

Northampton Partnership Homes

ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY



2022 - 2025



NORTHAMPTON
PARTNERSHIP HOMES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The government's Social Housing White Paper: The Charter for Social Housing, sets out the actions government will take to ensure that residents in social housing are:

- Safe;
- Listened to;
- Living in good quality homes; and
- Empowered to access redress when things go wrong.

Northampton Partnership Homes' (NPH) parent company, West Northamptonshire Council (WNC), is producing a new housing strategy to set out the local strategic direction for housing.

This Asset Management Strategy (AMS) has been developed to ensure that NPH deliver against the government and WNC's aspirations for residents.

NPH's AMS recognises that a home is more than just four walls and a roof. A home should provide safety, security, dignity and help create a community.

This AMS will ensure that NPH continues to manage safe, modern and efficient homes in communities that residents feel proud of.

The 2016 – 2021 AMS has successfully delivered many outcomes. In the world of housing however, change is a constant. Five years on, we need to review our priorities and adapt to the economic, environmental, social, and political environment we are operating in. This is an environment of:

- Growing housing need and demand for affordable housing.
- An ageing population and demand for housing that promotes independence in older age.
- A new parent company (WNC) with a statutory responsibility for adult social care, which brings both new opportunities and challenges.

- The Building Safety Bill and the Housing White Paper, which demand greater emphasis on engaging, informing and ensuring that resident voice is heard and acted upon.
- 2030 and 2050 carbon reduction targets - CPO26 outcome and the move towards zero carbon.
- Opportunities to borrow through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) at competitive rates for investment and new build housing.
- Heightened construction cost risk following Brexit and the global pandemic.

NPH manages over 14,500 homes and assets on behalf of West Northamptonshire Council:

- 11400+ homes let at affordable or social rent;
- 900+ leaseholder homes;
- 2000+ garages;
- 60+ local commercial properties (shops, takeaways, hairdressers);
- 15 community hubs;
- Northampton's permanent traveller site; and
- Open space and parking areas.

The AMS is a fundamental strategy to ensure delivery of NPH's vision:

NPH provides homes which enable people to live happy and healthy lives in enriched communities.

NPH's vision is at the heart of this strategy – a people focused Asset Management Strategy that puts residents first.

The Asset Management Strategy ensures that NPH is managing, repairing, investing in and building:

- Homes which meet housing need;
- Homes which are sustainable, in construction and occupation;
- Affordable Homes;
- Homes that are safe and secure; and
- Homes to feel proud of.

These five objectives are underpinned by NPH's Mission and Values. The detail within each objective is informed by consultation and feedback from residents and lessons we have learned over the past five years. NPH's mission and values are therefore "lived and breathed" in everything we do.

NPH Mission

- We improve lives by sharing a common purpose.
- We improve and maintain the quality of our homes.
- We provide services which endeavour to meet the needs and aspirations of all tenants and residents.
- We will provide the opportunity for people to influence the immediate and long-term futures for themselves and their communities.

NPH Values:

- Open and strong
- Listen and respond
- Achieving more with others
- Aim high and deliver

HOMES WHICH MEET HOUSING NEED

The key principle of council housing is that it meets a need that cannot be met by the private sector. It provides affordable, secure housing for those in housing need.

Affordable housing is a scarce resource. Demand both locally and nationally significantly outstrips supply. It is therefore critical that NPH, as the delivery agent for WNC, does everything within its power to optimise the homes it manages to effectively meet local housing need.

Housing need across West Northamptonshire will be set out in the new WNC Housing Strategy. NPH's Asset Management Strategy will be updated to reflect the stated needs and demands of the Housing Strategy when it becomes available.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE NORTHAMPTON HOUSING REGISTER

Housing need is set out in the Northampton Draft Local Plan and in the West Northamptonshire Economic Needs Assessment. NPH is committed to support its parent company West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) to meet local housing need through existing housing stock and the development of new homes, as set out in NPH's 2020 – 2025 Development Strategy.

NPH's new build and the existing homes it manages, should reflect the housing need of 3000+ households on the council housing register. This includes over 500 council tenants whose current home does not meet their housing need, the majority of which are due to:

- Under occupation;
- Statutory overcrowding;
- Medical need; and
- Domestic abuse or other threat to safety.

At the time of writing, 81% of the housing need demonstrated by applicants on the housing register is for one and two--bedroom homes. This is currently reflected in NPH's building programme, as over 80% of homes in construction have one or two bedrooms.

We will continue to plan our programme to meet housing need by undertaking an annual review of the housing demand mix on the council housing register, in relation to:

- Existing stock; and
- NPH's development pipeline, to ensure it is reflective of changing housing demand.

MEETING THE HOUSING NEED OF OLDER RESIDENTS

The number of older council tenants is growing. 17% of tenants are aged 70+ and 25% are between 55 and 69 years old. An ongoing programme is underway to appropriately designate and provide older persons' housing to ensure it is fit for purpose. This activity includes:

- Redesignating dispersed sheltered flats within general needs housing as general needs housing upon relet.
- Redesignating all general needs bungalows as sheltered housing upon relet. This includes upgrading with hard-wired smoke and call alarms and level access showers; ensuring we meet future mobility and safety needs of residents.
- Designating all new build bungalows and one person houses with the design principles of sheltered housing.
- Eleanor Lodge has been refurbished and reconfigured as a Category 2 sheltered housing scheme.

- Lakeview, NPH's new build Category 2 sheltered housing scheme has set the standard for future schemes.

Two important challenges remain:

- Older people under occupying larger homes are incentivised to downsize when there is insufficient (sheltered) housing to meet demand.
- Both of the Category 2 sheltered housing schemes are on the Eastern side of Northampton. There is demand for Category 2 sheltered housing in other areas of the town.

We will bring forward a third Category 2 sheltered housing scheme in either Northampton Town Centre or the Western side of Northampton. This could entail new build and remodelling of an existing provision.

MEETING SPECIALIST SUPPORTED HOUSING NEED

NPH currently manages three Care Quality Commission (CQC) registered supported living schemes for WNC. Two of these schemes (Moray Lodge and Oak Tree Rise) were newly built by NPH in 2021. This is a housing need that is 'hidden' from the housing register as people with specialist needs are less likely to apply for housing through regular channels.

