



Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister

Creating sustainable communities

The Deputy Prime Minister's Award *for Sustainable Communities 2005*



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The Rt Hon John Prescott MP *Deputy Prime Minister*

“These projects demonstrate the progress which is being made to create more sustainable places in which people feel proud to live”

In Bristol last December, I brought together 29 nations for a Ministerial informal meeting on sustainable communities under the UK Presidency of the European Union.

We agreed a common approach and shared ideas about skills, funding and governance needed to create sustainable communities.

Our agreement - "the Bristol Accord" - not only set a future agenda for Europe. It also demonstrated how much this country has achieved since we set out our agenda for sustainable communities in 2002.

In that time the concept of sustainable communities has developed into an internationally accepted framework for stronger cities, towns and regions.

And this year's Award for Sustainable Communities provides another reminder of the tremendous work which is being undertaken up and down the country.

Yet again we have had a terrific response and the four finalists have done well to stand out in a strong field of entrants.

I want to thank BURA for organising the Award and I am very grateful to the judging panel of experts chaired by Clive Dutton.

The Government does not underestimate the scale of the challenge which remains. But these projects demonstrate the progress which is being made - and the commitment by all concerned to create more sustainable places in which people feel proud to live.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Prescott". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



Clive Dutton OBE

Director of Planning & Regeneration, Birmingham City Council

The Awards Panel, administered independently by BURA (the British Urban Regeneration Association), consists of assessors with a wide variety of relevant expertise, representing public, private, community, voluntary, academic and professional organisations. The Panel has considered 150 entries in total this year, and has therefore needed to focus on seeking out those that really impress and stand out from the crowd.

This year the criteria used by the Panel are the agreed definition of a sustainable community as published in the ODPM's two five-year plans - 'Homes for All' and 'People, Places and Prosperity' - eight components in total as well as the requirement for full community involvement and a track record of success. The Panel's role is to identify the most outstanding projects that can demonstrate strengths across the full range of these components. We then recommend finalists and an overall winner for the Deputy Prime Minister's final decision.

The overall winner, and the other finalists, are inspirational examples of sustainable communities being delivered on the ground. They have created strategies and practical solutions to suit different market conditions, across both urban and rural areas. It is interesting to note the contrasting character of these approaches, in particular that different sectors have taken the lead role in strategy development and delivery.

This brochure also highlights 10 projects which have been selected for

special recognition. The Panel considers that these projects demonstrate exceptional strengths within specific criteria or a particularly useful approach to supporting the development of sustainable communities.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Panel for its objectivity, hard work, and above all for its passion, which has been so evident at the lively assessment meetings, and to BURA for its commitment to identifying best practice through the quality of the assessment process, and for providing a support team to assist in the initial screening of entries. BURA has also this year been involved in revisiting the 2004 finalists for a series of masterclass events and its forthcoming report illustrates how the components of a sustainable community are expressed on the ground.

I would like to thank the ODPM for giving me the opportunity once again to chair the Panel, and to pledge my support for the continued work to explore the further promotion of award-winning projects by BURA, by the new Academy for Sustainable Communities and by the ODPM itself.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Clive Dutton', written in a cursive style.

“The overall winner, and the other finalists, are inspirational examples of sustainable communities being delivered on the ground.”

Award Criteria, Assessment Process and Panel

Award Criteria

Entries were invited this year from projects and initiatives of all types and sizes that are contributing to making towns, cities and rural communities in England better places in which to live and work.

ALL projects and initiatives must demonstrate active involvement of the community including business and/or residents.

ALL projects and initiatives should be advanced to a state where there is a record of success with demonstrable results and should meet some, or all, of the following criteria:

- **ACTIVE, INCLUSIVE AND SAFE**
fair, tolerant and cohesive with a strong local culture and other shared community activities
- **WELL RUN** with effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership
- **ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE**
providing places for people to live that are considerate of the environment
- **WELL DESIGNED AND WELL BUILT**
featuring a good quality built and natural environment
- **WELL CONNECTED** with good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services
- **THRIVING** with a flourishing and diverse local economy
- **WELL SERVED** with public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to people's needs and accessible to all
- **FAIR FOR EVERYONE** including those in other communities, now and in the future

Assessment Process

All entries are scrutinised by an independent Assessment Panel administered by BURA. The assessment process is divided into three stages.

- **Stage 1** All entries are assessed on paper, to ascertain whether they sufficiently meet the specified criteria.
- **Stage 2** Projects that sufficiently meet the criteria are visited by a member of the Panel, and a written report submitted to the Panel for collective discussion. A short-list of projects is then agreed.
- **Stage 3** Projects on the short-list receive a visit from a further member of the Panel. A second written report is submitted to the Panel for further discussion and the recommended finalists are selected from this list for final approval by The Deputy Prime Minister.

