



BUILDING BETTER FUTURES 2021/26

Freebridge
COMMUNITY HOUSING

FOREWORD

Freebridge has ambitious plans for the future. As west Norfolk's largest housing provider, we have already taken great strides in improving local homes and communities, but now we are ready to take this even further. We want to drive our business forward to become a leader in our field, an excellent landlord and an exemplary employer.

This last year has proven how much homes matter and how where you live can determine your health, aspirations and wellbeing. We want to increase social mobility through better housing choices and standards, more balanced communities with a mix of tenure, greater educational opportunities and regenerated local spaces. Crucially, we want to empower our residents and work with them more closely to ensure we understand their ideals, align our ambitions to theirs, and in doing so create an inclusive culture from the Board, to our colleagues and our customers.

We are a values-led organisation with strong integrity, enthusiasm and a keen customer emphasis. We have learnt we need to be flexible. We need to be progressive. We need to be even more customer-focused.

Over the last 15 years, we have achieved many things. We have kept our promises to our tenants and brought their homes up to the Decent Homes Standard and transformed much of a tired 1960s estate in King's Lynn into a vibrant community which has won numerous national awards for regeneration. We have provided vital facilities



Anita Jones
CEO



Andy Walder
Chair

OUR MISSION

To be a top performing provider of housing as measured by our customers, colleagues and stakeholders.

This strategy is our commitment to deliver.

for local communities to help improve residents' quality of life and we have injected thousands of pounds into local projects and good causes through our Freebridge Community Fund.

We are proud of what we have achieved so far, and in maintaining the highest ratings possible from the Regulator of Social Housing, but now we are ready to hone our business strategies, improve the way we work, and increase our efficiency and accountability to become a top performer in our field. Our residents and our employees will always be at the heart of what we do but over the next five years we want to take our services to the next level.

This five-year strategy will drive us towards our long-term ambitions for the next 10-20 years and these first five years will be critical in laying the groundwork, investing in properties and people, hitting new targets and really making a difference.

We will work together with our partners to tackle stigma, deprivation, low aspiration and poor health outputs and help west Norfolk residents access the quality homes and opportunities they deserve.



The waterfront in King's Lynn.

OUR VISION

To provide quality homes and excellent services for current and future generations so that the people and communities of west Norfolk can thrive.

OUR KEY OBJECTIVES

We have identified six key objectives that will direct our path towards achieving this vision over the next five years. These are:

- 1. Providing excellent customer service**
- 2. Creating homes, communities and local spaces to be proud of**
- 3. Offering a balanced local housing market**
- 4. Being a great place to work**
- 5. Addressing the climate challenge**
- 6. To be a strong, sustainable and innovative business**



OUR CORPORATE VALUES

Underpinning these objectives are our corporate values that keep us on track and are the principles we lead by:

- 1. Working together**
- 2. Empowerment**
- 3. Integrity**
- 4. Customer focus**
- 5. Enthusiasm**



PROVIDING EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE

As a landlord we are committed to openness, engagement and treating our tenants with dignity and respect.

Excellent customer service is one of our key priorities and we aim to be exemplary in this field.

As a landlord we are committed to openness, engagement and treating our customers with dignity and respect. We recognise that customer service and the attitude of our colleagues is something that our tenants want us to focus on and we can do more to deliver on this commitment.

To provide excellent customer service, we need to listen to our residents. We are continuously seeking ways to improve customer engagement and dialogue to better understand their needs and make sure that we are delivering. We have had an excellent response to a text message survey asking customers what they want us to focus on over the next five years and we will continue to look at new ways to communicate.

Over the next five years, we will take measures to make things fairer and more inclusive. We will seek out best practice and continually improve the way in which we have meaningful and tailored engagement with our customers. We will also begin to offer many services online so that they can enjoy greater flexibility, less paper waste and reduce the need to travel to our offices.

