



Permanent beauty at Timber Wharves

Four sets of steel gates at Timber Wharves Estate on the Isle of Dogs were unveiled in March at a launch event to celebrate a community project that has improved security at the same time as creating a public work of art.

The project arose after staff from Southern Housing Foundation saw the potential for resident involvement when it was decided that gates were needed to enclose ground floor parking areas at the scheme.

In partnership with the Cedar Centre, a local community resource centre, artist Ben Coode-Adams was commissioned to work with over 60 residents on the design of highly decorative and individual gates.

Throughout a large part of 2006, residents researched their ideas, taking part in visits to local museums and drawing workshops, before producing over 100 pencil drawings as the basis of the final designs.

The finished installation, which residents have named 'Permanent Beauty: The Timber Wharves Story', is made from 30 steel sheets and has four 7m x 2.5m gates representing the four corners of the globe and four great rivers: the Thames, the St



Lawrence, the Nile and the Ganges. It is thought to be the largest piece of permanent public art to be commissioned in London since 'The Fulcrum' by American artist Richard Serra was installed at Broadgate.

Southern Housing Foundation's Director Anabel Palmer commented: "Making the gates provided a unique opportunity for the diverse communities at this estate to work

together to build something innovative and attractive. The project also created ownership by the community of a stunning piece of artwork."

Ben Coode-Adams said: "Many residents made beautiful drawings that went into the final designs. They could not have known how their part would turn into the whole, yet their various styles and images work together to make a whole story."

Launch of Neighbourhood Capital

In April, 'Neighbourhood Capital', the first independent review of the housing management and maintenance activities of the G15 London housing associations, was launched by Anthony Mayer, Chief Executive of the Greater London Authority (GLA) at a City Hall event hosted by the Group's Chief Executive Tom Dacey.

G15 comprises some of London's largest registered social landlords and Tom is taking over as its chair in June.

The review, written by housing consultant Helen Cope, shows that the G15 are:

- meeting London's housing challenges
- investing long-term in neighbourhoods
- empowering the community and accounting to residents
- uniquely placed to build diverse and cohesive communities.

Copies of Neighbourhood Capital are available online at www.g15.org.uk



Left to right: Anthony Mayer, Chief Executive of the GLA, housing consultant Helen Cope and Group Chief Executive Tom Dacey at the launch of Neighbourhood Capital.

JBHA prepares for inspection

The Group's Berkshire-based subsidiary, James Butcher Housing Association (JBHA), which owns and manages over 4,200 properties in nine central southern counties, has been preparing for an Audit Commission inspection in May.

JBHA, which joined Southern Housing Group in 2006, is looking to achieve a rating of at least one star for its service. It also aims to be judged as having promising prospects for improvement.

Team leaders have carried out rigorous service health checks and the organisation's improvement agenda has been publicised to residents, staff and other stakeholders.



JBHA Executive Director Caroline Tiller, pictured with Group Chief Executive Tom Dacey.

Staff and the residents' panel have been fully briefed and a resident consultation event was held in March. The inspection

process has also been explained in the Group's residents' newsletter.

"Over the past two years we've been steadily improving our services as well as drawing up action plans and strategies for all areas of our work," says Housing Services Manager Chris Roberts.

"Since joining Southern Housing Group, we've been able to refocus our efforts on customer service and we see the inspection as an opportunity to present our organisation in its true light. We are ready to show the Audit Commission how well we provide services and how passionate we are about providing them."

Market Estate in the spotlight

Market Estate in Islington played host to two VIP visits during March.

Mayor opens sports facility

The London Borough of Islington's Mayor, Councillor Jyoti Vaja, faced press cameras to score a first basket at the new outdoor sports facilities provided as part of the Group's £40 million regeneration of the estate and adjacent Caledonian Park, in partnership with Higgins Construction plc.

The launch of the ball games area was also used to promote sports opportunities in the borough provided by the Islington Football Development Partnership, which is supported by Arsenal Football Club.

The Group is investing almost £1 million in Caledonian Park as part of the redevelopment of this former Islington Council estate. The park has been redesigned by landscape architects Whitelaw Turkington, and estate residents and the park's user group have been extensively consulted.

The overall development will provide 359 homes for rent and sale to a new layout around the park's historic 47m-high listed Victorian clock tower. With construction running ahead of schedule, the first 140 new homes will be tenanted by September, so that demolition of half of the estate can commence by the end of the year.

As featured on Radio 4

Market Estate was also visited by international



Above: Islington's Mayor, Councillor Jyoti Vaja, prepares to score the first basket at the new ball games area in Caledonian Park. Below right: The new estate begins to take shape.

housing academic Professor Anne Power of the London School of Economics in March.

The co-author of recently published 'Jigsaw Cities' is an Islington resident, who also took part in last year's BBC Radio 4 programme, 'Knocking Down the Past'.

