

Spanbild case study: Rangers Park development

NEW PERMANENT HOUSING VILLAGE EASES CHRISTCHURCH MARKET PRESSURE

**Project:**

Permanent housing solution for displaced Christchurch residents

Key deliverable:

A quality, cost-effective solution providing both comfortable homes for temporary residents and long-term value for the investment

Spanbild Projects involvement:

Design, engineering and production of all homes

Success measures:

A quality residential development, delivered rapidly, which all stakeholders – including residents – are extremely happy with

To help relieve the pressures of a severe accommodation shortage in Christchurch, the Government embarked on an earthquake recovery initiative to address the issue directly, with temporary housing villages built in Linwood, Kaiapoi and Rāwhiti Domain. However, a more cost-effective, permanent solution has come out of collaboration between Spanbild, Hawkins Construction and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE).

“Getting the product right in terms of our demographic need was essential.”

Malcolm MacMillan
MBIE Earthquake Recovery
Operations Manager

While other housing villages in the region have been short-term – constructed on Council-owned land and parks – the development of 18 new houses and 22 apartments in three blocks at Rangers Park in eastern Christchurch is a permanent housing solution.

The \$12.5 million development will initially be used by displaced residents whose homes are being repaired or rebuilt due to earthquake damage. The cost will be offset by rent and eventual sale of the homes.

The long-term, permanent nature of the project differentiates Rangers Park from its more temporary counterparts.

Case study

The temporary villages at Linwood Park, Rāwhiti Domain and Kaiapoi Domain have been recognised as extremely successful. Hundreds of households have cycled through for a short stay. Most have been displaced residents having earthquake damage repairs undertaken on their own homes, so have been in and out in six to twelve weeks.

“However, Rangers Park is different,” says Spanbild general manager business development Tim Blake. “Mostly because we are into a different phase of the residential rebuild – it’s now more rebuilds as opposed to repairs. So people moving into Rangers Park will likely be there for around nine months while they wait for their house to be demolished and rebuilt.

“The beauty of Rangers Park is that these new permanent homes can be used for their current purpose – to provide an affordable rental solution for displaced Cantabrians whose homes are undergoing repairs or being rebuilt – and then sold as affordable housing when the pressure on the rental market has eased. But this did mean that we had to re-evaluate our approach – to construct cost-effective long-term homes, as opposed to more short-term relocatable structures.”



The Ministry’s Multiple-use Approval Scheme was used for the development, which provides pre-consent design approval that can be used throughout the country. This enabled a more streamlined consenting process, and the 18 houses were finished and occupied in September 2013; the 22 apartments were all completed mid-April 2014. Prime Minister John Key officially opened the Rangers Park development on 10 September 2013.

Collaboration

The Rangers Park development has its roots in a successful local partnership between Spanbild and Hawkins Construction.



Hawkins Construction was the lead contractor on the set-up of the development, and managed the project through from finding a relevant site to overseeing the build.

Construction manager Paul Brailey says prior to Rangers Park, the two companies were part of a collaborative agreement with Fulton Hogan to build temporary villages at Linwood Park and Kaiapoi Domain.

“The Government put out a tender in early 2011 for temporary housing. From that, we were able to build the two temporary housing villages in Linwood and Kaiapoi – a total of 64 houses. The model works really well; there has been very high occupancy rates and they have filled up pretty quick, but it will take money to take all the houses out and re-instate the grounds, so we looked into a more permanent solution.

“We found some land for the Crown to purchase at the Rangers Park subdivision and looked at what we could do for them on that site. We worked out costings – per square metre and per house – which would fit their budget. There was a residue amount of money available, so the project had to get the best from this.

“Once we got the go-ahead, we worked closely with the Spanbild designers to see what we could achieve on each property, and went from there.”

The Ministry’s earthquake recovery operations manager Malcolm MacMillan says apart from cost, time was also a critical factor. “Cost is always there – with public money, we need to be fiscally responsible – but time was the biggest one. We needed something up quickly to support the Canterbury rebuild, and because of the increasing demand for temporary accommodation, the need was for something sooner, rather than later. We couldn’t take years to build a subdivision and houses – time was a critical factor.

“The speed in which the first homes were built is testament to the strength and success of our collaboration.”



