



Inspiring Saffron

Asset Management Strategy 2024 - 2027



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Introduction

An effective, forward-thinking approach to asset management is key to ensuring we provide quality homes that are safe, warm, and affordable to run, in places that support successful lives.

Our Asset Management Strategy supports key elements of our Inspiring Saffron Strategy and sets out how we will invest well in our homes. It comes at a time when the Social Housing Regulator is strengthening its role and remit following the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, as well as the introduction and embedding of other emerging new legislation including Awaab's Law.

Our strategy aims to ensure that investment and interventions in properties and places are focussed on outcome-based standards. We will plan and deliver our activities in an integrated way, adopting a flexible and dynamic approach to maintaining, improving, and developing our homes and communities.

This will help make sure our homes are in demand, meet quality standards and are 'fit for the future'.

While focussed on the next three years, our Strategy also provides the foundation for a much longer-term approach to investment, including how our portfolio of homes needs to evolve over time through a process of improvement, regeneration, and renewal.

While our Asset Management Strategy covers our existing portfolio of properties, we will also ensure links with our plans and programmes for delivering new homes.

About Asset Management

'Asset Management' is the term used to describe the range of activities we need in place to make best use of resources to maintain & improve our asset portfolio, support our corporate ambitions & reflect tenants' future needs & aspirations.

While asset management includes repairs and maintenance, it is about much more than this. It includes updating, improving, and investing in properties and estates so they provide good quality homes in places people want to live.

Our Asset Management Strategy therefore includes a wide range of work and activities including maintaining safe and healthy homes that are in good repair, carrying out energy efficiency works, and modernising and regenerating our properties and estates, all with a focus on the needs of tenants.

Effective asset management will enable us to shape homes that meet future needs and standards, with sustainability as a central theme throughout the strategy. Sustainability goes beyond just environmental and energy performance standards; it also requires us to make decisions that focus on future standards and address the challenges of climate change, while using new technology and systems where possible.

Informing our approach

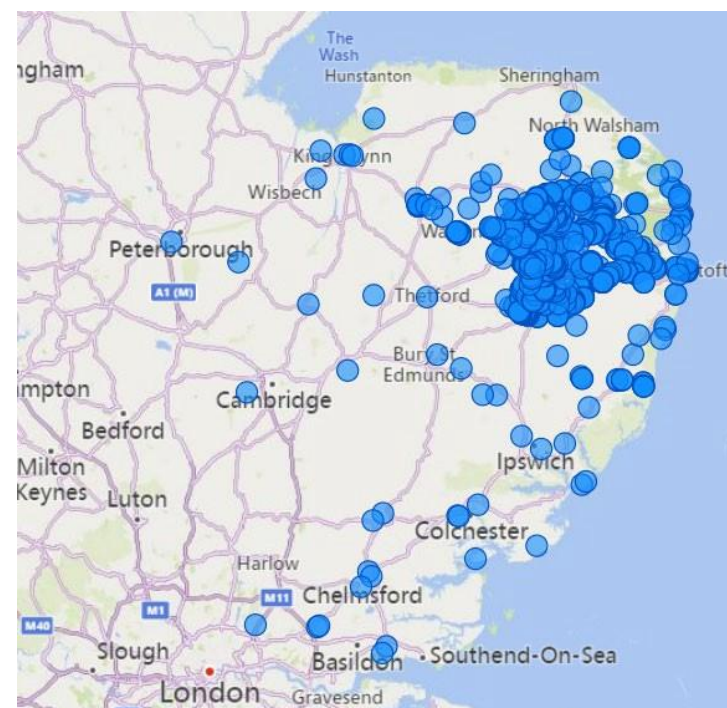
In developing our Asset Management Strategy, we have used insight and intelligence about our homes and how we manage them. We have also drawn direction from our Inspiring Saffron Strategy and from a wider range of drivers for the current work of social housing providers.

About our homes

We have a diverse portfolio of around 6,250 rented homes, most of which are in Norfolk and Suffolk, with the balance in neighbouring areas. A significant portion (c. 4,400) of the homes were acquired through the Large-Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) from South Norfolk Council. Subsequently, the number of homes we own and manage has grown by around 45% due through new acquisitions, construction projects, and the development of some shared equity and shared ownership properties.

The homes transferred through the LSVT show an ageing profile meaning that over 50% of homes date from between 1900 – 1975. This directly reflects on the energy efficiency of many of our homes and the need for retrofitting. Despite a range of energy efficiency works carried out to date, around 33% of homes remain below Energy Performance Band (EPC) Band C.

