

# 'Use all available space'

Marc Vlessing, chief executive of London-based affordable homes developer Pocket, discusses his 10-year deal to deliver 4,000 homes in the capital



## **What are Pocket homes?**

Pocket homes are located in urban areas across

London and targeted at those who earn too much money to qualify for social housing, but who are also priced out of the open market. Our homes are developed without public subsidy, and are typically available for purchase at a discount of at least 20 per cent to the local market.

## **Why the focus on infill land?**

All Pocket developments have so far been on brownfield infill sites. The accelerated release of public land is critical to addressing the housing shortage, and by working directly with local authorities we are able to encourage this type of land to be released.

## **What projects are in hand?**

We worked with Darling Associates on our first flagship development in Westminster, with Burrell Foley Fischer on a scheme in Camden, as well as PRP, Brady Mallalieu, HKR, Waugh Thistleton, PTA, HTA and JTP. Pocket W12 in Shepherd's Bush is due for completion by the end of this year. Last week we signed a 10-year deal with the Mayor of London to deliver 4,000 Pocket homes across London boroughs where there is the greatest demand for intermediate housing.

## **What are the main challenges?**

The biggest challenge for London and the UK is to build

new homes quickly. As part of the agreement with the GLA, we will therefore be reinvesting profits over 10 years to deliver five cycles of development. This is undoubtedly a challenge, but our ambition matches the scale of the task and is nothing short of delivering London's most significant private programme of intermediate housing.

## **How do you choose your architects?**

The most important factor when choosing an architect is their ability to deliver attractively designed homes to the Pocket brief, that fit within the existing landscape, and which people want to live in. Our homes make use of all available space, incorporating design features which are consistent throughout all Pocket developments, such as floor-to-ceiling windows, built-in cupboards, underfloor heating, ample cycle storage and generous shared public spaces, such as roof terraces and courtyards.

## **What's on the horizon?**

As part of the deal we have agreed with the GLA, we expect the first developments to come online in late 2014. On-site work should begin in earnest in early 2014, and we'll be working with our regular architects to deliver this programme. However, given the foreseeable scale, we will be looking to expand the base over time as we reinvest the profits to deliver developments across London over the 10 years.