



Kier Applies for Kickstart Funding for Area



Aerial View of Collins & Aikman Site (acquired by English Partnerships) in 2005 before clearance started and Mill Rise was built in Lower Milehouse, with strip of land just below already owned by Kier (Photograph Courtesy of Housing & Communities)

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A total of £5m has been bid for to act as a shot in the arm to encourage more homes to be developed in North Staffordshire. The Government is being asked to inject up to £925 million into 270 projects nationwide, to create jobs and ensure enough homes are built during the recession. Developers of stalled projects have been invited to bid for funding through the Homes and Communities Agency.

The announcement in June 2009 stated government funding would provide nearly 300 homes in three developments in Leek, Norton and Lower Milehouse, between them, as part of the Kickstart Programme.

The short-listed bidders (including Kier Ventures for the Collins and Aikman Site) will be subject to further assessment, and will have to prove they can start

construction this year to receive the funding.

Half the money will have to be repaid by the developers within five years, with only 18 per cent being paid in non-repayable grants. More than one third of the funding will go to housing associations to help them manage new affordable housing.

Speaking of the national programme, Housing Minister John Healey said: "This programme will get stalled building work back on track. This is not a handout to developers. There are tough terms to this deal including repayment of loans within five years. I want to see builders back on these sites within weeks. So I will be calling on successful developers to pull out all the stops so construction can restart as quickly as possible."

Knutton Lane Gateway Improvements

In March 2009 local residents in the Knutton area were first informed of a £442,000 gateway improvement scheme leading towards Newcastle town centre. This consisted of external improvements and enhancements as part of the regeneration programme being managed by Aspire Housing, with match funding from RENEW North Staffordshire and Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council.

The scheme includes frontage improvements for car parking, boundary treatments, security measures and low maintenance gardens.

Much of the work is being carried out by PM Training, although an Aspire Project Surveyor contacts in the first place to go through a possible “improvements menu” with individual residents.

Work is progressing through various phases, starting at the end of Knutton Lane closest to the new Newcastle under Lyme College buildings. It is anticipated that the Improvements will be completed before the end of the current financial year.

Summer Scheme Success

An indoor beach party completed a programme of outdoor and indoor summer activities for young people based around Ramsey Road community centre. A group of up to 20 young people took part in sports and craft activities including golf and hanging-basket making, as well as outings.



Toni Shaw was thrilled to hear that her property would be receiving attention at the start of the Knutton Gateway Improvement scheme. She had already made a start on turning her front garden into one of low maintenance. She was also “Pleased with the time that Aspire staff took to advise what improvements were on offer for each house.”



Above: June 2009 - Resident Toni Shaw had already started her own improvements

Below: August 2009 - Only gates need now!



The Wicked Weekends scheme of indoor and outdoor activities on Friday and Saturday evenings for young people over the age of 11 was also a great success. Funding and contributions for both schemes were provided by a partnership of local organisations including Staffordshire Police, who led on the Wicked Weekends project, and Renew North Staffordshire.

Picture left: Summer Scheme Trip to Apedale

New Knutton Residents' Association turns Small-scale Environmental Improvement into Bigger-scale Project

The 2008-9 Small-scale Environmental Improvements funded by RENEW and Aspire Housing included a project to put up a gate and improve fencing to an alleyway in St Giles Road, Knutton which was attracting anti-social behaviour. Yet this alleyway was really a road leading to nowhere. So Street Rep Amy Danylyk from St Bernards Road, whose house backs onto the abandoned playground site, supported the suggestion that the land would benefit from a change of use to allotments. When the New Knutton Residents' Association heard of the idea, they applied to the Community Spaces Big Lottery Fund to pay for the project and were delighted to receive an intermediate Development Grant in August 2009, to help them build up a solid case to change the space into a community allotment garden.

The overall aim is to create a safe-haven for all kinds of biodiversity by building a garden and setting out plots for local residents to grow their own healthy food produce, as well as developing a practical learning facility for the local community.

Derelict Play Area at St Giles Road site, Knutton.



Aspire's Resident Involvement Team received the approval of the Residents Association, beating off strong opposition, to be commissioned to carry out the task of building up local support for the project. Once the wider support for the idea is confirmed, and after soil tests and a topography survey are also carried out, this will allow the Residents Association to submit Stage 2 of their full Lottery Application for the work to be finally commenced.

A Community Consultation Day is to be held at the Knutton Community Centre on Saturday 24 October 2009 between 10.00 a.m. and 2.00 p.m. where local residents can make suggestions on the shape of the new allotment garden.

