



Nansledan is a community in Cornwall, England. It recently was awarded the Gindroz Award for Excellence in Affordable Housing.

Nansledan

A CORNISH BLUEPRINT FOR BEAUTIFUL, AFFORDABLE LIVING

On England's southwestern coast, a 540-acre extension of Newquay is redefining community living—blending traditional architecture, walkable design, and a bold commitment to affordable housing.

PHOTOS BY HUGH HASTINGS

On England's southwestern coast, a breezy, walkable community—where life unfolds on foot rather than from behind a steering wheel—has been gradually taking shape over the past two decades. Nansledan, a planned mixed-use development on 540 acres at the edge of the seaside town of Newquay, adheres to the principles of traditional Cornish architecture and the use of durable, locally sourced materials. Crucially, affordable housing accounts for more than 30 percent of an inventory that will ultimately include over 4,000 homes, interspersed among elegant, colorful residences lining pedestrian-first streets.

Last year, the Institute of Classical Architecture & Art awarded Nansledan the Gindroz

Award for Excellence in Affordable Housing—a testament to the project's balance of high design standards, community engagement, and forward-thinking vision.

“We are all deeply committed to creating integrated, sustainable places where it is possible to live a healthy, happy life, and that are beautiful and enduring,” says Hugh Petter, design director at ADAM Architecture and Nansledan's master planner. “Nansledan demonstrates that strategic master planning, long-term stewardship, and an understanding of local needs and identity can lead to vibrant, sustainable, and popular communities reinforced by social and economic resilience and low-carbon lifestyles.”

Nansledan originated with a vision from one of the most prominent advocates of traditional architecture and New Urbanist principles: King Charles III. In his former role as Prince of Wales, Charles oversaw the 123,000-acre Duchy of Cornwall estate. In the 1990s, he spearheaded Poundbury, a



The plan calls for a phased rollout of home and commercial spaces. Construction began in 2014.

high-density extension of Dorchester widely regarded as a successful experiment in locally grounded, walkable, mixed-use development. In the mid-2000s, he sought to bring a similar vision to Newquay—a fishing port turned North Atlantic surfing destination that, like many tourist towns, faces the challenges of low-paying seasonal jobs and a shortage of affordable year-round housing.

Transforming that overarching vision into a workable plan for Nansledan—Cornish for “broad valley”—was a thoughtful and de-

liberate process. It involved a deep study of Newquay’s existing streetscapes and ecosystems, extensive consultation with residents, and long-term investment in the community. Petter and the Duchy of Cornwall drew on Newquay’s character to develop a pattern book and design standards that ensure cohesion, consistency, and flexibility throughout the development.

After securing local approval for a phased rollout of homes and commercial spaces, the Duchy enlisted three local homebuilders committed to the project’s long-term delivery. Construction began in 2014, and the first residents moved in the following year.



URBAN DESIGN NANSLEDAN



Today, more than 1,800 residents live in the 800-plus homes completed so far. Narrow, gently angled streets calm traffic, making walking and cycling the easiest ways to get around. Shops, cafés, workplaces, and homes share the same blocks, with row-fronted housing often sitting above retail spaces and

most daily errands within a ten-minute walk. A two-story primary school opened in 2019, and a commercial center anchored by a Tesco supermarket is underway.

Approximately 300 acres of green space—including a community orchard—connect the development to Cornwall's natural ecosys-

tems. Architecturally, Nansledan's double-fronted houses, detached family homes, cottages, apartments, and commercial buildings draw on Cornish vernacular traditions, updated for contemporary living with tight building envelopes and durable construction. A bright, Easter-egg color palette contrasts



More than 800 homes have been completed, housing 1,800 residents.



By embedding affordable housing within the broader fabric of the neighborhood, residents of all income levels share the same streets and public spaces.

with pitched roofs clad in local slate and window lintels and sills crafted from granite sourced from nearby quarries—materials well suited to the howling North Atlantic climate.

One of Nansledan’s defining features is its affordable housing strategy. More than 30 per cent of homes are designated for individuals and families on housing waiting lists. Rather than clustering these dwellings together, they are distributed throughout the development.

“Nansledan’s affordable homes range from apartments to family houses and are spread across the community, reflecting the local vernacular,” says Sam Kirkness, Nansledan development manager at the Duchy of Cornwall. “Because they are designed and built to the same high standards, they are indistinguishable from the other types of housing.”

By embedding affordable housing within the broader fabric of the neighborhood, residents of all income levels share the same streets and public spaces. The approach enables more young families to put down roots, fosters social cohesion, and supports Newquay’s economic vitality.

As part of a recent initiative to combat homelessness spearheaded by Prince William, an additional two dozen homes are nearing completion in Nansledan to provide temporary accommodation for people experiencing homelessness. The effort serves as a proof of concept for a broader model that could be replicated elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

At a time when housing shortages have become a global concern, Nansledan offers a replicable framework that extends far beyond Cornwall. “The Nansledan model is at the forefront of the drive to address the contemporary housing crisis,” says Eric Osth, ICAA board member and chair of the Gindroz Award Committee, “and we hope it will inspire additional communities in the UK, the United States, and worldwide.” *TB*



In an effort to combat homelessness, an additional two dozen homes have recently been completed. *Bottom photo by Dylan Thomas*