

RENEW NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE HOUSING MARKET RENEWAL PATHFINDER 2003-2011

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Portfolio: Regeneration and Planning

Ward(s) affected: Knutton, Cross Heath, Chesterton, Kidsgrove and Town, Silverdale, Holditch, Poolfields

Purpose of the Report

To inform Members of the conclusion of the Renew Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Pathfinder initiative 2003-2011 and its achievements within the Borough.

Recommendations

- a) **That the Renew HMR Pathfinder Programme 2003-2011 and its achievements in Newcastle are noted.**
- b) **That the Council continues to work with both funding and delivery partners to optimise the prospects of further development/initiatives being implemented that are consistent with the objectives of the Renew Programme.**

Reasons

Due to the change in government spending priorities, funding for Housing Market Renewal ended March 2011, subject to a small programme supported by transitional funding.

1. Background

- 1.1 North Staffordshire was one of nine areas in the country which was designated as a Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Pathfinder area in recognition of housing market failure.
- 1.2 Members will be aware that the Government's HMR programme (Renew North Staffordshire) has been in operation since 2003 mainly focusing on the urban core of Stoke on Trent and in a number of communities of the Borough. The Newcastle wards covered are Knutton and Cross Heath, which was designated as the Borough's Area of Major Intervention (AMI), Chesterton, which was designated as a General Renewal Area (GRA), Town and Kidsgrove (Galleys Bank ex mining estate), Silverdale, Holditch and Poolfields.
- 1.3 In 2003 an initial £6.6M HMR funding was allocated for the period 2004 – 2006 to develop the plans required to carry out early work across North Staffordshire. The plans, which were informed by extensive stakeholder and public consultation, were submitted to Government to secure funding for what was envisaged to be a 15 year programme.
- 1.4 In line with delivery of the HMR programme and the Market Restructuring (Implementation) Agreement 2004, the council has demonstrated its commitment to direct and align its investment into the target neighbourhoods. To this end the council identified a capital sum of £5M to support specific HMR and regeneration activity in Newcastle. This was funded through the ring-fencing of some "Right-to-buy" receipts (derived from the sale of former Council houses since the transfer of the council's housing stock to Aspire Housing). As well as addressing HMR priorities, this approach has also addressed priorities in the borough's Sustainable Community Strategy and the council's own corporate priorities.

- 1.5 Members may recall that the original “BM3” 2005 Masterplan for Knutton and Cross Heath recommended large scale clearance and new build to deliver a broader mix of tenures with a view to improving long term sustainability. However, a critical challenge and economic appraisal of the proposal resulted in smaller scale demolition of less popular stock and a recommendation for a more tightly focused new build programme.
- 1.6 The Council has worked in partnership with Renew, Aspire Housing, the Homes and Communities Agency, Staffordshire County Council, the Primary Care Trust and the private sector to deliver the largely successful Newcastle programme. In line with the HMR vision and objectives the programme has focused on stimulating demand and creating sustainable communities where people want to live, work, invest and study.
- 1.7 Key areas of investment have addressed housing supply and demand to facilitate housing choice and the provision of good quality housing stock. Investment has also focused on encouraging population retention, improving the local environment, enhancing our heritage and improving the public realm. This has supported social cohesion and economic regeneration objectives, which contributes towards achievement of a more sustainable community.

2. **Programme Overview**

- 2.1 Successful partnership working has been at the heart of the Newcastle programme delivery. The programme has included clearance, targeted refurbishments, environmental improvements, heritage facelifts, eco terraces, strategic gateway improvements and new build across all areas within the designated Renew area of the Borough, although focused predominantly upon the AMI. The programme has also focused on improved communications and engagement with local residents across the Renew area and especially focusing on the Galleys Bank estate in Kidsgrove and in the AMI. In the AMI there has been reduction of anti social behaviour through a successful programme of diversionary activities working with young people at Ramsey Road Community Centre (which has provided a central hub for this work). The programme has also enabled research and feasibility studies focusing on the AMI as well as town centre, Chesterton and Kidsgrove. In the following paragraphs there is a summary of the key projects undertaken as part of the programme in the Borough.

2.2 **Group Repair, Facelifts and Environmental Improvements**

The early years of the programme 2004 – 2006 focused on group repair in the town centre and master planning in the AMI. The town centre scheme “Town Centre Living” completed external repairs to 55 houses in the John Street, Wharf Street and Albert Street area. The £632,500 scheme was totally funded by Renew and showed their early commitment to actively supporting and facilitating Housing Market Renewal in the Borough.

Improving existing housing has been central to the Newcastle HMR programme and has created uplift to priority areas. Further group repair schemes were successfully completed in Knutton – 32 houses in John Street and High Street and in Chesterton – 72 houses on London Road.

In response to the English Heritage review of terraced properties in Knutton, which was considered alongside a stock and ground condition survey, the award winning Knutton Heritage Facelifts were successfully completed in 2008. 73 houses were externally refurbished to a very high standard which restored heritage features to their former glory. The quality of the streetscape as been greatly improved and local community engagement increased. The £1.2M scheme was funded by Renew and the Borough Council.

