

October 2008

RENEW RECEIVES TOP GRADING FROM AUDIT COMMISSION

This month RENEW North Staffordshire received the highest assessment from the Audit Commission in its latest performance review.

RENEW was assessed as 'performing strongly' - up from 'performing well' in its five-year strategic review (to May 2007), which was published in February. The new assessment recognises the progress made over the last year, in particular in the impact of RENEW's actions throughout the area and in its approach to masterplanning, design quality and sustainability.

The Audit Commission report said that RENEW was performing strongly in a number of activity areas. These include:

- masterplanning
- ensuring that all regeneration plans are sustainable
- a 'generally successful' approach to engaging local communities, both in the planning and delivery of its schemes
- a good track record of delivery and effectiveness of projects
- its influential role in encouraging new economic development
- its strategic alignment with partners
- success in attracting additional funding for the area.

COMMUNITY COHESION – CREATING A SUCCESSFUL CITY

As well as the physical regeneration of communities in Stoke-on-Trent, RENEW North Staffordshire is playing a wider role in the creation of sustainable neighbourhoods and a successful city.

In collaboration with Blue Mountain and Staffordshire housing associations, RENEW helped organise a recent event in Hanley - the 'Cohesive Communities Summit: Making it Everyone's Business'.

The event aimed to support Stoke-on-Trent's ambition to be a diverse and dynamic city and encourage the organisations that deliver services to people to tackle the complex issues that will bring communities together, physically, socially and economically.



Cllr Mohammed Pervez addresses the RENEW-sponsored Cohesive Communities Summit

Cllr Mohammed Pervez, the city council's portfolio holder for Community Engagement and Equalities, chaired the event. RENEW was the main sponsor, along with Stoke-on-Trent City Council, William Sutton Homes, NHS Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Housing Association.

Attended by well over 100 people, Sarfraz Hussain, of Blue Mountain, said: "Turnout was fantastic, and people committed to taking action after the event.

"Simple commitments included organising a dinner to bring people together inviting both Christians and Muslims and having welcome packs for new migrants. People also said they would like to more involved in local initiatives to help make the city a success. Delegates were also pleased to be able to make contact with other people and start to build partnerships."

COMPLETION OF INNOVATIVE HERITAGE REFURBISHMENT SCHEME

A project to restore 72 Victorian terraced properties in Knutton village to their former glory has been completed.

The £1.2m scheme, - funded by RENEW North Staffordshire and partners Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, with input from English Heritage - is the first of this type of regeneration project in the area - and a Victorian themed celebration will be held later this year to mark completion of the project.

Conservation architects at Christopher Taylor Design co-ordinated the project on behalf of RENEW North Staffordshire. Some of the houses, in Lawson Terrace, Nash Street, Peake Street, Chapel Street, Gordon Street and Cemetery Road, date back to 1843. Refurbishments include sliding sash windows and solid panelled doors, as well as new cast-iron gutters and heritage chimney pots. Features commonly used at that time, such as decorative wall friezes and boot scrapers, have also been restored.

The houses were among those identified as being of value in a heritage characterisation study of North Staffordshire. The improvements are in line with the Knutton and Cross Heath masterplan, which was supported by the community following extensive consultation in 2005/6.

The masterplan identified Knutton village centre as being in need of support because of the poor condition and low values of its old terraced properties.



One of the special architectural features in terraced houses at Knutton

As the heritage work comes to an end, local residents are continuing to make a difference to the look of the village. Residents of Cemetery Road and Gordon Street have obtained funding from the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder (NMP) to have Victorian-style window boxes installed under the first floor windows of their newly refurbished homes.

Meanwhile residents in John Street have created a colourful wild flower garden on the edge of the street. It contains cornflowers and nearly 30 species of poppies. Through the Knutton Public Realm Strategy, Newcastle Borough Council funded the railings and the first year's seeds for the garden, but residents will manage the land themselves in coming years.

ECO-FRIENDLY HOUSING ASSOCIATION GOES FOR GOLD

RENEW's partner housing association in the Meir area - Staffordshire Housing Association (SHA) - has been nominated for a number of top industry awards.

