

- **The North Solihull challenge**

North Solihull was historically part of Birmingham before being transferred to the borough of Solihull in the 1970s. At around 1,000 acres, the area is a large former local authority run housing estate and is home to around 40,000 people. Built in the 1960s, the estate has suffered from problems associated with the unsustainable 'Radburn' design such as crime and anti-social behaviour as well as poor housing, low resident aspiration, low life expectancy and education.

- **The solution**

A 15 year private/public partnership which will see £1.8 billion invested in the three wards of Chelmsley Wood, Smith's Wood and Kingshurst & Fordbridge. The investment will create 8,000 new mixed-tenure homes (a net gain of 4,500), improve 12,500 existing homes, five vibrant village centres that will act as new community hubs for the area, the building of 10 new extended primary schools and significant improvements to the infrastructure such as roads and green spaces.

- **The partners that make up the North Solihull Partnership**

Inpartnership is a regeneration specialist – the architects of the specific regeneration model in North Solihull and is also delivering the village centres in the scheme. Solihull Council is the local authority and the land owner in the scheme. Bellway Homes is the housebuilding partner for at least the first 50 per cent of new homes on the scheme, and Whitefriars Housing Group is a registered social landlord which is carrying out the consultation process for the Partnership.

- **The funding model and financial structure**

The financial structure of the project is based on capturing value from residential land and other forms of development in the area and recycling it back into the project. The way this works is that Solihull Council put in the land at existing use value, the Partnership assembles the site and applies for planning permission, which is then sold to Bellway at market value, with the receipt reinvested in the other aspects of the regeneration programme, such as new community facilities and primary schools.

- **The benefits of this model and financial structure**

North Solihull falls within one of the most affluent boroughs in the country, and as such has struggled to secure central government funding for regeneration because funds are awarded on an assessment of district wide needs that mask the deprivation in North Solihull. The regeneration partnership model conceived for this scheme has grown out of necessity and new thinking and allows the Council to utilise its land assets to raise money for the project without having to rely on huge amounts of government funds as the primary driver for change.

The North Solihull model, because it captures value, limits the amount of local tax payers' money being spent in the regeneration area. Other benefits include the scope to incorporate a neighbourhood management partnership and scope for income streams to fund community programmes.

- **What is unique about the model and what are its aims**

One of the main differences between the Regenerating North Solihull project and other large scale regeneration programmes is that the project is being carried out with 40,000 residents in situ. This means that the residents play a significant role in influencing the process and the long term aim of the project is to create a truly sustainable community.

A cornerstone of the project is the focus on sustainable educational improvements throughout the area using money from the Partnership, the local authority, the Department of Children, Schools and Families and the schools themselves. Every nursery, primary and secondary school will be in a new building within 8 years. There is also a brand new College of Further Education in the area, run by Solihull College, offering a variety of work related learning opportunities to young people and adults within the community.

This £170m investment builds on work already underway that has been funded by Sure Start grants and Excellence in Cities, a DCSF project that has focused money on schools in challenging circumstances. The Partnership has also added over half a million pounds to Sport England funding enabling the development of two community sports initiatives aimed at targeting young people in areas of high crime and anti social behaviour.

- **The regeneration process**

The strategic framework for the regeneration programme was signed in the summer of 2005, following 18 months of intensive consultation with local residents and was subsequently incorporated into Solihull Council's strategic planning guidance.

Since then, three neighbourhood plans have been drawn up for the Craig Croft, North Arran Way and Kingshurst and Babbs Mill areas, where the first interventions for the

project are taking place including schemes for 350 new homes, two village centres, the first new primary school completed by December 2007, and the second starting before Christmas. Resident Implementation Groups (RIGs), have been established to involve the local community in discussions on how the regeneration should be implemented. With the scheme taking place in partnership with the community, it has been crucial to maintain local support, with extensive consultation and a constant flow of up to date information about the project. This has included consultation on Neighbourhood Plans, the more strategic Area Plans for the north, central and south of the regeneration area, bi-monthly newsletters, workshops, updates, individual letters from the Partnership to inform residents of what is happening, as well as home visits and one to one correspondence.

- **Comprehensive approach to regeneration**

Hand in hand with the housing and education projects is a raft of projects designed to encourage people to participate in the programme, to give them confidence and skills to enter mainstream training and employment and to direct young people from a life of disengagement, anti social behaviour and crime. Examples include:

- Business Enterprise Adviser etc
- Young persons' active involvement
- NS Fusion, the sports programme targeted at young people, has just won an award at the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Sports Awards for its innovative approach and success rate

- **Activity to date**

Intervention began 18 months ago with residents in affected areas being assisted in finding alternative accommodation so that their current housing could be demolished to make way for redevelopment. To date more than 160 tenants and 20 owner occupiers have moved to alternative accommodation and over 100 properties will have been demolished by the New Year.

Alcott Grove was the first completed housing scheme and is fully sold, mainly to local people. Work is progressing on a number of other schemes including Chapel Walk which includes 31 English Partnerships First Time Buyer properties, which have all been matched to purchasers. In total 449 properties are now underway or about to start on site and 64 homes for social housing have commenced construction.

The first new school, Kingshurst Primary, will be complete in December this year. Outline planning has been received for the first village centre which will have an extended primary school with substantial community facilities, health care premises, residential, retail and commercial elements. The building of the first phase, the school, starts before the end of 2007.

Ends

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