

**Regeneration**  
Enfield's vision

**Planning**  
Stockport are comeback kings

**Planning**  
Housebuilding: A how to guide

# Growth, Bristol-fashion

**Paul Martin** worked on the internationally significant regeneration of Nine Elms in his role as chief executive of Wandsworth LBC. He compares that with the exciting development of Bristol Temple Quarter



Bristol Temple Quarter

The new Government has an overwhelming electoral mandate to pursue its goal of delivering on inclusive economic growth. Local councils across the country have the tools and solutions to help deliver this ambition.

For 11 years, as chief executive of Wandsworth LBC, I worked on one nationally and internationally significant scheme – Nine Elms and the regeneration of Battersea Power Station. The absence of good public transport was addressed through the extension of the Northern Line, funded through Tax Increment Financing entirely by the development with no call upon the taxpayer.

Now, as interim chief executive at Bristol City Council, we are working with our partners to develop a different form of nationally significant regeneration at Bristol Temple Quarter. Both schemes represent infrastructure-led development on former industrial brownfield land.

At Nine Elms, the challenge was to achieve a sufficient development to fund a £1bn underground extension and two new stations. In Bristol, the challenge is being met in a different way, by developing around the existing rail station at Bristol Temple Meads. This regeneration is not a long-term or theoretical masterplan, it is being built out today and can be seen on arrival at Temple Meads station.

Last week (12 September) the vice chancellor of Bristol University oversaw the topping out ceremony for the £500m Temple Quarter Enterprise Campus. This campus will focus

on digital, business and social innovation, bringing world class academic, industrial and entrepreneurial expertise of international significance. It will burnish Bristol's reputation as a global destination for innovation and ignite the West of England's potential as an economic powerhouse.

In Nine Elms, the crucial first move was the decision of the US Embassy to relocate there. In Bristol, the University's first move status achieves a comparable stimulus for the regeneration to follow. In a bold strategic move, the University of Bristol has taken on an eyesore, long derelict site directly next door to the station.

It is a nationally significant project. Over 25 years the regeneration will deliver 10,000 new homes in a mix of types and tenures. Densified employment space will support retention of existing businesses as well as 22,000 new jobs, bringing new opportunities for Bristol's citizens, driving inclusive, sustainable economic growth.

Bristol shares many of the challenges of south west London – sky high residential rents and a housing market unaffordable to many locals, coupled with entrenched inequalities within a wider area that is well educated, highly skilled and affluent. Bristol Temple Quarter will drive the wider economic growth of the area and consolidate Bristol's existing status as the most economically successful of the UK's Core Cities.

Of course, none of this can be achieved by local government alone. In Nine Elms, it was a partnership between

Wandsworth LBC, Transport for London, landowners, national Government and the Mayor of London. Similarly, in Bristol Temple Quarter, is a partnership between Bristol City Council, the Mayoral Combined Authority, Network Rail, national Government and Homes England together with the University of Bristol.

A new special purpose delivery vehicle consolidates the partnership and sets out clear priorities and direction to private sector interests together with standards for our publicly controlled sites. The city council's place-based leadership is close enough to the detail to be able to see the opportunities and understand the development cycles in their areas. Building the stable relationship with central government to share that vision has unlocked growth and change already, now we are seizing the moment with our partners to deliver the aspiration.

Critically, progress has been sustained through recent changes to the political control and governance at Bristol City Council. It is vital that major regeneration schemes do not become political footballs, and that an aspirational long-term vision for green and inclusive growth can be built on a solid economic case, strong partnership working and most of all the interests of the people who will benefit from these developments in the generations to come.

*Paul Martin is interim chief executive at Bristol City Council*

# A vision for regeneration

A spate of projects in Enfield featuring bold partnerships have set a new standard for regeneration in the UK, and are providing a housing lifeline at a time of great crisis, says **Joanne Drew**

Enfield, like many boroughs across London, is at a critical juncture. It stands at the forefront of the housing crisis and on the cusp of a surge in regeneration which could change the face of local authority led housing and regeneration.

Firstly, let's look at the current landscape; skyrocketing prices have left many residents struggling to find affordable homes, forcing some to relocate to more affordable parts of the country. The exodus of landlords from the rental market – whether to pursue higher rents elsewhere or exit renting altogether – has only exacerbated this issue.

