

Community Presentation

Thank you for taking the time to read our presentation summary. Countryside has over 35 years of experience working in partnership with Housing Associations and Local Authorities across London, building considerable track record in delivering Joint Venture regeneration schemes with public sector partners.

We are ranked by HBF as a 5* *Homebuilder* and recently were awarded 16 NHBC *Regional Quality Awards* and three *Seals of Excellence* (NHBC Pride in the Job, 2020). Countryside Properties is one of the UK's leading housebuilders.

This summary of our presentation will cover four topics demonstrating Countryside's expertise in development and how we can foster a revitalised and thriving community at Ham Close.

1. An Overview of Countryside and Examples of Our Regeneration Projects
2. Engaging with Stakeholders
3. The Rehoming Process, and
4. Social Value

We hope this will show the importance we give to meaningful relationships with the communities we work within and how we believe this is critical to the long-term success of a project.

1. [Countryside Overview and Example projects](#)

Countryside is a national housebuilder, established over 60 years ago with a strong, demonstrable track record of delivering regeneration projects of a similar scale and profile to Ham Close.

We have won a number of awards across our developments, most recently the Housing Design Awards 2020 which was awarded to our Rochester Riverside regeneration project in recognition of the way in which a considered design and architecture approach contributes to residents improved health and wellbeing.

Our current joint venture partners include London & Quadrant housing trust, Home Group housing association, Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, Bracknell Forest Council and Notting Hill Genesis housing association.

The Partnership nature of our projects means we have a strong culture throughout all our teams of committing to productive relationships with our local communities. We make sure that residents and the wider community feel central to proposals and have the power to shape, influence and make decisions throughout the life of a project.

Finally, and recognizing how difficult the last year has been for many, Countryside has established a community fund to help communities overcome many of the challenges that they are currently facing. In the past 6 months this fund has provided around £1m for worthy causes that are local to our projects. This includes donations to food banks, mental health charities, community kitchens and children's activity packs along with many others suggested by our partners in these communities.

Examples of Our Projects

To illustrate our approach and provide evidence of the impact we have had on similar projects to Ham Close, we have chosen a few example projects from nearby London boroughs which will hopefully show this partnership approach in practice:

Acton Gardens

Acton Gardens is a redevelopment of the South Acton Estate in Ealing which is delivering almost 3,500 homes in a joint venture with L&Q housing trust. Works started back in 2011 following selection by Ealing Council who owned the existing housing estate which was developed after WW2 and, to date, we have worked closely with existing residents AND our neighbours in the areas surrounding the estate to deliver close to 2,000 of those homes.

We have recently won NHBC Pride in the Job and Considerate Constructors awards showing our commitment to being a good neighbour.

Community really is at the heart of the scheme. A Community Board was established at the outset to ensure resident and stakeholder participation. A sub-group of the Board controls a £50k per annum community chest earmarked for local causes which is discussed in more detail below.

Another sub-group of the Board oversees the design of the new homes. Every phase architect presents to the resident panel at the outset and takes on board comments and ensures that an agreed vision is taken forward.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1NPYR6yjoyw>

Acton Gardens Community Centre

In 2019, the Community Board opened a brand-new community and youth centre in the heart of the development. This centre comprises a large double storey hall which can seat up to 100 people, 2 smaller halls for additional activities, a double kitchen, meeting rooms and shared workspace available for discounted hire. We have worked with the community to source a long-term operator for the centre and, as developer, we have agreed a 5 year funding package to help the centre establish itself and ensure its vitality for years to come.

Cambridge Road Estate

The regeneration of the Cambridge Road Estate is being delivered as joint venture between the Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames and Countryside Partnerships. It will provide just over 2,000 new homes along with green spaces, play areas, shops, offices and community facilities. The project at an earlier stage to Acton Gardens. At Cambridge Road, the community has been helping us shape the masterplan and the detail for the first phase since 2019. Submission of the planning application is imminent. We have been working closely with the residents who live on the estate, the neighbouring residents who live around the estate and other key stakeholders such as the Metropolitan Police.

This has been a real shared journey of residents and Countryside getting to know each other and co-designing the scheme together. The estate residents have been incredibly generous with their time and expertise of how they want their homes and spaces to look and feel. Their input has helped us to evolve the scheme proposals, making changes to the layout of the estate. For example, where we have designed around existing trees through to the detail of residents' homes such as providing a range of open plan and separate kitchens.

The neighbouring residents have been equally engaged and their input has led to changes to building heights and vehicle routes. Like Acton Gardens, the design of the estate and the homes that we will build are tailored around residents need.

2. Engaging with Stakeholders

For Countryside, engagement isn't a phase in a project. It is an approach that runs through the entire project from those first meetings through the construction phases. In most of the communities we work in we have relationships that last for many, many years.

These relationships are built on trust, openness and transparency. It is something that we have to work hard to earn. We try to earn that by;

Getting to know the community – talking and importantly asking residents how they would like to be engaged and how we might be able to engage with parts of the community who are perhaps harder to reach.

