

The Housing Times

Harrogate Edition 2011

Life Without Grant's Grant

With a rapid drop in grant for the next four years (and possibly beyond!) housing associations are having to think differently to deliver new homes. They appear to be either shutting up their development shops, scaling back drastically, mulling over affordable rents and the effect on their borrowing rates, or embarking further into the murky world of development for private sale.

Inevitably the decline in grant affects the private sector, both as developers where grant helped schemes stack and contractors, who are already suffering, facing the prospect of an already declining market potentially shrinking much further. Yes, there are positives with the restructuring of local authority finance allowing more authorities to borrow and build and the delayed land payment option recently announced. But

how do housing associations and their contracting partners move forward?

One route we have pursued with our housing association partners is forming development specific joint ventures that help us secure construction work and our partners deliver more affordable homes. Effectively by sharing development risk associations share in the development profits and are able to use this money to fill some of the void left by the empty HCA pot.

Historically much of our development had been in joint ventures with other private sector partners, including major housebuilders, niche developers and investment funds. As an experienced developer, investor and contractor we know how these partnerships work and we are able to share this experience with like-minded



clients. Our largest scheme of this nature to date is a 327 unit canal-side development on the Islington border of Hackney with A2Dominion Housing Group. Working together we will deliver 232 private, 53 affordable and 42 shared ownership units and hopefully generate a healthy return for both parties, thereby allowing us to invest in further schemes.

It's ironic that, in the current

climate where lowest price is king and partnering contracts are declining, the way forward looks like an even greater reliance on partnership working where we need to share resource, skills and our investment abilities to prosper in the years ahead. Delivering schemes in true partnerships, where risk and reward are equally shared, is one route to delivery in what looks like a rocky road ahead.

A Successful Partnership

Following a successful partnership on Clapham One, United House and the Cathedral Group have now started construction at The Fold, a £20 million landmark mixed-use regeneration scheme next to Sidcup railway station in Kent. United House is also developing the private residential element of the scheme. Architects Studio Egret West has designed the 6,502 m2 development which will comprise restaurant, office and retail space with 98 residential apartments in a striking and contemporary nine-storey building featuring curved metallic cladding and rooftop gardens.

69 of the one, two and three bedroom apartments will be for private sale, while 29 will be affordable homes owned and managed by Gallions Housing Association. Construction is due for completion in summer 2012.



Delivering New Council Houses

Acting as constructor and developer United House has just completed the first phase of the Beavers Lane regeneration through a unique partnership with the London Borough of Hounslow, Hounslow Homes and A2Dominion. The regeneration is transforming a troubled neighbourhood of poor-quality 1950s housing into a sustainable community. United House has demolished four defective blocks of flats containing 72 homes which are being replaced with a traditional low-rise neighbourhood of 190 apartments and houses in a green setting designed by Stanford Eatwell Architects.

In essence, the scheme replaces a poor quality, mono-tenure estate with a mixed tenure development incorporating much needed family homes. The overall number of affordable housing units is increased by 40 units, helping to meet housing need in the borough. The high quality, tenure blind new housing is complemented by thoughtful landscaping to create an attractive place to live.

We are also just commencing our 5th new build site with LB Barking and Dagenham which will deliver a total of forty new homes owned and managed by the Borough for the local community. This code four scheme designed by Sprunts architects delivers new three and four bedroom homes replacing a derelict police training centre.

Both these partnerships rely on using publically owned land to deliver new affordable homes. We see this as a growing sector in the future and welcome the government's commitment to releasing government assets to deliver further similar schemes.



Tower Block Future Proofing - Adapting to Climate Change

United House is undertaking an extensive low-carbon retrofit of 200 homes in two 17-storey tower blocks in Barking for the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (LBBD).

Not only is the project the most advanced sustainable retrofit we have ever delivered, it is also the most extensive works programme undertaken to tower blocks with residents remaining in occupation throughout the works.

