, local centre with retail, community centre and parklands, the University seeks to establish a vibrant district where community spirit flourishes and is integrated into the wider community. Community engagement has been praised by the local authorities and community leaders as best practice for its collaborative rather than consultative nature, which has created positive foundations for and anticipation of the new district.

Our goals

NWCD will create a new district and extension to the City centred around a mixed academic and urban community: a place that is sustainable, long-lasting and ambitious, offering a high quality of life to enhance both the City and the University.

Obstacles and solutions

Overcoming stakeholder opposition	Proactive engagement with constructive dialogue and workshops to understand the key issues and resolve concerns
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Performance and results

On a monthly basis, the project is evaluated against a balanced scorecard of success criteria that are bespoke to the NWCD. These include quality, financial, environmental and timetable related key performance indicators so a rounded view can be measured. The development achieved planning consent for over 20 reserved matters applications with no local objections, enabling the development to proceed at pace. Qualitative measurement of relationships through on-going feedback with local members, stakeholders and the public is evaluated on an on-going basis providing the necessary adjustment mechanisms. There are plans for post-occupancy evaluation on user and sustainability matters.

To date, the NWCD has been recognised in industry awards including at the World Architecture Festival (Future Projects 2014); Planning Awards (Housing Growth 2015 & Stakeholder Engagement 2016); Green Apple Awards (Environmental Best Practice 2015); Waterwise (Water efficiency 2015), and Cambridge Construction & Design Awards (2015 School).

The future

Lessons learned

1. Collaboration has been key to the success, working with stakeholders and partners for the long-term benefit.
2. Creating and communicating our shared vision has helped stakeholders to understand the complexities of our plan.
3. Fronting the scheme personally enabled strong relationships with community leaders, neighbours and stakeholders.

Sharing your project

NWCD is promoted internally, locally, nationally, and internationally in industry and the higher education sector through a range of publicity methods including media relations, case studies in publications, social media,



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research interviews, speaker opportunities at conferences, and host visits for sharing international best practice. As a case study, the NWCD is unique but with key principles and innovative measures that have replicability in development across the globe.

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

The NWCD has set high standards for sustainable development, raising the benchmark across the property industry and in the higher education sector internationally. We are thrilled that this ambition has been recognised by these awards.

Further information

www.nwcambridge.co.uk or follow us on twitter @nwcambridge