Social Rent – General Needs	3,073
Affordable – General Needs	2,474
Shared Ownership/Equity	448
Sheltered Housing	312
Supported Housing	278
Leaseholders	101



Repair and investment expenditure

During 2022/23, our profile of asset expenditure was as follows:

- We spent a total of £2,000 per home on all aspects of repair spending, including routine maintenance, planned improvements, revenue-related costs, and capital investments in major works. This is markedly lower than the £2,575 spent by other comparable social landlords.
- We spent £1,100 per home on routine maintenance, which is higher than we would want, and has been increasing over recent years due to a range of cost and demand pressures.
- We spent less than other comparable social landlords on pre-planned maintenance (PPM), £50 per home compared with around £175.
- We spent around £875 per home on major repairs, which includes component replacements. This is significantly lower than the c. £1,200 spent by other comparator landlords.

We have planned for our expenditure to increase significantly over the period to 2030, recognising that to deliver our asset management strategy ambitions will require an investment in financial resources.

Our expenditure on capitalised major repairs is forecast to more than double.

Inspiring Saffron

Our Strategy is built around three strands that direct and provide a framework for all our work. They are:

Inspiring Trust – we listen, we learn, we deliver, with a 2030 objective for tenant satisfaction of 90%.

Inspiring Community - safe, quality, affordable homes in Norfolk and Suffolk, with a 2030 objective spending 30p in the rent pound spent on our homes, 100% EPC and average SAP rating of C or above.

Inspiring Organisation – a place where people want to work and can flourish, with a 2030 objective of having world class employee engagement.

Cascading down from these, we have a range of more immediate objectives and success measures that relate strongly to our repair, maintenance, and investment work. These include:

- Maintaining 100% property safety compliance
- Genuine tenant inclusion in our work through a representative network of engaged groups
- Simple, effective approach to capturing and monitoring tenant satisfaction with excellence in complaint handling.
- An interim target of spending 25p of the rent pound invested in planned works in the 24/5 financial year.
- Having 67% or more properties at EPC C by 31st March 2025.
- Average SAP of all our homes at 73.50 by 31st March 2025.
- Having a clear approach to professionalisation & learning, mapping the professional standards for staff, and ensuring CPD is part of all roles by September 2024.

The Inspiring Saffron strategy has been used to help shape and inform our approaches and actions across the range of activities in the asset management strategy.

Drivers for change

It is more important than ever that we understand how our work as a social housing landlord, and our work in asset management, needs to be informed by a growing range of factors. These drivers mean we must work hard and smarter in addressing the repair, maintenance, and investment needs of building components to ensure homes meet current standards. They require a comprehensive approach to taking decisions on how best to organise and prioritise our cyclical compliance and planned works, as well as making decisions on the relative merits of future investment with reference to:

- A new, more intensive policy and regulatory environment following the passing of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.
- Cost and income pressures for both Saffron Housing Trust and our tenants.
- Meeting and demonstrating home quality and safety standards that require us to raise our offering and performance.
- Stretching government targets for decarbonising social housing homes.
- The need to optimise the use of our assets in meeting current and evolving housing needs and tenants' aspirations.
- How we can ensure we are an employer of choice, so we attract, retain, and develop colleagues with the new skills and expertise needed to address the challenges we face.

1. Inspiring Trust

To earn and maintain people's trust, it is crucial we listen to tenants and work with them when making decisions about how we maintain and invest in their home.

We listen, we learn, we deliver

We need to coordinate our consultation and engagement to ensure tenants' views help shape and influence the services we provide. All our work with tenants needs to be driven by people and teams with the right skills and cultures from across our organisation so we can secure the best outcomes.

Our approach

In placing tenants at the heart of our work to repair, maintain, and invest in homes we will:

- Communicate effectively with tenants about works and plans for homes, listening to what people tell us about their needs and priorities and acting on what they say.
- Engage with tenants on plans and decisions around the design and delivery of our repair service, maintenance and improvement works.
- Seek feedback from tenants about the works and services we provide, including on the newly introduced Tenant Satisfaction Measures.
- Communicate and engage with tenants in the planning and delivery of our retrofit programmes so we bring them along with us in this important area of activity. We know the success of retrofit is dependent on working actively with tenants around the potential types of works and installations to help ease concerns.
- Maximise the use of IT and technology in communicating and engaging with tenants around works in their home and other services we provide. This includes ensuring excellence in text/email messaging on responsive repair arrangements, appointment times, securing transactional feedback and in surveys on future priorities.
- Train, equip and motivate people and teams from across our organisation so they understand and recognise the value and benefits of effective communication and involvement with tenants.