The project represents a significant step forward in the approach to addressing the impacts of climate change in the refurbishment of multi-storey housing constructed during the 60's and 70's. The high standard of refurbishment works together with the complete replacement of all the building services was underpinned by an extensive delivery of energy saving and environmental measures. This was aimed at combating the need to reduce energy consumption and achieve carbon emission reductions required by legislation.

The contract also included a £3.6m Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation grant from the GLA to support the project and will also include a Decent Homes upgrade. To maintain a tight 52 week

programme the works on both blocks had to run concurrently.

Energy Efficiency Improvements

The entire envelope of the buildings was addressed in an extensive package of works that included:

- Exterior insulated cladding with coloured render coating
- Triple glazed windows
- Integral blinds fitted to south facing windows to provide shading
- Insulated roof
- 55KWp roof mounted photovoltaic panels (PVs) which will receive 'Feed in tariff' income
- New heating and heat distribution system with a communal gas-fired central heating plant
- SMART meters in all homes
- Water saving bathroom and kitchen fittings
- New ventilation systems
- Lifts on every floor (previous lifts opened only on alternate floors)
- Single IRS satellite TV system
- Improved entry security with CCTV
- Flood mitigation works.



The Results

The end results will be impressive for the residents and the council. The SAP rating of the buildings will increase from 32 to 87 (with the potential to increase to 90) and the client will benefit from the Feed-in-tariff income via the PVs.

There is the potential to save an additional 2.85% on electricity and 2% on gas use through the SMART meters. The buildings will generate a minimum of 10% onsite renewable energy through the PVs. Water consumption is expected to reduce by 40%.



United House has recently been selected to deliver environmental and decent homes improvements to 2 tower blocks for Watford Community Housing Trust.

Legacy Building: In these challenging times it is more important than ever that we continue to support the local communities where we work. Employing local labour, supply chains and offering apprentices helps us meet our corporate social responsibility but leaving a lasting legacy beyond new or improved homes is as important. Below are recent examples of some of those initiatives.

Hairs Something New ...



United House has provided salon facilities for Places for People residents. A dedicated fortnightly hairdressing service for residents will be run from the new facilities.

A Garden of Tranquility



United House helped pupils with the construction of a 'Garden of Tranquility', a place for the children

to sit & reflect. Beavers Community School is located next to our new-build development, Beavers Lane for Hounslow Homes. Many of the children are from forces families that have lost loved ones abroad.

HITZ Project



United House is pleased to be providing £10,000 of funding to start a HITZ Programme in Barking and Dagenham, targeting young people at risk of exclusion and anti social behaviour, introducing them to tag, touch and contact rugby. Hitz provides participants with the opportunity to access personal and social development programmes, educational support, vocational training programmes and workforce development and volunteering opportunities.

Mentoring at Mole Valley

United House is currently involved in a mentoring scheme, working with Surrey Education Business Partnership at Mole Valley. United House staff involved in improving Circle's stock transfer volunteered to mentor several students at Howard of Effingham School in Bookham. Students were identified by the school as not realising their full potential and were invited to voluntarily join the scheme.

The aims of this programme are:

- To help students explore their aspirations and potential
- To build confidence and self esteem
- To improve management, communication and organisational skills
- To gain an insight into the world of work
- To think about their future plans and what skills and training they will need to realise them.

"I have been mentoring a sixteen year old boy in the run up to his GCSE's. He has used our sessions to discuss his thoughts and concerns for the next stage of his life, to talk through coping strategies for both school and home life, to ask for second opinions on things he feels he wants an adult's view on, and to chat generally about whatever is on his mind. We've had a few laughs too!"

"I have enjoyed building our relationship to a position where we trust each other to be honest. Being able to use my professional and personal experiences to help someone else grow and develop has been a part of my role at United House that has added real value to someone else's life as well as my own."

Anne-Britt Karunaratne, Regeneration Manager.



Apprentices at Colne & Mersea

