

Transformation of Northmoor, Manchester

Remodelling a neighbourhood to meet residents' needs

Overview

A £20 million, 10-year regeneration programme has transformed the Northmoor area of Longsight in Manchester from a crime-ridden area of boarded-up housing into a thriving, family-friendly community. Local residents were involved in planning the redevelopment work from the outset.

Between 1997 and 2007, Manchester Methodist Housing Association, Manchester City Council and Northmoor Community Association worked with other local organisations and people living in Northmoor to revitalise the neighbourhood. The vision was to make Northmoor a place with safe, family-friendly streets and housing, without resorting to wholesale demolition.

The area's housing stock was modernised by building new homes, refurbishing existing ones and converting two-up, two-down terraces into spacious four-bedroom town houses. A new community centre and the introduction of community wardens have fostered a strong community spirit in Northmoor. Every intervention was informed by a concept plan that was developed at the start of the project in partnership with local residents.

In 2002, Manchester Methodist Housing Association had no waiting list for houses in Northmoor and gave vouchers to tenants who moved there. By 2007, the average waiting time for a two-bedroom house in the area was three to four years. In 1997, rental properties were empty for around seven weeks between lets but by 2007 this had fallen to just three weeks.

The successful transformation of Northmoor has been recognised by a number of awards, including the Housing Corporation's Awards for Excellence, the National Transport Awards and the Deputy Prime Minister's Award for Sustainable Communities.

Summary

11 Home Zones have been created in Northmoor

Average time between lettings fell from 7.5 weeks in 1997 to 3 weeks in 2007

98% of residents said their neighbourhood had improved

90% of local people feel reassured by the presence of community wardens

Fly-tipping incidents fell by 30% in 2006-7

Background

Forging a partnership

In 1997, Manchester Methodist Housing Association – now the largest member of Great Places Housing Group – and Manchester City Council both had large numbers of homes in Northmoor that were difficult to let. The area had a high crime rate and a disenfranchised, disillusioned community. Recognising that the area was in urgent need of investment, the two organisations joined forces with 15 other local organisations to transform Northmoor into a busy, vibrant and diverse place.

Developing a concept plan

The partner organisations worked closely with local residents to develop a concept plan for the redevelopment of Northmoor. The plan focused on six areas: environment, recreation and open space, housing, shops and businesses, community and identity. Although developing plans in partnership with the community is now an established practice, in 1997 it was a pioneering approach. Local residents were invited to fun days and drop-in sessions where they could find out about the regeneration project and help shape its development.

Most of the redevelopment work in Northmoor took place between 2001 and 2006. More recently, Great Places Housing Group has built 36 new family homes for sale, introducing a greater variety of housing stock into the area. Stephen Porter, chief executive of Great Places, says: “Northmoor has evolved into a thriving community, with falling crime rates. But it’s by no means a finished process and we’ll carry on working with our partners and local people to realise Northmoor’s potential.”

The Impact

Creating Home Zones

Northmoor’s residents wanted their neighbourhood to have safer, more family-friendly streets and this has been achieved through the Home Zones initiative. Colourful paintwork, refurbished railings, wall-mounted street lights and hanging baskets create a welcoming environment and bollards and parking places slow down traffic to less than 10 miles per hour. Each of Northmoor’s 11 Home Zones is slightly different, as the designs were developed by the people living within them.

The collaborative approach taken with the Home Zone designs gave residents an immediate sense of pride and ownership. Members of the community have gone on to make further improvements to their streets. One resident, Evelyn Uche, has organised hanging baskets for her area, rallied people for local clean-ups and pitched for funding to improve green spaces.

Fostering community spirit

Around 200 local residents belong to Northmoor Community Association, which runs the community centre, a low-cost launderette, internet café and a tool hire service. Northmoor Community Centre is located in a grade II listed building at the heart of the community. “Northmoor’s strong community spirit is the glue that holds the neighbourhood together,” says David Callicott, chair of Northmoor Community Association.

The community wardens have become a valued part of life in Northmoor. Danuta Brightwell, head teacher at Crowcroft Park Primary School, says she “cannot praise the wardens enough” for their help with sports coaching sessions and other activities. Recent surveys in Northmoor show that education levels are above the national average and people are increasingly keen to live, work and invest in the area.

Good Practice

Local people were involved in developing the concept plan for Northmoor, which was drawn up in 1997 before any changes were proposed. Having a concept plan meant that the full breadth of the regeneration work was informed by the needs and aspirations of the community. The concept plan remains the blueprint for all work undertaken in the area and progress against the plan is reviewed at regular intervals.

The redevelopment of Northmoor has transformed an area of 19th century housing into a modern neighbourhood. It demonstrates the potential for a community to be revitalised through evolution, rather than through demolishing buildings and starting from scratch.

Although Great Places Housing Group owns only a quarter of homes in Northmoor, the regeneration projects that it has funded have been for the benefit of the whole community. Facelift work such as re-pointing and adding railings to the fronts of houses was undertaken regardless of home ownership.

The project team established partnering agreements with three contractors rather than continually re-tendering for refurbishment work. Contractors were selected on the basis of value for money and each contractor received a fixed fee per refurbishment, regardless of complexity.

Northmoor’s proximity to Manchester city centre and its abundance of small houses means that it has long been a reception area for newcomers to Manchester, with people moving on to other areas fairly quickly. Making the neighbourhood more family-friendly and introducing a greater variety of housing stock to the area has encouraged people to stay in Northmoor for longer and put roots down in the community.

Reference

Contact details

Jenny Parkin
PR & Communications Officer
0161 447 5049
<mailto:jenny.parkin@greatplaces.org.uk>

Great Places Housing Group
Southern Gate
729 Princess Road
Manchester
M20 2LT

External links

<http://www.greatplaces.org.uk/>

<http://www.northmoorcommunity.org/>

<http://www.manchester.gov.uk/>

Project Images



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