The Assessment Panel

Phil Barton
RENEW Northwest

Alan Baxter
Alan Baxter Associates

Grenville Chappel
Beacon Community Regeneration Partnership (2003 Award Winner)

Clive Dutton (Chair)
Birmingham City Council

Bill Ellson
Creekside Forum

Tony Fyson
TCPA

Donnette Milkson
Joining Up Northumberland Park (2004 Finalist)

Crispin Moor
Commission for Rural Communities

Kevin Murray
Kevin Murray Associates

Rob Pearson
English Partnerships

Jack Pringle
RIBA

Professor Peter Roberts
Academy for Sustainable Communities/University of Liverpool

Dan Sequerra
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Overall Winner The Regeneration of Attwood Green, Birmingham



“When we started, they were queuing to get out; now they are queuing to get in!” This is how the Chief Executive of Optima Community Association sums up the dramatic turnaround of Attwood Green over the past seven years.

Attwood Green comprises five large 1950s to 1970s housing estates featuring predominantly one and two bedroom dwellings in high-rise blocks and maisonettes. The estates were originally designed according to a ‘towers in the park’ concept. In reality however, the large proportion of planned open space was underutilised, difficult to maintain and a hot-bed for crime. Despite Attwood Green’s proximity to Birmingham City Centre, the area was ghettoised, the city’s middle ring road acted as a physical barrier to the rest of the city and local service provision was poor. Furthermore, Attwood Green was characterised by a high turnover of tenants, empty and derelict homes, falling school rolls, and ‘no-go’ areas.

By 1996 the area had declined to the point where local residents staged roof-top protests and sit-ins to draw attention to what they themselves termed, “the Slum Quarter of Birmingham”. Residents subsequently worked with the local authority to find a way forward which led to the successful ‘yes’ vote for a stock transfer.

Optima Community Association, a community-driven housing organisation, was formed in June 1999 with a vision to create a mixed-tenure, socially inclusive and vibrant community at Attwood Green, with family houses, flats and student accommodation together with business zones. Between 1999 and 2005, with the injection of almost £50 million

“When we started, they were queuing to get out; now they are queuing to get in!”

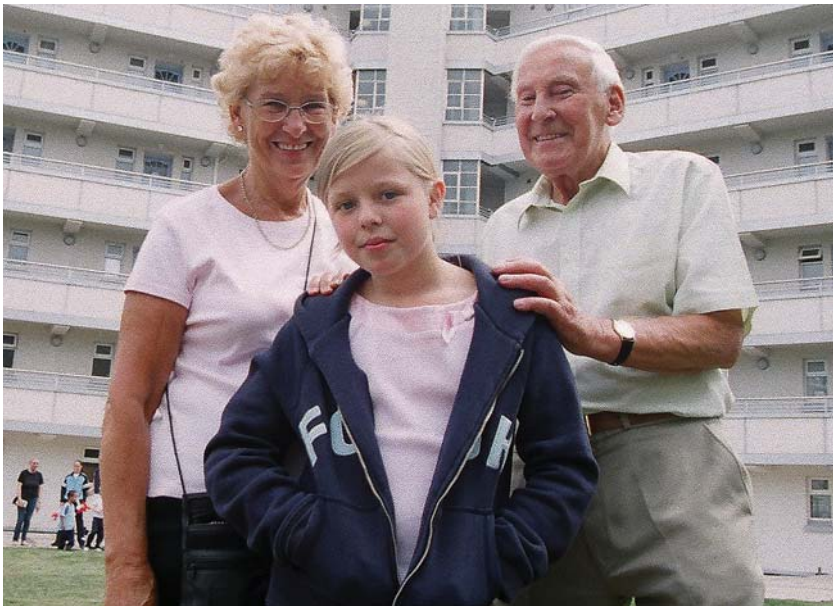
of Estate Renewal Challenge Funding, a massive 1,150 properties were refurbished (including the two tallest social housing blocks in the UK) and 1,350 unsatisfactory homes demolished. Almost 2,000 homes are now being built for private sale as well as 550 homes for rental.

In 2001 Optima and Birmingham City Council formed a Joint Venture to deliver a social and economic masterplan providing a framework for the regeneration of the estates. Crest Nicholson was appointed as developer for Phase One of Attwood Green which covers the 26.6 acre Lee Bank estate and is now known as Park Central. The scheme will ultimately provide around 2,000 new homes including a mix of social housing, private housing and shared ownership, eight acres of

landscaped parkland creating the largest park area within the city ring road, 285,000 sq ft of mixed commercial space, community facilities and major transportation improvements. Physical development to date includes more than 271 residential units (with a further 125 under construction), office space and a 230-bed hotel bringing commercial activity to the area for the first time.

