



Sigma Capital Group plc

# Norris Green Village

Working in partnership to  
create a new Norris Green...







# Contents

3	Foreword	
5	Introduction	
6	Masterplan	
9	<b>Local History</b>	
	Norris Green, an introduction...	9
	Growth	11
	Changing fortunes	13
15	<b>Getting Started</b>	
	Creating a partnership	15
	Interview: the Councillors' perspective	17
	Designing a modern village	19
	Interview: the Board's perspective	20
23	<b>Development</b>	
	First steps	23
	Interview: the Council perspective	25
	Private rents: a step-change...	27
	Interview: the Countryside perspective	28
	Taking shape	31
33	<b>Norris Green Today</b>	
	A greener environment...	33
	Interview: the school's perspective	36
	The built environment	38
	The families' perspective	40
	Norris Green in numbers	42
44	Thanks	





Aerial view, Perilla Drive.

## Norris Green Regeneration



# Foreword

Housing our citizens is one of the greatest challenges of our time.

**“Once a beacon of opportunity and aspiration – and sitting on a key route into the city – Norris Green is vital to the city’s collective future.”**

The quality of housing has a dramatic impact on health, education and life expectancy. The challenge for us, as a city, and a country, is how to build homes that are affordable, sustainable and a joy to live in.

Once a beacon of opportunity and aspiration – and sitting on a key route into the city – Norris Green is vital to the city’s collective future.

When Norris Green was built in the 1930s, it was a source of huge pride. The homes were modern, with generous facilities – hot water on tap, electricity and inside toilets; curved suburban streets with their neat picket fences. People visited from far and wide; it drew people to Liverpool.

We wanted it to become that place again: somewhere that people were proud to live; somewhere to raise a family.

When my administration took control of Liverpool’s Council in 2010, we were determined to do something positive for Norris Green and its people, who had been neglected for too long. We wanted to give it a sense of community and belonging again, where families would choose to live and set down roots. We want people to move to Liverpool because we have the right housing to suit them and the life they have planned for future generations.

And, I think, that’s what has been achieved. It is our largest residential regeneration project to date, and the speed with which people have moved back there tells you how successful it has been. It’s not just a housing estate, but a community: an urban village, with communal green spaces, a rejuvenated park, dramatically improved facilities, and first class homes. Those improvements have had a huge impact on the people who live there: education attainment has improved, employment has risen. They have stimulated new jobs, businesses and opportunities.

It is a resounding achievement, and testament to the benefits of working in partnership. For combining the right mix of skills – access to finance, community engagement, planning and building expertise and the will to get things done. And it has happened during the worst recession in living memory. It is a credit to everyone involved, from the residents to the community organisations; the developers, builders and planners.

**“We wanted it to become that place again: somewhere that people were proud to live; somewhere to raise a family.”**

Already it feels like an established community. It is vibrant and attractive, safe and sustainable. We’re very proud of it.



**Joe Anderson**





Residents speak fondly about the trees that line the area's central Perilla Drive.

## Norris Green Regeneration



# Introduction

When we arrived in Norris Green the forward-looking garden suburb had become a byword for urban blight. The area, just over three miles from the city centre, was prime for regeneration, and the local community deserved an outcome that kept them safe, secure, and was well suited to the demands of modern life.

In spite of its innovative past, defective pre-cast houses on the Boot Estate had left residents suffering anti-social behaviour, fly tipping and arson attacks while they waited for change to take hold. The community told us they wanted security, gardens and driveways; a better environment to bring up their children; they wanted to be able to use the park more, and they wanted traditional-style, good quality homes.

After years of stalled plans, our formal partnership with Liverpool City Council created a shared vision, offering new solutions, both in Norris Green and further afield. It matched our access to finance and a regeneration track record with their ambitions for the area's development. It is a relationship that has supported us throughout; both ambitious and pragmatic, and always delivery-focused. It is an excellent example of the public and private sector working hand in hand.

**“The community told us they wanted security and gardens; a better environment to bring up their children; to use the park more, and traditional-style, good quality homes.”**

Sigma's regeneration expertise was complemented by those of our building partner Countryside; their ethos matched ours. A belief in masterplanning and high quality design created a framework for us to

redevelop at pace, moving from one phase to the next, whilst responding to market conditions to create an extremely popular urban village.

**“One of Countryside's fastest-selling developments in the country.”**

The area now mixes homes sold on the open market with private rents and affordable housing. As a location, it is one of Countryside's fastest-selling developments in the country.

Our ambition throughout was to do more than just build new homes here. Norris Green is a proud, committed community, and we wanted to make sure that they were at the forefront of those plans. Beginning with a community consultation, the local school and park have seen significant investment, alongside the homes, roads and green spaces. The vibrant, growing community has attracted new shops and events. At every stage we have asked questions of the people who live and work there, and we have listened to the answers. Wherever we have had the opportunity, we have tried to ensure that Norris Green Village's development is resident-focused.

**“At every stage we have asked questions of the people who live and work there, and we have listened to the answers.”**

Now, as we reach the end of our work here, the massive investment that has seen £100 million spent on the area has changed not just its physical appearance, but its atmosphere and ambition. Many residents have been able to return to an area they knew and loved. It's something of which we're immensely proud.



# Masterplan

Located just 3.5 miles north east of Liverpool's city centre, the former Boot Estate is bounded by the wide boulevards that defined expansion into the suburbs in the 1930s. Utting Avenue forms the estate's northern border, with Muirhead Avenue the perimeter to the south. The route of the former Cheshire Lines railway runs north to south along the Norris Green's western edge, with Lorenzo Drive forming the boundary of the estate to the west; in the east, Stalisfield Avenue bounds the new development, with Croxteth Country Park beyond.







## Norris Green, an introduction...

Norris Green's 'Boot Estate' began life in a flurry of optimism. In 1869, Liverpool had become the first city in the country to build Council housing, with the construction of St Martin's Cottages in Vauxhall. It was the start of a trend that would continue for more than 100 years.

Between the wars, the sacrifice of the country's soldiers was recognised in a popular movement to house those who had contributed so much to the war effort. Prime minister David Lloyd George oversaw a move to 'make Britain a country fit for heroes to live in'; housing 'the hard-working people of Britain' saw Council housing flourish.

Liverpool however, had been an overcrowded city for many years. Its numbers swelled fourfold in the first 40 years of the 19th century, and its population peaked at 846,101 in the 1931 census. The 1919 Housing Act allocated the City generous subsidies to build Council homes, and the Corporation of Liverpool obliged, building 5,508 homes – more than any other city. But by 1924 overcrowding remained three times the national average.

In October 1924 the city's engineer, John Brodie, presented plans to build 5,000 new homes. As a result, 650 acres were purchased, north east of Liverpool city centre. By early 1926, a contract had been agreed with the housebuilder Henry Boot and Sons (London) Ltd, after whom Norris Green's most sizeable estate would become known. Work began in June that year, and the area was officially incorporated into the city in 1928, named after the local Norris family, builders of Speke Hall.

The area proved hugely popular and growth was rapid: within three years, more than 25,000 people lived on the estate; the population rose to over 37,000 eventually, housed in more than 7,689 homes.



## Local History



# Growth

The roots of the Garden Cities Movement are clear in any visit to Norris Green, its aerial blueprint a fluid swirl of crescents and concentric circles. Founded by Ebenezer Howard, the movement took off in Britain in the early years of the 20th century; a reaction to the social and environmental failures of the 19th century industrial cities and to pollution, cholera and terrible housing conditions.

By 1900, more than three quarters of the population of Britain lived in towns. Their alternative vision introduced greater balance between town and country, better architecture and open spaces.

**“The identikit housing and symmetrical road layouts were confusing to navigate, and it took time for services to catch up with the bustling estate...”**

In Liverpool’s urgency to house its residents, the Boot Estate was constructed at speed, including a number of ‘Boot and Boswell homes’, built from pre-cast concrete. While it was seen as a great achievement, its haste was to contribute to its later problems, both social and structural.

