

Estates Regeneration: Case Study

Westminster: Church Street

Overview Church Street ward is undergoing a 20 year programme of regeneration that will include:

- New housing (social and private) that will maintain the existing community, provide affordable/ accessible homes for local families
- Environmental work: a new garden space linking different areas of the ward, creating play space, meeting space and opportunities for public art
- Retail improvements that will maintain the current mix of businesses on Church Street that include an established food and clothing market and also a world renowned antiques market.
- Improved employment and education opportunities to tackle long term unemployment and reduce barriers to employment and training for local residents



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Westminster's goal is to secure the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the people who live in Church Street and the ward itself. A fundamental aspect is improving the links between the ward and the opportunities around it, severed by major transport infrastructure from canals to railways and major roads. All of the work will involve collaboration from local residents, stakeholders and businesses in the area. Depending on the overall number of homes the Grove Avenue site can deliver, we may look at a small number of units for private sale to cross subsidise and help with the scheme finances. This is particularly relevant due to build price inflation.

How were the sites identified? Church Street ward was identified and prioritised along with four other locations/estates in Westminster as needing major interventions and regeneration in a renewal strategy launched in 2010. Residents of each area were given the opportunity to vote for a programme of work to deliver the changes required in their neighbourhood. Church Street is one of the areas where change was welcomed.

Funding The programme has a mixture of funding – HRA, Affordable Housing Fund, private sector investment and more recently Housing Zone funding awarded for supporting infrastructure development in the ward. **Buy backs** on Church Street, thus far only apply to leaseholders who wish to sell up and leave the area now. There are no cabinet reports that will allow Westminster to buy back using the statutory regeneration offer of home loss payments and other disbursements yet.

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The statutory offer consists of: Market price for the property plus 10 per cent home loss up to the statutory maximum of £53,000 and reasonable disbursements for expenses incurred selling the property and reasonable expenses incurred in the purchase of a replacement property; this would include expenses such as: Legal fees, survey fee, removal expenses, post redirection, Stamp Duty Land Tax to the equivalent value of the purchase price of the sold property. When all the necessary permissions are in place Westminster Council will engage their partners Westminster Community Homes to work with resident and non resident leaseholders to buy their properties from them.

Community Consultation Every part of the regeneration programme has involved in-depth consultation with the community. A 'Futures Plan' was drawn up with residents: it guides the work that will be carried out over the course of the regeneration programme. This document was created following consultation with residents and stakeholders.

The project team works closely with the Futures Steering Group (and thematic working groups) made up of local residents and stakeholders acting as an advisory and scrutiny body on behalf of the community.

A hub is being opened in the heart of the regeneration area (99 Church Street) where officers can work and also be available to meet residents on a daily basis and keep them up to date with the progress of the projects that are underway.

A communications and engagement strategy is being written to ensure that regular exchanges of ideas and information flow between the council, residents and stakeholders. Social media will be an important part of communicating with the community.

Future Estate Regeneration Two other estates that were a part of the 2010 renewal strategy are being regenerated following positive votes from residents. These estates (currently comprising 142 homes and 336 homes) are much smaller than the Church Street programme and will be completed in the near future. Lessons, protocols and policy have grown out of each of these projects and are being refined for Church Street and future projects.

Westminster City Council is always analysing its stock with a view to increasing its social housing offering to meet increasing demand within space, funding and legislative constraints. The council is conscious of the need to maintain and attract the 'middle market' of residents and workers who are currently priced out of housing in the city and will include a range of housing options on all of its regenerated estates as well as working with partners in the city to ensure that a range of residents can continue to live in the city.

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