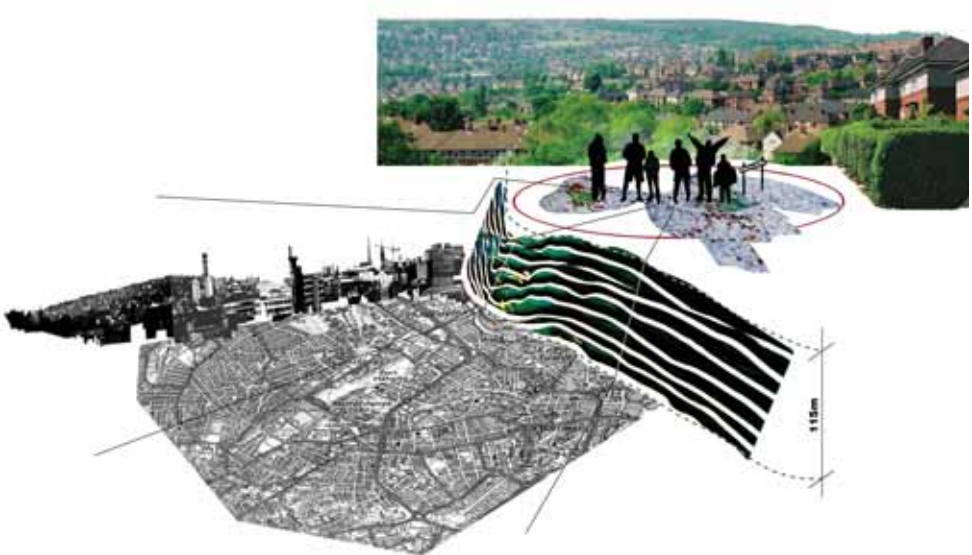


Successful and Sustainable Neighbourhoods: Sheffield City Council, Design Quality and the Housing Market Renewal Programme

1 Overview

Nationally, the Housing Market Renewal (HMR) initiative is being used to help transform our most deprived communities by creating more successful and sustainable neighbourhoods. The aim of this publication is to illustrate how Sheffield, and the South Yorkshire Pathfinder, has put the achievement of design quality at the heart of their approach. After a brief introduction to the pathfinder context, the document explains Sheffield's **'Excellent Clients, Excellent Plans and Excellent Projects'** strategy and illustrates what this means in practice through a number of examples.



Sustainable neighbourhoods image from Southey Owlerton Regeneration Framework, Bureau of Design Research, University of Sheffield

Sheffield is part of the **Transform South Yorkshire** partnership, the largest of the HMR Pathfinders, and the challenge here is one of weak housing markets, rather than wholesale abandonment. This market failure in parts of Sheffield has come about because of the limited supply of popular housing, poor neighbourhood services and the rising demand and aspiration for home ownership.

One of the particular issues in Sheffield is the number of large, homogenous housing estates with a lack of choice in type and tenure of housing, poor neighbourhood facilities and in some cases poor reputations as desirable places to live. These estates were built around the 1930's and are loosely designed around the garden suburb principle. Many neighbourhoods have a generous amount of green space and benefit from great views across Sheffield's hilly landscape. In practice, however, limited maintenance has sometimes turned these assets into a liability.

Sheffield has fantastic potential though: its history and landscape make it a distinctive place where local people value their identity and their neighbourhoods, and some parts of the city are considered very popular places to live. The challenge for the HMR programme is to support the more deprived areas by enabling more mixed communities to flourish, and by ensuring that all neighbourhoods in Sheffield are attractive and sustainable places to live and to move into.



One of the many long views over Sheffield

Typical housing stock



Building on the Council's 'Closing the Gap' neighbourhood regeneration policy, the Sheffield HMR programme is **'vision-led'**, but it is also pragmatic and deliverable. There are a number of strands to this vision that have been derived through housing and neighbourhood strategy, planning policy and from work with Sheffield's communities. They reflect aspirations for a sustainable future, a good quality of life and Sheffield's key historical and geographical characteristics.