This ongoing reduction in the availability of rental properties, particularly at the lower end of the market where rents align with Local Housing Allowance rates, is having a profound impact on local families and the borough's economic vitality. The dwindling supply of affordable housing threatens to disrupt family life and poses challenges to the borough's growth.

Despite these challenges, Enfield LBC is well-positioned to address the severe shortage of genuinely affordable social housing. The borough's vision and ambition for growth align with the new Government's agenda for a decade of renewal, presenting an opportunity to be a significant contributor to London's housing supply. Regeneration is key to this strategy, but it must be approached in a way that accelerates delivery while ensuring the benefits are shared with the existing community.

The council has taken decisive steps toward this goal, becoming the first borough to submit its Regulation 19 Local Plan for examination following the national election. This plan includes proposals for significant 'grey belt' releases, notably at Crews Hill, a new settlement in the north of the borough, which has the potential to accommodate approximately 6,000+ new homes.

This development envisions a sustainable New Town or



urban extension for London, strategically located by a train station with direct links to Moorgate in the City of London and near the M25. The site is primed for family housing and, by applying the New Towns criteria, could deliver up to 40% social rent homes – amounting to 2,400 homes – or even 50% if green belt policies are adopted. With some of the land already under council ownership, this site presents a prime opportunity for direct council house building, complemented by partnerships with selected housing associations from Enfield's Registered Provider framework.

The investment of time and resources by councils in

developing Local Plans is significant, particularly in an area where local government funding is increasingly misaligned with need. However, for boroughs like Enfield that make this investment, the rewards are substantial. We are well-placed to collaborate at both national and regional levels, driving forward solutions that can deliver results early in the new parliamentary term.

Enfield is already making headway with major regeneration projects. The Joyce and Snell's Park estate regeneration in Angel Edmonton, for example, will deliver more than 2,000 new homes, with 53% designated as affordable. This project is not just about replacing life-expired housing; it's about enhancing safety, designing out crime, and creating high-quality public green spaces for the community and sharing a vision for the public realm with local people.

The affordable housing component will be delivered by the council, with future phases open to partnership delivery, offering a mix of tenures that reflect the needs of the community. Located near Silver Street station, with direct links to Liverpool Street and connections via Seven Sisters, this area is set to become even more attractive, contributing to the vibrancy of the local high street.

Further south, the council's long-term regeneration scheme at Meridian Water is another flagship project. It is supported by the council's district heating company, Energetik, which is providing the vital infrastructure for low carbon and secure heating and can be a wider solution in North London, and bolstered by more than £200m in infrastructure investments. Meridian Water has the capacity to deliver 10,000 homes; the first homes, which have already been delivered, are council-owned and prioritized for existing residents within the wider Edmonton community.

The investment in infrastructure alone is a huge feat for the council which has ultimate control of the direction of Meridian Water. These works include the construction of new roads, four bridges, footpaths, cycle links, transport improvements and two new parks, demonstrating the council's commitment to creating inclusive, cleaner and greener spaces.



The proposed Joyce and Snells Park estate regeneration in Angel Edmonton; (top, l-r) the Meridian Water regeneration scheme has seen the first residents moving into their new homes



## Getting growth right

**Matthew Bennet** says this is a huge opportunity to put local influence at the top of the national economic growth agenda

The national goal of the new Government is greater economic growth. But it will be delivered and experienced locally, with a new statutory duty for every authority to have a growth plan. So as councils and combined authorities turn to this task, it's fair to ask what growth really means in different parts of England.

At Inner Circle Consulting we have worked on growth plans, inclusive economy strategies and business cases for growth for combined authorities, core cities, county unitaries, London boroughs and emerging devolution partners. In every case 'growth' is the common denominator yet there are wild variations in how that is expressed locally, how it delivers authorities' wider strategic objectives and how each one meets challenges and decides a delivery approach.

Those differences stem in part from differences in how gross value added (GVA) growth translates, or not, into wider measures of prosperity in different places. Growth plans and strategies that are focused on driving up one simple measure of total economic output risk falling well wide of the mark. Councils and combined authorities must respond to the agenda and strategic priorities of national government, but they are primarily accountable and responsible to their local residents, partners and stakeholders – who are rightly invested in what growth achieves for a place, rather than just the existence of growth.

