

Beacon of hope: New Hertfordshire flats offering **FREE ENERGY** for life

HERTFORDSHIRE may seem an unlikely place to build the world's most sustainable residential tower but anybody who snaps up one of its apartments could find themselves with zero bills for power and heating.

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The Beacon will feature groundbreaking environmentally friendly qualities



That's a possible saving of around £2,000 a year in living costs. The bold promise of "free energy for life" comes from Lumiere Developments, the firm building the 17-storey tower block not in forward-thinking London, New York, Singapore or any eco-warrior Scandinavian country, but in Hemel Hempstead.

Bordered by 400 acres of Green Belt land, the commuter town is 24 minutes from London Euston by train and the 272-apartment tower block will be only a few minutes' walk from the station when completed in 2018.

The Beacon will have groundbreaking green features not yet present in any other residential development in the world, including the highest density solar farm anywhere (0.8mw on 0.5 acres) and solar photovoltaic panels at each floor level.

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All apartments will be triple or quadruple-glazed, hot water will be provided by ground source heat pumps in the basement and water for flushing toilets and irrigating the UK's tallest residential indoor arboretum will be provided by harvesting rainwater.

Air source pumps will extract heat from the atrium and a mechanical heat and ventilation recovery system will circulate through apartments and keep them cool in summer.

And that's not all: the A-rated energy-neutral building will also have a fleet of five electric cars for hire, an electric bike hire scheme and the UK's largest underground automated robotic car park.



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The flats are just a 24 minute commute to London Euston station

Every flat will have one parking space and those without cars can rent out their slots to other residents.

We want residents to feel like they are part of a community

Ambi Singh of Lumiere Developments



Ambi Singh, commercial director of Lumiere Developments, says The Beacon (020 3283 8583; thebeacondevelopment.co.uk) will be the world's most sustainable residential tower and adds: "We wanted to marry emission-free renewable technologies with simple yet effective energy conservation strategies to create a zero-emission development that is truly world class in its architectural design,

engineering and specification.

"We want residents to feel like they are part of a community and truly to enjoy their living environment. At the same time we want apartments to be as cost-effective as possible whilst ensuring a positive environmental impact on their locality."

We don't often think about the pollution buildings cause but it's around 40 per cent of the world's harmful emissions according to Singh, who says the World Health Organisation sees air pollution as the "number one" risk to human health.



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The block will come with a fleet of eco-friendly electric cars

“Hence, it is our mission to promote large-scale uptake of emission-free renewable energy generation and simple energy conservation technologies within residential new-builds and old stock to reduce emissions significantly and by default help save lives,” he says.

The Beacon will be part of the post-war New Town’s £30million Hemel Evolution regeneration, spearheaded by Dacorum borough council, which has already made the picturesque old town more accessible.

But at the heart of the regeneration is a new civic centre for the council and community services, a new college campus and leisure complex, plus 200 centrally located apartments nearby.



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The two pedestrianised shopping centres have been improved and Jellicoe Water Gardens – named after the town's post-war architect Geoffrey Jellicoe – are being restored with lottery funds.

In total 1,000 new homes are expected to be built thanks to private investment in both the town and Maylands Business Park with the railway station earmarked for improvements in anticipation of Crossrail 2, which will link Hertfordshire to Surrey.

The town is also close to the M1, with easy access to the M25 and the Midlands. The good news is that Lumiere Development plans to use The Beacon as a blueprint for more zero-carbon residential developments.



The toilets flush using irrigated rainwater



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“We will be rolling out this unique mixture of sustainable technology and building practice across our future projects and ultimately hope that we inspire other developers to build significantly more high-quality sustainable homes across the property spectrum from affordable to luxury,” says Singh.

Let's hope The Beacon will light the way for many more zero power bills.

INFORMATION: Studios start from £217,000; one-bedroom apartments start from £291,000, two-bedroom apartments from £379,000 and three-bedroom apartments from £524,000



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