

# THE ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE FUND

## CASE STUDY

For 25 years the Architectural Heritage Fund has helped voluntary organisations regenerate historic buildings, creating community and education facilities, workspace and homes. This has often been a catalyst for further regeneration. We have supported relevant voluntary groups with grants, loans and advice on more than 700 projects to date. This is an example:

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### **28-33 & 36 Snow Hill, St John's, Wolverhampton**

Snow Hill is a terrace of late 18th century houses built for the middle-class owners of metalworking businesses in the old Georgian heart of Wolverhampton. In time, shopfronts were added and workshops built to the rear of the houses. Today, 28-37 are listed Grade II, and situated within St John's Square Conservation Area. This is the centrepiece of St. John's Urban Village, a public/private partnership which was set up to revitalise this 50-acre area in the centre of Wolverhampton.



By the mid-1990s the terrace and the area as a whole were in a very run-down condition. Few of the shops remained open, and the flats above had been vacant for over a decade. The council had been unable to persuade the properties' owners to undertake the necessary repairs.

The Buildings at Risk Trust is a country-wide building preservation trust with a reputation for taking on large or difficult projects. It acquired the properties and found a workable solution for this part of the terrace with the assistance of the council.



The Trust originally took on 28-33, and was later asked by the council to tackle 34-36 as well. All the buildings have now been restored; the shops have been let, and a local housing association took a long lease on the flats above on completion of the building work in September 2000. The shops' freehold was sold by the Trust in July

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2002, providing a source of income with which the trust can undertake future projects.

The Architectural Heritage Fund assisted the Trust by providing low-interest loans totalling £344,000. Other sources of funding were Wolverhampton Metropolitan Borough Council (SRB grant & ERDF grant) and English Heritage (Conservation Area Partnership Scheme).

The project has contributed to a dramatic turnaround in the area's fortunes. Both ends of the terrace, which remained in separate ownership, are now being rejuvenated. Many surrounding properties, once derelict, are beginning to be restored by their owners, or purchased by those who have been attracted to the area. Meanwhile the council has been able to maintain the percentage of affordable housing, preventing excessive 'gentrification'. Thus the area has been upgraded, and still remains accessible to the local community.

The renovation of Snow Hill has been extremely significant, with the manager of the Urban Village describing it as 'a model development'. Its improvement encouraged the City Council to improve the streetscape. Local businesses have also been offered assistance under the Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme (HERS), a system of grants provided by English Heritage to improve the condition of their own properties. This scheme will be in place for another three years.

The success of Snow Hill has encouraged further projects within St John's Urban Village. It has therefore been a catalyst for continuing regeneration, and a key to the process of repopulating the centre of Wolverhampton. Furthermore it is estimated that it has helped to bring in a quarter of the £10 million investment that the Urban Village has already attracted.

Wolverhampton achieved city status in 2000, reflecting its renaissance within the last decade. It is precisely projects such as this which have assisted in its raised profile. The construction, adaptation and decline of Snow Hill could be seen as a microcosm of the development over the years of Wolverhampton; happily, its rejuvenation mirrors that of the city too.

*Quote:*

'A little corner of Georgian Wolverhampton, which somehow escaped the brutal purges of the 1960s, has been handsomely restored'

Chris Arnot, *The Daily Telegraph*, March 2001

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**The Architectural Heritage Fund – Registered Charity No 266780**

We provide grants, loans and advice to voluntary organisations regenerating historic buildings.

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