
Dubailand gets \$3.5b Plantation

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Dubai: In the early morning sunshine, activity on the \$3.5 billion, 20 million-square foot Plantation project in Dubailand, was relaxed.

Horses were being showered and brushed, a few cars passed us on the only roads carved through the project. Diggers grazed on the land.

Plantation has a construction value of \$3.5 billion and is an equestrian project located just off Emirates Road. England rugby-pro, and now a director of Plantation, Tom Woolfe has a vision to build one of the world's finest equestrian facilities here.

Although the total land area is 20 million square feet, only eight per cent of this will be built-up. Comprised in the built-up area, will be a five-star hotel, operated by Southern Sun and 500 hotel serviced apartments.

"The hotel will be up and running in two years and the first villas will be done by the end of next year," Woolfe said.

In the hotel itself, there will be six exclusive spa suites with their own treatment rooms and butler.

The serviced apartments, The Residences, are based on Eaton Square in Belgravia, an exclusive London district. Plantation will include only 110 plots which range from 40,000 square feet to 150,000 square feet.

On completion of the project there will be 800 stables, all staffed by professional polo players and show jumpers. 600 stables will be available to the public and the remaining 200 will be private. There will also be five polo fields, an indoor arena and a health club.

Plantation will offer lessons in show jumping, dressage, polo and eventing, catering to all age groups. With just over a hundred horses on site now, there will be 20 more arriving this year and 50 more next February.

In line with building green, there is also an on-site district cooling plant. "It will reduce the noise and environmental load but it is expensive. All our water pumps and the reservoir are solar-powered," Woolfe said.

All of the polo fields are watered by sub-surface irrigation which saves water in the long run. Woolfe estimates that around one tenth of the water usually used will be saved.

Recycled water, or grey water, from the district cooling plant will also be used on the land.

With a potential community of 800 horses on completion, there is another fuel that will be available in ample supply. "The horse manure will be pelleted and used as a cooking fuel for stove burners in Africa," said Woolfe.

Woolfe said the buildings in Plantation have been designed to reflect the late Georgian period. By having features such as large verandas, they are protected from the heat.

The company is planning another four projects in Dubai over the next five years, with a combined value of \$8 billion.

When asked whether Plantation would be associated with the Dubai World Cup in the future, Woolfe smiled and said only that Plantation will host its first international polo events in April next year.