

Housing Association



Partnership Agreement

April 2008 to March 2013

STRUCTURE OF THE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

The Partnership Agreement consists of this, the main document, and three component parts which are detailed as follows:

Part 1: Preferred Development Partners Agreement

This includes one appendix:

Appendix 1. General information relating to the housing association

Part 2: Nominations Agreement

This includes three appendices:

Appendix 1. Nominations forms

Appendix 2. Inter-agency information exchange protocol

Appendix 3. Common Housing Register (CHR) protocol

Part 3: Temporary Accommodation Nominations Agreement

This includes one appendix:

Appendix 1. Temporary accommodation nominations forms

In signing up to the main Partnership Agreement, parties will also be committing themselves to the terms of its component parts.

Working with Housing Associations

Partnership Agreement

1) Introduction

- a) The Authority shall promote the Partnership Agreement including parts 1, 2 and 3 (Preferred Development Partner, Nominations and Temporary Accommodation Nominations Agreements) with the aim of providing for the long term housing requirements for everyone in housing need living in the North Herts district whilst supporting and developing local communities.
- b) The Partnership Agreement and the various parts will be the mechanism to continue a mutual commitment to high quality housing which meets needs now and in the future in North Hertfordshire and enable improved working procedures that will provide greater benefits for the community as a whole.
- c) This commitment will ensure that the housing is affordable, accessible, well managed and contributes to sustainable communities. Good informal and formal communication between the Council and Housing Association partners on all housing matters is essential to meeting this commitment.
- d) The Partnership Agreement and parts 2 and 3, set out the working procedures between the Authority and housing associations with housing stock within the district.
- e) The Preferred Development Partners Agreement (part 1) will be signed by those housing associations undertaking development and refurbishment works in the district.
- f) The Agreements will start in April 2008 and run until 31st March 2013. The Agreement will be reviewed bi-annually to ensure it remains current. Partners will be asked to agree any changes to the original Agreement.

- g) These Agreements will have the full endorsement of North Hertfordshire District Council.
- h) The Authority wishes to ensure that there will be limited additional work involved with the completion of the details required, from the Partnership Agreement. Suitable information would be equal to that produced to satisfy the Housing Corporation requirements.
- i) Monitoring of nominations outputs and performance will be done on a quarterly basis. The information to facilitate this will be taken from existing information exchange arrangements where possible, for example quarterly nominations returns – Continuous Recordings of lettings and sales (CORE).

2) Context

- a) North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) introduced the 'Housing Association Charter' in October 2000. This was to define the procedures and effectiveness of all housing associations working in the North Hertfordshire district.
- b) Since this time, there have been many changes in both regional and national housing and planning policies. In response to these changes the Authority promoted the initial Partnership Agreement embracing the Preferred Development Partner Agreement, Nominations and Temporary Accommodation Nominations Agreements and in March 2008 reviewed the Agreement to reflect current standards and bring the Agreement up to date.
- c) The Authority will work with partners and expect the Housing Associations to participate on many of the current issues such as:
 - The Local Authority Housing Strategy
 - The Local Authority Homelessness Strategy
 - The Local Development Framework and Local Development Scheme
 - Regional Housing Strategy – Regional Housing Board
 - LCB Sub Regional Housing Strategy
 - The Sustainable Community Strategy for North Hertfordshire
 - The Community Safety Plan for North Hertfordshire

- The Respect Agenda
 - The Social Inclusion Strategy for North Hertfordshire
 - Community Planning information and information sharing with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)
 - Rural Development and work of the Community Development Agency
 - Housing Corporation and Home and Communities Agency
- d) In view of the extensive sub regional working, Housing Association Liaison Meetings will be held two or three times a year to review and debate predominately Management issues.

