

UPDATE

HOUSING

NOVEMBER 2008

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

WE'RE INVESTING MORE MONEY IN GREETS GREEN

Nearly £1 million of additional funding is being invested to improve more roads and properties in Greets Green and work is due to start soon.

In the last housing newsletter we brought you the news that an estimated £2.8 million of funding had been approved to improve the look and quality of some of the main routes running through Greets Green.

Work has now started in earnest in Claypit Lane and Bromford Lane – and in Dartmouth Street residents are being asked for their views on the specific details of the improvement work which is due to start in the New Year.

Now Greets Green Partnership has earmarked a further £1 million for improvement work to some of the smaller roads off the main routes.

Read inside about the work that's due to start in Borwick Avenue, Manley Close, Sutton Crescent and Hilton Street.

The Claypit Lane redevelopment site will also be given a facelift to create attractive green spaces which will be much nicer for residents to look out on. Read the full story on page 5.

There's also news of the clearance work taking place in the Edith Street and Chapman Street area on page 6 and an article on the Extra Care Scheme that's coming to Greets Green on the back page.

 **MANLEY CLOSE**
Sandwell West Bromwich B70

 **SUTTON CRESCENT**
Sandwell West Bromwich B70

 **BORWICK AVENUE**
Sandwell West Bromwich B70

 **HILTON STREET**
Sandwell West Bromwich B70



WHAT A DIFFERENCE

Claypit Lane is already looking much better! That's the view of Wyn and Tony Dixon (pictured above) who've lived here for 26 years and have joined their neighbours in benefiting from the environmental improvements scheme.

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greetsgreen
partnership



Work is underway to improve the appearance of Greets Green

Environmental improvement work is happening right now across Greets Green. There's a hive of activity taking place in Claypit Lane for example, with new front walls, paved driveways and parking bays all taking shape.

Having discussed what they would like to see happen, residents are pleased that work has now started on several roads, and homes and streets are really being improved for the benefit of all.

← continued from page 1 **WHAT A DIFFERENCE**

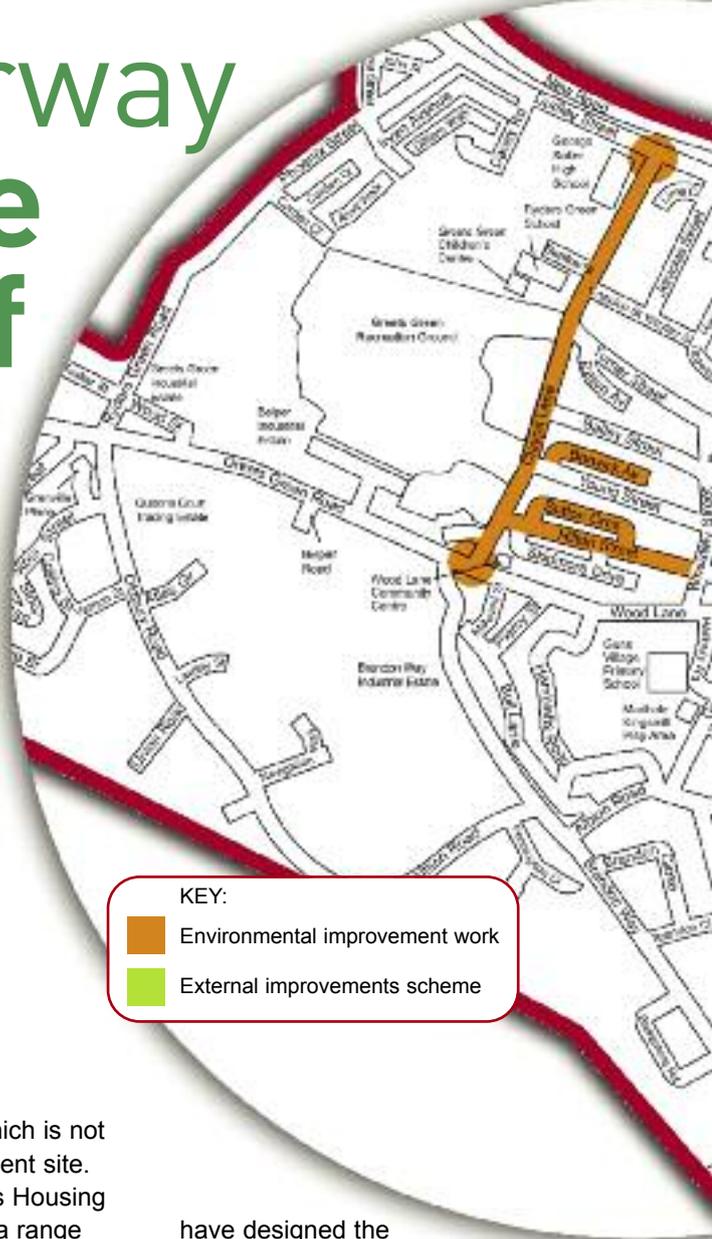
Claypit Lane residents have not only said what improvements they would like, but have also been able to influence some of the specific details of the work, such as the colour of all the metalwork.

