



Lovedon Fields

John Pardey Architects has designed a village extension of 50 custom build homes at Kings Worthy in Hampshire. Engineer Steve Webb delivers his verdict on a project that draws on the local vernacular and connects the existing settlement to the adjacent South Downs National Park

Photographs by
Jim Stephenson, Pete Humphry
and Richard Chivers





Vernacular building has been called (rather haughtily by Pevsner) 'non-architecture'. It is a form of building that emerges from the practical possibilities of what was available to generally poor people trying to build dignified homes with limited resources. The homogeneity of vernacular buildings in a given location might be unintentional and driven completely by what was there and what was known.

Traditional roofs were pitched because reeds or tiles are not collectively waterproof on their own. The pitch allows rainwater to run down the face of one tile or reed onto another, creating a waterproof surface through geometry and gravity. When a reliable waterproof membrane becomes available a builder would logically save themselves a lot of timber work and masonry and build a flat roof. Mastic asphalt was patented in 1837 and EPDM membranes in the 1960s. It's interesting to think that something as humble as rubber sheeting could have such a profound effect on an ancient architectural style, except it hasn't entirely and pitched roofs continue to be built today.

Lovedon Fields is a housing development at the edge of Kings Worthy, a village on the outskirts of Winchester bordering the South Downs National Park. The developer HAB Housing, founded by the television presenter Kevin McCloud and Isabel Allen, editor of this very magazine, worked with architect John Pardey and his co-director Carl Gulland, BD Landscape Architects, and engineer Clarkebond to design the development. Unusually, HAB acted as its own management contractor, carrying out the construction itself working with Bath-based practice BBA as the executive architect. An acronym of 'happiness, architecture, beauty', HAB set out to exceed the standard offer of commercial housing developers by delivering well-designed, sustainable homes.

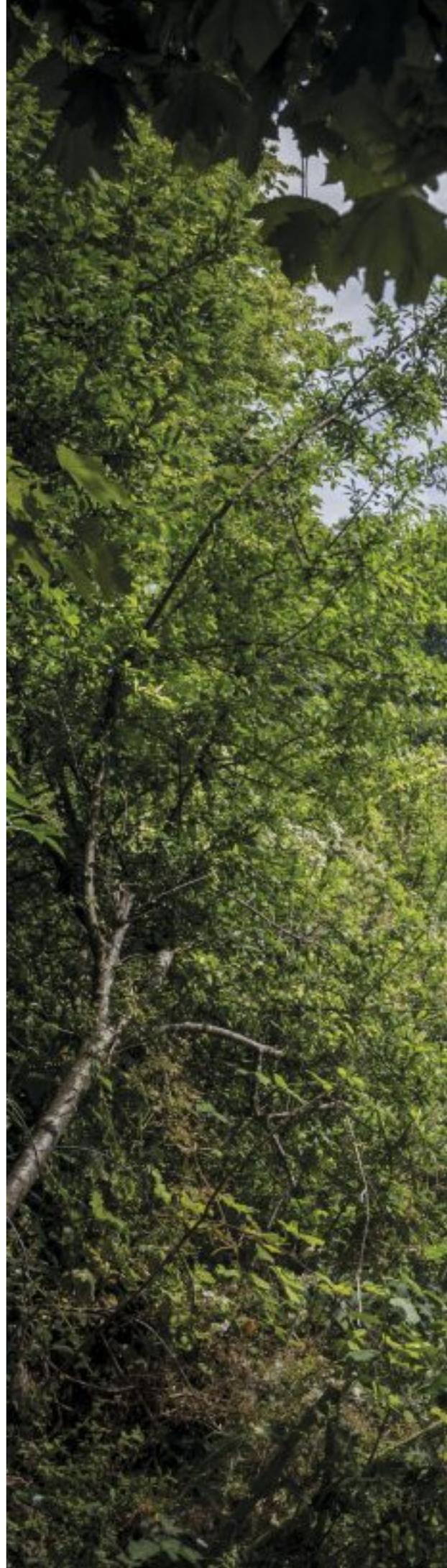
I arrived to take a look on a bleak January morning. The first thing one notices is how well the colour and material palette sits within the wintery landscape. Brown buff bricks with patches of pre-weathered timber boarding and occasional flashes of olive green (think Farrow and Ball) cladding and fascias complement the overcast dun colours



Right: Existing tree lines and hegerows have been retained and strengthened creating wildlife corridors and knitting the project into its site. Footpaths criss-cross the project, creating new walking and cycling routes between the existing settlement and the South Downs National Park.

