Cheltenham Borough Homes has committed to a Neighbourhood Works scheme to transform tired and rundown outside spaces into community gardens with multi-use areas for residents.

Cheltenham Borough Homes appointed The Landscape Group as neighbourhood improvement contractor to undertake hard and soft surface renovations on the Neighbourhood Works schemes, commencing with Bush Court and Hobart House in 2012, continuing with Seacome and Lewis residences in 2013, and carrying out improvements to Coates and Elgar in 2014.

**Works carried out include:**
- Site Clearance of soft landscaping including clearance of large shrubs, small trees, cutting back and pruning, excavation of top vegetative layer, stump grinding and weed killing
- Site clearance and breaking out of hard landscaping including concrete slabs and paths, paving slabs, concrete washing lines and fence posts
- Groundworks including excavations, trenches and making up levels by filling and backfilling
- Taking down and rebuilding of brickwork structures such as garages, sheds, walls and outhouses.
- Creation of new hard landscaping areas including hardstanding, tarmac and gravel paths with appropriate gravel stabilisation matting.
- Replacement of fencing and gates
- Creation of drying areas
- Creation of community gardens
- Tree planting
- Play area installation
- Security improvements
- Creation of dog exercise zones
- Street lighting installation
- Creation of communal planting areas for vegetables
The Landscape Group was awarded the Neighbourhood Works contract after a competitive tender process. Prior to any works commencing, The Landscape Group (TLG) team worked closely with Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH) to carry out neighbourhood consultations, which gave residents plenty of opportunity to review the plans and actively input their ideas. As a live residential site, it was essential that residents were kept informed about works to minimise inconvenience to them. To ensure this, notifications of works were issued to all residents with contact details and key information about the programme.

Each scheme was carefully planned to deliver maximum value for money for Cheltenham Borough Homes. CBH and TLG have been able to take a partnership approach to design and build, working closely together at design stage including detailing costings to establish the cost implications of design proposals. Through this partnership working approach, it has been possible to avoid incurring additional landscape architect design fees as well as speeding up the process.

The Landscape Group used its experience to recommend phasing solutions, such as planting in the autumn to provide cost-savings on maintenance and irrigation, whilst working around existing drainage to avoid the need for re-routing. Following completion of each project, detailed final accounts with re-measures were compared against initial estimations, to ensure that payments were exactly relative to work completed. Where the measurement had reduced TLG gave a reduction based on the schedule of rates.

The Landscape Group undertakes small Environmental Improvement Projects (EIP) alongside the larger projects, to avoid having the high management and supervision costs incurred if run as a separate contract; this was a structure suggested by TLG at tender stage.

In late 2014 when a large job was not scheduled, TLG organised these works together and did not apply management costs in the interest of the partnership, saving CBH approximately 10% of costs.

TLG and CBH have also worked together to plan in aspects that are not a direct responsibility, but when undertaken at time of the construction lead to efficiency savings. An example includes the installation of ducting for cabling for security works that were to be undertaken by a specialist contractor after the landscape works at Seacome.

Delivering Value
Recycling
Where possible, materials were reused and recycled, with surplus materials being saved for the next project.

This included the reuse of existing paving slabs to form new seating areas and bin stores, reusing surplus ballast generated during excavation and demolition works and reusing topsoil in planting areas.

This saved money and was also good for the environment.

Environment
The use of permeable tarmac is a more environmentally friendly choice and assists with site drainage, saving money on drainage works that would otherwise be required.

Recycled plastic furniture has been used throughout the sites, which lowers maintenance requirements.

A solar motion light column together with sensor was used at Coates and Hobart to reduce the need for cabling and improve energy efficiency.

Community Engagement
As an ongoing partner of Cheltenham Borough Homes, The Landscape Group takes part in events such as the annual Tenants Festival held at Cheltenham Town Hall and subsequent ‘Play in the Park’ events.

At these events the TLG team is able to display works plans and answer any questions posed by residents. At the 2013 Tenants Festival, TLG hosted a ‘Grow Your Own’ planting activity with residents, giving away over 150 mixed herb plants together with growing advice. Children were encouraged to participate too by creating ‘cress head’ pots.

The partnership between Cheltenham Borough Homes and The Landscape Group is an excellent example of where an ongoing partnership with a client and direct communication with residents has proven to be an effective approach to carrying out neighbourhood works with minimum disruption for stakeholders.
What do our residents think?

We asked residents at Seacome and Lewis how happy they were with the way the gardens looked before and after the neighbourhood works (rated 0-10 with 10 being very happy).

**Average Scores**

- **Before:** 3/10
- **After:** 9/10

**Improvements at Hobart House**

**Spaces opened up at Seacome and Lewis**

**New Sheds at Seacome and Lewis**

**New seating areas at Bush Court**