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Green Business Awards 2007



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LOWER MILL ESTATE

The person behind the Lower Mill Estate project is an extraordinary individual whose life is almost Dickensian. Jeremy Paxton was born in Hackney in London's east end to a mother aged 14. He grew up on a Hampshire council estate after being adopted by a couple from the New Forest. He was especially influenced by his adoptive mother's father, who was a poacher and lived in a cottage with gas lighting. Paxton later travelled on many unconventional roads in his fascinating life. His acquaintances have ranged from motorcycle ace Barry Sheene to ex-Beatle George Harrison. Paxton used the money raised from the sale of his publishing house in the 1990s to fund his dream for an estate of sustainable residential homes designed to fit into the natural beauty of 450 acres of the Cotswolds in Gloucestershire. Paxton told the *Financial Times* in October 2005: "As far as Lower Mill is concerned, I'd like it to be seen as an art project that relates to the combination of buildings, the natural environment, ecology and people: one of the world's foremost outdoor laboratories for nature conservation."

The company plans to build 575 second homes on 150 acres of the land, of which 200 are already built. Architects include leading figures like Frank Gehry, Will Alsop and Sarah Featherstone. Lower Mill Estate uses local and traditional materials such as slate and ashlar local stone or rubble walls to make the developments fit in with the landscape. Featherstone Associates provides a good insight into the kind of eco-design that is going into this project: Hump House, as it is known, is south-facing to get as much sunshine as possible; has a "concrete envelope of earth and rubble" which lowers the cost of heating and cooling the building; and the use of rubble lowers the environmental impact of construction.

The Green Awards judges always considered it important that entries should demonstrate that their ideas could be replicated and spread beyond to achieve a much greater green impact. Lower Mill Estate does this very effectively. For example, it introduced 10 simple building measures to encourage other builders to follow suit. They range from the installation of reduced-flow shower heads (at a cost of £50 each) that cut down water waste and water-heating energy; the use of timber from renewable sources; and planting five trees for each house built. The last measure creates a wooded area to soak up CO₂ emissions and costs just £75.



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“
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Meet the Rubbles: Lower Mill's Hump House

RUNNERS UP

LEND LEASE

The carbon-neutral HQ building in 19 Hanover Square, London, of commercial-property developer Lend Lease is designed to symbolise the company's commitment to all things green and to inspire the rest of the organisation.

PROLOGIS DEVELOPMENTS

Using an old sewage works (and unlicensed tyre dump) at in the UK's West Midlands, ProLogis intends to develop this unpromising piece of real estate into a new warehousing site that acts as a shining beacon of environmental achievement.