

Strategic Plan 2022-27



Executive summary

At Thirteen, we're all about providing homes, support and opportunities to grow. With a vision to provide safe, quality homes and services to the environmental standards that matter to our customers, we understand that everyone is an individual.

We offer a home for their life. Whether that's a space to enjoy with family, a haven to return to every night or somewhere to put down roots, we're there to provide what customers need.

We exist for our customers and that's why our ultimate commitment is being a great housing association and landlord – but we're about more than

just rented homes. We also build new properties for outright sale including affordable options to help people get a foot onto the housing ladder.

However, providing homes is only part of the Thirteen story. We want to help people live independently and be the best they can be, creating resilient communities that know how to help themselves.

Our strategy and plans for the business don't just stem from what we think is the right thing to do. They're created through understanding the context we operate in and through genuine consultation; listening to our

customers, colleagues and partners and understanding their priorities so we can make the biggest difference to people, communities and our wider areas of operation.

That's why we take all the feedback about future priorities from customers, partners and colleagues to review and update Thirteen's strategic plan for the next five years, supported by an updated financial plan. It's a tough balancing act with rising costs for many goods and services due to inflation, supply chain issues, and labour shortages.



The majority of our income is from rent, and our board has to prioritise where this is spent. Firstly, we've continued to prioritise keeping everyone safe - customers and colleagues - and include costs for keeping customers' homes safe and the day-to-day items we need to do this.

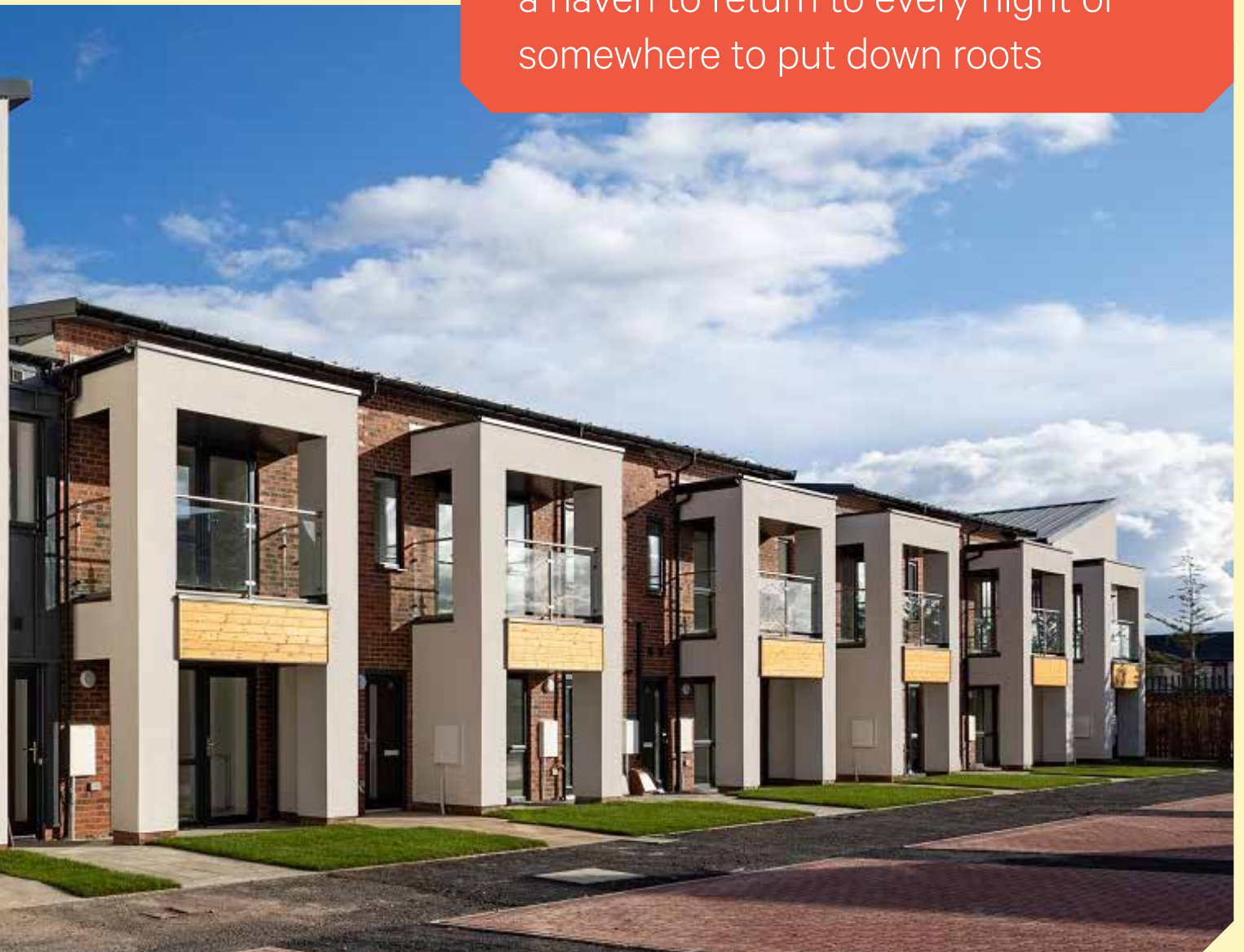
Then we've reconsidered what we need to invest in customers' homes to meet legal standards as well as those we've set with customers. We have an agreed Thirteen homes standard which is higher than the legal decent homes standard. This means that investment in customers' homes will

double from about £30m each year to over £60m each year over the next five years.

Finally, with what's left of the resources we have, we'll step up investment in building more much-needed new affordable homes across the North East, Yorkshire and Humber. In total, we plan to invest £1.1bn over the next five years in current customers' homes and in building new homes for new Thirteen customers.

We've also started to think about the investment we need to decarbonise our current homes, and we're delighted to have secured funding from the government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund to help do this.

