

Geography Homework

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Summarise the Redevelopment of the Longbenton Estate (Newcastle)

- In 1946, a year after the Second World War had ended, the corporation of Newcastle Upon Tyne Began a project to increase housing around the area as a method of solving overcrowding and remove slum housing in the city.
- There was little land available so local authorities in Northumberland were asked to accommodate an overspill estate. Newcastle and Wallsend were unwilling but Longbenton was.
- The estate was developed in four 'units' and would eventually house over 14,000 residents. The first three units (longbenton east) consisted almost entirely of two story houses, semi-detached or in short terraces.
- However unit 4 (Longbenton west) had a more adventurous design. It has undergone many changes over the last 50 years while units 1-3 remain almost unaltered.

The post war problem

- During the Second World War 468,000 properties had been destroyed leaving many homeless and without basic services. Many families lived in squalid conditions or slums, which lacked baths and indoor toilets causing hygiene to be the number 1 problem.
- The labour party promised to oversee the building of 5 million new homes to replace those lost in the war and to rehouse people in need of basic hygiene services.
- The housing minister of the time believed that council estates should be mixed communities, cutting across class and income barriers and offering a quality of life superior to that in private estates.

The Building of the estates

- In 1949, Plans for the 96-hectare unit Newcastle Corporation produced four of the Longbenton estates. The waiting list for housing was increasing, so the city architect was under enormous pressure to fit a substantial amount of housing into the new estate.
- The design was based on long blocks of 8-storey 'super flats' which would house over twice as many people per hectare as conventional

two storey houses, Longbenton Urban district opposed the building of such flats but permitted less ambitious three storey flats.

- In the first five years, these provided 77% of the estates dwelling units, and short terraces of two storey houses accounted for the remaining 23%.
- There were to be just under 2,800 dwellings to accommodate 9,000 people. Only 48 were bungalows specifically designed for elderly people.
- Construction of the estate began in 1952, the following year the Newcastle city architect renewed pressure for higher-rise building, this time for four or five storey blocks slotted into some of the empty spaces. Several such blocks were soon built.
- Newcastle Corporation was itself under pressure from the conservative government, elected in 1951, to accelerate the housing program- the party had promised to oversee the building of 300,000 new homes a year.
- In 1959 spurred on by the housing subsidies act (1956) Newcastle Corporation proposed two 15-storey blocks for the estate. The city architects suggested that these would form 'a point of interest' and help to relieve the estates monotony.
- Although Longbenton UDC opposed the construction of the tower blocks, describing them as 'inappropriate and completely out of harmony with the surrounding development' they were built.
- The UDC was critical of this 'piecemeal' development on the reduced areas of open space, but by 1968, construction of these new homes was underway.

The early years

People and Facilities

- Pioneer households in Longbenton west were, typically, married couples with young families. Children re-housed from the terraced Victorian streets of Byker, Heaton, and Walker in inner Newcastle, enjoyed playing in the open-plan areas of grass. However, the first primary school was opened only in 1956; until then they had to attend schools in Newcastle.
- Until the Arndale centre was opened in the centre of the estate in 1959, the nearest shops were in the east estate, but several mobile shops visited to supply convenience goods. When it opened, the Arndale centre provided a range of convenience shops including a Woolworth's store, three supermarkets and a post office to which

a library, a child welfare centre and a public house were later added.

- By 1970 when the estate was complete it contained churches of four christen denominations, three primary schools, four doctors surgeries, three public houses, a community centre, a youth centre attached to one of the churches, and a catholic social club.
- Opportunities for employment were few, but many residents worked at the ministry of pensions post office, which opened immediately south of the estate in 1947 and offered numerous clerical jobs. Longbenton railway station opened in the same year to serve the offices. This station is now on the Tyne and wear metro 'rapid transit' system with frequent services to Newcastle.

The Landscape

- In the planning during 1949-53 little consideration was given to the overall appearance of the estate. A 1960 report criticised the haphazard disposal of blocks of flats within a windswept, undeveloped landscape, and the marked absence of privacy.

The 1970's and 1980's

- Longbenton became part of the borough of north Tyneside, which took over management of the estate, and ushered in another period of change. Unpopular five-storey flats and maisonettes were demolished from 1977.
- By 1980, the housing stock needed modernisation. Some three storey blocks were demolished, restoring a little of the open space lost in the 1960's in filling. Others were fitted out for elderly people.
- Central heating was belatedly installed, roofs were replaced and external decoration was changed to add variety. Entry phone systems were installed to control access to communal stairways and cause a decrease in crime and the space in front of the flats was fenced off, providing a defensible space, which could be used as private gardens for the ground-floor flats.

Early 1990's

- Flats proved difficult to let and were boarded up against intruders.
- The quality of the Arndale shopping centre declined, owing to high rents and competition.
- Public transport was inadequate, on an estate where car ownership was well below the uk average.

- The southwest corner of the estate was turned over to a private developer for the construction of detached houses to sell.

Late 1990's

- After two decades of problems, north Tyneside council and estate residents agreed that wholesale regeneration was needed.
- Improvement plans were drawn up resulting, in 1996, in a successful bid for government single regeneration budget funding. This secured, over a seven-year period, £17.9 million, in addition to £25.6 million from the private sector and £17 million from the EU.
- Massive changes are now underway in Longbenton. By 2000, many hectares of land formerly occupied by 1950's flats and 1960's infill houses lay empty, or were being redeveloped with two-storey housing on realigned roads.

New Employment

- Great changes have not been limited to the interior of the estate. In the 1940's the danger of subsidence caused by coal mining fixed the northern limits.
- Two business parks have been developed on this Greenfield site. Ringtons Tea Company has its headquarters here and its distribution centre. There is also a large BT call centre dealing with outbound sales and employing 650 staff.

Conclusion

In November 2002, when Longbenton estate celebrated its half century, the regeneration was largely complete. Both high-rise block of flats, all the four and five-storey developments and many of the three storey blocks have been removed. Many of the traditional houses with gardens will remain, many of them privately owned and tastefully improved. Longbenton now reflects the political, social and architectural changes of the last 50 years.