All this means that residential design quality in Sheffield is not just about making places that look good. It's about making neighbourhoods that work, that people are proud of, where communities want to live and can stay, where people feel safe and can move around easily, and making places that build on the existing environmental and community assets.

In order to help prepare and deliver this transformation the Sheffield HMR initiative has created a design quality strategy: 'Excellent Clients, Excellent Plans and Excellent Projects'. The following sections explain and illustrate what this means.

1.1 CREATING A DELIVERABLE VISION

The overarching vision for the South Yorkshire HMR Pathfinder includes a reference to design quality. It is:

“To build and support sustainable communities and successful neighbourhoods where the quality and choice of housing underpins a buoyant economy and improved quality of life.”

This overall vision is interpreted locally within the Area and Neighbourhood Development Frameworks. These include a number of emerging ‘Big Ideas’ that aim to protect and build on Sheffield’s distinctive character:

Sheffield as a City of Distinctive Neighbourhoods: the historic development of the city has emphasised the importance of distinct neighbourhoods as places to live, work and socialise.

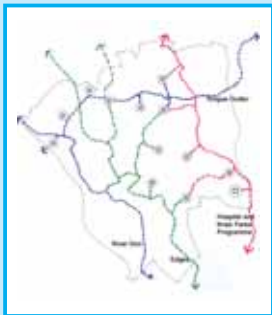
Park City: Sheffield is known up and down the country for the extent and quality of its green spaces, for example its linear parks, and the contribution these make to the quality of daily life. It is a real selling point for the city.

See and be Seen: One of the most unusual features of Sheffield as a city is that, wherever you are in it, you can see across the city and out to the countryside beyond. This feeling of being able to see the edge of the city is part of its special character.

Identity from Landform: Sheffield’s origins as a city and its special expertise in steel manufacturing and engineering stem directly from its hills, river valleys and woods. Today these features are still a key part of its landscape and identity.

From City to Country and Back Again: One of the amazing features of Sheffield as a city is that you can walk from the city centre to the countryside almost without having to use roads. It also has a great collection of round walks.

Green Arteries and Green Web: Sheffield has generally developed along radial routes, but these are mostly roads rather than green corridors. Where the linear parks have cafes, play areas and other features attached to them, they attract people from across the city at weekends and holidays.



The 'Big Ideas'; Park City, See and be Seen, Identity from Landform, From City to Country and Back Again, Green Arteries and Green Web



Fox Hill Competition Proposals, Developer Artisan (UK) PLC, Designer Mecanoo Architecten

2 Excellent Clients

The process of creating sustainable and successful neighbourhoods is complex and challenging and the client role - considered in the broadest sense to include stakeholders and residents - is crucial to the quality of the final product. The Sheffield HMR programme is organised in such a manner as to empower the client role and a number of associated initiatives and tools have been established.



'Walking Tours' as a way to get to know the area, Bureau of Design Research, University of Sheffield

Sheffield City Council really values design quality, and this can be seen in the transformation of the city centre and the investment in local neighbourhoods through HMR and other investment programmes. This priority is also shown by the creation of an Urban Design and Conservation Team, an elected Member Design Champion and a senior Neighbourhoods Manager with portfolio responsibility for design quality.

The Council has adopted a 'hub and spoke' approach to delivery and has established three area-based **Regeneration Teams** (one



High quality public realm in the city centre

each in the North, South and East of Sheffield) to help develop the programme. These teams are supported by **Strategic Initiatives**, a central resource offering technical and organisational assistance and by the **HMR Development Services Team**.

The HMR Development Services Team is made up of town planners, urban designers, and transport planners. It provides project services as well as developing policy and plays a lead role in developing the design quality strategy.

