

# The Bournville Story

Bournville Village Trust is about building and sustaining communities and not just houses. The aim has always been to build good quality houses and gardens for people of all kinds; with local shops, open spaces and community centres close to hand. Resident involvement also plays a crucial part.

When George Cadbury began building at Bournville in 1895 he did so, not as a single-handed attempt to solve all Birmingham's social problems, but in the hope he could prove that good quality housing in a natural, green environment was a necessity for the greater good of society. He challenged the thinking of the day and sought to change current attitudes by practical example. This is the story of how Bournville Village Trust came about.

## Bournville Village Trust

In 1900 George Cadbury founded the Bournville Village Trust, a charitable organisation set up to ensure the planned development and maintenance of the Estate and to preserve it for future generations. The Deed of Foundation ensured that surplus income was devoted to the improvement of the Estate and the encouragement of better building elsewhere.

Today the Trust remains at the forefront of housing provision for architectural design, estate management and development.

By careful consideration of the environmental implications of any work undertaken, the Trust has gained the reputation of being a model estate.

## Industrial history

The story of Bournville begins with the expansion of industry in Victorian England, leading to an increase in employment in the cities. People came in the hope of earning the higher wages which the factories promised. Although this changing economy offered the chance to escape from the misery of rural life, the alternative was still bleak. The overcrowded industrial slums of the big cities offered few opportunities for advancement, or a better standard of living.

So George Cadbury, and his brother Richard, made a crucial decision in 1879 to move their successful chocolate manufacturing business from Birmingham's back streets to a 14<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> acre site of open Worcestershire countryside 4 miles south of the city centre. As the factory flourished, it gave the brothers the finance to realise some of their social objectives.

In George's case it was the creation of the world's first planned and balanced community. The objective was the building of decent quality homes at prices within the reach of industrial workers. All the houses were to consist of light airy rooms and have good sanitation. 140 acres of land were purchased and 143 cottages built in the first year. In the years that followed more land was purchased and homes built. Some accommodation was specifically built for rent for those who could not afford to buy their own homes.



## Early Beginnings

The Founding of the Trust in 1900 signalled a change from merely a building estate into a complete village community. Shops, places of worship, open spaces, sports facilities, community buildings and schools were included to form the heart of the new model village: everything a community would want apart from public houses. And there are still no pubs or off-licences today! The idea was to create a traditional English country village with its communal buildings grouped around a village green.

Over one hundred years on, the Trust continues to work to allow people of modest means to live in this mixed community. The Estate now comprises 1,000 acres of land with almost 8,000 homes, ranging from one-bedroom flats to five-bedroom houses, split just about equally between tenanted and owner occupied. It is open to anyone wishing to live there and is in no way 'tied' to the chocolate factory. It is estimated that throughout its history the proportion of Bournville Estate residents with a direct connection to the Cadbury factory has never reached more than 40%.



## Housing Societies

Once the heart of the original village was seen to be almost complete, the Trustees turned their energies to providing economic housing in a different way. In 1906 the Trust established a housing co-operative called Bournville Tenants Limited; land was leased and shares were issued. Ownership of the land and planning control remained with the Trust, but development, design, selection of tenants, maintenance and repairs became the responsibility of the Society, run by the tenants themselves, which provided 145 houses.

Bournville Works Housing Society was formed in 1919. This mutual co-operative provided over 350 houses for employees of the Cadbury factory and their families.

During the 1930's, the Weoley Hill area was developed, which comprised mostly owner-occupied houses in large gardens.

## The Shenley Development

In 1950 the Trust embarked on one of its biggest single development schemes to date. Known as the Shenley Fields Neighbourhood Development, it was a mixed community providing houses, flats, maisonettes and bungalows for all ages. 750 homes were provided at a time when Birmingham was in urgent need of additional housing.

## The Estate in the 1980s and 1990s

In 1983 the Trust, in co-operation with the City Council, bought the Rowheath playing fields and parkland from Cadbury Schweppes and developed part of it, leaving 45 acres in the centre for recreational purposes.



This was followed by in 1990 by a major development by the Trust of 43 houses and bungalows, both for rent and for sales, at a site known as Meadow Rise, off Woodbrooke Road, Bournville

In 1994 the Trust sold the last major plot of undeveloped land on the Estate: a 15 acre site beside the Bristol Road. Over 60 detached houses were built in a carefully landscaped setting. The capital sum raised from the sale was invested in affordable housing elsewhere.



## 21st Century Regeneration

Lower Shenley forms part of a £25m redevelopment, which will see 167 new properties completed by the end of 2010.

All the outdated walk-up flats from the 1950s were demolished to make way for a strikingly contemporary scheme of houses and apartments. The first completions of the new homes took place in Spring 2009. Built to top-quality environmental standards, these homes are extremely well-insulated, incorporating solar panels for hot water, and are designed to consume much less energy than conventional houses.

Innovative ideas include a 'Home Zone' street design, where people, cars and bicycles share the same carriageway and pavements, where speeds are kept very low, to help establish a safe community.

Shenley Court Hall has been extended and refurbished to a high standard, with excellent facilities for a wide range of people

Allotments have been provided, to encourage residents to 'grow their own' and help meet the increase in demand for allotments, particularly from those people living in apartments.



## Achievements

Bournville Village Trust has many achievements to its name. It has established two conservation areas and a third is planned. There are many listed buildings in the area and housing developments that have won design and architectural Awards. The Trust is very proud of its work on nature conservation, community initiatives and development control through a detailed Design Guide.

Just about every form of housing has been built in Bournville, including self-build to nursing homes, homes for people with special needs, single person apartments, almshouses, housing co-operatives and low cost home ownership.

Resident involvement has always been an important element of managing Bournville. Four residents serve alongside Trustees on the Estate Management & Scheme Committee. The Housing Services Committee includes five tenant representatives. The Shropshire Housing Services Committee and the Lightmoor Village Estate Management Committee give residents a genuine voice in how BVT is run. The aim is to ensure that the tenants can help shape services and influence key decisions.



## Vision for the Future

The greatest dream of the Trust in Shropshire is now being realised: a “second Bournville” is now underway in the Lightmoor area of Telford, developed in conjunction with English Partnerships. This 800 home mixed tenure Urban Village will embody all the principles that have served the original Bournville so well, but expressed in the context of the 21st Century.



All the infrastructure is in place and the first 150 mixed tenure homes are occupied. The scheme takes its design cues from Shropshire villages and is an example to those engaged in creating successful communities for the future.

Building of the Lightmoor Village is now well underway. Two of the new parks are open. The Village Centre is in hand, with the School opening to its first pupils in September 2010. The Shops, Offices and Extra Care Scheme for Older People are to follow.

At nearby Lawley, the Trust is embarking on an ambitious long-term project which will result in the building of over 3,000 properties of mixed tenure, in partnership with Sanctuary Housing Group. Bournville Village Trust is also responsible for the management of the open space. This is one of the largest single housing developments in the region, and it's expected that the entire community will be complete around 2026.

The Trust remains in the forefront of campaigning for better homes and neighbourhoods and is generally agreed to be one of the most attractive places to live in the whole country.



**© Copyright 2010**

The information provided in this briefing can freely be reproduced in part or all by any voluntary or community group/organisation. All other groups/organisations should contact Bournville Village Trust.

**Disclaimer**

BVT would like to emphasise that all material published in this briefing is advice. All readers should research independent sources before action is taken in relation to all or any part of this briefing.