

## SOCIAL HOUSING IN NORTHMOOR

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<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Ian Finlay Architects &amp; Manchester Methodist Housing Association</b>
<b>Trigger</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SRB Funding and Home Zones challenge funding for an area of poor quality housing and high levels of crime.</li> </ul>
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To improve the quality and value of the housing.</li> <li>• To address social issues such as crime, lack of belonging etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Tools/techniques</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considerable consultation in the form of planning meetings, displays for the public and a mock up of a Home Zone.</li> </ul>
<b>Enablers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership between stakeholders.</li> <li>• Commitment gained from a diverse and vibrant local community.</li> </ul>
<b>Tensions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes had to be made within a tight budget.</li> <li>• Benches were not wanted by local people concerned about 'undesirables'.</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winner of Best Regeneration and Outstanding Achievement in UK Social Housing, awarded by the Chartered Institute of Housing.</li> <li>• Considered successful by the Housing Association and architects.</li> <li>• Improved the attractiveness of the area and the quality of life for residents.</li> </ul>
<b>Lessons</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with local community was key to its success.</li> <li>• Home Zones improve quality of life and are a more subtle approach to crime prevention.</li> <li>• Crime prevention should be part of overall approach to regeneration.</li> </ul>

### Synopsis

This case describes the development of 'Home Zones' in Manchester designed to prioritise pedestrian travel and social interaction, rather than car travel, whilst still reducing crime. Following extensive consultation with local residents, the visual appeal of the area was improved using shrubbery, signage, courtyards, lighting, public seating and open spaces. Clear boundaries between public and private spaces were designed to prevent such areas becoming vulnerable to crime. Traffic calming measures and attention to layout discouraged so called 'joy riders' from using the area. The impact of these measures was enhanced through initiatives to promote community safety, improve home maintenance and develop community art. The scheme won numerous awards and attracted media attention.

## Background to social Housing in Northmoor

The Northmoor area in Longsight, South Manchester, is an area of predominantly terraced housing, which has experienced all the usual problems of environmental, economic and social decline over the last 20 years including:

- a declining population
- high levels of unemployment and poverty
- increases in private rented housing and empty houses
- closure of local shops and businesses
- fast moving traffic and car parking problems
- an increasingly poor physical environment
- increasing crime rates and fear of crime

In particular, 37% of properties were rented compared to a city average of 13% and 20% of the houses were boarded over. As well as being unattractive and repetitive, terrace housing was accessible through alleyways and therefore vulnerable to burglary. Many residents had experienced break-ins and some repeat burglaries. Even if not victims themselves, residents had become afraid of crime. Many were unable to move to a safer environment, however, because houses bought for £30k were now worth only £7k.



*Figures 1 and 2: unattractive and repetitive housing (left) and void houses with boarded up windows (right)*

The design of the streets was simply not appropriate for the volume of traffic in the area. In addition, parked cars created dangerous conditions, particularly for children who tended to play on the streets.

Committed to improving the area was a strong, vibrant and diverse local community concerned about poor and inadequate housing conditions, a decline in retail outlets, lack of community facilities, poor and often dangerous traffic management and crime. Above all, the local community said the area suffered from a lack of identity and place, and that there was a need for a feeling of belonging (Manchester City Council and Manchester Methodist Housing Association, 2001).

Supporting the local community and helping to resource the change was a wide-ranging partnership of public and private agency stakeholders led by Manchester City Council and Manchester Methodist Housing Association, which owns 250 properties in Northmoor. All involved were prepared to commit resources to Northmoor and its people – not just money, but also ideas, effort and time (Manchester City Council and Manchester Methodist Housing Association, 2001).

Northmoor lies within the Stockport Road Corridor Social Regeneration Budget (SRB) area, which brings special status and funding to the area. Further funding of £800k for four streets, was gained through the government's £30m 'Home Zone' challenge fund. Home Zones are residential streets where priority is given to walking, chatting, playing, cycling and sitting, and where cars travel slowly and safely. The Dutch have been designing residential streets which give priority to pedestrians since the 1970s. Home Zones are said to have increased neighbourliness, lessened isolation amongst older people, reduced fear of 'stranger danger' and cut crime by increasing passive surveillance of the streets (Ward, 2001). Thus, in the 1980s, Austria, Germany and Denmark followed suit developing similar schemes



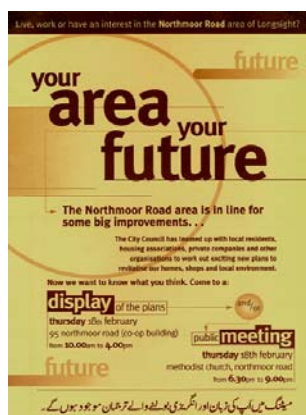
*Figures 3 and 4: Home Zones in Holland (left) and Cologne, Germany (right).*

The architects employed to design the Northmoor area were from Ian Finlay architects, Manchester. This case study is based on a presentation on the area given by Ian Finlay, Principal Architect, Ian Finlay Architects, and Jim McMillan, Manchester Methodist Housing Association, at the 'Safety versus Style' event organised by the Design Policy Partnership. Further information was gained from documentation provided by Manchester City Council and Manchester Methodist Housing Association (2001).

