

Windmill Piece, Watlington OXFORDSHIRE

Local authority: South Oxfordshire District Council

Client: Sovereign Housing Association

Contractor: Leadbitter Construction

Architect: Sovereign Housing Group

Cost: £1.6m

Number: 18 (12 for rent plus 6 shared ownership).



Sovereign's in-house architect practice used standard house types to design more than 70 affordable homes in Oxfordshire's villages so far using our standard house types.

The site

Sovereign is a founder member of the Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership – an alliance of four housing associations and four district councils committed to building 500 rural homes by 2009/10.

Part of this involves working with parish councils in rural settlements to identify land. In 2006, Sovereign was approached by Watlington Parish Council to see if we could provide a small scheme.

The local rural housing enabler calculated that 18 homes would be needed, and the parish council was asked to identify sites. In 2006, a section of farmland next to a row of houses and industrial estate was identified, and Sovereign bought the Greenfield site for £90,000 from the farmer.

Sovereign secured planning consent in Oct 2006, after planners agreed that the provision of affordable housing outweighed the slight extension of the village footprint.

The scheme

There are 18 homes arranged in two rows, made up of 10 apartments, seven family homes, and a bungalow. The s106 agreement strictly adheres that all efforts are to be made to house people with strong Watlington connections, including those for shared ownership – something Sovereign is now used to.

The £1.6m bill was slightly reduced by £300,000 of grant from the Housing Corporation, or £25,000 per rented unit. This has helped achieve Secure By Design, Ecohomes Very Good rating, and to use modern methods of construction (ie timber frame). The scheme completed in 38 weeks.

Completion date: Oct 2007