The flat, suburban environment brought its own challenges. The identikit housing and symmetrical road layouts were confusing to navigate, and it took time for services to catch up with the bustling estate: shops, schools and public transport took some years to arrive after the first residents had moved in. Luxuries like running water, electricity and indoor toilets made Norris Green desirable, but the Council was strict in its tenancy criteria, demanding high wage packets of its residents. Travel costs too were often expensive – the lack of public transport added to the pressure on tenants.

Liverpool’s economy suffered dramatically during the Great Depression of the 1930s, and unemployment reached one third of the workforce by the end of the decade, although levels amongst the city’s young were often far higher. After an initial wave of enthusiasm, 40% of the estate’s tenants left during this period – some couldn’t afford them; some missed the close-knit communities of their former homes.



## Local History



# Changing fortunes

The 1980 Housing Act, introduced by the Conservative Government, gave tenants the right to buy their Council homes, at a discount from their market value. Take up in Norris Green was high, and, within five years, a third of houses were bought by the people who lived in them.



Little did the new homeowners know, but – of some 2,000 homes – the 1,500 ‘Boot and Boswell’ pre-cast concrete houses on the inner parts of the estate had been faulty all along. The concrete sections had cracked and shrunk, causing bulging walls and concave gables. Damp and rust plagued them. The Housing Defects Act of 1984 required local authorities to deal with certain types of prefabricated concrete buildings – including the Boot houses: in 1985 they were declared defective and unfit for habitation.

Its tenants’ associations continued to lobby the city, and in 1988 three of the estate’s seven neighbourhoods were declared Priority Areas. But only two-thirds of homes had been improved in the first area before the strategy was abandoned.

**“The Housing Defects Act required the local authority to deal with the Boot houses: in 1985 they were declared defective and unfit for habitation.”**

The Council suspended the reletting of its vacant properties, and had to buy back the homes that residents had snapped up under ‘Right to Buy’. Increasing numbers of empty houses on the estate were boarded up. But their disuse caused numerous problems, with a piecemeal approach to rehousing families meaning many residents lived next door to vacant properties for years; the homes that remained were in poor repair, and vandalism began to make its mark on the estate.

In 1999, the City accepted that the defective houses would have to be demolished, and between then and 2005, most residents living on the estate moved out. A core of about 450–500 families remained on the estate, without clear options for somewhere else to move to. By summer 2006, 835 of the remaining 1509 properties had been demolished.

A 1981 Merseyside Police survey shows that almost a third of working age people were unemployed in Norris Green, and three quarters of the residents in receipt of Housing Benefit. The estate’s population was also ageing, with almost one in five over 60. In spite of the problems faced by the Boot Estate, a City Council Urban Regeneration Strategy launched in 1983 ignored Norris Green.

The Council’s properties on the estate were transferred to new housing association Cobalt in March 2002; in 2006, developer New City Vision began work on part of the former estate, building 90 homes for Cobalt to let at social rents, and another 104 two, three- and four-bedroom houses for sale. When Liverpool City Council transferred the last of its properties to housing associations in 2009, the Norris Green homes were left out, classified as ‘unsustainable stock’.



Norris Green takes shape: roofs are added to this road off Broad Lane, July 1926. Image courtesy of Liverpool Records Office.

While Liverpool was one of the most famous cities in the world during the 1960s, its economy continued to slide. The advent of containerisation decimated patterns of casual dock labour, traditional manufacturing industries slowed down, and Britain as a whole looked increasingly to Europe, rather than the US. For some, Liverpool was on the wrong side of the country.

Still, Barbara Weinberger’s 1973 Liverpool Estates Survey noted the Boot Estate as one of the city’s ‘most stable and respectable’

Council estates; ‘levels of satisfaction are high. Interest in owning is strongest in Norris Green,’ she reported. But many of the houses were beginning to show signs of stress, and political change was just a few years away. The 1977 Homeless Persons Act created a statutory duty to house the vulnerable – those in the greatest housing need. The ‘respectable working classes’ the Council had vetted so meticulously were no longer the highest priority for homes, and, just three years later, Right to Buy drove a wedge through the estate’s cohesion.



Getting Started



## Creating a partnership

While New City Vision began developing part of the estate in 2006, Liverpool City Council put out a tender via OJEU – the Official Journal of the European Union – for development on the rest of the Boot Estate site.

Sigma Inpartnership won the tender and, in 2007, created Regeneration Liverpool as a Limited Liability Partnership with Liverpool City Council. In 2004 it had formed the first public-private regeneration partnership in the UK with Salford City Council and RBS, merging regeneration expertise with fund raising and access to development land.

Designed as a long-term development and regeneration partnership, Regeneration Liverpool was expanded in 2012 to include not just Norris Green, but residential and commercial sites across the city, including Croxteth's Stonebridge Cross, the former Queen Mary's school site in Aintree and Gateacre Comprehensive. The partnership now has exercised options over 100 acres of developments.

**“By August 2007 there were signs of what was to become the worst recession in post-war history.”**

Created as a Local Asset-Backed Vehicle (LABV), Regeneration Liverpool allows the Council to put land into the partnership to regenerate priority sites. Returns to Regeneration Liverpool are then re-invested in the city, into areas decided by Council or Mayoral priorities.

By August 2007 there were signs of what was to become the worst recession in post-war history, and construction projects were the first to suffer. From 2008 to 2011, access to development finance was more or less non-existent. In the mire of recession, this was the time for the public and private sectors to work together, and a partnership-driven LABV was considered the ideal structure for delivering development.





(L-R) Sigma's Graeme Hogg, Mayor Joe Anderson, Ian Simpson (Countryside), Councillors Ann O'Byrne and Alan Walker take a tour of the site

Mark Kitts is assistant director for regeneration at Liverpool City Council. 'The aspiration for delivery brought about by the partnership was a breath of fresh air,' he says, 'and of huge benefit to Norris Green. It brought good, credible partners to the table, with the knowledge and experience and access to finance, to deliver a high quality product.'

The partnership created a ten-year programme of development and regeneration activity, with hundreds of millions invested in the city, and health and education facilities woven into housing and community plans. It also confirmed a commitment to sustainable procurement, local purchasing and training and employing local people.

The Council's housing strategy included aims to improve housing choice across the city through a mix of tenures in new development, and highlighted the need to improve housing for vulnerable households, especially older and disabled households. Tackling the Alt Valley Neighbourhood Plan priorities, Regeneration Liverpool began working

on community engagement and masterplanning guidelines, to safeguard and stimulate the area's economic development and enterprise, safer and stronger communities, children and young people, healthier communities and older people.

Working alongside the Alt Valley Neighbourhood Team, local businesses, the police, city planners, local schools and the local community, it began plans to establish a sustainable plan to deliver 1100 new houses, infrastructure, improvements and an extension to the school, alongside better shopping facilities, pocket parks and green spaces and training and employment opportunities for the local community.

'For success to happen you have to have the right ingredients,' adds Mark. 'The land, the political desire and the expertise of the right partners at the right time, with a good plan and the money to support the plan. That's what the work of the partnership brought to the table.'

## Getting Started



# Interview: the Councillors' perspective

Councillors Alan Walker, Barry Kushner and Sharon Ross are Norris Green's representatives at local government level. Their community was decimated by demolition and the false dawn of redevelopment for many years, and the memories of those days are still clearly in their minds.

*'Of the original families who lived on the estate, we only managed to rehouse about 200 out of 1,500 families,' says Alan. 'People started voting with their feet. They had had years of broken promises. Because it was such a big estate and so well known, it attracted fly tippers and vandals from a wide area. It wasn't locals, but it meant we had to spend a big budget to deal with it.'*

**"We only managed to rehouse about 200 out of the original 1,500 families on the estate. People started voting with their feet."**

Sharon lives in Norris Green, the area she was brought up in. 'Although only part of the estate was "defective", demolition had a detrimental effect on the whole estate. Getting maintenance work done was hard. We lost a lot of neighbours; a lot of the community. It brought down the whole of Norris Green.' 'It was,' adds Alan, 'like a wasteland. That's not an exaggeration.'

