

# WDCO Report November 2023



## 1. DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS

### 1.1 Phase 2 Block D & B

Phase 2 (Blocks D and B) is comprised of 134 Shared Ownership homes. 131 homes have been sold and are occupied by residents. There are two homes left for sale in block D and one home in block B.

### 1.2 Phase 3

Phase 3 build programme is continuing to progress well. The first kitchens have been fitted on the lower floors in A1 and the quality is good. The energy centre commissioning is due to begin from 13 November onwards and NHG's team of consultants will attend.

The tenant's choice workshop has been scheduled at the Redmond Centre on 29 November. Residents will be invited to come make their specification choices with invites being sent to residents by LB Hackney on 15 November. There will be representatives from NHG, LB Hackney, Berkeley and Public Voice available to answer any questions from residents.

The Shared Ownership homes launched for sale on 1 November and four properties have been reserved which is great news. New hoarding has been installed on Seven Sisters Road and a very positive collaboration meeting was held between NHG and Berkeley Homes to plan for the upcoming launch and agree resource sharing opportunities. NHG Sales will present information on the Shared Ownership product to Berkeley Homes Sales and provide postcards with a QR code that links to the Woodberry Down NHG website. This was agreed to help guide potential buyers who cannot afford to purchase on the open market.

### 1.3 Phase 4 and the Masterplan

The detailed Phase 4 planning information was distributed to the Delivery Partners on 12 September to review and provide feedback. Berkeley have incorporated NHG's feedback and NHG supported the planning submission on 9 October.

Berkeley chose to delay the Masterplan consultation events until late November. There will be two rounds of consultation - four consultation events in November and with an exhibition early February 2024. This allows 6 weeks between the first and second consultation.

## 2. SOCIO ECONOMIC UPDATE

### 2.1 Social Impact of the Regeneration Programme (WD Social Impact Framework)

Social Life are currently working on collating the final data from partners to finalise the 2023 Understanding Woodberry Down Report. This impact assessment repeats the research carried out in 2019, using the indicator framework that was developed. The report will track the impact of change on longstanding and newer residents from all tenures focusing on residents' sense of belonging, wellbeing, social relationships and sense of agency, alongside material changes in

people's lives. A draft report will be reviewed in November. Social Life will present the findings of their work at the January 2024 WDCO Board meeting.

## 2.2 Woodberry Down My Place

During half term, NHG hosted the young people from My Place to visit one of our other regeneration schemes at Grahame Park, Barnet. The young people were given a tour of the scheme where NHG are the developer. A presentation was given on what the social and economic programme delivers for the community. In the afternoon, there was a session with Common Vision, who develop projects for young people in civic life. On Grahame Park they have trained and employed young people to be researchers as well as hosting 'Place Shaper Labs' to create a space for young people to engage in the regeneration. This trip was an opportunity for the group to see and experience other developments and how we engage young people.

## 2.3 Black History Season events

NHG provided sponsorship to Fame Star Youth for their annual Black History event on 14 October. The key successes of the event were the audience participation and gaining knowledge in the quiz and the dances. Attendees also got to view an art display from the talented Charles Baldeh. The whole event was very lively and busy.

*"What a great event, so much food from different cultures and nice display of food and painting. I learnt so much from the quiz questions. I think I need to go back to school. What a lovely event, when is the next one?"*

NHG resident

NHG is also sponsoring another Black History Event being led by Lunch Up at the Redmond Community Centre on 24 November.

## 3. OPERATIONAL UPDATES

### 3.1 Woodberry Grove North Sewage System

In our previous update, we advised that the current pump set would be replaced with a combined pump and macerator unit. Our contractors, D&L have completed their works and have completed their final adjustments to the installation of the new pump. There was a delay due to the discovery of below ground services that could not be detected during the surveys and a subsequent change in design to allow to route around these.

Following the works, landscaping and paving has been returned to the previous finish to ensure there are no aesthetic issues. The works were phased to ensure there was no impact on the existing service and residents use of the foul water pipework was not impacted. The works were completed at no cost to residents.

## 4. HOUSING AND ESTATE MANAGEMENT UPDATE

### 4.1 NHG Places

The Woodberry Down Estate team (Jada and Nick) previously working within the 'Housing' directorate at NHG, have moved into a new directorate called 'NHG Places.'