SHA has been shortlisted for four national awards, reflecting its commitment to providing high quality, innovative housing that benefits the environment and promotes regeneration.



Rowan Village in Meir has been nominated for an industry award

Rowan Village in Meir - a bespoke housing complex designed to cater for the needs of older people - has been nominated for a Chartered Institute of Housing Award for meeting both housing needs and aspirations. Rowan Village supports the housing options within the Meir AMI (area of major intervention).

An eco-homes project in Chesterton has also been nominated for no less than three sustainable housing awards. In a project part-funded by RENEW, SHA remodelled several disused terrace houses and business premises in Chesterton into a selection of highly desirable eco-friendly family homes – and the project is now in the running for a Chartered Institute of Housing award, a Building Magazine award and an Inside Housing Magazine award.

Diane Lea, Chief Executive of SHA said, “We’re committed to developing quality, affordable homes for the people of North Staffordshire. We're thrilled that our work in this area is being recognised at national level.”

The winners will be announced in November.

LORD MAYOR BANGS THE DRUM FOR SHELTON FUN

An event in North Shelton designed to bring the community together has been hailed a huge success.

Bhangra drummers, dancers, Punch and Judy and surfboarders all helped create a carnival atmosphere at a community fun day. The event - held at the Rectory Road Community Centre, on the corner of Rectory Road and Milton Street - was funded by RENEW North Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Beth Johnson Housing Association - RENEW's partner housing association in the North Shelton area.

Stoke-on-Trent Lord Mayor Councillor Derek Capey officially opened the festivities, which included displays from the fire brigade, police and the first responders.

Rachel Forster, Stoke-on-Trent City Council Neighbourhood Renewal Team Project Officer for Hanley West and Shelton, said: "The event took months of planning and collaborative work between all of the organisations involved. It was a great success and really served to bring the community together for the day."

CONSTRUCTION WELL UNDERWAY AT MILL RISE

RENEW North Staffordshire's housing association partner in Knutton and Cross Heath, Aspire Housing, has organised a series of marketing events to encourage interest in 20 shared ownership apartments at Mill Rise Village - Newcastle-under-Lyme's first 'extra care' village for people over the age of 55.

The £10 million project is set for completion in early summer next year, and will offer a new housing option that enables older people to maintain an independent lifestyle within a supportive environment.

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.

Mill Rise will offer accommodation that allows older people to receive ongoing care and support at a level that suits their individual circumstances. The development also houses a range of shared facilities, including a coffee shop, restaurant, bar/lounge and hobby room. Forty of the apartments will be available for rent, and 20 will be sold on a shared ownership basis.

The shared ownership scheme aims to offer people the best possible chance to remain in home ownership as their care and support needs change.

Laurence Reardon, RENEW's project worker in Knutton and Cross Heath, said: "Mill Rise is part of RENEW North Staffordshire's regeneration programme in the area and we would like as many people as possible to come along to the marketing events and find out about the project and how it offers older people in the area a new way of living."

A series of marketing events will be held in and around the area throughout November. Mill Rise Village is currently under construction on the former Collins and Aikman factory site near Morrisons' supermarket.

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.

CREATING HEALTHY LIVING THROUGH GREEN SPACE

North Staffordshire is set to receive international recognition as experts from across the globe unite to focus on healthy living and the environment.

Sponsored by RENEW North Staffordshire, the Environment, Well Being and Healthy Lifestyle conference taking place in Stoke-on-Trent later this month will look at ways in which organisations can use green space to boost healthy living.

The conference, to be held at the Moat House Hotel in the city centre on November 19, will bring together high profile speakers to look at issues ranging from local urban environments to how green space areas impact on health and well being.

Guest speakers include Irene van Kamp from the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, in the Netherlands, who will be focusing on environmental health and planning spaces.

It is hoped the event will encourage best practice for schemes across the country that will promote healthy lifestyles.

SHARING EXPERIENCES OF HOUSING MARKET RENEWAL

Housing Market Renewal Officer at Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, Alex Phillips, is asking residents in Knutton and Cross Heath about their experiences before, during and after regeneration projects in the area have been completed.

Alex wants to hear from people involved in the clearance process, people whose homes have been refurbished and residents who have benefited from neighbourhood improvements.