*'The entrances to the estate were blocked off with concrete and the grass overgrown,' says Barry. 'You'd end up with just four or five houses in the middle, where lots of houses had been knocked down. Some were boarded up; some lived in.' 'And there were real fears that Monksdown, the local primary school, was going to close,' says Alan. 'About*

*1,000 families had gone by then, and weren't being replaced.'*

New City Vision's work in Norris Green began in 2005, and it was later given an option over a proportion of the estate; the remainder was subject to a tender competition, won by Sigma InPartnership in 2007. Alan became an observer on the board of Regeneration Liverpool alongside Liberal Democrat colleagues, and – with the advent of the new administration – became a full board member alongside Councillors Ann O'Byrne and Malcolm Kennedy.

He recalls: 'The plan wasn't just going to look at housing, but wider regeneration. An extensive period of community consultation followed. That was a step change because it was clear that people had listened; the traditional layout of the estate was going to be maintained where it could, with the suburban family-type housing with gardens and defensible space.'

Alan wrote to the Council's planning department on behalf of local residents. He says: 'The masterplanning and design code took on board a lot of those comments. They really "got" the residents from that stage.' The masterplan was agreed by the planning committee in October 2009.

The estate evolved from phase one, taking on board feedback from residents as the regeneration process got under way. In spite of the depth of the recession, while progress was slow, it had, finally, started.



In 2010, Labour took control of Liverpool City Council, with a pledge to redevelop the Boot Estate as its number one priority. Between 1999 and 2010 there had been only 200 completions, and a review of that progress led to the assertion that the partnership should play a wider role, city-wide.

With the changing financial climate, Sigma also purchased land separately to develop as PRS (private rented sector) homes. ‘Residents suddenly saw an acceleration in terms of numbers,’ says Alan. ‘Countryside were building at rate of sale, and Sigma could commit to 60 or 70 or 80 homes at a time.’

**“It has been transformational. This part of Norris Green has changed beyond all recognition – it’s brought the feel good factor.”**

Sharon moved back to Norris Green in 2008. ‘The area was becoming quite positive, because houses were finally getting built,’ she says. ‘As the estate increased, it lifted the rest of Norris Green with it. Houses were getting improved again.’

‘Now people are moving here because it’s a nice place to live,’ says Barry. ‘People just want a nice house to live in and a nice street – to start to see things happening.’

‘There aren’t the vacancies there were once,’ says Alan. ‘It’s very popular – and has brought all of these people into Norris Green. There are people with family connections who wouldn’t have been able to come back otherwise. It’s had a big impact in terms of rejuvenating the area and that success has also brought in a majority of people who aren’t from Norris Green originally.’

‘Similar to the city itself, people feel proud to be from Norris Green again,’ says Barry. ‘It’s intangible, but it’s had a significant impact.’ ‘People were tired that nothing was getting done. The Boot Estate fragmented our community across Norris Green,’ Sharon adds. ‘Norris Green Village is cementing it – we’re bringing people in again.’

The speed of development – facilitated both by a masterplan to smooth the planning process, and by the introduction of PRS, which allowed commitment to larger numbers of houses – is significant.

‘It has been transformational,’ says Alan. ‘This part of Norris Green has changed beyond all recognition – it’s brought the feel good factor, and has undone much of the damage to its reputation. People talk so much more positively about it. “Have you seen those houses?” they say. And that breeds success in other areas and with other partners.’

‘Progress has been quick,’ agrees Barry. ‘Organisations like to be part of something that is good and working – and we’ve got buy in from Cobalt and the police so you feel like you can actually solve issues. While the estate was in a terrible condition there was a feeling that nothing could happen. There’s a much more positive feeling about public space and what the Council can do. Success breeds success, and this shows things can change.’

‘The joint venture model has achieved this at a very difficult time. It has all happened through a period of the greatest recession since the 1930s. There are hardly any empty properties across the ward now. It really is a remarkable turnaround.’



Norris Green’s new generation of houses are landscaped and green...

## Getting Started



# Designing a modern village

With a partnership in place to take the development forward, Sigma moved to appoint a housebuilder for its initial nine-acre site in summer 2007. Looking for a builder with an ethos that reflected its own, it approached housebuilders Bellway, Gleeson and Countryside.

Citing their experience at Lower Broughton in Salford, Countryside were chosen as the residential development partner. ‘The first phase had to really set the tone for the whole estate, and they were a perfect fit for what we were trying to achieve,’ says Sigma’s Chief Operating Officer Graeme Hogg. ‘The mix of tenures; plot positioning; landscaping and material selection was exactly what we were looking for.’

With builders appointed, attention turned to planning permission and wrapping the project in a masterplan, to allow swift planning permission at each phase. It incorporated core overarching principles, with enough flexibility on each individual phase to allow the estate to evolve at pace. The design plan was to include community input on their priorities and ambitions for the area. Working alongside Liverpool City Council and the Alt Valley Partnership, Sigma began the process of involving local residents, with a series of consultation events in the local area.

Graeme says: ‘Everyone was aware of what wasn’t happening – they’d been told that things would start soon for ten years. We were conscious of not promising things we couldn’t deliver – there was a credibility period between planning and action.’ Ellergreen Tenant and Resident Association chair Clem Pettitt agrees: ‘We had been going to meetings for years, and everyone would fight their own corner. We picked the houses we wanted, and were presented with a plan for a dream village. But they

were scrapped, almost overnight. We were wary, but the changes suggested by Sigma are in line with what we fought for, for all those years. To look at it now is absolutely brilliant.’

**“Countryside were a perfect fit for what we wanted to achieve. The mix of tenures; plot positioning; landscaping and material selection was exactly what we were looking for.”**

Four key themes informed the questions people were asked, about housing, community facilities, transport infrastructure and public realm. They were asked what type of place Norris Green should be? What range of house types were appropriate for Norris Green? How they could make the best use of community facilities, and about the style and nature of streets – the circular streets long having been a source of frustration for residents on the estate – and public realm.

The community’s response was unequivocal. Their replies included the need for quality of design and build standards; concerns about safety in the area; clarity on the regeneration process and true consultation – listening and acting on resident’s views and concerns. There was also an overwhelming desire for ‘traditional’ style houses, with front and back gardens, and fences.

As a result, a masterplan for new infrastructure, school improvements and 829 new homes over the estate’s 60 acres was developed with the Glasgow-based Ian Derby Partnership. It was to include a mixture of houses for sale, private rent and affordable housing.



In New City Vision's development, the estate was evolving, too. 'The first phase was a more contemporary style, with flat roofs and coloured render,' says Sales and Marketing Director Tony Hancock. 'Phases two and three are a more traditional look, with predominantly brick facades but an up-to-date specification on the inside.'

Sigma's vision for the estate was to create a safe, attractive, high-quality, mixed tenure residential neighbourhood. New development, selective refurbishment and public realm improvements were designed to foster a distinctive sense of place, within an accessible and secure network of green spaces.

The plan included new and refurbished links to connect new and existing homes with local facilities, including the park, Ellergreen Centre, school and shops; energy-efficient, well-designed homes, and greater security through the design and layout of homes and streets.

**"The plan would connect new and existing homes with local facilities, including the park, Ellergreen Centre, school and shops; energy-efficient, well-designed homes, and greater security."**

A density of around 35 houses per hectare showed the capacity for between 750 and 1,000 new homes across the site. The plan also consciously moved away from the uniformity of the old Boot Estate by creating 'character areas' with more differentiation between buildings and a range of housing types. It realigned the estate's central artery, Lewisham Road and connected the areas built by the two developers, Sigma and New City Vision, with community facilities. It also advocated providing services and infrastructure via the inherited layout of highways and underground services, as far as practicable.