The aim of the project is to enhance

the side of Claypit Lane which is not included in the redevelopment site. Greets Green Partnership's Housing Team offered all residents a range of improvements including new front walls, fencing, paved driveways and parking bays. Sandwell Council's planners and highway engineers



The new parking bays in Claypit Lane are taking shape.



KEY:

-  Environmental improvement work
-  External improvements scheme

have designed the work and are implementing and overseeing it as it progresses on site.

“We did a lot of consultation and managed to speak to over 90 per cent of residents,” explained Marianne Monro from Greets Green Partnership's Housing Team.

“We knew we wanted to completely improve the street so made the work available to everyone – owner occupiers, private tenants, housing association tenants, even shop keepers.”

Now the work is well underway and it's happening very quickly.

Wyn Dixon says: “They've put the slabs down on our front drive and are just finishing it off. Our front and side walls have also been replaced. It looks a lot nicer and has made a big difference to our property.



The current view of boundary walls for residents in Manley Close.

ROADS BECOMING LITTLE GEMS

Several small roads on the Hamblets estate, adjoining the Claypit Lane clearance area, are now set to be given a facelift to

enhance their appearance and make them nicer places to live for residents.

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Greets Green Partnership is investing nearly £1 million in the environmental improvement work which is due to start any day now and will be completed before the end of March 2009.

“We’re working with Sandwell Homes to turn these little roads into little gems!” explained Phil Hartley, Greets Green Partnership’s Housing Theme Leader.

“We live opposite the clearance site and Claypit Lane has changed a lot in the time we’ve been here. I’m very pleased with the work that’s being done.

“The properties on both sides of us have also had their drives done so the area looks much better. It’s increased the value of our house and improved the look of it too!”

As well as the work to properties, the scheme also includes making the junctions on Claypit Lane more attractive with better paving. Much of this work has already been completed.

Once the improvements to properties have finished, traffic calming measures will be put in place. All work is expected to be completed by Summer 2009 and is right on track!



Work in progress in Claypit Lane.

“Most residents in Borwick Avenue, Manley Close and Sutton Crescent will see boundary walls replaced with slightly higher, more attractive ones and new footpaths to their front doors.

“Some of the overgrown grassy areas will be replaced with hard surface so that they look much nicer - and there will be new street signs, tree planting and re-modelled road junctions.”

The work will benefit both public and privately owned properties and the Partnership’s Housing Team has been busy consulting with residents to make sure it will meet their needs.

Improvements will also take place in Hilton Street where off road parking will be created at the front of some properties to enhance the street for everyone.

Watch out for work starting...

Work is underway to improve the appearance of Greets Green



NEW SHOWHOME!

Rose and Humphrey Northall (pictured right), who've lived in Bromford Lane for 35 years, never thought their property would one day become a show home!