In two half-hour slots, the programme compared the fortunes of the Market Estate to Glasgow's once notorious Gorbals, including interviews with residents and staff, who took part in exchange visits organised by BBC Scotland.

The programme confirmed that residents at both estates are optimistic about the future of their neighbourhoods.



A year in development

In 2006/7, we exceeded our spending and completion targets with the Housing Corporation by approximately a third.

By the end of the year we had completed 1,017 homes, with 407 for affordable rent, 20 for intermediate rent, 570 for shared ownership and 20 for outright sale. Over 700 of the homes were built with Housing Corporation subsidy.

Completed homes included:

- Lewis Gardens in Hackney (96 homes)
- Vanston Place in Hammersmith & Fulham (20 homes)
- Tabard Square in Southwark (212 homes)
- Wansey Street in Southwark (31 homes)
- Wick Lane in Tower Hamlets (38 homes)

New homes in Holborough Valley.



- Wellend Villas in Brighton & Hove (74 Homes)
- Daniels House in Crawley (37 homes)
- Downsview and Perowne Way on the Isle of Wight (59 homes)
- Burney House in Mole Valley (38 homes)
- Holmethorpe in Reigate & Banstead (37 homes)
- former garage sites in Margate (28 homes)
- Holborough Valley in Tonbridge & Malling (40 homes)
- Wormley in Waverley (21 homes).

In the same period, we began work on a total of 676 new homes. We continued to invest in our existing stock, spending £7.5 million on Decent Homes schemes and completing work on over 1,000 properties.

We also began the final phase of our estate regeneration scheme at Vanston Place in Fulham and commenced design work on the regeneration of our estate at Lisgar Terrace in West Kensington.

During the year, Southern Housing Group Limited took on responsibility for Decent Homes work to properties owned by James Butcher Housing Association, spending around £0.7 million.

New asset management strategy

A new asset management strategy has been drawn up to set out the Group's strategic direction in this area for 2007/10.

The Group has a varied stock profile in a large geographic area of London and southern England, including nearly 20,000 homes for rent and 5,000 leasehold properties.

The homes, some of which date back to the turn of the 20th century, are well maintained, thanks to an effective responsive repairs service and a longstanding reinvestment programme. Upgrading of homes is now focused around a programme designed to bring all our properties up to the Decent Homes standard by the 2010 deadline. For the Southern Housing Group Limited stock, we are going beyond compliance by rectifying all failing components.

The Group is committed to growth and as a Housing Corporation preferred partner we are developing 750 new homes for



Liverpool Road, the Group's oldest scheme.

rent and sale each year, working to an agenda that prioritises a green approach and sustainable communities. Resident involvement remains a key part of our asset management work.

In all our asset management work, we demonstrate our commitment to the Egan agenda by working with partners to achieve best value, continuous improvement and quality results for residents. We also work to the efficiency agenda, by achieving good value for money through centralised and partnered procurement.

Planning consent for King Alfred scheme

Brighton & Hove City Council has given planning consent for the King Alfred development in Hove.

The controversial scheme designed by Frank Gehry got the go-ahead in March, which means that, unless objectors seek a judicial review, the existing leisure centre can be closed and construction can start next spring.

The striking Karis/ING development includes a brand-new leisure centre and 751 homes. The Group will provide 276 affordable homes for rent and shared ownership at the scheme.

Affinity (Reading): performing well

At the end of its third year in operation, the Affinity housing consortium is continuing to provide a good service to residents at the North Whitley Estate in Reading.

The consortium, which consists of Southern Housing Group, Windsor Housing, Wates and Nationwide, is working to a 30-year Private Finance Initiative contract to manage and refurbish 1,350 properties on behalf of Reading Council, investing around £30 million in bringing properties up to Decent Homes standards.

Performance remained high in 2006/7.

- Refurbishment work was completed nine months ahead of schedule.
- Resident satisfaction levels remained at over 90 per cent.
- Rent arrears reduced by 11 per cent from April to December 2006 and by March 2007 to below the level of the contract starting position.
- Void turnaround reduced from over 30 days at the start of the contract to an average of 19 days.
- Around 97 per cent of letters were answered within 10 working days.
- Over 90 per cent of phone calls were answered within 15 seconds.

The majority of the estate's alleyways have also been cleared and gated, helping to provide extra security and a more pleasant environment.

Affordable homes for Ryde

The Isle of Wight is set to gain a large number of new homes in a move made possible since Isle of Wight and South Wight Housing Associations joined forces with Southern Housing Group.

The homes at Southern Quarter are being developed by the Group at a former scrap yard in Oakfield Road in Ryde that was previously owned by Isle of Wight HA. Planning problems and the need to tackle contamination first made the project difficult for a small housing association and the land has been awaiting development for the past 10 years.