Everything was ready.

## Getting Started

# Interview: the Board's perspective

Cementing the partnership vehicle, Councillors Ann O'Byrne and Malcolm Kennedy – with responsibility for housing and regeneration respectively – sat on the board of Regeneration Liverpool.

Councillor Ann O'Byrne is the City's cabinet minister for housing, and Chair of the Regeneration Liverpool board. 'The Labour group took control of Liverpool City Council at the same time that the coalition came in,' she says. 'One of the coalition's first acts was to cancel the housing market renewal programme, so the City lost around £126 million in housing grants almost overnight. We had to pick the pieces up.'

**"Norris Green's new homes are beautiful – well insulated and well designed, with solar panels and good-sized front and back gardens, whether they're social housing, or for sale or rent."**

In a city where 70% of homes are pre-1919 terraces, variety and choice – for renters and buyers alike – has proved difficult. 'Housing development was a specific priority of the Mayor,' says Councillor Malcolm Kennedy, whose regeneration remit includes 'anything that isn't a house,' he says.



Norris Green from the air, 2016. Stalisfield Avenue runs through the centre of the estate.

Ann says: 'We already had the bones of the work with Sigma. They talked a lot about what they could do in a partnership to drive forward this programme. Norris Green had been left for far too long – it had a really strong community that had been decimated, and families broken up. That had a massive impact on schools, because houses had gone, and added to the perception that north Liverpool had been given up on. We were determined to turn that around.'

'As a board we spent a lot of time looking at plans, and were heavily involved: what was our vision? Had we made it the best we could? Designing out crime; future planning – they're all things we looked at,' she says. 'Norris Green suffered from formula building in the past,' adds Malcolm. 'It was excellent housing at the time – but not well built, and developed problems over the years. They had no idea what life would be like in 30-40 years,' he says. They were mistakes the board was keen not to repeat.'

'We wanted to make the feel of the area loved and cared for – to weave new homes into an established community. We were conscious of building around an existing community and the impact it had on their lives on a day-to-day basis – on the roads, putting on extra transport. We really wanted to integrate them, and I think we've pulled that off,' says Ann.

Both Councillors point to the contribution of the Ward Councillors, and local residents, in making their voices heard. Ann says: 'The Ward Councillors have been fantastic in this process – it's been really important to have them on the board, and make sure we hear first-hand the

voice of residents. The community lies at the heart of the work; you have to take them with you. There will be things they don't always agree with, but if they can understand the reasons why you're doing them – if they can see the impact it will have later – they will support you. They enabled and allowed us to carry on the development with very little criticism or pressure because they understood the difference it would make. When we talk about partnership, I don't mean in a narrow sense – this is a partnership with residents, the school, the police and community and voluntary sector organisations.'

Norris Green's new homes are 'beautiful – well insulated and well designed, with solar panels and good-sized front and back gardens,' says Ann, 'whether they're social housing, or for sale or rent. You wouldn't know which was which. It feels like a very established community – to feel permanent is very important. It is stable and secure; a place where people want to put down roots.'

Partnership was the key to development. 'Sigma took a risk, and we need to recognise that,' says Ann. 'Supported by the Council and working with Countryside, they've put in really high quality spec homes – there was a risk that people wouldn't buy or rent, but I knew this would take off – because people want to go back home. They're clamouring to take them. Sometimes it's as if people have forgotten the banking crash happened – residents were struggling for mortgages, and banks had withdrawn funding. The Partnership worked in some of the most difficult financial positions because of that lack of funding. Sigma's ability to borrow, with the Council as a guarantor, gave both comfort and made this happen.'

'Liverpool's always been innovative,' she concludes. 'I don't believe either public or private is better than the other – it's about being innovative and pragmatic. That creates the best homes and communities for residents.'



Development



## First steps

With a masterplan in place and a housebuilder on board, work was ready to start. On the other side of the estate, building had begun in earnest. The first phase of the New City Vision/ Cobalt development had been granted planning consent for 196 houses in October 2003, with outline consent for phases two and three following in October 2005.

But by 2008, with Sigma ready to move, the global economy had plunged into crisis. Banks weren't lending; builders and developers were struggling. Regeneration stalled across the country as cranes fell still and diggers silent. Triggered by a sub-prime mortgage crisis in the US, buyers were refused mortgages, cutting off the lending pipeline for housebuilders.

Sigma was granted planning permission in October 2009, but the economic brakes were still on. In 2010, Labour swept to power in Liverpool's local elections, bringing a strong pledge to accelerate the regeneration of the Boot Estate with them. Finally, in August 2010, the scheme was given £2.93m by the Homes and Communities Agency, under its Kickstart programme to build affordable homes.

Recognising the significance of the funding, HCA's director in the North West, Deborah McLaughlin, said: *'We have worked closely with Liverpool City Council and Sigma to make sure these important housing schemes get moving. There is a good mix of new housing for people who want to buy or rent and I'm sure local people will be delighted to see these new high quality homes developed.'*

**“By 2008, the global economy had plunged into crisis. Banks weren't lending; builders and developers were struggling. Regeneration stalled across the country as cranes fell still and diggers silent.”**

The city's new Council leader, Joe Anderson, favoured the joint venture model that could deliver development quickly. And in Regeneration Liverpool, the city had one that was ready to move.





Countryside's Ian Simpson, Councillor Alan Walker and the HCA's Richard Jones look on as Ruth Hanbury and Mayor Joe Anderson see work start on a new phase of the site.

Support from the HCA for 45 social housing units, built for Cobalt – alongside 15 to be sold on the open market – meant work finally started in March 2011. It was a small, but significant, shift in momentum. Council leader Joe Anderson said at the time: *‘This is an exciting time for Norris Green and the days of its notoriety as “the Boot Estate” are coming to an end. These new homes demonstrate our full commitment to the neighbourhood and I’m sure they will play a key role in strengthening community confidence and driving up the quality of lives. In the current economic climate this is great news. This money will help breathe new life into areas which have waited a long time for regeneration to happen.’*

Three quarters of homes in phase 1a were affordable homes, built for local housing association Cobalt. By phase 1b the balance between open market and affordable houses was almost half and half, and phase 1c saw double the number of homes built for the open market. Houses for the private rental market were introduced with a limited number of 20 (out of 170), in phase two; their success led to phase three being developed exclusively for PRS.

Emphasis was placed on landscaping a community that had been designed during the garden suburb movement – but ironing out some of its more impractical intricacies. The trees that line Perilla Drive are a much-loved riot of colour through spring, summer and autumn. Plots were positioned to provide their residents with both space and security and open spaces planted and landscaped as part of a network of walkways to provide access through the estate.

**“Emphasis was placed on landscaping a community that had been designed during the garden suburb movement – but ironing out some of its more impractical intricacies.”**

Claire Parry is the Senior Development Officer at Liverpool City Council. *‘The success of Norris Green Village is testament to how good the product is,’ she says. ‘The homes are traditional – they don’t try to be too quirky or take a different approach and they integrate into the existing layout. It doesn’t feel like an isolated new development.’*

## Development



# Interview: the Council perspective

The election of a new Labour administration in 2010 turned the focus on regeneration from the city centre to a city-wide perspective, taking housing and planning into consideration as well as development.