## Design Process

### Consultation

According to Ian Finlay and Jim McMillan, all involved were equally committed to seeing the area ‘turned around’ and were willing to subscribe to a common agenda and vision for Northmoor. The different stakeholders recognised the area’s assets and were prepared to face its problems and find solutions. Recognising the importance of consultation with the local community, a leaflet stating ‘*your area, your future*’ was sent round inviting local people to a display of the plans and a public planning meeting. Young people came together to form a forum, which helped to get their ideas across.



Figures 5 and 6: leaflet inviting residents for their input on the improvements at Northmoor (left) and consultation with residents (right).

### Concept Map

Ian Finlay Architects and Manchester Methodist Housing Association recognised that there would have to be significant changes to the area, as simply installing security devices such as locks would not be sufficient. Through the consultation process, a concept plan was therefore devised containing ideas and proposals to tackle the problems identified (see figure 7 overleaf). The potential changes to the area included providing boundaries and gateways at major access points to reinforce a sense of identity for the area and using physical and psychological approaches such as lighting, signage, building facades, paving and planting to control access. Security was improved by closing alleyways, improving lighting in a railway underpass, restricting pedestrian movement and improving street lighting.

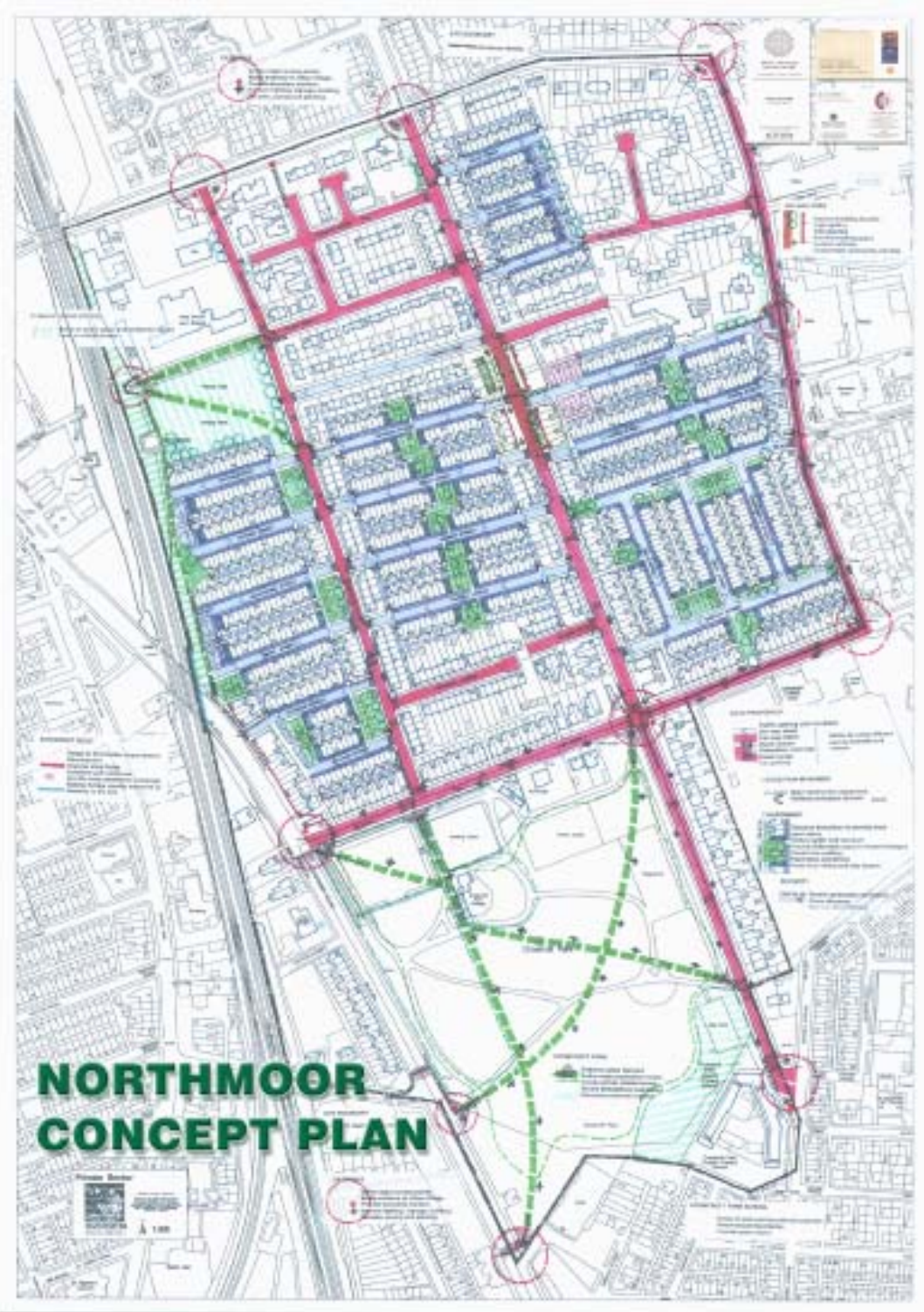


Figure 7: Concept Map



*Figures 8 and 9: lighting (left) and underpass (right).*

The village centre and access roads were to be improved by refurbishing shop fronts, establishing park entrances, improving the visual appeal of a railway bridge identified as a gateway to the city, planting trees and shrubs, providing high lighting, forming local sitting and play areas and controlling parking.

The quality of the housing and surrounding environment was improved by knocking down the internal walls between houses to make two properties into one home for families. At a mid point along a terraced street, some houses were bought in order to create open spaces. New, three-storey end terrace properties were built, which faced onto the new green spaces making it less monotonous.

### **Home Zones**

Safety on the streets was improved by using different paving materials and colours to define the area as a 'Home Zone', where the pedestrian, not the car, has priority. Speed and movement of traffic was kept to an absolute minimum by, for example, rumble strips, chicanes, passing points, road narrowing through 'built outs' or the creation of 'gateways' and raised thresholds entrances to side streets. Curved streets were designed to deter 'joy riders'.

