



**Highly Commended in
Excellence in Other Planning Work**
Southmead Regeneration -working for the community
(submitted by the Nash Partnership)

The RTPI South West Awards for Planning Excellence 2019

Our Awards champion the very best examples of planning and planners in the South West. They demonstrate the positive impact planning has on our quality of life and celebrate professional expertise. The Awards are open to all planners, both members and non-members, and all other built environment professions and community groups. **Entry to our Awards is free.**

Being shortlisted or winning is a clear demonstration of the high quality of your work and professionalism. All shortlisted and winning entrants will be provided with a RTPI South West Awards for Planning Excellence logo, which can be used on your own website, email, social media and promotional materials. We wish you the best of luck!

(25 word summary)

One of the UK's largest community-led housing and regeneration schemes. The project aims to improve community facilities, infrastructure and initiatives whilst providing affordable and ethical housing solutions.

(100 word summary)

- A community-led project to improve the centre of Southmead (one of the UK's most deprived wards) by making it vibrant and exciting for the people who live there. It seeks to regenerate an area which has a specific need for smaller homes for first time buyers and older people.
- Working hand-in-hand with the local community, the Nash Partnership team developed a masterplan vision to transform this central area. It involves building on under-used open space and council-owned sites to deliver around 300 new homes at the heart of the community. The project will also provide local facilities including a community centre, library, youth centre and a healthy living centre.

Background

Please outline the background to the project:

- Context
- Timeline

(insert your answer here – MAX 500 words)

Context and timeline:

Southmead lies at the centre of North Bristol and is focused on a district centre which provides shops, community and health facilities. It is one of the UK's 10% most deprived wards for indices including:

- Income deprivation affecting older people and children
- Health expectancy
- Employment, education, skills and training deprivation

Poor health impacts many aspects of residents' lives and it is the ward with the second highest number of older residents receiving a community-based service. In 2011, 31% of people of working age in central Southmead claimed out-of-work benefits compared to Bristol's average of 12.7%. The Southmead regeneration project offers a prime opportunity to address these challenges.

The regeneration journey started when work on the Community Plan began in 2012. This exercise produced invaluable data and highlighted the desperate need for more housing to allow those residents under-occupying three-bed semis to downsize and stay in the area. This would free up those homes for families and key workers.

The feasibility work carried out following this identified Glencoyne Square as an underused and misused site. It showed that by providing a carefully considered housing strategy in the area, surpluses from the housing provision could be used to reinvest into the area.

From the data and feasibility studies, Southmead Development Trust (SDT) created a regeneration brief. Nash Partnership was appointed in 2018 with community engagement specialists Streets Reimagined through an intensive community-led selection process.

SDT took the role of client, working for the people of Southmead. Aiding Nash Partnership was the council's City Design Group, Streets Reimagined and United Communities Housing Association. Additionally, regular meetings were held with the Arnside and Glencoyne Regeneration Project group made up of SDT staff, Trustees, community leaders and community stakeholders to help guide the decisions made in the formation of the regeneration.

A detailed consultation plan was drawn up in 2018, allowing for a varied collection of data and opinions to feed into the design process. By working alongside and listening to residents, the masterplan in its current form was adopted by the community in October 2018 to reflect the best of all the ideas and create a plan for a truly vibrant new centre for Southmead. This was done by studying the models produced in the community workshops and producing sketch plans to reflect what the community had instructed. A number of these options were taken to a key stakeholder meeting for review and testing: a preferred option was chosen, then refined with our client and taken forward to become the first draft of the masterplan. Consultation continued simultaneously with local groups to inform the detailed design process.

The public realm work around Arnside Road will be the first part of the plan to commence, with construction planned to take place throughout 2020. These enabling works will allow the first set of buildings around Glencoyne Square to be built whilst improving the traffic and streetscape around Southmead's centre.



Figure 1. Aerial of Southmead (© Google Maps)

Outcomes

Please outline what positive impacts the project has provided for:

- the local community
- the economy
- the environment

(insert your answer here – MAX 500 words)

The final adopted masterplan will deliver benefits for –

- **The local community:**
 - New community ‘hub’
 - Communal green space/play areas
 - A health centre with opportunities for social prescribing. This could offer a range of other facilities, in a more holistic ‘healthy living centre’, potentially including a launderette, dentist, gym, fitness/ dance studio, sensory room, library, and a room for hire.
 - Range of housing tenures
- **The economy:**
 - Higher density, better quality housing providing desperately needed 1- and 2- bed apartments for local elderly and young people
 - New flexible work/training space
- **The environment:**
 - Low cost energy affordable homes, reducing fuel poverty
 - A mix of types of green space to encourage interaction, active use of the spaces and visual richness
 - Reduced traffic congestion by changing road layout/access, improving pedestrian routes and cycle parking
 - Creating a more pedestrian-oriented public realm
 - Integrated drainage strategy including swales/underground storage
 - New landscaped area and pocket parks
 - Consideration for new ground source heat pumps, reducing carbon emissions