**“Norris Green is one of the biggest housing redevelopments in the city. The impact it’s had on the area has been phenomenal – people have occupied the houses far quicker than we’d imagined.”**

Mark Kitts, the city’s Assistant Director for Regeneration, says: *‘A new partnership approach evolved from conversations within the City Council. Coming out of the recession we were looking at different ways of trying to accelerate regeneration across the city – both in housing and commercial. Regeneration Liverpool – the partnership between Sigma and the City Council – became that vehicle. Bringing in partners with other expertise – like access to funding – could only strengthen the partnership vehicle.’*

Senior Development Officer Claire Parry became involved in the partnership in 2011, and was responsible for bringing on board the affiliates. *‘Different partners were involved across the city, with Countryside and Sigma picking up the Norris Green element,’ she says. Prior to that, the City’s housing department had led development projects, working without the wider regeneration perspective or brief. The new partnership model became an ambitious catalyst for change.*

Mark says: *‘It brought a focus for key partners in probably one of the most challenging parts of the city. The demise in population from the 1970s led to a drop of 6–7,000 people in one Ward. There were a variety of factors: poor quality housing; the environment; the standard of living and a lack of amenities. Regeneration was being done throughout, but in purely housing-focused way.’*

The 60 acres of the Norris Green redevelopment included proposals in the design masterplan to focus on the built environment. It was a document designed to provide over-arching quality, with a pragmatic flexibility. Claire says: *‘LMH later carried out eco improvements on its houses on Broad Lane, which were initially marked for demolition. They were originally in the Sigma plans, but LMH decided they wanted to do an experimental refurbishment. That has made sure the mix of homes is different – originally houses in Norris Green were all very similar. Now it has a different mix.’*

*‘Dividing the estate between Sigma and New City Vision was a tactic we used generally,’ says Mark. ‘We wanted to spread the opportunity, and there were a number of people interested in doing things in Liverpool. There were attempts to try and bring the two developments together however, focusing on the linked roads and public realm.’*

*‘Norris Green is one of the biggest housing redevelopments we’ve seen in the city. The impact it’s had on the area has been phenomenal – one phase has swiftly moved on to next; people have occupied the houses far quicker than we’d imagined. The speed of their popularity has been a surprise, and that speaks for itself,’ he adds.*





New residents are invited to look around the area's show house.

While the early brief demanded all owner-occupied homes, by the time work began, phase one included social housing and for sale homes at a rate of two-to-one. That ratio was reversed in phase two, where the majority of housing was for sale, while further phases have included a high proportion of PRS (private rented sector) homes, driven by the post-recession difficulty in securing mortgages. Claire and Mark admit to being pleasantly surprised by the level and nature of the demand. 'Six sales per month at one point,' says Claire. 'The proof is in the pudding. They're homes that people want to buy and live in. The defensible space; the driveways; they tick the boxes that people have always wanted.'



Mayor of Liverpool, Joe Anderson, gets an update on plans from Countryside's Ian Kelley.

**"In quietly going about its business, the success the partnership has seen is quite extraordinary."**

Throughout the process – from the recruitment of Countryside, to the submission of a masterplan to the Council – lay an emphasis on masterplanning and urban design, anchored by a desire to create something to be proud of. Those plans involved a degree of pragmatism when needed – the development used existing infrastructure as much as possible, avoiding the costs of digging up and starting again. While the principles remained in place, their manifestation sometimes changed.

*'You cannot underestimate how highly we prioritised Norris Green,' says Mark, 'looking at housing as part of a wider neighbourhood/ community regeneration strategy. If you look at the social economics of the area and neighbourhood, coupled with the condition of the properties and need for physical improvement there was a strong desire to implement change for the better. It's on the edges of the city centre, and is key to the city's future. The work that the partnership has done – in the innovative way that it has, and with its speed of delivery – has had a remarkable impact. In quietly going about its business, the success that it's seen is quite extraordinary.'*

## Development



# Private rents: a step-change...

While the focus in the first phase of development fell firmly on social housing need, the changing global financial environment opened up opportunities for rented homes in the private sector, dovetailing with the Council's aim to diversify tenure in the area.

*demonstrates our commitment to providing support to the housing market and helping meet enormous demand – it's a ground breaking funding package. We fully back Sigma's experience and ambition,' he says.*

Recognising that, by 2013, only one in ten potential buyers were being approved for mortgages, Sigma launched PRS (private rented sector) homes. It was, says Chief Operating Officer Graeme Hogg, 'a crucial factor in increasing the speed of delivery. We weren't constrained by the mortgage market; only by logistics. While we might have expected to sell four to six a month if all was going well, we could complete 15 rentals a month, dramatically changing the speed of transformation. We were bringing 20 economically active families into the area monthly; an investment of about £2 million each month. It was critical for gaining momentum.'

The model for managed suburban private rental developed by Sigma is still unique in the UK, establishing it as the UK's largest funder of PRS housing. The introduction of private equity negates the need for either grants or guarantees from local authorities or a registered social landlord, traditionally the basis for rental development. Gatehouse Bank's Chief Investment Officer Abdulaziz AlDuweesh says: 'Norris Green Village represents a highly ambitious and innovative joint venture alongside Sigma to deliver affordable, sustainable and highly desirable homes in the area. The development site marks a key milestone for the UK private rented sector and we're extremely proud to be able to support the high demand for local housing. The transformation of Norris Green is a huge achievement and testament to the strength of the mixed-tenure regeneration scheme and sustainable community created.'

Launching a joint venture with Gatehouse Bank to provide rented homes in November 2014, Sigma saw its first tenants move into Norris Green in February 2015, under its new DifRent brand, created specifically for the PRS market. Characterised by high quality interiors, appliances and design, and with the security of a contractor to cut the grass and maintain the communal green spaces, resident Emma Stringfellow says 'renting from DifRent means there's more protection for us, too, as they're a bigger company. And they're pretty quick off the mark with doing things.'

For Sigma, Norris Green is part of a growing, nationwide PRS plan, which has already reached in excess of 1,000 properties and over £140 million investment. Managed for Sigma by SDL Lettings, Sigma Chief Executive Graham Barnet says the venture has 'the potential to create one of the first and largest new build PRS platforms in the UK.' Councillor Ann O'Byrne, Liverpool's Deputy Mayor, says: 'The PRS scheme is helping the transformation of Norris Green and has been brought about through the very constructive relationship the City Council has with Sigma.'

Graham Chilver is the Relationship Director, Real Estate for Barclays Corporate. 'The funding deal with Gatehouse and Sigma



Significantly, PRS has the capacity to deliver 15 completed homes each month, five times the speed of single-tenure estates, bringing with it dramatic transformation.

Under the final phase of the NGV development, 69 more private rented homes will be built, alongside 200 new homes for sale. Private rented homes now make up more than 25% of the houses developed by Regeneration Liverpool in Norris Green, alongside 394 homes for sale at market rates and 214 new social homes. In total there will be 221 PRS properties in Norris Green under the DifRent banner, with the vast majority now built and occupied.

Paul Staley, PRS Director at SDL Lettings says: ‘We have worked hard alongside Sigma and Liverpool City Council to create a new

type of community that is building on the success of the wider regeneration. We have tried to build a sense of community amongst our tenants by providing a safe, clean and harmonious environment. As all properties are Safe by Design and include alarms, we maintain the environment by cutting and maintaining all front gardens and communal areas and take a zero tolerance policy towards any anti-social behaviour from our tenants. We ask all tenants to abide by our “Tenant Charter”, that asks them to treat other tenants and the property in a kind and thoughtful manner – in return we provide them with a new home which is energy efficient, professionally-managed and maintained by our dedicated team of property advisors.’

## » Development

# Interview: the Countryside perspective

Housebuilder Countryside was appointed in 2007, with an ethos reflecting Sigma’s, and a style and experience that would deliver the wishes of local residents; ‘traditional’ style houses, with front and back gardens, and fences.

**“If you build quality places and manage them well, communities will thrive. Our ethos is about Creating Places People Love.”**

‘Countryside has a long history and heritage in urban regeneration,’ says Ian Kelley, Managing Director of Countryside Partnerships’ North division. ‘Of working alongside local authorities, working with

local communities and creating new, safe and attractive places for people to live. And the ethos at Sigma is the same – if you build quality places and manage them well, communities will thrive. We liked the fact that Sigma and Liverpool City Council were approaching the regeneration of Norris Green professionally, methodically and with quality at the core.