Transform South Yorkshire (TSY) has established the **‘Delivering Design Quality Initiative’** - bringing together the four local authorities: Barnsley, Doncaster Rotherham and Sheffield - to efficiently create and administer a number of design tools and initiatives. These include:

- **The Design Enabling Panel:** a pool of design experts that Local Authorities can draw on to carry out short enabling commissions.
- **The Home Builders' Advisory Panel:** a similar pool aimed specifically at supporting private companies working within the pathfinder area.
- **Gap Funding:** common protocols are being developed by TSY to enable the Local Authorities to draw down grant funding and to offer private developers gap funding for those delivering higher quality schemes than would normally be built.
- **A Design Manager:** to facilitate these initiatives and to develop the strategy.

2.1 DESIGN ENABLING: PAGE HALL MASTERPLAN

The **Page Hall** neighbourhood is a dense urban environment where smaller terraced houses predominate. It has a strong, diverse community character but suffers from some out-dated, poorly performing building stock and poor environmental conditions. The area was part of the HMR masterplanning programme but because of the complexity of the issues to be addressed, the Council, working with residents, decided on a more comprehensive regeneration project for the neighbourhood.

An enabler from the Design Enabling Panel facilitated work with the neighbourhood group to carry out a detailed analysis of the quality of their neighbourhood and homes and to establish the residents' priorities. The enabler, working with the project officer team, helped to prepare a brief for a 'mini-masterplan' for improvements.

This brief was important in driving the project forward and in developing consensus within the resident group around priorities and projects. It set out the ethos of the project and enabled the team to discuss design issues in a practical context. A team of consultants have now been appointed to prepare the urban design framework that will guide the development of the neighbourhood.



The Page Hall neighbourhood



Concept images for Page Hall Homezone, Camlin Lonsdale Landscape Architects

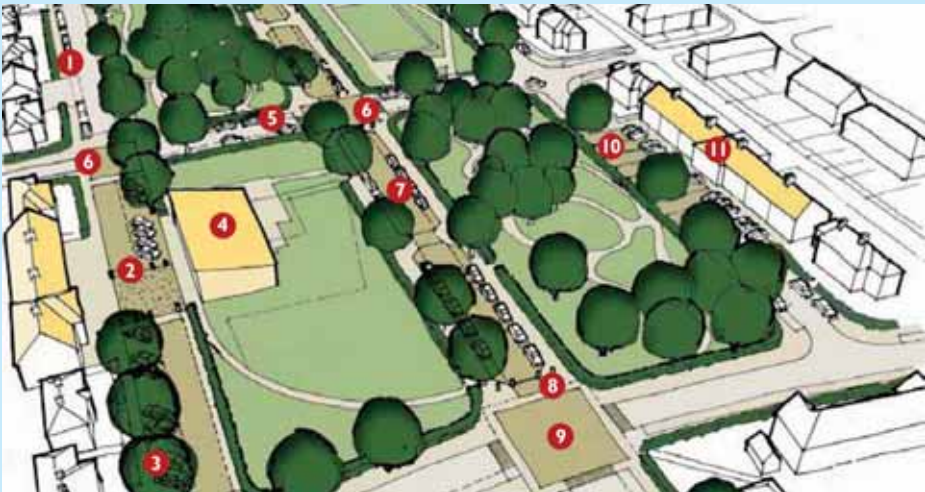
Part of any strategy involves working out 'where you are now' and 'where you want to be'. Working with TSY the Council is embarking on a pathfinder-wide project called the '**Design Quality Baseline Audit**'. This project will make it possible to assess and improve the way that existing corporate systems help to deliver design quality. As part of this work an action plan will eventually be prepared that will, for example, help support the Council's aspiration to provide an excellent development control service.

The Council has carried out a staff skills analysis and is participating in a TSY design awareness training programme for late 2007. Motivated and knowledgeable staff and elected Council Members are essential in developing and delivering the HMR plans, and the next section goes onto explain more about these plans.