Through an innovative financial arrangement Crest Nicholson is required to provide £32 million of essential works. These Guaranteed Essential Works include the delivery of social housing, infrastructure, community buildings and environmental improvements. Crest Nicholson carries out the works in the early years and then offsets the cost against the payment due to Optima and Birmingham City Council. Work completed so far includes an outstanding new park, subway closures, transport improvements, significant infrastructure work and the formulation of a community arts strategy.

A further agreement between the project’s partners prescribes that all capital receipts generated through the release of land for development will be ploughed back into the area and thus as land values have increased, the local authority and Optima have been able to capture the benefit of these uplifts for the community. A 0.62 acre site recently sold for over twice its originally anticipated value.



The once-oppositional residents have invested enormous energy into turning the area around. A sense of pride expresses itself through those residents who have remained involved in the project since their original protests. Residents are involved at all levels. Some serve on the Board (holding 7 of the 15 places); others regularly attend

“...offers valuable lessons in creative financial agreements and in first class community engagement”

development meetings and act as a link to other residents. Five active residents’ groups, a neighbourhood forum, a small grants group and an estate-wide social events group all contribute to a sense of identity and belonging. Many residents have been involved in decisions from the selection of contractors through to the type of properties they would like to live in. Optima engages with residents through formal meetings, walkabouts, road shows, social events, the arts, research training and through the work of its partner agencies running women’s groups, play projects etc. In 2005 an artist in residence was commissioned to encourage residents to express their thoughts and fears about the regeneration process. The result, an

exhibition entitled ‘My Little Flat’, is now promoted as best practice by the Housing Corporation and the Arts Council.

The project has invested heavily in transport connections both in the immediate neighbourhood and to the rest of the city. At the request of the community unpopular subways have been filled and replaced with pedestrian crossings, there is an estate minibus and residents are working with local artists on a scheme to mark out safe pedestrian routes across the estates using reflective lighting sunk into the pavements.

The project has retained a strong focus on quality of design from the outset both in landscaping and the built environment and boasts several accolades, including a CABA ‘Building for Life Gold Standard’ award for Park Central in 2005. This meticulous commitment to design has meant that new housing is effectively ‘tenure blind’, with no discernible difference between owned homes and socially or privately rented dwellings. All homes met Decent Homes Standard by December 2004 and all new homes are built to Lifetime Homes, Secured by Design and EcoHomes standards. Attwood Green has furthermore demonstrated an exceptional approach to large scale recycling with over 90% of demolition and excavation material being re-used.

During one phase of construction, over 650,000 tonnes of material was excavated but only 400 tonnes ended up in landfill.

View of the Panel

The epitome of innovation and high quality... the Regeneration of Attwood Green provides us with an excellent example of how to turn an area around. It offers valuable lessons in creative financial agreements and in first class community engagement. The project should also be commended for its strong environmental commitment in demolition and new build process and in seeking to end distinctions in the quality of sale homes and those for social housing. As one panel member commented Attwood Green proves “it can be done!”

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This is a story of fighting back. In 1990 Gravesend was struggling with the legacy of industrial decline and an air of neglect hung over Gravesend, the Borough's principal urban centre. The vacant and derelict properties and traffic-filled shopping streets of Gravesend were about to be dealt a further blow with the arrival of two major regional shopping centres on their doorstep - Lakeside (1990) and Bluewater (1999), between them now pulling in over 50 million people a year.

The Borough responded in an organised way to 'stop the rot' with the formation of the Gravesend Town Centre Initiative (GTCI) led by Gravesham Borough Council. This partnership, involving both businesses and residents, has been key to the evolution of the Town Centre Strategy and to the many consultation exercises on specific proposals for various parts of the town centre. Long-term political leadership and the commitment of key people are also vital features, with businesses closely involved through a Steering Group and, since 2003, through the Gravesend Delivery Board.

The project's first aim was to survive Bluewater but, in anticipating developments in the Thames Gateway, it has re-defined the town's roles in the regional economy, enhanced the town's cultural interest, and identified several 'quarters' as a basis for masterplanning. Thus when the renaissance of Gravesend was identified by the ODPM as a key project for the Thames Gateway, the earlier achievements and planning meant the town was well placed to move quickly.

The high quality refurbishment of the town's Heritage Quarter, including the conservation of 85 listed buildings, has provided 10 new shops and 51 new homes for key workers in the historic High Street. This project has also led to the restoration of the 1834 Grade II* Town Pier and the creation of a riverside walkway. A further £100 million mixed-use development is due to commence in 2006 which will create 1,000 jobs and see the construction of 600 homes.

This project has given the area a renewed confidence, bringing public, private and voluntary investment into important new facilities for the town, such as a £9 million Gurdwara for



Gravesend's large Sikh community - set to become one of the town's iconic buildings. The Town Centre Strategy stated that Gravesend should serve those members of the community who could not afford to shop at Bluewater. Now vacancies in Gravesend's retail premises have fallen by 25%, with 'Zone A' rents shooting up by 25% since 2003.