WNC Adult Social Care and Northamptonshire NHS Care Commissioning Group (CCG) have identified an unmet specialist housing need. NPH will work with them to address this by both managing and reconfiguring existing stock where appropriate and building new homes. We will:

- Work with colleagues in WNC and Northamptonshire CCG to map future specialist housing need.
- Secure funding and land on behalf of WNC to deliver new provision in Northampton through new build and reconfiguration of existing assets, for residents with specialist housing needs.
- Ensure that any new provision is at the forefront of best practice, including assistive technology.

PROMOTING INDEPENDENCE

NPH is committed to the empowerment of residents to live independently in their homes. NPH delivers a successful adaptations service with a qualified team, comprising both property and occupational therapy professionals. NPH's adaptations team delivers over £1.3m of works to residents' homes every year to enable independent living.

Referrals to NPH's Adaptions Team have increased in complexity and volume. NPH has responded by using more efficient procurement routes and a greater use of assistive technology, to effectively meet the needs and aspirations of the tenant. There is a recognition however that with an ageing population and increased housing demand, NPH's adaptations team will need to evolve to meet the demand it faces. A strategic review will therefore be undertaken to consider current delivery, forecast demand and agree priorities with our parent company WNC.

NPH's Adaptions service to include:

- A review of trends and forecast of future need.
- Benchmarking against other adaptations services.
- Stakeholder feedback (residents and health professionals).
- The use of latest innovation in adaptations, including assistive technology.
- The use of Total Mobile technology to ensure that all adaptations are captured on NPH's business system, Open Housing.
- A review and implementation process for maintaining adaptations on a cyclical basis.
- An appraisal of potential partnerships to drive efficiency, for example partnering with Northamptonshire CCG to deliver social prescribing.



HOMES WHICH ARE SUSTAINABLE: IN CONSTRUCTION AND OCCUPATION

NPH SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY AND WNC'S CORPORATE PLAN

NPH's 2020-2023 Sustainability Strategy sets out a commitment to:

- Ensure that all qualifying properties are an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Band C or above by 2030, to eliminate fuel poverty; and
- Work towards achieving zero carbon housing standards by 2050.

This in turn plays a significant role in supporting WNC to deliver the 'Green and Clean Environment and Wellbeing objectives' within its Corporate Plan. WNC has adopted the UN Seventeen Steps Plan to Save the World. These are the UN's sustainable development goals agreed by the 193 member states. NPH Sustainability Strategy is underpinned by the ten principles of the One Planet Living framework, which align with the UN approach.

SUSTAINABILITY WORKS TO DATE

In relation to asset management, NPH has already progressed this strategy significantly, to include:

- Integrating whole house retrofit (sustainability) works into the 'whole neighbourhood' ten-year investment programme, including upgrading external and internal insulation plus windows and doors.
- Securing a £3m grant from Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) demonstrator scheme on behalf of WNC, to deliver a whole house retrofit pilot programme to 150 solid wall properties.
- Bidding for future rounds of funding to support whole house retrofit.
- Adopting and embedding the government's 2035 Publicly Available Specification retrofit standard (PAS 2035) into planned investment on all properties which are EPC Band D, or lower
- Ceasing the inclusion of gas on all new development schemes at feasibility stage.
- Piloting different forms of renewable energy generation and heating including solar photovoltaic panels (PV) and air source heat pumps (ASHP).



ONE PLANET LIVING

NPH's Sustainability Strategy is a corporate strategy underpinned by Bioregional's One Planet Living philosophy. It is paramount that any actions relating to property put residents first and do not contribute to fuel poverty.

With the planned cessation of gas as a fuel source for homes, it is critical that the fabric of NPH homes is upgraded sufficiently to ensure that alternative heat sources are cost effective for residents. The fabric first approach is evolving towards a people first approach to ensure that the needs of the resident are the first consideration. This is an absolute priority for NPH over the next five years.

TO DELIVER OUR FUTURE COMMITMENTS, WE WILL:

- Work collaboratively with WNC to ensure that NPH's ten principles derived from the One Planet Living framework, align with the UN 17 steps adopted by WNC.
- Work towards NPH's Sustainability Strategy 2030 and 2050 targets and review annually.
- Undertake condition surveys to the PAS 2035 standard to ensure that a holistic approach is taken, which takes account of ventilation, occupation, property condition and risk of fuel poverty.
- Implement a medium plan towards zero carbon.
- Ensure all retrofit works are delivered by contractors with TrustMark accreditation and that works are undertaken to this Quality Mark Standard, to protect WNC's assets and the interests of residents.
- Trial alternative energy sources and technology in partnership with residents to develop NPH's expertise and to ensure residents are fully engaged in future decisions relating to energy.
- Continue to deliver retrofit works to neighbourhoods on a whole neighbourhood approach, securing inward investment to deliver in the most cost-effective way.
- Ensure our in-house maintenance team and supply chain are fully trained on maintaining new forms of technology, new forms of construction and retrofit works to ensure the fabric of the building is not compromised.
- Partner with other asset owners in Northampton on opportunities for shared zero carbon initiatives including shared energy where feasible.
- Ensure we have used Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) for measuring energy efficiency and CO₂ emission on all homes by using a combination of formal domestic energy assessment and the use of NPH's asset data base to create desk top SAP ratings using the asset data available.
- Optimise the use of NPH's asset data base and PAS 2035 assessments to capture energy performance and planning towards zero carbon.
- Trial different forms of energy and air quality monitors with residents, to identify the optimum approach to ensure that residents are informed on the linkage between lifestyle factors, energy consumption and air quality.
- Use Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) where possible and appropriate for vertical extensions of apartments when seeking to build additional homes.
- Promote One Planet Living principles with NPH's in-house repairs team, making use of supply chain buying power in relation to procuring:
 - a supply chain with robust environmental policies;
 - sustainable plant and equipment;
 - sustainable products;
 - minimising waste during works;
 - environmental statements for all major works;
 - fleet management and transport policies; and
 - local employment.



