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Swiss Farm, Henley-on-Thames

Steve Rowe visits a charming residential park that's walking distance from the rather posh centre of Henley-on-Thames

- 1 Park homes are nicely spaced at Swiss Farm
- 2 We saw a number of lovely garden plots during our visit
- 3 Sunshine at Swiss Farm - a picturesque sight!

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“People here are very friendly, but without being overbearing, with everyone respecting each other's space.”

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Days out

3 easy-to-reach attractions close to Swiss Farm Park

HENLEY-ON-THAMES
 Famous for its annual regatta, Henley is a lovely town on the banks of the Thames.



WINDSOR CASTLE
 Buy a home on this park and you're only a short drive from the Queen's slightly larger home!



LEGOLAND WINDSOR RESORT If grandchildren are staying, there's no better treat than a trip to Legoland.



3



IMAGES: KOSTAS TSELIOS

When visiting parks in expensive parts of the UK, such as the south-east, I often hear residents say that buying a park home was the only way they could afford to move to the area. Although this may have been their initial reason for choosing a park home, most then explain that they now wouldn't move anywhere else, even if they had the money.

The community feel and security provided by park home living seems to win many people over to this way of life.

Perhaps a prime example of such a park is Swiss Farm, on the outskirts of Henley-on-Thames, in Oxfordshire. Apart from London, it's one of the most expensive places to live in the UK, with even fairly average-looking family homes selling for well over £1 million. With this in mind, the park homes at Swiss Farm look like real bargains, with brand new homes available from just over £200,000.

You'd be hard pushed to find a tiny flat in Henley for that money, so to buy a detached two-bedroom 'bungalow' for that sum looks like a great deal.

There are 87 homes on this mid-sized park, which is owned by the Morrison family, consisting of father Henry Morrison and sons Henry Junior and Mark.

I had a quick chat with Mark when first entering the park, who was very friendly and enthusiastic.

He then introduced me to park manager Don

Hilton who has lived at the park for no less than 52 years – preceding ownership by the Morison family.

There's nothing Don doesn't know about the park, explaining to me, 'When I first moved here it was nothing like it is now.'

'It was a fairly basic park back then, with large caravans and a fairly noisy mix of young families. Now it's an upmarket retirement park, with the Morrisons having invested a lot in infrastructure such as new roadways and the like.'

The park's location also couldn't be much better. It's set in verdant countryside, right on the edge of Henley, so it feels very tranquil, yet is only a short walk, drive or bus ride from the centre of this buzzing tourist town. Keen to see why people had chosen to move to the park, I walked around and spoke to a selection of residents, all of whom had moved to the park fairly recently.

‘We moved in two weeks ago!’

From Sutton Coldfield in the West Midlands, Sheila and David Ryan-Bell had only been in their new home for two weeks when I visited them.

I asked why they decided to move here? Sheila explained, 'We have family living in this area so we wanted to move down to be nearer to them.'

'Our son actually lived on this park a few years ago, plus we know a lady who lives here, so it



parks

park profile

4 Homes range in age and colour at Swiss Farm... they're all well-preserved though!

5 Gardens are also kept in immaculate condition

Quick chat over a cuppa



SHEILA AND DAVID RYAN-BELL have only just moved into their new Omar Sherringham park home on the site and love the friendly community they have found at Swiss Farm.



LINDA AND KEITH KNIGHT moved to the park in 2013, buying a pre-owned Omar Heritage which they have been busy redecorating. They up-sized from a small London maisonette to



BARBARA HOWE AND ROB ADAMS moved to the park in February 2014, buying a pre-owned home, and they love the village-like atmosphere on the park.



seemed to be a great place to move to.'

What home did they buy? Sheila continued, 'We chose a brand new Omar Sherringham and, because it hadn't been built when we first came here, we were able to design it to suit our needs, making a few changes here and there. These were mainly minor changes, such as having a double door to the dining room replaced with a large single door.'

After just a few weeks on the park, what do they think of life here? They both enthused, 'It's a very pleasant park with warm and welcoming neighbours. We also like the location, being rural yet just a short walk from the town centre. In fact, we mainly walk into town, rather than taking our car, unless we're doing a big supermarket shop.'

'We downsized... then upsized!'

From Pinner in north-west London, Linda and Keith Knight have an interesting story to tell when it comes to choosing their retirement home, as Keith explained, 'We initially moved to a small Victorian cottage in north London but, because Linda was starting to have some mobility problems, we decided to move to a small, ground floor, one-bedroom maisonette, also in north London.'