Efforts have also been channelled into environmental improvements such as pedestrianisation, landscaping and the provision of street furniture and planting. All physical work has been underpinned by pro-active management, including a comprehensive security network and a dedicated town centre maintenance team.

Without a valued town centre no community can enjoy a good quality of life. Helping everyone to value their town and fellow-citizens is therefore a key aim of the GTCI. The Futuretown project for example, encourages hundreds of local schoolchildren each year to think about Gravesend's future. The town also hosts numerous cultural and entertainment activities such as the 'Big Day Out' - a festival of multicultural music, dance and cuisine. The GTCI makes excellent use of its historic roots to generate a sense of identity and place.

Gravesend's Tourism, Regeneration and Information Centre, TOWNCENTRIC, is a one-stop resource for the community. This accessible centre is the base for the town centre

team as well as the tourism information centre, a cyber-portal, and a place for exhibitions, educational and business events.

View of the Panel

The Panel felt that Gravesham offered an example of civic leadership at its best, with many different bodies being led well by the local authority using a carefully thought out and inclusive strategy to reverse the decline of their town.

The Panel was keen to consider the implications of sustainable communities on secondary towns. From an original intention of survival, now through this work Gravesend is better placed to embrace, contribute to, and benefit from the wider regeneration and development of the Thames Gateway.

One panel member noted that "Of all the towns I have visited Gravesend has the highest civic pride. It has not only survived but has become a healthy town."

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Finalist A New Deal for Braunstone, Leicester

In 1999 Braunstone had a reputation as the worst estate in the East Midlands. The area had one of the highest crime rates in Leicester, with a burglary rate of three times the average. Just 42% of people of working age were in full employment and unemployment was high at 8.2%. Educational attainment was poor with over 40% of pupils leaving school with no GCSE qualifications.

In the same year the area was awarded £49.5 million from the Government's New Deal for Communities Fund (NDC). The Braunstone Community Association (BCA) was formed to deliver an integrated programme to tackle the above concerns as well as poor health and a lack of physical infrastructure. The programme has also secured a further £18 million from other sources such as Leicester City Council and Sport England.

Through effective joined-up working with statutory agencies, voluntary sector organisations and local residents, the programme has implemented key transformational schemes including:

- **The Youth House** ...a purpose-built centre for young people with an Internet café, dance and DJ studios, advice and support services
- **The BRITE Centre** ...Braunstone Reading Information Technology and Entertainment Centre
- **A £10m leisure centre** ...in which Braunstone residents are eligible for discounts of up to 75%

These schemes have been supported by more than 90 smaller initiatives, such as the Six Streets project in which 250 houses earmarked for demolition were instead transferred to the Leicester Housing Association and refurbished. This not only transformed one of the most deprived parts of Braunstone but created training and job opportunities for 70-plus residents. The Six Streets also boasts the largest domestic solar energy project in the UK which significantly reduces energy costs to residents.

A strong aspect of Braunstone's strategy has been the establishment of key facilities that have broadened the offer and provided for particular target groups. A Sport Action Zone has been



vital to the development of new sporting facilities which have provided the vehicle for reaching young people

“The FAB project is totally inspirational and demands a national roll out”

and disaffected people. One panel member reported that the FAB (Fit and Active Braunstone) project, which supports more than 300 residents to change their lifestyles, “is totally inspirational and demands a national roll out”.

The BCA has a very effective board arrangement with over 50% resident representation and an open-to-all policy for board meetings. Braunstone now has a ‘feel-good factor’ with the community taking an active role in new facilities. For example, all projects have a resident and specialist members group which is responsible for monitoring project progress. The regeneration of Braunstone has been achieved through an approach based on refurbishment and improvement rather than demolition and rebuild.

The NDC programme is recognised as a starting point in a long process of enhancing Braunstone and for this reason the BCA is investing much energy into a succession strategy to ensure that the momentum continues beyond the NDC funding timeframe through

mainstreaming and continued local ownership of delivery backed up by a community asset base, and a possible maintenance trust for the park.

View of the Panel

The project has overcome early problems associated with governance and delivery team dynamics. It now represents best practice in delivery structure and team. The team energy is reflected in the positive attitudes of the many providers and local people. The BCA has already delivered major transformational change to create an area that is now in demand. In doing so, it has achieved an exemplary balance of process and product that is already creating the platform for activities that provide for further community growth with nationally remarkable work such as the FAB project. The organisation recognises fully the need to put in place a succession strategy underpinned by local ownership of community assets.

