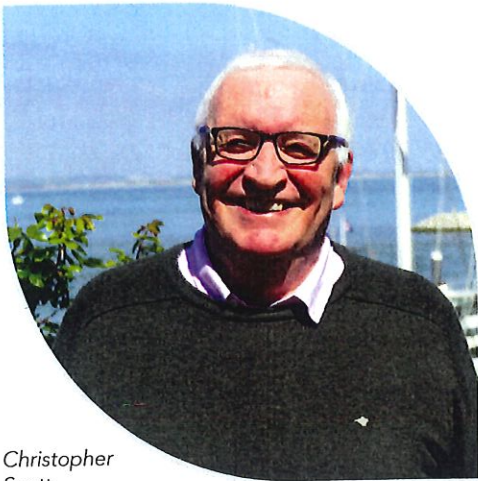


PROPERTY

A unique community building project

Gunville's Ash Lane development delivers a wide range of homes, backed by IW Chamber



Christopher Scott

In 2019 work began on a development of more than 50 new units, built as an extension to Gunville's Ash Lane. The project brought together stakeholders including Newport Town Council, Vectis Housing, the Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce and Isle of Wight College. At the end of 2021, sales have been completed for the cluster of new properties, which delivers an innovative mix of builds designed to support the local construction sector.

"Ash Lane is something quite unique," says property specialist Christopher Scott. "It's a highly innovative mix of plots and properties, sold to small builders and self builders as well as 14 new affordable housing units for Vectis Housing which have recently been handed over. The new homes are coming to fruition and this kind of project is the first with this kind of mix anywhere in the south of England as far as we're aware. It's a real community building exercise."

Christopher Scott acted to sell the plots at Ash Lane, working in partnership with Hose Rhodes Dickson, builders and developers Stoneham Construction and land owners GJL Ltd. The project began in 2012, with the support of the IW Chamber board and the Investment & Planning Group within the Chamber.

"We wanted to create an opportunity for self-build individuals and to help kickstart the building industry on the Island by encouraging small builders to become developers in their own right," Christopher says. "I'm very proud of what we've managed to achieve by working together. Ash Lane has generated work and opportunity for the construction sector and we've seen a lot of growth for self-employed builders, who now have the confidence to repeat their success here, except next time they'll take on four plots instead of one."

"We've also worked with the Isle of Wight College to create Apprenticeship opportunities, so it has been a real tale of growth. The industry definitely needs help

from projects like this. Nationally the average age of a builder is 52 and that's seriously bad. If we're not replacing our builders, we won't be able to build anything."

Ash Lane's professional and technical team were all Island based, including Rainey Petrie Architecture, Mayer Brown, ARC Consulting, Phil Salmon Planning Services, Sharon Packer Consulting and Treecare. Now that the Gunville development has been fully sold, the success of Ash Lane will inform a further project in Ryde.

"We're now on our fourth project with our bank and they totally get it. A lot of financial institutions find lending to people want to build their own house difficult. The Ash Lane development definitely unlocked funding to build homes that people would otherwise have struggled to access."

"I see Ash Lane as part of a wider campaign to promote building homes for the people of the Isle of Wight. We want to continue to work with our small builders and support them to be even more ambitious, taking on more plots and becoming bigger developers. I think the Chamber should be proud that all this began as one of their initiatives." ■

