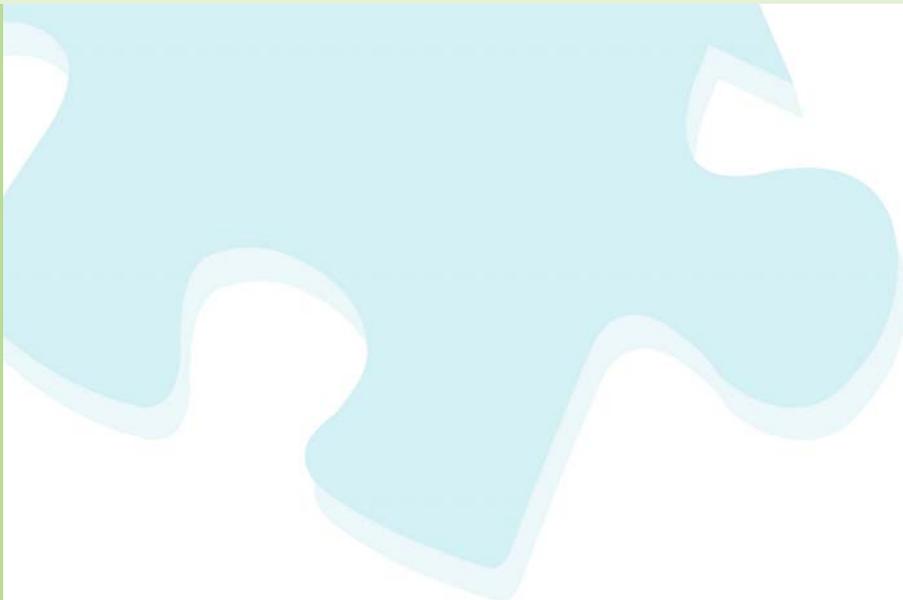


February 2009



PARTNERS' BRIEFING



renew
North Staffordshire
changing places: transforming lives

LOCAL PEOPLE TO PLAN THE FUTURE OF NORTHWOOD

People in Northwood are being invited to have their say on how to make their community a better place to live.

A major household survey is currently underway in the area as part of public consultation on the Northwood Neighbourhood Plan. The aim is get the views of residents on the issues affecting the area – and the results will help shape plans for the future of Northwood.

Hundreds of survey forms have been delivered to residents and local businesses, and people have also been invited to visit an information display on show at three different venues in the Northwood area.

Adrian Knapper, Stoke-on-Trent City Council's portfolio holder for regeneration, said: "This is a real opportunity to develop a plan for the future of Northwood. We would like to see local people really getting involved and contributing their knowledge of the area to the neighbourhood plan."

Although areas of Northwood are popular, there are some derelict sites and buildings and problems with anti-social behaviour. The neighbourhood plan aims to identify key issues and set out proposals to address the problems and create an attractive and desirable place to live and work. It will be used as a guide for future development in the area.

The Northwood Neighbourhood Plan was launched in September last year by RENEW North Staffordshire and Moorlands Harvest Housing.

A team of planning consultants, who were appointed with the help of the local Community Steering Group, has suggested that five 'headline' issues need to be considered in the development of the neighbourhood plan. They are:

- the need to improve links to employment and training and support for the business community
- the need for better quality and choice of housing
- the need for improvements to public areas and movement through the neighbourhood
- the need for improvements to the layout and mix of land uses within the area
- the future of Northwood Stadium.

Detailed information about these and other issues affecting Northwood will be on display until the end of February at The Hope Centre, Garth Street; Grove Junior School, Keelings Road and Northwood Sports Centre in Keelings Road.

BURSLEM'S CREATIVE HUB LOOKS TO THE SILVER SCREEN

A film maker based one of Midland Heart's live/work apartments in Burslem premiered his latest production recently.

The transformation of Queen Street into a creative hub for Staffordshire's young artists and entrepreneurs is a huge success, and Chris Stone's 42-minute, low-budget movie *Turpin*, which tells the tale of the infamous highwayman is the latest offering from a range of talented tenants.