Questions to the Editor

I keep being told on the bus that Lower Milehouse will soon be getting a new through road connecting to Chesterton and beyond. Is this true?
Ann Lawton Resident.

Editor's Note:- NO! (not mentioned in the Supplementary Planning Document about Knutton and Cross Heath presented to residents of the area in 2008)



Aspire Housing's Resident Involvement Officer Colleen Bradeley discussing plans for community consultation at the Knutton Community Centre with members of the Residents' Association.



The UK's latest 'extra care' village has officially opened its doors in Newcastle-under-Lyme with its first customer moving in. Hilary Freakley purchased a 50% share in a 2-bed apartment at Mill Rise Village in Cross Heath after selling her house to a first-time buyer at the end of 2008.

Mill Rise Village is one of the first schemes outside of the London area to combine extra care housing for the over 55s with a state-of-the-art primary care centre.

It has been developed on the Collins and Aikman site, Lower Milehouse Lane in Cross Heath, by Aspire Housing, NHS North Staffordshire and Prima 200 North Staffordshire (the Local Improvement Finance Trust Company).

The £15m scheme will enable people like Hilary to maintain an independent lifestyle, within a supportive environment, with vital services on site. It is the first new build project in the heart of an Area of Major Intervention, and is expected to serve as a catalyst for the wider regeneration of the Knutton and Cross Heath area.

Designed to improve residents' quality of life as a means of promoting good health, the three-storey steel-framed development provides 60 one and two-bedroom extra care apartments for rent and shared ownership.



Pictures: Aspire Housing's Chief Executive Sinéad Butters officially welcomes Hilary Freakley to her new home in June 2009

The complex incorporates three GP practices (accessible to residents through a linked corridor, and to the wider community through a separate entrance), a pharmacy, restaurant, café, bar, and hair salon, in a secure village environment. It will host physiotherapy, podiatry, phlebotomy and community nursing services, whilst a fitness suite will provide rehabilitation services and physiotherapy.

Residents' facilities include a lounge area and conservatory, landscaped gardens including seating, water features and a large



Picture above: Finishing Touches to Outdoor Chess Board area

outdoor chess board), raised plant beds and greenhouses, hobby room, wireless broadband connection, community alarm pull cords, CCTV door entry systems, laundry room and scooter storage, with charging points on all floors.

Mill Rise Customers Move In

Each apartment offers a walk-in shower, fully fitted kitchen, low surface temperature radiators, and anti-scald taps and showers. With lifts to all floors, Mill Rise is wheelchair-accessible throughout.

Assisted bathing is available in an adapted bathroom on the ground floor. Every bedroom has fixing points enabling a hoist to be easily installed if necessary. There is also a guest room allowing residents' family members and friends to stay overnight when necessary.



Picture Above: Outside Shot of Mill Rise greeting residents to their new home

The development has been funded by Aspire Housing, Prima 200, the Homes and Communities Agency and RENEW North Staffordshire.

Other project partners include Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council.

Local residents have been consulted throughout the development process and a 'Friends of Mill Rise' group has been established - open to all prospective residents and the surrounding community, the group has met on a monthly basis to review progress and influence decision-making. It is hoped that the group will continue to meet to discuss future issues and social events.

For further details about shared ownership opportunities at Mill Rise call 0800 027 9774.

Ida Morgan is 82 years old and has come to settle in Mill Rise at the beginning of July 2009, after living for the last 14 years in Porthill. She was helped by her son to move in and remembers her first impressions of Mill Rise as "brand new and strange."

Ida was one of the first women in the country to be recruited into the police force just after the Second World War. She worked as a police woman for 10 years (at a time that there were only four police cars to cover the entire Stoke on Trent area) before she had to leave to help out her father in his fish shop in Wolstanton.

Ida's family has a longstanding connection with the area. Ida reports that her Uncle Jim Stone was a local Alderman over 60 years ago. Ida's Grandmother reportedly ran a fish and chip shop at Knutton. Ida's Mother was born in Knutton and was married at St Mary's Church, Knutton. Ida's Father worked at the Knutton Forge during the Second World War.

Ida currently has difficulty walking too far but gives her opinion of Mill Rise as "very nice - especially the restaurant and its chef."



Picture above: Ida Morgan settling in to her new home at Mill Rise

In The Spotlight: Looking for Projects to Support in the Area



Picture above: Rebecca Patel

Community Cohesion Officer Rebecca Patel has worked for the Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Strategic Partnership since June 2008. Community cohesion is a phrase that came into being after the disturbances in the Northern towns in 2001 when the government recognised that the disturbances were a result of communities not getting along or respecting one another which led to a breakdown in good relations and communication.