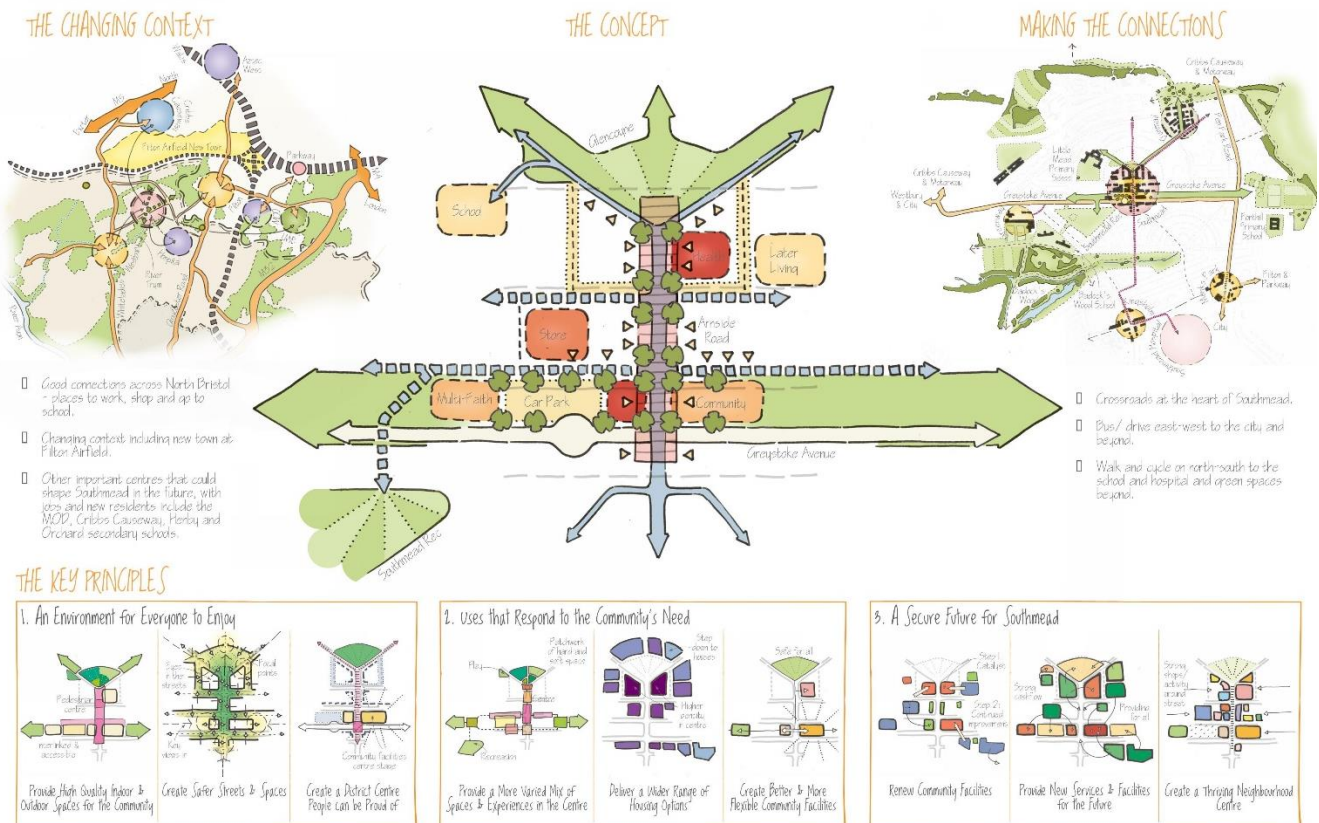


Figure 2. Initial concept

Planning contribution

Please outline how the project has benefitted from the involvement of a planner or planners:

- providing strong and effective leadership and vision
- working in partnership with others
- managing implementation and delivery

Leadership and vision: We adopted a balanced and inclusive approach, while seeking to retain a strong vision of the key interventions that will deliver lasting change in the community. We managed a complex client team (SDT, United Communities and Bristol City Council (BCC)) and worked in parallel with the Council in their public realm design work, to ensure teams work in unison towards common goals. We used a range of community engagement techniques to ensure different views are heard and a sense of ownership built, while continuing to move the scheme forward against an ambitious timescale. This has included street stalls, co-design workshops, one-to-one meetings, exhibitions and other media; and a range of methods to communicate the vision – plans, visualisations, Virtual Reality, model making, precedent studies.

