



Beechwood Housing Partnership Case Study

The Riverside Group Case Studies

No.6 Beechwood Housing Partnership

A partnership between Riverside Housing, Lowry Homes and Wirral Borough Council is contributing to the rejuvenation of Wirral's Beechwood and Woodchurch estates.

The scheme involves the removal of unpopular flats and maisonettes and their replacement with new homes for rent, sale and shared ownership.

The start of work on site follows several years of project planning and considerable debate within the steering group which was established in 2002 with representatives of the key stakeholders in the area - residents, Riverside Housing, Lowry Homes, the local Estate Management Board and the Council.

The aim of Riverside and Lowry was to redevelop the available sites with an appropriate mix of decent and affordable housing for rent and sale to increase housing choice. Furthermore, it would achieve this redevelopment through a process which engaged local people, ensuring that those directly affected were dealt with sensitively.

A Clear Vision

The scheme also helps to improve the surrounding housing areas, making them better places in which to live in the long term by repairing the urban fabric and achieving a more balanced mix of housing.

From the outset, Riverside had a very clear vision of how these aims and objectives should be translated into action 'on the ground'.

The promotion of mixed tenures - through rent, sale and shared ownership – helps to break down traditional barriers and establish the long-term popularity of the areas as places to live. All homes are being built to a very high standard, with full gas central heating, double glazing, high levels of security and energy efficiency and robust external works.

Other practical objectives set down by Riverside included a commitment to phased redevelopment, minimising the disruption for tenants, and undertaking a feasibility study into the need for additional community facilities and environmental improvements.

Engaging the Local Community

The local community and local authority have been involved in every aspect of the development via the steering group and through work with existing community groups and individual tenants.

Riverside has also pledged to establish a £50,000 challenge fund to subsidise environmental projects and to work with Beechwood and Ballantyne Community Housing Association to deliver effective neighbourhood services.

Riverside was also very keen to maximise the benefits of the construction work for local businesses and individuals.





A group was therefore established to investigate how local firms could get involved in bidding for contracts and how the project could generate job and training opportunities for residents. The work of the group means that up to 10 people from the estate are now employed through Lowry Homes and its contractors to work on the various building sites covering many different trades.

The community engagement exercise in the area included regular newsletters, surgeries within the local area housing office and a series of information days featuring exhibition material on the redevelopment plans.

These events generated very useful feedback in terms of residents' views on subjects such as access, traffic issues, possible loss of open space and green space and how the plans could help to tackle anti-social behaviour in the area.

In addition, door knocking exercises were carried out with residents on a number of occasions to determine their individual re-housing needs and to discuss the options available.

While this consultation was going on, Riverside also kept other interested parties in the area aware of the progress of the scheme through its links with Beechwood Community Trust, the Beechwood and Ballantyne Community Housing Association and the 4B's Partnership.

Minimising the Disruption

Following the formal approval of the scheme by Wirral Borough Council and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in autumn 2004, the project moved into the delivery stage with work starting on the first sites early last year.

Riverside pledged that all sites would have 24-hour security and secure fencing, a dedicated site manager and that ongoing information would be provided to residents affected by building work near to their homes.

As part of this process meetings have been held to discuss the work programme and any problems that residents might have encountered. These meetings have proved very beneficial in helping to establish good working relationships and to resolve problems quickly.

This same consultation process will be used as work gets under way on the other sites in the scheme.

By the time the Beechwood Housing Partnership project is complete in late 2008 it will have delivered 160 new Lowry homes, 26 Riverside new shared-ownership homes, 61 new Riverside homes for rent plus a further 24 refurbished flats.

Tenants who are currently being housed in temporary accommodation will be given priority for re-housing into a new home which meets their requirements as properties are completed and available for letting.

Ian Platt from Wirral Borough Council concluded:

"This project is now on target to meet its key objective of removing a substantial amount of unpopular housing on the Beechwood Estate and in Upton and replacing it with a range of in-demand property in a variety of tenures."