Our next big step is to develop a Freebridge Customer Charter in collaboration with our tenants to let them know what they should expect from us. In striving for an excellent customer experience, we will enshrine the principles of the Charter for Social Housing Tenants to make sure our residents are safe, are listened to, live in good quality homes and are able to take appropriate steps if things go wrong.

Through our new Customer Charter, by 2026 we will:

- ✓ Strive to be seen as an excellent landlord by delivering upper quartile performance in national customer satisfaction measures
- ✓ Establish a wide range of opportunities to involve our customers and encourage them to speak up and give us their views to help us shape our services to meet their needs
- ✓ Offer new online facilities to enable our customers to access more of our services electronically, however and whenever they want

Striving to provide excellent customer service.

CREATING HOMES, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SPACES TO BE PROUD OF

We will continue to invest heavily in our homes and local communities.

Freebridge has always had a strong commitment to our communities and to transforming lives.

We recognise that everyone deserves good quality, safe and affordable homes but we believe that our responsibility is wider than just the home and we want to be more than just a landlord.

Repairs and maintenance are top priorities for our customers and we want to concentrate on these services. We know that our tenants want us to raise the quality of their homes and improve the external areas such as guttering, fencing, parking and gardens. We need to do more to manage anti-social behaviour within the wider communities and help people feel safer. We also want to work harder on preventing tenancy breakdowns and homelessness through offering more advice and support.

Our award-winning flagship project, Hillington Square in King's Lynn, has proven our pledge to invest in local areas and turn them around to become desirable residences with increased customer satisfaction. We will continue to invest heavily in our homes and local communities and continue to make improvements to their quality and standards, in particular, prioritising tenant safety.

We will also build on our wider community impact through increased investment in wellbeing, community support and green spaces. Our two community centres are at the heart of local areas and help build strong community spirit and offer people support and opportunities to increase their life satisfaction. We will continue championing these and we will measure the social impact this is realising over the next five-year period.

We understand that we cannot deliver all our ambitions on our own, but by providing strong community leadership and working with strategic partners such as the Borough Council, we can set an ambitious agenda for change and tackle disadvantage and health inequalities across the borough.



Freebridge colleagues and local residents helping plant a community orchard.

By 2026 we will:

- ✓ Prioritise customer safety and demonstrate ongoing compliance with all health and safety requirements
- ✓ Have made progress in tackling the problem of physical defects associated with condensation and mould in our homes
- ✓ Be delivering a Decent Homes+ standard agreed with customers
- ✓ Halve our eviction rate through delivery of our Tenancy Sustainment Strategy
- ✓ Work with partners to deliver local investment plans and tackle disadvantage and inequality

PLAYING OUR PART IN CREATING A BALANCED LOCAL HOUSING MARKET

We pledge to invest millions of pounds to provide more homes and more choice to meet the growing need for good-quality affordable housing throughout the whole west Norfolk area.