They've had a whole host of improvements made to their home through Greets Green Partnership's External Improvements Scheme, and now it's being used as a showcase property so that other residents in Bromford Lane can see what they can expect for their home.

The scheme sees Greets Green Partnership funding 90 per cent of the cost of works to one block of terraced houses in Bromford Lane and the Council will then carry on funding the same work to the next two blocks.

Residents just have to pay 10 per cent of the cost of the work themselves and, in some cases, where the owners are on income support, the work is totally free. Despite the recent awful weather, the



scheme is now well underway. The Northall's property is the first to be completed, having had a new roof, new windows, new chimney and replacement paving and fencing in the front and rear gardens.

"We're thrilled to bits with the work because we couldn't have afforded to

do it ourselves," says 73-year old Rose. "We didn't want to get into debt to do it and this has made a big difference.

"Bromford Lane used to be quite smart but the properties have gone downhill over the years. They were built in 1898 and need improving. We're very pleased."



DISCUSSING IMPROVEMENTS



Residents in Dartmouth Street have been discussing the types of environmental improvements they would like to see and work is set to start in the New Year.

Members of Greets Green Partnership's Housing Team started by asking residents what they believe is needed in their street. In October the team went back out, calling at residents' homes to discuss the specific details of the environmental improvement work which will be carried out.

"The aim is to really enhance the whole Dartmouth Street area," explained Marianne Monro from the Partnership's Housing Team (pictured left with a Dartmouth Street shopkeeper). Work will be undertaken to residents' front walls, along with a wide range of other environmental improvements.

These include improvements to the junctions, to the pavement near

Dartmouth Street Metro station and to the traffic lights system at the junction with the High Street. As there are older properties on one side of the road, all improvements made will be in keeping with the period of these properties, creating a much more unified and more attractive street.

"Dartmouth Street is on the metro route, so many people regularly walk along it," added Marianne. "These improvements will make it a nicer place for everyone – whether they live there or walk along it to get to work each day."





WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THE DEVELOPMENT SITES?

Many improvements are being made to Claypit Lane and to the properties facing the redevelopment site. But residents will no doubt be thinking 'what's happening to the redevelopment site itself?'

At the start of the year, the site was ready to be marketed to potential developers. Then the credit crunch happened. Since then the news has been full of the downturn in the housing market and the financial crisis we're now facing.

The fact is that developers are saying they are unable to sell the properties they've already built and these are tying up their capital. They have no cash flow to build new properties. Their Boards won't let them commit to new building projects when they've still got homes not selling.

It's not a case of people not wanting to buy the houses, they simply can't get the mortgages.

So, where does this leave us?

We certainly won't be leaving the site as it is. We're investing £130,000 in

improving the site while it awaits redevelopment. Work designed and implemented by the Council's Landscape Division will include clearing away the fencing, taking any rubbish and fly-tipping from the site, and clearing any rubble. Then the site will be levelled and any holes filled in, before it's covered with top soil and seeded with grass.

Mounds of earth will be created at the edges to stop vehicles driving onto the site. It will become an attractive green space which local people can enjoy as part of the park. Residents living across from the site will also be able to look out across a much more pleasant green space.

Why did we decide to redevelop the Claypit Lane site originally?

In 2003, a massive consultation programme was undertaken when every single household in Greets Green – almost 5,000 homes – was

invited to share their views and ideas about the area's housing and what they'd like to see in the future.

Out of the four options for change, residents gave a resounding 'yes' to radical regeneration involving the major redevelopment of a number of sites including Claypit Lane.

We took action straight away and, with support from Urban Living, worked on clearing the Claypit Lane site. We always said that the development of new homes would take a long time. Unfortunately, due to the current economic climate, this is now going to take longer than originally anticipated.

However, we're continuing to talk to potential developers on a regular basis so that when the housing market improves, we can start the redevelopment.

Our consultation also showed that local people didn't just want new homes, they wanted the whole area improved. That's why we've committed millions to making the local environment more attractive with a wide range of improvements to streets and houses.