To deliver our work in this area we will:

- Carry out a survey of tenants to better understand their views, opinions, and ideas for repairing, maintaining, and investing in homes.
- Communicate effectively with tenants about works to their home and keep them informed throughout the process.
- Work with our involved tenant groups to help 'co-produce' our repairs service standards and investment programmes, including our retrofit programmes.
- Use modern, easy, and cost-effective methods to communicate with tenants on repair works, seeking feedback and acting on it.
- Ensure all our staff act as advocates for tenant involvement and seek to maximise the value and benefits of active tenant engagement.

We must ensure we provide safe, good quality homes that meet tenants' needs and all required standards. We must also look to the future when investing in and making decisions about our homes.

Our approach

To ensure we meet all current requirements for providing safe, good quality homes that are kept in good repair, as well as securing a stock of homes that meets future needs and requirements we will:

- Have in place a well organised, timely and reliable repair service built around the need to respond effectively and efficiently to problems when they are reported or otherwise

identified. We know that getting things right first-time is important to our tenants and is a key driver of tenant satisfaction.

- Take the steps necessary to ensure all homes meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard, the Regulatory Home Standard, are free from significant hazards, with a clear and transparent approach to tackling damp and mould and other disrepair issues.
- Take an uncompromising and sector-leading approach to meeting all building safety, legal and regulatory compliance requirements so tenants can be confident they are living in a safe home. As part of this work, we will instil a positive 'safety culture' across our whole operation. This means all staff and contractors acting as 'eyes and ears' proactively identifying any safety issues, the presence of hazards and any problems with the general condition of homes and communal areas.
- Support our 'zero-tolerance' approach to safety with a suite of well drafted policies and procedures for meeting all requirements, with planned programmes for testing, servicing, and checking of appliances and installations to ensure we meet our 'statutory compliance obligations. Our compliance policies and procedures will include those for the 'big six' of:
 - Gas – including servicing, safety checks and remedial works.
 - Electrical – including five yearly periodic inspections and remedial works.

- Fire safety – Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs), FRA remedial works, and smoke and fire detection servicing and maintenance.
- Asbestos – including working policy for all buildings for the management and removal of asbestos containing materials (ACM's).
- Lifts – including servicing and inspections.
- Water hygiene – including testing, inspections, and management plans.
- Ensure we have clear, well understood void standards for carrying out the works needed on empty homes to prepare them for reletting. We will seek an optimum appropriate balance between relet times, tenants' expectations in terms of both the quality and desirability, costs, and tenancy sustainment.
- Carry out periodic and ongoing management surveys that capture the range of information we need on property conditions. We will prioritise surveys based on archetype and risk factors, include internal inspections, and ensure the robustness of our approach through external validation. We must actively update and use the data to put in place well planned programmes of planned maintenance. The use of good quality data is fundamental to our approach, and we will turn it into 'business intelligence' to inform how we design and deliver services and prevent avoidable problems or failures arising.
- Use the outcomes from our Strategic Asset Performance Assessment work to ensure we are investing intelligently and make evidence-based decisions on future investment. We

will carry out options appraisals on poorly performing assets and develop a prioritised programme of interventions including exploring opportunities for redevelopment or disposal based on agreed criteria through our Property Disposal Pound policy.

- Provide minor adaptations 'on demand' and work in partnership with tenants to respond quickly to identified needs for major adaptations - usually in a tenant's existing home and within 6 months of the Occupational Therapy assessment. We will make best use of our resources by having an up-to-date property register capturing the assessed 'adapted level' (the adaptations provided or suitability for adaptation), recycling equipment and helping with rehousing where this is the most appropriate option.
- Link our property investment work with our engagement work with tenants to continually develop our understanding of tenants' needs and requirements for homes that are modern and 'fit for the future', with reference to fixtures, fittings, and facilities.

To deliver our work in this area we will:

- Review our policy for repairs to ensure it is fit for purpose delivering the optimum balance of cost and satisfaction.
- Ensure a robust approach to meeting the decent homes standard, addressing any failures in a timely manner, including prompt remedy and resolution of damp/mould and other significant hazards.
- Ensure our policies, procedures, systems, and processes are 'fit for purpose' to ensure 100% 'compliance' and embed a safety culture across the organisation.
- Review our Void Standard to ensure it provides an appropriate, flexible approach for meeting needs, while being affordable.
- Have a rolling 5-year programme to survey our homes. We will use the findings proactively to inform our investment, seeking to improve on the 5 year cycle, which will be explored within the Delivery Action Plan
- Have a rolling five year planned works programme that is informed through our business intelligence to minimise day-to-day responsive expenditure.
- Develop a strategic approach to understanding of the 'performance' of our homes and acting to address underperforming assets through a process of option appraisal, disposing of homes where appropriate in line with our Property Disposal Pound policy.
- Consult key stakeholders on the condition of the homes and their priorities for future maintenance.
- Develop in partnership a Disabled Adaptations Policy that ensures our tenants' needs for minor and major adaptations are met quickly.
- Involve and engage tenants in planning and delivering all repair, maintenance, and investment work.

