

## Gunwharf Quays, Portsmouth

Project:	Gunwharf Quays, Portsmouth
Project type:	High density 121 Units 95 dwellings / Ha
Year:	2003
Client:	Berkley Homes
Architect:	John Thompson & Partners
Location:	Portsmouth, Hampshire
Context:	Urban, City centre
Sector:	Private



### Case Study Detail:

John Thompson & Partners completed project at Gun Wharf for Berkeley Homes has involved the design of a significant new residential development on a highly visible site within a conservation area.

This high density development within a conservation area has won acclaim from English Heritage and other authorities for the way in which it exploits its waterfront location whilst respecting and enhancing the setting of the Vulcan Building, a scheduled ancient monument.

The development consists of 121 apartments with underground parking that are located in two contemporary buildings arranged either side of a formal landscaped courtyard. This arrangement creates a framed view of the refurbished Vulcan Building from the waterfront. An attractive new pedestrian walkway along the perimeter of the development leads to a restaurant and other commercial and leisure uses which have bought new vitality and viability to the dock area.

### **Awards:**

National Homebuilder Design Awards 2004 - Award for Best Mixed-use Development  
Commendation for Best Use of a Brownfield Site - Building for Life winner 2008

### **Building for Life Evaluation:**

The success of the Gunwharf Quays development lies in the integration of a range of living, working and leisure facilities on a unique site. The previously walled quays have been opened up to the neighbourhood, creating new routes along the water edge and through its main pedestrianised shopping areas.

It is fair to say that a new community has been created from nothing, providing self-contained living in a range of property types, from one-bedroom apartments to townhouses.

The site has two main aspects divided by a canal: the residential units and the main shopping/leisure areas. As a result, there is a definite sense of calmness within the residential areas. The retail spaces are very successful, with designer outlets encouraging many shoppers from outside the city to come and spend a day beside the newly designed sea edge.

All residential units have parking, although transport links to the station and the bus station are very good and within walking distance.

The layout and massing of the development is variable. Alongside the three-storey blocks of the historic naval structures, the housing is limited to three stories to respond to this existing context. The scale increases towards the waters edge and canal side to six stories. There are larger-scale structures across the site near the newly constructed retail areas, including social housing and a new hotel.

This massing is dominated by two elements: the Spinnaker tower, approximately 170 metres tall, and the latest development, Number 1 Gunwharf, a 29-storey apartment block. Both of these structures offer incredible views across Portsmouth Harbour.

The latest building, Number 1 Gunwharf, reads less a residential element than a commercial office block. The building's architecture is conceptually connected to the idea of a ship's funnel. It considerably dwarfs the scale of the surrounding hotel and housing projects.

### *Character*

The scheme mixes the restoration of historic buildings with a range of contemporary architecture from townhouses to a 29-storey apartment block. This range of building type accommodates many housing configurations from single-bedroom or studio units to townhouses for families.

The homes are located around a variety of different spaces, from formal courtyard gardens to smaller streets and squares. The residential areas are grouped around 2 main areas, with a series of streets and pedestrianised areas to the east of the site incorporating the historic structures, including the Vulcan building. These are organized around a formal garden arrangement and the main axis through the Vulcan building.

In addition, there is the main plaza area, which has only recently been developed, featuring a hotel, shops and the main tower housing development, Number 1 Gunwharf.

The housing developments group themselves around plazas and squares, which have been carefully landscaped with high-quality materials and planting. A sculpture and art programme across the site incorporates art pieces into key open spaces.

#### *Roads, parking and pedestrianisation*

The site has two road access points: one for shoppers and the waterfront area and another for the housing part of the development. This allows access to an underground parking area and to a private road with surface allocated parking for residents. All residents have a parking space and visitors parking. All parking areas are well lit and the underground parking offers direct access to the apartment areas above.

The residential part of the site is laid out with clear pedestrian areas and clearly defined roadways. The development has a series of carefully planned squares that relate to the historic structures and address the waterfront.

The Millennium Walkway, a route along Portsmouth water edge, from Clarence pier to the historic dockyards, crosses through the site connecting key cultural points, including the historic battlement in Old Portsmouth and the Spinnaker Tower in the Gunwharf Quays development.

The canal-side edge and the main shopping area are completely pedestrianised with ground level walkways along the marina and walkways at upper levels connecting bars and restaurants.

The adjacent marina provides berthing facilities for a limited number of boats, also allowing tall ships and pleasure boats to moor alongside.

#### *Design and construction*

The various elements of the scheme use a range of materials. Both the existing Vulcan buildings on the site, which used to be naval storehouses, as well as the surrounding new buildings of apartments and townhouses use local brick.

The newer houses and apartment blocks use rendered panels, while the newest building, Number 1 Gunwharf, is a concrete framed structure with a proprietary glazed system.

All newer buildings have been constructed with a concrete frame. In some cases the buildings are rendered, while brick is used in others.

Construction across the project uses a basic concrete frame, allowing the larger block to use a standard glazing system; the smaller blocks have rendered panels, brick, metal and terracotta panel systems.

#### *Environment and community*

The development has been implemented over a period of 10 years and reflects a range of approaches to sustainable design.

The site is adjacent to a major transport interchange in Portsmouth, the Hard - the main bus terminal for the city and a major railway station. There are ferry services to the Isle of Wight – a 15-minute journey – and Gosport – approximately 5 minutes.

The development is a walled site and allows public access to most areas, although there is limited resident access to parking and some other external areas. On site there is a small convenience store.

Outside of the development, within walking distance, there are local schools as well as other local facilities, including parks, leisure facilities and shops in nearby Portsmouth City centre.

**Links:**

<http://www.buildingforlife.org/case-studies/gunwharf-quays/introduction>

[http://www.homedesignawards.com/homebuilder/homebuilder\\_2004/Category\\_6/gun\\_2004.htm](http://www.homedesignawards.com/homebuilder/homebuilder_2004/Category_6/gun_2004.htm)

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