

Grove Village: a flagship regeneration scheme

CASE STUDIES

Background

Grove Village was the first Government-backed HRA Private Finance Initiative (PFI) scheme for social housing to reach contractual close – a landmark that was achieved in March 2003.

PFI programmes are highly complex projects. Multiple objectives including refurbishment, remodelling and new build all needed to be achieved in the early years, while programmes are put in place for the future management and maintenance of the area.

The PFI was delivered on behalf of Manchester City Council by a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) called Grove Village Ltd. The consortium comprises:

- MJ Gleeson Group. Refurbishment and infrastructure was carried out by Gleeson Construction, new build by Gleeson Regeneration and estate maintenance and day-to-day repairs by Powerminster Gleeson Services.
- Harvest Housing Group, through its subsidiary Manchester & District Housing Association, has a 30 year contract with Manchester City Council to provide neighbourhood management services.
- Nationwide Building Society lent the capital required.

The £100 million PFI scheme has turned the area around from a run-down, poorly-designed, under-invested inner city housing estate into a sustainable mixed tenure urban village with a bright long-term future.

Grove Village is now a highly sought-after area with a renewed sense of local pride. Where there was once over 300 void council properties, there is now a waiting list for homes of up to six years.

The challenge

IPB was appointed in January 2006 to promote the success of Grove Village Ltd, the SPV set up to deliver the PFI. We developed an integrated PR and communications strategy “Partner of First Choice” to promote this success story to the media and stakeholders. We also supported direct communication with residents. IPB worked with Grove Village on a two year contract.

What we did

- **Media campaign:** we delivered a hard working media campaign aimed at local and regional press, trade magazines and national broadsheets. Through the pro-active media campaign we were able to demonstrate that Grove Village was delivering on its promises. Stories ranged from milestones in the construction programme, new community initiatives, ministerial visits and awards successes. We issued a steady stream of press releases, as well as in-depth magazine articles and opinion pieces.
- **Photography:** good photographic evidence of what had been achieved has been essential in helping secure the right kind of media coverage. Strong images were utilised throughout a range of literature and helped tell the Grove Village story.
- **Celebrity/ministerial visits:** we helped to organise estate visits from government ministers, celebrities and journalists. Manchester United footballer Wes Brown, who grew up on the estate, returned to Grove Village, to open a new children’s play area and football pitch. Ruth Kelly, the former Secretary of State for Communities, visited the area in November 2006 to visit residents and see how the area had been transformed.
- **Awards:** we entered Grove Village for several national and regional regeneration awards. Entering awards related to housing and regeneration proved to be an effective way of highlighting Grove Village Ltd’s achievements. We worked closely with members of the consortium to ensure key messages and successes were included.
- **Community support:** the extensive improvement programme, which included internal and external works, reversing properties, new build and remodelling the estate layout, was carried out with the existing residents’ in-situ. As a result, residents needed to be kept regularly informed of the objectives and progress of the development. This was achieved through the Grove Village Update and Gazetter (two magazines published for residents) and regular stories in the local press and radio. We worked with the estate neighbourhood office, to help keep local residents informed of latest developments.
- We developed a dedicated website www.grovevillage.co.uk and produced a ‘review of the year’ document, issued to residents and stakeholders.

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Results

The media campaign secured regular coverage in local and regional newspapers, the national housing and regeneration press and regional TV and radio.

Grove Village Ltd had success in the following awards:

Win

- Building Awards 2008: PFI/PPP Project of the Year
- Manchester Evening News 2006 Property Awards: Best Housing-led Regeneration Scheme
- RTPI Awards: Renewed Neighbourhoods 2007 – gained a commendation

Shortlisted

- Housing Excellence Awards: Regeneration Scheme of the Year 2006 Regeneration Awards 2006: Best Housing-led Regeneration Scheme RENEW: Exemplar Learning Programme 2006
- Constructing Excellence: Demonstration Project Status 2007 – accepted as a Demonstration Project
- Chartered Institute of Housing UK Housing Awards 2007: Regenerating Neighbourhoods

Local people are delighted with the transformation of their neighbourhood. Resident Rita Moore said: “My quality of life has improved 100 per cent. Before, I was desperate to move out. Now, I can’t think of a place I’d rather live.”

What the client said

- “IPB was a valued partner. They understood the Grove Village project extremely well, and are full of creative ideas to help us tell the story. I’ve been very impressed with their work rate and responsiveness. Their support has made a big difference to our local and national profile.”

Bronwen Rapley, Grove Village Director