The work in Knutton has been further enhanced by a range of environmental improvements delivered through Aspire and PM Training (with the added value that the latter provides for). These were in response to consultation with local residents whose views informed the Knutton Environmental Strategy, which was produced by Taylor Young in 2007. £600,000 funding for the improvements was provided by the Borough Council, Renew and Aspire. The cumulative effect of group repair, heritage facelifts and environmental improvements has provided a visible uplift to the area as well as increased community safety through alley gating schemes. This work in Knutton has been further enhanced through additional funding to deliver environmental improvements to 18 commercial and residential properties on the High Street and 91 residential properties on Silverdale Street along with 66 properties in St Bernards Road.

2.3 Chesterton Eco Homes

The eco homes scheme involved the purchase of 7 empty properties in Chesterton, particularly targeting empty commercial properties that had previously been in residential use. By refurbishing the properties and bringing them back into use the scheme contributed to the uplift of the area and supported other Renew and Council investment in the General Renewal Area.

The refurbishment focussed on creating modern family homes within traditional terraced properties. By maximising solar gain and increasing insulation the scheme was successful in meeting the Ecohomes "Excellent" standard and making significant carbon savings for the future occupiers.

2.4 Chesterton London Road Housing Scheme

Most recently the build programme for the London Road housing development has started. This development to build four houses for rent is being delivered by Staffordshire Housing. The council provided the land for a nominal fee to support this development, which will improve the main route into Chesterton and compliment previous group repair, eco homes and environmental improvements.

2.5 Knutton Village Options Appraisal

In order to protect the village identity of Knutton and to create a stronger and more diverse community, Renew and the Council commissioned DTZ to develop an options appraisal into publicly owned Knutton Village centre sites. The sites were originally highlighted as a key opportunity for mixed use developments with a residential lead. Two reports - Knutton Village Options Final report June 2009 and Knutton Village Option 4 Financial and Deliverability Assessment, March 2010 were produced.

In summary the reports demonstrated that it would not be commercially viable to bring forward a comprehensive regeneration programme for the area. Consequently Cabinet resolved at its meeting on 15 June 2011 to take forward the disposal of the Knutton Recreation Centre site and adjoining land to enable a housing-led redevelopment (broadly consistent with the DTZ reports). This decision was the subject of a "call-in" and a scrutiny review undertaken; the current position in this matter is reported separately on this agenda.

2.6 Clearance Programme

As stated earlier, the programme of clearance in Newcastle has been tightly focused on two areas – the Lower Milehouse Estate, where 188 houses have been demolished and Charter Road where 59 houses have been demolished.

With regard to the Charter Road area Aspire Housing have been working with a development partner, the HCA and your officers with the intention of bringing forward a development of 116 houses, including 25% affordable provision. A consultation exercise has been undertaken with local residents to inform design of the detailed scheme.

Insofar as the cleared part of the Lower Milehouse Lane estate is concerned it is being managed and maintained by Aspire Housing. It was always envisaged that redevelopment of this area would be sequenced to follow the development of the former Collins and Aikman site and the Charter Road area. Whilst the pace of development has been adversely affected by a combination of the global recession and the withdrawal of Market Renewal funding, the site is in a condition that would enable redevelopment in the medium term.

2.7 Former Collins and Aikman Site

The Council was a key partner in the development of the multi award winning £15m Mill Rise extra care village on the former Collins and Aikman site, which opened in 2009. This has set an excellent standard and acted as a catalyst for further development in the area. 60 high quality apartments for rent and sale have been provided for people aged over 55. Mill Rise also provides a modern healthcare facility along with restaurant, café, hairdresser, and pharmacy and piazza area

March 2011 saw the completion of 80 new houses built on the site adjacent to Mill Rise (Lymebrook Way). This development received £7.5M investment from the HCA Kick Start scheme and has provided 72 affordable properties (40 for rent) and 8 for sale.

Phase two of the successful Lymebrook Way was recently granted planning approval for 127 houses. The scheme will include 36 two bedroom units, 46, three bedroom units, 43 four bedroom units and 2 five bedroom units.

2.8 Strategic Gateway Improvements

In order to blend the new developments with the existing housing a range of environmental improvements was funded by the Council, Renew and Aspire. The £1.3M scheme was undertaken in the Knutton Lane and the Lower Milehouse Lane, which are the main gateways into the area. The schemes were delivered through Aspire and PM Training and as well as uplifting the area, the schemes also provided valuable on the job training for young people.

In Knutton Lane residents were consulted on their preferences for improvements, which resulted in low maintenance gardens, improved driveways and boundary walls and more formalised parking areas. The work has helped to blend the existing housing with the new college and has strengthened links between the town centre and Knutton Lane. Initially it was planned to improve 87 houses however, the scheme was extended through additional funding from Renew to improve an extra 47 houses on Church Lane.