The £1.6 million live/work development is owned and run by Midland Heart, RENEW North Staffordshire's housing partner in the Middleport and Burslem area, and is a focal point for artistic young people looking to start out in business.

In total, 17 new properties have been created, offering budding entrepreneurs the opportunity to start out in business in an environment in which they can live, work and socialise alongside like-minded people.

The scheme has transformed Victorian terraced properties into hi-tech units, and is the first housing association live/work developments in the Stoke-on-Trent region.

Viewers packed into the Film Theatre in Stoke early this month (February) to watch the Staffordshire University graduate's project before he takes it to major film festivals in Cannes, Los Angeles and New York.

NEW GREEN SPACE FOR WESTON HEIGHTS

Consultation is now underway with the community and other stakeholders about new public open space for the £55 million RENEW-funded regeneration scheme at Weston Heights (formerly Coalville).

Environmental charity Groundwork, appointed by developers The Compendium Group, has started consulting people about possible designs and facilities for a new park and the wildlife area, which will have something for all age groups. A working group involving all the partners in the regeneration scheme – RENEW, Compendium, Coalville Residents' Association, Riverside Housing and the city council – is overseeing the development of the public open space.

So far, the community consultation has included design workshops with residents and Weston Coyney Infant School, study visits to other parks in Stoke-on-Trent, and meetings with existing community groups, such as Coalville Youth Club.

During March, there will be an open event at the Compendium Information Centre, where local people will be able to drop in to look at and comment on the ideas that have come out of the consultation process so far. The display for this event will include a model of the new park, made by members of the community, showing some of the suggestions that have been put forward.



Pupils at Weston Coyney Infants School have contributed their ideas for the new community park.

ASPIRE HOUSING RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS INVESTORS IN EXCELLENCE AWARD

Aspire Housing - RENEW North Staffordshire's housing association partner in the Knutton and Cross Heath area - has received a national award for excellence.

Celebrity businessman James Caan, of TV's Dragon's Den fame, presented the organisation with the Investors in Excellence standard at a ceremony in Birmingham recently. The award is recognition that the organisation is working to ensure its customers receive excellent services.

Aspire's chief executive, Sinéad Butters, and director of operations, Will Nixon, picked up the award at the Midlands Excellence Awards ceremony in January. Will said: "We are committed to the pursuit of delivering excellent services and providing quality outcomes for all of our customers and colleagues. We will be continuing to use the Investors in Excellence model to ensure that we continue to improve our services and the outcomes we deliver."

The Investors in Excellence Award is a nationally recognised standard for organisations using the Business Excellence Model, which helps organisations to develop their approaches to continuous improvement.

To find out more about the Midland Excellence Awards visit their website at www.midlandexcellence.org.uk own eventually, but until then this is probably the best thing they can do."



Aspire's Will Nixon and Sinéad Butters with James Caan and John Lindsay.



MANAGER APPOINTED FOR MILL RISE VILLAGE

Diana Wilson has been appointed scheme manager at Mill Rise Village, Newcastle-under-Lyme's first 'extra care' scheme for people over the age of 55.

Diana's experience includes working for several years at the 'Centre for Policy on Aging', based in London, and she was instrumental in publicising key government documents, including the Code of Practice for Residential Care.

From a family of medical professionals, she understands the importance of providing care and support to older and vulnerable members of the community. She has lived in Staffordshire for more than 10 years, and will be based at Aspire Housing's head offices until the scheme is ready for people to move in.

The Mill Rise Village development - currently under construction on the former Collins and Aikman factory site near Morrison's supermarket - is on target to open in the summer and the show apartment will be opening shortly. The £10 million project will offer a new housing option that enables older people to maintain an independent lifestyle within a supportive environment.

The project has been developed, funded and supported by a partnership that includes RENEW North Staffordshire, English Partnerships, North Staffordshire Primary Care Trust (PCT), Aspire Housing, Newcastle Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council and Prima 200 North Staffordshire.

