

UPDATE HOUSING

JULY 2008

Greets Green Partnership working together with Sandwell Council, Sandwell Homes and Urban Living.

Greets Green is changing...

Welcome to the July 2008 Greets Green Housing Update. Greets Green Partnership is continuing to fund lots of projects and work with its partners to make the area an even better and more attractive place to live – and we wanted to let you know about our latest plans.

Inside you'll read about ...

A brand new project to invest an estimated £2.8 million to improve the look and quality of some of the main routes running through Greets Green has been given the go ahead by the Partnership Board. The aim is to give the area a much needed facelift which residents and people passing through will see and appreciate.

On and off street parking, traffic calming measures, re-modelled road junctions, new fencing, walls and gates, resurfaced pavements, new street signage and new tree planting are all on the agenda and residents living in the identified areas are already being asked for their thoughts.

The Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) in Greets Green recreation ground has recently been improved. See the before and after photos inside. This work links in with long-term plans to transform the ground into Sandwell's first new park for more than 100 years.

The Sustainable Warmth project funded by Greets Green Partnership has £900,000 to spend on improving the heating systems and reducing

future heating bills for homeowners in Greets Green. New central heating systems, cavity wall and loft insulation and solar water heating are all on offer. See if you qualify for any of this free work by filling in the form inside. If you do, make sure you call Sandwell Warm Zone today.

There are also feature articles on the My Home My Choice project, the Landlord Accreditation scheme and the Community Alarms project.

To find out how Greets Green is changing and what this means for you, read on...

Improving the appearance of Greets Green

A brand new multi-million pound project to improve some of the main routes running through Greets Green will start this year.

The scheme, which will have a major impact on the look of the area, has been given the go ahead by the Greets Green Partnership Board and consultation with residents is already underway.

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Greets Green Partnership's Housing Officer, Christine Davis, talks to Dartmouth Street residents about the project which will improve the appearance of key routes in Greets Green.

greetsgreen
partnership



Improving the appearance of Greets Green

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What sort of improvements are being planned?

A whole range of high quality improvements are being looked into, with residents being consulted every step of the way. These include on and off street parking, new traffic calming measures, work to improve road junctions, new fencing, walls and gates, improved pavements, new street signage, new tree planting and, where it's not already been upgraded, new street lighting.

Councillor Bob Badham, Sandwell Council's Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Transport, has welcomed the news which he says will boost the appearance of Greets Green.

"I'm very pleased to see these plans," he said. "It's important that we take the opportunity to help improve the look of these key routes through Greets Green. As the new Town Centre develops, it's important to raise standards in the surrounding areas as well – which is just what these proposals will do."

Where will the improvements take place?

The series of proposed environmental improvements will cover key stretches of Claypit Lane, Wood Lane, Dartmouth Street, Oak Road and Bromford Lane, as highlighted on the map opposite. An estimated £2.8 million will be invested to transform the look of these roads which are all major routes in and out of the area.

Greets Green Partnership's Housing Theme Leader, Phil Hartley, explains: "We've chosen the roads involved in this project very carefully. These are the key routes through the area and we know that as West Bromwich Town Centre develops, more people will be looking at Greets Green and what it has to offer.



The junction of Dartmouth Street and Edward Street as it is now, which will benefit from the improvement work.

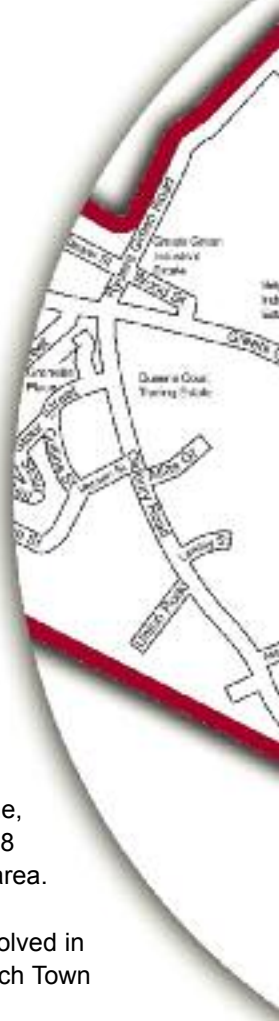
"The aim is to improve the image of Greets Green, creating an area where local people are proud to live."

More on offer for Bromford Lane residents

Some houses in Bromford Lane which face the new houses on the Lyng estate could also benefit from an External Improvements Scheme which aims to improve the external condition of the properties, removing the contrast that currently exists between old and new.

Grants are available to cover work to roofs, chimneys, windows, doors, paintwork and gardens. Greets Green Partnership and Sandwell Council will cover 90 per cent of the costs for the external improvements. Residents will be asked to meet the remaining 10 per cent. If residents who qualify for the work cannot fund the 10 per cent contribution, they can receive a 'non-interest bearing' loan.

