

Five-year Hale Village project is changing the face of Tottenham



■ THE planned student accommodation block at Hale Village

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IT is one of the biggest developments in Haringey's history and its developers say it could change the face of Tottenham.

The project in question is the £400 million Hale Village project, set on the old GLS depot site between Tottenham Hale Station and the Lee Valley Navigation.

Curious passers-by pause to watch as builders and diggers form a hive of activity on the muddy expanse of cleared land next to Ferry Lane.

That the project is big is beyond doubt. When finished, the 12-acre site, which was once home to furniture manufacturer Harris Lebus, will include 1,210 apartments, a 120-bed hotel, 50,000sq ft of retail space, a supermarket, a dentist, a doctor's surgery and a primary school.

Chris Shellard, project director for developers Lee Valley Estates, says simply: "It's the biggest thing we've ever done."

A large development as opposed to "piecemeal, infill development is the solution" to turning an area around, he believes, arguing it creates "sufficient investment value" to act as a catalyst for lasting change.

Speaking over lunch at The Lock dining bar, on the ground floor of the company's impressive Heron House offices, beside the navigation, he describes the trans-Atlantic inspiration for the development.

The design and environmental sustainability of the site is modelled on Hammarby, a waterside district of Sweden's capital Stockholm.

To this they have added the American concept for mixed-use developments, whereby middle class spending is drawn into a poorer area as a boosting mechanism.

"What happens to Tottenham doesn't have to be low grade or second best," says Mr Shellard.



■ HUNDREDS of tin helmets found in a maze of wartime tunnels on the huge site

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"We're trying to create a mixed community in all senses. It's more likely to give an area a lift than any amount of government grant. It's not socially enlightened; it's good for business."

The aim is to create a living, working site with up to 1,000 people around during the day – not a place that empties to become a ghost town.

In a report on the site Mr Shellard quotes Labour politician Nye Bevan, who as housing minister in 1945, argued it was "essential for the full life of the citizen to see the living tapestry of a mixed community" – one in which "the doctor, the grocer, the butcher and the farm labourer all live in one street".

In duller, more recent government speak, a place that supports "a range of household sizes and incomes".

Vision

Listening to him spell out the vision for this place on the edge of an area with "more water than Norfolk", selling it ought to be a breeze.

He reels off examples of the location's "fantastic connectivity" – 20 minutes to the O2 Centre, 11 minutes to Stratford, 17 minutes to Oxford Street, 29 minutes to Stansted Airport.

But there are some sticking points. Tottenham is set in one of the most deprived areas of the country and its reputation has been sullied by crime – a factor that does not help the sales pitch to investors or prospective inhabitants.

So, he is keen to draw the contrast between perception and reality.

"Fear of crime is bigger than crime itself," he says. "I lived here for 12 years then moved to Potters Bar and got burgled. If you can have a more balanced community then you can actually have a stronger community."

"We're selling the place as rapidly improving, quality residential location, which is on the up and any difficulty, which affects us raising money has an impact on the whole area and its economy."

The risk they bear with this development is "huge", he says, pointing out there have been nine failed applications for schemes here over 20 years. He has calculated just having a factory or group of small businesses on site during those years could have injected millions into the local economy.

Construction of Hale Village, a series of blocks or "pavilions" of flats, is set to take five years in two phases, employing 750 workers on site. The first three-year phase is the construction of the front half of the site facing



■ ABOVE: Hammarby, a waterside district of Sweden's capital Stockholm, on which Hale Village is based



■ LEFT: One of the main blocks of the Hale Village development

Creating a development of this size and complexity is already proving an engineering challenge. The whole site will be raised to street level to allow for 750 underground parking spaces.

Then there are the hidden costs such as discovering two kilometres of Second World War underground air raid shelters on the site – believed to be the largest of its kind in the country.

Here Tottenham residents and workers, mainly women, would have spent hours at a time awaiting the all

clear. Items found inside had to be archived and recorded for English Heritage before the tunnels could be filled in, in a project costing around £100,000.

In the end Lee Valley Estates insist they are different from the unloved stereotypical profit driven developer, who buys, builds, makes big bucks and leaves. They say they are here for the long haul and what is good for them will be good for Tottenham.

"We're here to stay," says Mr Shellard. "Everything we do is within a five-mile radius; everything we own is within a five mile radius."

"We will help finish off Tottenham Hale and even buy on the western side of the railway if the opportunity arises and carry on regenerating."

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■ MICHAEL Polledri (left), chairman of Lee Valley Estates and director of Hale Village Properties LLP, the partnership with home builder Barratt East London, pictured with Chris Shellard, project director for Lee Valley Estates, on the top floor of Heron House looking out over the former depot site

Picture: Tony Gay