3) Affordability

- a) To ensure that rent and purchase schemes remain affordable to those on lower incomes Housing Associations are expected to work towards a 2 % rent on unsold equity on shared ownership products and housing costs should be no more than a third of gross income. Schemes should be affordable to households on average incomes in the district (approx £20,000 for a one person household and £25,000 for a couple). Previously shared ownership units in the district have been predominately one and two bed flats, to which these income figures relate. Other income levels could be considered for shared ownership houses.
- b) Rent levels are of great importance to the Authority. It is essential that the levels of rent (and service charges) charged by the associations in the district are seen to be comparable and within acceptable levels that can be justified by the Authority. Social rented properties should be let at or below target rents and intermediate market rents should be a maximum of 80% of market value.
- c) Information on affordability can be obtained from the following sources:

Housing Needs Survey information
Hometrack
Analysis of Common Housing Register applicant data
CORE returns
SHMA data
KW housing research/Homebuy Agent

Hertfordshire Observatory
Labour Force Survey (Nomisweb)

4) Housing Management

Allocations / nominations.

- a) The Authority will hold a common housing register with North Hertfordshire Homes and Howard Cottage Housing Association that will take into account affordable housing demand and a protocol is in place for the operation of the common housing register (part 2, appendix 3).
- b) All Housing Associations agree to work with the standard Nomination Agreement (part 2 attached to this Partnership Agreement) unless they have joined the common housing register, whereby different working practices may have been agreed (see the common housing register protocol in part 2, appendix 3). The issues listed from (c) to (i) are requirements that relate to the standard Nomination Agreement.
- c) Nomination levels under the current system will be 100% on first lets (new development) with usually a minimum 75% on second and future lets in perpetuity (unless other agreements are already in place). This level of nomination will be maintained.
- d) The Housing Association agrees to introduce the 'HomeSwapper' or similar scheme to facilitate mutual exchange of properties for the benefit of their tenants.

Procedural agreement

- e) Under the Nominations Agreement the Housing Association agrees to notify the Council's Housing Options Supervisor for property nomination as soon as the property is vacated (or when first notice of availability of the property is received). This includes specific information on the property, including adaptations.
- f) Notification to the Council's Housing Options Supervisor of results and any amendments that occur with any nomination made, to be communicated within

agreed time scale. This includes when the Housing Association feels that the nominee should be allocated a different property. This process will be open and accountable.

- g) To provide details to the Council's Housing Options Supervisor of in-house transfers for the purposes of district wide projection of housing need and movement. This should be on a quarterly basis, and will illustrate the percentage of total allocations for each Housing Association.
- h) Notification to the Council's Housing Options Supervisor of any nomination via own waiting list, so that the case can be cancelled on the common housing register. This could be reciprocated, so that the Housing Association is informed of those moved on, in order to update their own waiting list of clients.
- i) The Housing Association agrees to comply with the Inter Agency Information Exchange protocol (part 2, appendix 2). The Housing Corporation 'Access to housing – Information sharing' protocol 2007 will be considered at a Housing Association Forum meeting with a view to reviewing current arrangements.

Participation in future working practices

- j) The Association also agrees to work with the Council to meet the needs of homeless households in the district, complying with homelessness prevention protocol as part of homelessness prevention strategies. The issue of housing association exclusions should also be discussed to minimise instances of Council nominations being unsuccessful due to the Housing Association's criteria, for example level of earnings. We agree to work toward an assessment process that satisfies both the Council and Housing Association.
- k) The Association agrees to contribute to the development of the Housing Strategy in the district and assist in its implementation.
- l) The Housing Association agrees to adhere to the requirement to provide information to the National Register of Social Housing (NROSH).

- m) The Council in partnership with North Hertfordshire Homes and Howard Cottage is Working towards the introduction of a choice based lettings (CBL) scheme in 2009. The Association agrees to work with the three organisations and participate in the new scheme and associated working practices following implementation. The Association agrees to pay a reasonable charge to cover the cost of advertising and administration associated with marketing their vacancies.
- n) The Association agrees to work in partnership with the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Officer, including provision of support to victims and tackling perpetrators.
- o) The Association agrees to review and implement strategies for dealing with the issue of under occupation of family homes and support their tenants to release under occupied family homes to make better use of existing housing stock in the district.
- p) The Association agrees to work with the Council in respect of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) and associated works and agrees to divide the cost of the DFG work on a 50/50 basis with the Council.
- q) The Housing Association agrees to consider the potential opportunities for stock rationalisation with collaboration with other organisations, on the basis of best practice and in partnership with the Council.
- r) All Housing Associations agree to remedy Category 1 hazards as defined by the Housing Health and Health and Safety Rating Standards (HHSRS) (Housing Act 2004) within the time specified by appointed Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) of the Council.

