

# Notes

OF A MEETING OF THE



## **The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Housing Advisory Group**

**HELD ON TUESDAY 11 JULY 2023 AT 6.30 PM**

**GRAVEN HILL, BUILDING E25, GRAVEN HILL ROAD, BICESTER OX25 2BF**

### **Present:**

**Councillors:** Barry Wood (Chair), Robin Bennett, Nick Mawer and Geoff Saul

**Officers:** Murry Burnett, Caroline Ford, Alex Jeffery, Oliver Margison, Dave Scholes, Richard Smith, and Paul Staines

**Other councillors:** Susan Brown

**Guests:** Adrian Unitt and Karen Curtin (Graven Hill Village Development Company)

### **1 Apologies for absence and notification of substitutes; declaration of interests; Chair's announcements**

The Chair provided members and officers present with a synopsis of the history of the Graven Hill site.

### **2 Notes of the previous meeting**

The notes of the previous meeting were agreed to be an accurate record of matters discussed.

### **3 Housing Advisory Group forward work programme**

Members noted the forward work programme.

### **4 Substantive item - Site visit to Graven Hill**

The visit began with a bus tour of Graven Hill.

Members then received a presentation from Adrian Unitt, Operations Director and Karen Curtin, Managing Director from the Graven Hill Village Development Company. The presentation covered the conception of the development following a visit by representatives from Cherwell District Council to Almere, Holland. Cherwell District Council

set up the Graven Hill Village Development Company in 2014 and the development is now the largest self and custom build development in the United Kingdom. As of March 2023, there have been 504 legal completions.

Adrian and Karen outlined the progress of the site to date, noting the initial objectives to offer housebuilders more choice in line with national policy objectives. Adrian and Karen noted that custom build had been attractive to people because of the flexibility to have large dwellings on large plots. Adrian and Karen also highlighted challenges that had been faced since the first phase of plots were released in summer 2016, noting supply chain delays, inflation in the price of construction materials and planning freedoms and timelines as just a few of the issues faced by housebuilders.

Questions from members covered the topics of community space, cycle paths and road adoption. Karen explained that currently, all community space on site was being managed by Graven Hill Village Development Company. All cycleways on site had been and were being constructed to the standards that were applicable at the time and new roads were being constructed to new standards. The officers from Graven Hill Village Development Company explained that main roads would be adopted by Oxfordshire County Council.

Members were interested to understand whether 'shell homes' had been explored as an option for the site. Officers explained that obtaining a warranty for mortgage purposes was challenging with self-finish homes and the practical completion of a self-finish home depended on the capability of the person buying the home to obtain sign off within the agreed timeframe.

Members asked how living at Graven Hill compared to a 'standard' development site and whether residents felt they were living on a building site. Officers from the Graven Hill Village Development Company explained that they had sought to avoid a 'pepper-pot' approach to the development by not releasing different areas for development at one time. Investing heavily in infrastructure had helped with the feeling of a well-connected community.

Members thanked Adrian and Karen for the tour and presentation, agreeing that it was a interesting and aspirational development.

## **5 Future Oxfordshire Partnership Housing Advisory Group Terms of Reference**

Members noted the Terms of Reference for the Housing Advisory Group which were endorsed by FOP at its meeting in June 2023.

## **6 Future Oxfordshire Partnership Advisory Group Meeting Notes**

Members noted this agenda item.

## **7 Dates of future meetings**

Members noted the dates for future meetings:

- 12 September 2023
- 11 December 2023

- 12 March 2024
- 09 July 2024

The meeting closed at 20:00.