

GREET'S GREEN IS CHANGING

FUNDED BY: A number of organisations are working together to deliver the Greets Green Housing Plan - Greets Green Partnership, Sandwell Homes, Sandwell Council, Urban Living and RegenCo. Each partner is helping to provide funding and resources, creating a total investment of more than £80 million. Greets Green Partnership is funding 20 per cent and has committed £12.8 million to be spent across the five key thematic objectives outlined in the Plan.

PROJECT BACKGROUND: Each time Greets Green Partnership asked local residents what their main concerns were, they usually responded with housing quality and choice. To tackle such a major issue across Greets Green, a strong partnership was needed which brought together the key players in the area.



Greets Green Partnership joined forces with Sandwell Council, Urban Living – the Birmingham & Sandwell Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder which aims to stimulate the housing market through renewal, new building and refurbishment, Sandwell Homes and RegenCo – the urban regeneration company responsible for the transformation of West Bromwich, Smethwick and Wednesbury Hill Top.

Greets Green Partnership commissioned independent consultants, Ernst & Young to undertake a housing options study to look at how the major issue of housing for the future could be tackled and the various options for change. Every single household in Greets Green – over 12,500 residents – was invited to share in the consultation programme during the Summer of 2003. Many residents gave their views, ideas and comments about the area's housing and what they'd like to see tackled.

Out of the four options for change put forward, residents gave a resounding 'yes' to radical regeneration involving the major redevelopment of a number of sites in addition to the five key objectives. The general consensus from residents was to stop talking about it and get on and do it!

Using the feedback from the consultation as a basis, the new housing partnership created an ambitious Housing Plan. Residents said they wanted outdated homes demolished and better housing built, but they also wanted other associated problems tackled such as anti-social behaviour, poor environment and lack of amenities. The Housing Plan isn't just about bricks and mortar. It's a much broader plan which is looking to transform the whole area by improving the local environment and delivering better services. The



Houses in Wattle Road are boarded-up in readiness for demolition.





The bulldozers make short work of the derelict Meadows School in Coppice Street.

aim is to make Greets Green a place that people want and choose to live in by transforming the area so that future generations can grow up in a safe, clean and green environment.

PROJECT IN ACTION: The Housing Plan concentrates on five key objectives which will transform the Greets Green area. They are:

- Improving Housing Choice – developing new, affordable, quality housing which better meets local people’s needs, but also piloting and exploring innovative ways to help existing residents access other forms of housing type and tenure.
- Delivering Quality Services – working with partners to ensure high quality standards of service delivery and neighbourhood management are achieved.
- Transforming the Built Environment – making physical improvements such as enhancing open spaces, improving main access routes, boundaries and walkways.
- Developing Partnerships – supporting joint working arrangements with a range of organisations and individuals to make the Housing Plan a reality.
- Achieving Decent Homes in Both Public & Private Sectors - working to bring all homes up to the Government’s Decent Homes Standard in both sectors.

Twelve areas were originally highlighted as potential locations for the development of new housing and these were shortlisted to four which were identified as being priorities for action. Work began in Claypit Lane / Wattle Road and Coppice Street in 2004. The plan for the Claypit Lane / Wattle Road and Coppice Street areas includes opening up the Recreation Ground, making it much more accessible for all, to help encourage greater use of the area by the wider community. New houses, which better meet local needs, will be



developed out onto the Rec with big spaces of land in between which will be reclaimed as public open space.

A total of 189 properties were earmarked for demolition in these areas. The housing partnership was concerned with ensuring that all residents affected were given all the help and support they needed right from day one and throughout the whole regeneration process.

During October and November 2004, every resident received a one to one home visit from the personal home visit team comprising staff from Greet's Green Neighbourhood Office (Sandwell Homes), Sandwell Council and Greet's Green Partnership Housing Team. The team worked through a detailed questionnaire with each household, looking at where residents want to move to, what type of accommodation they would like, whether they have any special circumstances and what type of support they will need throughout the process.

Residents were given a whole host of help in finding a new property to move to. Those looking to move to social housing were helped to find a Sandwell Homes property as well as being put in touch with other local housing providers. A whole package of support was put together for owner occupiers wanting to buy a new house. The relocation package includes New Homes Grants and Property Appreciation Loans (PALs) which are available to all residents in the Greet's Green clearance areas, subject to eligibility. Both residents renting properties and owner occupiers also received a compensation package.

Major change such as this needs managing carefully and Greet's Green Partnership was ready to address the different issues which arose as the regeneration process began.



Greet's Green Partnership secured funds to create a visible security presence 24 hours a day, seven days a week in the clearance area.





In June 2006 potential developers were invited to look around the area as part of a special 'Developers' Day'.

When the area began attracting anti-social behaviour during the Summer of 2005, the Partnership fast tracked approval to fund 24 hour additional security measures to address residents' concerns. The Greets Green Neighbourhood Wardens and a private security firm made out of hours security patrols, creating a visible security presence 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Now that many houses have been demolished at the Claypit Lane / Wattle Road and Coppice Street clearance site, the housing partnership is starting to look at the options for the future. The Partnership is working to identify suitable developer partners who can bring forward the construction of new homes through the use of developer panels. Once selected, developers will work up proposals to transform the area.