In a nutshell Rebecca's role is to ensure that communities from different backgrounds and circumstances can get along and respect one another regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability and ethnicity.

Rebecca is hoping to work with residents, schools, businesses, community groups, voluntary sector organisations, housing associations and the Local Authority to develop a vision of cohesion for the Borough. She wants to find out what things could be done to enable people from different circumstances and backgrounds to get along together.

For further details and if you would like to be involved, please contact Rebecca at the Local Strategic Partnership on the following details:

01782 742 498 or 07775 706 337 or Rebecca.wright-patel@newcastle-staffspartnership.org.uk



Picture right:
Shaun Rimmer

Shaun Rimmer has recently been employed as Staffordshire Wildlife Trust's Community and Health Officer. His 'Wild Steps' project, funded by North Staffordshire Primary Care Trust, is designed to promote health and fitness within Newcastle-under-Lyme by engaging local people in conservation skills and wildlife themed walks. Many of the activities will take place on Apedale Country Park and green spaces highlighted by local people.

An events programme has been produced to give people a choice of activities to try. The 'Wild Steps' programme includes activities such as wildlife walks, moderate activities such as pruning trees and strenuous activities like building steps. Shaun says "Staffordshire Wildlife Trust's Wild Steps programme is a great way to get fit and healthy which doesn't involve looking at the four walls of a local gym! The programme provides something for everyone. As well as becoming physically fitter a great deal of research on similar projects around the country has found that such schemes provide benefit to the mental well-being of participants and are a gentle way to help people recovering from illness to build up their stamina."

The session every Wednesday and Thursday morning will last from 10am to 1pm with refreshments provided. There will be pick ups for all the sessions from Newcastle Bus Station and along main bus routes.

For further details of the 'Wild Steps' scheme please contact Shaun on 01782 562 470 or s.rimmer@staffs-wildlife.org.uk or check out www.staffordshirewildlife.org.uk.

Meet the Street Reps

In September 2009 a group of residents from Hattersley & Mottram People's Association (HAMPA) came to the area to pick up some tips about how the Street Rep Scheme of Knutton and Cross Heath have contributed to the life of the area.

Initially set up by RENEW North Staffordshire to build a network of informed individuals who could act as verbal information points about the RENEW programme, (now facilitated by Aspire Housing), it has been developed to encompass items of news about other agencies delivering services in the area. The HAMPA group met with local Street Reps at their various homes all over the area, finding out at first hand the advantages of the scheme. Sue Fowell agreed to guide the group on a tour of the clearance area of Lower Milehouse, near to her home. She said afterwards that she was "dead nervous but they seemed to be nice and I hope to meet them again soon."

Jean Davison of Peak Housing, travelling with the HAMPA Group, found the day "really informative for all who were there. The Street Reps could come to visit Hattersley sometime to see what we do up here." If any resident is interested in joining the Street Reps on a trip to the peaks of Hattersley (near Glossop), please contact Laurence Reardon.



Street Reps Tim and Lynne Bates act as hosts for the HAMPA Group eating their sandwiches at John Street, Knutton Community Garden.



Did You Know?

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) is the national housing and regeneration agency for England, with an annual investment budget of more than £5bn. The HCA was formed on 1st December 2008 along with the Tenant Services Authority (the regulatory body for Registered Social Landlords).

HCA is a public body under the government department Communities and Local Government (CLG), combining the land and property experience of English Partnerships (current owners of Collins & Aikman Site, Cross Heath), the Housing Corporation's mission of delivering affordable homes and the Academy for Sustainable Communities' knowledge of creating and renewing high quality places.

It also incorporates the major delivery programmes of CLG including Decent Homes and Mixed Communities and Housing Market Renewal.

Heritage Facelift Wins Award



2008 Work in Progress at Lawson Terrace, Knutton

The Knutton Terraces Heritage Facelift scheme has been commended by the Newcastle Civic Award Scheme, which promotes excellence in design, workmanship in building and landscaping in the area. Judges visited 16 projects in the Borough and the Knutton scheme, whose restoration was completed in October 2008, won one of three main awards. An award ceremony will be held later this year.

Useful Contacts

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nwarden@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk or mark.jones@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk

RENEW North Staffordshire Helpline

Tel: 01782 232024

Residents' Friend - service offers independent information and advice about the Housing Market Renewal Programme.

Emily Tomkinson, Residents' Friend Direct Dial: 01782 408787

Contact Emily or Project House (611235) to make an appointment for Ramsey Road Community Centre.

Home visits are also available on request

This newsletter can be provided in alternative formats on request.

Please telephone us on 01782 635200

