

METRO Property New-Build News



Going green: How the roof garden at The Beacon will look once complete



BEACON OF HOPE

Gordon Miller takes a look at one of the UK's most sustainable developments

CRYSTAL-CLEAR INSPIRATION



THE Beacon's technology has been inspired by many leading global visionary enterprises, including the permanent sustainable cities initiative by Siemens at the Crystal Building in Royal Victoria Docks, London. The Crystal [above] is home to the Future Of Cities interactive exhibition, as well as being one of the world's most sustainable buildings and events venues. The Crystal produces 70 per cent less CO2 emissions than comparable UK offices and has a £0 annual heating bill, while 100 per cent of WC flushing uses recycled water. The exhibition is open most weeks from Tuesday to Sunday, 10am to 5pm.

AROUND five years ago, environmental sustainability was at the forefront of leading housebuilders' minds. Their thinking was about how to have the least ecological impact in terms of energy, carbon, water use and waste output. Today, social sustainability is the topic the pioneering developers are most engaged with.

Sam Budhdeo, one of the leadership team at Lumiere Developments, which is creating The Beacon, a sustainable development in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, says: 'The focus needs to shift to the social impact of housing, not the environmental effect alone, which can be perceived as tomorrow's problem. Developers need to think about issues such as air quality – seven million people a year are killed by emissions globally. People's health and wellbeing are an immediate and critical issue.'

The Beacon is playing its part. Ambi Singh, Budhdeo's business partner, explains that delivering

socially and environmentally sustainable outcomes starts with the generation and conservation of electricity and heat. 'Our predictive energy modelling gives us the confidence to tell residents they will have free energy for life – no energy bills, ever.'



The technologies employed (see below) will result in an expected reduction in heating costs by 70 per cent to 80 per cent, compared to most existing properties.

Intelligent heat recovery systems utilise waste heat from the building to help power a 2MW turbine that generates electricity. The impact of being able to recover sufficient heat from the building to help generate electricity on site is that it will make the building almost completely energy independent.

The innovative features include a number of industry firsts, such as the highest density solar farm in the world, which will generate approximately 850kW of solar power on half an acre of land, the UK's tallest residential indoor arboretum

and Britain's largest underground automated car park. The result will be a multi-dwelling EPC A-rated energy-neutral building.

Critically, the developers are seeking independent verification of their high-sustainability performance claims. The Beacon will be assessed under the Home Quality Mark (HQM), a voluntary mark of excellence bestowed on new-build homes to give people the reassurance that their properties are well designed, well built and cost effective to run. The development will showcase the levels that can be achieved with careful planning and consideration.

Gwyn Roberts, Lead for BRE New Homes and Communities and HQM, says: 'The Beacon is among the first developments intending to certify against HQM, proving its sustainability credentials and giving consumers information on the running costs, health and wellbeing aspects and the building's environmental footprint. By showcasing existing and new technology, The Beacon demonstrates

that developers can go beyond the minimum requirements of sustainability set out by the government.'

The Beacon's developers are astute enough to know sustainability is only one facet of a new home. Consumers demand style, comfort and luxury, too. Singh's argument is that sustainability and luxury need not be mutually exclusive. A case in point is the electric car scheme offered at The Beacon – the cars available include the high-performance yet low-emission Tesla Model 3 and BMW i3.



Other plans include a state-of-the-art gym, a club lounge with café and bar, a cinema, a communal roof garden and an observatory. Located seven minutes' walk from the railway station and just 24 minutes by train from London Euston, The Beacon is bordered by over 400 acres of protected Boxmoor Trust Green Belt land at the heart of Hemel Hempstead's regeneration district.

The 17-storey tower comprises 272 studio, one, two and three-bedroom balconied apartments and luxury

penthouses and off-plan launch prices at The Beacon start from £217,950. Reservations are open.

Singh says 40 per cent have been reserved by a Private Renter Sector (PRS) company and buyers have been local and London based, with no overseas buyers. The tower will be completed by 2018, following ground breaking later this year.

Budhdeo and Singh acknowledge that their vision is cutting-edge, but both have a pragmatic, scientific background and say this is no utopian 'white elephant'. 'Every technology we will incorporate is proven,' says Budhdeo. 'We're simply challenging the status quo of current housebuilders. Our aim is to revolutionise the industry and raise standards.'

'We're asking the public to think again about the homes they want to live in and the lifestyle they choose. It is possible to have a socially responsible house and lifestyle that is good for you and your family's health and wellbeing. That's what we're creating here at The Beacon. What we advise is, "make the right choices in how you live your life for your own sake and for that of your children and grandchildren".'

thebeacondevelopment.co.uk



WHAT MAKES IT SO SPECIAL...



Futuristic: There will be an automated robotic car park

- UK's tallest residential indoor arboretum
- UK's largest underground automated car park – 319 car park spaces in less than half an acre
- The highest density solar farm in the world
- Photovoltaic panels embedded into the solar balustrades at each floor level
- Ground source heat pumps to extract heat from the basement of the building to supply the hot water
- Triple glazing to all but the upper-level apartments, which are quadruple-glazed
- Air-source heat pumps to extract heat from the atrium
- Rainwater harvesting [collected at roof and balcony levels] for toilet flushing and irrigation of green planters on the external balcony and internal arboretum
- A mechanical heat and ventilation recovery system – to ventilate and create comfort cooling



Luxury: The homes will also be stylish and comfortable