



Parklands, Reading

Transforming University Land





Executive summary

Cala Homes' Parklands development was completed in 2018 and comprises 291 stunning homes, as well as a range of community facilities and a retail unit, on the former Reading University Bulmershe Court Campus.

Located in Woodley, just three miles from Reading town centre, the former brownfield site is ideally situated in a leafy suburb, with plentiful amenities and transport connections.

Parklands has been sensitively designed to harmonise with the surrounding area and preserve its rich heritage, which includes its former life as an 18th century country residence.



History of the site

When Cala acquired the Parklands site, it was home to a range of academic buildings and halls of residence. The University had moved its faculties to its other campuses in Henley and Reading, opening up the opportunity to redevelop the site.

The origins of the Parklands site date back to 1789 when it was occupied by Woodley House. This manor house, which sat in an extensive estate, was owned by Henry Addington, Speaker of the House of Commons (1789). Addington later became Prime Minister (1801–1804) and the house was visited by many prominent public figures. Its name was later changed to Bulmershe Court.

During World War II, the house was used by the US Army before being demolished in 1962 to make way for the Berkshire College of Education, which opened in 1964. The college expanded and became Bulmershe College before merging with the University of Reading in 1989.

As part of the redevelopment, Cala has restored the only remaining parts of the original eighteenth century estate. The kitchen garden wall and a series of gateways have been renovated and timber gates fitted.



Planning process

When Cala purchased the site, it benefited from outline planning permission for up to 300 new homes, a retail unit and a 60-bed care home, which had been acquired by the University in March 2013.

Cala's Reserved Matters application for Phase 1 (34 homes), including part of the walled garden, was approved by committee in 2014.

For the remainder of the site, Cala submitted a new planning application. Although following the principles established in the outline and reserved matters applications, there were important differences:

- The outline permission retained some of the student housing blocks for conversion into apartments. This proved to not be financially viable and these were replaced with family homes, meeting identified need in the local authority area.
- The privately-run care home envisaged in the outline approval was replaced with a 60-bed extra care facility at the instigation of Wokingham Borough Council. This required a larger site area than originally planned and, following a number of pre-application meetings with the council's officers, was relocated to a more appropriate area within the site, along with the retail unit.
- Access was adjusted to maximise the open space and provide direct routes to the Extra Care facility and retail unit.

March 2013
Outline planning permission secured by Reading University

September 2013
Cala Homes selected as preferred developer

November 2013
Consultation on Phase 1 (34 homes)

December 2013
Reserved Matters application submitted for Phase 1

January 2014
Consultation on Phase 2 (257 homes)

January 2014
Cala completes the purchase of the site

February 2014
Third round of consultation

April 2014
Reserved Matters approved on Phase 1

May 2014
Phase 1 Work starts on site

June 2014
Detailed Planning Application submitted for Phase 2

July 2014
Planning Permission granted for Phase 2

November 2014
Demolition completed

February 2015
Cala launches show home

August 2018
Final resident moves in

Consulting with the community

Although outline planning permission had already been secured by the University, it was vital for Cala to undertake meaningful community consultation, whilst preparing the reserved matters application. Given the history and heritage of the site, it was important that the community felt involved in the maintenance of its legacy, whilst shaping the new development.

Cala held three well-attended community consultation events between November 2013 and February 2014, enabling the community to discuss and contribute to shaping the proposed development, including the layout, house designs and landscaping. As a consequence of the community's input, the layout of the site was revised to accommodate a less dense development with a higher proportion of family housing.

Cala's planning application was approved in July 2014 and work started on site in May 2014.



Design approach - the vision

Cala appointed Broadway Malyan as architects and master planners, to ensure a design-led approach to the development. Preserving and celebrating the heritage of Parklands was at the heart of the design philosophy and the development has been skilfully integrated into its surroundings by retaining and restoring natural and historic landmarks.

A mature Holm Oak tree, the only one of its type in Berkshire, acts as a stunning showpiece for Parklands. The restoration of the original 18th Century kitchen garden wall creates a beautiful backdrop feature, which flows through many of the gardens within the development.

As well as providing much-needed new homes for the local area, Parklands has cultivated a community with strong social ties. The development includes a convenient Co-op supermarket, and the site's cycle paths, children's play area and green open spaces provide space for a range of leisure activities.

The play area, which opened in early 2018, is illustrative of Cala's ongoing commitment to supporting the communities in which we build and provides a recreational space for the wider community to enjoy.



The homes

Working closely with Wokingham Borough Council at planning stage, Cala has ensured the needs of the local community have been met by providing this wide variety of house types.

The homes at Parklands showcase a range of stylish and innovative designs with traditional touches; respecting local architectural styles and in keeping with the development's surroundings. The choice of materials – light brown multi-stock bricks and dark brown roof tiles – has created a strong, unified street scene, which integrates into its surroundings. Variety and individuality have been achieved by using a mix of house types and range of elevations, which have helped to create a varied roofscape.

Each home is perfectly proportioned and has been designed with high ceilings and deep windows to maximise light, whilst clever storage solutions help to accentuate the space available in each property.









Contributing to the community

Through the development's Section 106 agreement, Cala contributed over £2 million towards local community amenities, including to primary and secondary schools, the local library, sports facilities and towards the preservation of trees in the local area. The contributions also included a new community playground facility, providing a fantastic recreational space for local children and the wider community to enjoy.

The housing mix at Parklands comprises 30% affordable housing, including 60 one and two bedroom purpose built apartments and extra care facilities, as well as convenient retail and leisure provision on-site. These were delivered together with affordable housing provider, Housing Solutions.

Built specifically for the over 55s, 'The Birches' allows older generations to live with independence, privacy and security but with peace of mind that help is on hand if needed. With 50% of the homes allocated for shared ownership and 50% for social rental housing. The Birches goes beyond bricks and mortar to offer affordable housing combined with extra care.



The Mayor of Woodley, Parklands opened the new playground facility at Parklands at a community event in 2018



The Birches



Contributing to the community

Cala also makes direct contributions towards supporting grassroots organisations. Through its 'Community Bursary' scheme, which invites organisations and charities to apply for help to fund projects that make an important difference in the community, it has awarded funding to projects, including Reading Rockets Sport and Education Foundation.

Reading Rockets Sport and Educational Foundation has received funding from Cala to provide sports equipment for its community programme. The Foundation was formed in 1997 and has evolved from one team for young men, to fifteen basketball teams for boys, girls and seniors, working in schools, colleges, universities and community venues. The Rockets Charity Foundation has an extensive community programme, running over 50 sessions per week for 4-18 year olds, as well as a special educational needs programme for those members of the community who require additional help when playing sport.

Stephanie Johnson, SEN Basketball Lead for Reading Rockets, comments:

“This funding from Cala Homes has enabled us to purchase basketball equipment that will hugely benefit our grassroots basketball programme for four to 12 year olds, as well as our special educational needs programme and our mental health sport initiative. Exercise has been shown to improve mood and reduce depression, and with this new equipment we can ensure we are providing support, and most importantly fun, for our member.”



Sales success

Phase one of the development was launched at the end of 2015, with 80% of available properties reserved within three months.

This sales success continued with all 290 homes at Parklands reserved by spring 2018.

The development proved to be incredibly popular with home buyers from the local area as well as house hunters looking to relocate. Retirees, growing families and young professionals alike have taken the opportunity to buy a fabulous home in this scenic setting.





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