Safer parking at Children's Centre

Families using Greets Green's Children's Centre will be able to park more safely in the future. As part of the improvements to the Claypit Lane redevelopment site, a temporary car park will be built by the Children's Centre.

At present, people using the Centre are parking on the footpaths and making it dangerous for families crossing the road. The aim is to get the cars off the road by creating a car park for the Centre so that families no longer have to cross between parked cars.

NEWS FROM THE HOUSING ASSESSMENT AREA (HAA) AROUND EDITH STREET AND



New Home

Akrem Sharazi and his wife Ahmida (pictured below) had lived in Oxford Road since 1985 so the move out of the clearance area was a big upheaval for them.

A former bus driver, Mr Sharazi had to give up driving after a heart attack and is now known for running the paper shop in Oak Lane.

The couple have now moved from their terraced house to a semi-detached property with a garage in Hall Green Road, Stonecross. This means a longer journey in to work, but they will benefit from the improvements being made in the development area near their shop premises.

Mr Sharazi says: "Kevin Jordan from Sandwell Council is very nice and a good person and he helped us all the way with our move.

"Our money was transferred with no problems and they also gave us a grant so, financially, it was all right. We had no problems."



Pockets of cleared land are now visible in the Edith Street and Chapman Street area of Greets Green.

THE WAY AHEAD IS LOOKING CLEARER

Clearance work in the Housing Assessment Area (HAA) around Edith Street and Chapman Street is now entering its final stages. Virtually all the residents have moved out and demolition work continues, freeing up the site for redevelopment in the future.

Out of the 210 properties, 201 households have been re-homed. Most of the owner occupiers who wanted to remain as owners, have been able to buy a new home thanks to the compensation package offered by Sandwell Council.

The Council worked with Greets Green Partnership and Urban Living to approve 83 New Homes Grants and 13 Property Appreciation Loans.

Sandwell Homes has been able to find properties for most of the families who wanted rented accommodation through its Choice Based Lettings system.

A few residents have been housed by either housing associations or private landlords. There are only nine

households still living in the area now. Seven of these are either waiting to move into a Sandwell Homes property or are in the process of buying a new home. It's hoped the remaining two families will find a new home any day now.

What happens now?

So far, with support from Urban Living, 143 properties have been demolished and work is on schedule for all the remaining 67 buildings to be demolished by April 2009. All the houses in Chapman Street have already been demolished, along with Dartmouth Street, much of Oxford Road and half of Edith Street.

Although it's predicted that the demolition will be finished by the end

CHAPMAN STREET

Providing help and support to residents

Residents affected by clearance have been given lots of help and support during the whole process.

One successful initiative was the opening of a local drop-in office where residents could get answers to any problems or queries they had regarding the work being done in the area. This meant they could gain advice on their doorstep rather than having to make appointments to go to the Council House or wait for a home visit – and many residents found it invaluable.

Sandwell Council Urban Renewal Officer, Kevin Jordan, said: “When it first opened, people were regularly coming down. It was a good, informal facility where people could come and ask quick questions and get one-to-one advice.”



The drop-in office was in a converted flat in Oak Lane and was open three half-days a week. Residents visited with a wide range of concerns about moving out, security matters and problems with anti-social behaviour.

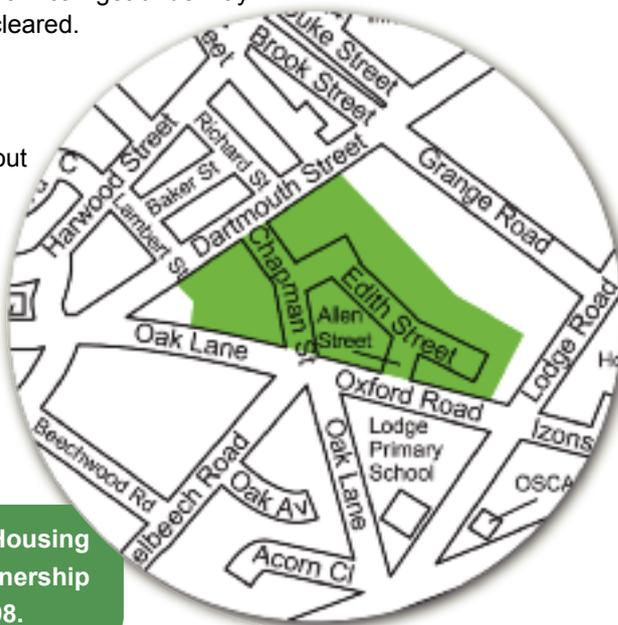
The drop-in office stayed open until there were only nine households left in the area and it was felt that it had served its purpose. Three officers are now dealing with these properties so there is still plenty of help on hand.

