

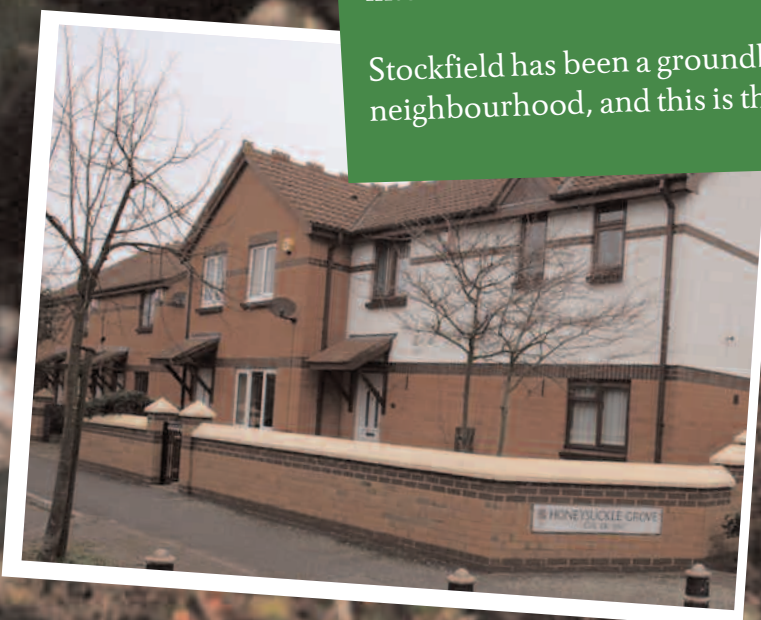


THE STOCKFIELD STORY

This is the inspiring story of the rebuilding of the Stockfield neighbourhood in Birmingham. In the late 1980s, residents received the devastating news that their homes were no longer safe and were to be demolished. How could this community recover from such bad news?

Local residents, determined to stand up for their community, began to explore with the Council and others what could be done to rebuild Stockfield. Through much hard work, and the innovative Community Association developed to serve and represent residents, the Stockfield neighbourhood has been rebuilt, with new homes, new facilities, and a wide range of activities and initiatives to continue to ensure that the best interests of the community are served.

Stockfield has been a groundbreaking approach to rebuilding a neighbourhood, and this is their story....





THE STOCKFIELD STORY



INTRODUCTION

by Councillor Mike Nangle

Stockfield is a special community. I have been involved with this neighbourhood for many years, and was privileged to work alongside local residents during the process of rebuilding that this book describes. This was a difficult time, but the community pulled together, taking advantage of the opportunity presented to them to create new homes and a new neighbourhood that they could rightly be proud of.



The commitment of local residents to ensure that this groundbreaking regeneration programme was done with the community's best interests in mind was inspiring, and is a concern that continues to this day in the work of Stockfield Community Association.

I am proud to have been able to play a role in supporting this community, and welcome this chance to celebrate what has been achieved here, and to share the hope and inspiration that Stockfield offers to other communities.



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BACKGROUND

The Stockfield estate lies in the Acocks Green ward in southeast Birmingham. Since it's creation, the estate has been home to a diverse and vibrant community who love their neighbourhood.



Stockfield was initially a home to the workers of Stockfield Farm right up to the 1920s when the farm was demolished and new houses were first built. Stockfield became an area where people wanted to live, with tall trees lining the three main roads that made up the estate. Residents who lived in the area then remember it as a good place to live, with street parties on the grass areas and good friends and neighbours. One resident who remembers the area as it was recalls, "It was a pleasure – people used to be friendly and gather on the green and be sociable".

In the 1980s, however, significant problems began to arise with the concrete 'Parkinson' type houses on the estate, and the homes were declared defective by law in 1985. In 1986, structural investigations were carried out on four houses in Fenton Road to see if repair was a viable option. When the test results confirmed that the defects were so severe that repair would not be possible, the only way forward was to demolish all 477 houses. However, Birmingham City Council did not have the finances to clear the site and rebuild this many new homes.



