

The Lockies

A case study
in modern
house building:
Introducing
Buttree Court



together
g housing

Procure
PLUS

Osco
HOMES

Situated in the historic town of South Kirkby, the Lockies bring high quality and affordable homes for local residents, built using modern manufacturing methods.

Homes with social value

Through an innovative approach to house building, modern methods of construction have been combined with true integrated social value to develop the Lockies project on previously derelict land.

Together Housing is one of the largest housing associations in the North of England, owning and managing 38,000 homes and affecting the lives of 50,000 tenants across 30 local authorities.

Working with South Kirkby Community Association and Wakefield Council, Together Housing developed a vision to transform what was once an area of land subjected to unlicensed tipping and anti-social behaviour, to a place which provides good quality affordable homes, built using structural panels manufactured in a factory.

The Lockies is unique in that it is the first affordable housing scheme of its kind where the structural panels were produced by prison inmates, who had a desire to retrain for skills which would assist in their rehabilitation back into society.

Background

As with any project there needs to be a valid reason for embarking on a commitment to investment. This was the case for this project, where the local community group, South Kirkby Community Association (led by the late Peter Buttree), had campaigned for the derelict land to be brought back into use.

The site is located in the former coal-mining town of South Kirkby, which lies approximately 12 miles South East of Wakefield City Centre. The site separates Mill Street and Mill Lane and was used as an informal public right of way. However, in recent years the site became known as a place of anti-social behaviour and unlicensed tipping, blighting the neighbourhood.

South Kirkby Community Association (SKCA) who owned the site were concerned that constant anti-social behaviour and tipping had become a liability. SKCA approached Together Housing with a proposal to transfer the ownership of the site for the specific purpose of providing new affordable homes. The approach was made to Together Housing as one of the main housing providers for South Kirkby.

***“As one of the largest Social Landlords in the North of England, we’re acutely aware that the need for new, affordable homes is not being met. Traditional building methods alone are simply not going to get houses built quickly or cost effectively enough to meet growing housing needs.*”**

“This innovative approach is really helping and we are continuing to look at future developments we can undertake with Osco Homes.”

Kevin Ruth, Deputy Chief Executive
Together Housing



Design and procurement

Acanthus WSM Architects were appointed by Together Housing to design the scheme. The original brief was to provide eight 2-bedroom bungalows using traditional methods of construction. The design proposals were used to consult with SKCA as well as the local authority, and a planning application was submitted on that basis.

Simultaneous with the planning consent process, Together procured tender prices to deliver the project. However, prices received were beyond the approved budget. There was a negotiation process with the lowest priced tender return, which failed to get back to budget.

Following failed negotiations on the build cost, Together Housing were invited to consider the launch of Osco Homes, a wholly owned subsidiary of Procure Plus Holdings Ltd. Osco Homes was created to fill a gap in low rise, off-site-manufactured (OSM) residential homes for the affordable housing sector.

Osco's niche is their ability to manufacture structural panels in a factory environment, while providing training and recruitment opportunities to low-risk prisoners at HMP Hindley. As a buyer through Procure Plus, Together Housing used this framework to negotiate a price on budget with Osco Homes and use The Lockies as a pilot with a view to rolling out on similar schemes.

The delivery challenge

The scheme which received planning had been designed for traditional build. Therefore a number of technical amends needed to be addressed such as:

- Site levels
- Elevational finishes (brick slips to satisfy planning drawings)
- Metal tile roof finishes.

The process within the factory in terms of producing structural panels went well and successful techniques for the handling, transportation and assembly of pre finished panels were developed and implemented.

The process at site level encountered a number of challenges which required a team approach to resolve:

- Planning condition discharge for drainage proposal requiring third party signoff
- Build Warranty provider being assured of the product in time for key milestone construction stages
- Quality management of groundworker in achieving the required tolerances to receive structural panels and coordination of the utility services with overall external works
- Co-ordination of handover process to client.