Site plan

- 1 Pedestrian access
- 2 Vehicle access
- 3 Running and cycle loop
- 4 New native hedgerow
- 5 Ecological grassland
- 6 Informal footpaths
- 7 Allotments
- 8 Football pitch
- 9 Visitor parking





of leafless woodland and yellowy winter grassland. The development sits in front of a large open meadow that separates it from the national park. It consists of 30 privately-owned houses and 20 affordable homes, some of which are flats, laid out around common green areas and criss-crossed with paths from the village to other places.

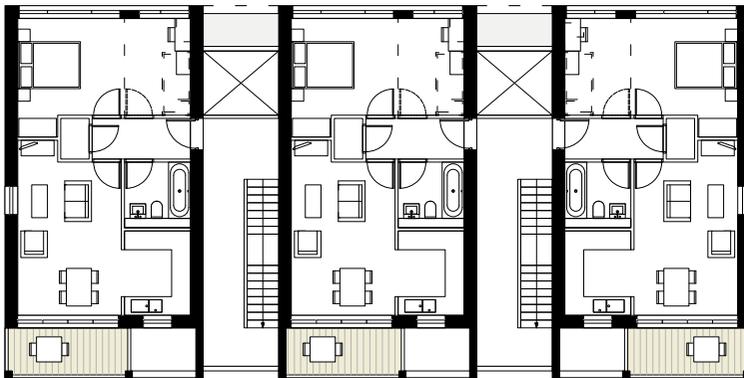
The periphery of the development is fronted by elegant, pitched roofed, chimneyed detached houses. In their outline form and materiality, they mirror the local vernacular – a nod to the fact that the planners and Natural England were highly sensitive of their proximity to the national park – but are unfussy with generous modern fenestration. Although detached, they are joined by single-storey garages and together the row creates a satisfying terrace-like rhythm.

Gulland is at pains to stress the importance of context in the way John Pardey Architects works. He explains how he walked the adjacent villages at great length and looked at the disposition of the houses and their form before designing those at Lovedon Fields. His observation that

local houses often addressed side lanes, with their gabled ends facing the street, inspired the orientation here. Despite this exploring, and the evident attention to detail, the development is clearly contemporary, even when viewed from a distance. There is something abrupt about its edges and inorganic in its street plan. I imagine that the local vernacular has developed over long periods of time, along lanes and paths on a small parcel-by-parcel basis. However, HAB bought a plot of land, rather than a spider’s web of rural desire lines, and needed to get enough houses on site built at once to make the development profitable, so the difference from the local older buildings was baked in from the outset.

In contrast, the inner part of the development has a row of what Pardey describes as ‘Danish style’ houses. These flat-roofed buildings are timber clad rather than brick clad and have a ‘mid-century modern’ air. I asked him why the switch of style: “We had to address the national park but when we were a bit further back they let us off the leash.”

This stylistic schism throws light on a



**Apartments:
First floor**



**Apartments:
Ground floor**

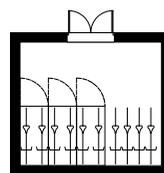
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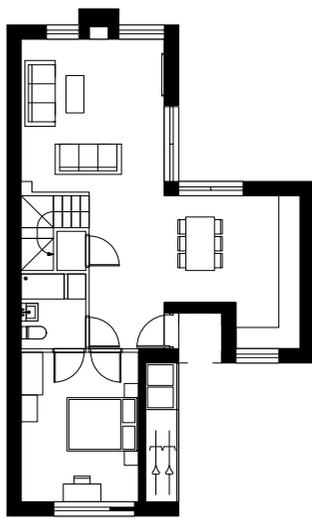
Left: All apartments have generous outdoor space. The floor plans allow for one large bedroom to be converted into two smaller bedrooms, or vice versa as required.



Above: Planting acts as a buffer between dwellings and roads and helps to define the intimate threshold spaces that anchor the houses within the public realm.