"Ultimately, the final say on whether or not the work goes ahead will be down to the residents," explains Phil Hartley. "This is a voluntary scheme for residents and we will only carry out work on people's properties if they agree. It's a great opportunity for them to have significant improvements made to their homes at a fraction of the full cost."





My home, my choice

Making sure that residents are happy and comfortable in their homes is one of the key objectives of the Greets Green Housing Plan.

That's why Greets Green Partnership has funded the My Home, My Choice project to look into issues facing older tenants of Sandwell Homes properties, such as:-

- There are a number of three and four bedroom properties that are under-occupied in Greets Green and there might be some residents who find it difficult to manage their property due to its size.
- There are families who are limited in their choice of suitable accommodation in Greets Green.

Step one involved a survey of 128 residents to find out their needs in relation to housing. The survey was carried out by staff from the Greets Green Neighbourhood Office and Agewell, the Sandwell-wide organisation whose key principles are to involve people aged 50 and over in decision making about matters which affect their lives.

64 under-occupied properties were identified but the vast majority of these tenants were happy with their homes and were not considering moving. However some would consider moving, and of those most said they'd like to move to a one or two bedroom bungalow.

Some people said they would like to take part in a focus group to investigate options for tenants who currently under-occupy their property.

Marianne Monro from Greets Green Partnership's Housing Team explained this project is all about working with our residents to see how we can shape our plans to meet their needs. Keep an eye out for the next issue of the Greets Green Magazine for details of how the focus group is getting on.

Have your say on the future plans for West Bromwich

As the new Town Centre starts to take shape, Sandwell Council are asking for comments on their 'preferred options' Area Action Plan for West Bromwich.

This is the plan that has identified eight key areas for development, with the aim of stimulating economic growth while making West Bromwich a better town, in terms of accessibility and attractiveness. The consultation areas include a new shopping centre, a new office & cultural quarter, the Carters Green end of Greets Green and Brandon Way canalside.

For more details call the Planning Policy Section at Sandwell Council on **0121 569 4253**, or to view the Preferred Options document online go to **www.sandwell.gov.uk** and search for 'West Bromwich Area Action Plan'.

Comments on the Preferred Options document should be with the council by 4th August 2008. You can also look out for more about the options for the future of West Bromwich in the next issue of the Greets Green Magazine.



GREETS GREEN CLEARS UP

More than £120,000 has been spent on giving the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) within Greets Green Recreation Ground a facelift so that local youngsters can enjoy it even more.

New concrete was laid to replace the old surface, which had been repeatedly ripped up. New basketball hoops, bins and benches have been installed along with wheelchair access to the games area, and a fresh coat of paint was applied.

The project also saw the MUGA's maintenance gates repaired, allowing a sweeper onto the concrete to keep it tidy. A new strip of concrete has been put down to link the MUGA to the nearby Youth Shelter. Plus, the undergrowth of the wooded area next to the MUGA was cut back to improve visibility.

"We wanted to make it a much safer place for children and young people," said Marianne Monro from

Greets Green Partnership's Housing Team. "It now has disabled access and looks much better than before. By cutting back the woods it's become more open which will reduce anti-social behaviour."

Greets Green Partnership invested £100,000 into the MUGA clean up, with a further £23,000 coming from Sandwell Council.

The clean up of the park has significant long-term implications for Greets Green. It will pave the way for future development as part of the housing plans for Claypit Lane and Wattle Road.

The recreation ground itself is set to be transformed into Sandwell's first



How the MUGA looked before the clean up. Above: How it looks now.

new park for more than 100 years. Ambitious plans are underway to make it a great public facility which will link in with the Greets Green Housing Plan.

"Making The Rec an attractive place for all local people to enjoy is my aim," adds local resident Janet Sayce who tirelessly campaigns for improvements. "The work to the MUGA is the first step of a long journey."



Before: The run down Youth Shelter.



After: Local resident Janet Sayce inspects the new, improved shelter.

WARMER HOMES AND LOWER BILLS

Homeowners in Greets Green could be entitled to free central heating, cavity wall and loft insulation and solar water heating, thanks to the Sustainable Warmth project funded by Greets Green Partnership.

The aim is to upgrade people's houses with modern, efficient heating and insulation systems that will reduce their heating bills for the future. Delivered by Sandwell Warm Zone, the project offers a range of services to homeowners in Greets Green who have an annual household income of less than £15,000.

Services include:

- New central heating systems
- Cavity wall and loft insulation
- Warm Front top-up grants
- Boiler replacements
- Solar water heating (only installed with a new/replacement heating system)

New criteria has now been introduced which means anyone who qualifies for the scheme, and has a boiler which is more than 15 years old, is entitled to a brand new heating system.