Within residential areas, pedestrian use was encouraged by using customised signage and creating a 'courtyard' feel where cars were merely allowed access. Parking was allowed on alternative sides of these 'courtyards' and 'echelon' parking provided the opportunity for residents to have their own defined space in front of their property. Standard methods of calming and controlling the circulation of traffic were used, such as selective use of one and two-way streets, road closure and pedestrian crossings.

Although selective demolition provided more open space, land around the frontages of houses in 'Home Zones' was clearly identifiable as 'defensible', that is owned by an individual resident. This improved the ability of residents to control access and encouraged adequate maintenance.

Summer 2000, a fun day was held in Prout Street, which was closed for the day and a full scale 'mock-up' of ideas to see how the 'Home Zone' would look was created. Areas of car parking were painted on the street, part of it was grassed over, with trees and shrubs added. This was an opportunity for residents to give their views.



*Figures 10 and 11: Home Zone areas*

### **Community Safety**

Lighting throughout Northmoor was improved to enable surveillance, reduce crime, promote community safety and highway safety. 'White' light high-pressure sodium bulbs were installed to streetlights and columns throughout the area. In 1997, the 'Safe as Houses' project run by Manchester Care and Repair was launched. This offered residents practical advice to improve the physical security of their homes, with security locks fitted to doors and windows. Allevy gating was used as a method of reducing access to houses and preventing the dumping of rubbish.

### **Community Art**

The identity of Northmoor and people's sense of civic pride was enhanced using a community art strategy, which generated a new logo for the area, new sign posts (see figure 12) and street furniture such as litter bins, feature lamp stands with baskets and bollards.



*Figures 12 and 13: signage (left) and exhibition (right)*

As part of this project, boarded up windows were used to exhibit images of local people (see figure 13), thus improving the overall look and feel of the area.

Local artists were encouraged to display paintings in the 'ImiTate' Gallery, thus promoting a sense of community pride, inclusion and belonging (see figures 14 and 15).



*Figures 14 and 15: ImiTate Gallery (left) and artist at work (right)*

### **Tensions**

Whilst the Housing Association suggested putting benches outside of people's homes, residents were concerned that these might attract undesirables and the idea was therefore rejected.

## Impact

Under the 'Safe as Houses' Scheme, Care & Repair inspected 267 properties and carried out improved security measures to 246 properties in the year 1999/00. In 2000/01, 140 properties were inspected and work carried out to 124. Initially, four streets were made into Home Zones and the first, Stainer Street, was completed April 2001. The cost of the scheme, £150,000 for a street of 50 houses, is considered a small price to pay for the dramatic improvements (Manchester Civic Society, 2001).