HOMES WHICH ARE AFFORDABLE RENT

Expenditure and income relating to council housing (section 74 of the 1989 Local Government and Housing Act) must be accounted for in the HRA. The rented homes which NPH manages on behalf of WNC are predominantly for social rent with a smaller percentage (3%) for affordable rent. Annual rent setting is determined by WNC as the landlord and, as a rule, follows CPI plus 1% as at September annually.

SERVICE CHANGES

NPH can influence to some extent the affordability of the service charges by designing out common and shared areas, ensuring the services which are charged are delivered as efficiently as possible. NPH's ten-year investment programme has delivered sustainable solutions to improve the grounds to apartments and reduce the cost of grounds maintenance through:

- Replacing underutilised grassed areas with lower maintenance hard standing, which has also significantly increased resident parking.
- Formalising communal areas from private open space to provide greater clarity around where NPH's responsibility to maintain lies.
- Upgrading boundaries, sheds, bin and bicycle stores with lower maintenance alternatives.

As NPH is half-way through its ten-year investment plan it is important that this programme of works continues, that it is accurately mapped on GIS and the asset data base is reflected in the grounds maintenance contract costs, and in turn the service charges. It is also important that the functionality of GIS is fully exploited to support the asset management function of NPH.

We will ensure:

- Consultation with NPH's Estate Services team to support One Planet Living principles whilst designing out unnecessary future maintenance and achieving best value.
- All changes are fully mapped on GIS and NPH's asset database.
- Changes are reflected in the grounds maintenance contract and in turn, service charges to drive up value for money for residents.
- Consultation with leaseholders to ensure mechanisms are in place to enable leaseholders to pay for capital works in regular instalments to avoid disputes and arrears.

UTILITY BILLS: PREVENTING AND ALLEVIATING FUEL POVERTY

This section details how NPH's Sustainability Strategy (underpinned by One Planet Living principles) sets out objectives to prevent fuel poverty and place the tenant first. By achieving the objective for all homes to be EPC Band C or above by 2030, we will have eliminated fuel poverty for all residents according to the current fuel poverty metric: Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE).

We must also remember that the property is 'just one part of the picture'. It is also important to consider lifestyle impact on fuel bills and to ensure that residents have all the necessary information and support to minimise fuel bills.

To deliver our future commitments, we will:

- Produce a new Fuel Poverty Strategy, which addresses the need to fully engage residents in the zero-carbon agenda, ensuring they are fully informed and empowered to minimise bills and save energy in their homes.
- Improve the fabric of buildings to reduce fuel costs.
- Work with tenants to manage their properties in a fuel-efficient way.

HEAT METERING

The apartment blocks NPH manages vary in the way they are supplied with heating and hot water. They range from district (multi-block) and communal (centralised within block) to individual. The Heat Networks (Metering and Bill) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 require (where viable) for apartment blocks to have independent heat metering and billing. This is to drive efficiency and deliver transparency and fairness for residents.

We will, where required, install independent heat metering and billing in:

- All new build apartment schemes; and
- All existing apartment schemes with district or communal heating where it is financially viable to achieve, according to the regulations.

TRAVEL COSTS AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

Many of our residents will need to travel to and from their homes for employment, education, services, and recreation. Whilst this may be locally within Northampton it is unlikely that everything will be within walking distance to a resident's home.

This can be a substantial additional cost for our residents, impacting on the overall affordability of their home. The One Planet Living principles that NPH's Sustainability Strategy aligns to, will support this agenda by promoting sustainable transport.

To deliver our future commitments, we will:

- Engage with WNC to ensure that the homes we manage are well served by public transport and advocate on behalf of residents to address any inequalities.
- Ensure that all apartment blocks have secure bicycle storage and promote bicycle use as a sustainable form of transport.
- Review the feasibility of installing car charging points to NPH managed secure (barrier-gated) car parks.
- Ensure all new build schemes are within walking distance to shops, services, and public transport routes.
- Ensure all new build homes have accessible electric charging points installed.



HOMES WHICH ARE SAFE AND SECURE

As managing agent, NPH has a range of responsibilities to help keep residents' homes safe. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Asbestos;
- Fire;
- Electrics;
- Gas; and
- Water.

NPH has a suite of policies in place and the dedicated Compliance Team oversee a programme of inspection, servicing and compliance works to ensure homes are safe and legal. This is monitored and reported on monthly basis to NPH's Executive Management Team and NPH's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Group.

FIRE SAFETY

NPH works in close partnership with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue in relation to existing homes and the building of new homes. Since its creation in 2015, NPH has adopted a 'zero tolerance' approach to fire safety and has a robust approach to regular inspection of all fire risk areas to ensure they are safe.

NPH was swift to respond to the concerns following the Grenfell tragedy and the recommendations that emerged from the Hackett Review, Fire Safety Act 2021 and the Building Safety Bill. This included:

- A review, in partnership with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service, of NPH's fire safety policy and approach to fire risk assessments in blocks.
 - A decision to retrospectively install a sprinkler system into NPH's only high-rise apartment block, St. Katherine's Court
 - Sprinkler systems being installed as standard into all new supported housing schemes and apartment schemes measuring 11m and above.
 - Fire safety strategy and design completed for all new build apartment and supported housing schemes. This will be reviewed and updated at each design stage with stage 5 strategies and designs signed off by WNC building control and Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service. It will include a detailed review of all materials and the relationship between materials, including independent testing where needed.
 - Implementation of the Total Mobile system to enable real time recording of Fire Risk Assessments and reporting directly to the Open Housing system.
- We will continue to work closely with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue and WNC Building Control to formalise and embed processes for signing off fire risk strategies for new housing schemes. This is to include a formalised process for:
- Stage 5 (construction) to ensure design is fully complete prior to commencement on site and to mitigate risk of issues and delays in construction.
 - Stage 6 (handover) to ensure NPH staff, residents and other stakeholders are fully briefed.
 - Stage 7 (use and occupation) to ensure a programme of continuous evaluation, learning and improvement. This is to include engagement with residents (particularly to align to the transparency and accountability ethos of the Building Safety Bill), committing to residents having a voice.
- Develop the use of Building Information Modelling (BIM) in design, to improve clash detection (especially in relation to fire stopping) and to aid cyclical compliance works to completed buildings once in occupation.
 - Implement a formalised approach to engagement with residents in our existing high rise apartment block (St. Katherine's Court) and the two schemes in development.
 - Comply with all requirements emerging from the Building Safety Bill related to the management of high-rise blocks.



