

Building on SUCCESS

Legacy was a major part of the 2012 Olympic bid. Now, two years after the closing ceremony, ROGER HUNT discovers what that really means for East London



East Village under construction



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LEFT & THIS PIC East Village under construction

BELOW East Village landscaping

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TOP Aerial view of East Village with the Olympic Stadium and venues

BOTTOM One bedroom apartment interior at East Village

Two years on from the London Olympic and Paralympic Games, the much-anticipated 'legacy' of those sunny weeks of 2012 has become tangible. Venues have reopened, the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park is there for all to enjoy and, from a housing perspective, the Athletes' Village has been transformed into East Village, the largest Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 development ever built.

The regeneration of East London was at the heart of the 2005 bid to host the Olympic and Paralympic Games. In the face of some scepticism, London 2012 was promised as the catalyst for the

revitalisation of the Lower Lee Valley – an area of complex regeneration challenges at the heart of some of the UK's most deprived communities.

Much has already been written about the immensity of this task, not least the challenges of delivering on time and on budget while meeting quality and sustainability goals. Nowhere was this truer than with the villages that would house the athletes and officials. "They were the largest of all the Olympic venues", explains Tony O'Reilly who, as lead project manager (Villages), joined the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) early in 2009.

The Athletes' Village was constructed by Lend Lease within the Stratford City Masterplan. The planning challenges were considerable and involved designing for the legacy condition that would see the 11 residential plots eventually become 2,818 homes, having efficiently accommodated 17,000 athletes and officials during the Olympic Games and a further 11,000 during the Paralympic Games. Lend Lease was additionally responsible for building Chobham Academy, a new school for 1,800 students, and a new health and wellbeing centre to serve the existing and new community.

Sustainability was always high on the agenda and embraced everything from procurement, site design, construction and operations to transport, accessibility and local employment. "The goal was to make London 2012 the 'greenest' Games ever so, by default, that meant making the Athletes' Village the most sustainable in history," explains O'Reilly.

Subsequent official reviews have endorsed the success of this policy. Extensive off-site manufacture was deployed for building elements, with its associated benefits of enhanced safety and speed of installation. This included over 5,000 bathroom pods and over 2,500 utility cupboards, plus large-scale facade units. Alongside the Code Level 4 designation for the residential units, BREEAM Excellent was achieved for the retail and commercial units and Chobham Academy. The project has full project Forest Stewardship Council certification.

The daily workforce, which peaked at 6,500 during construction of the Village, all travelled by public transport. Over 26 million hours were worked on the initial construction phase, and there was an accident frequency rate of just 0.18 – the lowest ever on a project of this type, scale and programme. Together with an extensive health and safety induction process, all contractors and their teams had to sign up to sustainability, says O'Reilly. "That was a condition of their contract and we listed what sustainability meant to us; everything was drilled around safety and sustainability."



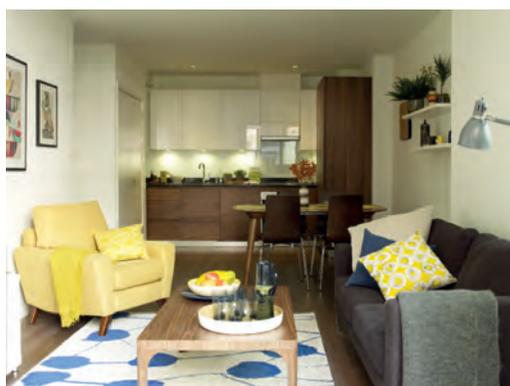


Following a deal with QDD (a joint venture between Qatari Diar and Delancey) that secured a £557m return to government and the taxpayer, the Village was handed over to its long-term owners. QDD now owns the 1,439 market rental properties, open spaces, and land for further development. Operating under the Get Living London brand, QDD is working alongside Triathlon Homes – which is responsible for the 1,379 affordable homes – and, together, the two organisations will oversee the Village’s long-term management.

Tony O’Reilly is now director of property and operations at Get Living London. Having, during the last five years, seen the newly named East Village grow to become the first legacy neighbourhood to result from the Games, few are better placed to understand what has been achieved.