By the beginning of April, £154,000 had already been spent on improving heating in properties in Greets Green, with work orders for 53 homes.

And there's still more money available! Greets Green Partnership has provided Sandwell Warm Zone with £900,000 to provide the free services.

Julie Poole of the Sustainable Warmth project said: "The scheme is for people on low incomes who own their own homes. All you need to do is give us a call and we'll see if a new heating system or insulation is needed. Where possible we'll look to install solar panels."

To find out if you qualify, call Sandwell Warm Zone on 0121 569 5015. All work is being completed on a first come, first served basis, so give them a call!



Bryan and Susan Wright with representatives from Sandwell Warm Zone. They were the first couple in Greets Green to have solar panels fitted - plus a new central heating system, cavity wall and loft insulation.

Greets Green Sustainable Warmth Project

See if you qualify

Section A

1. Do you own your own home? Yes / No

If "No" we are sorry but we cannot help you under the scheme at this time. (If you are in privately rented property, please see the note below)

If "Yes" please go to question 2.

2. Do you have a Central Heating System? Yes / No

If "No" please complete Section B below. If "Yes" please go to question 3.

3. Is your Central Heating System over 15 years old? Yes / No

If "Yes" please complete Section B below. If "No" we are sorry but we cannot help you under the scheme at this time.

Section B

Total Household Income (Net Monthly)*

Minus

Monthly Mortgage Payment
(including buildings insurance cost)**

Total

If the total is less than £1290 – CALL US NOW!!
(You do not need to return this form to us. It is for your assistance only)

0121 569 5015

* This includes the Net (after tax) income of all persons living in the property. Please include any benefit income apart from Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance.

** Do not include contents insurance.

Privately Rented – the scheme may be able to provide assistance later in the year to tenants in privately rented properties so, if you would like to be considered, please give us a call. We will record your details and contact you automatically at the appropriate time.



FEELING SAFER

Greetings Green resident Barbara Maye with her Community Alarm pendant which she says gives her peace of mind.

Greetings Green residents of all ages are feeling safer in their homes thanks to the Community Alarms project.

So far more than 100 have signed up to the service which is funded by Greetings Green Partnership and delivered by Sandwell Homes.

It offers support to all tenants and residents by linking them to a 24 hour-a-day control centre. This means that at any time of the day or night if you

have a problem you can get an instant response.

The Community Alarms package includes a bogus caller alert, to protect against dubious visitors, as well as a special smoke detector which is linked to the control centre in case of fire. Residents pay a reduced rate of £1.17 per week for the monitoring and response element of the service.

Lots of pensioners have already signed up, but it's not just older

people who can benefit from the Community Alarms service. Local resident, Barbara Maye, is just 45 years old but she had a Community Alarm installed more than 18 months ago after she suffered a stroke.

She says she finds having the alarm very reassuring. She has maintained her independence knowing that if anything was to happen to her support is available, 24 hours a day. She urges others in her position to get in touch with Sandwell Homes to see if they can get one installed too.

Marianne Monro, of Greetings Green Partnership's Housing Team, explains that the alarms are there for everyone. "Vulnerable people can be of all ages and come from different backgrounds," she said.

"Supporting local people is what the Community Alarms project is all about. The alarms make people feel more comfortable in their homes and happier in their lives."

If you or a friend or family member is affected by disability, fear domestic violence, are concerned about bogus callers or suffer from harassment, get in touch with the Community Alarms project for your free assessment by calling 0121 500 5500.

SUCCESSFUL SCHEME FOR LANDLORDS

The Landlord Accreditation scheme offers local landlords the chance to receive free training to improve their standards and gain recognition for their efforts.

Once they have successfully gained accreditation they are able to have their properties advertised through Sandwell Council's Choice Based Letting Scheme. So the scheme is good news for the landlords and for their prospective tenants as well.

The scheme is going from strength to strength with eight landlords

already gaining accredited status and a further eight currently going through the process. Four more landlords from Greetings Green signed up to the scheme at a recent Housing Forum held at Sandwell Council House.

Liz Mooney, who works on the scheme, says: "We want to get as many landlords as possible to sign up. With the offer of free training at Birmingham University, it's simply an excellent opportunity. It's too good for landlords to miss. We'll also make sure that any language

barriers are overcome, so we'd like to hear from landlords from all communities in Greetings Green."

Those who sign up to the Landlord Accreditation scheme must:

- Pass the fit and proper person test
- Sign up to a code of conduct
- Undertake a day's training at Birmingham University
- Volunteer their property for inspection

For more information, call the Landlord Accreditation Scheme on 0121 569 5256.



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