The council has now given planning

permission for a scheme with 149 homes, including 46 for affordable rent, 53 for New Build Homebuy and 50 for entry level market sale. The market sale homes are being developed by the Group's commercial property development company, Southern Space, which provides an additional source of funding for the Group's work.

The Southern Quarter scheme will meet the high standards set out in the Group's design brief, so that it is attractive, minimises environmental impact and has good security features.

Above right: Artist's impression of the Southern Quarter development in Ryde.



New award for Southwark scheme

In April, the Group's development at Wansey Street in Southwark was given a commendation at the American Institute of Architects UK Excellence in Design Awards.

This is a further accolade for the scheme, which was also judged the best public housing scheme at the Building Design Architect of the Year Awards in 2006.

Designed by architects de Rijke Morgan Marsh, the 31-home mixed tenure scheme forms the first phase of Southwark Council's £1.5 billion Elephant & Castle regeneration project.

Minding the Gap at Wansey Street

In March, local authority planning committee members and other London councillors, visited our Wansey Street scheme in Southwark as part of a day-long design masterclass run by Open House, the architecture educational charity, which aims to raise the standard of London's built environment and which has the support of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment.

The session, billed as 'Minding the Gap: New homes for a changing place', was designed to train councillors to be objective when

assessing both the design of a scheme and any linked planning issues.

The Wansey Street visit was led by the Group's Project Manager Jill Beaver, Philip Marsh from award-winning scheme architects de Rijke Morgan and representatives from Wates Construction.



Focus on: Lewis Gardens, Hackney



Site Lewis Gardens is on the site of the former Hillside Estate in Stamford Hill, which was built in the late 1940s and transferred to the Group from Hackney Council in March 2000. Major structural problems saw the estate demolished in December 2002. Former estate residents have been given the opportunity to return to the redeveloped estate and to select

some of the finishes for their new homes, such as kitchen units and flooring ranges.

Partners Countryside Properties in Partnership Ltd, London Borough of Hackney, Agudas Israel Housing Association, Housing Corporation.

Funding Total development cost of £18.5 million.

Output 155 x one to five bedroom homes, with 50 flats and houses for affordable rent (including three for wheelchair users and eight houses developed for Agudas Israel Housing Association), 20 flats for key worker intermediate rent and 85 flats for low-cost home ownership. Shared ownership flats were priced from £170,000 for one bedroom and £205,000 for two, with a minimum initial share purchase of 30 per cent.

Design and special features Seven blocks of high-rise flats feature in-situ concrete frames with flat slab construction and a panelled internal skin. Four blocks of low-rise flats have roofs made up of structural, self-supporting insulated roof panels, manufactured off-site. The houses were built using the 'Super-E' system, developed in Canada. This is a close panel timber frame system, which uses panels manufactured off site for the walls and structure. With excellent thermal and sound insulation, these properties are almost completely sealed to minimise air leakage, with windows and doors designed to control the flow of heat, air and moisture across the building. The homes also feature a mechanical heat-recovery ventilation system.

Improving access for Turkish speakers

The Group introduced a special phone number for Turkish residents in January, as part of our commitment to widening access to our services. We introduced a similar service for Bengali residents two years ago.

The new Turkish line connects callers to the Service Centre and is available from Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm, with calls charged at local rates. Users hear a message in Turkish which explains that they are about to be connected to an English-speaking advisor who will arrange for a translator for a three-way conversation. Because they have rung the special line, the advisor knows that a translator will be required.

Feedback shows residents are pleased with the service. They say it will be valuable in an emergency and is already making it much easier to report repairs.

The Group's latest figures show that around 17 per cent of our residents are more comfortable using their first language. Of these, 32 per cent prefer to use Bengali and 19 per cent Turkish. We now routinely translate key information into these two languages and we employ staff with relevant community languages in areas where there is an identified demand. Some 388 calls were made to the Bengali line during 2006/7.

Making a difference together

More than 100 residents from Southern Housing Group attended an event at the Victoria Park Plaza Hotel in London SW1 on 31 March.

The event was based around the theme of making a difference together. Barry McGuigan, Sky Sports presenter and former world featherweight boxing champion, was guest speaker.

Residents heard a presentation on the results of our recent Group-wide satisfaction survey, took part in workshops and a quiz, and watched a DVD explaining current initiatives designed to improve our services and the quality of community life.

Representatives from our major contractor partners and community-based projects attended, together with members of our anti-social behaviour team and staff from Southern Housing Foundation.

Post-event evaluation showed that 96% of residents rated the event as either good or above and a number of residents indicated that they would be interested in getting more involved in future.



Barry McGuigan addresses residents at the 'Making a difference together' event.

The Group is committed to giving residents the opportunity to shape the services they receive and we offer a wide range of ways for residents to get involved in our work.

