Loudoun Square, Butetown, Cardiff
Case Study
The Loudoun Square regeneration project is a £13 million investment initiative at the heart of Butetown. A regeneration partnership was formed in 2006 to develop the scheme between Cardiff Community Housing Association (CCHA), Cardiff Council, Cardiff and the Vale Health Board and Leadbitter.

This partnership was formed to deliver a safe and inclusive development to revitalise a community challenged with high levels of unemployment and poor health. The project involves building a new state of the art health centre, a new culture and media centre, a community hub, 11 brand new retail units and the creation of 61 new affordable dwellings.

Butetown is today ranked as one of the most deprived communities in Wales and is in the top 10% of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD). Butetown was once a thriving industrial dockland, attracting sailors and migrants from across the world and forming a unique multi-ethnic community which today includes 42 different ethnicities. Following the decline of the coal industry in the 1930s Butetown suffered from mass unemployment and continued to deteriorate through the decades.

In the mid 1980s the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation commenced the regeneration of Cardiff Bay and the Docklands in an effort to revitalise the area. The vision was to create a mixed-use waterfront development encompassing modern business, retail, leisure premises, and housing around the Penarth and Cardiff Bay waterfronts. The lack of community engagement that took place during the regeneration created resentment from existing residents, and a feeling of being locked out and left in the shadows of the new developments. The existing Butetown communities subsequently became sandwiched between the revitalised bay and the burgeoning city centre.

Loudoun Square is a small neighbourhood that lies at the heart of the old Tiger Bay less than a mile south of the City Centre and a short distance from the Cardiff Bay waterfront developments. Its high ranking within the WIMD demonstrates the multitude of problems within the area and socio-economic deprivation, including health problems, unemployment, crime, poor housing and low quality community facilities. Prior to the redevelopment that commenced in 2010, Loudoun was a 0.8 hectare site comprising 11 busy long-term trading shops which were in a state of disrepair with derelict flats above, a dilapidated health centre which served the entire Butetown ward, and land which previously accommodated an elderly care home. The area failed to compete with the modern leisure and retail facilities provided by the new Cardiff Bay developments. The remit was, therefore, to redevelop the health centre, community facilities, housing, retail units and external space.

The Loudoun Square regeneration partnership faced many challenges at the start of the project. Scepticism towards development was present across the community which had stemmed from the regeneration of Cardiff Bay in the 1980s and the fact that the redevelopment of Loudoun Square was long overdue. Residents from Loudoun stated that they felt isolated from the new communities that had emerged in the area, and felt that the existing high-rise railway wall along Bute Street acted as a social as well as a physical barrier. These challenges were in addition to the high levels of deprivation in the area.
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

From the start the message communicated to the residents was that the regeneration would be a long term initiative to develop the community not just a physical redevelopment. CCHA and Leadbitter promoted a holistic approach to community engagement and led an extensive programme of initiatives, including:

- Specialist consultations for women, elders and young people, including support from bi-lingual staff.
- A dedicated on-site community room for residents.
- Regular newsletters to 300 homes.
- 15 events and celebrations to mark development milestones, celebrate cultural diversity, and maintain enthusiasm for the project.

Residents were empowered to contribute to the scheme design during these activities. The feedback they provided on more lighting, parking, CCTV, and accommodation for larger families and disabled residents was fed into the scheme design and where requests could not be met an explanation was provided. Tenancy Liaison Officers forged relationships with well-regarded members of the community so that they could also identify any thoughts and concerns on the ground which were not expressed during these activities.

The success of these engagement activities has broken down communication barriers and encouraged residents to celebrate the cultural diversity of the area. Residents have subsequently recognised changes in the community, and some have even commented that “the new Tiger Bay is back”.

@LOUDOUN

The development involved the building of a new multi-purpose building ‘@Loudoun’ which houses the new health centre, a culture and media centre, social enterprise units and a community hub, 13 new retail units and 61 affordable homes. These changes within a particularly small 0.8 hectare area required careful planning and effective partnership working to ensure that as little disruption as possible was caused to the community. The development was, therefore, approached in three phases over a 140 week period. The phasing of the development and an innovative approach ensured that not one facility was closed during the build and included using the ground floor of the new houses as temporary shops to allow the retailers to keep trading.