NHG Places is designed to manage some of NHG's largest and most complex developments. Our customers have fed back their experiences, what they want and expect from us and NHG Places is an initiative that has been created to improve customers' experiences.

Repairs and service charges were the areas that clearly mattered most. This did not come as a surprise, but it is a clear mandate on what we need to focus on.

## 4.2 Service Charges

### **Final Accounts for 2022-2023**

Service charge final accounts for the financial year 2022-23 have been issued to leaseholders. We have since noted some errors in the information on the Annual Statement for social rent residents, which will be reviewed. We apologise for this delay, and we are working to distribute a final version before the end of the year.

### **Review of Final Accounts for 2020-21**

A dedicated Service Charge Officer has begun to review the 2020/21 Final Accounts for all NHG managed blocks. We had aimed to complete this review by 3 November 2023 however there has been issues with locating historical invoices on old systems. We acknowledge the delay, and we apologise for any inconvenience caused. The Estate Team will now benefit from a dedicated Service Charge Business Partner within NHG Places, who will assist us in completing the review as soon as possible.

### **Setting Service Charge budgets for 2024-2025**

Service charge budgets for the financial year 2024-25 are being progressed and we have until 10 November 2023 to produce these. Once completed, we will consult residents on the proposed budgets until Christmas. We will also schedule resident drop-in sessions at the Neighbourhood Office to discuss any issues.

### **Going Forward**

Our operations directorate are currently reviewing the service charge process across the organisation and aim to implement the outcome of this review by 2025.

Changes are already being made to ensure we can improve the current service. The aims of the review are to ensure that service charge costs are; transparent, offer value for money, issued correctly and on time, without the need to issue Section 20B notifications.

We acknowledge that there have been service failures and we have not met the expected standard of service. We are actively working to make much needed improvements as an organisation.

## 4.3 Billing and Tarriff Changes

We recently retendered our long-term heat maintenance contract for our estates with a district heating network and have appointed a new specialist heating contractor, Vital Energi to replace BSW. Vital Energi will take over billing from Insite, with effect from 1 November 2023.

### **Billing changes:**

Residents will have received a letter notifying them about the change. Vital Energi should also have sent out customer letters/welcome packs introducing themselves and detailing the services they will provide.

### **Tariff changes:**

From 1 December 2023, energy charges to customers living on estates that have a heat network, and where NHG is the heat supplier, will be changing. We will be launching a new universal heat tariff, which means all customers will be on the below rate.

	New Tariff (Including VAT)
Variable charge	17.1p /kWh
Fixed daily charge	50p per day

The change affects both the daily standing charge, which covers fixed costs such as providing the gas supply and billing management, and the variable tariff, which is based on the amount of heat and hot water that is consumed.

### **Additional Support:**

The NHG Heat Network Team phone number (020 3815 2303) went live on 30 October to help answer customer queries on billing and tariff changes.

NHG Billing Manager, Wayne Griffins, will also attend the NHG Contract Meeting with WDCO and ITLA on 14 November to run through changes to billing and tariffs and answer any questions. A billing FAQ has been circulated to WDCO, ITLA and Councillors.

### **Energy Bill Discount Scheme**

As part of the Energy Prices Act 2022, the government introduced the Energy Bill Discount Scheme (EBDS), which provides domestic heat network customers support with their heat and hot water bills. The scheme provides a discount on the price of gas that we buy to fuel our heat networks, which must be passed on to customers.

The scheme is intended to ensure customers on heat networks do not face disproportionately higher bills when compared to customers in equivalent households, who are supported by the Energy Price Guarantee or Ofgem's energy price caps. For our heat networks, we will be passing on the benefit via the new tariff, with the reduced rate of gas factored into the calculation above.

We are required by law to notify residents of this support and we are doing so via tariff notification letters. Residents who have any queries about the EBDS, or how they will receive the support are urged to contact the heat network billing team directly.

## 5. COMMUNICATIONS

NHG continue to meet with the communications leads for Berkeley Homes and Hackney to contribute to the Woodberry Down Newsletter, NHG have also sponsored the Hidden River Festival and Intergen Festival this year and are working in partnership with Hackney and Berkeley to organise and deliver the Winter Fest on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December 2023.