

C20 South Group Poundbury Visit – 25th September 2021

The event started with an excellent, informative presentation and lively question and answer session led by Jason Bowerman, the Estates Development Manager for Poundbury, within the Duchy of Cornwall.

Construction began in 1993 on Duchy of Cornwall land following the publication of HRH The Prince of Wales' book "A Vision of Britain" that set out his views on architecture and urban planning. Leon Krier was appointed as the architect to implement the Masterplan. It was a response to soulless urban sprawl - with housing estates located at a distance from employment, retail and leisure sectors (leading to a greater reliance on the car). Poundbury is designed as a sustainable community where people can "live, work, shop and relax" incorporating the rich heritage of traditional architectural styles and materials of Dorset.

Poundbury is not a new town but an extension of the Dorset County town of Dorchester. There are four distinct quarters, or neighbourhoods, of mixed use development. Work is currently in progress on the fourth, the North West Quadrant with completion estimated in 2025/26. Each mixed-use neighbourhood integrates housing, work and retail premises and leisure facilities. Each neighbourhood has a network of walkable streets radiating from a central hub. Additionally, the design promotes the idea of reclaiming the streets as places first with less reliance on the car, less road signage and parking in courtyards at the rear of properties.

The emphasis is on the creation of an aesthetically pleasing built environment with high quality traditional architecture of diverse styles. Furthermore, the principle of integrated affordable housing (currently provided at 35%), alongside private housing, is an important tenet of the Masterplan. The Queen Mother Square is now the heart of the development with a supermarket, Duchess of Cornwall Inn, a boutique hotel, luxury apartments in the Royal Pavilion, a garden centre and an imposing statue of the Queen Mother.

The provision of open space is integral to the development with parks and play areas and the Great Field. Trees and wild flowers have been planted and bee bricks and swift boxes installed and there are allotments. Since 2012, the Rainbow Farm, a commercial Biomethane plant, has generated renewable gas for the development. Five years ago the local authority established a primary school, there are also two churches and the establishment of a quiet space for spiritual contemplation, nursing homes and private apartments for senior living and a community hall.

Following the presentation, we had a guided tour around some of the neighbourhoods, giving the opportunity for members to share their varied impressions of the development. All in all, an excellent, thought provoking event. Many thanks to Jason for giving us a most insightful talk and tour and member, Mike Henderson for setting up the event.

Bobbie Dawson