

Estates Regeneration: Case Study

LB Hounslow: Heston estates

Overview: The Heston Estates Regeneration scheme delivered 157 new mixed tenure homes and a series of estate improvements, over a collection of 15 infill sites across six housing estates. The scheme was delivered in partnership with Lovell Partnerships LLP, who developed and sold the homes for private sale and were the council's construction partner for the affordable homes. A total of 103 affordable homes were delivered across the sites, of which 73 were for social rent. The focus for the social rented homes was on alleviating local overcrowding, and a large number of four and five bedroom properties were provided with a local lettings plan in place to give additional priority to residents of the six estates in housing need. Estate improvements included upgrades to estate security such as door entry systems, landscaping, and the provision of a new multi-use games area within a large estate amenity space.



How were the sites identified? The first phase of the scheme was the redevelopment of a redundant sheltered housing scheme which was replaced with a 41 home mixed tenure apartment block. This site was the obvious starting point as the existing scheme failed to meet modern housing standards and had already been decanted on that basis. The subsequent sites were identified through a review of estate capacity, with priority given to sites that had attracted anti-social behaviour or had caused management issues, such as a disused semi-underground carpark and a vacant space to the rear of an estate shopping parade. As many of the sites would only yield a small number of homes, Hounslow decided to include all six estates in one programme and to package the sites into one contract to make them more attractive to the contractor and achieve economies of scale.

Funding The programme attracted funding from the London Housing Board (now part of the GLA) which supported both the new build and estate improvement element. The original intention was that the schemes would deliver just over 50 per cent affordable housing in total, with the private sale element providing cross-subsidy to fund the construction of the affordable homes. However, the housing market downturn led to a reduction in private sales values, which had a detrimental effect on the value of the council's land proposed for sale. In order to address this, the council and developer agreed that certain sites where land values were lowest would be retained by the council and developed for affordable housing. Hounslow was able to secure grant funding from the GLA to support these additional affordable homes, and the final scheme delivered 66 per cent affordable housing.

Community consultation A series of drop-in consultations were held before and during the planning process to seek residents' views on the most appropriate sites for development and to gain an understanding of local housing needs. Resident newsletters were sent at regular intervals and regular meetings were organised with local ward councilors and the project team. The key challenges in gaining community support were that certain sites were existing green spaces, and that the number of sites spread over the six estates meant that a large number of existing residents would be directly impacted by the developments. Most residents were supportive of the developments proposed on other estates, but concerned about the sites located closer to their own homes. The key to addressing these concerns was to establish how the programme could help to deliver local priorities, and the provision of a new community centre and games area was included in the programme as a result.

continued over...

Estates Regeneration: Case Study

LB Hounslow: Heston estates

Key successes:

- The delivery of 103 affordable homes.
- The inclusion of four and five bed family homes, making a significant contribution to tackling local overcrowding.
- The successful sales of the council's first in-house shared ownership homes, which attracted several tenant households to move in home ownership, freeing up much needed social rented housing.

Key challenges:

- Obtaining buy-in from local communities when so many households were affected.
- The impact of the housing down-turn on sales values.
- The logistics of delivering such a large number of sites with relatively few homes on each.

Lessons learned:

- The 15 sites across several different estates were so diverse in nature that the practicalities of delivery were highly challenging.
- In future, better value for money may be achieved by identifying very small sites for delivery by local firms, with a smaller number of higher-yield sites being targeted for delivery by larger national companies.

Future estate regeneration Estate regeneration schemes need to provide a mix of housing which responds to the needs of both existing and future residents, and any absolute requirement to provide Starter Homes would be likely to undermine this principle. Higher value local authority asset sales and the extension to the Right to Buy are likely to reduce both local authority and registered provider confidence in building new homes in areas where relatively early sales would be anticipated. This will present challenges in how to regenerate estates in higher value areas while maintaining the ability of the existing community to remain. The extension of Right to Buy is also likely to lead to larger numbers of freeholders or leaseholders within registered provider estates, making land assembly for future regeneration schemes even more challenging. Furthermore, the reduction in rents by 1 per cent per annum will have a detrimental impact on scheme cash-flows, and is likely to delay schemes from coming forward unless new sources of development capital can be identified. Overall, recent and proposed policy changes will make it even more challenging to achieve estate regeneration aims in future.



For more information contact: suzannah.taylor@hounslow.gov.uk