

Development Strategy

2004-2007



Introduction

Southern Housing Group has been developing homes since 1901. At the start of 2004 the Group had 19,000 rented and leasehold homes, and we plan to develop around 500 new homes each year. Our area of operation covers Local Authorities in London and the South East - from Portsmouth and Reading in the West to Thanet and Thurrock in the East. As well as many London Boroughs, we operate in Hampshire, Berkshire, Surrey, East and West Sussex, Kent and Essex.

Southern Housing Group provides:

- housing for affordable rent for people on low incomes
- housing for older people

Southern Housing Home Ownership, part of Southern Housing Group provides:

- homes for low cost home ownership
- rental property for key workers and other people whose incomes are unable to sustain private sector housing.

Our Development Strategy is to:

- **Continue to meet the housing needs of a wide range of people in London and the South East, working in partnership with a range of organisations**
- **Regenerate homes and create sustainable communities**
- **Innovate to better meet these needs**

We endeavour to develop new housing schemes that comprise a range of tenures, from social rented housing to market rent and outright sale, to help create thriving neighbourhoods where people want to live.

Our vision is

To become the first choice provider for the development and management of housing, to be achieved by providing service excellence and sustainable neighbourhoods.

We aim to be the partner of choice for developers, Local Authorities, the Housing Corporation and other agencies in the private, public and voluntary sectors in meeting a range of housing needs by delivering affordable housing and successful communities.

Southern Housing Group is ideally placed to be this partner and our Development Strategy builds on our strengths.

We:	page
have a proven track record in delivery via partnership	3
are open to innovation and committed to quality to best meet housing need	4
are customer focused	5
have successfully delivered on regeneration	6-7
are committed to sustainable neighbourhoods	6-7



Once the home of Gainsborough Films, founded in 1924, Gainsborough Studios N1 is now the provider of 252 homes situated around a central courtyard and sculpture garden, with a canal-side walkway, bridges and a space for a restaurant.

Delivery – building partnerships to build new homes

We are taking on the challenge of meeting housing need by developing a range of schemes to suit local priorities throughout London and the South East, with some 1,900 units in development at the start of 2004. These include new builds, refurbishment, mixed tenure and complex regeneration schemes (including mixed uses such as community facilities and retail outlets). Our Development Team has many years of experience in delivering complex projects - in the five years up to 2004 we completed approximately 2,150 homes, utilising over £105 million Social Housing Grant.

Over the years we have built up considerable financial strength. This gives us the flexibility to plan ahead, for example by buying land before funding has been secured. We can also pay for schemes to be completed before agreed funding is available.

We are at the forefront of developing innovative ways of funding affordable housing without the use of Social Housing Grant, through section 106 agreements, cross subsidy and other forms of funding. We were successful in bidding for Challenge Funding and a Pathfinder PFI project.

Refurbishment under licence

We worked with Islington Council on this innovative way to fund the refurbishment of run-down listed street properties in the borough. It involved the transfer and sale of two initial high-value properties to cross subsidise the refurbishment of the other properties and the works were completed under licence from the Council to enable VAT to be reclaimed. The refurbished properties were sold on a shared ownership basis to existing Islington Council tenants. The project was completed without grant and at no cost to the Council, and provided high quality family homes in previously derelict properties.



Working Closely with Partners

We work closely with local authorities to help deliver their housing and regeneration priorities, both by responding to their requests and by being proactive.

We have well-established relationships with the private sector. Many of our recent schemes have been developed with well-known house builders. In addition, in pursuit of

successful communities, we hope to increase our work with retail and leisure developers, as well as with health care providers and education authorities on mixed-use schemes.

We are increasingly entering into partnering arrangements with our contractors and consultants in order to plan better quality schemes, and are working towards common objectives such as value for money, zero defects and customer satisfaction.

Other housing associations are also key partners in our delivery of homes. In order to deliver large-scale, mixed tenure communities in the Thames Gateway (north of the River) we have established the Thames Gateway Alliance with London & Quadrant Housing Group and East Thames Housing Group. In addition, working with specialist BME and supported housing associations such as Bangla, North London Muslim and St Martin of Tours, we can make a positive contribution to improving the housing of minority ethnic groups and vulnerable residents.

