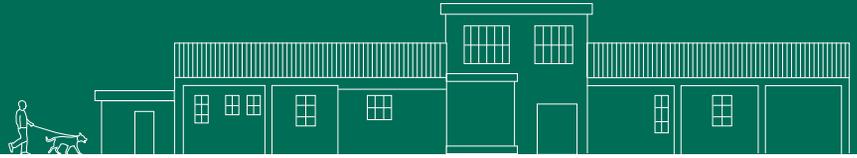




Physical



Our approach

“Creating high quality places is absolutely what we do. We tailor the designs of our sites to create long-term physical value and increase the longevity and walkability of our places.”

Everyone agrees: the UK needs more housing and it needs housing in places that people want to live in and that provide the services – transport, schools, recreation – that are equally important. Achieving planning for and then delivering large scale sites which make this kind of quality and differentiated housebuilding possible, with increasing levels of market absorption, is our job as a Master Developer.

Our mantra that “flexibility is better than prophecy” ensures we design our developments with the ability to evolve and respond to innovations and changing trends. We continue to create places that support people to live sustainable and healthy lives, designing sustainability into our sites from the very beginning. Travel planning is an essential part of this, to ensure people living and working on our sites can access what they need quickly and sustainably.

To support our approach within this capital, we consider the following objectives describe what we do and ensure we create long-term physical value across our developments:

Unlock value through physical infrastructure

The physical infrastructure we build, such as schools, bus stops, roads and utility services, not only generates links with the existing communities, but it also provides value to the communities we create. As a Master Developer, we seek to recycle, decontaminate and reuse materials wherever possible on site and we embed “Active Design” Principles at each stage of our design process.

In combination this enables us to deliver a sustainable and considered structure of multifunctional green spaces and public realms that are well connected to homes and jobs, creating everyday opportunities. We are also a signatory to NHS England’s Healthy New Towns Network.

Develop a future-looking and flexible energy strategy

The way we power homes in the UK is rapidly changing; this is why we ensure that our energy strategy for each development is flexible and meets the changing demands of the future. Our mantra continues to be based upon a fabric-first approach to embed energy conservation and use within the design as well as continuing to utilise self and regenerated energy through photovoltaic, ground source heat pumps, battery storage, hot waste water recycling, etc. However, we recognise that dependence on electricity from the grid will not provide the solution to our future energy supply strategy alone and are investing in off-site generation from sustainable and renewable sources of energy alongside localised on site generation and recycling of energy. This will also require close working and alignment with our housebuilder customers which are responsible for the delivery of the homes on our sites.

Resilience to climate change

We acknowledge the UK government’s commitment to achieve net zero carbon by 2050, and the part new housing developments have to play in achieving the transition to a low carbon economy. As part of our approach to build places that are resilient to the impacts of a warming climate, we are already modelling the potential effects of the future decarbonisation of our utilities network and changing building fabric requirements as part of all technical and financial appraisals.

CASE STUDY

Delivering Active Design

An essential component of the approach to designing and now delivering new development at Alconbury Weald has been the embedding of Sport England’s Active Design Principles.

In 2019, Alconbury featured as a Sport England case study which stated:

“An important aspect to ensuring the success of embedding the Active Design Principles into the scheme has been the long term ‘Master Developer’ role that Urban&Civic (U&C) have taken. U&C have retained the long-term overall control of the site, which ensures that there is proper phasing of build out and adherence to the design principles and vision for the overall development.”



Sample metrics from Alconbury KP1:

489,000

tonnes of concrete taxiways excavated, processed and reused on site

12.8km

of dedicated cycle routes provided to date

One

Grade 2 listed Second World War watchtower fully refurbished and opened in summer 2019 as a community facility and office

89ha

of contaminated land remediated and returned to a usable development platform to date

CASE STUDY

Restoring heritage

The remarkable Second World War-era RAF Watch Office has been restored at Alconbury Weald. The Grade II listed building has been transformed into a library and heritage space for the community to use. Built in 1940-41, the Watchtower was the first permanent control tower at Alconbury. The Watchtower is an outstanding example of a standard type built for bomber satellite stations during the Second World War. Only 214 were built in the UK in total, with just a handful remaining.

Taking almost one year to complete, the Watchtower had to be restored with the original features retained or reinstated where possible, including external stairs, timber door sets, original walls and flooring, a roof access ladder and the roof balustrade, breathing new life into the period features. The result is an outstanding new heritage space to be enjoyed by many generations to come.

“It has been an honour to work on a restoration project of such high historical significance. We are pleased that Urban&Civic has integrated this fine example of war-time architecture into the masterplan, ensuring it benefits the community by raising awareness of the heritage of the site and providing new facilities.”

Nick Armour, Local Conservation Officer at Huntingdonshire District Council



We are building upon the current SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) and SBEM (Simplified Building Energy Model) modelling, air tightness test data, and daylighting and thermal modelling on each of our commercial buildings to understand the impacts of our fabric-first approach employed to date on any potential overheating scenario and on the performance of the buildings and comfort of the people who use them. In addition, we install extensive Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) to ensure appropriate ground water management. All drainage systems are designed for one in 30-year flows with overland flows and attenuation to one in 100-year events, such flood data is under constant review as external modelling is updated by our statutory partners.

Bring heritage to life

The development of large-scale sites creates new places, but it is essential to anchor those places in the site and the surrounding area's heritage to provide a genuine sense of place. Whilst this does not mean preserving everything it does require a sympathetic, creative and proactive approach to heritage. From the recent restoration of the listed watch tower at Alconbury to the incorporation of the listed C-Station Building at Houlton into the new secondary school we also seek to ensure that heritage buildings have a long-term viable future and will be fully adopted by the new community.

Design sustainable transport

A great place supports people going about their daily lives. Travel planning is essential to ensure people living and working on our sites can access what they need quickly and sustainably.

We promote a culture of cycling and walking and have integrated these considerations into our plans right across our portfolio of sites; this aims to not only limit the impact of our new developments on existing transport networks, but to also encourage our residents to enjoy healthy lifestyles. Working at scale, this means that we have already delivered over 28km of cycle routes within our sites alone. At Alconbury Weald one of our founding principles has been to deliver a “walkable community”, ensuring that all residents have the option to walk to schools, shops and parks. As a result, all homes have been designed to be within a 5–6 minute walk of a bus stop and a 10–12 minute walk from a local shop. At Houlton, Rugby, the link road, which opened this year, also incorporated a dedicated footpath/cycleway providing direct access to the town and allowing a sustainable option for commuting to the station.

Build quality outdoor public spaces and facilities

We create quality outdoor public spaces and facilities for people to enjoy. As part of our design we ensure that the provision of the green infrastructure network and also core community facilities, such as cricket pitches, allotments and schools, is available as soon as possible and continues to grow with the community. Our role as Master Developer is to ensure that these essential community infrastructures meet the daily needs of the new residents. At Priors Hall, this year where we took over an existing development, we have delivered eight play spaces, two fitness areas, a new community café and a dedicated on-site Urban&Civic office and planted over 46,000 trees to ensure that this site not only has the provision originally intended but is also uplifted by our focus on quality and our belief in the importance of this capital.