Combining a village complex of 60 modern apartments and shared facilities with a state-of-the-art health centre and pharmacy, Mill Rise Village will be built to high design and environmental standards and serves as a catalyst for the wider regeneration of the Knutton and Cross Heath area.



Diana Wilson

ALLEYGATING SECURES THE FUTURE IN MEIR

Great Places Housing Group is in the process of completing a programme of alleyway closures and surface improvements across the area as part of an environmental improvements programme funded by RENEW North Staffordshire.

Each scheme will give private access to the residents that surround each alley and provide them with security, an improved environment and a safe communal space for neighbours to access.

Initial consultation carried out by Great Places - RENEW's housing association partner in the Meir ARF area - with residents throughout the ARF area in Meir highlighted a preference for a programme of alleyway closures.

Further consultation followed, with individual schemes to establish the desire for each closure and, on the basis of overwhelming support, each scheme has gone ahead.

Once completed, the alleyways will become the responsibility of those that use them.



SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES

More than 100 people attended an event aimed at helping business people from across North Staffordshire get to know each other and find out about the support agencies that are available to help them survive and succeed.

Sponsored by Midland Heart - RENEW North Staffordshire's housing partner in the Middleport Burslem area - the Let's Do Business Support event was organised by the North Staffordshire Chamber and Business Brokers, an organisation that actively encourages businesses of all sizes to get involved in the process of social and economic regeneration in North Staffordshire.

Their aim is to help foster relationships between the private sector, voluntary and community groups.

The support event included a talk on the importance of business in Burslem and tips on 'speed networking'.

KEEPING AN EYE ON THE FUTURE

Thanks to real partnership working, the very latest digital technology is helping keep an eye on the streets of Meir.

RENEW North Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, camera manufacturers TYCO and Meir residents and councillors have been involved in a trial project that links mobile CCTV cameras sited on the estate to a control centre.

Brian Jones, Chair of the Wood Farm Residents' Association, helped secure funding from the local councillors Ward Budget and support from RENEW, for the project.

Digital technology means the prototype cameras need no hard wiring and are fully portable, allowing them to be moved easily and located at different sites.

So far, feedback on the project has been positive, with reported incidences of anti social behaviour dropping in the areas where the cameras are situated.

ECO-HOMES UP FOR SALE

Traditional terraced houses in Newcastle-under-Lyme that have been transformed into environmentally-friendly, 21st century homes are now up for sale

Environmental campaigner David Bellamy officially opened the first 'eco-homes' in Chesterton more than a year ago. The project - part funded by RENEW North Staffordshire - was designed to demonstrate how these traditionally energy inefficient houses can be turned into modern, energy efficient homes.

Refurbished by Staffordshire Housing Association, the latest four eco-homes - in London Road and Victoria Street, Chesterton - are now being sold.

Staffordshire Housing Association has opened the houses to the public in a series of open days designed to show people the latest 'green' features that make the family-sized homes very energy efficient.

The first two houses achieved the Eco Homes 'eco-excellent' standard, which looks at the environmental qualities of new homes and rates them - with only the most environmentally friendly properties achieving the 'excellent' standard for demonstrating outstanding energy preservation minimal pollution, a green approach to building materials, transport and land use, and water conservation.



David Bellamy opened the Chesterton eco-homes.

MIDDLEPORT MASTERPLANNING

Masterplan options for Middleport are to be consulted upon at a stakeholder event to be held in the week starting March 16.

A baseline report was produced by BDP, the consultants delivering the masterplan options, in December. This looked at community issues, the economic health of the area, the housing stock, the physical environment and transport provision.

Masterplan options, which will address these issues, have been presented to officers and a process of wider engagement is now being roled out. A six-week public consultation is due to start in April and will implement a wide range of engagement tools.

Feedback from the public consultation will be taken on board, and the preferred option will be worked up in the summer, with a further round of publicity that will highlight the actions agreed and the timescale for the delivery.

HAVE YOUR SAY

Please contact the RENEW North Staffordshire team on 01782 232024 if you have any comments or questions, or see www.renewnorthstaffs.gov.uk



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