Design

There is a mix of two, three and four bedroom homes at Rangers Park. The two-bedroom Spanbild-designed homes are purpose-built to meet the needs of a diverse range of future residents. They have also been sited to make the most of the surroundings.

“Building design starts well before the actual building,” says Mr Blake. “The properties had already been divided, so we worked with Hawkins to carefully site each building to maximise sunlight. We also tried to accommodate the community from the subdivision design, with public walkways, crime prevention initiatives and general amenity, right down to the kind of fencing and plantings.

“We wanted to make these buildings look like any other ‘normal’ subdivision, so have used different cladding materials to mix it up. It also needed to make sense from both sides of the coin – for the Government, which is looking for a cost-effective but high quality and affordable housing solution, and also those tenants and owners of the building in the future. This dual purpose was very much front-of-mind when we were considering the types of buildings and materials to use in the construction of these homes.”

Mr MacMillan says there is a high demand for two-bedroom homes in the rental market. “Getting the product right in terms of our demographic need was essential. At Rangers Park, there are a high proportion of small two-bedroom units. The reason for that is there’s a high number of elderly single people or couples who need temporary accommodation.

“Larger working families have tended to be more able to self-assist and find something on the private rental market. They can find a three or four-bedroom home and rent it – for many they might have a double income so affordability became less of an issue. Whereas, we have found that a number of pensioners have found it harder to find an appropriate or affordable two- or one-bedroom unit on the private rental market at present. They haven’t needed big four-bedroom homes; they needed small cottages.

“For this reason, we also needed to be able to make the houses accessible for people with disabilities or just mobility issues, such as the elderly. They have found them really easy to live in because they are really functional and accessible.”

INTRODUCING LOCAL RESIDENT, TOPSY BANNERMAN

Christchurch residents of 23 years, Topsy and Alex Bannerman have been living at Rangers Park for six months while their home in Bromley is being rebuilt.

The couple are due to move out in the next few weeks, but Topsy, 79, says they have enjoyed their time in the new accommodation.

“My first impression of the village was that it was a bit like a mini Coronation Street. We were very pleasantly surprised with the quality of the buildings. Our home is just a short drive away, so it has meant we can keep up with the rebuild progress, and also continue our normal social outings.

“And having an attached garage makes it much easier to unload the groceries now. As temporary accommodation, nothing could be better.”

While the Bannerman’s Bromley home will be ready to move back into soon, Topsy says she would definitely recommend Rangers Park to anyone in a similar situation.

“We have also met the neighbours on either side of us and they are very nice. We mostly talk about the rebuilds, but they think – as we do – that they are very fortunate to be here.

“We have been extremely lucky to have such a comfortable, warm place to stay.”



Case study

Final outcome

Mr Brailey says he has been impressed with the outcome. “The design had to be top-notch, because it was scrutinised thoroughly. There was a very robust process in place to make sure the buildings were right and they all complied. The designers all worked well and the delivery was excellent. Their part of what they agreed they would deliver – material-wise, I can’t fault them really.



“They have facilities to meet the needs of a diverse group of people. They have given a lot of thought to how these buildings will be used and purpose-built them to suit all needs and people. It’s a really good quality product.

“We would definitely work with Spanbild again – in fact, since then, we already have, with 15 houses at the University of Canterbury.”

Mr MacMillan says the Ministry has also been involved with another Spanbild initiative in the meantime – and would continue that partnership in the future.

“Spanbild is clearly a family business, which is very different to dealing with a big corporate business. Most of our engagement has been with the general manager business development Tim Blake, who – like others at Spanbild – is committed, genuine, and passionate about their product and the Canterbury rebuild.

“Spanbild representatives would always be at the Ministry’s open days to support that and represent their product, and help support the earthquake recovery initiative. Clearly, this is their community – and they are genuinely interested in helping out.”

Mr MacMillan says the feedback they have received from the residents and community has been really positive.

“We have had overwhelmingly positive feedback around the quality of the housing, with tenants saying they are warm, dry and really comfortable to live in. At the open days, a number of neighbours also came out and had a look around and were impressed with the product. The homes are absolutely fit-for-purpose and it works.

“I think it will be a nice legacy, in terms of the housing stock – it’s good quality, and will help contribute to the supply of affordable housing in Christchurch East. I walk away from Rangers each time pleased with the product and the result.”

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