



Different villa styles at Al Falah near Abu Dhabi.

Houses for the nation

Al Falah is a \$2.5bn, 1,200ha housing development for UAE nationals near Abu Dhabi, with 4,857 villas and an expected population of 60,000

The only sign to remind you that you are not in the middle of the open desert, but rather only on the outskirts of Abu Dhabi, is the air-traffic control tower of Abu Dhabi International Airport sticking up on the horizon like a cocked thumb.

Everything else is a flat, shimmering expanse of white desert baking steadily in the sun. However, developer Aldar Properties and Abu Dhabi's Urban Planning Council (UPC) have ambitious plans to turn 1,200ha of this desert into a thriving mini-city for UAE nationals.

UPC corporate services director Abdulla Al Sahi gave some background to the project. "The government of Abu Dhabi offered the site

at Al Falah for the construction of affordable homes for UAE nationals," explained Al Sahi.

"Rather than simply allocate plots, provide interest-free loans and then wait for villas to be built over an open-ended period, the government requested the design of a number of villa types to be constructed by Aldar Properties within a master-planned area, which would be offered to families based on their specific needs. The villas will then be constructed in a phased manner, according to the comprehensive master plan."

It is on the occasion of the achievement of the first milestone of this project that *Construction Week* is paying a visit to Al Falah. "About 20% of the 4,857 villas are to be delivered in the first quarter of 2012, with the remainder to

be delivered by the end of 2012 as part of a phased provision of Emirati housing," said Aldar Properties director of planning and infrastructure Talal al Dhiyebi.

This means about 971 villas will be handed over at the beginning of next year. Project director Yousuf Al Hosani added that "so far Aldar has completed about 40% to 50% of its work for the first phase of the project." The Al Falah project forms part of the Emirati Family Housing Programme, a wider government initiative launched by the UPC to create more social housing for the local population.

"The delivery of these housing communities forms a key part of the government's commitment to Abu Dhabi's long-term development, which

will ensure that UAE nationals have access to quality housing constructed by reputable, local developers to the highest standards of quality and sustainability," said Al Sahi. The overall housing programme will see 13,000 new homes built for locals in Abu Dhabi, Al Ain and the Western Region. "The new communities will enjoy a complete set of infrastructure and social and civic facilities developed as per world-class quality standards," said Al Sahi.

Al Dhiyebi said that, given the size of the housing requirement, "it was clear to the Aldar team that a new town was effectively being created." The team established early on "that the master plan should break away from the very rigid layouts traditionally used in other housing developments, and create a design that would facilitate the development of a stronger community."

Al Falah professional team

Owner: Urban Planning Council
Developer: Aldar Properties PJSC
Project manager: Fluor Middle East Limited
Lead designer (villas and master plan): GHM Design Limited
Lead designer (infrastructure): Hyder Consulting
Main contractors (villas): Al Jaber Building, El Seif Engineering Contracting, SPK Construction
Main contractors (infrastructure): Al Jaber Transport, Hilaico, Ghantoot

Al Falah comprises five so-called 'villages'. The first village will have 1,021 villas, the second 1,059, the third 1,010, the fourth 775 and the fifth 1,001. Of the total number of 4,857 villas,

962 will be three-bedroomed (each villa with a gross external area of 312m²), 1,461 will be four-bedroomed (each villa with a gross external area of 456m²), and 2,434 will be five-bedroomed (each with a gross external of 480m²).

Of the total number of 4,857 villas, 1,949 will be Gulf Heritage style, 1,452 will be Modern style and 1,456 will be Andalusian style. "These three distinct styles blend contemporary designs while preserving local and Islamic tradition," said Al Dhiyebi.

"Each of the five villages is arranged around its own village and neighbourhood centres, and will contain a mosque and a landscaped market area, as well as a mix of local shops and amenities. To ensure convenience for residents, all shopping facilities are placed strategically within a ten-minute walk from all villas," said head of planning Muna Al Daheri.



MASTER PLAN

In addition to the community elements of the individual villages, the Al Fatah housing development will also feature a town centre. This particular component of the project "is in the master-planning phase."

It is expected to include a regional shopping mall and commercial office space. A hospital and several clinics are also planned, while 15 schools will be spread throughout the community "to cater for all age groups, from early learning to high school."