Our relationships with voluntary organisations are particularly well developed in the area of social investment to ensure the wider needs of our residents are met.

Regional government and other government agencies are also integral to our delivery of affordable housing. We work closely with the Housing Corporation and are one of their Preferred Development Partners.

Other agencies such as English Partnerships, Regional Development Agencies and Urban Development Corporations are increasingly important partners, particularly in areas such as the Thames Gateway and other growth areas.

Royal Arsenal - Partnership Award

In 2003 Southern Housing Group won the 'What House' Gold Award for Best Partnership Development at The Royal Arsenal in Woolwich, London SE18. This is a partnership with Berkeley Homes, the London Development Agency, MoD, SRB and the EU. The development includes over 1,200 homes, 25% of which will be for

affordable housing:

178 for shared ownership, 116 for affordable rent and 23 for intermediate rent.

Regeneration of the Royal Arsenal will have knock-on benefits for Woolwich and its residents –

creating new homes, jobs and businesses for the area and encouraging spending in the locality.



Innovation and Quality – looking to the future

We are increasingly using our 100 years of development experience to lead by example - coming up with creative solutions and ideas for new schemes. Southern Housing Group has been at the forefront of the use of innovative construction methods:

- Our Nightingale Estate development pioneered the use of Tunnel Form construction in the UK.
- New River Green, a mixed tenure redevelopment in Islington, included a range of pre-fabricated components. Both the Nightingale and the New River Green projects were given 'demonstration status' by the Housing Forum, in its efforts to promote innovation in construction.
- Our first project to utilise solar power is at Sompting in Adur. The innovative construction method facilitates the provision of rooms in the roof and high standards of insulation.
- In Folkestone we have used pre-fabricated modules supplied by Rollalong.



Installation of one of the modules at Kettle Drive near Folkestone.

Our commitment to exploring new ideas and pioneering new products and practices is demonstrated by our full-time Innovations Officer who researches possibilities, evaluates pilot projects and, where clear benefits are established, promotes these methods. Our main criteria for evaluating innovation are that it must be:

- fundable
- deliverable
- maintainable
- affordable (in capital and revenue terms)

Southern Housing Group actively embraces the implementation of the Egan agenda and this is primarily represented in our Client Charter Status, achieved in August 2002.

The Group's Sustainability Strategy outlines our commitments and plans in relation to climate change and the environment. It addresses practical measures such as improving environmental awareness amongst our residents and staff, providing homes that are energy and water efficient, and the promotion of public transport. Our Sustainability Strategy commits us to an Eco-Homes target of achieving 'very good' ratings for all the projects on which we have control over the design and procurement process.

Another key commitment is quality in design in the specification of homes and in the environments we create. The design of the housing we produce must respond to the needs of the wide range of people we house, from a diverse array of backgrounds. The design and density of our developments will also be appropriate to the setting, reflecting the particular rural, suburban or urban location.

Design and density appropriate to the setting: Gainsborough Studios

One example of successful high density, inner city development is at Gainsborough Studios, the former film studio in Hackney, East London. The development is made up of 5 separate buildings, situated around a central courtyard and sculpture garden. Of 174 units, the Group has 32 for shared ownership, pepper-potted with 8 rented properties. The development also includes a new film studio, a café and commercial units.



Customer Focus – listening to our residents

Our residents are central to the work we do. We therefore involve them as much as possible in the development of new homes to gain their input into both strategic proposals and specific projects. This creates a greater sense of ownership in the creation of successful, vibrant neighbourhoods where people want to live.

We have a customer feedback system in place for the residents of our new homes to let us know what they think about their homes and surrounding areas. We also hold focus groups to discuss some of our larger developments. All this information is fed back into our design brief and to our architects and designers.

Wherever possible we offer residents a choice of materials used in their new homes such as kitchen units, flooring and wall coverings. On some schemes we have offered upgrades of fixtures that residents can choose to be fitted for an extra charge.

