



Beacon of hope

Free energy for life is the bold promise for a new blocks of flats reports DEBORAH STONE

ZERO EMISSIONS: The Beacon will be the world's most sustainable residential tower

HERTFORDSHIRE may seem an unlikely place to build the world's most sustainable residential tower but anybody who straps up one of its apartments could find themselves with zero bills for power and heating. That's a possible saving of around £2,000 a year in living costs.

The bold promise of "free energy for life" comes from Lumiere Developments, the firm building the 17-storey tower block not in forward-thinking London, New York, Singapore or any eco-savvy Scandinavian country, but in Hemel Hempstead.

Bordering by 406 acres of Green Belt land, the customer town is 24 minutes from London Euston by train and the 575-apartment tower block will be only a few minutes' walk from the station when completed in 2018.

The Beacon will have groundbreaking green features not yet present in any other residential development in the world, including the highest density solar farm anywhere (8.5mw on 0.5 acres) and solar photovoltaic panels at each floor level.

All apartments will be triple or quadruple-glazed, hot water will be provided by ground source heat pumps in the basement and water for flushing toilets and irrigating the UK's tallest residential indoor arboretum will be provided by harvesting rainwater.

Air source pumps will extract heat from the atrium and a mechanical heat and ventilation recovery system will circulate through apartments and keep them cool in summer. And that's not all: the A-rated energy-rated building will also have a fleet of five electric cars for hire, an electric bike hire scheme and the UK's largest underground automated robotic car park. Every flat will have one parking space and those without cars can rent out their slots to other residents.

Anish Singh, commercial director of Lumiere Developments, says The Beacon (020 3583 5025; thebeacondevelopment.co.uk) will be the world's most sustainable residential tower and adds: "We wanted to marry emission-free renewable technologies with simple yet effective energy conservation strategies to create a zero-emission development that is truly world class in its architectural design, engineering and specification."

"We want residents to feel like they are part of a community and truly to enjoy their living environment. At the same time we want apartments to be as cost-effective as possible whilst ensuring a positive environmental impact on their locality."

We don't even think about the pollution buildings cause but it's around 48 per cent



ENERGY-NEUTRAL: The Beacon will have a large roof garden for residents and apartments will have lounges with floor-to-ceiling glass doors out to private balconies plus continental-style bathrooms

of the world's harmful emissions according to Singh, who says the World Health Organisation sees air pollution as the "number one" risk to human health.

"Hence, it is our mission to promote large-scale uptake of emission-free renewable energy generation and simple energy conservation technologies within residential new-build and old stock to reduce emissions significantly and by default help save lives," he says.

The Beacon will be part of the post-war New Town's £300m Hamel Evolution regeneration, spearheaded by Dacorum borough council, which has already made the picturesque old town more accessible. But at the heart of the regeneration is a new civic centre for the council and community services, a new college campus and leisure complex, plus 200 centrally located apartments nearby.

THE TWO pedestrianised shopping centres have been improved and Jellicoe Water Gardens - named after the town's post-war architect Geoffrey Jellicoe - are being restored with holiday funds in total 1,000 new homes are expected to be built thanks to private investment in both the town and Maylands Business Park with the railway station earmarked for improvements in anticipation of Crossrail 2, which will link Hertfordshire to Surrey.

The town is also close to the M1, with easy access to the M25 and the Midlands.

The good news is that Lumiere Development plans to use The Beacon as a blueprint for more zero-carbon residential developments.

"We will be rolling out this unique mixture of sustainable technology and building practice across our future projects and ultimately hope that we inspire other developers to build significantly more high-quality sustainable homes across the property spectrum from affordable to luxury," says Singh.

Let's hope The Beacon will light the way for many more zero power bills.

• INFORMATION: Studios start from £217,000; one-bedroom apartments start from £251,000; two-bedroom apartments from £279,000 and three-bedroom apartments from £334,900

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THE BEACON
DEVELOPMENTS



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REGENERATION: Hamel Evolution includes the restoration of Jellicoe Water Gardens

Edited by DEBORAH STONE