2.2 INVOLVEMENT AND TRAINING: SOAR DESIGN PANEL

In January 2003, the **Southey Owlerton Area Regeneration (SOAR) Design Panel** was established to advise council officers and local groups on the briefing, appointment and management of design consultants, so that all capital projects would take the design quality agenda seriously. Community representatives were involved in the appointment of this panel, which, though it initially seemed somewhat risky, has empowered those involved in the procurement and selection of consultants as well as exciting them about the possibilities of good design!

This panel has greatly developed the team's ability to be a good and confident client, justifying the time involved in administration. The panel has created skills and understanding in the local community from the beginning of the project, and thus ensured a more structured approach to later design discussions. Design champions have emerged who are really engaged in the process and take ideas back to the wider community. This has demonstrated to the Council and other partners how neighbourhood groups can contribute positively to the process of design.



Proposals for the Longley Four Greens, Roger Evans Associates

2.3 INVOLVEMENT AND TRAINING: TSY DESIGN AWARENESS TRAINING

An aspiration for design quality is essential throughout the organisation, so developing the design awareness of council officers acting in the client role for projects is an important part of delivering better neighbourhood projects.

The Area Regeneration Teams are made up of professional and technical staff with a broad range of knowledge and experience in housing. However, a skills and awareness audit has indicated that, now that the teams are engaged in complex development projects and broader issues around creating more sustainable neighbourhoods, a skills gap needs to be addressed.



Working with stakeholders

Design South Yorkshire 100 is a pathfinder-wide training and design awareness programme being prepared to fill this gap. As well as an introduction to design quality, the six day-long sessions will discuss residential design topics such as:

- The role of quality neighbourhoods in a successful city
- Creating distinctive and sustainable neighbourhoods
- Sensitive design solutions for difficult sites
- Sustainable construction and development and
- How to make it really happen!

3 Excellent Plans

Creating a deliverable yet visionary hierarchy of neighbourhood frameworks - 'masterplans' - has been at the heart of the early work in the Sheffield HMR area. Working with stakeholders, and especially Sheffield's communities, to create a suite of **Neighbourhood Development Frameworks** and **Neighbourhood Strategies** has been challenging but rewarding and has helped to evolve the HMR working practice. The HMR programme has adopted the government's definition of a sustainable neighbourhood. The neighbourhood frameworks and strategies help to put this concept into a local perspective and to create a clearer purpose for developing each of the HMR sites.



Conceptual image for neighbourhood centre, Bureau of Design Research, University of Sheffield

The HMR plans work within and contribute to the emerging Local Development Framework vision:

Sheffield will be a successful, distinctive city of European significance at the heart of a strong city region, with opportunities for all.

The approach to achieving this vision is built upon three key principles:

Prosperity: *We will actively seek to make the city competitive in economic terms, attracting investment and providing an environment that enables wealth to be created.*

Inclusion: *We will promote access to opportunities and services, so that all residents can take advantage of the benefits of living in and around Sheffield.*

Sustainability: *Our actions will meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*

In common with all the pathfinders, Sheffield must present a number of **Area Development Frameworks** (ADFs). Each of the three ADFs in Sheffield help to articulate a vision for change in the wider area and to explain how the vision will be delivered. The vision statements are:

North ADF: ***Creating Garden City Neighbourhoods for the 21st Century***

South ADF: ***Outstanding 21st Century Neighbourhoods at the Heart of the City***

East ADF: ***Building Successful Neighbourhoods around a Strong Economy***

3.1 VISION: SOUTH SHEFFIELD AREA AND THE MANOR

Despite many natural assets such as its location, green spaces and views, parts of the south of Sheffield are not perceived as popular places to move to. Consequently a key part of the masterplanning programme has been the preparation of a number of studies to understand better how the area can work as a more popular and sustainable neighbourhood.