Levelling up, as a slogan, captured the imagination of places because it recognised that economic prosperity is about how it's felt in our streets and communities and not on a spreadsheet at the ONS. Levelling up as is over – but the appetite and impatience to see change and improvement in many places across the country remains strong.

Our multidisciplinary team, which covers regeneration, housing, development, public service reform and transformation, thinks about place as a system, and how life and life chances are shaped by growth. Consequently, we understand that growth needs to be about a lot more than shifts in GVA. We've worked with our clients to develop a range of indicators that express place prosperity and vitality across business, productivity, employment, housing, transport and environment to provide a wider view of how prosperity is experienced in a place set against a measure of pure GVA.

The results have been striking. In one rural county GVA had been in decline since 2016. In a city, rapid progress in some key indicators far outpaced what was happening with GVA, which had largely flatlined. The key drivers and components of growth and prosperity across different places and how this relates to total economic output are not consistent.

More and more councils are embarking on growth plans and this will only increase in the coming months. There is huge opportunity for local government to seize this agenda and make sure it's a local agenda delivered on a national scale, rather than a Whitehall template shoehorned into hundreds of different council style guides. This means establishing the best systems, partnerships and approaches to meaningful delivery that reflect specific local circumstances, so we get the right outcomes in the right places. Now is the time to seize that chance.

*Matthew Bennett is a managing consultant at Inner Circle Consulting*

**There is huge opportunity for local government to seize this agenda**

*Joanne Drew is strategic director of housing and regeneration at Enfield LBC*

# Transforming the planning landscape

To reach its targets, the new Government will need to tackle infrastructure as well as planning, says **Laura Jenkinson**

The Government's recent announcement of Labour's revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) underscores a bold commitment to delivering 1.5 million homes over the next five years. Key proposals include reintroducing mandatory

local housing targets and increasing the national housing delivery goal from 300,000 homes to 370,000 homes a year.

These promises have given the built environment sector an increased sense of urgency to implement change, aiming to deliver social, economic and environmental benefits through the planning system.

Housing delivery remains a crucial aspect of these reforms. The Government's reintroduction of mandatory housing targets, an expanded definition of brownfield land, the newly created definition of grey belt and the need to undertake green belt reviews where required, are strongly supported by the sector.

With 50% affordable housing embedded into the grey belt and green belt development, there needs to be more funding available to deliver this. Labour's intentions to increase funds through the Local Authority Housing Fund and the subsequent Spending Review are promising, as are the potential future flexibility for Registered Providers to invest more of their money in new social housing.

However, the real anticipation lies in the Government's strategy in tackling the root causes of under delivery of homes through infrastructure provision, along with the objective of stimulating the economy by supporting all forms of growth through the planning system.

This holistic approach through the lens of strategic planning, could transform London's urban landscape and beyond, making the south east a fairer, more dynamic, sustainable and economically vibrant place.

Previous attempts at reform have often only focused on addressing the symptoms of a lack of investment. By expanding the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime to include water infrastructure, transport infrastructure, renewable energy projects (and potentially others) means that we can better deal with the barriers to housing delivery and the underlying reasons for this.

This will also serve to highlight the often-forgotten impact the planning system can have on getting to net zero by 2030, supporting a low carbon future and stimulating the economy at the same time – with

economic recovery through development to fund the social housing that the Government has committed to delivering.

For London, I hope that with a Labour mayor and Government, the consensus will now be on delivery. This should mean a shorter, more pragmatic London Plan with guidance that promotes and does not hinder or overburden development.

As suggested by Whitehall, householder planning application fees need to rise to cover processing costs. With the lack of local authority resourcing, we need to make sure officers focus on strategic applications to make the most impact. To achieve this, the national scheme of delegation needs to be put in place as soon as possible.

While there's further detail and legislation to be settled, the new Government must take a firm lead in implementing its policy and collaborate with the sector to make positive change.

*Laura Jenkinson is principal, London planning consultancy at Avison Young*



# Comeback kings

Stockport's regeneration underlines the importance of local innovation says **Cllr Mark Hunter**



Celebrations begin as the Weir Mill building conversion is completed; (right, clockwise from top) the Stockport Interchange from above and lower levels and the Stockport Exchange

To the surprise of many visitors today, in the early 2000s, Stockport was labelled as the 12th worst town to live in in the UK. Fast forward to today, it starkly contrasts the £1bn regeneration that recently earned Stockport the title of 'the best place to live in the North West' by the *Sunday Times*.