ON SITE

338km

Storm and sanitary drainage piping

267km

Total length of water mains

156km

Total length of roads

In addition to the community elements of the individuals, Al Falah will also feature a town centre. Al Dhiyabi said that this particular component of the project "is in the master-planning phase." It is expected to include a regional shopping mall and commercial office space. A hospital and several clinics are planned, while 15 schools will be spread throughout the community "to cater for all age groups, from early learning to high school," said Al Sahi.

In addition to Al Falah, the UPC has eight housing projects under development, of which four are located in Abu Dhabi, one in the Western Region and three in Al Ain. "We have around 6,500 units in Abu Dhabi, 6,000 in Al Ain and 500 in the Western Region (Al Gharbia)," said Al Sahi.

New housing contracts with regard to these regional projects were announced in April at the recent Cityscape Abu Dhabi. Developers

include Sorouh Real Estate, Tamouh Investments, Royal Development Company and Al Qudra Real Estate.

"Building quality housing for Emirati families is integral to implementing the Abu Dhabi Vision 2030. The key objective of these projects is to develop multiple housing options for future Emirati generations, and to preserve and promote the traditional Emirati identity and preferred style of living," said UPC general manager HE Falah Al Ahbabi. "Planning and designing of

all the villas has been done carefully, with the commitment to establish sustainable, world-class communities that help preserve our rich and unique culture and heritage."

In Al Ain, 1,022 Emirati homes with complementing neighborhood infrastructure will be built by Sorouh Real Estate in the 2.15 million square metre Al Ghareba project. The Al Ghareba villas will be built to Estidama Pearl 2 requirements, and will emphasise traditional Emirati designs. It will be surrounded by the

historic oasis of Al Ain and framed by the ancient Hafeet Mountains.

Sorouh will also develop 448 villas in Sila'a, in the Western Region. In addition to the heritage-inspired villas, the total plot area of 1.3 million square metres will also include a mosque, a school, a women's centre and a wide range of retail outlets, all of which will be designed to meet Estidama Pearl 2 requirements and Plan Al Gharbia 2030. Spanning 4.4 million square metres at the western base of Jebel Hafeet and

13km south of Al Ain's city centre, the Jebel Hafeet project will encompass 3,000 villas and a range of neighborhood amenities such as schools, health and recreational facilities and mosques. Another significant development is the Ain Al Fayda Project, a comprehensive, mixed-use, master-planned community to be built by Al Qudra Real Estate near Jebel Hafeet. Following the award announcement in 2010, the master planning and design of the first phase has been completed. Enabling

works are underway for 2,000 units spanning across 3.75 million square metres. This four-year project is in line with the Plan Al Ain 2030. Yas Island is the location of another major Emirati housing project being developed by the Royal Development Company on the Yas Island waterfront. The 500-villa project is being built over 78ha, with a total built area of 2.32 million square metres. It will be based on the traditional 'fareej' design, linked with 'sikkas' and 'barahas'. ■



UPC corporate services director Abdulla Al Sahbi.

INSIGHT

Five a day

Gulf Precast Concrete delivers at Al Falah

Gulf Precast Concrete Company is currently building five villas a day at the Al Falah residential development near Abu Dhabi, reports CEO Elias Seraphim.

The company has been tasked by main developer Aldar and the Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council with the construction of more than 2,000 villas at Al Falah.

Scope of works covers the full superstructure, with external and internal wall panels, flooring and roof, façade lightweight decorative

elements and more than 220km of surrounding boundary walls, as well as the substructure and superstructure works for numerous electrical substations of the villa development.

"The critical challenge has been to consistently produce and build five villas per day. As a leader in the UAE precast industry, Gulf Precast mobilised seven of its plants to achieve this requirement, including a mobile production facility that was directly

installed and commissioned on-site," said Seraphim.

More than 1,100 villas have already been manufactured and 850 installed on-site, in addition to 20kms of boundary wall, according to the company.

Seraphim precast construction was chosen due to aspects, such as time, quality, safety, sustainability and cost. "Precast is ideal for large villa projects, as it fosters substantial cost-savings through economy of scale and allows to significantly

reduce the construction time. "As precast elements are produced in a factory environment before being assembled on-site, all components are controlled and inspected before being transported, which allows for better quality and sustainability."

"Fast assembly considerably limits the exposure of working at height, making precast much safer than traditional methods," said Seraphim.

