



Wolvercote Mill, Wolvercote, Oxford

Bespoke design for regeneration





Pixey Mead

A34

Wolvercote Mill

Godstow Road

To Oxford City centre

Port Meadow

- 1. Wolvercote Lakes
- 2. Wolvercote Surgery
- 3. Wolvercote Allotments
- 4. Village Green
- 5. White Hart Pub
- 6. Jacobs Inn
- 7. Godstow Bridge
- 8. Wolvercote Mill



Executive summary

Despite its enviable location within cycling distance of Oxford city centre and surrounded by greenbelt, the site of the Wolvercote Papermill was vacant for over a decade. Cala's vision for the site will form the single largest development to take place within Wolvercote for a generation. It exemplifies Cala's commitment to driving best value from challenging regeneration projects.

The Papermill site, owned by Oxford University, received Outline Planning permission for 190 homes in 2014. Following a tender process, Cala Homes (Chiltern) was selected to partner with the University to complete the Outline Planning process, finalise the S106 legal obligation and to purchase the land.

Cala worked along side Glenn Howell Architects to overcome the challenging technical and environmental restrictions posed by this brownfield site to greatly enhance the original outline scheme. The final design addresses local concerns regarding the flood risk and the need for amenities, providing a broad range of properties including affordable homes, a GP surgery, community hall and light industrial unit.

A large portion of the village is protected and characterised under the 'Wolvercote Within Godstow Conservation Area', which includes 27 grade II listed buildings, so a high degree of design sensitivity was required. The final design was strengthened and improved by feedback from a wide range of stakeholders.

The development will be marketed as 'Wolvercote Mill,' drawing on the site's heritage. Once built, Wolvercote Mill will form a unique community of homes, designed for modern

living, but also paying homage to surrounding historic buildings and the industrial heritage of the site and will breathe fresh life into this neglected parcel of land.

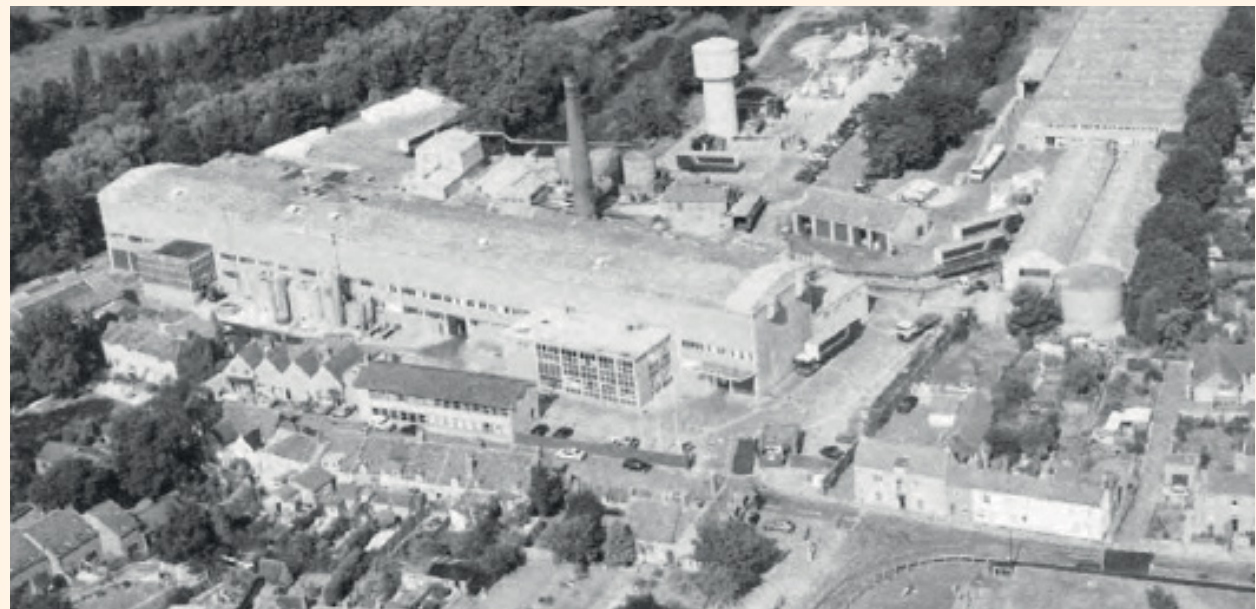
Land category	Brownfield site within the Greenbelt
Previous use of land	Former Paper mill for Oxford University Press
Size of site (acres)	25
Number of private homes	95
Number of affordable homes	95
Start of build	Started
Anticipated completion of build	Dec - 21

From deserted industrial ground...