Stockport's incredible turnaround didn't happen by chance. It's the result of a successful programme of urban regeneration born from an ambitious collective vision, strong partnerships, innovation and a strong track record of delivery. Over the last decade,

we've seen our One Stockport ambitions come to fruition as more people continue to set up homes here, build businesses, and Stockport become a place that is on the up, bucking trends and pioneering town centre living.

That is why we welcome accolades such as being one of the '12 best places in the UK to retire' (*Which?*) or 'to buy your first home' (*The Times*) as well as one of the best 25 places to shop, in recognition of our historic Underbanks area (*The Telegraph*).

Our success story has also become a blueprint for others. While some may

attribute our success to Stockport's strategic location within commutable distance from Manchester and sitting just on the edge of the beautiful Peak District, there's much more to our regeneration story, namely, the power of local government innovation and the determination of the people of Stockport too.

Stockport is an ambitious place undergoing a spectacular transformation.

A prime example of our innovative approach is the Stockport Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC), founded with a partnership-first mindset, uniting

public and private expertise. Since its inception five years ago, it is successfully delivering over 1,200 of 4,000 new homes (a 15-year target), attracted £600m of private investment, and opened among its flagship developments a brand-new £140m transport interchange with a two-acre rooftop park, accommodating 164 departures an hour.

The growth of commercial activity in and around areas of development such as the Interchange is an excellent example of how regeneration is never entirely top-down. Stockport is now well-known for its thriving

independent businesses, gastronomic scene, and wider cultural offering – the result of innovative and ambitious Stockport residents and businesses taking advantage of the new opportunities such a wide-ranging regeneration programme offers.

Another standout success is Stockport Exchange, which is transforming a previously underused area into a vibrant hub of activity. Having already delivered three new grade A office buildings, a successful

hotel, and new car parking facilities. The next four phases of the scheme (which is being delivered by Stockport Council and developer Muse) will integrate high-quality office spaces with retail units and residential apartments.

Also essential to the wider £1bn regeneration programme is Stockport 8, a mixed-use new neighbourhood that will deliver another 1,200 new homes. It will also bring significant upgrades to public

transport, develop new green spaces, and introduce a variety of local amenities and tourist attractions. Partnership is also key here – the scheme is being delivered by Stockport MDC and the English Cities Fund, a joint venture between Homes England, Muse, and Legal & General.

The quality of these schemes demonstrates the crucial impact of forward-thinking planning and the importance of a collaborative effort towards regeneration,

with lots more still to come, including:

- The transformation of the Grade 2 listed building – Weir Mill – into 253 new apartments
- The development of the former Stockport College site into 442 new homes
- The submission of our planning application for Stockport 8, a mixed-use neighbourhood of 1,200 homes
- The opening of Stockroom, our innovative, creative learning and discovery centre

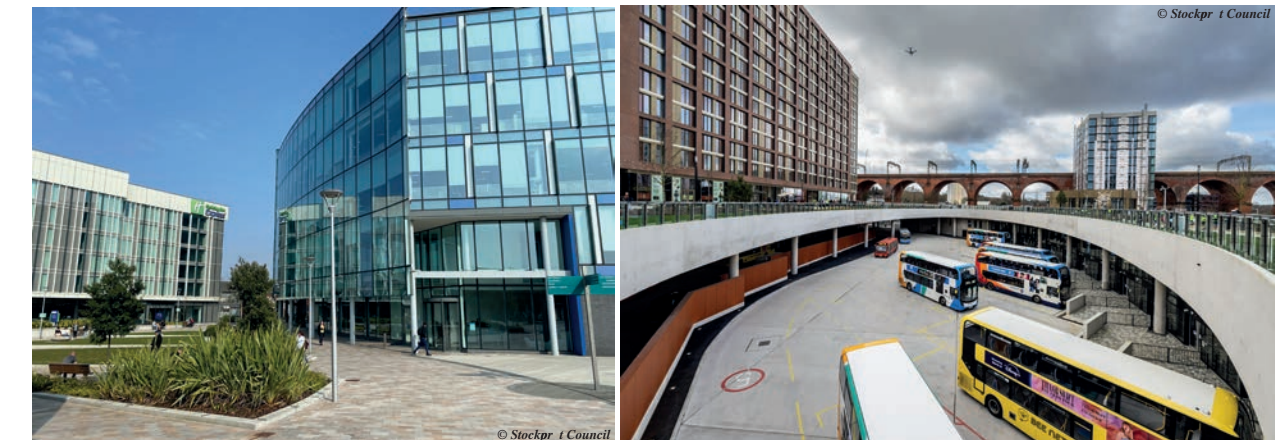
Stockport is therefore well on its way to realising our ambitions to become one of the most liveable towns in the UK.