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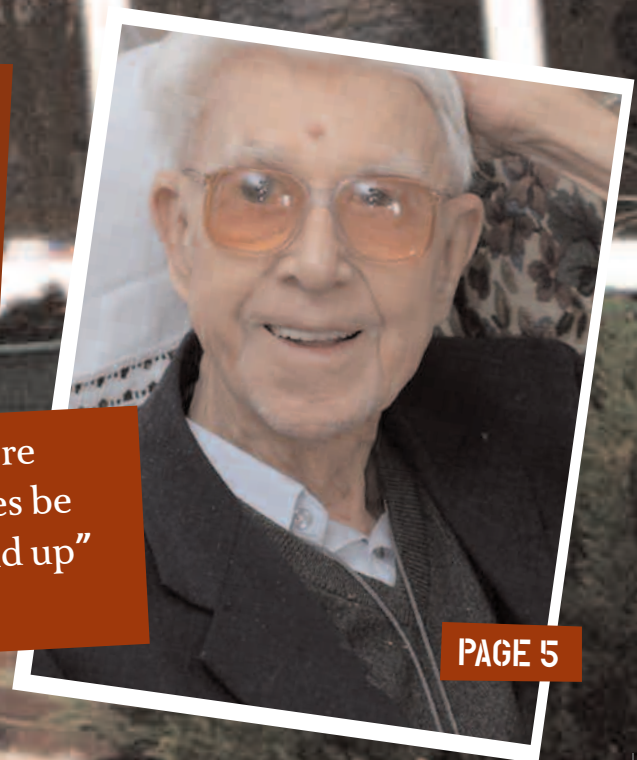
LOCAL RESIDENTS DETERMINED TO STAND UP FOR THEIR COMMUNITY BEGAN TO EXPLORE WITH THE COUNCIL WHAT COULD BE DONE TO REBUILD STOCKFIELD.



Residents received letters from Birmingham City Council informing them of the problem and confirming the devastating news that their homes would need to be demolished. In the following months there were public meetings with local Councillors that packed the local school hall, as the community grappled with what was happening. Many current residents lived in Stockfield at this time and remember hearing the news about their homes and neighbourhood. A resident said 'I was really sad and angry as I'd bought my house and didn't want to move. The kids all got on back then.'

The future initially seemed bleak, with relocation apparently the only option for the residents. However, the Council, through a working party set up to explore possible ways forward, was seeking to find a solution. Local residents, determined to stand up for their community, began to explore with the Council what could be done to rebuild Stockfield.

"Everyone was distraught when we found out we were going to be relocated somewhere else and our houses be demolished – I didn't know where I was going to end up"
Fred, Resident



CRISIS AND CONSULTATION

With the situation seeming so bleak, it was clear that radical solutions were needed, and ideas were explored with a wide range of people. In 1987, a Birmingham City Council working group invited organisations such as Halifax Building Society to contribute to the discussions, who were to play vital roles in finding a way forward...

From the early stages, Stockfield residents were also involved in consultation about their housing requirements, and an Estate Development Group was formed with six resident representatives (including Pam Smith, a resident director 17 years on) to ensure that residents' concerns helped shape the proposals. Resident involvement was to play a significant role in shaping the plans for the estate as a place where they would want to live.

Architects Webb Seeger Moorhouse had been invited to prepare a master plan for the proposed redevelopment of the Stockfield Estate. This master plan, developed and adapted with input from residents and the Council, was to form the basis for the subsequent rebuilding of the neighbourhood.



Proposals for the design of new houses were developed, paying attention to details such as security and parking, but it didn't stop there. As the existing houses were to be demolished, the opportunity was taken to reconsider the layout and design of the estate. Roads were changed, including traffic calming, and a new scheme of cul de sacs was proposed. The plan aimed to create a well-designed, safe and pleasant residential area, with care also taken to retain important existing features, such as the well-established trees that lined the main roads.

THE PLAN AIMED TO CREATE A WELL-DESIGNED SAFE AND PLEASANT RESIDENTIAL AREA. CARE WAS ALSO TAKEN TO RETAIN IMPORTANT EXISTING FEATURES SUCH AS THE WELL-ESTABLISHED TREES THAT LINED THE MAIN ROADS.

Throughout the development of these plans, the residents' Estate Development Group played a vital role. Local residents involved in the group spent time considering the way forward and exploring various options, including discussions with architects Webb Seeger Moorhouse about plans for new homes. They were key in shaping the plans for new houses, for example, ensuring that concerns over disabled access were incorporated, and specifying features to ensure that the homes were warm, spacious and secure, with attractive exteriors.

