

## **SUMMARY REPORT**

# **Moseley ACTION PLAN 2008**

### **Contents**

1. Moseley, some background
2. 1992 Moseley Action Plan
3. Birmingham's Planning framework
4. Our findings and recommendations
5. The Way forward
6. The Moseley Regeneration Group

## **Moseley**

Moseley, or Moseley Village as it is better known, is a suburb of Birmingham and can be found 4km south of Birmingham City Centre along the A435 (Alcester Road). It was originally a rural hamlet surrounded by farmland in the old Parish of Kings Norton. However, the Victorians developed Moseley as an exclusive settlement constructing many prominent buildings. Moseley became a proud village just outside of Birmingham; located on a hill, away from the smog and within easy reach of the City Centre. Now, Moseley is a busy suburb sandwiched between the inner city neighbourhood of Balsall Heath and the suburb of Kings Heath with its large shopping centre.

Moseley remains a desirable place to live within Birmingham, its proximity to the city centre and other centres of employment, good primary schools, mix of family housing and rented accommodation, and its diverse community continue to attract people to the neighbourhood who are then proud to live here.

Unfortunately, there has been little investment made by the City Council or Government to improve facilities in the area. The City Council does not have any public buildings in the neighbourhood. Moseley isn't considered to be a high priority when it comes to Government grants; there are other neighbourhoods in the City that are in greater need. But, Moseley still has problems and residents who are in need of help. There's a range of problems that need to be addressed to ensure the neighbourhood doesn't begin to decline to a point where hundreds of thousands of pounds need to be spent, as we've seen elsewhere in Birmingham. The problems include matters such as: a failing shopping centre, few local jobs, poor health for some of its residents, a changing population, little access to affordable housing, rubbish on the streets and a loss of green spaces.

It is local volunteers who have taken the lead and worked to improve services from the Council, set up their own projects to help the neighbourhood and protect the character of the area. The Moseley Action Plan 2008 is another one those initiatives.

## 1992 Moseley Action Plan

The current Action Plan for Moseley was produced with Officers from Birmingham City Council's Planning department. The Plan looked at issues raised by local groups (such as the Moseley Society) and resulted in the development of the following set of priorities for the neighbourhood:

- Retain and enhance Moseley's character as a conservation area.
- Identify opportunities for environmental enhancements
- Develop guidance for the future development of the shopping centre
- Seek opportunities for "living above the shop"
- Address car parking and servicing of shops
- Control the spread of institutional type premises
- Identify priorities for investment
- Identify broad transport objectives for the neighbourhood.

It was the City Council's intention that this Plan would be used as guidance when it came to Planning applications or policies and it should direct future development in the neighbourhood. Fifteen years later, however, residents are still meeting about the same issues listed above apart from the spread of institutional premises whose development is now restrained. Also, residents have been informed that they are unlikely to have the Action Plan updated by the City Council anytime soon. Therefore, the Moseley Regeneration Group has taken on the task of reviewing the objectives and recommendations from the original Action Plan.

### Birmingham's planning system

Currently, Birmingham's development is guided by the Unitary Development Plan but this is changing as the City Council develops a "Local Development Framework" document to replace the Unitary Development Plan. Within this document there is the opportunity for local communities to make a contribution through "Area Action Plans" they help form part of the new Local Development Framework. Their purpose is to provide a structure for areas where significant change or conservation is expected or required; the Moseley Regeneration

Group feels Moseley should have an Area Action Plan to help it protect the character of the neighbourhood and to make it successful - socially, environmentally and economically, in to the future.

Birmingham City Council hasn't produced many Area Action Plans to date since it's an intensive process. The Moseley Regeneration Group understands it's a difficult process but it still feels it is what is needed and wants to help the City Council produce an Area Action Plan for Moseley. The purpose of the 2008 review documents (parts one and two) are the first step towards an Area Action Plan.

## Summary of our findings and recommendations – Moseley in 2008

### A changing population

Moseley population has been growing significantly since the 1970's and this has brought many new communities in to the neighbourhood. There is now a significant Pakistani community as well as other migrant communities living mainly in the northern part of the neighbourhood. This area is often called north Moseley and joins the neighbourhoods of Balsall Heath and Sparkhill; from where many of the new residents have moved. Overall the majority of the population remains white (and Christian) and is of working age (16-59, mostly professional); there has been fall in the 16-24 age group though.

There is a contrast between the incomes across the neighbourhood; generally there are higher income people living in the south and lower income people living in the north. Also, there is greater unemployment and poor health in north Moseley. Parts of it fall in to the Government's definition of *priority areas suffering from multiple deprivation*. Unfortunately, the deprivation that exists in the neighbourhood is often missed by public agencies due other impression that Moseley is a "wealthy" neighbourhood.