The Manor is a large 1930s housing estate in the south of Sheffield built on garden suburb principles. It has suffered from the long-term effects of anti-social behaviour and a fear of crime and the stigma that this brings. There is also a lack of choice in housing stock, in both type and tenure. To address these issues a series of working groups of stakeholders have met over a long period to develop the ideas now being expressed in the Neighbourhood Development Framework for the Manor. The vision for the Manor is simple but poignant:

“A neighbourhood – a place where neighbours and neighbourliness matter. Our vision is of a neighbourhood characterised by ‘light and air’ – a brighter, fresher Manor.”

To help deliver this vision major redevelopment is planned to break down the large scale of the existing estate and to create



South Sheffield Area Diagram, EDAW

a number of neighbourhood focal points. As well as building new housing, the existing houses are being improved and better neighbourhood facilities will be provided. A City Academy is being built, the government's 'Liveability' programme is being rolled out in the area, and there are plans to improve the district service centre.

The development of each HMR site is an important opportunity to help deliver the vision that has been set out in the neighbourhood plan. A **Market Brief** for each of the HMR sites provides the site-based information that should appear in any development brief and it describes how the site should contribute to the overall vision for the area. The brief for a site is read with the Council's **HMR Developer Manual**, which sets the quality standards required from the proposals and offers detailed guidance on design quality and development issues. This Manual links its guidance with the work of other agencies, stakeholders and departments and covers the broad range of factors critical to creating more sustainable and successful neighbourhoods. These include the need for quality schools, parks, streets and service centres to complement an improved and wider range of housing stock. The next section explains some of the projects that are starting to deliver these plans in real projects.

3.2 SUCCESSFUL AND SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS: BUSK MEADOW

A sustainable neighbourhood needs not only quality housing, but also the other essential facilities that most people rely on. One of the key proposals which came out of the Regeneration Framework for **Southey Owlerton** was the idea that each neighbourhood should have a 'hub': a collection of facilities that can provide a physical focal point, and sustainable local services.

The area around **Busk Meadow** was identified as one of the preferred locations for a hub. Some of the facilities being delivered include:

South Yorkshire Housing Association (SYHA) Extra Care Housing Scheme: The location between the park, the shops and the GP surgery has made this a very popular and much needed addition to older people's housing.

Busk Meadow Park: The park regeneration was delivered through the government's 'Liveability' pilot in Sheffield. It has been a resounding success and the levels of use have soared.

Shirecliffe Hub: The first of the 'hub' projects to be completed is the new 'Shirecliffe Hub' building. The building provides a base for a Surestart Childrens' Centre as well as space for meeting rooms and workspace.

Shirecliffe Hub Building, Bauman Lyons Architects



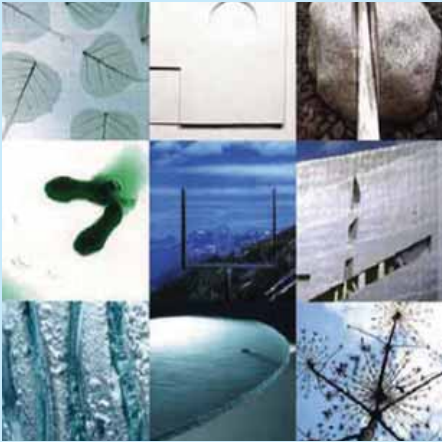
Conceptual image of Shirecliffe Hub Building, Bauman Lyons Architects



New School – Watercliffe Meadows: Work has just started on site to build a new school close to the Shirecliffe hub. The building is innovative and includes features such as a green roof.

Streetscene: As well as providing scheme designs for a number of key sites, the ‘Streetscene Report’ sets out a number of ideas about how to develop neighbourhood character through improving the public realm. In particular the strategy suggests using distinctive palettes of materials for the hilltop areas, the valley sides, and the valley bottoms.

New housing on redevelopment sites in Shirecliffe will help these projects to deliver the plans for a more sustainable neighbourhood.