To support this group, and to ensure that the residents had access to advice and support throughout the process of redeveloping the estate, Birmingham City Council appointed independent legal advisors on behalf of the residents. Anthony Collins Solicitors, in particular Martin Knox, were also involved in supporting the process.



A further major factor remained to be resolved, however, as Birmingham City Council did not have the resources to finance the redevelopment. Martin Knox had brought an innovative suggestion to the table when he worked for the Council, which was to eventually provide a solution for Stockfield and prove to be an inspiration for other communities, including nearby Perry Common. The solution, to form a new type of Community Association, is detailed in the next section, and gave the possibility of a way forward.

Proposals for a solution, including the master plan and community association model, were put to the residents of Stockfield at a public meeting in October 1989. The community approved these, seizing on the hope offered to rebuild their neighbourhood.



“It was upsetting, because we were a community but we took it in our stride – we knew we had to move forward.” Renie, Resident

COMMUNITY MODEL

Stockfield Community Association was formed in 1991 to manage the redevelopment of the Stockfield estate, and was the first of its kind in the country. Working in partnership, the resident-majority Association was able to borrow the money to rebuild houses on the estate.

Birmingham City Council, like all Local Authorities in the late 1980's, operated under tight financial controls from Government, restricting its options for finding funds for new housing. The Council therefore actively encouraged innovative approaches with the private sector, the Housing Department having a dedicated Joint Ventures Section supported by development accountants. The situation at Stockfield found its way to the Joint Ventures Team, who began exploring options for funding the redevelopment.

The result became known as the Community Association Model and was the brainchild of Martin Knox of Birmingham City Council and later Anthony Collins Solicitors, supported by an imaginative approach from Birmingham City Council, in particular Stephen Sellers of the Legal Department.

Central to the proposal was the formation of a Community Association which would, unlike the Council, be able to borrow money to build properties based on projected rental income and from the leases on properties sold. It was a complex solution, but it offered a way forward. In essence, the model not only allowed for private finance to be raised to fund the redevelopment, but also, importantly, involved local residents alongside the other partners, ensuring that their interests were met.



All those involved in Stockfield acknowledge that success would not have been possible without the other parties. A notable feature was the close working between various Council departments, but the partnership that was vital to the success of the project was much broader than that. The first step was the formation of Stockfield Community Association as the redevelopment company, with a majority of local residents on its Board. Next came the formation of the Redevelopment Partnership which included the Community Association, Birmingham City Council, Halifax Building Society and Bromford Carinthia Housing Association, with Anthony Collins Solicitors and Webb Seeger Moorhouse Community Architects giving vital support. All parties worked hard together towards the goal of a better Stockfield and this continues today.



It was important that enough homes were provided to rehouse all the existing tenants in Stockfield who wished to remain on the estate. It became clear that the new Association would not be able to provide all of the necessary social housing for rent, which is why Bromford Carinthia Housing Association became a partner in the process.

Funding had to be found for the redevelopment and it came from an imaginative interpretation of existing legislation, providing Birmingham City Council with the legal power to give significant grants to Stockfield Community Association. Selling Birmingham City Council's Stockfield housing land to private developers and Bromford Carinthia and obtaining the Council's approval to earmark the proceeds to the redevelopment provided a large element of the funds.

The Association was able to secure additional funds by way of a mortgage, although it was initially a challenge to find a lender willing to lend to such a new form of company. Andy Baker, then of the Council's Finance Department, produced the first 40-year business plan for the Association and tendered for funds from several institutions. Halifax Building Society (now Halifax Bank Of Scotland), which had been involved in an advisory capacity from a very early stage, kept a promise to consider funding. Bromford also brought additional funds in the form of Housing Corporation Grants, which it utilised to build not only social houses for rent but also shared ownership dwellings.

Alan Head from the Council's Urban Design Department (later the Associations' Employer's Agent) aligned the new model with a competitive tendering solution to reduce the cost of the Association's homes. He describes Stockfield as a 'real breakthrough' and all those involved recognised how unique it was. The Stockfield Community Association Project was an innovative pioneer in Community Regeneration and locally based tenant led Housing Management that paved the way for others to follow.



"People were unsure about moving into homes being run by residents, but now its wonderful." Christine

THE STOCKFIELD COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION PROJECT WAS AN INNOVATIVE PIONEER IN COMMUNITY REGENERATION AND LOCALLY BASED TENANT LED HOUSING MANAGEMENT THAT PAVED THE WAY FOR OTHERS TO FOLLOW.