ACHIEVEMENTS: As the Greets Green Housing Plan affects all ages, Greets Green Partnership has been funding projects which enable local school children to have their say about their ideas for the future. Pupils at Lodge Primary School have made a video about Greets Green to record how they'd like to see the area changed.

Lyng Primary School children have been comparing where they live with youngsters in Holland, while imaginations ran wild at Ryders Green Primary School when Year 6 pupils planned how they'd like to see the Claypit Lane, Wattle Road area developed in years to come.

Plus, pupils from all five Greets Green Primary Schools have had a go at creating their own communities through WorkWise's "Make It Real" project.



Local school children have been having their say about how the area should be changed for the better.



Many adults who have had to move due to the clearance are pleased with their new homes and the ongoing support they've received from the housing partnership.

Here's what some of them have to say...



Glad to Move

Sandra Thompson and her partner moved from their home in Claypit Lane to a two bedroom house in the new Trident scheme on Wood Lane.

"I'd lived in Claypit Lane for 26 years and was hoping to modernise the kitchen so I wasn't planning to move," Sandra explains. "But after I was told our house would be coming down, people starting leaving rubbish around which was attracting rats. Nobody seemed to bother and I thought then 'I'm glad to move'.

"Our new house has a downstairs toilet which we didn't have before, a bigger bathroom, bigger living room and bigger bedrooms. I've always wanted a proper hallway and I've got one. I'm very pleased.

A Family Affair

Vicky Morley and her brother, Malcolm were born and bred on the Wattle Road estate. They've always lived next door to each other and will continue to do so when they move to their brand new homes.

Vicky explains: "My five sisters, two brothers and my son and daughter all live in the Wattle Road area. When I heard that my home and my brother's home next door were going to be demolished, I wanted to make sure that our family could stay as close together as possible. My brother is registered blind and it's important that we both live near each other.

"The Neighbourhood Office were very, very helpful. They came to see us and explained everything. Then the next thing we knew, they'd found us both a property and asked if we'd be interested. We're going to move into the new apartments on Wood Lane – next door to each other! We're over the moon."



Proud to Live Here

Helen Prince and her partner, Mark King used to live in a one bedroom Sandwell Homes flat in Wattle Road.

Helen says: “My partner had been there since about 1996 and I moved in a couple of years after. When I found out that we’d have to move I thought ‘fantastic!’. We’d been burgled six months after I moved in and from that day on I wanted to move.

“A lot of properties around ours were already empty and no-one wanted to move there. At one time there was only us and an older lady living in our flats. My partner was a bit worried about the upheaval but I was excited.

“When the lady from Trident came to see us and offered us a two bedroom house both of us couldn’t believe it. I wasn’t counting my chickens ‘till we finally got the offer in writing but I was already driving everyone mad at work talking about it so much. We viewed it in February and moved in March.

“We only moved round the corner but it feels like a different world. It used to be embarrassing inviting people to the flat who didn’t know the area and thinking ‘this is where I live’. Now I’m so proud to say ‘look where I live!’”

Staying Close By

Audrey Small and her partner, George Upton had lived in a Sandwell Homes ground floor flat in Wattle Road for 11 years. Now they’ve moved to a Black Country Housing Association bungalow on Hamblets Road which suits them down to the ground.

“I was a bit subdued when I found out we’d have to move because as you get older, you don’t want these upsets,” Audrey says. “There are six new bungalows here and we were asked if we’d like to look round one. We liked it and said we wanted to move in.

“It’s a nice two bedroom house with grass and trees around. There’s a lot more room here and a lovely big fitted kitchen. Our kitchen in Wattle Road was tiny. We’re close to where we used to live which is what we wanted and we’ve been able to keep the same phone number. We know it will be lovely here.”



My Best Move

Mrs Priest moved to Coppice Street from Dudley in 2000. When she first found out her home was included in the clearance area, she was very upset.

“I was really happy in my home and didn’t want to move,” she says. “I was frightened because I didn’t know where I’d end up or what would happen. It came as a shock to me.”

After she’d received a personal one-to-one home visit from the housing team, her views began to change. “Once I realised why our houses were coming down and found out about the plans to improve the area, I thought it was a good idea. I thought, if I’ve got to move, I just need to get on with it.

“When I was offered a two bedroom house in the Trident Homes scheme on Wood Lane, I was over the moon. The Council arranged my move for me and it was the easiest move I’ve ever made. My neighbours are very friendly and the area here is nicer. I was always happy in Coppice Street but this is a thousand times better.”



For more information about the Greets Green Housing Plan, contact David Guy, Greets Green Partnership’s Housing Theme Leader on freephone 0800 073 0798.

Greets Green Partnership was awarded £56 million in 2000 to deliver a 10 year regeneration programme under the Government’s New Deal for Communities (NDC) initiative. It has funded more than 100 projects throughout the area, covering community empowerment, crime & community safety, education & lifelong learning, health, housing & urban form, jobs & enterprise and neighbourhood management. The Partnership area, which is adjacent to West Bromwich Town Centre, is home to just over 12,400 residents living in 4,900 households.

To find out more, call Greets Green Partnership on freephone 0800 953 0215.



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