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COMMUNITY AND CHOICE: THE CHINESE APARTMENT MARKET EMBRACES CHANGE

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Construction is set to begin on the second stage of Cambridge Waters – a new Allen Jack+Cottier designed residential development at Baoshan, in the northern district of Shanghai, China's second largest city. The 175-hectare site, to be developed in three stages, is the largest residential development Allen Jack+Cottier has designed to date. When completed in 2008, the development will include 12,000 apartments for over 30,000 residents, plus a town centre and community facilities. Stage two, which will commence by the end of 2005, will comprise 3,500 apartments in 9-, 12- and 16-storey buildings.

The project has hit a chord with Shanghai apartment buyers, offering a greater range of styles and configurations and more green space than many other projects in the area. The Cambridge Waters development is aimed at the upwardly mobile younger generation of Shanghai workers, providing a wide choice of plan types, from traditional or open-plan, through to Allen Jack+Cottier's innovative cross-over apartments. Stage One, which comprised 1,500 apartments in a variety of 2-, 4-, 6- and 12-storey buildings came onto the market at the end of 2004 and sold out within weeks. Sales of nearby competitive developments slumped at around the same time.

Allen Jack+Cottier Director, Peter Ireland, who heads the design team said "in China many aspects of residential and commercial buildings are prescribed under strict building codes. As a result, there are formulaic answers to issues such as solar access, building character and the public domain that are generally not very inspiring. Our approach was to create a greater variety of choice of apartment types in buildings of strong individual character. We paid careful attention to the scale, quality and connectivity of the public spaces to achieve a varied but considered landscape environment."

The design team has avoided the stark repetition of rows of tower blocks that characterize much of Shanghai's residential architecture, by introducing a variety of building heights, gently curving facades and overlapping building groups. This has resulted in dynamic spaces that use glimpses of vistas and borrowed landscape in the manner of a traditional Chinese garden.

For further information and images of the project:

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