

Revitalising the Existing Evenlode Estate

Hunters and HemingwayDesign have collaborated on a unique estate regeneration project at Evenlode, Maidenhead for Housing Solutions.

With Hunters breadth of regeneration experience and HemingwayDesign's values of 'breathing new life into old concepts' the two parties have completed a sustainable transformation of the 180 1960's maisonettes. Through extensive engagement sessions, residents and the design team developed designs focused on improving social capital and quality of life through:

- New identity
- Remodelling of the exterior of the 180 maisonettes
- Creation of a large balcony or a private garden for every maisonette
- Improved security, layout and environmental performance
- New family friendly, secure, semi-private Evenlode community gardens (including BBQ area)
- New children's play area
- Six new 1-bedroom bungalows for older people (replacing former disused garages which have been demolished)
- Three new 2-bedroom flats
- New stairwells and entrances for each block to make them independent from each other
- New windows / lifts / New energy-efficient cladding
- Reconfiguration of some households to create 3 bedroom (2 singles & a double) maisonettes from 2 double bedroom homes to reflect changing family needs

Human scale, variety and making green spaces 'sing' was the heart of the design solution.

The 'stylish' makeover has created a soft and sympathetic look for the estate which provides an oasis within the town centre. The revamp has removed the harshness of the original design which focused on upper level connectivity of buildings with walkways and everlasting corridors rather than ground level use of soft space like lawns, gardens and planting. Its central location means poor design reflects the whole town, so an attractive solution was critical.

One of the largest practical benefits for tenants include the introduction of outside private spaces (balconies and gardens) for all maisonettes enabling fresh air and a better sense of wellbeing. There is also easily accessed, semi-private communal gardens with extensive planting that is both natural and structured. Each shared area has a slightly different design, with the aim of creating a sense of adventure. The gardens have new facilities (including communal barbecues), an adult outdoor gym and a new children's playground. Different life stages have been taken into account in the design of the outside areas. The new balconies naturally police the gardens and the link of the homes with outside space has been improved.

There are 6 blocks each of four levels containing two storey maisonettes. The blocks now act as separate buildings, each with their own entrances with bold new stairwells and contemporary signage. This is to reduce crime and provide a more secure and community-focused block of flats. The signage has stepped away from traditional council estate graphics and looks like it could be part of graphics from a hip central London office. This quality has been accomplished throughout the refurbishment including the colour palette of the cladding reminiscent of a traditional terraced Street in areas like Brighton or Chelsea, highlighting individual accommodation rather than a monolith structure that previously the estate asserted.

Resident Input

A number of reviews were carried out with the initial review asking the question 'demolish or refurbish'? Eighty one per cent of the homes were owned by the Housing Solutions (at the time called Maidenhead and District Housing Association) and the vast majority of residents, both private and rented, voted for refurbishment.

Working with Housing Solutions through extensive engagement sessions, residents and the design team developed designs focused on improving social capital and quality of life. With many single parent and young families living at Evenlode underused landscape has been made family friendly, secure, visible to residents and easily accessible with places to play, socialise, learn to ride a bike and hold parties and gatherings as requested by those who live there.

The team felt the detail from the residents was key in the success of the plans.

Everything from colour palettes to what was to go in the gardens had input from residents. The designers and architects drove the principles and provided options to allow focused and relevant feedback. Details were important and included some planting beds in each of the new secured gardens left empty to allow residents to plant their own flowers to help to encourage "ownership" of each of the gardens.

Wayne Hemingway " At HemingwayDesign we always look at housing projects from the angle of "would we live there and if not what would it take to make it an option" . When we were first introduced to Evenlode it was clear that it wasn't a desirable place to live but that it had potential . The residents understood the value of the generous internal spaces , the proximity to the town centre and the potential of it's uninviting and thus under –utilised green spaces ,its non functioning drying courts and dilapidated garages and storage sheds . It was our job to bring this potential to life and the end result is living testament to positive collaboration between designers , architects , residents and an open minded housing provider "

<http://houseofhemingway.co.uk/hemingway-design/projects/evenlode/>

<http://www.hunters.co.uk/architecture/projects/regeneration/evenlode/>