

## HOUSE DESIGN AWARDS

# Worthy in a critical sector

HOUSE DESIGN Awards

## Starter Homes

Oakfield Developments have taken the 2006 title in the Starter Homes category, exactly a year after being voted overall winner in the 30th Birmingham Post & Mail House Design Awards.

The family-run firm had won the 2005 top award with its luxury offering, Whitehaven on the river bank at Stratford-upon-Avon.

That was a £1.5 million, one-off, luxury house. This year's winning entry was a modest apartment home, aimed at first time buyers with well under £100,000 to spend.

The scheme is Jefferson Place at Grafton Road, West Bromwich, 35 one and two bedroom apartments, six miles from the centre of Birmingham, where prices started from £75,000 for a ground floor studio.

The judging team were struck by the versatility of the housebuilder, as impressive in this sphere as when aiming right upmarket.

"This development is possibly one of the best value for money schemes we have seen for many a year, giving first time buyers a real chance of getting onto the property ladder," said judge, Mark Lenton.

Particularly clever was a space-saving "back-to-back" design of the apartment block, low rise at only three storeys and neatly planned.

Making the very most of the plot was the layout of the building, with units facing one way or the other.

If one likes to watch the world go

**These affordable, well-finished, stylish homes, in an unpretentious but well-mannered development, sit comfortably in the mature streetscape of their urban context**

by, one picks an apartment facing onto Grafton Road.

A slightly quieter aspect is the one that fronts the generous car parking area behind, plenty to award each apartment with their own permanent space.

The immediate surroundings are pleasant, an established residential area. And yet the injection of the tidy and well-conceived design into the traditional street scene has added a fresh modern dimension, nicely varied with areas of render, brick and contrasting stone trim.

These homes are both "affordable and cheerful", said another judge, Gary Longden. "This development shows that it is possible to build entry level housing from £75,000 which still meets a more than adequate specification.

"It is a scheme that lifts the immediate surroundings while still being located in an area where people want to live now."

One of the architects on the judging team, Chris Cronin said: "The accommodation provided represents very good value for money because the builders have gone back to basics.

"Much of the cost of a building is in the external skin and in this strikingly simple layout, less is more, in



A view of the Jefferson Place apartments at Grafton Road, West Bromwich, one and two bedroom homes by Oakfield Developments, winners in the Starter Homes category of the 2006 Birmingham Post & Mail House Design Awards

terms of the main structural fabric. "This makes for very economical units."

The internal spaces also had a nice modern feel, well lit and nicely flowing."

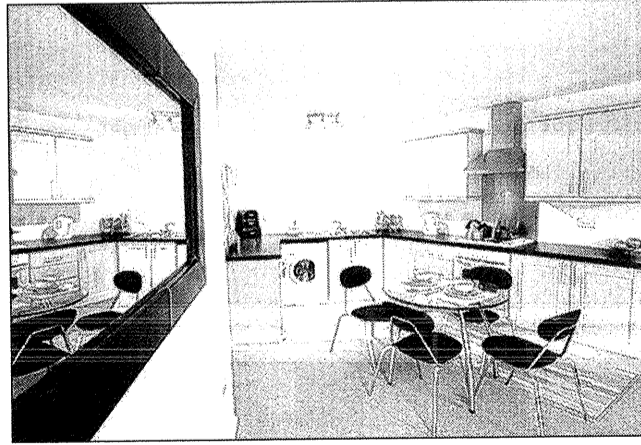
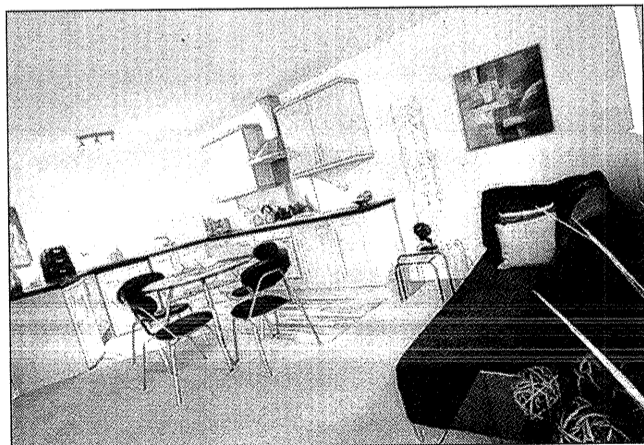
Oakfield Developments may be getting rather used to industry accolades. In addition to being overall winner in the Birmingham Post & Mail House Design Awards, the company on the 2005 Daily Mail National House Design Awards.

It also took a bronze in the annual What House? Awards scheme.

Details at Jefferson Place included smart kitchens with stainless steel finishes and integrated appliances; good plain white bathrooms; timber veneered internal doors; door entry systems; high degree heat and sound insulation.



John Furey of Oakfield Developments receiving the company's award from Marc Reeves, editor of *The Post*, attended by Ailsa Raine, of Knight Frank, and Sarah Matthews of DBK Back



Inside the Jefferson Place show apartment. Prices for smaller studios started from £75,000