‘Our ethos is about Creating Places People Love. It’s as simple as that. With Sigma’s PRS model, we were producing over 20 homes per month during part of the development, so the transformation was rapid. Their strong asset management regime ensures that the community is looked after – and any problems are quickly dealt with. Community

sustainability is all about creating a desire to remain – and we’ve achieved that here.’

**“Working with local people on the project, supporting the local economy and creating jobs and opportunities, has also given people a sense of ownership.”**

The development focused on a range of house types, attracting a variety of residents, from young couples through to retirees. Ian says: ‘It’s a high quality range of houses, set in well landscaped areas with safe linkages to the community facilities. In Norris Green’s case, providing a good and safe link between the community centres at Ellergreen and Monksdown primary school was key.’

Working with local people on the project, supporting the local economy and creating jobs and opportunities, has also given people a sense of ownership. ‘We’ve employed local trades wherever this was possible, and we’ve also run a successful local apprenticeships scheme on the site,’ Ian says. In spite of the tumultuous economic position at the time, new homes and new opportunities have created a renewed sense of optimism.

‘The depth of the economic recession meant that the site started slowly, but we managed to generate momentum by working with Sigma and the Council to secure government support,’ says Ian. The mixture of tenures was key on a challenging economic landscape: ‘With sales alongside PRS houses and affordable homes, we quickly created attractive spaces – which undoubtedly helped attract new buyers. During 2015 the site was one of our fastest selling sites in the country!’

‘We were confident that given the quality of the homes, materials, landscaping and the partners involved that this would work well. It was extremely difficult at the outset – but once we had the momentum, we were confident this scheme would sell well.’

As the scheme has progressed, additional house types have been added to the development, responding to the interests of both buyers and renters. ‘We have a real cross-section of residents at Norris Green,’ says Ian. ‘But there was always a desire for people to return a generation after, too, as many of our clients have family still living in or near Norris Green.’

Perceptions of Norris Green are undoubtedly changing. Ian says: ‘When you look at the area before, and the challenges vacant land created – including crime, health stats and education attainment – as well as the physical reality – the scheme has turned around completely. Liverpool City Council cites it as probably its best regeneration/housing site in the city now. That’s quite a turnaround and has helped re-set the perceptions locally. No-one refers to the Boot Estate anymore. It’s Norris Green Village now.’

**“The challenges vacant land created – including crime, health stats and education attainment – as well as the physical reality – have been turned around completely by the scheme.”**

Looking back at the economic reality, and a site long-neglected, partnership has been key to its swift, sustainable progress. ‘Successful regeneration needs buy-in from a wide group and, between the partners – Sigma, Liverpool City Council, the housing association and the local community – we created a very successful working arrangement,’ Ian says. ‘This included regular dialogue with the local RSLs, the school and the community centres, as well as the local councillors. This ensured that what we built reflected the needs of the people who are now living here. It has ensured strong community sustainability – one that will continue to prosper long after we have finished building. It’s a very good result all round.’





## Taking shape

While affordable housing drove early development in Norris Green Village, the completed estate will see almost half of its homes sold on the open market, with the other half split between private renters and affordable housing. In its most recent phase, 56 affordable homes were built for LMH, while early partner Cobalt was the recipient of 158 houses over the last five years.

**“Housing development has been a specific priority of the Mayor. Improving the housing offer in the city is long overdue, and building diversity of tenure into areas contributes more to the city as a whole.”**

Councillor Malcolm Kennedy is the city’s Executive Member for Regeneration, and a Regeneration Liverpool board member. *‘Housing development has been a specific priority of the Mayor,’* he says. *‘Improving the housing offer in the city is long overdue, and building diversity of tenure into areas contributes more to the city as a whole.’* Tony Hancock, Sales and Marketing Director at New City Vision, agrees. *‘The number of sales has been a great success, alongside the housing association houses’ seamless integration into the development.’*

Since 2011, Sigma has built more than 600 new homes in Norris Green, in an investment worth more than £100 million to the local economy. The development of innovative new building models, including PRS, has contributed to speed of transformation in the area. The final total of 829 houses will be complete by 2018, bringing a mixture of residents with family connections to the area, and families who have moved to Liverpool from across the country. New City Vision has added 350 plots, with another 165 to complete.

In the scheme’s latest phase, The Avenue, more than half of the reservations were made as a result of the popular government-backed Help to Buy scheme, where buyers can secure a home with a deposit of just 5%. Speaking as the development entered its final phase, Sigma Chief Executive Graham Barnet said: *‘It has been important to build homes that residents find attractive and which will contribute to the ongoing regeneration of the area.’*



Norris Green Today



## A greener environment...

In April 2012 Regeneration Liverpool successfully bid for £750,000 from the Growing Places fund, to complement its next phase of development in Norris Green. The money, which is designed to support infrastructure projects in creating economic growth, jobs and houses, is allocated locally, meaning it can be prioritised according to an area's needs and ambitions. The partnership has already begun repaying the loan, based on value created by the partnership via land value and shared equity.

Growing Places money was spent on new link roads in the estate and improving footpaths and public spaces; £250,000 was spent at Monksdown, while a further £50,000 went towards the local park.

Norris Green Park's leafy 17 acres have become the focus of much of the renewed community activity. Formerly the site of Norris Green Mansion, the house was demolished in the 1930s, leaving only the stable yard wall and old walled garden visible now. Councillor Sharon Ross says a new tenant group is working on bolstering community spirit, with a range of activities in the park.

The area has a history of civic pride. It is the site of one of the first community groups in the country, when a grant from the Carnegie Trust paid for an organiser for the Norris Green Community Association in 1930. Today, resident chair Clem Pettitt is keen to see a range of activities for local residents. *'£50,000 came from the partnership, via the Growing Places fund to improve the park, and form the Friends of Norris Green Park. We're designated to have a new soft play playground now, and more events are happening there. Sigma have donated money for events for residents like a local bus service during the redevelopment, childrens' days out and events in the park like our Christmas Elf Run. We had a fantastic turn out for our last Fun Day there, with more than 800 people.'*

*'Sigma have been very good. They haven't just stopped where their houses stop - they seem to go the extra mile to help the community.'*





The estate's new homes are light, bright and spacious.



Katarina Forgione's family love their new home. Many of the homes offer views across the landscaped green spaces

The estate's success has inspired renewed confidence and ambition: 74 derelict properties belonging to housing association LMH were ear-marked for demolition, before a £4.5 million investment transformed them into state-of-the-art eco homes.

The homes in Broad Lane and Winskill Road feature a range of green technologies, including thermal insulation, solar panels, ventilation heat recovery systems and LED lights, alongside fittings designed to reduce water consumption and energy use.

Meanwhile, redevelopment work has attempted to use existing utilities and layouts where possible, but residents' concerns about the shape of the estate have been heeded. Full circular crescents have been rejigged as partial loops; Lewisham Road has been realigned around the new 'The Avenue' development, with its central green space. Disused patches of grass have been replaced with new homes.

Clem says: 'The estate itself is absolutely fantastic compared with what it was. We've got extra houses where there was a bit of grass, and the walk down Lewisham Road is lovely. The area has become quite affluent now.'

**“The Boot Estate provided headlines for five to six years, but now people talk about Norris Green Village. It's a huge perception change.”**

The estate has utilised both local expertise and aspirations. 'The local community been involved in the longer-term development,' says New City Vision's Tony Hancock, 'and the reputation of the whole area has been enhanced by the regeneration. Local people have been employed on the site directly through ourselves and our sub-contractors - we've always listened to what local people have wanted.'

Councillor Alan Walker says: 'When you meet people who were involved in earlier phases and they still talk positively about the estate and how they like living there. People don't refer to the Boot Estate any more - it provided headlines in the Echo for five to six years at one point, but now people talk about Norris Green Village. It's a huge perception change.'