5) Partnering with other Housing Associations.

- a) Where the circumstances require, the Housing Association agrees to work in partnership with other housing associations or other organisations (voluntary sector) to meet the housing need and welfare of the people of the district. *Confirmation is required of current partnering arrangements see Appendix 1 (item d within this document).*

6) Community Involvement and Tenant participation

- a) The Housing Association agrees to promote the role of tenants, leaseholders or other residents in decision-making at all levels.
- b) The Council and the Housing Association will seek to achieve 'sustainable communities' principles beyond new development projects.

7) Valuing diversity

- a) The current BME community in the district is in the region of 12.85% of the population (ONS mid term estimates). All Associations should have an adopted and published policy framework that describes the Housing Association's position on matters relating to Equality & Diversity and Racial Harassment.
- b) The Housing Association agrees to work with the Council to promote social inclusion and extend monitoring of key service delivery outcomes such as allocations/ lettings/ nominations, repairs, complaints and anti social behaviour to include; ethnicity, disability, age, gender, sexuality and religion or belief.
- c) The Housing Association agrees to implement policy and procedures to support and protect tenants suffering equalities harassment and work with partner agencies to enable support to be provided.
- d) The Housing Association agrees to provide information on adapted properties of existing stock and provide 50% of new build affordable properties to the Lifetime Homes standards on all Local Authority or Housing Association owned sites, increasing to 100% of all new build affordable properties by 2011 (to comply with the government's national strategy for housing in an aging society target). Additional grant funding will be considered to achieve this target up to a maximum of £1,000 per property.

8) Temporary Accommodation

- a) Those Housing Associations providing temporary accommodation for the homeless or other forms (not sheltered) of supported housing agree to abide by the Temporary Accommodation Nominations Agreement contained in Part 3 to this document.

9) Key monitoring requirements

- a) The parties to this Agreement accept the Council's role in enabling housing need to be met and promotion good housing management practice. The Council will work closely with the Housing Corporation and any successor organisation to ensure that best practice is followed and duplication is minimised.
- b) The Housing Association agrees to provide the information listed in appendix 1 (item e) to enable the Council to carry out its monitoring role.

Housing Association



The signing of this Agreement will enable the provision and management of affordable housing to be undertaken in North Hertfordshire District Council between April 2008 and 31st March 2013.

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Council's Housing Spokesperson

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Councillor Mr Bernard Lovewell

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Chief Executive

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Housing Association

Date.....

Partnership Agreement

Appendix 1

a) General information of the Partnership

Name of Housing Association:.....

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Housing Corporation registration number:.....

Address of Head office:.....

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.....Post code:.....

Telephone Number:.....Fax number:.....

Personnel to Contact;

Chief Executive

E-mail address

Direct line telephone no.

Housing Management Director

E-mail address

Direct line telephone no.

Contact Key Officer for Management matters;.....

Title.....

Local Area Office Address for North Hertfordshire:

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North Hertfordshire District Council

Chief Executive John Campbell (01462) 474 300

Head of Housing and Environmental Health Andrew Godman

E-mail address Andy.Godman@north-herts.gov.uk

Direct line telephone no. (01462) 474 293

Contact Key Officer for Management matters;...Martin Lawrence

Title Housing Options Manager

E-mail address Martin.Lawrence@north-herts.gov.uk

Direct line telephone no. (01462) 474 250

Contact Key Officer for Development matters;... Debbie Ealand

Title Housing Development Liaison Officer

E-mail address Debbie.Ealand@north-herts.gov.uk

Direct line telephone no. (01462) 474 526

b) Rent details

Current property rents within the North Hertfordshire area (rents and service charges as of 31/03/08) period 2007/2008

PROPERTY TYPE	TYPICAL CURRENT RENT	SERVICE CHARGES IN ADDITION TO RENT?	SERVICE CHARGES FOR SUPPORTING PEOPLE?
1 bed unit.			
2 bed unit.			
3 bed unit.			
4 bed unit.			
Other			

Please list what is included in any service charges.

