

# Remaking Chalkhill



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Forward from the Leader of Brent Council and Managing Director MHT London.

Now that the regeneration of Chalkhill is almost complete, it is our great pleasure to invite you to review the work that has gone into the transformation of the Chalkhill neighbourhood. And it truly is a transformation. The old concrete blocks have been replaced not only with new and better homes of a more traditional design and scale, but also a safer and more pleasant neighbourhood, with improved educational, health and community facilities.

There are many unusual features of the Chalkhill project. The regeneration was carried out without direct government funding, apart from the employment and training programme and a small amount of shared ownership development.

The scheme also combined the redevelopment of the concrete Bison estate with the transfer of ownership of the Scientist estate to Metropolitan Housing Trust, to be repaired and modernised by MHT while allowing residents to remain council tenants if they wished.

This makes Chalkhill a complex and groundbreaking scheme in the way it is structured and financed. The regeneration of Chalkhill has received all party support from Brent Council but regeneration on this scale could not have been achieved by the council alone. The results you can see today are testimony to the success of the exemplary partnership between the council, MHT, George Wimpey and most especially the local community.

From the beginning, the proposals for regenerating Chalkhill have involved local residents, who played a major role in the planning of the scheme and in the supervision of activities throughout the lengthy development phase. This degree of resident participation is considered normal practice today but was less usual in the early days of such big regeneration projects, when Chalkhill began. We would like to pay tribute to the many residents and other community representatives who

played active roles, giving up their time in an entirely voluntary capacity and sometimes over many years. And we would also like to thank residents at Chalkhill and those in the immediate surrounding area for their patience and forbearance over the long and sometimes disruptive development period. We hope you will agree with us that the results are plain to see and that all the time and effort that has gone into the regeneration of Chalkhill has been very worthwhile.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Lorber".

Cllr Paul Lorber  
Leader of Brent Council



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Neil Mawson".

Neil Mawson  
Managing Director of  
MHT London

## Introduction

The regeneration of Chalkhill has been an exercise in partnership between Brent Council, Metropolitan Housing Trust (MHT) George Wimpey PLC and the local community who live in the Chalkhill neighbourhood. A formal development agreement between the council and New Horizons – the joint venture company formed by MHT and Wimpey to carry out the regeneration work – was signed in July 1996 and twelve years later the final stage of the new development is under way. This seems like a good moment to take stock and report on what has been achieved.

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### Involving the community

Regenerating a residential area is a huge responsibility, as the lengthy redevelopment process can be very disruptive to people's lives. It is also a wonderful opportunity to make change for the better: new homes for residents; a safer and more pleasant environment; improved local amenities; and increased prosperity and wellbeing through educational, training and job opportunities. But this can only be achieved in partnership with the people most affected.

Involving the community has been key to the regeneration of Chalkhill from the start. Residents changed the master plan in the early consultations, bringing about a more traditional street pattern and reducing the amount of development in some areas. Design groups were set up, so that residents could take part in the planning of their new homes in both the on-site and off-site developments. They agreed 'menus' from which families could choose their fixtures and fittings and decoration schemes, in order to

### The vision for Chalkhill

New Horizons' objectives for the regeneration of Chalkhill were:

- To provide high quality housing in a new, safe neighbourhood integrated within the North Wembley area
- To create sustainable employment and a prosperous local community
- To create a sense of ownership in the individual homes and the environment by fully involving residents and the wider community in the design and development of the new housing.

individualise their new homes. Scientist residents identified the key areas of work needed for their homes and helped design the landscaping works.

A consultative forum – the Chalkhill Joint Development Board (JDB) – was set up at the beginning of the project and met every quarter until its last meeting in 2007. The JDB was made up of local residents and other community representatives, such as ward councillors, the police, the local school and the health centre. Together with its sub committees, it played an invaluable role in keeping the regeneration scheme in touch with local needs and interests.

As the development phase draws to a close, there will continue to be community involvement in the management of the neighbourhood. A new residents' association was formed in 2007 to join the existing leaseholders' group and MHT holds regular meetings to discuss performance and local concerns. And the body managing the new community centre is a charitable trust, comprised of a majority of local residents.

## Chalkhill council estate

The newly formed Brent Council began building Chalkhill estate in 1966 as a means of providing additional new homes for rent, to alleviate poor housing conditions in the Willesden area. The whole estate totalled over 1800 homes and was made up of two distinct phases and styles of development. The larger part was built as high rise concrete blocks, which came to be known as the 'Bison' estate named after its building system. There were 30 blocks, mostly eight storeys high and all linked by continuous walkways – described as 'space age streets in the sky' in press reports at the time. The Bison estate provided 1280 flats with shops, a health centre, multi-storey car parks and play facilities in the green landscaped areas between the blocks. The low rise development now known as the Scientist estate contained about 550 homes of

more traditional construction: 150 houses and 400 flats in four-storey blocks.