We offer a home for their life. Whether that's a space to enjoy with family, a haven to return to every night or somewhere to put down roots



Section One

About us



1. Who we are and what we do

Thirteen has a history of growth. Thirteen in its present form was created in 2017 through the mergers and consolidation of four housing companies and a care organisation to create a strong social purpose housing association.

In July 2021, we acquired 1,400 properties from another housing provider, and today we own over 34,000 properties and manage over 35,000 homes, with over 1,500 colleagues providing services for more than 72,000 customers.

Most of our homes are in our Tees Valley heartland, but we're actively expanding our presence throughout the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber region, with a growing development programme to meet housing needs.

We continue to be committed to our main purpose – being a great housing association and landlord – and once again, customers have recently told us that's what we're living up to, with 91% saying their rent provides value for money.

Overall satisfaction shows customers would recommend us, and our operating model puts neighbourhoods at the heart of our business so we can develop closer relationships, creating an even bigger impact in our communities and giving customers a greater voice.

But we're not just about rental properties; we build new homes for rent and sale and offer affordable sales options to help people onto the property ladder. As a Homes England Strategic Partner, we have an ambitious development programme that includes building 4,500 new affordable homes alone, as well as homes for market sale, with the proceeds reinvested over the next five years.

Overall satisfaction shows customers would recommend us, and our operating model puts neighbourhoods at the heart of our business

We also go beyond bricks and mortar to develop targeted help and support for our customers, so people can live more successfully and become the best they can be. We support communities, work to prevent homelessness, help residents gain employment and apprenticeships, assist with money management, provide volunteering opportunities, domestic abuse support, refugee resettlement and much more.

We place emphasis on developing and delivering accommodation and services for older people or those who need a helping hand to live independent lives. We currently work with over 3,000 customers in these settings, including extra care for older people, homes for people with learning disabilities, children leaving care, schemes to prevent homelessness and helping those leaving prison to find accommodation. Some of these include commissioned services from local authorities, health trusts and other government bodies, bringing additional income into Thirteen.

We work closely with our partners, investing time to understand their drivers and priorities and where we can help deliver their ambitions. Local authorities are key partners, and our close relationships

enable us to work together to develop new homes, regenerate communities and tackle common issues such as environmental problems and anti-social behaviour.

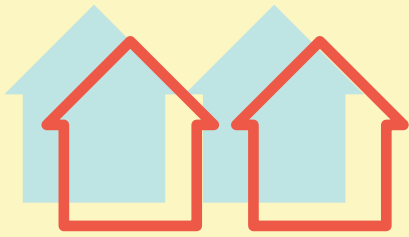
We're committed to becoming a much greener organisation, reducing our environmental impact with a clear set of targets, and empowering our customers, colleagues and partners to take control of their impacts. To make sure we do this, we've set our ambition as an organisation to reach net-zero on direct emissions by 2035, and this vital agenda has become one of our key priorities.

While COVID-19 has had an impact, our financial metrics and operational performance are strong. With a comparatively low gearing level compared to most other large housing associations, we benefit from greater financial capacity and lower financial risk than many of our peers.

Whilst we're financially strong and resilient to deal with challenges that constantly face us, we still know we need to remain flexible, with a clear focus on our role in helping address housing needs and improving what we do for the people in our areas.



Thirteen at a glance



Manage over
35,000 homes



£181m
turnover



We reach out to more than
72,000 customers



£400m to be invested into
our existing homes over the
next five years



4,500 new homes to be built
over the next five years



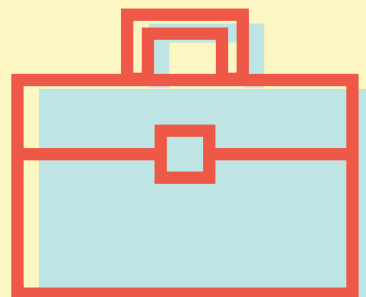
Asset base of **£1bn**



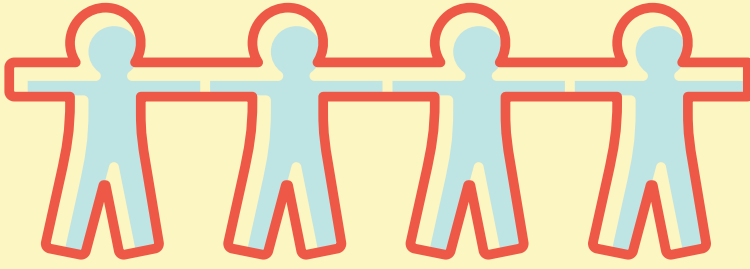
£57m Invested in the Tees Valley economy last year through our
spending on staff and suppliers, an increase of £9m over last year



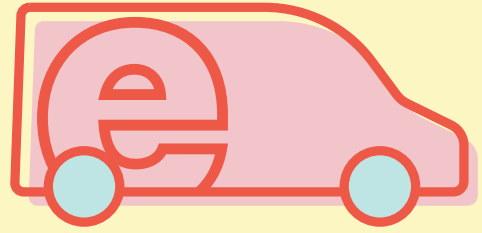
£2m additional benefits gained
for customers last year



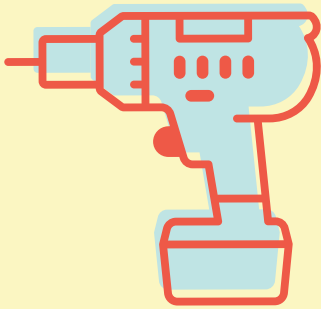
Found jobs, employment or training
for more than **560** people



1,500 colleagues



Over **365** vehicles



Around **160,000** repairs
are completed each year



£5.3m in efficiency
savings last year



£131,763 of support for projects
run by community groups



Provided **4,423** customers with
specialist advice on debts, budgeting,
benefits, and financial confidence



1,928 major and minor adaptations were
carried out to customer homes last year



1,545 customers helped through
care and support services last year

Our operating area



Our philosophy

Our vision

We provide safe, quality homes and services to the best environmental standards that matter to our customers.

Our mission

As a charitable housing association, Thirteen exists to provide housing and support services across the North East of England, Yorkshire and the Humber region. We are here for anyone who needs a home and maybe a helping hand. We work to improve the fabric of places where our customers live.