What was learned

Once the project was completed and handed over to Together Housing, a project review meeting took place to identify lessons learned. A number of learning points emerged from the meeting:

- Consider NHBC to undertake Building Control and Warranty provider role, which would assist in establishing the service and approval process.
- For future schemes convene a Pre Start Meeting with NHBC to establish requirements.
- A detailed assessment to include location of existing services and capacity of existing services.
- Consider Pre Commencement Cashflow for undertaking “up front” tasks, such as detailed service enquiries, surveys, etc. Assists in identifying and/or mitigating potential risks.
- Factory Timing and Quality - timing of site preparation and delivery of panels needs tight coordination. Regular quality checks in factory to avoid retro-fitting, e.g. utility boxes.
- Suggest essential to have factory inspections by NHBC to alleviate potential issues later. Osco Homes are investigating how this might be managed relative the inspection regimes and stages currently operated by NHBC.
- Document Control to address/improve for future schemes. Site Team to be made clearly aware of what is required on site.
- Ensure suitable, organised site set up for future schemes, to fully comply with CDM requirements and provide organised on-site facilities to aid management and co-ordination.
- Full design review and alignment with model prior to commencing works.

- Sufficient time to be afforded to complete groundworks prior to site deliveries of the manufactured units.

Good Practice

In addition good practice has been captured which can be developed and enhanced for future projects:

- First NHBC panelised system.
- NHBC technical manual produced for the Osco product.
- Running costs to be reviewed. Highly insulated units and therefore energy bills should be significantly reduced.
- Potential to roll out model across other low-risk prisons, offering training and recruitment opportunities, while meeting demand for affordable housing in other geographic locations.

All of the learning is being applied in the implemation of a second Together Housing project which will deliver seven houses at St Hilda’s Crescent, Cross Green, Leeds.

As The Lockies, like many affordable housing developments, is an addition to an existing residential area, the unique approach presented fewer disturbances, debris and noise for existing residents than a traditional build.



Employability

Osco Homes completed the development of the eight bungalows, partnering with HM Hindley Prison to recruit eight prisoners who were trained to build the external walls, floor and ceiling cassettes of the panellised units. The training provided in construction trades provides the skills required to work in the industry upon release; research suggests that gaining employment is key in reducing re-offending.

“Working on The Lockies was a great experience and it meant a lot to me to be involved. Since I’ve been released, I’ve started work for Osco using the new rendering skills I learnt on the project – it’s given me something to focus on. I’ve been inside a few times in my life and I think if something like this had been available earlier, it would’ve changed my decision making and I wouldn’t have re-offended.”

Michael MacNally, employed on the project

This project alone has provided the catalyst for eight full time employment opportunities, six within the Osco business. Of this group 85% have avoided re-offending and are fulfilling constructive roles within society. Michael MacNally who has been employed within the factory and on release in the site team which delivered the Lockies project is a primary example of what can be achieved.

Gwen Beeken, Managing Director of Osco Homes has led the development of the company and overseen the implementation of the Lockies from inception to completion, encapsulates the significance of the Lockies project.

“As The Lockies shows, by approaching house building differently, it’s possible to build homes in a way that’s more efficient and effective but also made a long-term, genuine difference to people and communities. The two most definitely aren’t mutually exclusive.”

Gwen Beeken, managing director
Osco Homes



Innovative Approach

The off-site-manufactured (OSM) solution used at The Lockies has been specifically developed by Osco Homes for the social housing sector to provide homes in a faster and fairer way with the greatest possible benefit to the community and local area.

Together Housing is one of the first providers to engage this manufacturing method, which delivered the new homes using precision manufactured steel framed panels built in a factory by Procure Plus subsidiary Osco Homes. This enabled delivery time to be more predictable as the majority of construction could take place under a factory roof without the need to rely on prolonged periods of dry weather.

The walls, floors and ceilings of eight new bungalows have been manufactured in a factory and then quickly assembled on site. This new approach means builds are faster to complete and costs can be kept down.

Homes built using this approach provides a tangible benefit to the wider community and economy as the modular method of building enables the building of more genuinely affordable houses to meet the growing demand.

“Osco Homes was set up to ensure that when new houses are built there’s a more tangible benefit to the wider community and economy and this method of building means that we can build more genuinely affordable houses to meet the growing demand.”

Mike Brogan, Chief Executive
Procure Plus



BEFORE...



...AFTER





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