Training young mediators

Thanks to funding from Southern Housing Foundation, children as young as six are being trained as mediators in the Dover area.

The training is being run in three local schools by Shepway and Dover Mediation Service and includes sessions for children, as well as the adults who supervise them at break times

"Children can make very good mediators because of their great sense of fairness," said Pam Male from the Mediation Service. "At school, there are all manner of small arguments in the playground that children can help others to resolve. We want to set up mediation in as many schools as possible."

Since last June, the scheme has trained a dozen children from Years 5 and 6 at The Downs School in Walmer and another 12 from Year 2 at Shatterlocks Infant School. Earlier this year, training also began at St Radigunds School.

Working at Shatterlocks, where the mediators are just six and seven years' old posed a particular challenge, but proved to be very rewarding.

Working with young people is a priority for Southern Housing Foundation.

Booklet promotes energy saving

Children from the Nightingale Estate in Hackney have worked with their classmates to help the Group to produce a new booklet for residents about saving energy in the home.

The booklet provides tips designed to help residents keep energy usage and water consumption low and to reduce their bills.

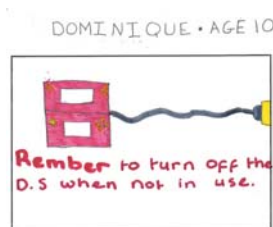
As part of the project, Southern Housing Foundation provided funding so that children in Years 4, 5 and 6 at Baden Powell Primary School could take part in a day of energy-saving workshops run by Peace Child, an international youth-led charity.

Students from Year 6 went on to work with

a professional illustrator and graphic designer from the Okai Collier

Company, producing drawings for the booklet based on the workshops. The drawings reflect the children's views on climate change, as well as saving energy in the home.

The Group has a strong commitment to environmental sustainability and our strategy in this area includes providing residents with good quality information about energy saving.



Financial plans for 2007/8

The Group Board has approved the proposed budgets for each Group company for the year to 31 March 2008.

The overall budget will enable us to achieve the Decent Homes standard ahead of schedule in many locations. It will also fund the changeover to an integrated approach to management, regardless of tenure or which Group company owns particular properties.

The budget will cover the one-off costs of moving staff based at our London regional office to our main office in Clerkenwell, as

well as the move to new premises of all the staff based in Horsham. The change will reduce on-going costs, while improving our services to residents.

During the year, James Butcher HA (JBHA) will conclude a programme of asset disposals begun before joining the Group. Sales surpluses will allow JBHA to invest heavily in Decent Homes works. South Wight HA has been granted additional expenditure for maintenance projects.

Southern Housing Home Ownership will continue to Gift Aid its surplus to fund the

charitable activities of Southern Housing Group Limited and is budgeted to provide £925,000 towards Southern Housing Foundation project costs.

Sales surpluses generated by Southern Space, our open market sale subsidiary, will be used to invest in the social housing activities of the rest of the Group.

Strategy for the external environment

Southern Housing Foundation has drawn up a strategy for the external environment at Group schemes, in recognition of the importance of communal space to the sustainability of neighbourhoods.

The strategy is based on using partnership working with residents and other agencies to improve communal areas, encourage a sense of community and reduce the likelihood of anti-social behaviour. The approach has already been used successfully at a number of estates.

Providing homes in sustainable neighbourhoods where residents want to live is one of the Group's central objectives. We also anticipate that social space will become an increasingly important national

issue following the completion of Decent Homes in 2010.

Artist's impression of our £1.4m scheme to improve landscaping at Ixworth Place in West Kensington.



New offices provide growing space

The Group is transferring all its Horsham operations to new offices in May.

Around 130 of our staff will be moving to the new premises, which will bring all the Group's Horsham-based staff under the same roof.

Renamed Spire Court, the refurbished offices were formerly home to Royal and Sun Alliance. The move will provide the additional space needed for our expanded business and will meet expected growth in the future. Part of the building will initially be let out to other organisations.

The address for the new offices is **Spire Court, Albion Way, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 1JW**. The **08456 120 021** telephone number will still apply.

In July, staff based at our London office will also be moving. The lease at the Cowper Street premises expires in August and we decided not to renew, but to use the vacant first floor at our Fleet House head office premises instead.

London region and Thames Gateway Tower Hamlets team, as well as Southern Housing Foundation, will be making the move.

Bringing the Board online

A new Extranet section of the Group's website is providing Board members with immediate access to the information they need to do their job.

As well as providing essential background detail, the new site provides access to minutes and papers from the Group's Board, subsidiary and committee meetings.

The aim of the site is to improve communication with our Board members and to demonstrate our openness and accountability, at the same time as reducing the volume of circulated Board papers.

In future, we plan to give committee and subsidiary members access to the non-confidential documents on the site, to ensure that all members in our governance structure are fully informed about the work of the Group.



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