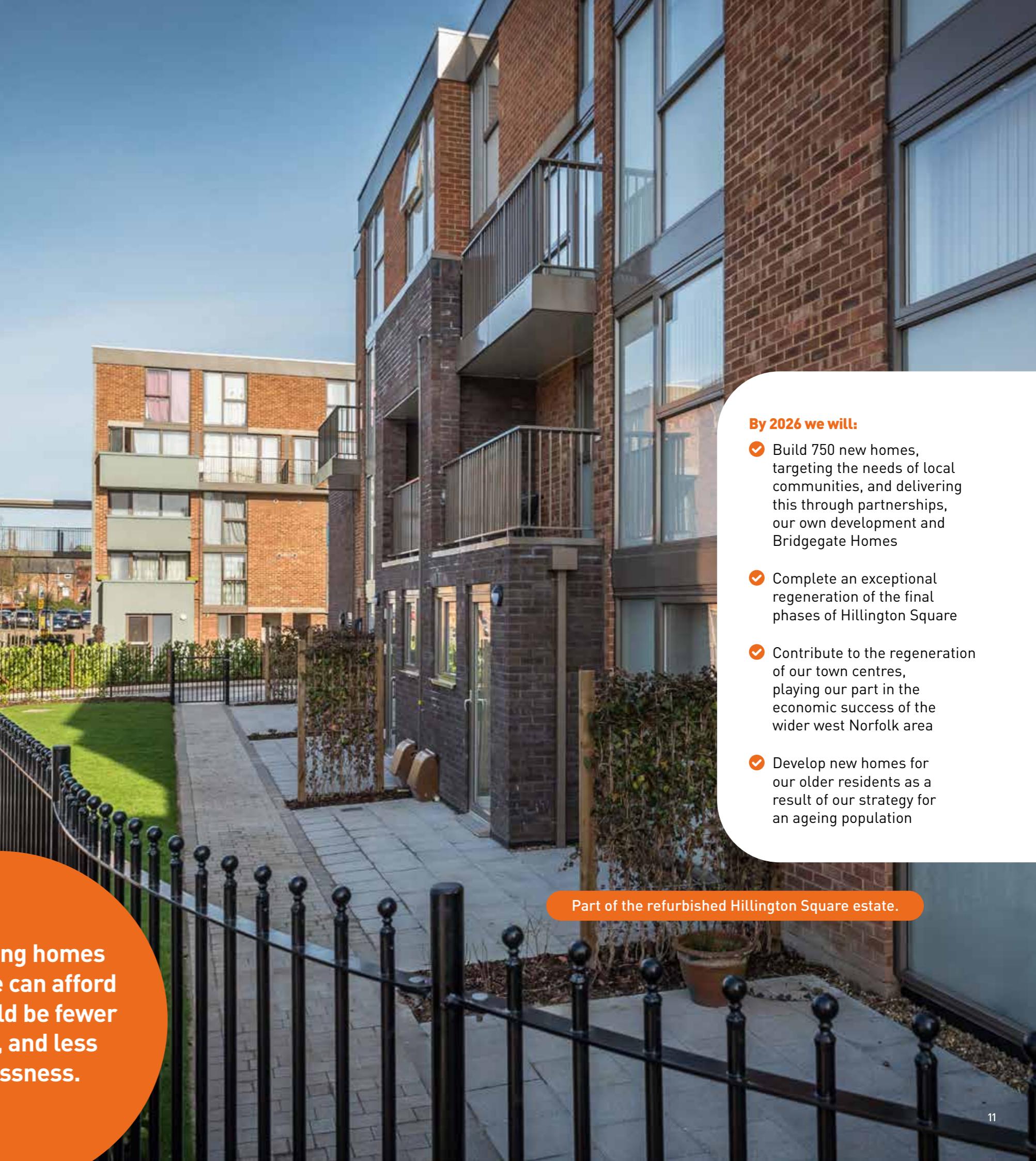
We know that high prices and second homes can make some desirable areas inaccessible to local people. We will build more affordable homes in the areas where there is the biggest demand, both in King's Lynn itself and in the surrounding villages. We will be reimagining brownfield sites and building a range of tenures that meet a variety of differing housing needs.

By providing homes that people can afford there should be fewer evictions, less homelessness and more money available to spend in the community. This will support local business, creating more job opportunities and a healthier population.

Our tenants have expressed strong support for both new builds and regeneration so, as well as building new affordable housing, we will regenerate our existing stock. We have committed to redeveloping on a large scale at Hillington Square and also to rejuvenate our smaller estates, to boost both the town centre and local areas.

We will use our subsidiary, Bridgegate Homes, to generate additional resources to support the delivery of our mission.

By providing homes that people can afford there should be fewer evictions, and less homelessness.



By 2026 we will:

- ✓ Build 750 new homes, targeting the needs of local communities, and delivering this through partnerships, our own development and Bridgegate Homes
- ✓ Complete an exceptional regeneration of the final phases of Hillington Square
- ✓ Contribute to the regeneration of our town centres, playing our part in the economic success of the wider west Norfolk area
- ✓ Develop new homes for our older residents as a result of our strategy for an ageing population

A GREAT PLACE TO WORK

Our exceptional team is what makes Freebridge so remarkable. Their commitment to customer service and passion for what they do is outstanding.

