



Press Release

28th September 2020

Top award for visionary social housing

Visionary social housing that has transformed an area of Sele Farm, Hertford, previously in urgent need of redevelopment, was this week awarded a top accolade from Hertford Civic Society.

The Ridgeway housing was judged the best of 20 final contenders for the Society's "Cream Plaque" award by an independent panel under the guidance of Dr Lee Prosser, Curator of Historic Buildings at Historic Royal Palaces.

Such recognition is given every four or five years for the most outstanding site making a significant visible impact on Hertford. This year's award celebrates the best in new or refurbished buildings since 2016.

The Panel concluded that the houses and flats built by Network Homes at the Ridgeway, Sele Farm, had a "strong identity", showing careful design. Houses and flats were equally well constructed and there was a positive sense of community among people living there. This achievement was judged to be impressive, particularly given the very recent completion of work, in 2019.

The need to deliver relatively high-density housing had been cleverly met by Network Homes, the panel said, creating different types of building along a central "street", which felt like "a processional way, culminating in a taller, elegant apartment block".

Four strong contenders receiving commendations included the refurbishment of Ware Park Mill House (architect: Kirby Cove) along the River Lee, a Grade II listed building restored to its original Georgian style. Panel members appreciated the care taken over the Mill House and its surrounds - including the interpretive panel and viewing point, so passers-by can see the remains of the old watermill from the footpath.

Other commended developments were: the houses and flats in Tudor Way, Hutton Close and Welwyn Road, another Network Homes development; the conversion of Media House (former Hertfordshire Mercury offices on Ware Road) by LW Developments Ltd, into housing; and the Great Northern Works (a development conceived by adjacent Ekins Builders Ltd) which were judged sufficiently honest and thoughtfully designed, within the constraints of a tricky site, to be commendable.

Malcom Ramsay, chair of Hertford Civic Society, said: "This award scheme is part of Hertford Civic Society's drive to encourage discussion and debate about the best new buildings in Hertford and to encourage more people to think critically about the built environment and what sort of town they wish to live in."

The independent panel working under Dr Prosser's guidance was a citizen jury, which made the final assessment, drawing on comments and suggestions from Civic Society members and the public. The panel comprised: Ben Crystall, East Herts District councillor for Hertford

Bengeo; Karen Elmes, a built environment engagement specialist; Hilary Laidler, former Deputy Head at Cheshunt School; and Ian Nash, journalist and media consultant.

Notes to Editors:

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Hertford Civic Society was formed in 1969 to protect the architectural heritage of the county town and to encourage the best in contemporary design. The Society has worked constantly to improve the environment and facilities in the county town during a time of great change and increasing pressure on resources. Over this time the Society has established a reputation for presenting strong and sensible knowledge on planning and other issues.

Hertford Civic Society is a registered charity No. 266111
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