

# Designs on a better planet

**A**CCORDING to a British Gas snapshot, one of the most eco-friendly places in the UK is Southampton – the only British city to have a geothermal power station, which uses the Earth's natural energy.

But this is only one example of green technology. Unfortunately, much of it can be expensive, so many housebuilders adhere to traditional methods. However, from next year, all homes put on the market will have to come with details of the energy they use, providing an incentive for builders to invest in the latest eco-friendly gadgets and gizmos.

The benchmark is set by the Energy Savings Trust and is known as the Eco Homes Rating. Developer Crest Nicholson has achieved an excellent rating at two of its latest projects.

Its Avante development, built on the site of the old Linton Hospital at Coxheath, near Maidstone, Kent, won an award in the Design for Manufacture competition, which aims to show it is possible to build high-quality homes with low construction costs.

Sales and marketing director Pippa Bugby said: "This is the first development in Kent to showcase this contemporary style of architecture and we hope to attract a wide mix of people, including first-time buyers, young families and downsizers who want good design combined with a semi-rural location."

Among the measures to reduce energy consumption are smaller windows in bedrooms, to prevent heat loss, and larger windows in living areas, to make use of natural light, thereby reducing the amount of artificial light that is needed. Meanwhile, central lanterns in



## ANDREA WATSON looks at the steps being taken by developers to reduce greenhouse gases

selected properties flood the homes with natural light to make the most of the sun.

In Brighton (inset) Crest Nicholson and partners BioRegional Quintain have been given planning permission for one of the most environmentally advanced developments in the UK. The Brighton One Planet Living

Community – a high-rise project occupying a derelict site close to the city's train station – is being built according to One Planet Living principles, which state that everyone should consume only what the planet can provide.

The scheme will achieve zero-carbon emissions, provide a zero-waste plan, use sustainable materials and provide a range of non-car transport options.

Energy-saving measures include an on-site communal biomass boiler fuelled by local wood waste and a roof that features wind turbines and solar panels. Mini-allotments will encourage residents to grow their own fruit and vegetables.

The 172 apartments will comprise a mix of affordable eco-studios and one-, two- and three-bed flats. The first will be available later this year.

Steve Jones, managing director of Crest Nicholson South East, said: "Zero-carbon

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PRIZE-WINNER: The Avante development, built on the site of an old hospital, in Coxheath, Kent



OUT OF THIS WORLD: The One Planet Living Community in Brighton

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schemes are an essential part of future property developments and we are very proud to be setting the benchmark.

"The scheme combines our residential expertise with BioRegional Quintain's knowledge of sustainable developments. Together, we believe we have created homes that not only feature striking contemporary architecture, but can play a major part in combating climate change."

Pete Halsall, managing director of BioRegional Quintain, said: "Local people were involved in the design of this project, and it is all the better for it. We are confident that our residents will find it easy and affordable to live sustainably in these attractive homes."