Concept images from the Streetscene report, Hilltop, Valley and Green imagery, Roger Evans Associates

4 Excellent Projects

Targeted clearance and redevelopment of areas of housing is a key plank of the HMR programme, along with the improvement of local services and neighbourhood facilities such as schools, parks, health facilities and shops.

Nearly three years into the programme the delivery phase is well under way. Several tools have been created to help achieve the high quality aspiration including:

- A transformational **Development Programme** which has set out a programme of site releases within the target neighbourhoods,
- The **Sheffield Quality Standards**, which use a number of local and national standards to measure and specify development quality,
- The **HMR Developer Panel**, a select list of quality developers that compete for preferred bidder status on each site release,
- The **Designer Panel**, a select list of quality built environment professionals, to encourage the selection and use of high quality design teams,
- A **Residential Design Guide**, that will roll out, city-wide, some of the lessons learnt in the HMR pathfinder,
- site specific **Market Briefs**, describing the site and vision for each release and
- the **Developer Manual**, which is used as a standard specification in association with the Market Brief.

These tools also work alongside other city-wide initiatives such as the **City Design Review Panel** and the emerging **Sustainability Toolkit**.

4.1 DEVELOPER GUIDANCE: HMR DEVELOPER MANUAL

Residential design quality is complex and relates to many aspects of a neighbourhood and people's homes. For example it includes whether projects are fit for purpose, how they will work, the appearance and character of developments, and whether they express any general ideals, such as environmental sustainability or promoting equality of opportunity.

The **HMR Developer Manual** makes clear the design quality standards and best practice that is required for the development of the Council's HMR sites. The Manual is read with site specific Market Briefs that act as the competition brief for each site. The Manual is a 'live' document that acts as a record of best and evolving practice. The process of drafting the document has created a discussion forum, allowing officers to share and test ideas.

As well as using local requirements for developing better practice, the competition requirements for each site include the national standards used by English Partnerships in their procurement protocol . These include: Building for Life, Lifetime Homes, Secured by Design and the Code for Sustainable Homes.

The developers have to prepare competition proposals for each site they wish to bid for. The competition requirements are grouped into seven sections that include:

Planning and Design Excellence: Layouts and architectural concepts are required along with proposals for design teams and an explanation of how local character will be created.

Housing: Specific requirements are stipulated in the Market Brief and developers are also asked to explain how they will deliver the affordable housing that will be required.

Environmental Sustainability: As well as achieving the required environmental standards, developers are asked for their proposals to support more sustainable lifestyles.

Regeneration, Sustainable Communities: The involvement of local communities is important and proposals for social enterprise and neighbourhood management are often required.

Finance and Delivery: A detailed financial breakdown is required as well as details of the development team and the planned timetable.



The **Development Programme** allows the Council to categorise the HMR development sites according to the required outcomes. The **Sheffield Gold Standard** sites represent demonstration projects: models of best practice and innovation including environmental sustainability, architecture, and design procurement. The **Sheffield Silver**

Standard sites are of very high quality though not exemplars, and the **Sheffield Quality Standard** schemes demand a higher quality than normally required through the planning process and so form a benchmark.

The **Developer Panel** is a 'select list' of quality developers that have been identified to deliver these high standards. The panel has been set up initially for three years and interested firms from the panel enter 'quality/cost' competitions for each site as they are released. The 'select list' approach is efficient and provides opportunities to enter into dialogue with the developers. In addition the HMR team is working in partnership with organisations such as Urban Splash on major projects like the refurbishment of the Park Hill Flats complex.

4.2 QUALITY STANDARDS: WOODSIDE

The **Woodside** project is a significant site and so has been designated as a Gold Standard scheme where the developer must work more innovatively and to the highest quality standards.

Woodside is near to the city centre. The project is complex and challenging: it includes a 5 hectare development site, a Listed Building - the former Pye Bank School - and an existing area of open space - Stanley Fields. The site slopes significantly, incorporates large retaining walls, and is very visible from a number of points within the city.