A similar approach was taken with residents living on the Lower Mile House estate, which has seen improvements to 125 houses and has also provided low maintenance gardens, improved driveways, boundary walls and a number of properties have been re-rendered and painted to reflect the colour palette of Mill Rise and Lyme Brook Way.

2.9 Kidsgrove - Galleys Bank Former Miner Estate (overview)

A number of initiatives have taken place on the estate in response to residents concerns.

The Pilot House project has undertaken work on one of the defective houses on the estate to investigate whether a cost effective repair is possible. After an extensive period of testing the property is currently being refurbished.

Communications on the estate have been greatly improved by the establishment of a Community Steering Group for the Pilot House Project as well as regular bi-monthly newsletters, which have been delivered to every house on the estate since 2008.

In 2008 targeted inspections to 42 privately rented homes were carried out on the estate. The inspections were followed up with enforcement action where appropriate. The successful project helped to reduce the risk of residents having to tolerate disrepair through fear of eviction.

A number of clean up days have been held on the estate which has helped to address problems created by short term tenants moving on and leaving items behind which have created an unsightly mess.

A more detailed review of the work undertaken on the Galleys Bank estate is attached at Appendix A. Whilst there is not a key decision to be made in this regard it is important that members (and other stakeholders; particularly the local residents) have the opportunity to reflect upon the initiatives undertaken and have a shared understanding of the medium to long term prospects for the estate.

3. **Proposal**

- (a) That the Renew HMR Pathfinder Programme 2003-2011 and its achievements in Newcastle are noted.
- (b) That the Council continues to work with both funding and delivery partners to optimise the prospects of further development/initiatives being implemented that are consistent with the objectives of the Renew Programme.

4. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 4.1 To acknowledge the legacy of the Renew North Staffs Programme and to demonstrate a continuing commitment from the Council to the local communities and other stakeholders with regard to future opportunities that may arise to reinforce the achievements of the programme.

5. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

- 5.1 The HMR programme has positively addressed all the council's corporate priorities and some of those in the Sustainable Community Strategy (People – PE03 and PE10. Places – PL02 and PL03. Prosperity – PR01, PR03 and PR04). It has done this by providing high quality, sustainable housing and environmental improvements to those people living in the boroughs most deprived wards. This has supported stronger neighbourhoods and community pride where people have actively participated and influenced service delivery. The programme has helped to improve the perception of certain areas by creating a more attractive environment which benefits people and business.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 6.1 The programme has been successfully delivered in line with the partnership agreement signed in 2004 along with the Deed of Variation, agreed and signed off annually.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 The HMR programme has focused on the most deprived wards of the borough as identified in the IMD. The programme has contributed to improving the lives of the people living in those areas. Equality Impact Assessment was submitted January 2009.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 8.1 The council's investment of approximately £2.8M has levered in £14M Renew investment into the borough during the life of the programme. This is approximately 7% of the overall HMR allocation for North Staffordshire. A total in excess of £27M has been invested by partners into the AMI area.
- 8.2 Whilst there are no direct resource implications arising from this report it is likely that future regeneration initiatives undertaken within the designated Renew areas will necessitate support from the Council. Such support will often be assimilated into day to day work programmes but any initiatives requiring new funding would be the subject of the Council's normal decision-making procedures.

9. **Major Risks**

- 9.1 As indicated above a number of the significant Renew-led interventions have been completed or remain subject of delivery commitments. The major risks arising from the demise of the Renew Programme are:
- Lack of public sector funding to pump-prime or provide gap financing for capital schemes;
 - Loss of partnership infrastructure that could diminish the prospects of efficient/effective initiatives and;
 - Change in focus of partner priorities.
- 9.2 In mitigation it is considered that the programme has helped to galvanise key partners around mutually agreed priorities which are reflected in the approved Local Investment Plan. Whilst the lost of external funding, coupled with the global recession, will have slowed down the pace of delivery, the programme has helped in providing the building blocks and confidence in investors to continue the good work undertaken to date.

10. **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

- 10.1 Eco homes and improved design standards has positively impacted on this.

11. **Key Decision Information**

There is no key decision. Cabinet members are asked to note the report.

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

- 12.1 Renew North Staffs HMR programme
- 23/02/2004 – Cabinet
 - 02/06/2004 – Cabinet
 - 22/09/2004 – Cabinet
 - 14/02/2005 – Cabinet
 - 27/05/2005 – Cabinet
 - 22/06/2005 – Cabinet
 - 17/10/2007 – Cabinet
 - 17/06/2009 – Cabinet
- 12.2 Galleys Bank
- 23/07/2003 Cabinet
 - 15/10/2003 Council

- 2/05/2006 Cabinet
- 28/06/2006 Council
- 25/10/2006 Cabinet
- 17/10/2007 Cabinet
- 17/06/2009 Cabinet

13. **List of Appendices**

Appendix A – Overview of work undertaken regarding the Galleys Bank Estate.

14. **Background Papers**

The Renew final report produced by the City Renewal Team will be available in the Members room.

Copies of the structural and repair options reports relating to the Galleys Bank Pilot House Project will be available in the Members Room.