Our priorities

- Great customer experience
- Quality places to live and improving neighbourhoods
- Being Team Thirteen
- Net zero and reducing environmental impacts

Our essentials

- Everything safe
- We understand customers' needs
- We have strong financials
- Data Integrity and Insight
- Simplify the way we work
- Have clear communication
- ESG and Social Value

Services

Homes for rent, shared ownership, outright sale, construction services, care and support, jobs and advice.

We are here for anyone who needs a home and maybe a helping hand. We work to improve the fabric of places where our customers live.

Our geographic focus

We operate across the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber region. Our regeneration and social value work is focused in the Tees Valley.

Colleague promise

Be the best you can be at Thirteen, and we'll do our best to create great days at work, working with you to create an experience that helps you feel proud, valued, energised and challenged, as well as connected and informed.

Values

Our values are:

- **Considerate** in the way we do things
- **Smart** in how we do things
- **Progressive** in getting things done

Our value-based behaviours guide us towards what we need to do to make sure we're living the values every single day, so we feel:

Proud

A sense of achievement from our ability to positively impact our colleagues, customers, and region.

Energised and in control

Taking personal ownership for bringing our best self to work and the impact that has on the work we do.

Connected and informed

Taking a proactive approach to collaborating with others and understanding the wider context and goals we operate within.

Challenged

Contributing to the progression and improvement of our business.

Valued

Feeling recognised and appreciated for the effort we make and the impact we deliver to others.

Our operating context

Our focus on our operating environment means we have a broad understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing us and how we can shape, enhance and grow Thirteen's services and address issues to fix problems for customers, communities and colleagues.

Socio-economic and demographic factors

Many areas in the North East, Yorkshire and Humber are classed as underperforming compared to the rest of the UK in terms of the opportunities around education, skills, jobs, health and other factors.

Middlesbrough and Hartlepool are in the top three areas in the country with the highest levels of unemployment. Average levels of income are low, and there are high numbers of people on universal credit and in low paid work. A total of 19% of the Tees Valley population lives in 'left behind' wards, and one of our wider operational areas of Hull is the fourth most deprived local authority in England, with 36% of children living in income-deprived households.

Issues around low levels of income impact on a number of things, such as people's ability to pay rent and levels of arrears – but also health and the general prospects for people living here. Being out of work is associated with poorer health outcomes.

There are widespread reports of labour and skills shortages and skills mismatches across a number of industries, with training not keeping up with changes to technology and industries.

Children's development, attainment and later-life chances vary significantly across the UK. Around 4.5% of children in the North East are a 'child in need', compared with 2.4% in the East of England.

In some areas, there are high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour, which can affect tenancy turnover levels and the number of empty properties.

However, round one of the levelling up fund is already backing five projects in the North East alone, and the levelling up white paper plans include investment in education, skills, jobs, transport and health.



Themes for levelling up include empowering local leaders and communities through devolution and funding deals, boosting productivity, pay, jobs and living standards, spreading opportunities, improving public services and restoring local pride.

When it comes to levelling up, we've got an approach to help communities help themselves with our community resilience strategy. We're an anchor institution to facilitate collaboration with other agencies and our communities - but we're also involved in some Tees-wide initiatives around levelling up, including with some key partner organisations.

Local economy

Many of the areas we operate in have specialisms and industries they're known for. The Tees Valley in particular, has recently attracted a lot of new investment from both the government and businesses.

However, the impact of COVID-19 is still being felt, and we're dealing with a post-Brexit employment landscape with uncertainties to be addressed and worked through in partnership. We can support our local economies with a housing offer that attracts people to the areas we work in and keeps them there.



Housing affordability and markets

While the North East and parts of Yorkshire are some of the most affordable areas in England, many houses still aren't affordable, with average house prices between five and seven times the average household earnings. In every area of the North East and Yorkshire, there aren't enough new affordable homes for customers on low incomes. We can increase the delivery of new affordable and shared ownership homes to meet these needs.

There are significant gaps between high price and low price areas; some urban areas suffer from once-popular homes with neighbourhood issues that now make them unattractive to people. Some places we work have high levels of social deprivation and others significant affluence, with populations and the number of households set to continue rising.

Growth will be driven to a great extent by an ageing population and a rise in single-person households. We'll continue to listen to what our customers tell us to add the most value and provide well-cared-for neighbourhoods, communities and homes.

Older people and specialist places to live

We have a growing elderly population, and requirements for housing and services suitable for older people will increase significantly in the coming years. We can help ensure people can live independently for as long as possible by providing a wide range of choices and places to live that best meet their needs and aspirations. Not only that, we also adapt homes and provide specialist support services and can even help create support packages, meaning customers who may have had to go into hospital or care can stay in their homes longer.

As part of our commitment to living well, we'll develop new forms of accommodation by working closely with local authorities and commissioners to understand local needs for good quality and cost-efficient homes to enable people to live independently. We've carried out extensive consultation and research, including speaking to a range of customers, and the evidence suggests we should be exploring more intergenerational and multi-generational housing, close to or in town centres, to meet gaps in provision. Feedback also demonstrates that what people want to move into is less important than where the property is located.

Key Project 1.0 - Innovating and growing the offer



We want to grow and diversify our housing offer to existing and new customers across a range of needs. Our living well strategy has already identified that customer issues can be better addressed through a more person-centred approach with flexible interventions, where we can really demonstrate our impacts. We'll explore this further as we progress the strategy, but there are many opportunities to co-produce these services with commissioning partners. Using innovative technology is very much part of our focus and we're investigating new products to help with this.

We want to continue developing supported housing for young people, and adults with special needs, particularly in the context of the adult social care white paper whereby integrating health, social care and housing is seen as key. We do this very much in partnership with specialist care providers where appropriate.