HOME AND RESIDENT SECURITY

The 'Whole Home, Whole Neighbourhood' approach to NPH's ten-year neighbourhood investment programme has resulted in significant investment in the security of residents' homes. This has included:

- New and upgraded CCTV.
- Fob entry car park barriers in town centres. The fob system for these is the same as the door entry system, creating a co-ordinated approach that is easier for residents and NPH to manage.
- Security lighting to block entrances.
- Security lighting to individual houses where required to meet the Northampton Standard, standard agreed with residents, to undertake works to properties to an enhanced decent homes specification.
- Upgrading all communal doors to Secure by Design (SBD) standard to include a door entry system with a cloud fob to enable monitoring, activation and deactivation of fobs by NPH remotely.
- Providing storage for bikes and pushchairs for residents in apartment blocks. This has also supported NPH in enforcing its zero-tolerance fire safety policy.

To deliver our future commitments, we will:

- Undertake a consultation exercise with residents and other stakeholders relating to the impact of security works, to capture lessons learned.
- Work with Northamptonshire Police and community safety partnerships to continue our work to design out crime, whilst designing in safety using a range of measures in the next five years of the neighbourhood investment programme.
- Ensure the principles of the Northampton Standard (agreed with tenants in 2015) continue to be embedded into investment programmes.

DAMP AND MOULD

Identification of signs of damp (including tenant observations) is included in the annual cycle of stock condition surveys. It is recognised that there are two major causes for damp and mould- property defects and lifestyle or living conditions. When the issue occurs due to lifestyle factors or living conditions such as overcrowding, it is actually the result of condensation, not damp.

Where the cause of the damp is identified as a building defect this is either dealt with through responsive repairs (if it is a one-off incident, such as a water leak) or, if it is systemic through an apartment block or a neighbourhood of houses (usually due to the age and type of property) then it is dealt with through neighbourhood investment. Works may include (but are not limited to) upgrading:

- Roof and roof line components;
- Window repair and replacements;
- Ventilation systems;
- Cavity wall, external wall and loft insulation;
- Heating; and
- Damp proof courses and damp-proof membranes.

Where damp is identified as a result of lifestyle factors or living conditions, support and advice will be provided to alleviate the problem.

Addressing damp and mould is critical to the wellbeing of residents. If ignored, it can create (or exacerbate existing) health problems such as asthma. It is important that there is a published policy and procedure for dealing with concerns raised by residents regarding damp, with an early assessment of risk.

To deliver our future commitments, we will:

- Update published information, procedures, and policy to ensure there is a transparent approach to how NPH deals with damp, which empowers residents. This will include published information for residents (welcome packs, NPH website and newsletters) on how to prevent damp (lifestyle) and report damp concerns to NPH.
- Train NPH staff on recognising signs of damp in properties, using this knowledge to report repairs and support residents with key aspects of heating and ventilating their homes.
- Deliver specialist training for NPH staff working in repairs and asset management. This is to include training on damp prevention and ensuring that works do not inadvertently:
 - Compromise damp proof courses or membranes (e.g., ramps to properties); or
 - ‘Wrap damp in’ by failing to design in ventilation to retrofit programmes.
- Train WNC Customer Service Team to triage damp queries and undertake an early risk assessment to identify:
 - Any vulnerability or health problem that could be affected by damp and mould; and
 - The severity of the case and potential risk to health.
- Have a clear process for surveying damp, interventions and drying to include monitoring.
- Install ventilation systems where appropriate.
- Pilot different approaches to monitoring air quality and ventilation to be trialled initially through the whole house retrofit programme, funded by BEIS. This will then be rolled out across all housing stock, to include the use of mechanical positive ventilation systems where appropriate.
- Carry out a review of properties occupied by residents living in socially overcrowded properties, and the impact on damp and condensation.



HOMES AND COMMUNITIES TO FEEL PROUD OF

An effective asset management strategy can make a big difference to residents' feeling of pride about their homes and the belief that council housing contributes to thriving communities. This is at the heart of NPH's vision to provide homes which enable people to live happy and healthy lives in enriched communities and seeks to make a difference by delivering:

- Homes that are maintained in a good state of repair;
- High levels of customer satisfaction with works and services; and
- Other housing assets (shops, car parks, garages open space) are invested in and wider social, cultural, and environmental issues are addressed.

WHOLE HOME, WHOLE NEIGHBOURHOOD TEN-YEAR NEIGHBOURHOOD INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

NPH completed the decent homes programme (started by Northampton Borough Council) in 2017 and subsequently commenced a ten-year neighbourhood investment programme using the ‘Whole Home, Whole Neighbourhood’ approach. This programme delivers:

- Internal component works (kitchens, internal insulation, heating, and electrical works).
- External works (windows, roofing, doors, external wall insulation).
- Landscaping, environmental, and public realm works including upgrading car parks, bicycle storage, fencing, retaining wall, refuse and recycling provision.

This ten-year neighbourhood investment programme is now half-way through, with the following plan for the five years of this strategy:

Financial Year	Neighbourhood
2022- 23 & 2023- 24	Kingsthorpe
	Sunnyside
	Kingsthorpe Hollow
	St. James
	Kingsley
	Abington
2024- 25	Semilong
2025- 26	Ryehill
	Town Centre
	Duston
2026- 27	Spencer
	Hardingstone
	Great Houghton
	Wootton
	Dallington

This approach has realised a range of benefits including:

- Local tenant engagement on matters that are important to them in their area and in their own home.
- An annual cycle of stock condition surveys to inform:
 - The scope of the following years' neighbourhood investment works; and
 - The asset management data base with lifecycles for future works.

This programme of surveys has resulted in data certainty for over 50% of the homes we manage.