@Loudoun is located at the cornerstone of the development and boasts:
- New modern health centre
- Pharmacy
- Culture and Media centre
- Social enterprise units
- Council information service
- Butetown Employment Support and Training Service (BEST)
- Community and training rooms and a commercial kitchen

The new facilities included in @Loudoun mirrored the project objectives to tackle long-standing community issues including unemployment, safety, and health. The Butetown Employment Support and Training Service (BEST) provides a wide range of advice to residents from completing job applications, contacting employers and advising on interview techniques. The facilities provided by the Culture and Media Centre and social enterprise units also provide the support to grow talent and ambition in the local community. The new health centre with its increased patient capacity and modern facilities contributes towards improving the standards of health within the area. In addition the adjacent shops along Bute Street have benefitted from new contemporary units which have been designed to complement the look and feel of the community, and are supported with plenty of lighting and CCTV to improve the safety of the area.
ART & DESIGN

From the outset residents were encouraged to be involved in the design of @Loudoun to portray and celebrate the rich history of the area. The partnership commissioned artists to engage with the community and to undertake artwork and local film through the "Community Helps Itself" project. The final artwork consists of a decorative glass cube at the entrance to @Loudoun (Fold), a photographic montage of the local area which is displayed inside the atrium (Axis), a photography project which captured the images and views of staff and residents from the nearby tower blocks (Different Storeys) and a film made by and starring local people which has transformed old photographs into moving images (Statues). The projects centre around the development of CCHA's new Culture and Media Centre which is housed within @Loudoun. In 2012 CCHA was awarded the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Inspire Mark in recognition of the success of the project.
HEALTH

The inclusion of the health board within the consortium is a particularly refreshing partnership that we are keen to see more of due to the well documented links between housing and health. Butetown historically suffers from extensive health problems which are recognised as being influenced by poor housing, community and education facilities. Mortality rates from all causes are higher than anywhere else in Cardiff and substance misuse is also recognised as a serious issue. The involvement of health within this scheme came in response to the outcomes of a Butetown and Grangetown needs assessment that was commissioned by the former Cardiff Local Health Board (CLHB) in 2007. The assessment highlighted a need for improved services to meet population demand which then led to full support from the health board during the preparation of detailed plans for a new health resource centre.

The new health centre and dental practice has been built to the latest NHS guidelines and meets BREEAM Excellent standard. The expansion in its size in comparison to the original building allows for an extra 3700 patients to be seen each year to accommodate the increase in patients who have taken up residence in the new housing developments around Cardiff Bay. The new health centre offers a range of community services including district nursing, health visiting, child health, podiatry, dietetics, audiology, sexual health and sickle cell and thalassaemia services. It is envisioned that the extensive services available and new modern facilities will improve health within the area by encouraging residents to access the care and advice available.

EMPLOYMENT

Introducing local employment opportunities and raising the skills set of local people was important in Leadbitter’s approach to supply chain engagement during the regeneration. Leadbitter devised a targeted recruitment and training agenda resulting in seven appointments being made: two labourers, a security guard, a machine driver, a bricklayer, a bricklayer’s apprentice and a carpentry apprentice. Similarly, local firms were recruited for the supply chain, with 33 out of 46 packages awarded to companies with Cardiff postcodes.

HOUSING

The development includes the creation of 61 new affordable homes in response to growing demand for housing in the area. The scheme includes 13 townhouses designed to accommodate larger families, 35 general-needs apartments, and 13 apartments specifically designed for disabled people. All homes have been built to the highest environmental standards with the houses meeting level 4 and Level 5 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. Energy-efficiency measures have been built-in to help reduce running costs for tenants, including eco-friendly insulation, heat recovery units, and water efficient sanitary ware.
REGENERATION
This development marks a considerable achievement in community regeneration and can be used as model for other communities. The emphasis on improving the health facilities and using the local health board as a key partner is a model that can be utilised by other communities in recognition of the importance of health in regeneration. The project is also a good model of an RSL prioritising long-term regeneration and going beyond the provision of bricks and mortar.

Perhaps the central achievement of this development has been the regeneration of the community. Community engagement activities have provided opportunities for residents to interact with other members of their own community and with those from other areas, marking a step towards improved relations across different ethnicities. In addition the physical improvement of the area now attracts residents from outside the area which breaks down the existing social barriers and the isolation previously felt by Loudoun residents. The partnership is committed to continue this work following completion. CCHA has an active presence within @Loudoun to promote the facilities available and to continue to organise events for the community, making use of the new Culture and Media Centre, training and community rooms.

The plethora of community challenges from the outset sparked partners to question “is this possible?” at numerous stages of the redevelopment: however, the commitment and dedication of everyone within the partnership has resulted in the delivery of an exemplar regeneration project. The partnership delivered a holistic approach to regeneration and used the redevelopment as an opportunity to improve housing, health, local amenities, employment and skills within the community.

At the time this case study was completed the site is nearing the final phases of completion and is on track to be completed in October 2013.

OVERVIEW OF SCHEME
- New health centre built to the latest NHS guidelines and BREEAM Excellent Standard including two GP surgeries and a dental practice.
- Culture and Media Centre.
- BEST employment services.
- Pharmacy.
- Social enterprise room rental facilities.
- Community artwork through the “Community Helps Itself”.
- Cardiff Council information service.
- 11 new retail premises.
FURTHER INFORMATION:
Loudoun Square Community Website:
http://www.loudounsquare.org.uk