Underpinning our growth ambitions is part of our strategic partnership status with Homes England, which will see a further 4,500 new homes delivered over the next five years. We'll continue to develop in the North East, but we know we can also play a strong role in meeting housing needs in Yorkshire and Hull. Shared ownership, an affordable way of entering home ownership, is a large part of our overall programme, and ensuring potential customers understand the product and find it easy to access is a key focus for us.

Understanding a wider customer base is part of our plans, so we're researching where we can identify new customers and develop products and services they'll want from Thirteen.

Development comes with challenges, not least the requirements to hit zero carbon targets in a currently volatile environment where build costs are difficult to control. We're looking at how we mitigate this by entering into longer term partnerships with contractors and developers to share opportunities and minimise risks.

We'll also continue to seek other external funding sources to support our ambitions and bring new income into the business.

We're open to more larger scale property acquisitions that add value to Thirteen and where we feel we can provide a better customer offer.

Key activities:

- o Continuing to bid for support contracts
- o Developing our shared ownership campaign
- o Delivering on our living well strategy
- o Developing new models of accommodation for older and vulnerable customers
- o Developing regeneration schemes with key partners to help levelling up
- o Delivering our community resilience strategy and locality plans



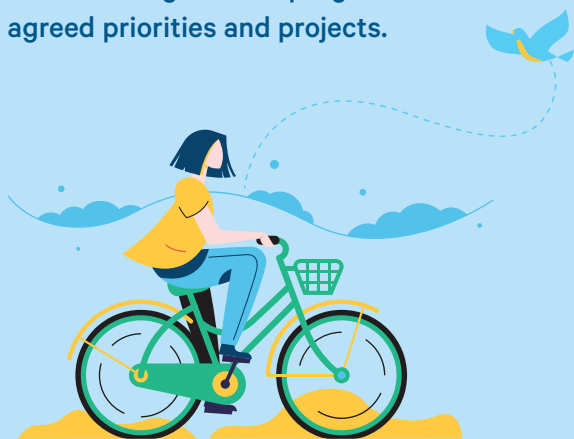
Section Two

What our stakeholders tell us



We're constantly engaging with customers, employees and wider stakeholders and asked for feedback as we were producing this plan, with a particular focus on listening to our customers' top needs from us as their landlord, our partners' main priorities and our colleagues' thoughts on where we can make the biggest difference.

We're also committed to constant dialogue with customers, colleagues and partners, so they can understand where we've decided to deliver one service or project over another, the benefits this will bring and our progress in line with our agreed priorities and projects.



1. Consulting with our customers

We wouldn't exist without our customers, so we're committed to listening to their voices, responding and ensuring we feedback as a business.

Our customer involvement framework and co-regulation approach mean customers are constantly feeding into the business through specific activity streams and individual pieces of consultation.

Listening to customers forms a key part of developing many of our approaches and strategies, including building safety, helping people live independently for longer through our living well project and ensuring communities help themselves and are resilient by creating locality plans based on their needs.

We gather a range of intelligence through different mediums to know how people feel in the moment and what makes a real difference to them, so we can act on it and build this into our plans for the future.



Over recent months, customers have told us through a range of different routes about their needs, priorities and what our vision means to them. The feedback falls into five main themes:

- **Customer service** – repairs being carried out quickly and right first time, being able to get in touch with us easily, and colleagues listening and being understanding
- **Decent quality home** – a good quality home that's up to date with good decoration
- **Place** – a pleasant and tidy area around their home, feeling safe in their home, having friends, family and connections and more chances to get into work

We wouldn't exist without our customers, so we're committed to listening to their voices.

- **Safety** – feeling safe in their home, with safety features, having ASB dealt with effectively, having safety checks such as gas and electrical checks and feeling financially sound
- **Environmental issues** – energy efficiency in their homes, and external factors such as gardens and recycling



2. Consulting with our partners

We place great importance on continually working with our key partners and listening to their views. It's not only essential to us; it's vital for us all when it comes to maximising what we do.

Our last partner perceptions survey results gave us some useful feedback, and we have acted on the suggested areas for improvement, such as building or reinvigorating relationships and ensuring we keep our partners up to date with our progress.

When it comes to raising our profile, increasing our visibility and being more influential, we've created an approach with five main objectives and are constantly measuring against these, so we know we're making progress.

Whether it's with sector bodies, local agencies, commissioners or MPs, we're positioning Thirteen to be able to influence decision and policy makers so we can have a positive impact on our customers, colleagues, business and wider area.

As well as asking for regular feedback using a range of methods, we carry out key consultation on our plans with partners, consider this and feed it in to ensure we effectively meet all our priorities; many of which we regularly find are some of our partners' priorities too.

Our partners have given us a vast amount of information to help inform our plans, including what our vision means to them and where their priorities lie

Feedback falls into five main themes that bring opportunities to explore around complementing each other or working together to make the biggest positive impact across our areas of operation

- **Business and economic growth** – including using technology and digitisation to work smarter and collaborating or taking the lead in initiatives and bringing other companies on board
- **Employability and social value** – providing training and volunteering opportunities as well as improving employment opportunities
- **Improving the customer experience** – ensuring customer focus, a positive home environment, a great place to live and offering value for money
- **Supporting people to be more environmentally friendly**
- **Provision of homes and places and supporting more people in need of housing or with more specific needs**



3. Consulting with our colleagues and board members

Our colleagues and board members understand the importance of delivering a quality service and seeing how we can improve performance through collaborative and smart working. It's key to us that they can see the areas where they can make a difference and understand the improvement in performance as a result.

Regular feedback helps us further shape our homes and services offer and experience, and their experience as a colleague within Thirteen, delivering for our customers.

Recent feedback has told us what is most important to them, where they feel Thirteen can make the biggest difference and what our vision means to them.

Five main themes emerged:

- **The customer experience** – listening, engaging them. Considering their needs and ensuring excellent communication, personalised where possible
- **Our offer to customers** – making it varied and an offer that considers all customers, to ensure homes are attractive and desirable
- **Embracing technology** – digital self-service to free up staff and use of tech to provide a great service
- **The environment and decarbonisation**
- **Our colleague offer** – including learning, development and maximising our talent



4. Key themes

Some key themes emerged from all the feedback about what people feel are our priorities to deliver as a business and how we can link in with some partners to help us deliver jointly.