Moseley has a changing population with a variety of different needs. Whilst we appreciate the need is Moseley is not as great as some other parts of the City; although a significant

number of residents in Moseley that do have similar problems to the inner city areas. Greater attention must be paid to these residents by the City Council and other public agencies, who could be working much closer with the local charity and community sector to find additional resources.

## **Housing**

Moseley remains a desirable place to live for many people and the high house prices reflect this. The balance of tenures has been changing over the years as well, previously there was a lot more rented accommodation and a significant student population, that has nearly all gone now. Owner occupation has grown as well as social housing, unfortunately the availability of affordable housing is low. Whilst it's difficult to obtain precise figures about housing demand we understand that demand outstrips supply for local Housing Associations and there is a short supply of new affordable housing units.

The Moseley Regeneration group understands that house prices will remain high and it's difficult to change the housing market. But it would like to see policies developed by the City Council to protect 2 and 3 bedroom houses and opportunities created to allow Registered Social Landlords to secure more property in the area. In addition, the group wants to see the enforcement of existing policies and regulations to protect the conservation areas and architecture of the neighbourhood.

## **Protecting the character of the neighbourhood**

For many years now there has been inappropriate development (both domestic and commercial) that has been gradually eroding the architectural character of the area. Thanks to diligence of the Moseley Society the area has managed to retain a lot of its original built and natural features.

The City Council's Planning department has a number of policy documents and regulations that can be used to help conserve Moseley's character. The Moseley Regeneration feels that these are not being used effectively or often enough and wants to see consistent application of policy and regulation by the City Council.

There has been a combination of factors affecting the diversity in the local population. The rising house prices have meant that there has been a gentrification in parts. Whilst in other areas, inward migration, unemployment and the loss of younger people has meant that the previous diverse population (age, income and background) has been reduced. This diversity has always been one of the important features of the neighbourhood since it led to creative and enterprising spirit amongst residents. More social and affordable housing along with a vibrant community sector could help retain that original spirit.

### **Community life**

One of the most valued features of Moseley has been the way some local residents have organised themselves, led community projects and taken care of their neighbourhood. It would appear that the neighbourhood has attracted civic minded residents since the 1970's. One aspect of the changing population is that it is becoming more difficult to sustain the range of community activities that once existed. Another is the need for greater cohesion and understanding between the growing variety of ethnic groups. The opportunities for regular communication between different groups also appear to have reduced.

As the population changes, the challenge as to how sustain volunteers in creating a vibrant and inclusive community life remains. Moseley community groups still need modern places to meet, organise and deliver projects. They also need access to funding and expertise to help them. The City Council's Hall Green District office should work closely with "community anchor" organisations like Moseley Community Development Trust to grow community development and youth work.

### **Education**

Moseley's enjoys good quality primary schools that perform to a high standard. It appears the secondary schools serving the area are improving but there's more to do before they can compete with the best in the City.

The competition for secondary school places is not an issue we seek to address in this report, but residents do want to ensure the high quality of primary schools remains. They

also wish to see greater pre-school provision in the neighbourhood. Currently, parents rely on relations, private nurseries and the community groups. Demand for pre-school provision is high and there is an opportunity for community groups to be greater providers, if they were given more support from the public bodies.

### **The local economy**

This is probably the biggest problem facing the neighbourhood. Over time, there has been a loss of large local employers (e.g. Britannic Assurance, the Department for Social Security and the Ideal Benefit Society). This means there are few local jobs and lower local spending occurring. This has combined with a reduction in retail outlets in the daytime due to high property rentals and a trend towards supermarket shopping to create a shopping area that has little daytime footfall. The role of Moseley's centre as traditional retail shopping centre, serving local residents needs, is now very fragile. In contrast, there has been a significant growth in the number of restaurants, bars and Pubs. These open in the evenings and attract people from around the City. The proliferation of drinking and eating activities in the centre makes it a lively place to be in the evenings. However, residents around the centre suffer from anti-social behaviour and nuisance from the evening customers as well as the neighbourhood having the extra litter and rubbish to deal with.

Community groups have been trying to help the shopping centre through initiatives like the Moseley Farmers' Market and the Moseley Arts Market. These are held once a month and do help bring in shoppers for a day, from which the regular local shops have some benefit. The temporary market could be expanded to occur more often and offer a greater variety of products in the future.

There has always been the idea that Moseley should have a cluster of independent, niche retailers. It appears that this will be very difficult to realise and a new identity needs to be found for the centre.

Moseley Community Development Trust has undertaken studies in to Moseley's economic strength and has concluded that the neighbourhood has a high concentration of people who

work in the creative industries (the arts, media, ICT and design professions). It's also a place where businesses are born and many professional people work from their homes. Moseley has the opportunity to become known as a "creative village" and host a cluster of creative businesses. There would be many spin offs for community life at the same time.