Despite its bold and innovative design, the Bison estate was soon a source of dissatisfaction for tenants. It became unpopular and hard to let. There were problems with dampness, vermin, crime and anti-social behaviour. The design and layout of the estate seemed to facilitate criminal activity and the estate developed a reputation, no doubt exaggerated beyond the reality, as a crime-ridden, no-go area. The council made various attempts to improve security for residents, including removal of the walkway links between some blocks and the installation of CCTV and 'concierges' or receptionists to control access. This programme was extremely expensive and the government questioned whether the improvements brought about were good value for money. Also a

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After assessing 37 initial entries, five finalists were asked to prepare detailed plans in consultation with residents. In April 1994, on the recommendation of a jury led by an independent chair and including three estate residents, the council announced the winner as the consortium of MHT and Wimpey, together with architects Levitt Bernstein.

All residents were formally consulted on the MHT/Wimpey proposals, as required under housing law, and the majority were in favour of the redevelopment scheme proposed. The secretary of state gave his consent in June 1996 and this opened the way for the council to enter into a legal agreement with New Horizons – the partnership formed by MHT and Wimpey – in July 1996.

### The regeneration proposals

The proposals put forward by MHT and Wimpey and agreed by residents, the secretary of state and the council were as follows:

- Demolish the 'Bison' blocks and let MHT build new low rise homes on the land
- Transfer ownership of the 'Scientist' estate to MHT for them to repair and modernise the existing homes
- Develop a major supermarket on part of the land to provide money for the scheme
- Develop some housing for sale to provide money for the scheme and to give a mixture of housing types and tenures
- Provide other community benefits including employment and training, school improvements, a new local park, new health centre and community centre.



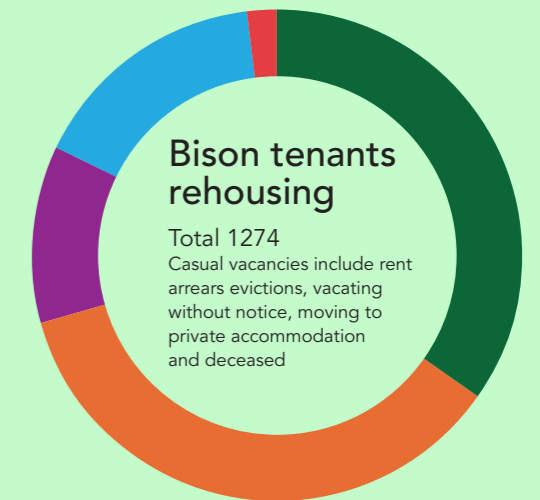
## Moving home

Before the Bison estate could be demolished all existing tenants had to be rehoused and the council took on the task of finding them new homes. Rehousing began in 1995 and was not completed until the end of 2002. Tenants were given a rehousing package which offered them a choice:

- Either to remain at Chalkhill and move into a new MHT home
- Or to move away from Chalkhill into either an existing council property or a housing association property

Because many tenants would have to move before new homes could be built, choosing to stay at Chalkhill meant accepting a temporary move before they could get their new permanent home. As a result only about 150 original tenants now live in the new Chalkhill homes built by MHT. The rest moved to other properties around the borough as shown in the chart above. All moves were negotiated with the tenants, with no-one being evicted through the courts.

Over 90% of the material from the old blocks was recycled



## Demolishing the Bison blocks

The main demolition contract was won by McNicholas a local Wembley company. Demolition was carried out in phases as rehousing progressed, beginning in October 1997. The first phase was cleared by February 1998, enabling the sale of the supermarket site to Asda. The final clearance work was completed in November 2002. Over 90% of the material from the old blocks was recycled, including crushed concrete brought back to Chalkhill to fill the holes left after the removal of foundations.



## New homes

Because land used for housing was given over to the Asda supermarket, the redevelopment scheme had to include replacement housing land away from Chalkhill. MHT met this requirement in two new housing developments at Yeats Close in Neasden and De Havilland Road in Queensbury, providing 103 and 149 new homes respectively. About 70% of these were used to rehouse Chalkhill residents so that other tenants and housing applicants could also have some access to these new homes. Residents from Chalkhill were involved in the design and planning process for both schemes, as well as choosing their own fixtures and fittings.

