



Protecting the past, shaping the future

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Suffolk Preservation Society
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Shared enthusiasm puts scheme on national map

An award-winning affordable housing scheme has won praise on both the national and local stage following a visit which saw a government minister and new tenant share their enthusiasm for the project.

Baroness Andrews OBE, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government, visited the Three Gardens affordable housing scheme in Elmswell on Wednesday and declared the project to be a shining example of truly sustainable development.

During her visit to the 26-home scheme, Baroness Andrews also met one of the development's future tenants – with both sharing the same enthusiasm for the environmentally-friendly project.

Richard Ward, director of Suffolk Preservation Society, which has brought forward the scheme alongside Orwell Housing Association, said Baroness Andrews was delighted with what she saw in Elmswell.

“Baroness Andrews was extremely enthusiastic about the scheme and hugely impressed with what has been achieved,” he said. “She appreciated that this project is a truly sustainable community development and that it shows the benefit of a holistic thought process when designing affordable housing.

“She also met one of our prospective tenants, who is delighted to have been offered the opportunity to live in the area and is counting down the days until she can move in. It was interesting to see the enthusiasm for the scheme which was shared by both minister and tenant.

“We have always felt that this development would set a national benchmark by showing that high quality, low cost, truly sustainable and well designed affordable housing can be achieved. To win the agreement of Baroness Andrews is extremely satisfying.”

Three Gardens has been built using energy saving natural resources, such as lime and hemp, which makes it the first in the country to leave a near zero impact in terms of its carbon footprint.

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SPS and the Orwell Housing Association have worked closely with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), Mid Suffolk District and Elmswell Parish councils, to deliver the scheme.

All of the homes on the development have been built and designed to be as energy efficient as possible, while materials have been specifically chosen to generate energy and reduce energy loss.

A hemp and lime spray mixture has been used to insulate the properties. Both materials breath naturally, ensuring moisture generated inside migrates rapidly to the outside, therefore eliminating condensation and allowing buildings to keep warm.

Therefore, the need to waste energy for artificial heating is reduced, avoiding potentially damaging gases escaping into the environment.

The homes are also served by a network of underground tanks to collect rain water, to be used for flushing toilets and watering gardens.

Terraced in rows of three, they have been staggered to maximise privacy, sunlight and views. Private gardens have also been wrapped in curving mud black walls.

The innovative scheme, which has already achieved a RIBA housing design award, was recently described in the Architect's Journal as "about as close to zero carbon as any multi-unit residential project completed to date in the UK."

The development will offer local people much needed high-quality, comfortable homes that are low maintenance and very energy efficient. It is due to welcome its first tenants later this year.

Ends

Note to editors: SPS, founded in 1929, originally worked to protect the county's buildings and landscape. Today, the Society has broadened its focus to help shape Suffolk's future, largely campaigning for sensitive and appropriate development, more and better quality affordable homes and to ensure sustainable infrastructures are in place to support the county's communities.

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