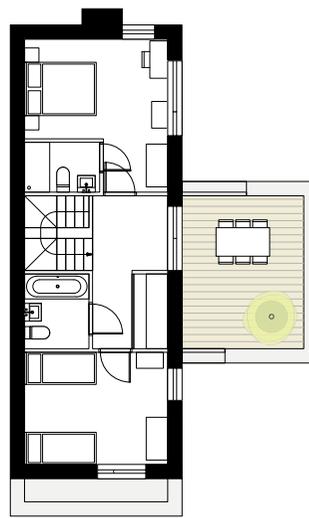


The development includes a range of houses from two bedroom terraced dwellings to five bedroom detached homes. Houses were sold off plan with a range of possible layouts and varying degrees of open plan. The most popular options for two of the house types are shown here.

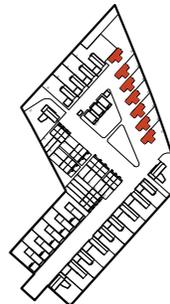


T Houses:
Ground floor

0 5M

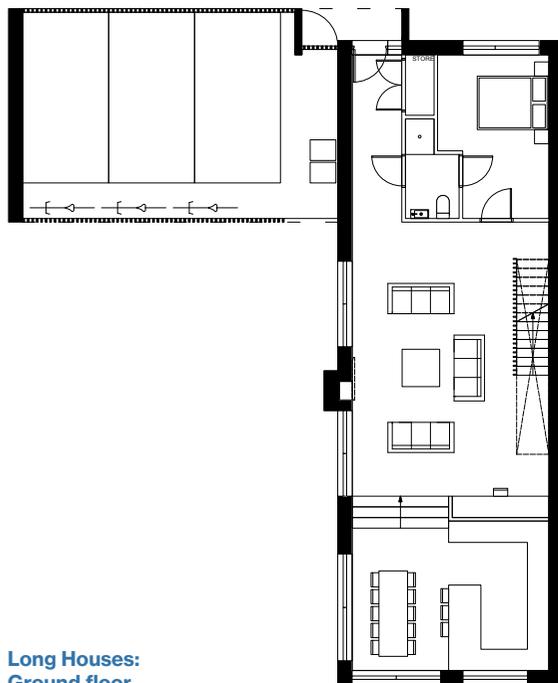


T Houses:
First floor

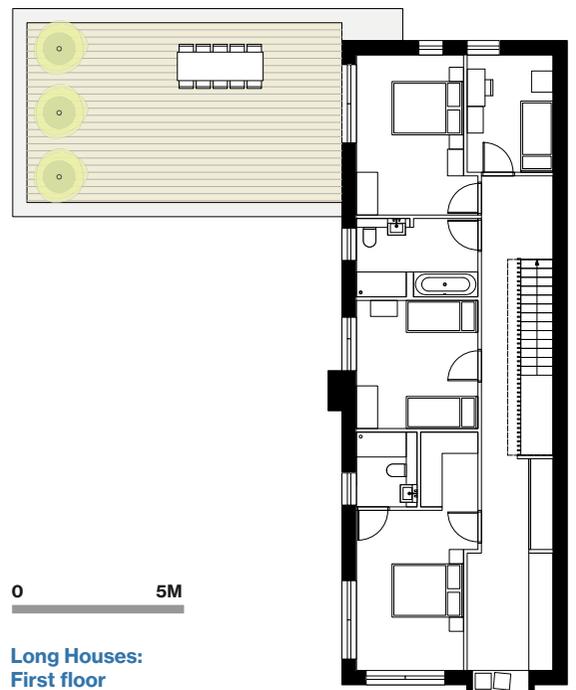


The T Houses, which line the edge of Lovedon Lane, are designed with older residents in mind. Most purchasers opted for this relatively conventional layout, but liked the fact that the first floor can be easily converted into a self-contained carer's apartment with its own first floor terrace if required.

