

# MADE

## **Knutton terraces Heritage works**

**location:  
Newcastle-under-Lyme**

Good practice in design doesn't have to be about bold and innovative architecture or even new buildings, in this case it is about the sympathetic refurbishment of a number of terraced houses that had been identified as being of significant quality in the comprehensive heritage characterisation study of the area commissioned by Urban Vision North Staffordshire.

### **Introduction**

The heritage-led refurbishment of 72 Victorian terraced houses located in the Renew North Staffordshire Housing Market Renewal Initiative (HMRI) Area of Major Intervention includes properties in High Street, Nash Street, Peake Street, Chapel Street, Gordon Street and Cemetery Road in the village of Knutton, near to Newcastle-under-Lyme in Staffordshire (see downloadable map below).



Local conservation architect, Chris Hesketh of CTD Architects managed the project on behalf of RENEW North Staffordshire, the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder and Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council.

### **Design process**

The aim of the project was to raise the quality of the housing environment and make properties attractive in an area where the houses were basically sound but unpopular. The area is considered a sustainable location but has suffered from high void rates and a negative image. The basic philosophy was to use historical features to help to create a sense of place and improve the local housing market.

As a result, specification of works and product details were focused on improving the heritage image and activity was aimed at face-lifting properties and reinstating original features where possible. These works included the reinstatement of detailed brick strings that relate directly to a specific local manufacturer, use of locally produced ironwork and, where possible, the use of environmentally sustainable products. The aim was to raise quality of the house façades and to offer an alternative housing path for residents that may not have considered remaining in the area.

There have been side benefits to this project with regard to the community engagement, residents have invested further in their own home as a result

and Housing Market Renewal Initiative objectives have been promoted to a wider audience. Another key feature has been the focus on local supply chain and local labour sourcing using the 'Build Up North Staffordshire' database of businesses as a first port of call for tender process.

## **Evaluation**

At the outset of the project two key obstacles were identified:

- Overcoming preconceived ideas about how such a scheme should be delivered
- Making the break from a 'cheapest is best' approach

In order to overcome these obstacles an approach of partnership working was adopted underpinned by effective consultation and negotiation. The community consultation and engagement led by CTD Architects was effective and this coupled with an open-book approach to site meetings and information sharing had major benefits for the programme.

Upon arrival the improvement in the overall quality of Knutton village as a result of the refurbishment of the terraces is immediately noticeable. The reinstatement of key features in a cost-effective manner, for example the use of well-sourced PVCu sash windows has enabled this to be achieved in budget and on time. Indeed, it is put forward as an exemplar project because it shows that a sympathetic heritage-led approach to refurbishing terraced properties and regenerating whole areas is achievable with very realistic budgets and timescales.

## **Key design features to look out for**

- The locally produced detailed brick mouldings that were specially commissioned for the project and feature as a string-course on of the terraces and even grace a number of chimney stacks.
- The reinstated boot-scrapers and chimney pots.
- The carefully selected replacement windows and doors used throughout the scheme.

## **Contact for further information**

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