“At handover after the Games the buildings were shells,” explains O’Reilly. “The Athletes’ Village didn’t have kitchens and the temporary stud walls dividing

“I honestly believe the legacy is the community that we’re providing. Something like 52% of our residents here are East Enders. These are people who are local and want to stay local in a better place to live”



the accommodation were taken down and recycled. The plans designed by LOCOG’s architects for the one-, two-, three- and four-bedroom apartments and townhouses could then be implemented by the construction teams from Lend Lease.”

Once the temporary Games features were removed and the wear and tear repaired, plumbing and electrical work was undertaken and the new homes were created with kitchens, carpets and hard floors installed in every property. Infrastructure, including parkland, play areas, wetlands, roads and bridges, was also completed within the new neighbourhood. The Village meets Secured by Design and Lifetime Homes standards and there is step-free access throughout. Get Living London has installed hoists in one apartment for a paraplegic resident.

All homes have MVHR. “One of the big battles we had with the Athletes’ Village was about air conditioning, we fought that tooth and nail,” says O’Reilly. “It was a big fight but a fight that we won through the use of appropriate shading, orientation and materials.”

LED lighting is used throughout while heating and hot water is supplied by East London Energy through the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park District Energy Scheme, the largest of its kind in the UK. This is powered from two energy centres using combined ▶



heat and power (CHP) engines that use renewable energy sources such as biomass or bio-fuel. One of the issues that has been noted is heat loss from the pipes within the buildings, which can potentially result in overheating.

Importantly, alongside the buildings and technology, creating a community is essential to East Village. "I honestly believe the legacy is the community that we're providing," says O'Reilly. "Something like 52% of our residents here are East Enders. That's quite a success story in itself. These are people who are local and want to stay local in a better place to live."

Get Living London's policy of only offering properties for rent must have influenced this pattern, preventing the purchase of properties for investment. Even so, considerable care is going toward creating

this community. More than 30 bars, restaurants, cafes and shops will be opening soon. "We're working on a strategy where the shops will complement Westfield (Stratford City's large shopping centre) and not compete with it, so the shops that come in will all be little startups; for example, you won't see a big coffee chain," explains O'Reilly.

A community hall has also been created while residents can sign up to an internal portal system, which provides information on Village events. O'Reilly and his team have helped residents stage fairs and run farmers' markets. "We have community engagement officers who help keep the children occupied with games, and over the summer Get Living London offered 35 different health and fitness classes out in the park, which were a great success."

One of the huge sustainability benefits of East Village is that it stands alongside a major transport hub, points out O'Reilly. "Something we've been pleased with is the lack of take up on the car parking spaces because the people that live here don't need cars. Only about 30% of our residents own cars, the rest are using public transport. We're putting in more bike racks and storage spaces and the bike racks are filling up."

The external environment is another factor in encouraging a sense of community. There are 2.5 hectares of wetlands and 30 hectares of parkland within East Village, plus the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park alongside, explains O'Reilly. "A lot of people who come believe all the water and trees were already here and that we built around them but we've put it all in, including over 3,000 trees planted."

On top of the buildings some 12,000m² of brown roofs are flourishing, providing biodiversity and rainwater attenuation. Rainwater flows to special tiered ponds, and is naturally filtered through wetland reed beds and then channelled back to irrigate the village. Greywater from sinks, showers and baths is also used for irrigation and for flushing toilets in the school.

A further 1,950 homes are to be created in East Village when Get Living London builds six towers. The tallest will be 36 floors and all will contain a mix of market rental and social housing. In coming years, five new neighbourhoods will be built on sites around the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park to provide up to 7,000 new homes. Construction of Chobham Manor, the first of these, by Taylor Wimpey has started.

Clearly the vast majority of the sustainability goals have been achieved at East Village but the benefits are greater than that. "From a legacy perspective East Village has been a huge success," says O'Reilly, who is clearly proud both of the fact that the spirit of London 2012 lives on in the community and the part the development is playing in the area's wider regeneration. ^{sh}

CONTACTS

East Village www.eastvillagelondon.co.uk
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Read Roger Hunt's blog www.huntwriter.com
and follow him on Twitter @huntwriter

ABOVE LEFT Two bedroom apartment interior at East Village. Get Living London appointed Wayne Hemingway and his team at HemingwayDesign to lead the furnishing and interior design for all of the homes and created a series of furniture packages for those renting the new homes, with a central design ethos to feature the best of British design

ABOVE RIGHT East Village landscaping

THIS PIC Aerial view of East Village with the Olympic Stadium and venues