- Neighbourhood investment works completed to over 5000 homes in 25 neighbourhoods.
- Using Total Mobile technology to enable real time condition surveys, where survey data automatically updates component data on NPH's asset database, with further updates upon completion of works.
- A holistic approach to neighbourhoods addressing wider concerns relating to anti-social behaviour, community facilities, parking, and open space.
- Delivering the works through a single partnering contractor to drive efficiency and accountability for contractor conduct. The ten-year approach means we can smooth programmes, which is more attractive to the construction sector than peaks and troughs. This eight-year contract ends in 2025 with an option to extend by up to a further two years.

Future commitments include:

- Completion of the investment plan using the 'whole home, whole neighbourhood' model of delivery.
- Delivering works to properties that exceed decent homes standard, aligned to the Northampton Standard set out at NPH's start in 2015.
- Complete stock condition surveys on the remaining neighbourhoods and PAS 2035 Assessments on all homes with EPC Band D or below.
- Increase the use of drone surveys to ensure 100% of blocks have roof surveys within the lifetime of the strategy.
- Implement contractor portal functionality of the asset data base to provide transparency in relation to ordering works, progression of works, customer feedback and payments between contractor and client (NPH).
- Expand the use of Open Housing functionality to include scenario planner to inform investment programmes.
- Expand the asset data base to include component data on external assets (car parks, communal gardens, retaining walls etc).
- Undertake a review of the current contractual arrangements to inform the procurement route once the current partnering contract comes to an end.
- Undertake a review of the voids lettable standard to ensure a consistent standard between NPH's in-house team and external contractors.



INTEGRATION OF RESPONSIVE REPAIRS AND ASSET MANAGEMENT/ INVESTMENT

Whilst the neighbourhood investment works should minimise the need for responsive repairs and maintenance, some responsive repairs will be inevitable. If properties are damaged due to neglect, wilful damage or simply wear and tear it is imperative that they are maintained to mitigate the need for capital investment before the next cycle. NPH's repairs and maintenance team has undergone a two-year improvement programme to drive up standards, customer satisfaction and efficiency. This includes new ways of working, increased use of technology and a new performance management framework.

NPH's asset management and repairs and maintenance teams are collaborating closely to deliver a joined-up approach for residents. Key examples include:

- Improved asset database visibility of works planned and in progress;
- Published five-year neighbourhood investment plan;

- Regular cross-departmental meetings to discuss opportunities for collaboration and service improvement;
- Annual review of specification to ensure consistency between repairs, planned works and new build; and
- Co-ordinated approach to disrepair claims.

To deliver our future commitments, we will:

- Ensure that the in-house repairs team continues to receive updates on any changes to the neighbourhood investment programme, enabling repair processes to be fully informed.
- Ensure that the in-house repairs team are trained on any new components installed as a result of the neighbourhood investment programme, including new forms of insulation and technology.

TACKLING HOMES WHICH ARE CHALLENGING TO LET OR MANAGE

Whilst demand for housing in Northampton is so great that all properties (regardless of size, location, or design) could be let, some are not appropriate for modern living due to their size or layout.

NPH's Neighbourhood investment programme has successfully remodelled several properties, which were no longer attractive to residents or did not meet the Nationally Designated Space Standards (NDSS). Examples over the past five years include:

- Remodelling Eleanor House Category 2 Sheltered Housing Scheme with increased capacity (additional apartments) and modernisation throughout;
- Remodelling Overslade House (single persons' accommodation) into Centenary House- 40 attractive, modern family apartments;
- Remodelling redundant space in apartment blocks to create new homes;
- Demolition of Little Cross Street to create 18 new homes; and
- Installing 'winter gardens' to apartments with open balconies that were unusable due to pigeons and bad weather, creating useable space and improved thermal efficiency.

These have all been part of the wider 'Whole Home, Whole Neighbourhood' approach and fully integrated into NPH's ten-year neighbourhood investment

programme. With half of the ten-year neighbourhood investment programme remaining, housing which is challenging to let or manage still exists within Northampton, albeit on a much smaller scale.

NPH produced a housing regeneration policy in 2019 which was adopted by Northampton Borough Council. This policy now needs to be reviewed by NPH's new parent company WNC.

To deliver our future commitments, we will:

- Undertake options appraisals of any housing identified as challenging to let or manage. This will include any homes that fail to meet NDSS space standards.
- Bring forward proposals to remodel housing, including the use of redundant space and vertically extending buildings using MMC (air space development) where appropriate, to optimise assets.
- Retain the option of remodelling as part of the wider whole neighbourhood approach to deliver efficiently in an integrated way.
- Review with WNC, the Housing Regeneration Policy as a key policy to guide major regeneration schemes, which entails the demolition of homes and buying back of leaseholder properties.

WHOLE NEIGHBOURHOOD APPROACH TO FORMER COUNCIL HOMES

As more homes are sold through the right to buy scheme, the impact of neighbourhood regeneration is diluted as the proportion of council owned stock reduces. As NPH progresses its neighbourhood investment programme, neglected or poorly maintained privately owned homes are becoming more apparent.

NPH has not yet fully explored opportunities to partially mitigate this risk. These include enforcing restrictive and positive covenants on former council homes.

To deliver our future commitments, we will:

- Undertake a legal review of the restrictive and positive covenants within deeds of former council properties to recommend to WNC; properties to recommend to WNC:
 - Establish whether existing positive and restrictive covenants can be enforced and agree a policy for doing so;
 - Identify whether standard positive and restrictive covenants could be improved for future title deeds; and
- Agree with NPH's partnering contractor, a formal process for offering works to private owners adjoining WNC properties.

DRIVING UP CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

The 'Whole Home, Whole Neighbourhood' approach has increased customer satisfaction. Reported complaints for investment works have decreased significantly from the previous decent homes programme of works.

NPH has launched a customer service improvement programme with the asset management strategy being key to improving customer satisfaction further. Feedback from customer satisfaction surveys has predominantly focused on communication and the need for:

- Improved communication to residents about the content and timing of investment works;
- Clearer communication to help residents prepare for investment works; and
- Easier channels of communication for residents to address concerns or ask questions when works are underway or have been completed.