Consideration now needs to be given how to create more office / workshop space to house new and established creative businesses. In this way, employers can return to the neighbourhood, local people may find local jobs and employees may begin to spend their wages locally again.

To do this well, support from the City Council and Regional Development Agency is required to ensure Moseley becomes part of the regions strategy for growing the creative industries sector.

### **Traffic and Transport**

Moseley, like other neighbourhoods in Birmingham suffers from high volumes of traffic and roads that are nearly always at capacity. This is not unusual for situation for an urban neighbourhood nowadays. Car-parking in and around the shopping centre remains a problem both, in the day and night-time. It's a difficult problem to resolve without the support of the City Council's Highways department.

Previously residents have suggested more traffic calming measures, improvements to public transport, cycle lanes and more public car parking around the shopping centre. In addition there is support for the re-opening of the railway line / station in Moseley. More recently, a red route has been suggested for the Alcester Rd that passes through the centre of Moseley to ease congestion. But, this and other transport solutions need the involvement of the City Council to ensure integration in to a greater strategy to reduce congestion, pollution and improve safety.

Locally, residents could be encouraged by community groups to take some personal action to help the problems by reducing car journeys, using public transport for more journeys, cycle and walk more often. SusMo, a local environmental project has the opportunity to take a lead on these matters.

### **The local environment**

The quality of the local environment as well as the wider environmental issues have always remained a high priority for local residents. There are a number of community projects and City Council initiatives involving local residents in place to ensure the neighbourhood is clean, green and conserve green spaces. Community groups tend to lead on this matter and they have achieved much with few resources.

If the community sector is to continue lead on protecting the local environment they do require more resources and closer working with the City Council; who share this objective. The sustainability of projects like SusMo, Moseley in Bloom and Moseley Street Wardens all need to be ensured as well as the consistent enforcement of the planning policies and regulations by the City Council.

### **The way forward**

The Moseley regeneration group offers a vision for Moseley - *to become a sustainable urban neighbourhood*. By this we mean a neighbourhood that has three important parts to it:

- (i) Its residents and businesses are able to operate in such a way that they reduce their impact on the natural world as much as is practically possible. So, they should be "going green". They should be recycling, reducing and re-using as well as protecting the neighbourhood's parks and other green spaces.
- (ii) Money that is created locally can be spent locally, not just once but as many times as possible. This way, money goes further and provides an opportunity for disadvantaged people to share in local wealth.
- (iii) There should be a range of active residents who are able to build trust between other residents, develop networks and lead community groups/charities.

## **Recommendations and next steps**

Moseley residents want to take action now to stop any further decline and protect the character of the neighbourhood. The City Council needs consider the findings and recommendations in this report urgently and commit resources to its development. There should be greater involvement from the City Council with the Moseley Regeneration Group.

The Moseley Regeneration Group plans to undertake a consultation with local residents in 2008 about the findings and recommendations in the full report. The results of the consultation will help refine the proposed Action Plan document.

The Group wants to work with the City Council to develop an *Area Action Plan* for Moseley. This document would replace the current 1992 Moseley Action Plan and would be incorporated in the City Council Planning Development Framework.

## **The Moseley Regeneration Group**

This group is made up local people (volunteers) representing local community groups who have a stake in the future of Moseley and want to make Moseley a better place to live and work. Moseley Community Development Trust has provided secretary and administration support for the Group.

This group was originally formed by a local Councillor in 2003 to address the issue of the increasing number of empty shops in Moseley's shopping area. This led the group to consider why Moseley's shopping centre was in decline, what could be done to fill the empty shops and the state of the local economy. It's been difficult to consider these matters on their own, therefore the Group has also discussed other matters that affect people lives in Moseley such as: the environment, housing, traffic and transport, health and community projects and most importantly, planning applications and policies from Birmingham City

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Council. The group has commented on a number of planning applications and policies as well as meeting with Developers.

The groups involved with the Moseley Regeneration Group include: Moseley Society, Moseley Forum, Moseley Community Development Trust, Moseley Business Association, Moseley in Bloom and Moseley and District Churches Housing Association.

## Contact us

If you want to know more go to [www.MoseleyCDT.com](http://www.MoseleyCDT.com) to download parts 1 and 2 of the Moseley Action plan 2008.

Or, you can contact us with your comments:

Tony Thapar

Moseley Community Development Trust

The Post Office Building

149-153 Alcester Road, Moseley,

Birmingham, B13 8JP

Tel 0121 449 6060

Email: [Tony.Thapar@MoseleyCDT.com](mailto:Tony.Thapar@MoseleyCDT.com)