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Rent arrears policy: what are the current levels of rent arrears that occur within the Housing Association stock? (Collection rate as arrears as a % of the debit due?)

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Methods of rent collection, please tick methods available.

- Direct debit By telephone using debit / credit card
- By post Pay point
-
- The Web site Cash offices

Other method please list below

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c) Current stock held within the North Hertfordshire area

(Point of reference being 31st March 2008).

PROPERTY LOCATION	HITCHIN		LETCHWORTH		BALDOCK		ROYSTON		OTHERS (VILLAGES)	
	GN	OLD	GN	OLD	GN	OLD	GN	OLD	GN	OLD
Property Category > Property type v										
Rooms										
Flats										
Bungalows										
Houses										
Maisonettes										

GN = General Needs Accommodation

OLD = Older persons accommodation (figures to include Cat 1 Cat 2, Special needs and Wheel chair housing, details of which to be noted under separate list)

Indication of housing stock held beyond the boundaries of NHDC.

PROPERTY LOCATION	HERTFORDSHIRE		NATIONALLY	
	GENERAL NEEDS	OLDER PERS.	GENERAL NEEDS	OLDER PERS.
Property Category > Property type v				
Rooms				
Flats				
Bungalows				
Houses				
Maisonettes				

Please specify other client groups that your organisation is involved with i.e. (other than general needs), Frail elderly, Young mothers, Homeless, Physically / Mentally disabled, Learning Disability, drugs / alcohol.

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d) Partnering with other Housing Associations.

Confirmation required from the Housing Association as to what existing partnership arrangements are working within the district (name of other partnering associations to be noted along with details of the partnership arrangements.)

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e) Key monitoring requirements

The Housing Association agrees to supply to the Council, the following documents / details at the start of each Partnership Agreement or when existing policies change throughout the course of the Agreement.

- Copies of all current documented policies and procedures relating to housing development and management;
- A copy of audit outcome of inspection under the Housing Corporation assessment process. Associations should be working towards an excellent service as defined by the Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry.
- Provide the Housing Association's 'Key performance Indicators' for the past three years, covering the following: Repairs, Voids and Allocations, Rent Arrears.
- A copy of the Annual report and report to tenants;
- One full set of Audited accounts for the last three years;
- Five year financial forecast and long term business plan;
- Copies of any news letters circulated in the district;
- A copy of Equal opportunities policy, Disability Equality Scheme and Race Equality Scheme;
- Result of the analysis of any tenants satisfaction surveys undertaken in the last year.
- Monitoring of the nominations made to and by each association on a quarterly basis.

The Authority will undertake an interim annual review of the Housing Association's performance prior to the review at the end of the Agreement period and will publish on its website all relevant performance indicators.

f) Current Housing Associations operating in North Hertfordshire.

- The following HA's are noted as having properties within the North Hertfordshire District Council area. (December 2007)

Registered Social Landlords name	RSL Code	Number of units.
Aldwyck Housing Association Ltd	LH1682	91
Ashwell Housing Association	L1517	10
Chiltern Hundreds Housing Association	LH3809	4
Garden Housing Association (Moat HA)	L3987	15
Granta Housing Society	LH1831	11
Griffin Housing Association	LH2066	2
Guinness Trust	LH0036	89
Hanover Housing Association (+ Hanover Prop. Man.)	L0071	77
Hightown Praetorian Housing Association Ltd	L2179	59
Housing 21	L0055	22
Howard Cottage Housing Association	L1312	1107
Jephson Housing Association Ltd	L0173	15
John Groom's Housing Association Ltd	L1688	21
Johnnie Johnson Housing Trust	L1231	49
North British Housing Association	L0659	5
Papworth Trust	LH1648	12
Refugee Housing Association (Metropolitan HA)	LH1522	4
Sanctuary Hereward Housing Association (Incl. shared ownership)	L0247	201
South Anglia Housing (Circle Anglia Housing Association)	LH4094	17
Springboard Housing Association Ltd	LH0121	34
St. Pancras and Humanist Housing Association	L0871	50
Warden Housing Association Ltd (Home Group)	L0658	53
William Sutton Homes (Affinity Sutton)	LH0052	348
North Hertfordshire Homes	L4370	7804