Norris Green Today



## Interview: The school's perspective

Headteacher Stephanie Gough has taught at Monksdown for 36 years, seeing it come full circle from a thriving education environment, through painful years pre-redevelopment, to a popular, growing school once again.

*'When I first came here the area was well established,' she says. 'Things were so disorganised when the estate was knocked down. The whole community suffered, not just the school and housing. There was a huge amount of uncertainty and all sorts of other problems. One year we were surrounded by absolutely nothing – we were literally standing in the middle of a wasteland.'*

As pupil admission numbers dropped from around 60 to 45, year groups became vertically-streamed classes, putting huge pressure on the school's budgets. *'It was a very difficult time,' says Steph. 'Children didn't get the extra enrichment activities – the trips and theatre groups that we believe is an important part of their education. But the teaching was always excellent.'*

*'During that time the staff never changed, and even then it was rated Outstanding,' she adds. 'They were very loyal to the area – a good number of us are quite local.'* Still, the school was put under possible threat of closure as pupil numbers dropped, and was mooted for amalgamation with another, unnamed, local school.

As part of the development of the roads around the school, Monksdown gained new outside space, creating a grassy play area used by the children for the Forest Schools and Edible Playground projects. *'Countryside, Sigma and the local Ward Councillors have been so supportive; as has our local MP, Stephen Twigg. We've had a good relationship with Sigma throughout,' she says.*

***"We've gone from struggling for numbers to a waiting list across every year group. Now the school is expanding again..."***

The estate's recent redevelopment has turned the school's fortunes around. Steph says: *'We've gone from struggling for numbers to a waiting list across every year group (apart from upper juniors). Now they're expanding the school again, and we wonder how big we can grow.'* Monksdown's current 478 children includes its nursery, but numbers were as low as 235 in 2011.

Monksdown's pupils come from more than 12 different countries now, and have moved to the area from all over the UK, including London, Yorkshire, the South West, Wales and Ireland. In many classes, just one third of pupils started in the reception class, such has been the speed of growth. *'We reflect what a vibrant city Liverpool is now,' says Steph. 'We love having people from all over the world. The children are great resources*



Pupils at Monksdown Primary School enjoy their new space.

*– they can talk about different countries and cultures. Today is Chinese culture day, for example, which includes cookery, fan dances and calligraphy. They're an asset to our school and the families are so supportive.'*

***"The more children we have, the more chance there is for everyone to find someone with a similar outlook and interests..."***

Such is the estate's close-knit character that many of the current parents also attended Monksdown. Steph says: *'One was in last week and I was showing him around – they absolutely love the changes; it's allowed us to have state-of-the-art computers, a library and a cookery room. They're things that the children never had before.'*

The new additions are open to the wider community. Steph says: *'We run Dads and Daughters and Lads and Dads cooking programmes – they're very popular; we also provide a "Cooking on a Budget" course. The library is open every night after school*

*for all students and family members. The reading areas in classrooms are quite a luxury – we've used the money we have from additional children to provide more homely resources.'* Where once the school was shuttered and hidden behind barbed wire after hours, now it is the area's focal point: a vibrant community hub.

The school's 2014 Ofsted inspection agreed, reporting: *'The behaviour of pupils is excellent. The school provides an oasis of calm. Teaching is effective and pupils enjoy learning. A wide variety of activities sustain their enthusiasm. Parents are very pleased about the education their children receive. The school is held in high esteem by the local community.'*

*'The whole school has benefitted from increased numbers –not just budget-wise, but because social engagement improves,' says Steph. 'The more children we have, the more chance there is for everyone to find someone with a similar outlook and interests... It's been a success story for the school.'*





Monksdown Primary has benefited from a £250,000 investment from the Growing Places fund.

## Norris Green Today



# The built environment

Alongside Norris Green Village's 829 new homes, a range of community facilities have been redeveloped and refurbished to support the local community.

**“Education attainment has improved, with a 43% increase in the number of pupils achieving five or more A\* – Cs at Key Stage Four.”**

Monksdown Primary School has been integral to plans to place local residents at the heart of the development. Adjacent unused land was given to the school, and £250,000 from the Growing Places fund

invested in it. Work at Monksdown has included removing the razor wire fences which enclosed it before the estate's redevelopment and the integration of extra space to the school's existing playground, creating a grassy play area that the school has used for numerous new initiatives.

*‘That bit of extra space has had a huge impact,’ says Headteacher Stephanie Gough. ‘There was never anywhere to play on grass. Since we’ve had the additional land, we’ve been able to start different initiatives – we’re involved in Forest Schools... One teacher has trained and we have another one in training.’*

Monksdown has also become involved in Edible Playgrounds, which inspires children to grow and eat good food. *‘They can see the food from farm to fork,’ says Steph. ‘It’s plant to plate...’*

Education attainment has improved, with a 43% increase in the number of pupils achieving five or more A\* – Cs at Key Stage Four, between 2008 and 2015. The average age of residents in Norris Green has also fallen with the impact of the new houses, bringing greater demand for sports and childcare facilities. The area has seen an 11% increase in the number of under 15s. More than half of Sigma's DifRent tenants – 52% – are aged between 26 and 35, while another 19% fall into the 18–25 bracket; of those tenants, an average of 81% are renewing their tenancies, according to SDL's reports.

SDL's statistics also show that a third of tenants have a household income of £25–35,000; another third (37%) earn between £36–55,000 and over 10% of the properties have household incomes in excess of £56,000. More than a third – 35% – have also travelled more than ten miles to live in the area.

On the estate's northern edge, the Ellergreen Centre provides a community hub, with a medical centre and pharmacy, cafe, nursery and early learning facility. The Care Quality Commission rates Ellergreen Medical Centre as ‘good’, and access to the surgery and pharmacy and facilities at the Ellergreen Centre have been improved by new pathways and renovated pavements. The other side of centre is occupied by Lifestyles Ellergreen, the Council-run sports facility that includes a swimming pool, gym, aerobic fitness classes and yoga sessions.

Clubmoor and Ellergreen Children's Centre is responsible for looking after the estate's youngest residents, with a nursery, children's services and family support programmes. Alongside its sensory stay and play, sleeping and feeding classes and baby massage, it runs innovative projects like DadZone, which encourages sport, arts and crafts and cookery sessions.

A new Aldi supermarket development has sprung up because of the impact of the new estate, boosting the local community. The sense of renewed optimism is tangible. Councillor Alan Walker says: *‘The Ellergreen Centre is growing; the school's doing well; Cobalt can let properties easily. Ellergreen Tenant and Resident Association Group have a lot of contacts in the area. Lots more activity takes place in Norris Green Park, which has seen an investment from the Growing Places fund, as part of the redevelopment. Monksdown School has had some investment for extra land and landscaping.’*

Sigma has been instrumental in the transformation of the estate's local secondary school, St John Bosco in Croxteth, destination of many of Norris Green's teenage girls. The girl's Catholic comprehensive was completely rebuilt on land adjacent to the old school, alongside Neptune Developments, as another piece in the Regeneration Liverpool jigsaw. Specialising in visual and performing arts, the school features state-of-the-art drama and dance studios, and forms part of the Mayor Joe Anderson's commitment to building 12 new schools in the city. In line with Regeneration Liverpool's company vision, construction focused on creating opportunities locally: six apprenticeships were created; 65% of labour drawn locally, and a similar proportion of contracts handed to local firms.



Playtime at Monksdown Primary.



## Norris Green Today



## The families' perspective

Since 2008, the population of Norris Green has increased to almost 16,000. More than 10% of the enquiries Countryside fields are from more than 20 miles away, and it is one of their most popular sales destinations.

