

Billybanks Development

The development of the Billybanks site was undertaken by the Sir Percy Thomas and Son Partnership, as architects and consultants for Penarth Urban District Council in the early 1960s. By 1964 reports on the geological suitability of the three sites, led them to concentrate on the Harbour View Road site, an area of 5 acres on a ridge facing south. The other 2 sites, lower down on the harbour side of Paget Street were developed slightly later. A 1965 report outlined the Harbour View Road buildings and details.

A report of Jan 1967 stated that the work of footings and roads for the **Harbour View Road** site had **begun in May 1966** and that the housing had commenced in October 1966, and was due to be **completed by April 1968**. There were to be **16 blocks for 194 dwellings, housing between 550 and 600** people, at a **total estimated cost of £663,000**. These buildings were to be of mostly 4-storey terraces, consisting of flats and some two storey maisonettes, for different sized families. These buildings were arranged in 4 large linear blocks at the top of the ridge, along Harbour View Road. There would also be 6 similar blocks, at right angles, down the sloping land to the south, each with a landscaped courtyard area, linked by car-ports to the lower Chichester Road. The maisonettes and flats were to be reached by external stair projections, allowing each unit to have their own front doors. There would be elderly housing for 16 people in one room flats, built in 4 smaller separate 2-storey blocks, along the south side of this road. All were to be built to the Parker Morris standards of the time with brick cross-walls, concrete floors between flats, standardised fittings and heating by self contained circulated warm-air units. In the courtyard areas were groups of wash/drying-houses, play areas, small individual gardens, as well as ornamental landscape planting and pedestrianised areas. This is essentially what was built, being of grey brick construction, with concrete floors and concrete tiled pitched roofs. The living-rooms have railed balconies. The 6 blocks on sloping land were each built with 3 garages under the basement gable-ends facing Chichester Road. A detached 4-storey block at the west end of Harbour View Road is of similar period and detail.

Prince Charles Court on the north side of Paget Road, completed in the early-1970s, is of grey brick with, concrete floors and concrete tiled pitched roofs. It is built across sloping ground and has a **canted terrace of 4-storeys with 2-storey maisonettes accessed via a service area and main central south stair**. This leads onto two projecting access terraces along the north facade. The maisonettes have a kitchen and living-room with railed balcony to south living-room, and stair to bathroom and bedrooms. There are 32 units to the west and 21, larger in size to the east. A similar 4-storey range in-line adjoining the east end has projecting access terraces on each floor for 43 smaller flats.

Royal Close consists of **3 blocks of 4-storey terraces, as 2-storey maisonettes**, namely Prince Edward, Prince Llwellyn and Prince Rhodry, completed in the early-1970s. They are similarly built of grey brick with concrete pitched roofs. They are aligned north-south down the sloping ground with gable-end stair projections and covered recessed access passages at ground and second-floor on the west side. The stair projections to the north each have an adjacent cylindrical brick chimney or flue from a low brick block house, presumably for a heating system. The living rooms of ground and second floors have small

projecting railed balconies with opening doorway and flanking windows. There was also a detached community centre, built to the west of the same style and period.

Although built to the high Parker Morris standards of the time, further economies were gained by standardised details and fittings, which enabled efficiencies in bulk buying. This enabled the Council to build cheap affordable housing, outlined in the contract for the initial Harbour View Road development report of 1967. The standard features and plan details, were then utilised at the other two developments.

Over the years the buildings had become run down and uneconomic to upgrade to today's standards. A decision to redevelop was taken in 1998 by the Vale of Glamorgan council, and the homes were largely emptied by 2002. People moving out were promised an opportunity to move back to the new development. The new development, known as Penarth Heights, is by Crest Nicholson, with Architects Edward Cullinan. Demolition of the Paget Road and Royal Close sites began in June 2010, although the Harbour View Road site is still partly occupied it will eventually be redeveloped.

Visited, Geoff Ward, June 2010