To deliver our future commitments, we will:

- Undertake an 'end to end' review of the process, from first contact to completion of the 12-month defect liability period ('DLP') including:

- The approach to neighbourhood consultation, including residents and other stakeholders to inform neighbourhood investment plans;
- Information published on NPH's website, which is accessible to all stakeholders;
- Information recorded on NPH's database, including the contractor portal, which is accessible to all colleagues;
- Written correspondence to residents;
- Standard information leaflets;
- Communication channels that are easy for residents to access before, during and after works have completed; and
- Provision of further training on the neighbourhood investment programme for WNC's customer service team, to improve responses to telephone queries and minimise the necessity for call backs.
- Review quality control processes, for both contractor and NPH, to drive up performance and reduce complaints related to workmanship.
- Implement and embed the contractor portal functionality on NPH's Open Housing system for greater visibility of works and communication for contractors, NPH staff and WNC customer service colleagues.



SOCIAL REGENERATION

The ten-year programme has delivered many wider social regeneration benefits. These have included:

- Securing inward investment and delivering new play areas and a green gym;
- Upgrading many of NPH's community hubs;
- Securing revenue funding for local voluntary groups through our partnering contractor and through NPH's Community Interest Company, Happy to Help; and
- Creating apprenticeships within NPH and through our supply chain.

This positive social impact needs to continue. With growing construction costs and greater competition for grant funding, the environment for social regeneration is challenging. These challenges create a risk for social regeneration to be marginalised, but for physical regeneration to have lasting impact it is essential that it is fully integrated with social regeneration.

To deliver our future commitments, we will:

- Consult and engage with residents and other stakeholders to understand the needs of local communities;
- Continue to apply for grant funding to add value to HRA capital investment, to directly improve neighbourhoods;
- Continue to provide apprenticeships and work experience opportunities, both within NPH and our supply chain;
- Ensure our supply chain delivers their Corporate Social Responsibility aligned to social regeneration of the neighbourhoods they are working in;
- Undertake an annual review of community hubs use, to ensure they are fully utilised and overcome any barriers; and
- Ensure new housing schemes and existing neighbourhoods are family friendly with safe space to play and exercise- particularly where families are living in apartments.

HRA SHOPS

NPH manages the repairs and maintenance function for over 60 shops and commercial units that are held in the HRA. WNC retains the letting (commercial) function however NPH manages the maintenance of the asset. Shops play an important part in the sustainability of communities and NPH has been proactive in supporting this. Notable examples include the new build local retail in Thorplands and Spring Boroughs.

We will continue to work with WNC colleagues to undertake a strategic review of HRA shops to include:

- Stock condition surveys on all HRA shops and commercial units;
- A review of lease income;
- A review of any void shops or difficult to let commercial units; and
- An agreed standard for commercial units and connected homes, which informs future investment approach and identifies responsibilities for repair, improvements, and compliance.

PARKING AND GARAGES

When the majority of council homes were constructed in Northampton, households had fewer cars and those cars tended to be significantly smaller than those owned today. NPH has, over the past five years, looked to address this in a number of ways:

- In 2017 NPH produced a new garage sites strategy and garage lettings policy, which was approved by Northampton Borough Council. To implement the council's policy, NPH undertook a major programme which entailed demolition of garage sites for redevelopment and refurbishment of the remaining garages for letting. The programme is nearing completion and the letting of garages is now business as usual. Local residents can apply to let garages online using the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system, which provides increased transparency and efficiency.
- In 2019 NPH undertook a programme to install car park barriers town centre apartment residents. Car-owning residents can use the same fob access that they use to enter their apartment block to enter the car park. This has provided a solution for car parks being used by non-residents who work or commute from the town centre.
- NPH has upgraded car parks to apartment blocks and utilised open space where possible to increase parking for residents.

- Though challenging, and at times contentious, delivery of all three programmes has created a greater number of secure parking spaces for residents. These programmes will continue throughout the remaining five years of the neighbourhood investment plan. However, as NPH has moved to business as usual, it has become clear that the garage policy requires review, and a published policy is required for car parks to apartment blocks.

To deliver our future commitments, we will:

- Review the garage lettings policy in consultation with residents and WNC.
- Publish a new car park policy in consultation with residents and WNC. This will include the policy on:
 - The management and use of electric vehicle charging points;
 - Service charges for new build homes with communal parking areas and non-adopted roads; and
 - Maintenance and management of off-road parking areas.

DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

Some residents living in NPH apartment blocks experience low internet speeds and access issues. In some cases, there is a limited choice of intranet provider. We are working with WNC to agree standardisation of wayleave agreements with telecommunication companies, to facilitate the installation of ultra-fast fibre networks in blocks.

To deliver our future commitments, we will:

- Finalise a standard wayleave agreement with WNC for telecommunications companies;
- Explore further potential to enable the gradual withdrawal from the use of satellite dishes and aerials, through the opportunities from fibre; and
- Provide Wi-Fi to all community hubs.

REFUSE AND FLY TIPPING

One of the most common complaints raised by residents relates to fly tipping and issues with refuse. The neighbourhood investment programme has included wide consultation with residents, NPH estate services, housing management teams, the council, and its refuse contractor to identify solutions for bin storage, recycling and to tackle fly tipping. Whilst improvements have been made, in certain areas fly tipping persists and targeted interventions are required in partnership with WNC.

To deliver our future commitments, we will:

- Review the impact of the new refuse and recycling solutions that have been installed to date, in consultation with residents, NPH Estate Services, WNC neighbourhood wardens and WNC's refuse contractor;
- Work with WNC to identify fly tipping hot spots and agree action plans to address them, including the use of CCTV and enforcement where feasible; and
- Run new initiative pilots with WNC with a view to prevent and manage residual fly tipping.

ECTON LANE TRAVELLER SITE

Although traveller sites are not a HRA asset, NPH manages the Ecton Lane Travellers Site on behalf of the council. Management of this budget is retained by the council.

WNC is in the process of developing a strategy for the provision of travellers across West Northamptonshire. Following this, a strategic decision will be made on the future and the investment requirements for the Ecton Lane site.