Emma Stringfellow moved into her new home, which she rents from DifRent, Sigma's PRS brand, with her two children, in summer 2015. 'I'd always lived in West Derby, which is just around the corner,' she says, 'so I guess you could say I had a few preconceptions about Norris Green. When the house came up, I loved the look of it. Some of my friends said "oh no, you can't move to Norris Green", but I literally fell in love with it. I watched it get built. I'm the first person to live in it – it's not mine, but it feels like mine.'

Registered blind, with two children to look after, Emma relies on accessibility for getting around. 'You're away from the main road here, but still close enough to get into town, and I can walk to school with the kids,' she says. 'It's brilliant in terms of the shops we have – they're just at the end of the road, with a dentist and pharmacy.'

'I love living in the area. Family and friends are really surprised when they come over – they all think the house is gorgeous. I've always lived in rented accommodation, and no-one's ever raved about a house as much as they do about this one.'

Echoing the original estate's garden suburb inspiration, she says: 'Our back garden's gorgeous – it was really important in terms of what I was looking for. It's big, with different areas with stones, and paving, so it's a lovely environment for the children to play in. When you look out of the window you can see everyone's kids playing in the gardens, and you know that things are safe.'

It's a friendly community that she's quickly settled in to, she says. 'I'd love to live here for a while – given the opportunity I'd love to stay here and for it to be the place that my children grow up.'

**"I watched it get built. I'm the first person to live in it – it's not mine, but it feels like mine."**

Around the corner, Clem Pettitt is the chair of the Ellergreen Tenant and Resident Association. He has lived in Norris Green all of his life, and been involved in the local community for more than 50 years. 'I class myself as a fighter of lost battles,' he says, smiling. But admits that there was a time when residents thought nothing would ever happen on the estate. 'Everything just stopped,' he says. 'I try and put over the human side of the ups and downs we've had. So while residents get the dust from the building site blowing in, I tell people that they're lucky to put up with it. We have battled for so long, we're seeing the fruits of our labours now. We can put up with the dust!'

**"We have battled for so long, we're seeing the fruits of our labours now. We can put up with some dust blowing down from the building site!"**



Katarina Forgiione and her family are new residents.

He remembers the impact of the Boot Estate when it was first built. 'It was a showpiece, and people came from all over Europe to see it. The tree-lined roads; front and back gardens; bathrooms and toilets – people had never had them before. Imagine... But you can only look forward. We're contented; there are still a number of people who've lived here all their lives. When I speak to the people in the road, everybody's quite happy, and happy with the houses and community. We've seen many changes. One of our biggest problems was that the school, Monksdown was closing down. Now it's very difficult to get a place in it...'

**"When I speak to the people in the road, everybody's quite happy, and happy with the houses and community. We've seen many changes."**

After so many years of waiting, Clem admits he's looking forward to seeing the final pieces of the jigsaw slotted together. 'I want to see it all finished – so the building work is finished, and the roads and the sidewalks are tidy, and everything's been cleaned up. But that's always my problem! When you look around now, it's absolutely brilliant. Being an old person – it's better for me to walk around. We've had the sidewalks tarmacked. As long-time residents, we're over the moon.'



Clem Pettitt chairs the Ellergreen Tenant and Resident Association.



Norris Green Today

# Norris Green in numbers



829

Total units built



63  
acres

Site size



£100  
million

Invested

Education:

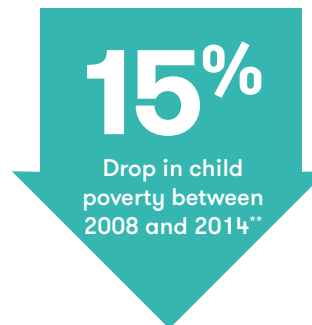


Increase in school numbers\* from  
**235**  
in 2011 to

**472**  
children now (including its nursery)



increase in the number of pupils achieving five or more A\* – Cs at Key Stage Four (including English and Maths) between 2008 and 2015\*



Drop in child poverty between 2008 and 2014\*\*



Monksdown Primary School:

**£250,000**

invested by Regeneration Liverpool \*\*\*

\* Monksdown Primary School \*\* Liverpool City Council Ward data \*\*\* Sigma/Regeneration Liverpool

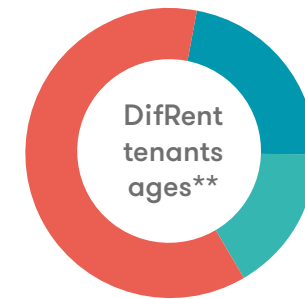


438

Between 2008 and 2015 the population of Norris Green increased by 438, including an 11% increase in under 15s, and a 3.2% increase in adults aged between 16 and 64\*



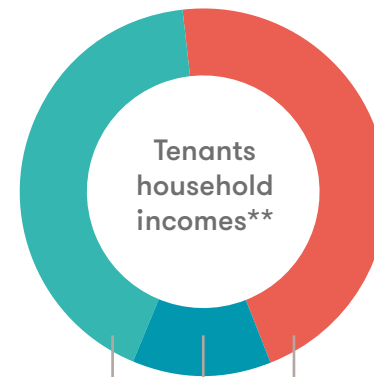
In 2015 there were 452 more homes than in 2008, a 6.6% increase\*



19% are between 18 and 25  
53% are between 26 and 35  
14% are between 36 and 45

**£750,000**

from the Growing Places fund invested by Regeneration Liverpool, split between Norris Green Park, Monksdown School and new link roads on the estate\*\*\*\*



10% > £56,000  
34% £25,000 – £35,000  
37% £36,000 – £55,000



35% of DifRent tenants have moved more than ten miles to live in Norris Green\*\*

In six months in 2009, Merseyside Fire Service was called to the Boot Estate 124 times to deal with 95 fires. 33 of them in empty properties, at a cost £500,000\*\*\*



\* Liverpool City Council Ward data \*\* SDL Tenant Survey \*\*\* Merseyside Fire Service \*\*\*\* Sigma/Regeneration Liverpool



## Norris Green Regeneration



# Thanks...

**Abdulaziz AIDuweesh**, Gatehouse Bank

**Joe Anderson**, Liverpool City Council

**Graham Chilver**, Barclays Corporate

**Katarina Forgione and family**, DifRent tenants

**Stephanie Gough**, Monksdown Primary School

**Tony Hancock**, New City Vision

**Ian Kelley**, Countryside Partnership

**Malcolm Kennedy**, Liverpool City Council

**Mark Kitts**, Liverpool City Council

**Barry Kushner**, Liverpool City Council

Liverpool Record Office

**Ann O'Byrne**, Liverpool City Council

**Claire Parry**, Liverpool City Council

**Clem Pettitt**, chair of the Ellergreen Tenant and Resident Association

Pupils at Monksdown Primary School

**Sharon Ross**, Liverpool City Council

**Paul Staley**, SDL Lettings

**Emma Stringfellow**, DifRent tenant

**Alan Walker**, Liverpool City Council

## Acknowledgements

**English Garden Cities:** An introduction, written by Mervyn Miller (Historic England)

**Norris Green Homes for Heroes in Changing Suburbs:** Foundation, Form and Function, edited by Richard Harris, Peter Larkham

Website **Municipal Dreams** has been a mine of information about Norris Green, including the quotes from Barbara Weinberger's 1973 Liverpool Estates Survey

**Historic England Archive** (Aerofilms Collection)

## ACTIVE PROFILE

Produced by **Active Profile**

Written by **Fiona Shaw** at Wordscapes

Design by **Chris Nelson**

Photography by **Ant Clausen**

Sigma Capital Group plc

1 St Ann Street, Manchester, M2 7LR

[www.sigmacapital.co.uk](http://www.sigmacapital.co.uk)

0333 999 9926







Sigma Capital Group plc



Liverpool  
City Council



Regeneration Liverpool  
Delivering the Vision



COUNTRYSIDE  
Places People Love



Homes &  
Communities  
Agency



GATEHOUSE BANK



