

Homes England announces developers for historic school site in Macclesfield

Government housing agency Homes England has announced Barratt and David Wilson Homes North West as its preferred developer to provide 300 new homes at the former King's School campus at Fence Avenue, Macclesfield.

The scheme gained full planning approval on July 29 2020 and offers a wide range of open market and affordable homes.

Homes England acquired the Fence Avenue campus from King's School in August 2018, in an award-winning deal which saw the site being leased back to the school for two years so it could access upfront investment and build its new campus without interruption to education. The deal won Deal of the Year at the Insider North West Residential Property Awards in January 2019.

A high-quality design approach is has been adopted which blends into the existing landscape and reflects the character and style of the surrounding area. This follows on from Homes England's introduction of a design quality assessment in its land disposals, which ensures developments follow Building for Life 12 criteria and provide local character and distinctiveness.

The development will provide 30 per cent affordable housing, 20 per cent more than the outline planning consent (in place when Homes England acquired the site in 2018) required. The site will now contain 90 affordable homes rather than 34, a significant increase and huge benefit to the local community.

Barratt and David Wilson Homes North West will partner with Torus, one of Homes England's housing association strategic partners, to deliver a proportion of the affordable homes. Torus will also convert the historic school building, Fence House, on the site into apartments for market sale.

Construction of the school's new campus is on schedule and is set to be open for the 2020/21 academic year. As well as a new school, a full suite of sports facilities will be available for community use. These include a 9-line 25m swimming pool; indoor cricket centre; pitches for hockey, football, rugby and cricket; and 9-court sports hall.

Development by Barratt and David Wilson Homes and Torus will begin when the new school campus is operational.

Homes England's intervention in the King's School site has also facilitated the development of housing by Bellway at the school's former Westminster Road campus. Future development is to be brought forward by McCarthy and Stone at Westminster Road, alongside Bellway, and the refurbishment of listed buildings on the Cumberland Street campus by Hillcrest Homes.

This project is a great example of the important role housing and construction can play as part of a wider economic response to Covid-19, creating jobs, training opportunities, housing and local facilities across

five separate sites in the town.

Stephen Kinsella, Chief Land and Development Officer at Homes England, said:

“This is a significant step forward for the development of Fence Avenue, where our innovative approach has demonstrated our ability to intervene in the market and unlock land for new homes, while facilitating the school’s ambitions for its new campus.

“We’re pleased to appoint Barratt and David Wilson Homes as the developer, who along with Torus will provide a range of homes for the people of Macclesfield, with a significantly higher proportion of affordable housing than originally anticipated.”

Robert Holbrook, Managing Director at Barratt and David Wilson Homes North West, said:

“We are delighted to be working in partnership with Homes England and Torus to deliver high quality new Homes in Macclesfield.

“We will be retaining the heritage of King’s School through the refurbishment of the main school building, which will be converted into apartments, complemented by the development of 273 new homes. The development will offer spacious homes alongside plenty of green spaces and local amenities, meaning it’s perfect for a variety of buyers.”

Chris Bowen, Managing Director of Torus Developments, continued:

“We’re passionate about building strong communities and giving people the opportunity to take that first step on the property ladder. By working closely with public bodies and national organisations, we are able to provide affordable homes, exactly where they’re needed, like never before.

“Being a strategic partner of Homes England is already paying dividends in terms of the land we can access and the assets we can unlock. Not only will this development see us bring new homes to Macclesfield, but also restore and transform Fence House.

“Torus has considerable experience of heritage projects and the sensitive redevelopment of listed buildings. We are excited to be leading on the regeneration and transformation of this landmark asset to provide truly affordable housing options to the people of Macclesfield, like our award-winning redevelopment of Odgen’s Tobacco Factory in Everton, Liverpool.”

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