



Development Strategy 2025-2030



Introduction

This strategy sets our development ambitions, aligning them with our Strategic Plan 2025-2030. It sets out how the development programme will support Orwell's overall growth ambitions in providing 100 new affordable homes a year.

Our development programme will provide a mixed tenure approach consisting of social rent, affordable rent, and, where suitable, market rent, as well as a range of home ownership products including shared ownership and shared equity. We will look to achieve more through collaboration and new partnerships and be open to, and seek out, joint initiatives with house builders, developers, local authorities and other housing associations to help us deliver our development aspirations.

Our programme will be a combination of 'land-led' sites where we own land and contract with local contractors, working with local developers to acquire good quality, affordable Section 106 (planning gain) homes in areas of identified need. We will ensure we maintain a balanced programme across both aspects but will explore opportunities to work with developers to acquire additional affordable homes in the event of market uncertainty.

Where possible, we will seek to combine sites with private sales through Orwell Homes and support the Orwell Homes' ambition to grow and recognise this as a potential strength in supporting land acquisitions. We will work with our partners to consolidate our existing supported housing portfolio, working together with Care and Support to ensure this valuable area remains viable and sustainable.



Operating Environment



The government has pledged policy and funding changes aimed at providing 1.5 million new homes over its administration, and affordable housing is a key component of this. This has been backed up with funding available in the new Homes England funding which creates enormous opportunity for developing Housing Associations. Across our communities the need for affordable homes is increasing, with house prices still often beyond the reach of typical local incomes.

The demand for quality affordable homes for rent and sale remains high. Recently, we have seen some disruption in the economy impacted by wider global politics. This uncertainty is directly impacting our customers and target market, who are typically on the economically disadvantaged margins of society and continue to struggle with cost-of-living issues.



Operating Environment

We will continue to develop affordable homes in what is currently a sluggish and challenging market. Construction costs remain high and changes in planning and environmental legislation continue to impact the viability and deliverability of some sites. This may lead to some of our communities seeing less social housing development despite housing need in that area being high. We are committed to working creatively to ensure that sites in these areas continue to be developed whilst recognising the need to ensure the development programme remains affordable and within the financial parameters set by the business plan.

We are anticipating changes to our local authority framework as the devolution agenda takes effect. We will be working with our partners to ensure affordable housing delivery is not disrupted and we take advantage of any opportunities this may bring. We will ensure our schemes strike the right balance of tenure and are appropriate for the locality, led by housing need. We will also ensure that our shared ownership products are assessed for affordability and are within reach of local incomes.

Despite these challenges we are well placed to continue to deliver and provide much needed affordable homes for our customers. We will support the growth of Orwell Homes, Orwell's private delivery arm, who have their own ambitions for growth through the provision of outright sale homes.



Our Development Services



We have an established reputation as a quality developer with lenders and funders and have a programme capable of making a significant contribution to local housing need.

We have our own in-house development team that identify opportunities and project manage our developments and we work with a wide range of contractors, architects, consultants and partners ranging from national house builders to smaller SMEs.

We recognise the contribution we can make in the local economy through our projects by generating employment and economic activity as well as wider social value objectives. We are mindful that in the current challenged local economy we are seeing an increased risk of contractor insolvency and we are working collaboratively and flexibly with our contractors to mitigate against this.

We will ensure our homes are designed and constructed to be thermally efficient to reduce running costs for our customers as far as possible.

We will balance the costs of maximising the sustainable aspects of construction, whilst not reducing our overall financial capacity to deliver much needed affordable homes.

Our development programme will continue to be locally based in Suffolk, southern parts of Norfolk and North Essex. The programme will be directed to where we are able to provide a responsive and efficient housing management and maintenance service with the emphasis on the quality of service we can provide our customers.



Putting People at the heart of what we do



We will...

Lead the market in both build quality and customer service for our new homes, strengthening feedback channels and improving our after-care service, ensuring lasting quality in every home we build.



We will achieve this by:

Benchmarking our development services and our design specifications with peers and the private sector to ensure competitiveness

Ensuring the design guide and scheme designs are reviewed annually using customer and stakeholder feedback

Improving the level of customer engagement in development feedback surveys and identifying any trends

Being ambitious for our Homes and our Communities



We will...

Deliver a development programme to reach 5,200 homes in ownership or management by 2030, developing an average of 100 new homes each year and maintaining our Homes England funding status to support growth and secure future grant opportunities.



We will achieve this by:

Building a healthy pipeline of building sites securing land and using 'land-option' facilities

Providing a range of tenures including affordable, social or intermediate levels supplemented by Home Ownership products

Expanding our development activities by working with Local Authorities, where we are currently less active but where there is potential for growth

Exploring opportunities to grow our stock by considering stock acquisition or transfers from other providers or charitable groups

Collaborating with others to achieve more



We will...

Build partnerships with local developers, contractors, funders, and housing associations to share risk and boost capacity. We will strengthen relationships with private developers to secure affordable homes through planning gain, increase the social impact of our procurement by using local contractors, and collaborate openly with Independent East partners to share best practice, jointly procure, and benefit from shared expertise.



We will achieve this by:

Identifying key local developers and establishing better links to identify and secure opportunities

Reviewing the market regularly to ensure that our s106 offers are competitive

Working with our existing partners to sustain and expand the existing development partnership arrangements

Continuing to understand our development partners' objectives and tailoring our service to meet their changing needs

Being an effective team and organisation



We will...

Ensure all new homes meet at least EPC B standards, incorporating renewable energy where possible, and are built efficiently to deliver value for money. Improve procurement and design, speeding up delivery and enhancing efficiency, while ensuring our programme spend outperforms 30-year plan projections to maximise value for the organisation.

We will achieve this by:

Generating fee income and adding value by selling development services to our partners

Contributing towards sustainable communities; designing in biodiversity, safety and comfort to meet social, environmental and economic needs

Embedding sustainability in all new developments by prioritising a 'Fabric First' approach and aligning with Orwell's Decarbonisation Strategy

Creating high quality, affordable homes, offering a range of tenure options and contributing to social mobility and the wider economy

Metrics of Success



1

Increase customer engagement regarding the quality of our new build homes by 10% per annum in 2026

2

Grow the organisation by owning and/or managing 5,200 properties by 2030 by providing on average 100 new homes a year

3

Maintain our Investment Partner status with Homes England and access necessary funding in the SAHP 26-36 programme

4

Establish strategic partnerships with developers, contractors and private investment firms to share risk and enhance capacity

5

Ensure the development programme meets or exceeds the financial parameters of the 30-year plan





Development

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