Being accessible and flexible– so not engaging when might think is best, but asking the question what suits you?

Engaging in a way that suits the community- communities are varied and some people may want to attend an exhibition or perhaps they would like us to outreach to groups they already attend, or may be arrange visits to

other developments. So for example, at the Cambridge Road Estate we found that residents really wanted to visit our scheme at Acton Gardens to see how we managed construction and how the layouts and specification we were discussing in our workshops worked in reality. Some had childcare difficulties, so we arranged nursery facilities and children's activities on site and timed some visits to work with school drop offs.

Keep it interesting- We are always conscious that the process of design and planning can seem quite slow, but we want to keep people engaged, so for example at the Cambridge Road we have facilitated a youth panel, built scale models of homes so that residents could see how the layout might work for them, created 3d touchscreen walkthroughs, built a kitchen and bathroom with sample panels of the choices the affordable tenants had. We also facilitated the opportunity to meet and ask questions of the Acton Gardens Community Board.

Listening and acting – we follow a 'you said, we did approach'. We can't act on every request that residents make, and we sometimes have to balance views and competing objectives, but we can always be transparent and explain why we have or have not changed something.

Regular communication – this can be through a variety of means such newsletters, a website, phone calls, texting and knocking on doors. The important point is proactively keeping in touch and there always being someone that residents can talk to and get quick answers.

Elements – Good Practice Approach to Engagement

This is an example of the approach that was taking at a project in Enfield, called Elements. Working with the community, we broke down the engagement into themes reflecting what the residents told us were important to them and they were particular interested in shaping. We made this interactive including walkabouts, trips to other places so residents could show us what they liked and didn't like, built models and most of all had lots of discussions.

The reason we like to highlight Elements is because it received recognition in the Mayor's Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration as the example of best practice of Tenant involvement in regeneration across the whole of London and will form the basis for our approach at forthcoming regeneration schemes.

Cambridge Road Estate – Adapted Approach

It is worth reflecting here how we have adapted our approach to Covid.

At the Cambridge Road Estate we had spent many, many hours with face to face engagement and when we were faced with lockdown, we wanted to maintain that level of engagement with the residents that we had worked so hard to build up. We met with the Community Board and together set up a programme of on-line events for residents of the estate and neighbouring residents.

We were acutely aware that for some residents on line was not possible or it did not suit them so we also produced detailed newsletters covering information about the proposals Working with the council's housing team we communicated with residents on the phone and by text. In short, we gave residents choices how they wanted to engage.

3. The Rehoming Process

The engagement isn't only about the planning process. The re-homing process for affordable tenants that has been followed for a number of years at Acton Gardens, and that the residents at the Cambridge Road Estate have also asked us to follow;

- So around 2 years before a tenant moves, drop-in sessions are arranged with residents to explain the process.
- A housing needs survey is carried out. These provide us with the information that we need to design the homes to meet need. At Cambridge Road, we found out that there was more overcrowding, and disability needs than the initial brief and we have been able to adjust the design to reflect that.

- Tenants then make their choices so they can personalize their home. Colours of carpets, kitchens, walls, floors.
- The residents will be able to see their new home being built and we offer home visits around 6 weeks before moving day so they can take measurements for example.
- For the move itself we recognize that it can be an exciting but also can be worrying, so as well as arranging the move we are there to help with home inductions to explain how things work, a handy-person service for hanging pictures and also deal with re-addressing bills. We are flexible to help out as residents need us.

Underpinning all of this is regular communication and updates on progress.

4. [Social Value](#)

Making an Impact at Acton Gardens

Social value is very important to us and we aim to make a difference to the overall quality of people's lives, both during and after construction.

At Acton Gardens we actively monitor social value and the impact of the regeneration on residents' wellbeing and community life. We capture this by working with a social enterprise called Social Life who survey residents at various points in the development to secure feedback and understand local priorities and needs. Perhaps the most telling statistic is that at the beginning of the regeneration over 80% wanted to leave the estate and only 20% wanted to stay, but more recently this has completely reversed with well over 80% now wanting to stay.

We are a keen supporter of local employment with local labour targets annual introduction to construction events and a long running and successful apprenticeship programme which has seen many gain full time employment.

Social Value - Community Board Spend at Acton Gardens

We have mentioned the Community Board concept already. Our longest running Board is at Acton Gardens which has responsibility for a Community Chest of £50,000 per annum. To date over 110 local causes have been supported, with almost half a million pounds committed.

Up to £5,000 is offered per project the decisions resting with the Community Chest sub-group of residents. The group review and score project using a points system based on value for money need for the project and the benefit offered for residents.

A wide variety of causes have been supported across a range of categories. Further examples of the projects supported include:

- Activities for the elderly
- Fitness classes
- After school and summer clubs
- Arts forum
- And Community allotments

In Conclusion- Whilst only a brief summary. We hope the illustrations provided supported by the presentation, has given a fair representation of our commitment to working in partnership with the community and our strong belief that by working together we can achieve the best outcomes for all.