2. Inspiring Community

We will place a strong focus on investing in our neighbourhoods to create and sustain attractive and thriving places where people want to live and are proud to call home. We must also embrace the challenge of significantly improving the levels of thermal insulation and ventilation in our homes and installing heating systems that use renewable energies, to meet the stretching targets set by government for carbon emissions and energy usage.

Safe, quality, affordable homes in Norfolk and Suffolk

We must take a broader view of 'place', recognising the importance of cohesive and sustainable communities for helping support successful tenancies and fulfilling lives. Our aim is to generate a greater connection between tenants to their place and neighbourhood.

Our approach

To deliver our 'place-making' ambitions we will:

- Work with tenants to define local, potentially bespoke Neighbourhood Standards. These flexible standards need to reflect the issues that matter most to local people, such as quality and maintenance of communal garden areas and

green spaces, the effectiveness of neighbourhood management, and initiatives to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour. Importantly, to deliver the standards will require us to work effectively with partners at a local level to provide clear service standards and initiatives against which tenants can hold us to account.

- Work proactively with tenants to encourage them to be 'good neighbours' – caring for their home, gardens and communal areas and helping to create a place they are proud to live. We will also work with tenants and partners to help prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour and maintain areas to the highest standards - clean and free of litter, dog waste and graffiti.
- Place an emphasis on the quality, safety, and security of internal and external communal areas. This means ensuring they are clean, tidy, and clear of rubbish, as well as being in an acceptable decorative condition, well lit, with appropriate door/gate access systems installed and in proper working order. It also means ensuring that grounds maintenance standards are properly specified and undertaken and that car parking facilities are well maintained and managed.
- Ensure an integrated approach to our planned investment in properties and places. At a practical level, this means a co-ordinated approach between asset management and the housing and neighbourhood teams. This will help maximise our impact by ensuring all investment is complementary - even if it takes place at different times.

To deliver our work in this area we will:

- Develop a set of Neighbourhood Standards that reflect local priorities in the areas where we have significant concentrations of homes.
- Be proactive in our approach to neighbourhood management, balancing our role as a social landlord with the responsibilities of local tenants and partners.
- Put in place, manage, and monitor standards for internal and external communal areas.
- In developing our planned works and investment programmes make sure we co-produce our plans in partnership with colleagues in housing and neighbourhood teams.

Extensive programmes of work will be needed in our properties to meet the target of having all our homes meet Energy Performance Band C by 2030 and being 'net zero carbon' by 2050.

Our approach

To drive forward our work in this area we will:

- Agree and work towards key milestone delivery targets to ensure all properties achieve a minimum EPC Band C by 2030, delivered on a 'worst first' basis. Linked to this, we will ensure our approach to energy data management allows us to capture, analyse and report on progress towards our targets.

- Invest in learning and skills through recruitment and training and by embedding new retrofit technical and data management skills across the organisation. We must explore the potential to upskill and increase in house capacity to deliver our retrofit works programmes and build local skills. We will support our approach to learning and skills by developing and implementing initiatives such as 'pilot' programmes, ensuring we take on board the 'lessons learned'.
- Develop a long-term decarbonisation and sustainability 'road map' setting out our investment priorities for retrofit, external energy efficiency works, future heating provision and the use of new renewable technologies for different property types. This will include integrating our net zero retrofit works programmes into our overall investment plans, aligning component replacement programmes wherever possible.
- Ensure that planning, delivering, and monitoring progress towards our targets becomes a key part of our day-to-day work over the next few years. We know we must continue to gather more detailed energy data and use this proactively to help devise our programmes of work and secure external funding. Our investment approach will be flexible, enabling us to take advantage of any funding or partnering opportunities.
- Put in place systems and approaches for measuring and reporting on progress to include headlines such as the number of homes meeting EPC C rating, number of skilled/trained staff, status of retrofit projects, details around pipeline programmes, and the status and performance in securing external funding.

To deliver our work in this area we will:

- Set key milestone delivery targets for achieving EPC C across all properties by 2030, with an interim target of 67% or more properties at EPC C by 31st Mar 2025.
- Devise and deliver a plan for developing in-house and local learning and skills in retrofit, with 'pilot' learning.
- Develop and implement a long-term decarbonisation 'road map' that integrates net zero carbon works into our plans and programmes.
- Continue to build our data on energy performance.
- Be proactive in using data to have 'finance ready' programmes for securing external funding.
- Put in place systems and processes for measuring, monitoring, and reporting on all our work in this area.