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Finalist Springhill Cohousing, Stroud

Springhill Cohousing in Stroud is the first new build cohousing community in the UK and is a possible model for future sustainable communities. This ‘creative way of living’ comprises 35 households plus a Common House where people cook and eat together at least four times a week. This substantial additional space makes it easy for people to have smaller private dwellings with a safe pedestrian street through the middle of the site. The Common House is the hub of the community, a communal extension to residents’ private living rooms. As well as hanging out for a chat and a cup of coffee, there are regular singing, dancing, tai chi groups, films, parties and celebrations. Downstairs there is a workshop, table tennis area and laundry.

Designed by Archtype, long-term specialists in timber frame houses in the Walter Segal tradition, the project shows how a small, inconvenient sloping site can be transformed into a new community. Timber construction and cladding give the hill-slope site a distinctive character and the relatively narrow, pedestrianised ‘main street’ meanders around the site parallel with the contours, creating a characterful village feel. Walking and cycling are priority modes of transport within the area and beyond. While car ownership remains high, car use is reportedly lower than average, with easy walking access to the town centre.

Recycling, community composting, high-intensity insulation, PV panels, a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS), and a car-sharing scheme all contribute to an environmentally sensitive scheme. The meaning of ‘health care and social services’ is transformed by cohousing where it is so much easier to eat well, be healthy and look out for each other. Something in the overall attitude of the site minimises negative and enhances positive environmental and social impacts.

Cohousing promotes a very strong sense of belonging and encourages friendly, co-operative and helpful behaviour, including self-policing. The residents all became directors of the development company so were involved



in commissioning the construction. Three housing units are subsidised in perpetuity at 15% below market value.

In Denmark, from a standing start in the 1970s, 3–4% of the population now live in cohousing. In Stroud they are already working on schemes for coflats and actively looking for other sites to develop. As UK households continue to change and shrink cohousing may offer answers more widely. The high level of single parents at Springhill (nearly half the families with children) shows how cohousing responds to their need for safety, services and social interaction close to home. A third of the residents of Springhill work from home and the nature of the community means there is a lot of business support sharing, offering a glimpse of a possible future for home-based enterprise integrated with more sustainable living.

View of the Panel

This is a small but extremely successful cohousing development, thought to be the first of its kind in the country. The involvement of residents is impressive, constant and fulfilling to all. The sense of contribution to the locality is palpable, but the absence of coercion is valuable too. People live their individual lives with an added collective dimension.

This is a ‘values-driven’ sustainable community with a strong and coherent sense of what it wants to be, both for

itself and in relation to the rest of the world. While cynics may scoff at the idealism of cohousing, Springhill offers

“Springhill offers an innovative but practical and rather sensible 21st century version of communitarianism”

an innovative but practical and rather sensible 21st century version of communitarianism; there is no sense of imposed ethos. In fact the efforts to make consensus decisions are clearly tiring, yet the commitment remains because the residents know the alternative – distant bureaucracy, poor services, individual powerlessness and social isolation.

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Special Recognition Botton Village, near Whitby, North Yorkshire

Botton Village, set in 650 acres of the North Yorkshire Moors near Whitby, is an integrated community supporting adults with learning disabilities and other special needs. Part of the international Camphill movement, Botton has 330 residents of whom 130 have special needs and are supported and cared for by the community as a whole.

“The community’s culture focuses on tolerance, respect and developing individual strengths”

Founded 50 years ago, Botton Village has demonstrated a long track record of working to realise the potential of all residents through living and working together in a largely self-sustaining environment. The community’s culture focuses on tolerance, respect and developing individual strengths.



Sustainability is core to the ethos behind the village and as well as rearing livestock, growing crops and managing forestry, the community sells products made in their workshops on a not-for-profit basis; activities that also provide skills training.

The Panel was impressed by the dedication to the ethos of sustainability and mutual respect shown by those involved in Botton Village. The Panel considers that this model offers both lessons and inspiration to the endeavour to create

sustainable communities. The culture of respect that is evident in Botton is particularly relevant and is one to which every community would do well to aspire.

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Special Recognition Parson’s Croft, Parwich, Derbyshire

Parwich is a village of 520 people in the Peak District National Park in Derbyshire. The village’s strategic challenge was social sustainability. Dramatic rises in the housing market saw the growth of holiday homes, second homes and commuter homes whilst Right to Buy had decimated the stock of affordable rental homes for local people. Both these factors were affecting the viability of village services.

This project, conceived and led by the Village Action Group, has been delivered through partnership working with Derbyshire Dales District Council, Peak District National Park Authority and Nottingham Community Housing Association. Parson’s Croft is a development of three 3-bed family homes for rent on the brownfield site of a disused school house. This is now allowing local people with young families to stay within their community (tenants must have been resident in Parwich for 10 years to qualify).

Money from the sale of the site has been used to upgrade the school, thus helping the viability of this school into the future. Experience has shown that once a village school is lost to a community then the tipping point of social sustainability moves in favour of affluent incomers including holiday and second home owners and a significantly older age profile.