of March, it will still be a long time before any new building work occurs on the site. Phil Hartley, Greets Green Partnership’s Housing Theme Leader explained: “No development work can get underway until the entire site has been cleared.

“The remaining properties will have to be demolished before investigations can be carried out across all the land to confirm its suitability for building.

“All this, combined with the current economic climate, means we are still some way off seeing bricks and mortar going up, but we’ve certainly come a long way.”

To find out more, call the Housing Team at Greets Green Partnership on freephone 0800 073 0798.



SAVING ENERGY ON THE STREET

Lots of us are now lighting our homes with energy saving light bulbs, so why not light our streets with them too?

That could soon happen! Church Street in Greets Green is having five energy-saving street lights installed as part of an experiment.

John Sheppard, Street Lighting and Signs Team Leader for Sandwell Council, explains: “These new street lights will give off a white light and will replace the current yellowy-glowing ones.

“You can save up to 40 per cent in energy on each light - and that’s what we’re proposing to do. This is new technology we’re trialling and, if it’s successful, we could well use it elsewhere.

“Once we’ve installed the lights, we’ll ask local residents what they think of the difference.”

This pilot project is being funded as part of a much bigger project which will install new, brighter street lights in every single street in Greets Green by March 2009.

Greets Green Partnership has provided £458,375 for the third phase of the street lighting improvements, which will see more than 800 new lights put up to make the streets brighter and safer.





Extra Care scheme is a first for Greet's Green

A stunning new development in Greet's Green is set to create the first Extra Care community in the whole of West Bromwich.

The former Meadows School site in Coppice Street, off Claypit Lane, has been earmarked for the project and it's hoped that plans will be approved in the New Year. The development will create dozens of high quality homes in a community setting.

Sandwell Council, in partnership with Housing 21 – a leading provider of housing, care and support services for older people – has already held four information open days in Greet's Green to show people the ideas behind the Extra Care project.

What is Extra Care?

Extra Care schemes provide lively, stimulating and vibrant communities where older people can keep their independence. Extra Care works in partnership with local authorities, regeneration organisations, charitable trusts and developers to try to help older people lead

an active, independent lifestyle. It believes that age, health or financial means shouldn't create a barrier to having an enjoyable quality of life in later years.

There are currently 28 Extra Care supported housing schemes and retirement villages in the Midlands and the North of England, and Greet's Green should be welcoming its own scheme in the near future.

Extra Care in Greet's Green

"The Extra Care scheme in Coppice Street will offer an opportunity to buy through shared ownership or to rent a flat or bungalow," says Sandaljit Bains, Housing and Social Care Partnerships Development Manager with Sandwell Council.

"It's a massive site and will comprise one and two bedroom properties with a communal lounge, café,

restaurant and possibly a shop. The facilities provided will reflect what the residents want."

Anyone in Sandwell aged over 55 will be able to apply to move to the homes, but priority will be given to people who are living in properties which are too large for them, or who have local connections.

The Council is currently carrying out pre-application discussions. This means that the proposed plans are discussed while they're still being drawn up, rather than Housing 21 simply putting in a planning application.

This should speed up the process once the plans are submitted early in the New Year, as they have a much greater chance of being approved by the Planning Committee. Watch out for more information!

"The facilities provided will reflect what the residents want."



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