Residents' experiences will be used as case studies in a booklet about Knutton and Cross Heath's past, present and future.

The book will include some local history, and concentrate on people's experience relating to social and economic conditions and the impact that housing market renewal intervention has had on residents' day-to-day lives. undertaken in the area of major intervention (AMI).

A THREE DIMENSIONAL LOOK INTO THE FUTURE AT MEIR

Residents in Meir turned out in force last month to see for themselves plans for the future of the area.

RENEW and its regeneration partners, including the Great Places Housing Group, hosted two presentations - at the Britannia Stadium for stakeholders and at the Crescent Primary School for residents - that detailed improvements due to take place over the next few years during Phase 1 of the delivery plan for the area. The plans aim to create better housing and amenities and give people more choice of places to live for rent or buy.

Displays at the presentations featured improvements to the Woodville Road area - which includes the refurbishment of 20 homes for rent and shared ownership - and a new, 43-unit development of bungalows and housing in Lyme Road. It also detailed the continuation of the voluntary acquisition programme that will create other new development opportunities.

Meir residents were consulted about plans for the regeneration of the area earlier this year, and RENEW North Staffordshire:

- issued 3,000 invitations to consultation events
- knocked on 2,000 doors
- spoke to 900 residents in person
- received 400 completed feedback forms.

Of the completed feedback forms:

- 90% agreed with the ARF objectives for Meir
- 90% supported the ARF as an overall vision for Meir
- 88% agreed with the priorities laid down for Meir in the ARF.

Visitors to the events were also given DVDs that showcase, in 3D, what the area could look like when the regeneration projects are complete.

Over the next few months, RENEW will engage with its developer partner, BDW (Barratt David Wilson) to discuss the next steps of the Phase 1 development plan, and Great Places about the two schemes in Woodville Road and Lyme Road. Consultation with residents will begin again in earnest next year to plan the future of the area beyond 2011.

PRIDE IN THE COMMUNITY AT CHESTERTON

Community pride was top of the agenda for residents who attended a 'clean up' event in Chesterton and Holditch earlier this month.

The idea was to give residents a chance to tidy up their local areas, get rid of unwanted waste and remove litter from the streets.

The event was co-ordinated by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and was officially opened by the Chief Superintendent of Staffordshire, Mark Bates, who was born in Chesterton.

More than 80 residents volunteered to undertake litter picks over the three-day event, and the collected almost 300 bags of rubbish.

More than 70 fridges/freezers were collected, as well as 45 televisions, 32 cookers, 23 washing machines, 36 three piece suites and 25 mattresses - as part of the Chesterton youngsters enjoyed a fun day after helping clean up their community bulky waste collection service that was offered free of charge to all local people.



Children at Chesterton enjoy a day of fun

To celebrate their achievements, the residents who took part were invited to a family fun day at Chesterton Community Centre, which was sponsored by RENEW North Staffordshire, Newcastle Borough Council, Aspire Housing and Staffordshire Housing Association.

Alex Phillips, Newcastle Borough Council's Housing Market Renewal Officer, said: "The clean up has really improved the look of the area, and the fun day was a huge success, with around 350 local people attending the event."

SEAL OF APPROVAL FOR BURSLEM'S CREATIVE HUB

The launch of a £1.6m scheme to transform a Burslem street into a vibrant hub of creative business activity was celebrated with an event hosted by leading British economist, Kate Barker.

Born and raised in Stoke-on-Trent, Kate was awarded a CBE in 2006 for Services to Social Housing and has led a Government review of housing supply.

Midland Heart, RENEW North Staffordshire's housing partner in the Middleport and Burslem area, has driven forward the programme to turn a run-down area of Queen Street into a focal point for artistic young people looking to start out in business.

In total, 17 new properties have been created to provide business and living space so that fledgling enterprises can set up and flourish. The launch event marked the completion of the project.

Kate Barker commented: "As a board member of the Housing Corporation, I fully understand the importance of regeneration projects, such as Queen Street in Stoke-on-Trent. The new complex will offer huge benefits to the community by helping to support aspiring creative entrepreneurs, encouraging enterprise among local people and creating employment opportunities in a nurturing community environment."

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