Parwich’s solution is an excellent and elegant, albeit small scale, example of sustainable development in action. And it is for this solution to their most pressing community need that they deserve recognition. It is fantastic that the community itself initiated this development when in fact it is rather more common place that such development is imposed upon communities. The Action Group is aware that this development can, and must only be, the first significant step in a continuing effort to invest in the social sustainability of Parwich.



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Special Recognition East Oxford Action

East Oxford Action (EOA) is an example of a Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) partnership which has survived the transition into a social enterprise.

EOA operates in two deprived wards in Oxford that, while not far removed physically from the 'dreaming spires,' are culturally far more diverse and economically disadvantaged than their more famous neighbours.

EOA comprises a wide variety of projects in the Cowley Road area of the city, which include business support schemes, consultancy work, the annual carnival and environmental projects. It continues to support projects that range from role swaps – e.g. bus drivers and cyclists – aimed at resolving road traffic conflicts, to the prevention of business closures through provision of food hygiene training for retailers and negotiating between statutory agencies and businesses against which enforcement actions have been brought. In partnership with The Ethical Property

Company, EOA is also negotiating the construction of a £4 million enterprise centre to meet non-retail business needs.

The Panel believes that EOA has

“Cowley Road Matters is turning a ‘drive through’ community into a thriving, multi-cultural alternative centre within the city”

become far more than simply the sum of its projects; it has used the lessons learned as an SRB programme and has continued an effective dialogue between Cowley Road's businesses, residents and service providers. The Cowley Road Matters programme in particular is an exemplar for community involvement, feeding into a partnership with the City Council, County Council, contractors and the Department for Trade to turn a 'drive through' community into a thriving, multi-cultural alternative centre within the city.



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Special Recognition Invermead Close, Hammersmith

Queen Charlotte's Maternity Hospital was a cherished facility which had outgrown its useful life. Hammersmith Hospital Trust owned the site and it was a priority for the Trust and the local authority to ensure that any redevelopment created sufficient value to re-provide a modern maternity facility at an alternative location in the Borough.

The site, now named Invermead Close, has been sensitively redeveloped to provide 234 new dwellings. 144 of these are for social rent, shared ownership and key workers of the Trust whilst 58 have been offered on the open market.

The project has also included the refurbishment and conversion of a listed building into residential use, the development of a 32-unit extra care sheltered scheme providing independent living for the frail elderly and a community health centre, which currently serves 7,000-plus people within the development and the wider community.

There is evidence that all those

involved in this project worked together for a long time to meet the objectives of all parties. The Council was instrumental in bringing key parties together including; Hammersmith Hospital Trust, Crest Nicholson, Acton Housing Association (HA), African Refugee Housing Action Group, Care UK, Hanover HA, Innisfree HA, the Housing Corporation and the Primary Care Trust (PCT) to make this development a success. The community strongly influenced the planning application and there was also input from different sections of the local authority and the PCT to identify and meet particular requirements of the older community and the Irish and African refugee communities for example.

The Panel considered that the breadth and depth of consultation implemented at the start of this scheme is outstanding and should be recognised. It was also impressed by the mix of housing tenure as well as the inability to distinguish visually between different tenures.



“Invermead Close has been sensitively redeveloped”

Contact

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Special Recognition Parkfield & Mill Lane Neighbourhood Management Project

Parkfield and Mill Lane in Stockton-on-Tees fall within the top 3% of most deprived areas of the country. In 2002 the area was chosen as a pathfinder for Neighbourhood Management, a national initiative working with communities and service providers to involve residents in regenerating the areas in which they live through better use of existing funds and services.

18% of Parkfield and Mill Lane residents are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups with the majority of these being Muslim. Tolerance of and respect for a diversity of cultures and beliefs are core to the ethos of the community-led management board, with four places specific to the BME community and others dedicated to young people. The core areas being addressed under the initiative are crime prevention, improved health, leisure, education, and tackling housing and environmental issues. This involves substantial physical redevelopment alongside the engendering of a culture of

respect across the community.

The Neighbourhood Management project has a budget of £3.4 million over seven years and despite having only been running for three years when assessed by members of the panel, has demonstrated strong success in several key areas. Reported domestic burglary has fallen by 27%, fire-related crimes have been substantially reduced (deliberate vehicle fires by 57%, deliberate dwelling fires by 65%) and comparative studies on resident satisfaction indicate that previously 75% wanted to leave the area but now 60% are happy there. By working with its partners, particularly Stockton Borough Council, the Pathfinder has levered in over £9 million of funding to kick-start housing market renewal in the locality.

The Panel found this Pathfinder project to be a remarkable example of community engagement. Concerted action by local people, in partnership with statutory authorities and funding agencies, is effectively addressing serious anti-social behaviour. Imaginative local



governance, cultural tolerance and constructive, inclusive collaboration is already normalising the area and it is hoped that the next steps, such as new housing developments, will significantly raise living standards for residents.

