

connect

APRIL 2007

PFI Dream Becomes Reality

Years of hard work to secure a bright future for Stanhope has culminated in the signing of an historic Private Finance Initiative contract.

Ashford Borough Council has put pen to paper on a £200 million, 30-year deal that will unlock funding to transform the estate.

Under the terms of the contract Ashford Borough Council has handed the management of Stanhope over to the Chrysalis consortium, which will undertake a massive regeneration project over the next five years - replacing seven blocks of flats with more than 400 new homes for rent, shared ownership or sale on the open market.

Two blocks have already been demolished and Ashford Borough Council has approved plans for housing and a new commercial centre. The day-to-day management of the council's housing stock will be taken over by Moat Housing.

Ashford Borough Council chief executive David Hill said:

"The signing of this contract is an historic event that will benefit thousands and heralds a new dawn for Stanhope.

"Quality new housing designed to meet the community's needs, a more

safe and secure environment and major investment will create a new identity for Stanhope and shake off its negative image.

"This project has achieved cross-party support and those involved in making the community's dreams a reality deserve rich praise for a great achievement to date."

Stanhope residents have been heavily involved in shaping the project, which began seven years ago when local people were asked to identify problems the estate faced and priorities for improvement.

Mr Hill added: "The council has set about the task of transforming the estate into a thriving, healthy, safe and sustainable community where residents will enjoy a good quality of life.

"We have engaged in extensive Government talks to secure funding, detailed negotiations with our PFI partners to ensure the right decisions are made in the interests of the community and very thorough consultation with the people of Stanhope."

The 30-year PFI contract takes immediate effect and the council is expecting Chrysalis to submit further planning applications in the very near future.



Message from Tracey Kerly, Head of Housing, Ashford Borough Council

The signing of this PFI contract is the most significant moment in the history of Stanhope since the estate was built in the Sixties.

The regeneration of Stanhope is one of the biggest tasks ever undertaken by Ashford Borough Council, costing in the region of £200 million.

We have only reached this point through tremendous hard work by the council's PFI team.

Identifying how Stanhope should be improved, securing funding, engaging PFI partners to deliver the project and finalising contracts has taken seven years of hard work by my officers.

Consultation with you, the residents, has been a vital part of that process. The project will only succeed if it meets your aspirations and priorities so involving you every step of the way has been important to us.

I would like to thank you for your patience and perseverance in working with us to get to where we are today. It is only with your input that we have secured an agreement to

transform Stanhope. We now hand the estate over to Chrysalis, a group of highly experienced and competent companies. I am confident you will be in safe hands.

In many ways the contract signing is just the start of the adventure. We have all seen Chrysalis's exciting plans for regenerating Stanhope. They were chosen as our preferred PFI contractor because we believe their proposals will address the issues on the estate and meet all our objectives for improving your quality of life and the future lives of many new families who will choose to live on Stanhope.

Over the next few months those long-awaited improvements will finally start to happen on the ground. There is still a lot of work to do, and again your involvement is crucial, but now is the time to deliver after years of planning. It won't all happen overnight and the next five years will be key to the transformation. You will see a large number of operatives on the estate, building new homes, refurbishing council properties and carrying out improvements across the estate to the public areas. So once again, we want

Over to Moat

Maintenance and all other day-to-day housing queries should now be addressed to Moat.

However all rents due prior to 30 April should be paid to Ashford Borough Council in the normal way.

After that date tenants should pay rents to Moat. To contact Moat visit the Neighbourhood Office at Otterden Close, Stanhope, or call 01233 647396.

to ensure we work with you during this process. Sometimes it may feel like a building site, but we are aiming to minimise the inconvenience the construction and repair work causes.

It has been a privilege to be part of this process from day one and, again, thanks for your involvement and continued co-operation.

Tracey Kerly

So after all these years and all these meetings and exhibitions the Stanhope PFI project moves forward at last.

I have been very impressed by residents' patience and commitment over the years I have been working with you. People have stuck with the project through all its twists and turns, making their views very clear as things have developed. The market has changed a great deal over the last few years, meaning Stanhope residents had the opportunity to work with Ashford to consider some very strong partners for the future.

Not everyone will be happy with what will now move forwards, that is always going to be the case. But residents have shaped what the new Stanhope will be in some fundamental ways and the project will be all the better for that.

So now its over to Chrysalis to make it all happen. You will have seen the new offices being constructed ready for day one. A lot more activity will follow soon.

To mark this point, the Tenants and Residents Steering Group held its final meeting on 5 March. It will be replaced both by an open forum, a regular residents' meeting to be arranged by Moat, and with steps to establish a Tenants and Residents Association with support from Moat. I hope very much that you will support these moves and take these important opportunities to continue to have your say in how the project progresses. It is about to be a time with lots happening and huge changes at Stanhope. If you have not got involved in the project yet, I hope the time will feel right to do so now.

PEP has felt it an honour to work with the people of Stanhope over the last few years and will continue to take great interest in how the project goes. While the last steering group meeting marks an end to our role running that key group, I will be around to help things bed in for a few weeks yet.

One of the things I am working on is helping the establishment of the project monitoring group, which will have up to six residents as part of it. My thanks to all those who have come forward wanting to be part of that.

May it all work out splendidly.



Keith Mann
PEP Stanhope Residents' Advisor