3. Inspiring organisation

We must maximise the contribution and impact of our work so we extract as much value as we can from all our expenditure. This means we must measure and monitor how effectively and efficiently we are delivering our repair, maintenance and investment works and services against targets that align with our ambition to be a 'top performing' social housing provider. Our performance will also be stronger if we maximise the benefits of working in partnership with others.

A place where people want to work and can flourish

Our approach

To deliver a comprehensive approach to optimising our performance we will:

- Ensure we use our resources well and to best effect to help reduce costs and make our expenditure go further. This will involve us making the best use possible of data and insight about the performance of our properties and services to help identify and drive the optimum outcomes for the money we spend. It also means maximising the benefits of procurement and contract management practices to specify and install components that optimise durability/cost.

- Have in place an appropriate suite of key performance indicators (KPIs) focused on the outcomes we want to achieve across all our assets work, with a range of secondary indicators also monitored. This will include having in place robust and regular reporting of our performance in meeting our statutory and regulatory obligations (compliance target 100%).
- Actively use benchmarking against peers as an important tool for demonstrating that our services represent value for money, or for addressing any shortcomings in our performance. Our most recent benchmarking data shows that in some areas, services are not performing sufficiently well with some 'outlier' benchmark costs that we need to understand further and reduce.
- Set annual and longer-term budgets, then monitor our performance in delivering these, recognising that 'success' should be based on the quantity and quality of work we deliver for the procured price, rather than simply for spending budgets.
- Actively review the suitability of our IT systems and packages for meeting our current and future needs. This includes assessing the ongoing suitability of our Asset Management System, implementing a new contractor's portal, revamping our component data recording, and reporting, automating workflows and systems where possible.
- We are actively collaborating with Independent East (comprising five independent Housing Associations, namely Saffron, Broadland Housing, Orwell, Havebury, and Freebridge) in various initiatives, including the Social

Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) wave two. Additionally, we have fostered partnerships with Broadland Council, South Norfolk Council, HACT, and EON.

- Continue to develop our partnership working with others in various initiatives, including the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) wave two. These partnerships have involved the exchange of data and benchmarking, helping develop our datasets related to the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) and the new Consumer Standards.
- Additionally, we have fostered relationships with the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), HACT, and EON. These partnerships are working significantly towards the decarbonisation of Saffron's Housing Stock and goes towards meeting the governments Net Zero commitments.

To deliver our work in this area we will:

- Ensure cost/benefit analysis forms a key part of our approach to maximising the use of resources, supported by a strong approach to procurement and contract management.
- Review our KPIs and 'dashboard' reporting to ensure they are best designed to measure and monitor the right outcomes, including 100% compliance on safety related items.
- Regularly review benchmarking results (Independent East and HouseMark), taking action to understand and remedy performance, as appropriate.
- Ensure we monitor budget spend across all our assets work based on the right performance outcomes.
- Put in place a process and plan for reviewing our IT and systems to ensure they meet our ongoing requirements.
- Maximise the benefits or partnership working to achieve efficiencies, added value, knowledge, and systems development.

Delivering our objectives

The success of our Asset Management Strategy will rely on our ability to deliver what we have set out to do. Throughout the strategy, we have developed a range of key actions across each of our strategic objectives. Our performance in delivering these will need to be regularly assessed by our Executive Team and reviewed by our Board.

Leadership and Governance

Our Director of Asset, Sustainability and Decarbonisation will take responsibility for the delivery of the Asset Management Strategy and its associated actions, reporting monthly to the Executive Team. Quarterly reports will be provided to the Board on progress and performance in implementing the strategy. Importantly, the Board and involved tenant groups will receive regular reports on all matters relating to statutory and regulatory compliance so they are informed of, and fully understand, the latest position. This governance includes independent audits and scrutiny.

Delivery Action Plan

The headline actions within the strategy will be developed into a set of more detailed actions in a Delivery Action Plan. The Action Plan is designed to be a flexible, agile, and dynamic document that is regularly reviewed and updated as changes in legislation, regulation, and our operating environment change. This will ensure the Asset Management Strategy remains 'current' so should be viewed as a living document, that it is continually monitored and reviewed and that it drives forward our activities.

We cannot deliver everything we want to straightaway, so this means we are going to have to prioritise our time and resources to make sure we strike the right balance in delivering the works and activities, to ensure our tenants see the maximum benefit. The Action Plan therefore contains target dates that reflect the priorities we have set.