'However, we soon found that this was just too small for us, with Linda in particular missing the

flexibility of having a spare bedroom. So, we started to think about moving again and checked out our options. We thought about moving out of London to this part of the country because we already have family living in this area but, of course, it's a very expensive place to buy a home.

'However, when surfing the internet one day, looking at property websites, Linda came upon a home at this park. She thought it looked very nice and was great value compared to other properties in the area. I must say, though, that I originally thought she was bonkers for thinking about a park home.'

'However, we decided to come along for a look and both really liked the park. We looked at several homes for sale here, before opting to buy the home Linda had first seen on the internet.'

'It's an Omar Heritage which we bought direct from the previous owner and have since been decorating to our own taste.'

What do they think about the park and their new life here? Linda explained, 'People here are very friendly, but without being overbearing, with everyone respecting each other's space.'

'The lifestyle is also very relaxing and the park feels very secure, so you have no worries if you go away for a few days. I also love the home itself, and it's great to be detached and to have lots of interior >>>

All you need to know

Swiss Farm Park info at your fingertips

LIVING COSTS



PITCH FEES

£166.70 per calendar month for new homes.

WATER AND SEWERAGE

Mains water and sewerage supplied and billed direct by the utility.

ELECTRICITY

Mains electricity supplied and billed direct by the utility.

GAS

LPG gas bottles.

COUNCIL TAX

Homes fall into Council Tax Band A, currently £1,047.07 per annum.

VISIT THE PARK

Swiss Farm,
Marlow Road,
Henley-on-Thames RG9 2HX
Tel: 01491 576783
Mobile: 07850 331191
W: morrisonparkhomes.co.uk

All prices correct as of 11/06/14

FOR SALE



AVAILABILITY

At the time of our visit, there was one new show home in place with another two to follow by the time you read this. The show home is a luxurious 46ft x 18 Omar Sheringham, priced at £275,000. The two homes due to be delivered are both Omar Sandringhams; one a 40ft x 16 version priced at £220,000; and the other a 48ft x 15 unit priced at £239,950.



OTHER

PARK RULES

The park is for residents over 55 years of age. No resident children are allowed (visiting children are welcomed). Pets are allowed.

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“We came to meet manager Don at this park and he showed us round, including looking at this 10-year-old Omar Sheringham home, which I immediately set my heart on!”



Above Brick steps and skirt on a pretty home

space. Compared to the small maisonette we owned before, I also love having two bedrooms, with the spare bedroom handy for doing the ironing or drying clothes.’

Escape to the country

Selling their respective flats in north London, couple Barbara Howe and Rob Adams decided to buy a park home here so that they could fulfil their dream of living in the country, as Barbara explained, ‘Having enjoyed a lovely holiday in the Derbyshire countryside, we decided that it was time to leave London and look for a better life in the country.

‘We initially looked in the Derbyshire area itself, but Rob then suggested a park home as an option, which meant that we could then move to this more expensive part of the country, which is better for me as I have family living close by.

‘So, we came to meet manager Don at this park and he showed us round, including looking at this 10-year-old Omar Sheringham home, which I immediately set my heart on!’

What do they think about the park, now that they have lived here for a few months?

Rob added, ‘The town of Henley itself was a big part of the appeal and we walked around and sat by the river when we were first thinking about moving here. In fact, even though we have now moved here, it still feels like we are on holiday, with plenty new places to explore.’

What would they say to anyone considering a move to a park home? They both enthused, ‘We would thoroughly recommend it, just go ahead and go for it! We’re very glad we did and love this park and its location!’

Visit for yourself

If you would like to see the park for yourself, just call manager Don on the number alongside and he will be happy to arrange a visit for you.

At the time of our visit in May, there was a brand new show home on site, in the form of a 46ft x 18 Omar Sheringham, priced at £275,000. Two other new homes were also due to be delivered and should be in place by the time you read this. They are a 40ft x 16 Omar Sandringham and a 48ft x 15 Omar Sandringham, priced at £220,000 and £239,000 respectively. In addition, pre-owned homes come up for sale occasionally, with a 2008, 40ft x 20 Omar Ashbourne for sale at £230,000 when we visited.

Personally, I thought it was a great little park, enjoying a superb rural location and yet being just a stone’s throw from the buzzing and rather upmarket town centre of Henley – which I spent a few hours exploring for myself after chatting to residents on the park! ❁