There are currently significant challenges on this site in relation to:

- Services (the main incoming electrical supply requires replacement);
- The utility blocks (located on each plot providing bathroom and kitchen facilities – designed for the transient traveller); and
- The location and capacity of the site.



CONNECTING COMMUNITIES WITH HISTORY, NATURE, AND CULTURE

Northampton is rich and diverse in history, natural habitats, and culture. This includes the neighbourhoods with council housing. Examples to name a few include:

- Spring Boroughs, steeped in history not least due to its proximity to 11thc Northampton Castle;
- Kingsthorpe Hollow and its links to the Northampton's famous shoe industry; and
- Eastfield, located alongside Eastfield park rich in wildlife and biodiversity.

Connecting communities with history, nature and culture is important for two reasons:

- It creates a sense of belonging and connects people to place. This in turn helps to break down cultural division. It builds friendship and unity, critical for sustainable communities.
- It encourages people to care about their environment, respect the past and respect natural and built assets for the future.

To deliver our future commitments, we will:

- Integrate links to heritage with neighbourhood investment through both physical regeneration (signage, information boards and public art) and social regeneration (workshops, events and activities).
- Promote engagement in biodiversity through activities such as:
 - Sharing information on identification of local species and wildlife with residents; and
 - Promoting biodiversity with engagement activities including tree planting, bird and bat boxes, bug hotels and more.
- Promote volunteering to care for the natural habitat.
- Promote local culture and links to nearby places of interest and recreational opportunities.
- Explore opportunities to create play opportunities for children in natural environments.



DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

Publishing a strategy is only the beginning. This section sets out ‘key ingredients’ that are critical for successful delivery of the strategy:

- A partnership approach to delivery;
- Resources (finances and people); and
- Governance.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Partnership is in our name and something NPH was designed to deliver. A core strength we have demonstrated since our launch in 2015, is the ability to work in partnership. This takes many forms and is critical to success as we as an organisation do not hold all the answers, or all of the solutions.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP: TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS ('RESIDENTS')

Consultation and engagement with residents are referenced at several points during this strategy.

Nobody knows their homes and communities more than the people living in them.

NPH's annual programme of neighbourhood investment includes a range of consultation approaches including:

- Public meetings;
- Home visits; and
- Getting involved with existing forums, such as resident associations.

With the majority of NPH's neighbourhood investment work, this approach has been successful. In light of new policy and legislation in the sector however, we know that we need to move to a more formal approach that is documented, published and measured.

This strategy already includes an action to review consultation processes, which then needs to be approved, published, and formalised. This will enable NPH to demonstrate a clear statement of intent to ensure that residents are consulted, listened to and their views responded to in a transparent manner.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP: WNC (PARENT COMPANY AND LANDLORD)

NPH as WNC's ALMO delivers services on behalf of WNC. WNC is engaged and consulted in multiple ways including:

- An annual review of the Corporate Plan, including a review of the one- year and and five- year investment plan;
- Existing performance management frameworks;
- Operationally with neighbourhood wardens;
- Statutory approvals from WNC Planning, Building Control, Highways teams; and
- Working collaboratively and strategically on inward investment opportunities.

To deliver our future commitments, we will:

- Agree a formal approach to annual investment plan consultation and engagement, which is published, reviewed annually, and reported to board. The annual review will include scrutiny from residents.
- Agree a formal approach to liaison with residents on capital investment into communal areas of apartments, which could in turn have an impact on:
 - Communal space and individual space in communal gardens;
 - Service charges; and
 - Future maintenance and management.

NPH's 15-year management agreement with WNC is the subject of discussion following the creation of WNC and is due to be reviewed in 2022. It is important that the partnership approach at an operational and strategic level is incorporated into the review to ensure continued successful delivery.

To deliver our future commitments, we will ensure that the strategic and operational partnership approach to asset management and planned investment is incorporated into the updated Management Agreement between WNC and NPH.



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP: LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

NPH collaborates with multiple stakeholders in the delivery of its Asset Management Strategy. This includes public sector bodies (police, fire, local authority), faith and community groups. This is crucial to ensure that the strategy and investment that flows from it:

- Listens to and learns from the significant level of intelligence held by other stakeholders about the homes NPH manages and the communities in which the homes are located;
- Harnesses the input and support from others to achieve NPH's vision, mission, and values;
- Makes a difference holistically to communities in relation to health, wellbeing, community safety and the environment; and
- Does not create unintended consequences (for example design features which inadvertently create community safety issues).

To deliver our future commitments, we will:

- Map out the stakeholders in each neighbourhood as part of the annual cycle of consultation; and
- Formalise our approach to stakeholder engagement in asset management and neighbourhood investment.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP: SUPPLY CHAIN

NPH's eight-year contract (with option to extend a further two years) with Equans (formerly Engie) is based on a strong principle of partnering. This entails a collaborative approach to:

- Long term phasing of work to ensure 'smooth' phasing and packages that are attractive to the supply chain;
- Overcoming challenging delivery and logistic details;
- Developing a local supply chain and supporting local Small and Medium Enterprises (SME);
- Resident engagement;
- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR); supporting local voluntary sector groups;
- Innovation and response to new investment opportunities; and
- Ongoing review and improvements.

The current economic for construction is at its most challenging. Brexit, the pandemic, the zero-carbon agenda, and Building Safety Bill have all contributed to:

- Rising material costs;
- Material shortages;
- Rising labour costs;
- Labour shortages; and
- Specialist sub-contractor and consultant shortages.

To address this, it is critical that a partnering approach is continued. A traditional contractual approach will result in protracted commercial negotiations and a risk of programmes grinding to a halt. NPH more than ever before will need to be innovative and 'dig down' into the supply chain. This will enable NPH to be an intelligent client that is able to work collaboratively with its partnering contractor and local supply chain to ensure continued delivery, viability and satisfaction from residents.

To deliver our future commitments, we will:

- Undertake a strategic commercial review of the partnering contract with Equans, to test the commercial viability in light of the changing global economic climate.
- Undertake a strategic supply chain review of the partnering contract with Equans, to further develop the use of local SMEs to drive value and support the local economy.
- Undertake a strategic efficiency review (in-house and contractor) of the partnering contract to identify opportunities to streamline process and avoid waste. This relates to all areas including major voids, neighbourhood regeneration, adaptations and decent homes programmes.
- Undertake annual credit checks on supply chain to mitigate risk of supply chain collapse.