The feedback is vital in helping shape what we do and how, but it also tells us that we're on the right track; our progress is consistently aligned with their needs and priorities.

The key themes from our various consultation mechanisms are aligned with our four business priorities and centre around:

- **Customers** – in line with our priority of **great customer experience** - listening, responding and ensuring great communication and being able to get in touch with us quickly was a key theme, as well as embracing digitisation, all to improve our access, repairs service and offer to give the best customer experience
- **Places** – in line with our priority of **providing great places to live and improving neighbourhoods** - customers and partners want to see great places to live, with quality homes, good decoration, tidy estates and safety measures, so people feel safe and happy and get value for their rent, including people who may need some extra support
- **Colleagues** – in line with our priority of **team Thirteen** - ensuring we become even more customer focused, that people have a great offer and are skilled to deliver the best service, and we embrace automation and digitisation
- **Environmental** – in line with our priority of **delivering our commitment to net zero and reducing environmental impacts** - embracing green technology in homes, ensuring energy efficiency, increasing understanding of environmental impacts and carbon literacy, ensuring links to training and skills to deliver net zero and dealing with physical issues in communities, such as fly tipping
- **Social value** – in line with our business essential of **understanding the difference we make** - and embedded within all our delivery - all of this is linked to the difference we make and that all our stakeholders, most importantly customers, feel.



Section Three

Our business essentials

We have some fundamental objectives that we call our business essentials because they're embedded in everything we do at Thirteen. We take each of these into account constantly as we deliver services, invest and plan for the future.

1. Everything safe

Keeping customers, colleagues, and the organisation safe is at the forefront of everything we do. Our health and safety and assurance frameworks ensure we manage and monitor performance and risks with appropriate and effective mitigating controls in place, covering areas such as working safely, property and regulatory compliance and data security.

Our dedicated health and safety team, works with and delivers training to teams across the organisation to ensure safe working practices and support wellbeing. We continue to deliver our health and safety culture programme, which was developed following a specialist survey, to ensure all colleagues fully understand health and safety requirements and feel comfortable reporting accidents, incidents and near misses and letting us know when things don't look or feel right.

COVID-19 has been and will continue to be a key focus. Constant monitoring of personal protective equipment and reviewing our risk assessments and safe operating procedures means we can continue to deliver services while putting customer and colleague safety first.

Keeping customers, colleagues, and the organisation safe is at the forefront of everything we do.





With a proactive approach to advising and supporting teams and individuals, the team also gives an added layer of assurance on development and property compliance through a comprehensive audit programme.

We have an established health and safety meeting structure to ensure it's at the top of the agenda for all leadership and service director meetings. Directors take responsibility for overseeing and communicating health and safety matters in their service areas, reporting and sharing information in line with our reporting and meeting structure. The board is ultimately responsible and hears of progress against the health and safety objectives and key performance indicators at each meeting.

We're committed to continuously enhancing fire safety in our high-rise, low-rise and complex buildings, as well as improving on the good practice we've already established over the last three years. We've launched a clear, concise and ongoing campaign to raise awareness of how our customers can make sure they stay safe in their homes, and we're continuing to engage with and listen to them.

Policies and procedures govern all aspects of our business, and we're constantly reviewing and refining these to meet changing operational needs. Defined authority limits are in place, so significant investment needs committee/board approval based on sound and robust business cases. There's a transparent organisational framework, and we'll continue to review this to ensure we deliver our priorities as effectively as possible.

Information security and risk

As we continue to transform into a smarter and leaner digital business, information and data are vital to every part of our services. The change in the way we work and how customers access our information and services means we need increasingly robust cyber security measures to protect against threats.

We hold a significant amount of data on both customers and colleagues, which we use to drive business decisions to make sure we give our customers a great experience and our colleagues a great day at work.

This includes special category data under UK GDPR, which means we must take information security and risk seriously. We are accredited to the ISO27001 standard, the international standard for information security and risk, and assess the systems and processes we have in place to manage and improve how we keep information and data secure.

Cyber attacks are happening more often with local and nationally known brands falling victim, and the damage can have severe consequences for any company's customers and wider stakeholders. The attacks will continue to evolve, so we're putting every effort into staying ahead of the threats.

We've invested in world class hardware and software designed to keep our assets, employees and data safe. As we develop or introduce new processes, we give each one the same care and attention to ensure they meet or exceed our security standards.

We're committed to continuing to invest in systems and infrastructure to strengthen and secure the business, giving trust and confidence in the way we work now and in the future.

Our regulatory framework

Our established and effective governance framework supports us in making sure everything we do is legal and safe and complies with our regulatory standards.

This includes our board and committee structure supported by rules, terms of reference, standing orders and financial regulations, customer co-regulation, health and safety, business continuity, disaster recovery and risk management and assurance arrangements.

As a registered social housing provider, we are overseen by the Regulator of Social Housing (RoSH) and must meet the outcomes and expectations set out in its economic and consumer regulatory standards.

The board is responsible for ensuring we meet these standards, embracing a co-regulatory and transparent approach to regulation and ensuring we're open about how we meet our objectives, as well as being accountable.

Our board reviews performance against the economic regulatory standards to confirm compliance, and our involved customers test us against the consumer standards.

The board also works with our leadership team to develop and set strategic objectives and ensure we deliver against them, taking into account what we're here for, what we have the capacity for, the resources to deliver and how we use evidence and feedback to prioritise and split resources.

Our most recent in-depth assessment by the regulator confirmed our grades as G1 and V1, evidence of continuing strong governance and financial viability, with the capacity to deal with a wide range of adverse scenarios.

Defined authority limits are in place, so significant investment needs committee/board approval based on sound and robust business cases. There's a transparent organisational framework, and we'll continue to review this to ensure we can deliver our priorities as effectively as possible.