We're building on strong foundations and have five big aspirations that will be game-changing. One Stockport, One Future is all about making our borough the best place in the UK to live a happy, healthy life in the years ahead by delivering five big things. These are:

- A wide choice of good jobs and homes, which includes big ambitions for the east of our town centre.
- Being the best place to grow up, including a new town centre inclusive secondary school and retaining and recruiting the best teachers through joined up approaches across housing, work and skills.
- Having access to the best health and care, including a new neighbourhood health hub and hospital in the heart of the town centre.
- Thriving neighbourhoods that are safe places to live and visit, including better public services, it shouldn't matter which team or organisation provides the support, the support will be connected and serviced locally.
- Access to clean, green transport, bringing metrolink to stockport and facilitating a zero-emission bus network which connects all of our neighbourhoods.

As we continue to build on this momentum, Stockport's transformation is a testament to what can be achieved when local government, communities and businesses work together. In this new era of devolution, the Stockport model isn't just a success story; it's a blueprint for revitalising towns across the UK.

*Cllr Mark Hunter is leader of Stockport Council*





# Housebuilding: A how to guide

Ambitious plans to build 1.5m homes by 2030 will not be easy. **Mike De'Ath** suggests it will need aggregation, collaboration and a drive toward modern methods of constructions

With the new Government's plan to build 370,000 homes a year – up from the current expectation of less than 200,000 – there are welcome signs of a gearshift.

The good news is the Labour administration has grabbed housing with both hands in its first 100 days. It has not, yet, pointed to levers other than the private sector to deliver on its ambitions. We will have to wait for the Spending Review on 30 October to see how Angela Rayner's clarion call for 'the largest expansion of social and affordable housing for a generation' will be delivered.

The enthusiasm of policy alignment and encouragement to the sector needs to be met with a pragmatic response to the realities of delivering in a fragmented housing market. History shows that, while private sector affordable housing derived through section 106 is an important source of homes it is not, on its own, enough to drive the huge increase we need.

Analysts have suggested we have a 4.5 million home shortfall, with 90,000 social rented homes each year needed to rebalance supply. While we might argue numbers housing supply is now a key infrastructure challenge for the UK and it will need several decades of focus to restore balance in the market.

When Mark Farmer and I wrote our paper *Build Homes Build Jobs Build Innovation* in 2020, we saw the need for housing to be part of a green industrial strategy.

In addressing Covid and Brexit related supply shifts and falling sector capacity to deliver, our report noted the urgency of creating a multiplier effect in the post-pandemic economy.

We also argued that any measures taken needed to flow both into the construction supply chain and, in turn, the wider market in the way that supports economic recovery as well as the UK target to reach a net zero carbon economy by 2050.

Our research showed that there was potential to build 75,000 additional high-quality manufactured homes a year by 2030 creating 50,000 productivity and quality jobs from

SMEs to larger companies. Importantly, these jobs could be located in regions where they were needed most.

This thinking is as relevant to today's challenges as it was back then.

We could see that traditional tenures and construction could deliver some increases in a beneficial market, but without a major investment in social and affordable housing, combined with the creation of additional rental supply, the ability of a market to sustain high levels of absorption that drive delivery would struggle to meet the numbers required.

What is also clear is that since 2020, capacity in the construction sector has diminished further and consolidation, together with business failure, has driven out several routes to delivering construction traditionally.

Despite this, it has been astonishing to see the failure rate in the modern methods of construction (MMC) sector.

As we pointed out in 2020, manufacturers need clear future demand for their products that is sustained over many years and many projects. This is also a key ingredient for driving efficiency and productivity to lift housing delivery to that 370,000 number by 2030.

The need to redress the balance in housing would indicate at least a 20-year program requiring a major and sustained increase in capacity, and MMC, for the long term.