Partnership working: Key partners include the Council (as landowner/service provider – plus designer/ implementer), One Public Estate, the local community and other key stakeholders. We established a clear governance framework from the outset of the project, enabling clear lines of communication and interactions with partners at key stages of the process, including wider design team meetings, focused design meetings, informal ‘touch point’ meetings, and meetings with community project board. These were planned from the outset and adapted as the project moved forwards.

We have also involved key potential occupants in the process – notably the health centre and library. With the former, this has necessitated a separate strand of work, to determine the health centre requirements, within the context of broader NHS corporate policy and strategy. This in turn will feed into the final design of the Phase 1 scheme, although due to time pressure we have had to create an adaptable planning approach, which will allow for either a ‘lift and shift’ model, where existing facilities are re-provided verbatim, or a larger healthy living centre model, incorporating a broader range of health-related facilities and programmes. Allowing these options to be explored in parallel, maximises the potential impact of the proposals on wellbeing in Southmead.

Implementation and delivery: We have developed a collaborative engagement approach with statutory authorities to ensure consensus built and difficult issues tackled head-on early in the process. This included input from Council planners, specialists, Bristol Urban Design Framework and other bodies.

We adopted a pragmatic approach to ensuring the masterplan has material weight in the planning process - rather than seeking to develop an outline application, SPD or Neighbourhood Plan for the entire area, instead preparing a detailed planning application for the first Phase (Glencoyne Square), with the masterplan providing context. We have used the masterplan as a basis for feeding into the emerging Local Plan Review in parallel, to ensure a more supportive policy context. This should enable delivery within the constraints of funding timescales, made the project more manageable, built momentum and provided the opportunity to secure the release of further sites for development.

Sustainable development

Please outline how the project has supported:

- positive short, medium and long term public benefit
- a balance of economic, social and environmental objectives
- the UN's Sustainable Development Goals

Public benefit:

Short-term:

- Feelings of community ownership. Through a positive engagement process, the community has bought into a regeneration project which has encouraged real participation and involvement. Taking part has enabled community members to get to the heart of the area's issues and opportunities and reflect on how best to act on them, resulting in real ownership.
- Building momentum for regeneration of central Southmead. The masterplan has provided a framework for identifying a series of early public realm interventions, delivered by the Council, which will start to transform Arnside – the main shopping precinct and heart of the community. These include a traffic-calmed street, cycle lanes, sustainable urban drainage features and new landscape planting
The first phase will see development of part of an underused public open space, which has become a focus for anti-social behaviour. The mixed-used development will provide new housing responding to local housing need, comprising 120 units – 85% of which will be affordable, comprising small units for first time buyers and downsizers and two live-work units. It will also provide modern replacement community facilities – a new library, health centre and flexible community space, acting as a new community 'hub' at the northern end of the centre.
- A new, higher quality public green space, incorporating a mix of formal play facilities and informal 'playable spaces', a 'trim trail'/ outdoor gym for health and wellbeing and landscape planting, all set within an undulating landscape to create a stimulating environment for residents.

Medium-term:

- The phase 1 development would release further sites for redevelopment, which have the potential to deliver an additional 200 homes tailored to the needs of the local community, a new youth centre, a new community centre, workspace for local start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises, an expanded supermarket and new senior living accommodation.

Long-term:

- An empowered and informed community, with its own housing stock generating an income stream to pay for community facilities and services in perpetuity.
- Improved prospects for sections of the community including young and older people.
- A regenerated town centre, with a range of modern community facilities and housing stock better aligned to the needs of local people.
- A shift in perceptions of Southmead, from a deprived suburban area, to a modern, pro-active and progressive place that is appealing to investors and future residents alike.

A balance of objectives:

The overriding objectives of the project are to:

- Social - Generate a 'profit for a purpose' i.e. contribute towards the delivery of SDT's services in perpetuity, such as social prescribing, youth and play workers, teaching assistants and Policy Community Support Officers; provide housing that better meets local needs; and provide a built environment more conducive to building a sense of community.
- Environmental - Bring about the physical regeneration of the centre of Southmead.
- Economic: Improve access to jobs, promote skills development and stimulate both local enterprise and external investment.