Assurance and risk management

The board has agreed and continually reviews a set of strategic risks, and at each meeting, considers the impact of its discussions and decisions on the strategic risks – both positive and negative – and whether we need to take any further action as a result.

Our risk register details the triggers and impacts for each risk, along with planned and current controls, our three lines of defence, the status of golden financial rules, risk appetite and inherent and residual risk scores.

The audit and risk committee monitors mitigating actions on behalf of the board and all committees.

The Thirteen Homes Board also considers risks at each meeting, elevating its views and any concerns to the Thirteen Board. Regular chairs' meetings ensure further oversight of cross-organisation risks and concerns. Executive directors and service directors own and monitor the strategic risk controls and action plans, supported by service risk registers, which are reported to the audit and risk committee.

The strategic risks are detailed in the table below. The board's latest revisions include a strengthened focus on data, cyber security and zero carbon risks.

Risk		Risk Appetite	Risk Owner
1	Failure to deliver against customer expectations (Respect, redress, repairs and quality)	Minimal	EDCS
2	Failure to keep tenants and customers legal and safe	Averse	GCE
3	Failure to maximise growth and income opportunities	Cautious	CFO
4	Inability to respond effectively to challenges and risks	Cautious	GCE
5	Failure to manage a successful development programme	Cautious	EDD
6	Failure to effectively manage our homes, buildings, and places of work	Cautious	EDA
7	Failure to manage regulatory expectations	Averse	GCE
8	Failure to retain, support and nurture colleagues	Open	EDBC&I
9	Failure to maintain a financially viable business	Open	CFO
10	Failure to ensure the quality, accuracy, and security of our data	Averse	EDBC&I

2. We understand customer need

Customers are our business; without them, we simply wouldn't exist, so it's vital to listen, understand and respect their needs and how they differ across groups when planning, delivering and enhancing products and services.

Respect for our customers and their needs is high on our agenda, and constant communication, listening and gathering feedback means we can shape our locality plans and campaigns around what matters most to them to ensure they can live happily and independently and make the most of their lives.

As a business, we're constantly looking to improve our understanding and methods to gather insight. We do this in several ways:

- Real-time feedback is key to ensure we understand in the moment how services are being delivered. Text surveys, follow up telephone calls and face to face feedback gathering are just some of the methods utilised
- Complaints and compliments are analysed to understand when we get things wrong and what learnings and actions are needed, ensuring they're dealt with promptly and fairly
- Data is gathered and analysed to understand how services can be improved via live feedback, telephone follow up, mystery shopping and working with partners
- A variety of methods are utilised to understand how neighbourhoods and communities can be improved and enhanced, e.g. local meetings, surveys, face to face discussions, community engagement and consultation, live feedback and capturing/analysing data
- Understanding demand for property types, demand by location, changing requirements in our homes, monitoring markets and changing demographics

But we want to know more than how people feel in the moment; we want to know what makes a real difference to them so we can build this into how we deliver in the future and meet those needs. Plans to enhance our understanding include:

- More direct feedback gathering and in depth understanding via telephone and face to face contact
- Consistent approach to insight gathering and shared understanding of key needs by specific groups and customer types
- Sharing our understanding and what we're doing as a result of the feedback and information – talking to customers more about the changes and improvements
- Ensuring customers know that we're listening and acting on what they're telling us
- Even more ways to ensure customers can give feedback and tell us what is going well and what isn't
- Sharing more about how and why we're working with partners and how this benefits customers
- Improved and more up to date understanding of who our customers and potential customers are, more insight about household make up and differing needs now and, in the future

There are 22 proposed tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs) that reflect the themes and issues set out in the social housing white paper. Twelve are tenant perception measures that must be collected through a perception survey, and ten are measures that can be collected through our management information.

We'll finalise our approach through 22/23 based on the guidance once the regulator has finished its consultation period. In the meantime, we're aiming to start collecting perception data from April 2022 using our customer experience team and the approach prescribed by the regulator in its white paper and consultation documents.

There are several ways the perception survey can be carried out, including face to face and by telephone contact, and we'll test this during 22/23, so when we need to publish information about our methodology alongside our performance data, we'll be ready. The regulator is also asking for views, including from customers, about how to publish the satisfaction outcome data, and as the consultation evolves, so will our approach.



This will further enhance our real-time information and will not only ensure we're complying with the regulator but give us an additional lens through which we can view what our customers think about services and where we can keep improving. All aimed towards giving our customers the best possible experience with Thirteen.

Each of the seven themes in the social housing white paper is aligned to one of our priorities, as outlined within the priority section later in this plan.

Customer involvement and co-regulation

Our co-regulation framework, developed in consultation with customers, continues to go from strength to strength. It ensures Thirteen's customers can influence and challenge our performance and service delivery, offering a range of options for involvement and enabling them to choose when, how and for how long they're involved.

Customers decide the methods they want to use to challenge performance, service delivery and test compliance with regulatory and service standards, holding us accountable for delivering services that meet their needs and expectations.

Our community fund stream considers and allocates funding to projects as part of our approach to community resilience and interviews customers applying for Thirteen Academy funding to support them through university and enhance their opportunities.

We were early adopters of the NHF Together with Tenants initiative, and we're continuing to work with other housing providers in the region as part of the North East tenants voice.

We received a compliance plus accreditation in our customer service excellence assessment, and our approach has gained interest from a number of other organisations, following attendance and presentations at national events by involved customers and Thirteen colleagues.



3. We have strong financials

Our financial metrics, gearing, and interest cover compare favourably to our sector peer group, and we're committed to ongoing compliance with our golden financial rules. We maintain headroom on funding facilities to enable investment in existing and new homes and our neighbourhoods.

Key Project 2.0 - Financing the plan



To deliver the level of investment planned within our existing homes, neighbourhoods and new homes, we'll need to unlock financial capacity and secure additional borrowing to deliver the plan's ambition.

