

**Freemens Meadow, Leicester – Barratt brownfield skills at one of Europe’s largest regeneration projects**

Freemens Meadow, now taking shape in the centre of Leicester, is transforming a derelict waterfront site into a spectacular mixed-use development providing up to 1,000 properties, including homes for key workers and live/work units, plus shops, restaurants, offices and public open spaces.

One of the biggest projects of its type in Europe, the £80 million Docklands-style project is taking shape on a 37-acre former industrial site, on which Barratt successfully overcame a number of substantial technical challenges to bring it to the high standard demanded for residential development. It is rejuvenating Leicester’s West End and providing a wide range of new homes at prices from £175,000.

The project was recently rated as an “exemplary scheme” by the Government’s advisory body CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment).

Barratt is Britain’s leading urban regenerator and today over 80% of our homes are built on land which has had a previous use. In fact we build over 230 new homes on brownfield sites every week – more than any other housebuilder.

The Freemens Meadow site was derelict and needed considerable skill and meticulous planning to clear the land, which had had numerous former uses, including a locomotive depot, over the previous century.

Demolition of the outbuildings and



Freemens Meadow has proved to be a runaway success with buyers, with an innovative scheme to help key workers purchase new homes hailed as a major breakthrough by Secretary of State for Health Patricia Hewitt MP. She said: “This is a wonderful opportunity for public sector workers to buy an outstanding home at an affordable price. I am delighted to hear about this scheme to help this very important group of people.”

remediation works were undertaken in such a way that most of the materials were kept on site and recycled. This included the use of metal, concrete and rubble and the strategy minimised vehicle movements.

The site was originally earmarked for a new football stadium, incorporating significant retail superstore development which met with strong opposition from council officers, elected members and local people. It was then marketed for potential housing and, due to our extensive planning and regeneration skills, an agreement to purchase was undertaken in a matter of days. Within 18 months, our proposals were unanimously approved by the Planning Committee.

Barratt decided on a stunning contemporary design and commissioned architects Goddard Manton Partnership, the same firm which was also responsible for the redevelopment of parts of London’s Docklands and Cardiff Bay. The clear brief agreed between the architects and the local authority was to achieve a high density, urban design, which would

make a distinctive modern statement with the river being the main focus of the development.

The new homes are a mixture of 6-storey stepped buildings around courtyards, 7-storey waterfront buildings which include commercial and community uses, plus courtyard houses, apartments and townhouses. In addition there are two landmark towers dominating each end of the waterfront site.

Buildings are located to open up scenic vistas from every angle, leading to the waterway which runs the length of Freemens Meadow – extending the river’s influence and transferring extra value to a larger part of the development.

Contemporary materials have been used to striking effect and cars are discreetly parked under buildings to give unobstructed views.

Another significant aspect of the design is the inclusion of a new access bridge over the River Soar – the first major new river crossing in the city for more than 100 years.



1. The new homes are a mixture of 6-storey stepped buildings around courtyards, 7-storey waterfront buildings which include commercial and community uses, plus courtyard houses, apartments and townhouses.
2. The brownfield site prior to development.