

WOODWARD ROAD REGENERATION PROJECT

Summary

In 2009, the Woodward Road Estate was identified as failing with it being in the bottom 3 per cent of Indices of Multiple Deprivation nationally.

Unemployment levels were more than double the national average, child poverty, income and educational attainment within the worst 3 per cent. In addition 32 of the 209 properties on the estate were empty (15.3%).

Crime, anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol addictions on the estate were amongst the worst in the Wirral. Vandalism and fly tipping was a major problem. Door step lenders and loan sharks were regular visitors.

In response Wirral Partnership Homes (WPH) launched its Woodward Road Regeneration Project which has made major improvements to the estate making it an excellent example of neighbourhood and social improvement.

The aim of the regeneration project was to make Woodward Estate, (built in 1929) a flagship for community sustainability, reducing carbon emissions and cutting utility bills. It also hoped to promote the local economy and employment initiatives by developing opportunities for local residents and directly employing tenants in the project.

Question 1- Innovation

Action Plan:

- Introduction of a dedicated intensive management team to address anti social behaviour and vulnerability issues
- Bring together a multi skilled project team comprising of housing management, building surveyors, project managers, architects, RAND Associates, EDF CSEP funding, the police and local community leaders

- Elimination of empty properties
- Refurbishment of the estate's community house making it the only retrofitted "A" rated energy house on the Wirral and using, amongst other measures, PV solar panels, the installation of a Neta-tec super efficient boiler with a combined gas saver unit etc creating an energy efficient, cheap to run community asset.
- Improving the physical appearance of houses whilst reducing energy costs by installing solid wall external insulation, replacing flat roofs, canopies etc
- Improving heating systems to "A" rated standards and loft insulation
- Replacement of existing timber fencing with green property boundaries and introducing traffic calming measures.

Question 2 - Benefits

Bringing new life into the area

Along with physical improvement to the estate, WPH needed to focus on the community and its needs. This required a sustainable intensive management team approach to tackle lettings, anti-social behaviour, health and wellbeing, financial inclusion, worklessness and education issues.

At the heart of the estate is the community house which has been transformed through a Low Carbon Retrofit pilot resulting in the estate now having the first energy efficient "A Rated" social housing property on the Wirral. This revitalisation has made the centre a valued community asset. Local volunteers are helping to maximise its use and initiatives such as acupuncture therapy, career and educational pathways for young people, money management and problem analysis sessions are arranged for tenants.

With support from several partners such Merseyside Police, EDF, Bramall Construction, RAND Associates, Ainsley Gommon Architects and the National

Careers Service, the project has made tangible and meaningful improvements to the lives of the estate's residents.

Tenant support and opinions have also been a key factor in the success of this project. Housing Management have been undertaking follow up visits, asking for ideas from tenants for future improvements and giving advice.

Quotes from our residents include: "Can't believe how lovely and warm the house is and my gas bill is halved!" and "I was always embarrassed before about anyone visiting, now I'm proud to live here."

Involving and supporting residents to change where they live

The project team used a vacant property on the estate and set up a local office base for residents to engage with WPH staff. We visited all 209 properties to get to know residents, asking what they wanted and held consultation days (attended by over 50 per cent of residents) talking about designs and colours of external wall insulation.

We held problem analysis sessions with tenant reps and contractors, and ran a joint project with RAND Associates to measure property energy efficiency. We engaged with local schools to communicate the health and safety implications of the works and helped vulnerable tenants to clear gardens in preparation. We kept residents up to date via direct communication and introduced a monthly newsletter.

Since the beginning of the project there has been strong customer support from tenants, residents, and local councillors. We involved them in plans for the estate and initiatives including:

- Garden initiatives including clearance of unwanted household items to reduce fly tipping and support for vulnerable people
- Dog fouling clean up exercise and rubbish amnesty days
- House security initiatives with local police

- Bonfire and Christmas parties, health advice, help with youth unemployment and a football academy at the community centre
- Help for local residents on drugs and alcohol alongside Arch who provide intervention and referral to services
- New security provisions including evening patrols between 5pm and 8am
- Supporting local volunteers and any necessary resources required.

Improving the community and physical spaces

Residents who have had the external wall insulation fitted to their homes have been delighted with the outcome. Feedback indicates that they have already noticed dramatic differences in fuel consumption, the amount they put into prepay meters almost halving per week. Additionally, £800k has been invested in the creation of green aesthetics to complement the new external appearance of the houses.

The WPH project team, local architects, contractors and tenants are working together to develop other physical improvements to the estate including a new approach to the boundaries of their properties. The old broken, wooden fencing is being replaced, community areas landscaped and traffic controlling measures introduced to make the streets safer for children to play.

Local Police Constable Stuart Lawson said: "Since the WPH team came on the estate, it has broken down a lot of barriers between the Police and residents, making communication easier. We feel it has gone a long way to build bridges and make the residents feel more confident and trusting with the work our officers are doing to make the area a safer and nicer place to live"

Two evictions have taken place due to anti social behaviour and 8 Notices to Quit have been served along with 5 acceptable behaviour contracts.

The community have been happy with results so far and are fully behind the project team. For the first time in estate's history there are no empty

properties and now there is a waiting list of applicants to move onto the estate.

Question 3 – Financial benefits

Project Costs

Total project funding was in excess of £3m capital

- £1.46m external wall, loft insulation and associated low carbon measures
- £557k aesthetic property works (canopies etc)
- £800k traffic calming and boundary works (estimate as works due to be completed in 2013/14)
- £250k rear boundary fencing
- EDF CESP funding £1.46m

Energy Benefits

- Average property SAP rating improvement from 57 to 69
- Saving of 2.5 tonnes of CO2 per property per annum
- Estimated 40% reduction in utility costs to tenants

Question 4 Positive practice

WPH is recently started promoted the Woodward Road Regeneration project as an example of a multi partner regeneration example. Stake holders such as Wirral Borough Council, the NHF etc. have been part of good practice visits to promote WPH's approach to Low Carbon Housing Retrofit Regeneration. But the true value of this project is what our customers have told us

*“Can't believe how lovely and warm the house is and my gas bill is halved!”
and “I was always embarrassed before about anyone visiting, now I'm proud to live here.”*