



Property Press



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Speen gets a store and new housing built solely for locals

Village gets its own shop back

A **BUCKS** village is to get its shop back a decade after the previous one closed.

The new shop has been built as part of a joint venture between Wycombe District Council and Wycombe-based Buckinghamshire Housing Association. It will be owned by the Association and run like any other village shop except the profits will be shared between the village and the housing association.

The development, on the site of the old store, includes a row of brick and flint cottages to rent to young families.

The five new homes have been earmarked for tenants who grew up in Speen but had to move away because property prices in this affluent Bucks village are beyond their means.

The first of the families moves in today and the rest will be in by next weekend.

Cllr Clare Martens, chairman of the council's housing and economic development committee, says the tenants were carefully vetted.

She explains: "One or other of the partners will have

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PROPERTY CORRESPONDENT

grown up in the village.

"One couple bought themselves a flat when they were both working, got married, had a baby, then the recession came.

"They spent seven years trying to sell the flat, got behind with the mortgage because of their reduced income.

"Through no fault of their own they were about to be repossessed. Finally they had to surrender the keys. Their marriage was on the rocks, they came to us expecting to have to rent a place somewhere in Wycombe.

"Instead we were able to put them on the list for a new cottage back in their home village. They are over the moon."

Four of the cottages have three bedrooms, one has two-bedrooms.

The smaller cottage is £74 a week, the three bedroom version is £76 a week.

Currently, the housing association is advertising for a

manager to run the shop which will open in November.

Jane Fleming, the association's chief executive, bought the site for £120,000 and battled for five years to get to this point where the village has a shop again and kids who couldn't afford to live in the village where they grew up are about to move back.

"The shop will be open seven days a week and stock everything from booze to bread," she says.

"Fifty per cent of the profits will go to the village to help village causes, and fifty per cent will come back to the association so we can do the same for another village.

"We have an enthusiastic group of professional local people who are advising us about how to set up and run the store. None of them are charging us for their services. We won't be charging rent for the shop and we hope the local authority will let us off rates because it is a charity.

"All we need now are the villagers to support it when it opens."

A wall plaque marking the completion of the development was unveiled last week by the chairman of Wycombe District Council, Cllr Frances Alexander.

She said: "I believe this is the first time that such a scheme in the district has incorporated a shop. I understand that when it is opened it will be run on a charitable basis and will, I hope, be of great benefit to the local community."

Cllr Alexander said some of the funds to build the cottages had come from a Housing Corporation grant. The shop has been built with funds from the lottery. She added: "It is a great credit to the Buckinghamshire Housing Association that they have been able to bring this attractive rural development to completion for the benefit of local people."

The name for the new lane bordered by the cottages at the side of the shop was chosen by 86-year-old Miss Campbell who owns the house next door. The development couldn't

have been built without a slice of her garden.

Jane Fleming explains: "She was under a lot of pressure from within the village when the site of the old store was up for sale. We didn't want to hassle her so we didn't approach her. But she wanted us to have it. She insisted: "I want some small houses for our youngsters and I want the village shop back." Her only stipulation was that it should be called Laurel Close, so Laurel Close it is."

The development also received a welcome from the builder constructing two £300,000 houses at the end of Laurel Close.

Jane Fleming reports: "The developer Peter Hatch couldn't have been more helpful. He let us have some of his land so we could have a hammerhead turning circle at the end of our row of cottages. He gave us assistance all the way through.

"We have had a very good response from villagers now, but it was a battle to get the scheme off the ground."



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Serving the community: Speen will soon have its own village shop again



For villagers: Housing on the Speen development will be for the born and bred