To achieve, there will need to be some key additional reforms and policy drivers to support the impressive energy placed into planning reform and traditional housing delivery.

Firstly, consideration regarding ways of aggregating demand suitable for MMC delivery. Clearly the first port of call for this is in the public sector and to align with any uplift in social and affordable housing. The increasing importance of the mayoralities in galvanising delivery within regions could be a real catalyst in establishing commonality across authorities.

Secondly, it is time to pick up on some of the positive themes from past approaches that insist on a measurable outcome-based approach to procuring housing. Procurement has for many years been under the spotlight for driving

short-term cost-based approaches to delivery. This tends to be focused on capital expenditure without due regard to operational costs over the life of the building, important for those that hold stock for rent over the long term.

Third. To drive efficiency and productivity, we need continuity of collaboration to lessons are learned and approaches are honed. This is not just for the MMC sector, where continuous improvement is a byword for productivity, but in the wider sector. This includes the whole supply chain from design to delivery. We must move away from site-by-site procurement towards something that enables long-term relationships and rewards the driving of efficiency.

On top of that, social housing funds could come with an expectation that the receiving parties will not continually be reinventing the wheel on a project-by-project basis and that elements of standardisation and best practice, including in MMC, are shared between public sector organisations and contractors and used in design and delivery.

And finally, there should be greater innovation in affordable rental models aimed at the space between social and market rent. For example, the potential of flex rent, linked to household income and aimed at mid-market tenants could add a huge new source of investor friendly homes to the current tenure stack.

It feels like we are about to enter the most positive and proactive political stewardship of housing delivery for a generation. A return to business-as-usual feels inappropriate to both the opportunity and the challenge and we should use the next few months to clearly plan how we can make the most of a government that has clearly set out its stall, with a significant mandate to get some homes built.

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**Build Homes Build Jobs Build Innovation** – [www.hta.co.uk/publications-post/build-homes-build-jobs-build-innovation/](http://www.hta.co.uk/publications-post/build-homes-build-jobs-build-innovation/)

# Funding homes for the squeezed middle

As the Government launches its plans to create more homes, **Cath Webster** looks what homes are needed – and how they could be funded

Labour's plans for the delivery of 1.5 million new homes have hit the headlines since the General Election – but there has been less debate over what types of homes these might be.

Volume house builders, delivering predominately open market for-sale homes, who have been scaling back delivery in the face of higher interest rates have share prices to support in most cases so won't wish to flood the market even if the planning system was re-cast in their favour.

Local authorities have long since wound down large council house building programmes and even if they were revived alongside those homes from Registered Providers they would tend to be allocated to the most vulnerable in society.

So, what about the 'squeezed middle'? This includes the key workers who, with long waiting lists for social housing, must increasingly turn to the private rental market as they battle to hold down jobs in 'blue light' or lower pay scale private sector roles.

New research carried out by Thriving Investments and PriceHubble reveals that hotspots of acute housing need for those on lower quartile to median incomes are scattered throughout the UK.

While London boroughs are suffering from the most acute affordability crisis – with 10 of the UK's 15 least affordable locations for key worker renting – renters



in London commuter belt, Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol, Bath and even south Wales are also especially challenged.

We calculated affordability by assessing where an undersupply of homes combines with high rents to create a double whammy which means that in the top quartile of unaffordable locations, 44% of key worker renters are paying more than 30% of their take home pay on rent.

The average proportion of income paid in rent across the 283 local authorities



New Avenue Living has proved successful in areas such as Edinburgh and across Scotland; (main) London is particularly suffering from an affordability crisis

There is no reason why this model should not be rolled out in all unaffordable locations.

Debt finance from the public sector is required and the business model in Scotland shows this will repay this in full, and local developers and contractors benefit because they are engaged to build the homes and employ local people, providing further place-based impact.

Using debt instead of grant is a more efficient way of providing subsidy as the capital is returned and can be recycled into further delivery of homes.

The public sector investment could be funded from the local authority or central government in the form of what was known as levelling up funding or brownfield regeneration funding. The model also converts 100% of the homes to the discounted rent so all are available for key workers rather than the 35% or less affordable housing provision that private house builders deliver.

With rents at an affordable level, occupancy is very high (trending at 99-100%). Alongside the public sector investment, long-term investors provide the remaining investment to deliver the homes and in turn receive a strong cash income, linked to CPI growth over the long term.