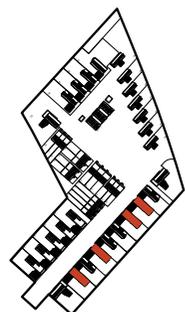
Long Houses are interspersed with Chimney Houses along the boundary with the new wildflower meadow. Purchasers liked the split-level open-plan ground floor with steps down to a kitchen/dining area 'embedded' in the landscape, and the first-floor, semi-open-plan study space with a view. Internal walls can be removed to create fewer, larger rooms once children leave home. The roof terrace above the garage affords long views towards the National Park.



Long Houses:
Ground floor



Long Houses:
First floor



Project team

Client

HAB Housing

Architect

John Pardey Architects

Executive architect

BBA Architects

Landscape architect

BD Landscape

Architects

Structural engineer

Clarkebond

M&E consultant

Fabric Building Physics

L VIA Consultant

The Landmark Practice

Contractor

HAB Housing

Selected subcontractors and suppliers

Landscape contractors

Hillier Landscapes,

Peach Ecology

Timber frame

Stewart Milne Timber

Systems

Bricks

The Bespoke Brick

Company

Timber cladding and landscape elements

Piveteaubois

Windows

Velfac

Rooflights

Velux

Roof tiles

Dreadnought

Integrated photovoltaic panels

GB-Sol

Sliding garage doors

Rundum Meir

major dilemma in housing design in the UK. As an engineer, my assessment of the local vernacular ‘non-architecture’ would be more technological. At each period you find what could be done at the time. Tudor houses have tiny window panes in lead because they could only make tiny pieces of glass. Georgian windows have larger square panes with bottle ends because they learned to pour big glass circles onto a hot steel plate. Victorian houses have big panes because they learned to float glass. Thatch, crook frame and wattle-and-daub gave way to brick and tile with the advent of coal. Vernacular buildings reflect what is around them, stone or clay. We begin to interpret their similarity as a style – one that can be adopted by mock Tudor or 1980s neo-Georgian or, indeed, Lovedon Fields.

Today’s buildings have often become unhitched from the practical constraints that used to give rise to a particular appearance. They are both geographically and chronologically divorced from their context. We can buy materials from anywhere in the world and it is often very difficult to use local ones. We keep making

old-fashioned materials like bricks; a coal-era product designed to be built by manual labour, when we shouldn’t be burning fossil fuel because of feedback loops in demand and supply. Imagine an imported fibreglass classical pilaster with plastic neo-Georgian windows stuck on the front of an executive brick box. Lovedon Fields doesn’t go that far. Despite its nod to the local, it is quite refreshingly modern at close quarters. The detailing and expression of the building features are far more of their time and carefully thought through to make the buildings a pleasure for the residents.

It occurs to me that John Pardey’s, “off the leash Danish style” houses are a little closer to a modern truth. We have rubber membranes and so they have flat roofs. We have preservative treatment for timber and so they are clad predominantly in timber. This lighter approach must be both more economical and lower carbon, avoiding coal products like bricks, brick gables and clay roof tiles.

While in Britain we have been endlessly recreating the 18th century, modernist cities like Palm Springs were dealing with a



Above: Aerial view showing family houses with modest private gardens opening onto what is now a publicly accessible wildflower meadow protected in perpetuity by the charity Fields in Trust.

Right: Affordable apartments enjoy generous south-facing balconies and views over a shared landscaped space. The aim was to create a planting strategy that was ‘both dense and free’, an ecologically rich extension of the surrounding countryside as opposed to a formal village green.









relatively blank canvas. They had no woody lanes and Georgian farmhouse-filled villages to respect. Their clients weren't steeped in that history either. Those cities developed a cohesive style that people are now very fond of. What would Lovedon Fields have looked like if the designers had been 'leashless' from the beginning? After being submerged in contemporary architecture and living and working in the English countryside and being surrounded by suppliers, purchasers, planners – all of whom are prepared for the neo vernacular – can you even perceive of what a true architecture of the time and place might be, and would that itself be an affectation? As with the vernacular, the key for us might be technological. What are our constraints? Amongst other things, carbon and sustainability. What are the materials of our day? Is it time to be braver and form new styles embracing our situation?