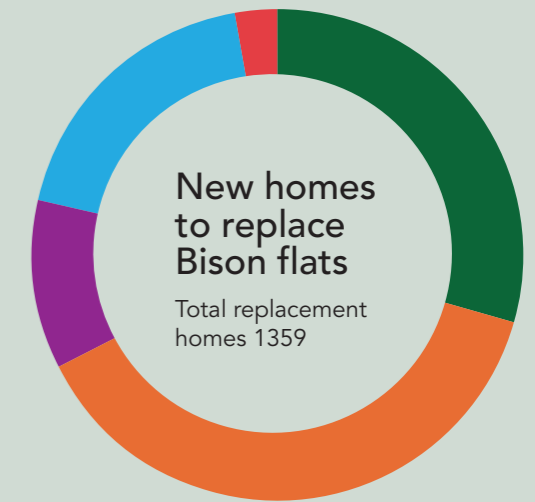
In addition to those off-site developments, 445 new homes have been built by MHT at Chalkhill under the terms of the main partnership agreement. These are mostly for rent with 39 shared ownership units, giving local people an opportunity to buy a share in their home and adding to the variety of homes and tenure on Chalkhill. The first 72 new homes were completed in 2000 and a further 215 were completed during 2002, coinciding with the completion of the rehousing programme. The last phases provided 82 new homes

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completed in 2003 and 76 in 2005 and these were wholly occupied by new tenants.

The development by George Wimpey of 150 apartments for sale was completed in 2005. The provision of some homes for sale was felt to be important in providing social and tenure mix as well as providing further finance to support the social housing and other facilities. Most of these units were eagerly bought 'off plan' which was a resounding confirmation that Chalkhill has lost its bad old image. Further housing provision was negotiated during the course of the development including: 15 new homes on the site of Jenner House; 18 'lifetime homes' to enable elderly residents to remain living independently at Chalkhill with appropriate support; and 42 shared ownership units built as part of the Combined Facilities Building (see below). This brings the total number of new homes built at Chalkhill to 670. The council has also undertaken a long term programme of financing new housing association development to replace the homes lost at Chalkhill. The full picture of housing replacement is set out in the chart right.



- 400** Council-funded housing association homes
- 520** New social housing on Chalkhill
- 150** New private housing on Chalkhill
- 252** New homes built off site
- 37** Properties purchased



The council has undertaken a long term programme of financing new housing development to replace the homes lost at Chalkhill.

## The Scientist estate

Ownership of the Scientist estate was transferred from the council to MHT in 1996, so that MHT could repair and modernise the existing homes. Existing Scientist tenants could choose either to become MHT tenants or to stay with Brent Council. The majority are now MHT London tenants.

The main programme of repairs and modernisation was carried out between 1998 and 2000. Many of the blocks have been visibly transformed with new pitched roofs replacing flat roofs, new windows, landscaping and parking improvements. MHT tenants have benefited from new gas central heating, insulation and for a small increase in rent, new kitchens or bathrooms. As with the newly built homes, residents played a big part in prioritising the works and identifying key areas which needed attention. Where possible, residents have been given more privacy, with previously public areas being turned into private or communal gardens for residents only.



## Employment & training opportunities

An integral part of the original regeneration proposal was a programme of employment and training projects, aimed at enhancing the education, skills and employment prospects of local people, at Chalkhill and across the borough.

This was one part of the scheme which received direct government funding, with £3.25m of Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) money.

The flagship programme – known as the Community Refurbishment Scheme or CRS – was designed to take advantage of the opportunities offered

by the construction work at Chalkhill. Long term unemployed people were offered courses in various construction trades such as bricklaying, carpentry, plastering, and painting and decorating. What made this course different was that trainees were given extensive periods of on-site experience and waged training for much of the course. 106 local people entered these courses and 68 gained employment, with 55 obtaining NVQ level 2 qualifications. There were several other successful strands to the SRB programme including a construction labour job matching service, security guard training, a catering business set up by Chalkhill residents, a homework club and other educational courses.

The SRB programme began in 1995 and was initially for five years. The government department which oversaw SRB programmes considered Chalkhill to be very successful and extended its funding. The focus for the SRB programme was the Stadium Training Centre, established by Wimpey in 1996 and finally completing its work in 2007. The premises have been sold and the surplus from the sale has further enhanced the Community Trust Fund.



## Chalkhill School

Chalkhill primary school has benefited from the scheme, in return for a land swap arrangement, with a new heating boiler, extended play areas, improved boundary fencing and a financial contribution, which the school used for a new computer suite. The school has also been able to gain lottery funding for a brand new sports hall which was completed in 2005. As well as providing a much needed facility for the children, the sports hall is available for community use outside school hours.

The park, which will be fenced and gated, has been designed to cater for all age groups and a range of activities.

