



PRESS RELEASE

JUNE 19, 2007

£450,000 ESTATE IMPROVEMENTS PLANNED

A plan to make Meir a more pleasant and safer place to live has been given a £450,000 kickstart.

RENEW North Staffordshire is to make the money available during 2007/08 for environmental improvements around the estate where multi-million pound regeneration work is taking place.

Local people will be asked over the coming months for their views on the best way to improve the appearance of the estate and make it a more attractive place to live.

Meir is a priority area for RENEW North Staffordshire because of low demand for homes in the area and high turnover of council tenants. Extensive community consultation has taken place and masterplan for the estate received 80 per cent local support in 2005. RENEW North Staffordshire has earmarked £4.5m for work in the area over 2006/08.

Meir has a large amount of open green space but much of it is currently in need of environmental improvement, as unfortunately the current design of and access to these open spaces means they are difficult to maintain and vulnerable to fly-tipping and other anti-social behaviour. Meir also has a network of rear alleyways and pathways that have over recent years become a magnet for anti social behaviour and environmental damage.

The Meir masterplan suggested making much better use of the greenspace and creating a network of green routes through the estate to lead to the surrounding open countryside.

Local residents have been lobbying Stoke-on-Trent South MP Rob Ffello over the past year to work with RENEW North Staffordshire to get these improvements underway.

Now the first steps are to take place to make this happen. Work will depend on what that local community wants to see, but it may include:

- improving the quality of paving and footways
- improving footpaths so they are feel safe to use
- improving the quality of and width of roads
- traffic calming
- creating off-street car parking
- creating new uses on green space, such as play areas, community gardens or sports pitches
- installing alley gates to stop anti-social behaviour.

The environmental work will be expected to complement the regeneration already underway in Meir. This includes the opening next year of a £10m new “extra care” supported housing complex for older people off South Walk; and the Crescent Primary School and children’s centre in Pinewood Crescent, which have opened within the past two years.

A programme of community consultation on the improvements will be led by Great Places Housing Group, RENEW North Staffordshire’s partner housing association in Meir, over the coming months. Great Places will then work with contractors to make the improvements during the 2007/8 financial year.

Hardial Bhogal, director of RENEW North Staffordshire, said: “Meir is lucky to have a large amount of greenspace, but because it is badly designed it

currently causes a lot of problems. The roads are often very narrow and there is anti-social behaviour.

“These problems can be overcome by making environmental improvements and changing the layout of parts of the estate. This £450,000 will help kick start the improvements and make Meir a more pleasant place to live.”

Mark Meredith, elected mayor of Stoke-on-Trent, said: “Environmental improvements in Meir will complement the new buildings such as the children’s centre, older people’s housing and the new homes that will be built.”

Ends

Notes to editors

1. RENEW North Staffordshire is the housing market renewal pathfinder for Stoke-on-Trent, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Biddulph East. Our aim is to help make North Staffordshire a thriving, diverse conurbation where people want to live, work, invest and study. We do this by working with communities and partners to:
 - balance housing supply and demand
 - retain and attract population
 - provide quality housing that meets the aspirations of existing and new residents
 - transform the environment and make the best of our heritage and green space
 - support economic regeneration.
2. The RENEW North Staffordshire team can be contacted by the public on 01782 232024 or renew@civic1.stoke.gov.uk. Further information can be found on the website: www.renewnorthstaffs.gov.uk.