

## HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS NEWS

**Mitchells Bakery on Oakfield Road sold bread to the Anfield community and pies to Liverpool FC matchgoers for 85 years until it fell foul of the failed Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder programme. The tightly packed terraced streets around the football ground opposite the bakery were awaiting demolition when the coalition government halted the programme.**

Mitchells had a compulsory purchase order hanging over it and half its customers had been dispersed from the area. The family business finally shut up shop in January and the building was left to decay along with the boarded-up family homes around it.

But the old bakery is now a hive of activity again after a group of local residents, aided by a socially-committed Dutch artist and an architecture practice specialising in urban regeneration, bought the building and set about producing redesigns of the adjoining row of houses with local youngsters. The resulting project, 2Up

2Down/Homebaked, is set up as a community land trust, which aims to rent and manage the houses for local residents and run the bakery as

a not-for-profit business. In the evenings the bakery will double as a community hub. Workshops, exhibitions and expert talks on housing issues are held on a regular basis. They vary from the practical – how a co-operative works, for example – to the more intellectual, about the relationship between culture and economy.

“When it closed it felt like the last nail in the coffin,” says local resident Lynn Tolman. “Oakfield Road changed from being a high street where you could do your whole shop to somewhere you can only get kebabs or pizzas. It’s just all bled away.”

“It’s the right place and the right time,” says another resident, Sue Humphreys. “The recession has meant that no one is building new houses. Some of the houses have now been tinned up for eight years but they are perfectly good enough to be renovated.”

Liverpool City Council is backing the scheme but funds are needed to realise the dream.

The project started as part of the

# Rise again

A disused bakery is at the heart of a radical attempt by residents to restore their rundown community in Liverpool, reports **Deborah Mulhearn**



**A design workshop in the old Mitchells bakery, now Homebaked**

Liverpool Biennial of Contemporary Art, whose organisers invited Jeanne van Heeswijk, a Dutch artist, to propose a community project for the area. The Biennial had already worked with local schools and she built on these links. She also appointed Urbed, a Manchester architects’ practice that is working with young people from the area on the housing project. They have learnt drawing, modelling and computer-aided design.

If the required funding is granted, this small-scale project will become a reality. The plan is to have the bakery reopened by the end of this year, and the houses restored by mid-2013. “It’s showing how it can be and not how it is,” says another local resident Andrea Jones, who returned to Anfield after many years away and was shocked by the decline. “People can reclaim their lives. We have the momentum, and we have learned everything from budgeting to breadmaking. It’s been wonderful.”

The youngsters interviewed potential inhabitants for the houses to discover what their needs were. The conventional family structure didn’t figure much. Older people wanted ground floor bedrooms, for



example, and young people wanted flexible spaces to spend time apart if they weren’t getting on with family members.

The bakery was the ideal building to convert to the community hub, says van Heeswijk. “When I saw that the bakery was closed – where I had been buying my pies when I was in Anfield – it became both a precious object and a pressing issue. It was the last remaining place for real food, to buy bread.

“And leaving the houses boarded up was like saying to residents that their buildings are worthless, and by extension so are you.

“I want to radicalise the local again, both in the sense of re-rooting or resettling communities, and show that the impetus can be driven from within.”

## VENDOR CODE OF CONDUCT

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