



## Ross Mill



**Location**  
Falls, Belfast

**Client**  
Carvill Group

**Project Size**  
165 homes

**Value**  
£10.8m

**Status**  
Completed May 2008

**Awards**

**RICS Awards 2010**  
Regeneration Award - Shortlisted

A regeneration project providing 165 homes and a new shop. The design was based around the preservation and conversion of a 19th century flax mill and its landmark chimney, and the creation of a new urban block.

### Overview

Ross Mill is a high-density, sustainable residential development. A regeneration scheme situated on a brownfield site, the project involved the conversion of an historic flax mill built by William Ross in 1850, and the replacement of the surrounding dilapidated industrial buildings with new terraced houses and apartments. The project provides affordable and energy efficient homes, regenerating an area that had frequently been the site of violence and civil disturbance during the Troubles.

### Integration and Regeneration

The project represented an ideal opportunity to integrate a redundant industrial area into the residential urban fabric. The main goal of the project was to introduce active frontages along the site's key boundaries, re-instating streets based on an intimate historical model and improving an area blighted by bleak, low quality post-war housing. Two new streets connect to the site,

creating an urban block, enclosed on three sides by new apartment buildings, and on the fourth by the mill. The streets were designed to encourage pedestrian movement and accessibility, an aim achieved through building form, landscaping, and passive traffic calming. The architectural forms and materials used are sympathetic to the historical context of the area. External designs consist of simple configurations of brick and galvanized steel, materials of an industrial nature, which complement the design of the converted mill building.

### Sustainability

The developers addressed the issue of sustainability both in terms of energy use and in social terms. The site's environmental impact was reduced through the use of a brownfield site and the re-use of existing buildings. The development provides secure cycle storage, and is close to local amenities, reducing residents' reliance on cars. High





efficiency heating systems and integrated recycling facilities were also incorporated into the design.

**The Courtyard Deck**

The two courtyards incorporate a raised landscaped deck at the first floor level, which provides amenity space for residents and an outlook for the apartments, and conceals the secure ground floor car park below. Openings in the deck allow natural light to reach the car park, and allow the landmark mill chimney to penetrate. Trees planted at the ground level also grow through these openings.

**Consulting the Community**

At the heart of the development was a healthy dialogue between the

developers and the local community and authorities. The team secured support for the project through active consultation with conservation officers, heritage experts, Sinn Féin politicians, local Assembly members, and church leaders from the nearby Clonard monastery. These discussions helped the project to gain the support of the public, and overcome the initial scepticism of some local residents. The protection of the site's heritage value, achieved through the retention and restoration of the mill and its striking chimney, was lauded by the public. Residents' requests for amenities and workspace were complied with, and the local preference for a fully residential development led to the omission of an early proposal to maintain some employment uses at the site.