It is believed that a mill has been sited in the village of Wolvercote since the 15th century, though the exact location of this early mill is unknown. Maps dating back to 1616 show the three Wolvercote Mills powered by a tributary of the Thames. The paper produced at the mill was considered particularly fine and was used by the Oxford University Press for several centuries. The mill was bought outright by Oxford University in 1872, and the first part of A New English Dictionary (later called The Oxford English Dictionary) was published on paper sourced from Wolvercote in 1884. This first volume covered words from A-Ant.

During the industrial revolution, production was expanded and upgraded with steam powered mills. The employment provided was integral to the creation of the close-knit and vibrant community and excellent transport links that grew around it.

The 1950s saw a dramatic modernisation at the site and the Mill Stream was culverted. Sadly the mill ceased paper production in 1997 and the land fell into a state of dilapidation. The mill buildings were demolished in 2004, with the exception of an office block fronting onto Mill Road and smaller ancillary buildings.



Aerial photograph of the mill 2003

...to a new waterside community in the Oxford green belt

After a series of proposals, the University of Oxford obtained Outline Planning Permission consent for the site in 2014 for 190 residential units, employment space, community facilities, public open space and ancillary services and facilities.

Following a tender process, Cala homes was selected to partner with Oxford University to complete the Outline Planning process, finalise the S106 legal obligation and to purchase the land. The Chiltern region worked closely with The University of Oxford to acquire this complex and challenging development opportunity. Cala appointed Glenn Howells Architects to the project for their wealth of experience with mixed use waterside developments.

The final design extends the close knit, vibrant community of Wolvercote and opens up a neighbourhood rich in modern and contemporary homes, public open spaces and natural landscapes.



Stakeholder engagement

With Outline Planning Permission secured for 190 homes, Cala worked to optimise the development to deliver the best possible design, recognising both the constraints and opportunities of the natural and man-made waterways and connecting the new neighbourhood as an extension of the pre-existing architecturally varied community.

Glenn Howells Architects were chosen for their particular expertise, following on from their mixed use and residential schemes at Bath Western Riverside, the new John Lewis Store in Oxford City Centre and the Royal Wharf development in London.

Recognising the importance and sensitivity of this development within the context of the village, extensive community consultation was arranged. Over 170 residents attended a public consultation at St Peter's church in December 2017. The response was generally positive, with most of the attendees welcoming redevelopment of a disused site in such a prime location. In addition, local resident groups were interested in integration of market and affordable

homes into one cohesive neighbourhood. All stakeholder feedback was considered in the final design.

Both design team and planning officers felt that the scheme would benefit from a design review panel. The Oxford Design Review Panel was presented with

the process and was taken to site to see what Cala's proposed improvements to the area were. As a result of that visit, the layout was further adapted to better retain the village's character and to bring the community square into a central location that better fit its status as the heart of the scheme.





Design approach

The fundamental concept that underpins the basis of the proposed masterplan is its connections to the site's natural assets, including the reservoir and the woodland at the north of

the site. Pedestrian experience of the site has been at the very centre of its design right from inception. The scale and grain of the masterplan gradually steps down through five character

areas to ensure a sympathetic relationship with the conservation area of Mill Lane and framing key views.



Computer generated images of areas within Wolvercote Mill





Mill Lane

With the entrance to the site being located in a conservation area, and right next door to the Grade II Listed White Hart Pub, repairing the Mill Road street scene was a significant

consideration. The buildings proposed fronting this street are kept to two storeys to remain in scale with the conservation area and emulate the strong gable form in a modern and

contemporary way. The 'Gate House' is of a larger scale with a double frontage creating a sense of arrival.



Grade ii listed Mill Lane cottages

New Mill Lane homes

Gate house



Entrance to Wolvercote Mill

New community centre

The White Hart listed pub



Mill Square

The new proposed Mill Square at the heart of the development is to be a key piece of public realm, that brings not only the whole development together but also ties it back to the existing village. The GP surgery and light industrial unit will be housed here. It is envisaged that the square will become a meeting point and social hub for the village, offering a well-managed and pedestrian friendly space that will encourage activity from both new and existing members of the community.

The square is enclosed and characterised by larger buildings, reflecting the mass and scale of the mill building of the past.



Indicative computer generated image towards Mill building

Water's Edge

Taller, slender buildings, each with a second floor balcony provide a striking backdrop for the reservoir. Pedestrian movement will be prioritised to create a promenade along the reservoir edge, with no car parking by the water.

The area will make the reservoir feel slightly enclosed, creating a tranquil setting for the water's edge. Flat roofs assist in keeping to the height restrictions imposed on the site and juxtapose with the gable ends and the natural undulating curtilage of the reservoir.



Indicative sketch of Water's Edge from the Riverside Park

Reservoir Mews

Smaller Mews like cottages along shared surface streets, where pedestrians will have priority, will create framed views and provide access to the reservoir. Houses are smaller in scale to provide contrast with the Water's Edge area and bridge the transition between the townhouses to the Meadow Way and reservoir. On plot parking will be incorporated with a combination of garden walls and landscaping to screen the view of cars.