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Special Recognition Regen School, Sheffield

“It’s been fantastic. It’s been extremely useful because we were all new to volunteering and projects. Regen School showed us what it entailed and gave us both the confidence and skills”. Jane Holmes of Friends of the Green is just one of over a thousand ‘regeneration apprentices’ who have benefited from the Sheffield-based Regen School Toolkit for Regeneration.

“We learned things we wouldn’t have learned elsewhere.”

As a result of her involvement, together with colleague Brendan McNamara, Friends of the Green - a new community organisation stimulated by the Channel Four Pride of Place in Castleford project – has secured over £300,000 for the transformation of a run-down park on the Ferry Fryston estate.

Regen School has been operational

since 2001 and is based on the simple premise that regeneration practitioners learn best from their more experienced peers. Pairs of students from a project (for mutual support) commit to 20 days of learning including four days structured support from an experienced mentor and ten days of workshops on a range of practical subjects, all built around a personal six month action plan to take the project forward.

Building on this success, the School has now responded to student feedback and developed courses on women into management, successful communications and sustainable enterprise.

The Panel was greatly impressed by the work of Regen School in delivering practice-based, practitioner-led training in skills for sustainable communities.

The last word should go to Brendan: “Regen School was very useful and our mentor was brilliant. We learned things we wouldn’t have learned elsewhere.”



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Sunlight on a Rainy Day

The Awards Panel was bowled over by the shining examples of multi-use community centres that panel members visited. Here is work of extraordinary quality in buildings that radiate community-focused energy, but are working hard to reduce wastage and environmental impact. These centres serve and are owned by some of the poorest communities in England yet they have a wealth of experience and a remarkable underlying knowledge of just what it takes to serve and engage people.

Special Recognition Phoenix Centre, Sutton

This centre has been created within the wider context of the regeneration of the Roundshaw Estate, made infamous by appearing in endless episodes of *The Bill*. Resident surveys now show satisfaction rising – many people now make Roundshaw their first choice of a place to live instead of their last.

The Phoenix Centre boasts an impressive array of facilities and activities, which have been used beyond expectations. Its facilities include a sports hall, fitness gym, library, youth zone, IT suite, community café, local access point, crèche and neighbourhood police base. The Phoenix Centre targets excluded groups to draw them into learning, sport and healthy living. Facilities are affordable,

accessible and there are targeted services and sports sessions for people with learning and physical disabilities, girls, young women and older people.

The centre draws people onto the estate from the wider locality, improving integration with the wider community. Relations between police and public are much improved now that officers are on site and in regular contact through surgeries as well as in response to any emergency.

The very act of regeneration seems to have brought this community closer together. Residents testify to the new neighbourliness. It is obvious that the estate has a strong sense of place, much of it focused around the Phoenix Centre, and all those the Panel spoke to were very proud.



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Special Recognition Severn Centre, Highley, Shropshire

The Severn Centre, opened in September 2004, is an impressive community resource with a multi-use building and outdoors sports and play facilities in a former mining village. The project was led by Bridgnorth District Council working with the Highley Project Group; a dedicated band of community leaders. Highley is the most deprived neighbourhood in the District, with a population of 3,300, over half of whom are already members of the Severn Centre.

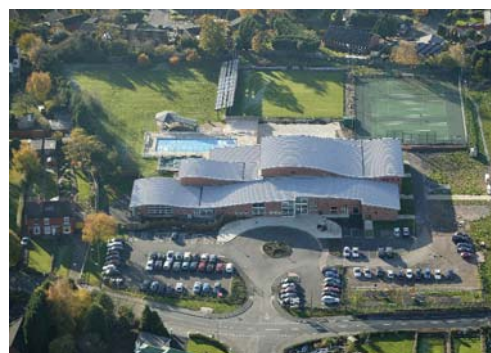
This project has everything: sports and leisure facilities, swimming pools, police station, library, childcare suite, broadband IT centre, for adults and children, pre-school/nursery, social facilities. It is community driven from concept to reality and is financially sustainable in a well designed building.

The Centre, which is now run by a charitable trust, cost £3.5 million to build and equip. Visually, the building has a dramatic wave-form roof, echoing the nearby Shropshire hills. The design of the heating and lighting systems was chosen

to minimise environmental impact and includes low energy fittings and intelligent control systems. Rainwater run-off is captured to irrigate the bowling green and a 60-panel solar hot-water heating system heats the water in the outdoor swimming pool.

The Centre brings together many different services and facilities under one roof. Existing services have been improved and new services and opportunities are developed holistically within the Centre. For example, the childcare suite provides wrap-around day-care during the week and links to the nearby primary school by walking bus. The enhanced childcare enables parents and carers to take part in other activities within the Centre such as training and sport, as well as enabling them to take full or part-time jobs.