Key outputs/activities:

- o Increased funding available to the group
- o More certainty over long term cost of funding
- o Effective use of property assets as security



Value for money (VFM)

Thirteen is committed to providing a value for money service, delivering our vision and maximising the social impact of our resources and investment. It's important because we want to make sure we can invest in building/acquiring more homes, invest in our existing homes and create quality services for residents, customers and other stakeholders. VFM is about obtaining the maximum benefit over time with the resources available.

We encourage colleagues at every level to use their knowledge and experience to help us improve. We give the opportunity and mindset to share innovative ideas and contribute to business challenges, giving them the freedom to solve problems, helping create a culture where continuous improvement is everyone's responsibility, and all ideas are welcome.

But it's not always about reducing costs. We also look at increasing our income streams, as outlined in our project 'innovating and growing the offer'.

VFM is owned and driven by the board, and performance against VFM measures is reviewed at every board meeting. However, the remit for delivery is spread across the business, with collective responsibility at all levels, from the executive team and service directors to operational team leaders.

Performance against these measures is monitored closely, ensuring Thirteen's approach to VFM is embedded in the way we work.

Delivery of the strategic projects is overseen by the VFM and business change steering group through regular updates from the programme boards aligned to each strategic priority. These four programme boards prioritise and monitor strategic projects, with every significant project or investment requiring a business case with a clear return on investment.

Each project or investment undergoes a 'lessons learned' review, which not only ensures we've delivered on the expected outcomes but also that any learning picked up along the way is shared at all levels, including the board. By understanding why we want to do things and what we've learned along the way, we can better identify opportunities to save money, improve processes and outcomes and maximise the value of our work.

Finally, our procurement processes ensure when businesses bid to work with us, their offer is considered thoroughly. Cost, quality, scope of service and social value all help make sure we get the most for our money by spending wisely with maximum effect.



How do we set and assess our targets?

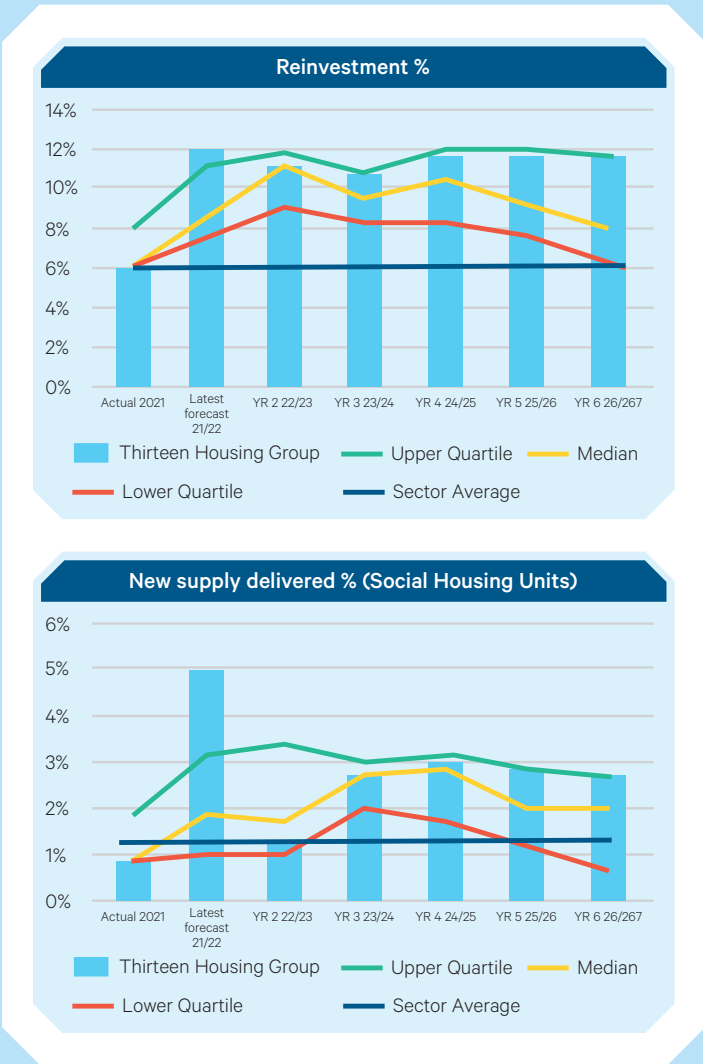
To ensure we continue to drive positive change in the way we work, we set an efficiency target of 3% each year and monitor performance against this target across the five-year strategic plan. This ensures we don't just focus on the immediate cash savings through the elimination of waste or duplication but that there is also the encouragement towards a longer-term view and to consider opportunities to invest to save. A key dimension to this is the best use of technology to automate and streamline our services.

But how will we know if our efforts make the difference we anticipate or expect? Setting stretching targets (our critical success KPIs) and benchmarking performance against peers goes a long way to establishing our direction of travel and highlighting improvement areas.

We've used data from Vantage (a peer network group) and compared a forward look with 13 other registered providers, so we can understand where and why we differ and share best practice. This group includes providers ranging from 6,500 to 44,000 homes, some with a large proportion of social rented homes, diversity of stock relating to older people, leaseholders and market rent all of which provides a solid base to make comparisons and query differences.

Looking forwards and backwards allows us to see how our plans compare, prompting us to act sooner where we appear to be out of line, where that's the case. Knowing what our investment plans are and how we compare is important to our board and will remain a key focus over the next 12 months.

The tables below provide that forward and backward look for each of the sector scorecard VFM metrics along with any key actions that are being considered as a result. It should be noted that these are as at the end of February 2022 and are subject to change as we finalise the group's financial plan for 2022-27.

