

4 Dudley, St Andrews – Local Priorities

Two local priorities have been identified and approved by the St Andrews Panel:

To establish an infrastructure of Youth & Community Facilities and create long term opportunities for young people to engage in useful activities and to reduce the perception of low esteem and self confidence.

To encourage greater community involvement, in working with the voluntary & statutory sectors.

Identified needs

- Deprivation as identified by national indices
- No infrastructure of youth & community facilities
- Perception of crime & anti-social behaviour
- Second & third generation unemployment
- Issues of low esteem & self confidence
- Isolated estates & therefore communities

Background information on the St Andrews Ward of Dudley

The St Andrew's Ward (the neighbourhood and hereafter called the ward) is made up of the following areas; Lodge Farm, Saltwells, Netherton (part), Derby End & Dudley Wood as identified by local communities.

The Local Authority has identified the ward as being amongst the most deprived in the Borough and as a result has allocated a Priority Neighbourhood Manager to the Lodge Farm and Saltwells area.

Due to road planning, commercial and industrial developments, estates have become divided from each other creating isolation for the communities.

With no central focus, such as, a town centre, there has been little history of voluntary and statutory community development.

To the west of the ward is the Merryhill Shopping Centre, separated by a busy dual carriageway. For many, including young people, this has become an alternative town centre and leisure facility. It also provides full, part-time and seasonal retail employment opportunities.

To the East of the ward is the boundary with Sandwell Borough Council, an authority of even greater deprivation.

St Andrew's does boast about the Saltwells Nature Reserve, an area of natural beauty and interest, an additional resource is Lodge Farm Reservoir.

However, to access other recreational facilities, such as, leisure centres, cinemas etc, residents are required to travel to other areas of the Borough.

Primary education is well served but there is no secondary school or further education college within the ward, although the local Education Authority recently opened a Neighbourhood Learning Centre in Dudley Wood, to develop adult education provision.

The overall population of St Andrew's is 12,423 with a more or less even gender split and an age breakdown reflective of the country as a whole. 95% of the population is white and the predominant religion is Christian, slightly higher than the national average.

Issues faced by St Andrews

The St Andrew's Ward (the neighbourhood and hereafter called the ward) is made up of the following areas; Lodge Farm, Saltwells, Netherton (part), Derby End & Dudley Wood as identified by local communities.

Dudley Borough has 24 wards, using results from the 2001 Census, St Andrews has a population of 12,423, made up of 3,232 0-19 (26%), 6,579 20-60 (53%), 60+ 2,612 (21%). The Ward is 18th in respect of the number of households with dependent children (32.6%), 19th in respect of lone parent households (7.1%), 16th in respect of owner occupation (64%), 17th in respect of unemployment (7.4%), permanently sick/disabled (6.7%). 30% of the households have no independent mode of transport & 45% of the population have no qualifications. It is an accepted fact that up to 40% of Dudley's population is illiterate & innumerate, yet the borough as a whole has less than 10% of it's population where English is not the first language.

St Andrews ward is bordered by 4 wards that suffer from comparable problems, this relates to the areas industrial past. The area of Cradley Heath (part of Sandwell) bordering the rest of the ward suffers from even higher levels of deprivation.

With no central focus, such as, a town centre, there has been little history of voluntary and statutory community development. The topography of the area is very hilly, which make movement in the area for those without transport very difficult, 64% of the area is made up of owner occupied properties, many of these were purchased under the right to buy, this has increased the problems of the existing council tenants, they have become a minority with a much smaller voice in local affairs, yet, the majority of problems come from these areas. As has been mentioned the area is split into 5 recognisable areas: Saltwells, Lodge Farm, Darby End, Dudley Wood & Netherton. These estates were built around the heavy industry that provided the employment, with the decline of heavy industry large tracts of land have been converted to warehousing or private housing. To the West of the ward is the Merryhill Shopping Centre, separated by a busy dual carriageway. For many, including young people, this has become an alternative town

centre and leisure facility. Whilst it provides full, part-time and seasonal retail employment opportunities, due to the low educational achievements of the locals, the majority of jobs are taken by people living outside Dudley's most deprived areas.

The difficulties encountered by the residents, due to the above circumstances and the unwillingness to travel out of their immediate area, (Black Country residents are very territorial and will in some cases, class the opposite side of the road in which they live as 'Foreign Territory'). Due to this situation, the area suffers from a number of 'hotspots' created by limited numbers of young people, which in turn increases the fear of crime amongst adult residents in these areas. This perception of crime is far higher than the actual levels experienced by the area.

The Key Issues identified by the LSP in the Neighbourhood Plan are:

- Deprivation as identified by national indices
- No established infrastructure of youth or community facilities
- Perceptions of crime & anti-social behaviour
- Second & Third generation Unemployment
- Issues of low self esteem & self confidence
- Isolated estates & therefore communities

Considerable consultation has been undertaken with tenants & residents groups and Dudley Voluntary Youth Organisations to ascertain priorities, the overwhelming response from across St Andrews is the desperate need to support the aspirations of the children & young people. Work has already started, the CVS has co-ordinated a number of meetings bringing together voluntary sports groups from around the area, who have identified ways in which they can help the young people. For all its problems St Andrews has one unique feature 'Lodge Farm Reservoir', this facility is used for: Sailing, Water Skiing, Sub Aqua, Fishing etc, it is the only facility for open water diving in the West Midlands (the nearest other dive centre is in Leicestershire). These groups together with other sports groups have accessed funding from other sources to give young people from St Andrews the opportunity to participate in activities that were previously beyond their reach.

The panel feel that the initial thrust of FS funding must be to tackle the 'hotspots' that have been identified, supporting the provision of equipment that has long term usage and mobile youth worker presence, will give residents of St Andrews proof that Fair Share is there to make a difference.

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