

COMMUNITY REGENERATION

► Pupils from Excelsior Academy visit The Rise in Scotswood regularly as part of a project on home economics



Delivering the promises

JUST 18 months after work started on the construction of The Rise in Scotswood, Newcastle, it has been shortlisted for two prestigious honours.

The North of England's largest, single-site, housing-led regeneration initiative is a finalist in the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors North East Renaissance Regeneration and Residential Awards.

There could hardly be a clearer sign that the project is already delivering the promises made to the communities in the West End of Newcastle. These pledges included:

Building modern, energy-efficient homes affordable to local people.

Creating a new, attractive environment while improving existing facilities.

Providing training and work opportunities for local people and businesses.

Supporting education.

The first 100 homes released for sale have already been bought – encouragingly, 80% of them to people living within 10 miles – and the next release of properties in the 379-home first phase is imminent.

These cleverly-designed, larger-than-average properties – priced from around £80,000 to £180,000 – provide great value when compared with the £156,000 regional average house price (Office of National Statistics figures).

In addition, a district energy centre – the first of its kind in the North East – provides heating and hot water, reducing carbon emissions by up to 35% while other eco-initiatives mean The Rise achieves Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes.

New resident Emma Ndoni, who moved to The Rise with her husband and daughter, said: "We were renting a flat and wanted to get on to the property ladder but stay in the area where we work.

"The houses are fantastic and just so affordable that we took the plunge. We've never regretted it. Even though it's still a building site it doesn't feel that way and there is a community spirit already developing."

Heather Wills added: "It is such good value in comparison to where I

lived before and you can just tell, when you look around, what a lovely development this is going to be."

Around a quarter of the properties will be for rent and the first of these affordable homes are now being allocated to families in most need.

The striking design of the homes is creating an attractive streetscape which links to the existing built environment through green corridors and a new road network. The adjacent Hodgkin Park has been refurbished and there are plans for a new neighbourhood centre, commercial and retail facilities.

Newcastle Futures, a multi-agency partnership, has helped people into the work and training positions which development creates. This includes labourer Doug Arkle who, like the Yosser Hughes character in the 1980s Boys from the Black Stuff television series, turned up at site and asked: "Giz a job."

Local lass Victoria Bell is providing on-site administrative assistance and there have also been a dozen construction trade and an administration apprenticeship created so far. Support for teaching assistants at Bridgwater Primary has helped it achieve "outstanding" Ofsted ratings, placing it in the top 20% of UK schools.

Audrey Bushell, a Scotswood resident for over 40 years, said: "It's a dream come true. They have done a great job and I'm very happy for the people who can move in to the new homes. It's a new era for Scotswood and Newcastle."

Coun Hazel Stephenson, Newcastle City Council cabinet member for communities and a councillor for Benwell and Scotswood ward, added: "We're delighted that take-up at The Rise has got off to such a great start, which is real testament to confidence in the development. It puts Scotswood firmly on the map as a friendly, attractive and affordable place to live."

The £265m initiative is the product of a public/private joint venture – the New Tyne West Development Company – comprising Newcastle City Council and developers Barratt Homes and Keepmoat. The aim is to create a diverse, sustainable commu-



► The Rise, Scotswood, makes a striking addition to the Tyneside landscape. Left, the second intake of apprentices

nity of about 6,000 people living in approximately 1,800 homes.

Involving locals in the process was fundamental and there were 10 years of consultation before work started.

Residents, who between them had lived in the area for more than 300 years, were invited to sit on a joint working group.

They attended workshops to

comment on and influence the designs. They cut the first sod when development began, worked with local schools to select the first street names and were guests of honour at a prestigious show home launch.

Pupils also performed at this event and school visits remain a regular feature. Students from primary school to universities around the country visit to learn about health and safety, finance and mortgages and large-scale regeneration projects.

A new future is truly being forged for this famous part of Newcastle and The Rise will be further integrated into the existing community over the coming months and years.