Millennium Plus



Millennium Plus is the regeneration of the Nightingale Estate in Hackney, East London. Three Hackney Council tower blocks have been demolished to make way for modern, innovative houses and flats.

Extensive consultation took place with residents, many of whom have moved into the new units. Residents had a say in all aspects of the design of the new homes, from brickwork to kitchens.

On major regeneration projects our partnership with residents goes much further. We work with residents to ensure the long-term viability of the scheme, working together on masterplanning, and in design groups. Residents have a significant impact on the design and look of a new scheme and the internal layouts of homes.

St Ann's - consulting the wider community

On the Gascoigne Estate in Barking Town Centre, we were chosen as preferred partner for the redevelopment of the St Ann's site, which had been cleared by the council. Extensive consultation was carried out with the residents of the rest of the estate, who influenced the way the buildings were designed externally and how they interacted with the existing blocks.



We strive for quality in both design and materials, to make homes that last - meeting the needs and aspirations of residents, but flexible enough to meet their changing needs too, and ensuring they are as economical to run as possible.

Building Sustainable Communities – regenerating and renewing

Southern Housing Group sees itself as a major agent in creating mixed and thriving communities where people want to live. Through partnership, we build not only housing but communities that work. The three main strands of this activity are:

- **Renewing our existing and ex-local authority estates**
- **Identifying, co-ordinating and funding initiatives to improve quality of life**
- **Promoting mixed tenure and mixed use on new developments**

Estate Regeneration

We spend around £10 million each year on major repairs and improvements to our existing estates and properties. We have also taken transfer of eight estates from the London Boroughs of Hackney, Newham and Southwark, where we have carried out millions of pounds worth of physical improvements and also significant social investment work. The Development Team works closely with the Social Investment Team on initiatives such as local labour in construction, physical improvements to deter crime and the building of new community facilities.

We have been involved in the regeneration of several Local Authority estates requiring redevelopment, bringing new life and a new sense of optimism to these areas. At Holly Street, New Kingshold, the Nightingale in Hackney and New River Green in Islington, we have worked with the council and residents to rectify the mistakes of the 60's and 70's and address the needs of the 21st century. Designing out crime and designing in communities has been the priority, and through working closely with residents we have been successful in transforming these notorious, hard to let estates into vibrant new developments that people choose to move to.



New Kingshold - new homes for the 21st century.

Case study - Southern Homes

In 2000, 1,500 homes on six estates transferred to the Group from Hackney Council. Major refurbishment works have been carried out to the homes on the estates as well as significant external improvements and community development work. We have been working with the local Sure Start initiative to build a new community centre for use as a nursery, and for the use of the wider community.



Southern Housing Foundation

In 1998, Southern Housing Group established a charitable arm, the Southern Housing Foundation dedicated to delivering social investment and strengthening local communities within the Group. The Foundation employs around 30 staff, working with housing management staff and key partners, and has an annual budget of circa £1 million.



Tower blocks make way for new homes at the Nightingale in Hackney.

Building Sustainable Communities – regenerating and renewing

Mixed Tenure and Mixed Use

One of the keys to the success of our developments is our commitment to mixed tenure. Wherever possible future schemes will include an element of low cost home ownership and outright sale. We aspire to pepper-potting of tenures, where tenants, leaseholders and outright owners live side by side, their homes indistinguishable from each other. Our aim is to provide a seamless management and maintenance service to all residents of mixed tenure schemes, ensuring no distinction in service to different tenures.

In order to ensure the communities we create are thriving and viable, we work closely with a range of agencies - private, public and voluntary, to encourage and facilitate other uses in our residential developments such as retail units, office/work space and premises for health, educational or community projects.

New River Green - mixed tenure and mixed use

New River Green is the redevelopment of the former Marquess Estate in Islington. In partnership with the council, developer and residents, parts of the estate are being demolished to make way for modern mixed tenure housing that meets the needs of current residents. In addition to rented, shared ownership and outright sale housing, we have also provided retail units, some of which have been taken up by a new Sainsbury's Local store.



Sainsbury's at New River Green creates jobs for local residents.



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