Sustainable Development Goals:

The project would contribute towards achieving SDGs outlined in the diagram below.



Figure 3. Sustainable Development Goals to which Project Contributes

Community benefit

Please outline how the project has provided:

- positive and constructive engagement and dialogue with local people and businesses
- a better quality of life for people, especially for disadvantaged communities
- tangible benefits for communities such as facilities, infrastructure, jobs, training etc

(insert your answer here – MAX 500 words)

Engagement and dialogue: From the get-go, engagement has played a huge role in the project.

As a community organisation, it is important for SDT to ensure it achieves the best it can for the people it serves, so there was a huge emphasis on community engagement throughout the entire process. Some key events to gather local opinion at the masterplan stage were:

- Attending the Southmead Festival
- Roaming 'street stalls' and 'Regeneration Tours'
- Drop-in sessions
- Pop-up events
- Attending local groups (youth, church etc)
- Exhibitions
- 'Speed-dating' style resident interviews
- Interactive community workshops (with model-making) designed to identify potential masterplan options and select a preferred option

Across all the engagement activity types outlined above in the 'background' section, there was a consistent focus on the key elements that the community could influence. This approach continued in developing detailed proposal for Phase where the community were asked to provide views on:

- Building styles
- Building details (eg. balconies)
- Design and use of semi-private /courtyard spaces
- Design and character of open spaces
- Design of streets and public spaces

SDT's comments tracker has to date over 500 comments recorded on it from which we were able to identify trends, analyse opinions and design accordingly.

Keeping the community fully engaged throughout has meant the project has continued to build capacity and momentum, ownership, support and a sense of community.

Quality of life:

Data shows that the quality of life for older residents in Southmead is significantly poorer than that across Bristol, being within the 10% most deprived wards within the UK. 7.5% of residents over 65+ receiving a community based social care service, compared to a Bristol average of 4.2%. This figure puts Southmead as the ward with the second highest number of older residents receiving a community-based service. Life expectancy is also 3 years less than the Bristol average, and 9.4 years less than neighbouring Henleaze. Through providing new housing better suited to the needs of older residents in close proximity to a range of facilities and services, a new health centre with potential for a greater range of non-medicalised treatments, better quality public realm and open space more conducive to social interaction and an income generator to ensure SDT can provide support programmes in perpetuity, the project will contribute both directly and indirectly towards addressing this issue.

Tangible benefits:

These will include the direct provision of a new health centre, library, flexible community space, a newly landscaped open space with a range of play facilities, workspace in the live-work units and a newly traffic-calmed and landscaped shopping precinct at Arnside.



Figure 4. Southmead Festival

Leading practice

Please outline how the project:

- is creative and innovative
- is an exemplar that is transferable across the UK
- promotes equality and diversity

(insert your answer here – MAX 500 words)

Creative and innovative: Being one of the largest community-led development projects, this is of a scale unforeseen by even Homes England and formulating the Community-led Housing Fund. As a result, SDT and the project team has had to work hard to secure enough funding from Homes England initially, and source additional funds from alternative sources such as Power to Change and conventional lending institutions in parallel.

At the same time, to keep the momentum going and ensure they can comply with the funding timescales of the Housing Infrastructure Funding that is delivering some of the supporting infrastructure, SDT has had to develop innovative funding arrangements with the contractor – EG Carter and Bristol City Council. As a design team, this and the multiple other stakeholders has meant we have had to balance many competing agendas and ensure both the design and planning approach has retained enough flexibility to ensure it can respond to the different funding scenarios that could arise, while being sufficiently robust to secure planning permission (with regard to Phase 1) and enable a start on site within a reasonable timeframe.

An exemplar project: The extent of community engagement has made this an exemplar project. The project has not used a traditional developer ‘keep informed’ approach but instead has kept the community fully engaged throughout. This has helped to build understanding, address key policy issues collectively and stay true to the ‘spirit’ of the project.

The project was the subject of a joint presentation given by Nash Partnership and SDT to Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) SW delegates at the conference in May 2019; Nash and SDT are also set to speak about the project at the national Urban Design Group conference in Birmingham September 2019.

Equality and diversity: The project team spoke to ‘Inclusion Southmead’ (a group of local disabled and non-disabled residents), to gain opinions on designing responsibility for disabled residents. The team also spoke to young people from the youth centre to get some ideas for the play and activity area elements of the plan. The many other tools employed have also ensured that the views of harder to reach groups can be captured.