Given this complexity a two-stage competition to choose the developer has been used. The Market Brief for the project sets out the competition requirements including that the scheme must deliver the project vision. This vision was developed with the stakeholder group and has a number of important components including:

See and be Seen

Going Green

Getting Involved

Projecting a Positive Future for Living

Loose Fit and Flexible Accommodation

Sensitively Engineered and Constructed

A Commercial Success

The developers' proposals must meet the competition requirements that are set out in the Developer Manual for Gold Schemes. These include: Building for Life Gold, 50% of properties to Lifetime Homes standard, highway design to ensure 10mph, dwelling space standards and affordable housing, neighbourhood management proposals and community involvement, Code for Sustainable Homes level 4 and proposals for renewable energy.

Developing better practice in sustainable energy is an important component of this project. A feasibility report around sustainability and a wind survey were commissioned as background for the developers. The site has great potential for wind energy generation as well as solar gain, but at the same time the strong westerly winds that buffet the site, especially in the winter, are a major constraint. Developers will be expected to use environmental design principals to mitigate the negative micro-climate.



Aerial Photograph of the Woodside site in 1961

4.3 PROCUREMENT: PARSON CROSS, PARK HILL AND SKYE EDGE

The term 'procurement' is used here to describe the delivery method for projects. It is more important than its unglamorous name suggests and plays a major part in delivering high quality projects. The procurement route determines which aspects of the project can be specified and controlled and, importantly, who the different parties are that are involved. Examples of different procurement processes to select development teams are shown below.

Parson Cross

Around 1200 homes will be built on over ten sites in the Parson Cross neighbourhood in North Sheffield. Working with a TSY Enabler, a team of stakeholders reviewed the many different ways they could work with developers and designers to deliver the masterplan for the neighbourhood. They identified that having poor design teams was a major barrier to delivering quality developments. As a result when the Places for People Group was selected to develop the first site, it was initially without a design team. Now, in partnership with this developer, a high quality design team is being assembled which should be able to deliver a distinctive high quality scheme. This scheme is also being reviewed as it progresses to see how it can influence the quality and character of future developments in the area.

Park Hill

In association with English Partnerships, and using HMR funds, the Council is meeting its long time ambition to refurbish the Grade II* Listed **Park Hill** complex. The project team held an open day with bidders to help brief and inspire them. Submissions were required to address a technical brief, indicate a design approach, and respond to five key design criteria. The technical brief emphasised meeting best practice standards

such as Housing Quality Indicators and Building for Life Criteria, as well as balancing the needs for conservation, regeneration, tenure change, innovation and the creation of a quality public realm. Urban Splash was selected as developer and their proposals are well advanced with a detailed planning application anticipated in summer 2007.



Conceptual proposals for Park Hill refurbishment, Developer Urban Splash, Designer Hawkins Brown

Skye Edge

This site sits high on a ridge adjacent to the Park Hill complex, overlooking the city centre. Working with CABI, the site has been entered into the European 9 competition for young architects throughout Europe. Over 50 competitors have registered to prepare proposals for the Skye Edge site. The winning team, or individual, will work with the Council and their stakeholders to prepare detailed proposals to develop this very visible site.

5 Conclusion:

Emerging Practice & Lessons Learnt

As the name suggests, the HMR programme in South Yorkshire is a pathfinder for developing better ways to create more sustainable neighbourhoods. A number of lessons are emerging as the programme matures including:

