

## North Coventry Estate Renewal

A visionary Renewal Programme

### Overview

#### Background

The Wood End, Deedmore, Henley Green and Manor Farm estates in North Coventry (collectively known as WEHM) were built in the 1950s and 1960s as council owned stock during Coventry's post war reconstruction.

The estates were once award-winning, cutting edge designs but now have fallen into low demand and poor shape with a reputation for high levels of crime and unemployment.

The area includes some 35.7 hectares at Wood End, 20.6 hectares at Deedmore and Henley Green and 14.8 hectares at Manor Farm.

The project builds on the success of the New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme in the area, which has targeted improvements in education, health, physical environment and transport links together with initiatives to reduce crime and worklessness.

The NDC programme will have invested £54 million in the WEHM area by March 2011 when it ceases business and a successor organisation, the Moat House Community Trust, is in place. NDC has also funded some £2.82 million of Masterplanning between 2002 and 2008, together with some £1.6 million funding to enable acquisitions of a number of Right to Buy (RTB) properties and subsequently their demolition. Over a similar timescale, Whitefriars has invested over £3 million in demolition of its low demand stock.

In terms of related outcomes the NDC programme has invested substantially in employment, education and community safety measures.

The WEHM Estate Renewal project builds upon the legacy of the NDC programme, and its objective is to bring about residential-led development in order to transform the area. It is an HCA 'Mixed Communities project', and has been seen by all project partners as a priority for public sector support.

This support has ensured that a comprehensive intervention has been able to progress that had previously stalled because of current economic conditions. Due to the commitment on behalf of all partners working together, both within the public and private, the project has been able to achieve start on site of the first phase.

### The Project

The aim of the project is to redevelop an area which has fallen into a spiral of economic and social decline, resulting in poor quality housing, derelict properties and associated social problems.

Supporting infrastructure, such as roads and utilities will also be enhanced, while environmental initiatives will improve the quality of green space, developing new informal play provision and recreational facilities accessible to residents.

The WEHM housing-led project is a large integrated regeneration scheme, which is proposed to be delivered in two principal phases over some 12-15 years.

Whitefriars Housing Group on behalf of the council and the NDC are responsible for the management of the project. The project currently proposes the demolition of 1,935 existing homes to facilitate the development of 3,328 new homes, including 969 new social rented units and new provision for existing owners who will be displaced by the redevelopment proposals.

In addition, significant improvements to open space are proposed, which will be delivered through the Section 106 agreement between the developer consortium of Bovis Homes, Keepmoat and Westbury Partnership (BKW).

This development supports, and takes forward the housing-led aspects of, CLG's New Deal for the Communities initiative and has ensured that this estate regeneration and housing growth project has progressed through the pre-start phase and start on site was achieved in May 2010.

There is a strong alignment to Homes and Communities Agency's strategic aims, especially in relation to the housing growth, regeneration and place making objectives. The project aims to retain (rather than displace) existing residents, while delivering net housing growth and tenure change.

This will be achieved in the context of improved primary healthcare, improved education (primary, disabled and further education) facilities, new community and leisure facilities and linkages through the NDC programme of employment linkages.

Ensuring that the partners address a comprehensive area based intervention of housing renewal and growth, which builds on the successes of the NDC and the infrastructure it, has implemented and promotes this WEHM as a place of aspiration.

The Coventry Local Investment Plan recognises this and identifies the WHEM area as a key strategic priority for the city of Coventry.

Proposals for regeneration and redevelopment of the area have evolved through public consultation, led by the NDC, since 2000.

Community involvement is at the core of the NDC activity, and has featured strongly in the Masterplanning and delivery phasing consultation. The Coventry Partners & BKW have demonstrated their commitment to continue this. Whitefriars is now leading the involvement and capacity building strategy for local people.

Local working groups have been set up and include design, supporting other residents, communications and estate management/stewardship.

The Master Development Agreement between Whitefriars and BKW was signed in 2007 for the whole redevelopment programme.

However, due to economic conditions it became unviable for the redevelopment scheme to progress as planned, and it was necessary for public sector partners to take a more direct involvement.

In 2009- 2010 a funding package was secured for Phase1a1. HCA has supported this vitally important first phase of the scheme through P & R and NAHP funding for the 39 social homes and a guaranteed purchase scheme 'safety net' to buy up to 37 homes for market sale in the event BKW are unable to sell.

The guarantee scheme is jointly funded with Whitefriars, who would subsequently let such homes for intermediate rent. Advantage West Midlands contributed £600,000 to the design code, reserved matters and sustainability.

The Council (growth funding) and NDC contributed £200,000 each to reserved matters work.

Legal documents and grant agreements were signed in early 2010, closely followed by demolition and site preparation which allowed the £35 million Phase 1A1 redevelopment programme to begin on site in 2010.# The first of these 154 new homes are due to be complete by October 2010.

In March 2010 the planning application for Phases 1A2-4 were also signed off by the City Council. Project Director Lynn Wassell (Whitefriars Housing Group) commented: "We're really excited about seeing the project come to life next year. This is a huge milestone in the scheme which we've only been able to reach thanks to the tireless support and input from local residents."

The scheme brand for the development is 'Spirit Quarters', reflecting the vibrancy and energy in the local area and the four 'quarters' that make up the community.

Residents will be kept up-to-date with all news surrounding the redevelopment through the magazine Spirit Quarterly which is a publication developed and funded by all partners involved in the project.

## The Impact

The recent consultation initiative called 'One Voice' gave the local community an opportunity to discuss their future, and encourages residents to ask questions and raise concerns.

Residents have been kept up-to-date with all news surrounding the redevelopment through the magazine Spirit Quarterly which is a publication funded by all partners involved in the project.

An investment based approach to capture a proportion of medium-long term increases in value for HCA and the public sector in priority locations.

Multi programme approach utilising P&R funding in tandem with NAHP/Growth to maximise public sector impact to deliver 'place creation' and promote a range of tenure mix including intermediate tenure products.

Ensuring that comprehensive interventions are brought forward that address long term stewardship, linkages to skills and employment together with HCA environmental development standards (minimum CSH Level 3).

The gap between WEHM and the rest of the city for Key stage 2 literacy has reduced from 37percent to 12 percent. About 600 residents supported into full time employment since 2001 and 1,300 residents received job training and 630 young people supported to access employment initiatives. Moreover, there had been a 77percent drop in the anti-social behaviour in the area.

Coventry NDC has worked closely with residents to improve their quality of life through a number of different measures. Health initiatives have seen the introduction of a targeted obesity and weight management programme and a daily drop in service for those who want to quit smoking.

Over 20 local community groups have been funded with Community Resource Funding. Then Environmental Improvement Schemes have been funded and have worked on diverse projects including landscaping and football pitches.

### Lessons Learned

- \* Ensuring that the public was consulted at each stage of the project generated widespread support and confidence in the process.
- \* Strong community leadership and governance is extremely important to work on projects of this scale.
- \* Developing partnership working and leveraging co-funding from other agencies and project partners to share in the intervention risks.
- \* Public consultation is particularly important on projects such as this one where a key goal is to retain the existing residents on the renewed site.
- \* This project has shown how adverse economic conditions can be overcome through forming strong cross-agency support.
- \* It has also highlighted the important role the HCA provides in a time when funding is tighter. This is achieved not just through direct HCA funding but also taking advantage of the HCA's ability to enable the Local Authority, alongside local partners, to ensure strategically important schemes are able to progress.
- \* Identifying value for money solutions that were capable of bringing forward early development starts.

## Reference

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Project Images