REGENERATION AND REBUILDING

With the way forward agreed, the rebuilding of Stockfield could begin. Wimpey Homes were appointed as the developer for the redevelopment, building not only the rental and shared ownership properties but also homes for sale. Rebuilding was planned to proceed in stages, with a mixture of tenures within each stage. Work on the first phase began in January 1991.

Residents were given the option of leaving the estate entirely or moving temporarily and then returning. Those who wanted to stay were temporarily re-housed while the phased rebuilding was carried out. Getting some residents to agree to move proved to be a bit of a problem. Simon Kimberly remembers one gentleman who had lived on Stockfield throughout the war saying, 'The Germans couldn't move me so the Council has got no chance!'



This was a difficult time for Stockfield, with much upheaval and disruption. The community had been fragmented, and crime was so bad the washing machine was stolen from the Wimpey show home! One resident remembers, 'It was horrendous. I had to move house twice in 8 months!'

The initial phase (17 Bromford family homes for rent) was opened by Birmingham's Lord Mayor in the summer of 1991, with the second phase of rebuilding well underway by 1993. The developer, Wimpey, did a great job and by 1998 all four phases of the new Stockfield homes were finished.

"It's a nice, quiet area and ever since I've lived here, people have been friendly." Manshad

As the work progressed, the value and importance of resident input and the partnership approach was clear. The significant resident involvement in the running of Stockfield was a revolutionary development, and has been the subject of a number of studies and reports, noting that the achievements would not have been possible had residents not been 'drawn together to oversee the project'. Having half the Board made up of residents democratically elected by the community ensured that they would feel a sense of ownership of the redevelopment.

The original Resident Directors of the Association were not allowed to become tenants of the Association, to ensure that they were acting in the best interests of the community they lived in and were not viewed as serving their own interests. Having empowered residents on the Board ensured that changes could be made to respond to the needs of the Community, allowing residents a high level of influence in the redevelopment and management of the estate.

For example, after the early phases of rebuilding, some residents requested a gas fire in addition to gas central heating. After evaluation, this was provided in all of Stockfield's houses, while wider doorways and other features became standard in later phases in response to the desire to make future adaptations possible if tenants became disabled or infirm. The Association built several bungalows to meet the needs of disabled residents who were able to specify features in the new homes.



The use of Wimpey throughout meant that the relationship with the residents and other partner organisations developed. This meant that designs and approaches could be tweaked as lessons were learned from the early phases, with the residents providing input and seeing changes. It also helped maintain consistent costs throughout, helping keep the process on budget, and ensured consistency in the style of houses throughout the estate.

The involvement of the residents brought additional benefits to the community. It was a priority to try and ensure that neighbours from the estate were kept together in the new development (unless they wanted to change), to try and retain the sense of community. Despite this, and the phasing of the building, there were some problems as the redevelopment fragmented the existing community with some people leaving, and new people moving in. However, involving local people who knew the community so closely certainly helped limit the problems.

HAVING HALF THE BOARD MADE UP OF RESIDENTS DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED BY THE COMMUNITY ENSURED THAT THEY WOULD FEEL A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP OF THE REDEVELOPMENT.

REBUILDING COMMUNITY & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Today, Stockfield is a quiet area, designed to be safe and clean and tidy. The redevelopment created a cohesive neighbourhood with focal points at the park and Cypress Square. Birmingham City Council's Richard Thomas, who helped plan the area, said that the good of the community was at the heart of the planning.



Access to the back of most of the properties is restricted, making burglary significantly more difficult, while the system of short cul-de-sacs limits speeding traffic. Many of the original trees still line the streets, a feature for which Stockfield won a Civic Trust Award. The homes in which the people live, are warm, spacious and secure. But the work did not end there.

Stockfield Community Association was initially set up to facilitate the rebuilding process. Today the Association is still working hard and investing in the Community to fulfil its mission statement: 'To work with the residents of the Stockfield Estate to achieve a self supporting community living in high quality homes in a pleasant and safe environment'.