We know that our people are our biggest asset and we are committed to empowering them to be the best they can be. We promise to support and develop their talent and enthusiasm, creating career opportunities for both existing and new colleagues. We also want to support their mental health and wellbeing and enable them to get involved with the communities we serve through specific project working groups and volunteering.

We will be introducing a new operating model to improve our business efficiency with better outcomes for customers and greater proficiency for our colleagues. We will be drawing more on digital technology and integrating our systems to achieve transparency and improvements in customer services, processes and self-help for customers to make sure we are fit for the future.

We also have an ambition to take on a wider role in skills development in the area and this is strongly supported by our tenants. We will achieve this through the creation of a Freebridge Academy that will generate new opportunities for young people in Kings Lynn and west Norfolk. With our partners, the Freebridge Academy will capture local talent and build greater technical and vocational skill sets within the regional economy.

We are committed to empowering our people to be the best they can be.



Freebridge colleagues supporting the King's Lynn Foodbank.

By 2026 we will:

- ✓ Meet our target for ensuring our colleagues are highly engaged and satisfied (85%+)
- ✓ Make Freebridge an employer of choice by developing a progressive employee offer and cultivate a highly desirable employer brand
- ✓ Commit to a culture of inclusivity where colleagues are "free to be me"
- ✓ Increase our social value by enabling all colleagues to contribute directly and give back to the communities we serve
- ✓ Raise aspirations, increase opportunities and support a better West Norfolk through the development of a Freebridge Academy
- ✓ Have developed a next-generation operating model, setting out the future of work at Freebridge, and the platform for people to develop and thrive

ADDRESSING THE CLIMATE CHALLENGE

The cliffs at Hunstanton.

With housing estimated to account for 14% of the UK's carbon emissions, we are keen to play our part in supporting the Government's net zero carbon agenda.

We recognise that many of these targets are set in the future, but we want to start to act now and begin improvements that make a difference to our customers today.

Any new decisions we make as a landlord or employer will be considered for their impact on reducing our carbon footprint.

As the largest provider of housing in west Norfolk, we have a big role to play in helping combat climate change and we want to step up and deliver.

By 2026 we will:

- ✓ Be actively reducing our footprint against a clear baseline position, strategy and sustainable financial plan for both our homes and our company infrastructure
- ✓ Have reduced fuel poverty through improving existing homes to an EPC rating D or above
- ✓ Be building 50% of our new Freebridge built homes at carbon neutral standards
- ✓ Be training our teams to support the development and maintenance of new technologies
- ✓ Be collaborating with partners to innovate and reduce costs

STRONG, SUSTAINABLE AND INNOVATIVE BUSINESS

Our ambitious plans for the future are made possible by sound business sense, efficient processes and prudent financial management

These include:

- ✓ Timely and affordable funding streams
- ✓ Supportive legal and governance services
- ✓ Effective IT systems, and support which enable digital transformation
- ✓ Investment in our colleagues, their training and development to meet the needs of our businesses, customers and their own professional aspirations
- ✓ Effective risk identification and mitigation
- ✓ Intelligent data and customer insight

Our value-for-money goals are simple: to deliver excellent homes and services whilst retaining financial strength and resilience to fulfil our wider mission.

We will achieve this by:

- ✓ Improving our operating margin to sector averages
- ✓ Maximising income generation through the development of new multi-tenure homes
- ✓ Diversification by developing through our subsidiary, Bridgegate Homes
- ✓ A new target operating model, aligned with our strategic objectives, maximising efficiency through different ways of working and technology
- ✓ Measurable increase in the social value we generate through our activities

“We invite our colleagues, residents, stakeholders and partners to work with us to achieve our goal of becoming a leader in best practise for local housing associations and providing a better quality of life for our customers, communities and employees alike.”

“Homes are at the heart of our happiness; the foundation of a stronger economy; and the key to unlocking better health for our wider communities.”