One Panel member commented: "This Centre is excellent. It is turning the village round and giving very disadvantaged people great opportunities. It is the strongest community-driven project I've seen. It



may not directly include housing but it is helping to turn Highley into somewhere people want to live."

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Sunlight is an experience that defies categorisation. From one point of view it's a surgery and health centre with a pharmacy, loads of service providers and a healthy food café running fruit and veg box schemes. From another it's a large open-access community resource, hang-out joint, with IT suite, a multi-purpose hall, state of the art music studio and community radio station. Beyond the building, the Sunlight Development Trust also operates an outreach programme in eight further distinct communities.

All Sunlight's projects are informed by community participation and a strong understanding of community needs built up over time invested in a community development approach, including training local people to lead consultation. A sense of health way beyond the traditional is embedded in everything they do. They have a holistic and very diverse approach to meeting needs from youth-led football training to a Bangladeshi women's sewing group and they work hard at deconstructing barriers to participation. In the year 2004-05 Sunlight delivered services to 22,000 beneficiaries. The Trust directly employs 26 local workers and a further 58 people are employed by its partners sharing the building. Nearly 100 volunteers actively participate in service delivery.

The building itself was an old laundry, derelict and deteriorating in a landscape of small terraces devastated since the 1980s by the loss of Medway's industrial livelihood. Following a design competition and extensive community consultation, the new build took its architectural line from the laundry to create a bright, warm and modern building.

Led by a voluntary sector organisation, Sunlight has developed innovative partnerships including a strong collaboration with the Primary Care Trust and other partners. This is an excellent example of four-way working between health, local government, voluntary/community groups and individual residents to break the cycles of deprivation and health inequality. The centre is providing accessible primary care and real opportunities in an area where people were previously forced into ill-health due to the lack of service infrastructure. They work to meet needs, increase confidence, build trust and develop skills.

The elected board, chaired by a local resident, includes strong local representation. The leadership is passionate and committed to learning from experience. Sunlight has a proven track record of joined-up service delivery and accessible governance.



In addition the Trust has been a beacon to other communities by disseminating its lessons and experience throughout the country. Its advice on running a community café, for example, was so much in demand that it now runs courses on the subject.

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Special Recognition UCAN Centre, Bolton

The UCAN Centres focus on capacity building and support for communities and individuals to play their full role in influencing the standard and quality of their environment. The success of the original UCAN Centre in Bolton has led to further centres being opened. The centre identifies changing needs through "giving all residents a listening ear on a daily basis" and through partnership working with local organisations. By helping local people to express their concerns and work through solutions, the centre involves residents in making decisions about their area and influencing the delivery of services by mainstream providers, externally-funded projects, other partners and the activities of UCAN itself.

The first centre, opened in 2000, has assisted 90 people towards employment and given learning support to over 160. Hundreds of residents have been

supported in dealing with their own specific neighbourhood and social exclusion issues. The UCAN services were pivotal in Bolton Council's achievement of Beacon Status for its work around housing renewal in the private sector.

The centres are the focus of many individual environmental projects from community clean-ups to encouraging reporting of environmental problems. They also provide a wide range of employment and learning opportunities and are used by other agencies such as health visiting teams, careers advice services and youth projects. Information, advice, sign-posting and referrals are made easier by close partnership work.

UCAN centres are multi-functional and are designed to be informal and friendly. They serve the whole community, recognising that everyone has a unique part to play and offering a



chance for residents to give something to support their community at the level they choose.

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Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister
Creating sustainable communities

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister was created in May 2002. The ODPM's aim is to create prosperous, inclusive and sustainable communities for the 21st century, places where people want to live and that promote opportunity and a better quality of life for all.

It is responsible for policy on housing, planning, devolution, regional and local government and the fire

service. It also takes responsibility for the Social Exclusion Unit, the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit and the Government Offices for the Regions.

The ODPM works across government - ensuring that Departments work together to deliver thriving, inclusive, sustainable communities - creating better places - and achieving a better quality of life for all.

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The British Urban Regeneration Association has provided a forum for the exchange of ideas, experience and information for the diverse regeneration sector since 1990. As the leading independent champion for those involved in regeneration, BURA's unique strength comes from its diverse membership, which spans the private, public, voluntary, community and academic sectors.

BURA identifies and promotes best practice in regeneration, guiding and

inspiring the sector's evolution and exploring the social, economic and environmental issues involved for all parties. BURA's dynamic cross-sector think-tank, the SDF, helps to shape and influence regeneration policy. The Association offers national and regional networks, pioneering and practical modular training programmes, diverse and constructive events and campaigns addressing key issues on the regeneration agenda, in particular the long-term development of the regeneration workforce itself.

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