There is no doubt that John Pardey Architects' design for Lovedon Fields delivers on HAB's ambitions. The development is more sustainable and of a better quality than the vast majority of volume housebuilding – and the residents

love it. All of the houses are well insulated and constructed with cassette-built timber-frame panels. The brickwork is a decorative cladding element. All of the houses have PV panels and the larger houses have wood burners. The rush-filled verges in the street are actually attenuation ponds, making a street feature out of a water discharge problem. The first residents bought off-plan and unusually were given choices of interior arrangements and fit out. I met several of them who said that they loved the houses and the neighbourhood, and that a community spirit and sociability had sprung up between the residents.

John Pardey Architects' mediation between modern and traditional has succeeded in keeping everyone happy. Despite the many concessions to context, the development doesn't quite meld into the grain of old Hampshire. On the other hand, its modernity and progressiveness isn't really evident from a distance.

Although I can't help liking the place, I also can't help feeling a little disappointed that such a progressive developer wasn't able to forge a fresher path.

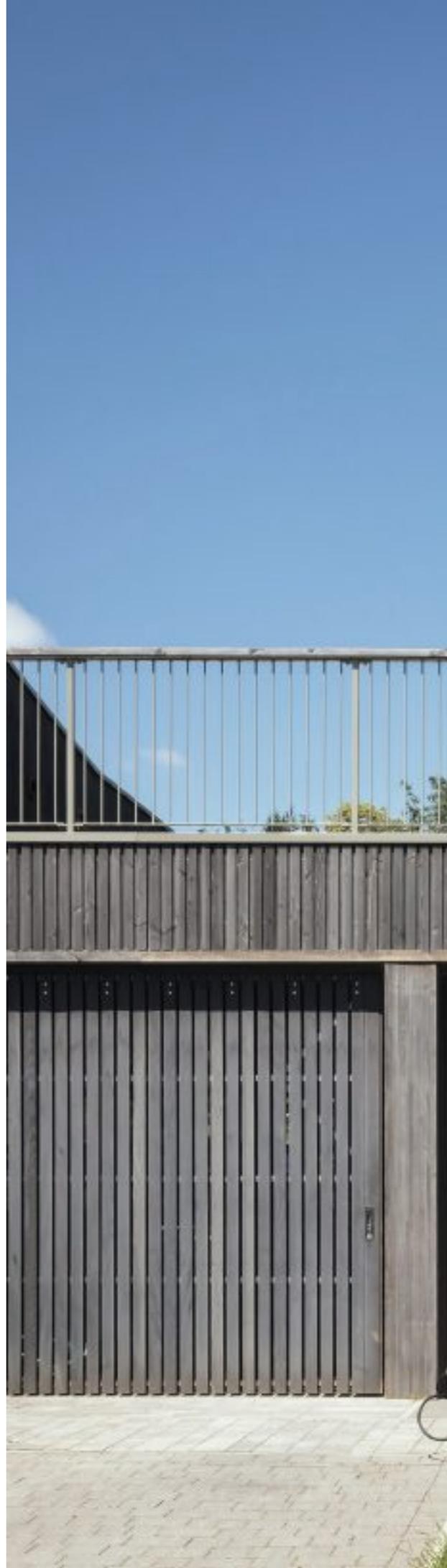


Above: The flat-roofed timber-clad Gallery Houses have a mid-century modern Scandinavian air in contrast to the more traditional pitched roofed brick houses that face the South Downs National Park.

Right: Balconies, roof terraces and generous 'stoops' provide a variety of outdoor spaces with varying degrees of privacy and different views.



Watch a film about Lovedon Fields and its residents at architecturetoday.co.uk/lovedon-fields





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Lovedon Fields

Landscape detail



Sections by BD Landscape Architects.

Above: Relationship between private rear gardens, shared cycle way and footpath, and wildflower meadow.

Right: Pathway through the meadow and landscape conditions either side.

Below: Relationship between areas of planting and vehicular, pedestrian and cycle routes.



- 1 Residential unit
- 2 Reinforced slope
- 3 Residential garden
- 4 Hedgerow and green edge
- 5 Shared cycleway and footpath
- 6 Ecological grassland



- 1 Threshold planting
- 2 1.5m wide pedestrian footpath
- 3 1.8m rain garden
- 4 6m wide roadway
- 5 Flush kerb edging

- 6 4.5m wide protective planting bed and trees
- 7 1.2m wide pedestrian footpath
- 8 Private threshold planting and seating