According to Manchester City Council and Manchester Methodist Housing Association (2001), Northmoor has become:

"...a safe, attractive, popular residential area housing a good mix of people including families, children, young people and elderly from a variety of backgrounds and cultures. The area contains a good mix of facilities and infrastructure – shops, businesses, community and recreational facilities and efficient, safe transport systems" (pp2).

It is also considered:

"...more prosperous, safer, happier more inclusive and vital place to live, work and play" (pp2).



*Figure 16: Children playing in a Home Zone*  
©Tajna Jager, Northmoor Urban Art Project, 2001

Safety has been improved by a significant drop in car speeds. In Stainer Street, average speeds have dropped to around 10 miles per hour. The value of properties has increased by around £6,000. In addition, surveys show that existing residents are generally pleased with the changes, which makes the area feel safer and more aesthetically pleasing. They particularly like having more trees in the area.

There has been a significant reduction in the number of empty properties. In 1999 there were approximately 200 empty properties. In 2001, Manchester Methodist Housing Association purchased a total of 53 properties, 23 for demolition and 30 for renovation.

The scheme, costing £0.8m, won the National Housing Award for 'Best Regeneration' and was the overall winner for 'Outstanding Achievement in UK Social Housing'. Organised annually by the Chartered Institute of Housing to recognise innovation and excellence in the work of social landlords, Northmoor was selected because of the involvement of so many local people and agencies working in partnership to turn the area

around. The award recognized that 'Home Zones' were more than just a safety device; they can be important as a physical regeneration tool. In addition, young people who came together to help raise money for the games area in Crowcroft Park were awarded the Philip Lawrence Prize for outstanding achievement by young people in 2000.

Although the flagship building was the Co-op building in Northmoor (converted into 19 flats, each rented out for £60 a week, with community facilities on the lower floors), Manchester Methodist Housing Association and Ian Finlay Architects suggest that the sum total of the different schemes had created the impact, rather than one single factor.

The work is not yet finished and there are plans to improve the park through better lighting to add to safety and security and ensure that it fulfils its function as the key connecting point between Northmoor and the city centre. Increased use of the park by local people of all ages will ensure that it is an environmental and recreational asset for Northmoor and will improve the attractiveness of the area to visitors. Alleygates are also planned to reduce the problem of burglaries.

### **Lessons Learned**

The key to the success of Northmoor was the involvement of local people, the dialogue with local agencies and stakeholders and the recognition of a common purpose. Lots of different ways of reaching people have to be used, according to Jim McMillan:

"Some people read newsletters and leaflets. They like to be kept informed, but don't want to come to a meeting. Others want to ring you up. Others don't read anything, but want to come to meetings.

Manchester City Council and Manchester Methodist Housing Association (2001) believe that consultation is necessary, as it ensures that money is used appropriately:

"Money alone never resolves problems. Difficult issues must be faced head on and budget restraints acknowledged – but above all local enthusiasm must be harnessed and geared towards positive solutions" (pp3).

Community involvement has to be 'built in' to the improvements, since local people will ensure that these improvements last in the long term and ensure the future prosperity of the area.

### **References, Related Case studies and Further Reading**

Biddulph, M. (2001) *Home Zones: A Planning and Design Handbook*. Policy Press: Bristol.

DTLR (2001) Home Zones - Planning and Design. Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions, *Traffic Advisory Leaflet*, 10/01, December. [www.dtlr.gov.uk](http://www.dtlr.gov.uk)

JRF (2001) Planning and Designing 'Home Zones'. Joseph Rowntree Foundation Manchester City Council and Manchester Methodist Housing Association (2000) *Northmoor Now!* Draft brochure.

Manchester Civic Society (2001) Going Dutch - People Power in Northmoor Brings Regeneration Right to the Front Door. *Manchester Forum*, no.22, summer, pp8-9.

Ward, D. (2001) *Streets Ahead: Pioneering 'Home Zone' Transforms Neighbourhood*. Guardian, Society Section, Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> August, pp4.

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### Classification Index

Ekblom's crime classification	Misappropriation (theft), misbehaviour (violence against the person, criminal damage, anti-social behaviour).
BCS crime classification	Theft, violence against the person, criminal damage.
DAC	Protecting people and properties
Primary motivation	Transformation of a high crime area into somewhere safe and pleasant.
Type of designer	Architect
Approach	Security and Home Zones
Sector	Social housing
Location	Housing
Author	Caroline Davey

DAC – Ian Finlay architects