The Association is both a Company limited by Guarantee and a registered Charity, and also has a trading subsidiary which principally collects ground rents from owner occupied dwellings on the Estate, providing further regular income for the Association. The Association has twelve Directors, half of whom are democratically elected representatives of the local community, with others nominated by Birmingham City Council, Bromford Housing Group and Halifax Bank Of Scotland. The Board meets monthly, its main role being to manage 119 properties and their maintenance and repair. Stockfield Community Association does not directly employ any staff, meaning that overheads are kept to a minimum, and instead buys in the necessary housing management and repairs services from the City Council and Bromford to provide a good quality housing service to residents.

STOCKFIELD COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION WAS INITIALLY SET UP TO FACILITATE THE REBUILDING PROCESS. TODAY THE ASSOCIATION IS STILL WORKING HARD AND INVESTING IN THE COMMUNITY.



Today the Resident Directors continue to play a major role. All give up their time voluntarily, and demonstrate great commitment to the community they are part of. Two directors have Community Notice Boards outside their homes and are the first point of contact for residents with any problems. "Ann sorts me out," says one elderly resident of Resident Director Ann Ross.

The Association recognises that keeping the estate clean and well maintained is not limited to the properties alone, and works closely with Birmingham City Council on the ongoing upkeep of the park, the trees, and other planted areas. Graffiti, dog fouling and litter are issues of concern to residents, therefore the Association works with Birmingham City Council Environmental Wardens to tackle these problems, raising awareness of what residents can do to help keep their estate looking good.

A Community Development Group has been established to address the wider issues of maintaining the neighbourhood and improving the quality of life of the community. This group, which meets monthly, includes resident directors, the environmental wardens, the Police, local schools and churches, and is working to develop links with other organisations to improve the services and conditions experienced in Stockfield.

Recognising that the redevelopment and rehousing has had an impact on community cohesion, one of the key aims of this group is to look at ways to strengthen community spirit and the involvement of residents, whether through events such as the summer Funday, the installation of noticeboards to keep residents informed of community issues, and a quarterly newsletter to celebrate achievements and keep everyone updated on current events and issues, including regular updates from the police and the environmental wardens. The association has also recently launched a website, www.stockfield.org.



"It's a friendly community here, and a nice mixture of people, with friendly neighbours." Margaret

FUTURE PLANS

In November 2005 Stockfield Community Resource Centre opened, re-emphasising the fact that the Community Association's work did not finish at the end of the redevelopment but is an ongoing mission to unite the community and provide useful resources.

The Centre is a place for the community to meet and somewhere to receive support in the form of housing and benefits advice, debt counselling and a place to meet Housing Managers and to be listened to by the Community Association and the police.

Listening to residents is something that Stockfield Community Association value very highly. Many residents talk directly to the directors, or visit the Community Resource Centre for advice, but the Association also undertook a community questionnaire in Autumn 2005, speaking to a large proportion of households about their concerns about a range of issues including crime, community spirit, and the appearance of the estate.



The results of this questionnaire have helped shape the future plans of the Association, as it looks to continue to maintain the estate and homes, and to continue to help the community. Good financial planning means that the Association is in a strong and sustainable financial position and is therefore able to support a range of initiatives to benefit the community, working closely with a range of organisations to address themes such as employment, crime and safety, health and education.

THE CENTRE IS A PLACE FOR THE COMMUNITY TO MEET AND SOMEWHERE TO RECEIVE SUPPORT AND A PLACE TO MEET HOUSING MANAGERS AND TO BE LISTENED TO BY THE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION AND THE POLICE.

Current plans include a programme of planting and cleaning events as part of the national Britain In Bloom competition, the development of a resident led Community Watch project to reduce the fear of crime, and a range of community events focusing on health and employment. The Community Resource Centre is proving to be beneficial for the community of Stockfield, but there is still a desire to have a larger community centre which can support a wider range of activities, including good quality facilities for young people.

A lesson learnt throughout the regeneration of Stockfield is that all of these hopes and plans will need to be achieved in partnership with others, and the Association remains committed to this. Discussions are underway with a local school and church to explore the possibility of working together to develop community resources such as the community centre.



Stockfield Community Association is also aware that they have much to offer, with a great deal of valuable experience gained over the course of the regeneration process. Resident directors regularly participate in meetings, discussions and conferences, offering advice and insights to other resident and community groups. They have also hosted visits from groups eager to see how Stockfield has been rebuilt, inspiring others with the story of what can be achieved with a mixture of innovation, hard work and resident involvement.



**Stockfield
Community
Association**

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