Indicative sketch along a Reservoir Mews towards water

Meadow Way

Meadow Way will form a corridor through substantial red and grey brick villa homes to the managed woodlands to the north of the site. The homes are predominantly detached, three and four bedroom homes arranged along the wide, slightly crescent shaped road which follows the contour of the water's edge and the site boundary.

The homes are a modern take on the red brick and rubble houses within Wolvercote, and continue the gabled leitmotif of the development, punctuated with modern feature chimneys.



Indicative computer generated image of Meadow Way

Better connections with the surrounding community

Wolvercote Mill has allowed for and improved access for the private car through its parking strategy and the improvement works to Mill Lane, but it looks to promote more sustainable modes of commuting and transport in line including cycling, walking, a bus route and an Electric Car Club facility.

Motorist provision

Only 43% of Oxford's workforce travel to work by car, which is the lowest proportion in the entire South East region and amongst the lowest in England and Wales. The region has a target to further reduce reliance on cars over the next 3 years.

Houses within site each have an average of two allocated parking spaces variety of curtilage and garage parking, but this has been designed in such a way that certain areas of the site will be visually and physically free from parking. For example, the properties along Waters Edge will have to keep their cars in the garage.

To maximise efficiency, apartment and public use parking is based on unallocated spaces

which have been strategically and logically placed around the site to cater for the needs of parking for both public and residential use. Provision has been made for disabled spaces around the site in key locations. In addition, Car Club spaces with electrical charging points have been allocated to reduce the dependence on private cars.

Cyclist Provision

Oxford is acknowledged as one of the few true 'Cycling Cities' in the United Kingdom. Wolvercote Mill will connect with the greater network of cycle routes and will benefit from Wolvercote's existing 'quiet route' into Oxford City centre. This means that rather than rely on roads, cyclists will share pathways with pedestrians (who have priority) and will be able to cycle 3.5 miles into the centre of Oxford in an estimated 20 minutes. Generous cycle stores are included across both social and private homes on the site. Houses' cycle stores are within the footprint of the home and apartments will benefit from shared facilities. There will also be a number of Sheffield stands scattered

around the site for the general public to use and cycling routes have been provided through all the key areas of site.

Bus route

Between the Country and the City, Oxford lays claim to an extensive bus network. Millions of pounds of investment has been made by the main bus companies in order to become greener.

Currently, Wolvercote is served by the No.6 bus, which runs a regular route directly into Oxford from Home Close, with stops within the Village. The new scheme will see an extension and improvement of this bus route with a new stop added on the newly proposed Mill Square, close to the GP surgery.





Overcoming key engineering & building challenges

The site benefits from the Weir structure which prevents flooding locally but due to its inaccessibility it has become run down and only utilised by the Environment Agency (EA) at extreme flood events. The proposals for the site would bring back to life this Weir through renovation to the structure and banks of the water course.

A number of technical issues had to be resolved including extensive negotiations with the EA regarding the future operation and renovation works to the existing weir structure. A permit was secured from the EA to carry out detailed survey work where the weir chambers were sequentially drained and their structural integrity surveyed.

Our specialist consultants advised Cala on the scope of works that would be appropriate to bring the asset back to its full potential. These works will be carried out during the construction programme and a legal agreement will be put in place with the EA for the future operation of the weir.

In addition to the above, Cala also resolved an issue with the approved planning drawing and access to the development. There was some unregistered land and discrepancies with the highways records that could have caused an issue before in delivering the only access to the site.

Working with the Highways Authority and the Land Registry we were able to ensure that the relevant Section Agreement can be put in place to deliver the off-site highways improvements.



An integrated community with new places to meet

The site will provide 95 affordable homes which will be split as 80% social rented dwellings which will be available through our housing association partner and 20% shared ownership to assist with getting people on the housing ladder.

These homes range from one bedroom apartments to four bedroom houses and support the local vision for a truly mixed and integrated community. All homes within the development will benefit from the extensive public outdoor spaces and in addition to

this, every house has a private garden and all apartments have a balcony or terrace of at least 6 square metres. Some apartments also benefit from a shared garden as additional amenity.

On the right hand corner of the entrance to the site a community centre will stand, inviting use by existing Wolvercote residents as well as those who live at Wolvercote Mill. Right at the heart of the development sits a new GP surgery and light industrial unit to boost local employment.

The site is rich in outdoor community spaces, too; a village square, a Reservoir Promenade and a riverside park will provide a place for local people to enjoy water views and for children to play and learn to ride their bikes. The north and southernmost ends of the site will provide managed woodland with play equipment and a nature reserve respectively.



No. Beds	No. Pvt	No. Aff
1 Bedroom	0 0%	12 13%
2 Bedroom	8 8%	38 40%
3 Bedroom	68 72%	34 36%
4 Bedroom	19 20%	11 12%
Total	95 100%	95 100%



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