In another study which Thriving Investments has undertaken with Turley Economics, Highland Housing Alliance and Lar Housing Trust, studying the impact of 2,959 mid-market rental homes in Scotland, they found that 60% of residents earned less than £26,000 per year.

By far the most common age range for these residents is 25-34-year-olds, who have been provided with a high-quality, sustainable and secure home that offers a credible alternative to traditional private and social rented housing.

This programme has also created 2,230 jobs, generated £186.3m in net GVA in Scotland, generated £5.9m in council tax and created homes for 6,230 residents.

One of the Labour Government's five key missions is to 'kickstart growth', securing the highest sustained growth in the G7 group of the world's wealthiest nations.

Promoting a new model of discount market rental homes for key workers and younger people driving business – at the same time as delivering healthy returns for pension funds – would be a great way to start.

*Cath Webster is chief executive of Thriving Investments*



Before and after images of one of the completed retrofit projects in Birmingham; (below) another successful retrofit project

# Partnership is the key to SHDF success

By Rebecca Reynolds

All strategic development and asset management teams will appreciate the hours of work and level of expertise required to secure government funding. It's an elating experience to learn that your bid has been successful, but what then? What do you have in place to make your plans a reality?

In Birmingham, Equans worked in partnership with the council to bid for and secure £24m from the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) last year – the largest single allocation to date – unlocking an £111m decarbonisation programme across the city.

A collaborative approach, made possible through Equans and Birmingham City Council's existing repairs and maintenance contract, enabled us to seamlessly mobilise this retrofit programme to more

than 1,600 homes, with no delays between funding-award and delivery – something that has been a real issue for other successful SHDF applicants.

The key differentiator here is true partnership working. Equans has been Birmingham Council's main repairs and maintenance contractor since 2016, and our existing knowledge of their stock helped identify properties that could benefit most so that sample retrofit assessments and bespoke energy modelling could be developed for each property type.

Birmingham's openness in collaborating with us on this project meant that we could offer especially wide-ranging assistance, including retrofit option appraisal, design, programming, pricing and predicted financial returns. This rigorous, all-encompassing approach has translated into a solution that delivers genuine value for money for the council, at a time when every penny counts.

By working so closely together, we were able

to quickly develop and roll out seven bespoke schemes, leaning on an already in-place workforce, Equans' in-house PAS-certified retrofit teams and established supply chain.

A common unforeseen workload is the administration and reporting required to draw down funding. We have supported the council by helping to collate monthly reports to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, detailing financial information and data on properties retrofitted.

The council has placed trust in our retrofit teams to undertake all the Trustmark lodgements required for funding compliance, and we report this back to the council along with the certification documents within the required timeframes. This provides a seamless, end-to-end service and prevents the need to appoint third-party consultants.

This speedy mobilisation has been key to the success of the programme, especially due to the

significant number of properties to be retrofitted in such a short period of time.

Today, just six months on, almost 800 homes in the city have been successfully transformed – with some now reaching an Energy Performance Certificate A rating.

Residents are seeing their energy bills halve – some are set to save more than £1,000 per year – and they share with us that they are thrilled at living in markedly more affordable and more comfortable homes.

We're linking the SHDF programme with our day-to-day repairs and maintenance service for the council too, meaning that our teams are on hand to maintain the technology installed.

Across the city, emissions will be reduced by more than 2,500 carbon tonnes annually by March 2025.

The success of this project is almost entirely down to effective partnership working – building on the strong foundations of a trusting relationship established over several years, joining forces to tackle any challenges encountered along the way, and a steadfast commitment from all involved to get things done.

The collaborative approach demonstrated so well in Birmingham is one that could be replicated by local authorities and social housing providers up and down the UK – partnership truly is the key to unlocking SHDF success.

Cllr Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness at Birmingham City Council, said: 'Having energy efficient homes is critical to reducing energy bills and supporting people during this cost of living crisis.'

'We want all our tenants to live in warm, safe, sustainable homes and we are investing £1.4bn in the next eight years in our council homes to ensure all our homes meet decent home standards.'

'Our housing stock is a significant producer of carbon emissions in the city and our delivery partner, Equans, has been vital in identifying properties to retrofit.'



**Rebecca Reynolds** is Sustainability Manager at Equans UK & Ireland