RESOURCES

CAPITAL AND REVENUE FUNDING (NPH MANAGED BUDGET).

NPH has managed HRA capital and revenue budgets to deliver property maintenance, compliance, cyclical works, capital investment into existing stock and new build council housing. Both revenue and capital budgets are reviewed every year.

The capital budget review entails:

- A collaborative NPH and WNC review of the 30 HRA Business Plan.
- A collaborative NPH and WNC review of the medium-term financial plan (five-year capital investment plan) which includes acquisitions (budget retained by WNC), and NPH managed budgets for investment into existing stock, new build development and ICT. Please see below the forecast NPH managed budgets for the five-year capital investment plan that was published in 2021.

Please note that this is updated each year to consider new funding opportunities, phasing of works and new challenges which need to be addressed. Specifically, from 2022 onwards this is likely to include:

- Higher level of budget allocation to disabled adaptations; and
- Higher level of budget allocation to external improvements, due to inward investment for retrofit works.

To deliver our future commitments, we will:

- Work collaboratively with WNC to review and update the 1, 5 and 30-year plans; and
- Seek to drive efficiency through intelligent scoping and phasing of works and procurement.

	Original 2020-21 £	Budget 2021-22 £	Estimate 2022-23 £	Estimate 2023-24 £	Estimate 2024-25 £	Estimate 2025-26 £	Total £
External Improvements	9,300,000	11,650,000	12,450,000	12,450,000	10,450,000	8,450,000	55,450,000
Internal Works	4,600,000	3,050,000	2,250,000	2,250,000	4,250,000	5,250,000	17,050,000
Structural Works and Compliance	600,000	450,000	450,000	450,000	450,000	450,000	2,250,000
Disabled Adaptations	650,000	650,000	650,000	650,000	650,000	650,000	3,250,000
Environmental Improvements	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	15,000,000
IT Development	300,000	275,500	315,000	260,000	245,000	245,000	1,340,500
New Build Programme/ Major Projects	20,900,000	42,180,038	35,419,832	34,089,029	20,900,000	20,900,000	153,488,899
Total	39,350,000	61,255,538	54,534,832	53,149,029	39,945,000	38,945,000	247,829,399

INWARD INVESTMENT

NPH has worked collaboratively with WNC to use 1-4-1 receipts (from the sale of council homes) to subsidise the council house building programme and avoid these receipts being paid back to central government with interest.

NPH has been successful in securing significant (£14.8m) inward investment in partnership with WNC which to date has included:

- £3m funding from BEIS for decarbonisation works;
- £1.8m NHS England funding for supported housing;
- £1.4m Homes England funding for supported housing;
- £6.2m Homes England funding for general needs housing;
- £1.4m Homes England funding for Next Steps Accommodation for rough sleepers (NSAP);
- £550k Homes England funding for Rough Sleepers Accommodation project (RSAP); and
 - £450k One Public Estate (Cabinet Office) Brownfield Release funding.

In addition to above, several bids have been submitted to Homes England, BEIS and the Cabinet Office for future schemes.

To deliver our future commitments, we will:

- Continue to bid in partnership with WNC for inward investment opportunities for existing stock and new build housing; and
- Develop strategic relationships with funders, in particular Homes England.

PEOPLE

NPH's Asset Management Strategy is dependent on a whole company approach, including but not limited to:

- Sharing intelligence on housing stock and neighbourhoods from housing officers, rent income officers and repairs operatives.
- Collaborative working between departments to address operational and strategic asset issues, including complaints and issues that require a holistic 'people, property and place' solution.
- Collaborative working between NPH Asset Management and Development and NPH Finance Team to work through investment plans and budget monitoring.
- Collaborative working between NPH Asset Management and Development and NPH Corporate Services Team on service development, in particular the use of technology.

NPH has developed a strong multi-disciplinary Asset Management and Development team with professional qualifications including:

- Commercial (RICS Quantity Surveying);
- Surveying (RICS Building Surveying);
- Construction Management (CIOB);
- Design (CICT);
- GIS;
- Project Management; and
- Occupational Therapy.

More broadly within NPH, colleagues have professional qualifications that support a professional delivery of property services. This includes technical disciplines relating to health and safety, fire safety, electrical and gas installations.

There are significant challenges in the property and construction sector in relation to the recruitment and retention of property professionals due to the competitive packages offered in the private sector. To address this, NPH has invested in apprenticeships (including higher apprenticeships), graduate roles and professional development. This has been instrumental in the development of the team.

The nature of inward investment and future investment planning will require a dynamic approach to staffing, to ensure sufficient people resources are in place to reflect the nature of the capital programme being delivered.

To deliver our future commitments, we will:

- Continue to promote apprenticeship opportunities to recruit and retain staff and contribute to the development of the construction industry locally;
- Continue to support where appropriate, professional development to develop a professionally qualified workforce; and
- Review people resource' implications of new funding opportunities and new projects to ensure they can be effectively delivered.

GOVERNANCE

There are several measures in place to monitor the delivery of this strategy:

- Monthly reporting to NPH's PAG (Project Appraisal Group);
- Reporting to EMT (Executive Management Team) in relation to capital spend;
- Monthly reporting to WNC's Place Group in relation to delivery and capital spend;
- NPH's Performance Management Framework, which is reported to EMT and NPH's Operations Committee;
- Quarterly reports to NPH Finance Committee; and
- Annual reporting to Board.

To deliver our future commitments, we will:

- Continue to report into existing structures;
- Review reporting formats; and
- Review suite of Key Performance Indicators.



REVIEW

The operating environment for housing is dynamic and influenced by many external factors- political, environmental, financial and legal to name a few. These changes are local, national and global and can be both challenges and opportunities. This strategy will therefore be reviewed in two years' time and an updated strategy submitted to the NPH board within 3 years.

ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Northampton Partnership Homes

2022- 2025