## Local parks & play areas

There are two linked projects which together make up the neighbourhood's open space provision. The 'linear park' – the landscaped walkway running from Forty Lane opposite the Town Hall to Chalkhill Road - was completed in 2006. This connects to the main park, which is the one facility remaining to be completed under the regeneration scheme. The site of the park is just under five acres and has been housing the temporary health centre. Now that the health centre has moved into its new permanent home within the Chalkhill Centre, work on the local park can begin. The park, which will be fenced and gated, has been designed to cater for all age groups and a range of activities, with planted gardens and seating, grassed areas for walking and informal games and a young children's play area. There are other attractive and fun play facilities within the housing developments.



## Community Trust Fund

New Horizons set up the Chalkhill Community Trust Fund with a donation of £500,000 to finance community projects in the Chalkhill neighbourhood. The Trust Fund is managed by trustees drawn from the council, MHT and the local community. To date interest gained on the Trust Fund has been used to give grants to a number of small projects. In 2003 residents were consulted on how they would like to see the Trust money used. Over 88% felt the money should be used to support the facilities and projects run at the new community centre and options for the best way to use this money are currently being explored. The Trust Fund has also benefitted from the sale of the Stadium Training Centre premises.

## Willows Children's Centre

Brent Council has redeveloped the former Barnhill nursery, adjacent to Chalkhill School, building a state of the art children's centre. This was opened to the public in 2006 and provides 90 childcare places with an emphasis on children with special needs. The Willows centre provides services for under-fives and their families, including early education integrated with day care, family support, health advice and links to other services such as training and job finding.



## The Chalkhill Centre

The Chalkhill Centre – known throughout its long planning and development phase as the Combined Facilities Building - will become, we believe, the crowning glory of the Chalkhill regeneration project. The Chalkhill Centre embodies the principle that regeneration must deliver more than just the bricks and mortar which go into building new homes. The community itself needs space and opportunity to come together and develop. The Chalkhill Centre is an amazing community resource, combining three public spaces under one roof – a community centre, new larger health

facilities providing one stop health services and local housing offices for MHT, together with 42 shared ownership apartments.

Most importantly, the design of the community centre has been driven by local people meeting over many years as 'Health from Leisure at Wembley Park' and the Community Centre Steering Group. Local people have formed a charitable trust to manage and run the facility. With help from MHT, they have had a centre manager in place for the last six months, to develop the business plan and ensure the centre is up and running from day one.

During the course of the regeneration, a small temporary meeting hall was provided to house various community activities and this has been well

used over the years. For example the Somali community has run a homework club, elders' and women's groups; Brent Homestart has held regular sessions; there have been ESOL classes (English for Speaker of Other Languages) and gardening projects supported by MHT; the Willows older persons social club has met there weekly; the Health from Leisure group has held its meetings there and promoted initiatives such as keep fit for over 60s; and it has been used for meetings by residents' associations and local religious groups. After years of making do in their temporary home, these groups have now transferred to wonderful new accommodation in the Chalkhill Centre, where they form the core activities along with other new projects. Chalkhill now has its very own community resource, with space to cater for a full range of community activities from small committee meetings to keep fit classes, from advice sessions to dancing and socials, together with changing facilities and a community café.



# Chalkhill regeneration timeline



**December**  
• residents voice their opinions on Chalkhill

**December**  
• residents 'vote' in favour of the redevelopment scheme

**May**  
• Stadium Training Centre opens

**June**  
• Secretary of State gives his consent

**July**  
• council & New Horizons sign partnership agreement

• first meeting of Joint Development Board

**September**  
• Scientist estate transfers to MHT

**July**  
• new police office opens at Ken Way

**January**  
• Scientist main refurbishment contract completed

• 72 new homes completed on Chalkhill (phases 1 and 2)

**September**  
• new play area completed for Chalkhill school

**December**  
• 82 new homes completed at Chalkhill (phase 5)

**April**  
• Linear Park completed

**September**  
• Willows Children's Centre opens

**November**  
• Chalkhill Centre completed

**1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2002 2003 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009**

**September**  
• Design and Development Competition begins

**February**  
• council begins rehousing Bison residents

**October**  
• 103 new homes completed at Yeats Close

• demolition of Bison estate begins

**March**  
• Asda store opens

**July**  
• 1,000th household rehoused

**October**  
• 149 new homes completed at De Havilland Road

**April**  
• 148 new homes completed on Chalkhill (phase 3)

**November**  
• demolition work completed

**December**  
• 67 new homes completed on Chalkhill (phase 4)

**August**  
• 150 private apartments completed and sold on Chalkhill

**November**  
• 15 new homes completed on Chalkhill (Jenner House site)

**December**  
• 94 new homes completed on Chalkhill (phase 6)

**March**  
• Chalkhill Residents Association launched

**April**  
• last meeting of Joint Development Board

**Winter**  
• Main Park scheduled for completion





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5748 BDU 08.08

Printed on recycled paper

Published by Brent Council  
and MHT London  
November 2008

