

# DELIVERING A CARBON NEUTRAL COMMUNITY

Graylingwell Park will be the UK's largest carbon neutral development, located on the site of a former hospital near Chichester. Set within 85 acres of parkland grounds, it will provide around 750 new and converted homes along with a range of new community amenities, managed by a Community Development Trust. By **Marcus Adams**



Graylingwell Hospital was part of network of hospitals and asylums built during the 19th century for those suffering mental illness or with serious disabilities. Many, like Graylingwell, were conceived as self-contained communities, with their own farms and kitchen gardens, orchards, administrative offices, workplaces, chapels, and therapeutic landscapes, in addition to hospital wards and treatment facilities. But as clinical approaches to the treatment of mental health changed, many of these places became redundant, and Graylingwell was amongst 96 hospital sites transferred from the NHS to English Partnerships, as part of the Government initiative to use public sector assets to meet the national housing need. A competitive process undertaken by English Partnerships (now the Homes & Communities Agency) was won by a joint-venture between private developers Linden Homes and Downland Housing Association/Affinity Sutton, primarily because of their commitment to a net carbon zero development, which far exceeded the performance targets. The proposals for the 34-hectare site were developed by a team led by John Thompson & Partners, with Joachim Eble Architektur, Studio Engleback and WSP, and driven by the idea of reinstating Graylingwell as a self-sustaining community by using four key approaches: these are briefly outlined below.

## 1. COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

The winning bid proposed a consensus-led masterplanning process, using techniques pioneered by JTP on their award-winning Caterham Barracks project, also undertaken for Linden Homes. The Graylingwell Community Planning Weekend was held during March 2008 and involved more than 350 participants including local residents, business people, council officers, arts groups, university representatives and other key stakeholders. The community event revealed great affection for the buildings and landscapes of the former asylum, and served as a reminder of the social importance of these civic institutions.

As a consequence, the development team set up the 'Graylingwell Forum' for local residents, businesses and interest groups to serve as a platform for regular communication and feedback. From this point, the participative approach to design was effectively an urban 'change management' process, with local people having a key role in determining how the Graylingwell site should be integrated into the town, while retaining a sense of identity as a self-sustaining community.