

Graven Hill Update

June 2015



The big news since the last *Graven Hill* newsletter was issued at the beginning of May is that **a second self-build information event has now been confirmed for July**. This will give those who missed the first event in March the opportunity to find out more about self-build opportunities at Graven Hill. Details are included within this newsletter, as are updates about the site's brand development, information about open space at Graven Hill and answers to some of the latest frequently asked questions.

Self-build information event

Back in March the Graven Hill team was joined by self-build and industry experts to host a free information event about the practicalities and realities of building a home at Graven Hill. With an estimated 700 people passing through the doors, it was agreed to hold a repeat of the event for those who were unable to attend.

The date and venue have now been confirmed and the free event will take place on Friday, 10 July at The Tally Ho Hotel on Ploughley Road in Arncott. The venue is located just two miles away from Graven Hill. The event will be split into an afternoon session starting at 1.30pm and repeated again at 5pm. Several guest speakers have already been confirmed to discuss topics ranging from an introduction to self-build and group-self build to finance and the supply chain. Full details, including the online booking form, will be published via email and on the Graven Hill website shortly.



Friday, 10 July
TALLY HO HOTEL
Ploughley Road
Arncott

Group self-build at Graven Hill

When referring to self-build opportunities at Graven Hill, this covers a wide spectrum of opportunities ranging from:

- People physically building their home themselves
- Commissioning an architect and contractor to design and build a home on their behalf
- Purchasing a 'package solution' (e.g. a kit home) from a manufacturer or developer
- Working with a 'custom build developer' to project manage the build process

These options not only apply to individual builds but also group builds, so it is important to keep an open mind and consider working with others to find a solution that meets people's needs and budgets. The benefits of group working can include:

- Having a real say in the design and layout of individual's homes
- Getting to know neighbours
- Potential economies of scale in working with others
- Organisations are available who will project manage and organise the design, planning and the construction work (if required)

For some people building as a group will be critical from a cost point of view and will

provide an opportunity to share resources, ideas and costs. For others, the attraction will be the chance to build their home alongside family and friends.

At Graven Hill there are a number of opportunities for group self-build schemes including terraces and apartments. These opportunities will tend to be with similar sized properties such as apartment blocks or terrace houses, so people will be able to work alongside those on similar budgets but retain the opportunity to customise homes to make them individual.

Although working as a group has huge benefits, it does require a commitment of time 'up front' to ensure the 'right' design and everyone's views are heard.

Anyone interested in working as part of a group at Graven Hill is being encouraged to contact the Graven Hill team to receive tailored information and support. Call 01295 221615 or email information@gravenhill.org.uk

To view examples of group-self build projects across the UK and Europe, visit the case study section of the Self Build Portal at www.selfbuildportal.org.uk



Open space at Graven Hill

The open space at Graven Hill is considered to be as important to the character of the site as the buildings themselves. Accordingly, the various woodland, field and wetland habitats proposed have been designed with as much attention to detail as the urban environment.

The existing abundance of rich greenery will be protected as far as possible, with new recreational parks being introduced for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike.

Proposed open space features include a gateway park (fig 1) located immediately adjacent to the main site entrance along the A41 that serves to provide a welcoming environment upon arrival. This lush and informal wetland park will contain swales, ponds, marginal planting, meadow-like grasses & meandering walk/cycle routes.

The untouched pockets of woodland will be preserved & opened for public use. Discrete, rural tracks of packed gravel & trodden ground will ramble through the lowland woods & up to hilltop areas, providing access for walking, cycling, educational activities & play (fig 2).

A series of field habitats including meadows & possible grazed farmland are also proposed with paths that roam through wildflowers, long tufty grasses & along native hedgerows (fig 3).



Fig 1. Artist illustration of the gateway park



Fig 2. Artist illustration of the woodlands



Fig 3. Artist illustration of the meadows



Focussing attention on brand development

During May, six focus groups were brought together to consider naming and branding options for the Graven Hill site.

The groups each had between six and eight participants who spent a couple of hours discussing a variety of names and associated imagery.

Although all of those who participated in the workshops were chosen from different walks of life, each had a shared interest in self-build.

The sessions were very lively and created a huge amount of discussion and debate. It was generally felt there was already a huge amount of excitement in the project with people keen to get involved and to build and live in their own home in a community with like-minded individuals.

Understanding the heritage of the site was also important. The participants were far more

accepting of certain aspects and features that evolved over time rather than those which were manufactured to fit.

The location and the unique self-build aspect of the site was also very appealing, with self-builders less likely to favour the 'cookie cutter' model adopted by traditional housing developers. Instead, participants preferred somewhere with enhanced open space and a good mix of homes that will give the development its USP.

When it comes to the development of the brand, participants felt simplicity was key with many of the attendees stating that any brand must portray the aspirations of the self-builders and the key components of the development at Graven Hill.

Using this market research, work is now taking place to finalise the brand which is expected to be launched in the autumn.

Self-builders' questions answered...

Each month the newsletter will feature some of the questions received by the Graven Hill team over the past four weeks in a bid to offer wide-spread clarity on any areas of confusion...

1. Can I have a basement?

Yes. Basements are allowed and the golden brick scheme is able to undertake the extra excavation work involved.

2. What speed internet will be available?

The matter of internet speed is not yet fully resolved, but it is anticipated that Graven Hill will benefit from the prevailing high speed broadband available to the area.

3. Can I have a large front garden?

At the launch event in March, there was a clear demand for more flexibility regarding the depth of front gardens. In response to this, the masterplan has since undergone further development to allow additional flexibility wherever appropriate.

4. How will the Graven Hill Development Company prevent speculative development?

The forthcoming prioritisation strategy will set out clear criteria that potential buyers will need to satisfy in order to purchase a plot. Furthermore, it is likely that all agreements of sale and deeds of transfer will include provisions to preclude speculative development. Please note, these provisions have not yet been fully resolved.

5. I noticed you have a primary school on site, but what secondary school provision is available locally?

Bicester currently has two secondary schools. The Cooper School has approximately 1,270 pupils while Bicester Community College has about 890 students. Details on each school can be found at www.thecooperschool.co.uk and www.bicester-cc.oxon.sch.uk

Additional planned secondary school provision will be provided at the nearby Kingsmere development in south west Bicester; more details can be found at www.kingsmere-bicester.com/about-kingsmere/facilities.html