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News

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After eight years, work begins on £3 billion Chelsea Barracks project

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Consumer Business Editor

CONSTRUCTION of hundreds of homes at the ill-starred Chelsea Barracks site finally gets under way today eight years after it was sold for almost £1 billion.

The milestone marks the start of a crucial new chapter in one of the most protracted and controversial property sagas of recent decades, that has dragged in figures such as Prince

Charles, star architect Lord Rogers, developer Christian Candy and the Prime Minister of Qatar.

Building work began this morning after more than a year of preparation and clearing of the "super-prime" 13-acre site on Chelsea Bridge Road, south of Sloane Square, which was sold by the Ministry of Defence in 2007.

Today's breakthrough means that the first phase of three blocks of up to eight storeys and a cafe designed by archi-

tecs Squire and Partners will start emerging from the former parade ground.

The 74 apartments in phase one are expected to have price tags ranging from £2million to £50 million and are scheduled to be completed by 2018.

It comes six years after a dramatic intervention by Prince Charles scuppered the original modernist proposal from Lord Rogers, which the heir to the throne said "made my heart sink" in a

notorious letter to the Qatari prime minister and head of developers Qatari Diar Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim al Thani.

More recently there had been fears that the Gulf kingdom was preparing to walk away from the project when the site lay idle for two years after it received outline planning permission from Westminster council in 2011.

The completed £3 billion scheme is due to have up to 448 homes, including 123 designated "affordable", as well as five acres of gardens and open spaces, a public sports centre, shops and a children's playground.

The start of construction work triggers a £39 million initial payment from Qatari Diar's subsidiary Project Blue to fund affordable housing elsewhere in Westminster. A second payment when phase two starts will take the total contribution to £78 million.

The site is ultimately owned by the Qatari royal family headed by Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

Daniel Astaire, Westminster's cabinet member for housing and regeneration, said: "This is a clear example of how the right investments from overseas can lead to huge benefits for Londoners.

"The site at Chelsea Barracks is an important one for the capital, and it will provide much-needed housing in London, including affordable homes, and new local jobs.

"It is hugely encouraging to see work starting today.

"Westminster has just launched its forward vision, where we have outlined that we want a City for All – this demonstrates that commitment."

A spokesman for Project Blue, said: "Today marks an important milestone in the redevelopment of the landmark Chelsea Barracks site.

"We have spent a number of years of working closely with the local residents, Westminster City Council, community groups and local businesses to develop a masterplan for this historic

A PROTRACTED SAGA



Super-prime: how the first phase of the Chelsea Barracks plan will look

September 2005 Defence Secretary John Reid announces that Chelsea Barracks is up for sale.

April 2007 MoD agrees £959 million deal with buyers Qatari Diar and Christian Candy's CPC Group.

April 2008 Lord Rogers reveals modernist designs for site with interior designs by Candy & Candy.

March 2009 Prince Charles writes to Prime Minister of Qatar complaining about "unsympathetic" scheme.

June 2009 Qatari Diar withdraw their planning application.

December 2009 Christian Candy launches court case against Qatari Diar.

April 2010 A new plan for the redevelopment of the Chelsea Barracks site unveiled by Qatari Diar.

July 2010 Court case settled with "unreserved" apology from Mr Candy.

November 2011 Westminster council grant outline planning permission for new scheme.

January 2013 Westminster tells Qatari Diar to start work or sell after site left empty.

March 2015 Work on the first phase begins.

site. This development will deliver world-class homes, beautifully designed new green space and a wide range of new amenities for residents and the local community, as well as additional jobs and much-needed housing in central London." @JonPryn

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