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Brunswick Riverside scheme begins to take shape



Brunswick Riverside, the substantial housing development on the old Cambridge Regional College City Centre Campus site on Newmarket Road, is beginning to take shape.



Colin Brown, Planning Director at Cambridge Consultant Surveyors Januarys, who is working with developers Berkeley Homes on the project, explains what everyone can expect when the last brick is in place.

which Berkeley developed in the 1990's. The remainder of the site is given over to student accommodation in an attempt to meet pressing need for more student accommodation in the City."

The final layout for the scheme was only agreed after intense negotiations with the City Council and very extensive consultation with local residents. "Berkeley takes local consultation extremely seriously and was keen to listen to the views of local people likely to be affected by the development. As a direct result of their comments, access to the site was completely re-designed and Berkeley also took steps to minimise the impact of those apartment blocks with frontages onto Midsummer Common.

"It's taken about two and a half years of very hard work to get to this point. We always knew it would be a challenging process but the final scheme shows what can be achieved when you combine the skills of a local, experienced company with one of the country's premier housebuilders. We are very confident that a scheme of lasting quality will emerge over the coming months, and its prominence will mean it can be enjoyed by many passers-by.

"Berkeley Homes are particularly suited to a development of this nature as they are passionate about sustainable development. In the most recent NextGeneration Benchmark Report into the sustainability credentials of the top 25 UK homebuilders, they came first for the third year running. The company also won the prestigious Queen's Award for Enterprise in Sustainable Development in April 2008."

Development is underway and Berkeley expects to have the first units available for August 2011.

property performance indicator

Cambridge Rents

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The next time you are crossing Elizabeth Way Bridge towards the City Centre from Chesterton, glance across the road to your right. Let your eye wander back from the eights training on the river and Midsummer Common and you will see the early evidence of the initial stages of one of the latest major housing schemes to be constructed within Cambridge.

Brunswick Riverside is a project that, when complete, will boast 195 apartments, 10 houses and a stand-alone development of 253 student rooms. There will be community facilities, green spaces, courtyards and cycle paths, and new pedestrian links from Newmarket Road through the site to Midsummer Common. The scheme has been designed by award winning Architects John Thompson & Partners.

"This scheme is really very large for a site so close to the centre of Cambridge and makes superb use of one of the last big brownfield sites in the city," says Mr Brown.

"The balance of houses and apartments very much fits in with Sub-regional housing studies that conclude that in excess of 80% of all new build accommodation should be smaller one and two bed properties. Berkeley are however also looking to provide some very fine family houses which will be in keeping with Evening Court which sits alongside the scheme, and



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Remaining Cambridge brownfield sites need professional approach

The few remaining Cambridge brownfield sites need a professional approach to ensure they're developed properly.

That's the view of Colin Brown, Director at Januarys, who is warning site owners not to be blinded by £ signs or tempted by the first developer that knocks on their door.

"As Cambridge's bank of brownfield land dwindles, so it becomes more important than ever that whatever's left is used effectively.

"There are still several sites in the city suitable for residential developments of between six and fifteen properties, but the planners are more determined than ever that each and every scheme fits both the site itself and the surrounding area completely.

"With the cost of a well presented planning scheme now around the £50k mark, it's vitally important that clients get it right first time.

"That's why we'd advise anyone with a brownfield site to take professional advice from day one.

"Given their scarcity, site owners are always likely to have all sorts of people knocking on their door offering deals that on the face of it seem too good to turn down.

"Don't be tempted, however alluring the offer. No one can give you a true price without a thorough appraisal of the site and its prospects and you may find that in the long run you're actually better off taking an offer that isn't the highest available.

"If your brownfield site is your retirement fund, don't leave it too late to start the process. To develop a scheme from an initial idea to final approval can take up to two years – and planning permission itself lasts for three, so you could start the ball rolling four to five years before you want to retire."

Flexibility is the way forward, says Januarys

Cambridge Consultant Surveyors Januarys is calling on everyone involved in the property business to share the risk a little more and worry about upfront fees a little less to help residential and commercial building schemes in Cambridge get off the ground.

The firm, which delivers a wide range of property services to private and corporate clients, says that sometimes a little risk sharing is required to give a project wings. Surveyors, developers, architects and legal teams need to work more closely together at the beginning without worrying excessively about who's going to pay for their time from the offset.

"As property consultants," says Nick Muncey, "We talk to a large number of clients on a regular basis and sometimes there's a sense that projects are thwarted before they've had a fair chance because everyone involved wants to claim fees from day one.

"It's entirely understandable – we've businesses to run – but at the same time there are some potentially great property ideas out there that are simply mouldering away due to the lack of a little goodwill.

"Januarys holds regular business meetings with other property professionals to see what's happening in the residential and commercial world and, if we think an idea could get off the ground, we're always very happy to offer our time and input for on a deferred basis to start with.

"Naturally we have to start charging at some

point but there have been many occasions, especially recently, where we've seen a little flexibility on everyone's part at the beginning lead to substantial rewards at the end.

"There are some great schemes out there which could have a really beneficial impact on Cambridge and the surrounding area; all they need is some early stage benevolence to get them going."

THE CALM BEFORE THE DELUGE

So there we were (third from the left) with Desmond



Hirsch holding pole position, Richard Rowlett holding on for dear life and Anton Frost holding his mobile, how could we fail but to strike fear and dread into the hearts of our fellow competitors? Well, somehow we managed not to. The competition in the EG Bidwell punting challenge was fierce as we pushed, shoved and soaked everyone in sight to finish a very creditable fourth.

Cambridge developers on the hunt again

A recent survey by Cambridge consultant surveyors Januarys has revealed that local and regional property developers are back looking for land.

The survey, carried out during the first two weeks of July, found that a number of developers were actively seeking out new opportunities and some had taken on new employees specifically with a view to finding new sites in the area.

Simon Dazeley, a director at Januarys, says that the survey results are indicative of the confidence returning to the market.

"Like many other sections of the economy, developers pulled their horns in during the recession and only built on land they already had in the bank.

"Now, however, with the economy gradually picking up, they're beginning to start speculating again.

"Many are looking to replenish land banks that they ran down during the recession, with a view

to perhaps building on them in several years time. This shouldn't come as a surprise given how long schemes can take to move from idea to completion.

"Others, however, are actively searching for sites with planning permission that can be built on straight away and completed in the next twelve months.

"Overall, I'd say the survey is pretty positive. It's clear that the vast majority of developers are looking at the short and long term with confidence and this is reflected in the work they're doing.

"I fully expect some projects that were put on hold in the last few years to be given the green light again soon, and some significant deals to be closed that will provide developers with building options for the longer term."

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