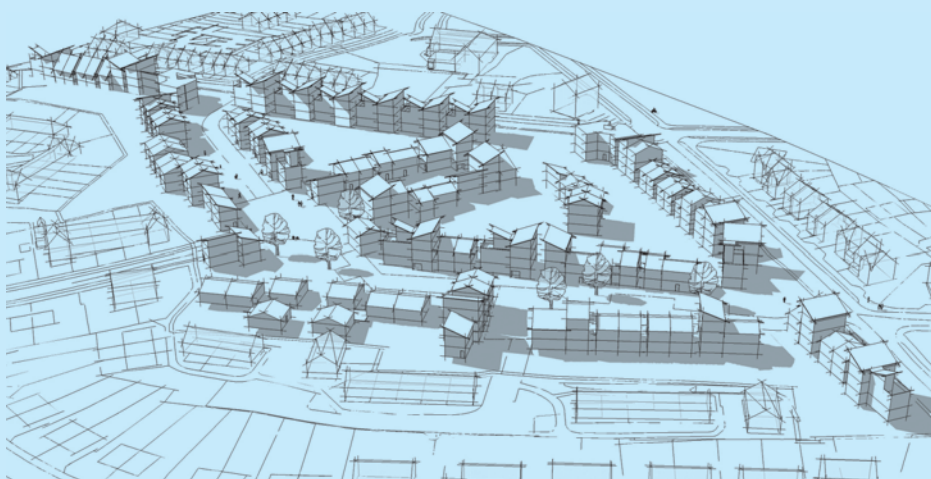
- **An holistic approach:** a major strength of the programme is the approach to sustainable neighbourhoods and the aim to address all the stakeholders' needs in the design process.
- **Procurement:** a review of the Developer Panel is under way, to explore how to speed up delivery.
- **Commercial awareness:** more work needs to be done to understand private sector processes and why, for example, the sector may be reluctant to invest in professional design services.
- **Time and resources:** higher quality doesn't cost any more over the project lifetime, but resources and time **must** be front-loaded!
- **Skills and experience:** being able to attract and retain experienced project development and design staff is essential.

5.1 PUBLIC REALM: HOMEZONES AND THE GREEN ESTATE

The public realm (streets and public spaces) has a significant impact on people's quality of life and the character of a neighbourhood.

Homezones attempt to strike a better balance between motor traffic and everyone else using the streets such as residents, pedestrians and cyclists. The Council is piloting a number of Homezone initiatives in the HMR area and one example being explored is in the south of Sheffield on the **Manor 8** site.

The proposals for Manor 8 include highway designs that will limit traffic to 10mph, shared pedestrian and vehicle surfaces, gateways into the neighbourhood, and an approach to urban design that puts the creation of urban space and character above the needs of the car. The development team is multi-disciplinary and includes highway development control, transport and area planning, urban design and housing regeneration officers.



Aerial view of proposals for the Manor 8 site, Developer Lovell, Designer Axis Architecture



Housing proposals for the Manor 8 site, Developer Lovell, Designer Axis Architecture

Transforming the Green Estate is a project in south Sheffield to rollout the lessons learnt from the government's 'Liveability' pilot programme and to make the ample green and public space in the area an asset, rather than a liability.

Improvements are already being delivered, for example on the Manor Fields Park and working through the masterplanning process, the Neighbourhood Development Framework has set out a greenspace strategy for the 'Liveability' programme including a number of 'big ideas'. These include:

Sociable Spaces: encouraging greater neighbourliness through project interventions and safer public places to meet.

The Green Estate: creating an urban version of the Duke of Devonshire's profitable Chatsworth Estate in Derbyshire, by developing the ideas of making productive use of the land and natural resources.

Taking a View on the View: maximising the benefit of the long views from the area, and managing the image of the area that is perceived by others from outside the neighbourhood.

Stone, Wood and Water: using the natural assets and historic development of the area as design themes and sustainable design solutions.



Railing Detail from Manor Fields Park, Designer Chris Campbell

The aim of this brief report has been to try to give a taste of the broad range of design quality initiatives that are being used in Sheffield to create more successful and sustainable neighbourhoods. The programme is still developing as we learn the lessons and we would welcome contact from individuals and organisations that would like to share ideas and discuss any of the issues presented here.

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