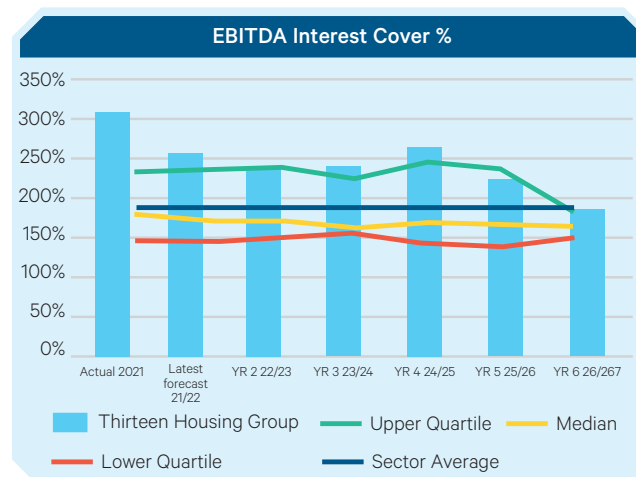




In 2021/22, our investment plans were significantly affected by the pandemic and this appears to be the case for many housing providers, although we were at the lower end when compared to our peers. The latest forecast shows we've now more than caught up and are outperforming our peers. The plans for the next five years show there will be a small dip while we mobilise a new partnership framework agreement, but we then have a solid delivery plan from 2023/24 onwards. Our plans will continue to incorporate property compliance investment and bringing forward improvements in building safety, such as completing the installation of sprinklers in high rise buildings. Equally we'll continue our journey towards every home reaching a target of EPC C by 2030 by installing energy efficient heating systems, improved glazing and insulation. Learning from retrofitting homes, we'll map out our road to stock decarbonisation and the financial requirements this brings.

Our contribution to the new social housing supply has always compared favourably when we look at the HouseMark global accounts, but in 2020/21, we did see a significant dip in delivery which we have more than recovered in 2021/22. This recovery was further bolstered by the acquisition of 1,400 homes from another Housing provider. Looking ahead and linked to our long-term strategic partnership with Homes England, we have ambitious plans to deliver 4,500 affordable homes alone over the next five years.

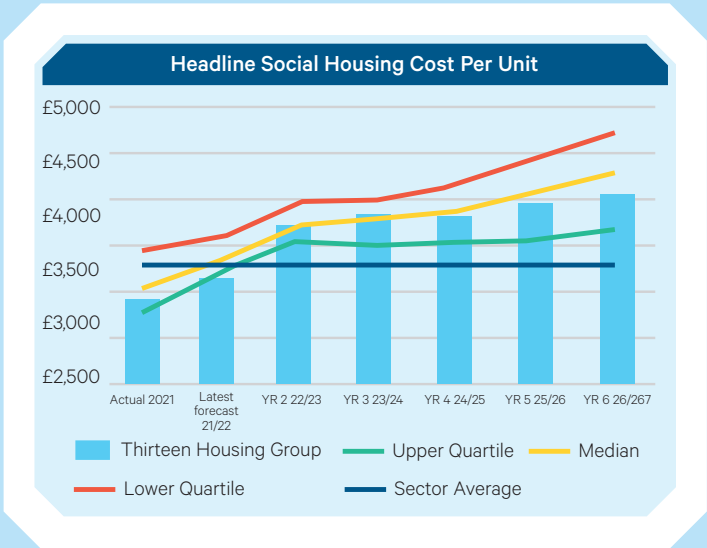
All the above is to be delivered whilst maintaining a low level of gearing, allowing us headroom if we need it, to deal with any additional stresses that come our way, in addition to providing capacity for business growth and continued service improvement.

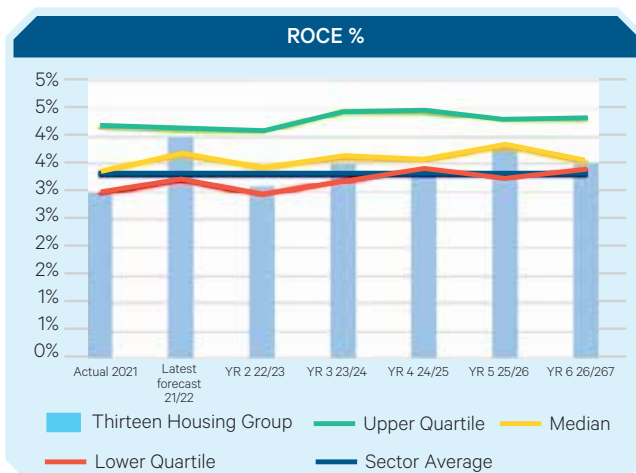
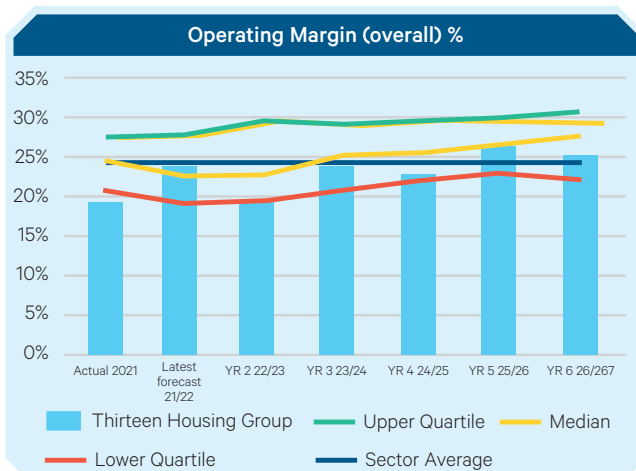


In line with our gearing position, we know our EBTIDA/ MRI Interest cover is currently upper quartile, reflecting the financial capacity as set out above. We recognise we can improve our overall operating margin. A primary focus of our VFM strategy will be to drive service improvement to enhance this and our overall social housing cost per unit to further underpin the financial capacity and ability to invest in existing and new assets.

Our current financial plan allows for significant growth in investment in customer homes, with increases for the next two financial years and then a further ramp up in investment from 2025/26 onwards. Whilst our EBITDA Interest cover will decrease, it will still be upper quartile. That said, we need to carve out headroom to decarbonise our homes.

By forming strategic procurement partnerships and simplifying the way we work, we aim to increase our investment in our homes whilst at the same time comparing favourably with the sector and demonstrating value for money.





Our headline cost per unit has traditionally been low - £3,264 in 2020/21, which was lower quartile against the benchmark. It has increased in 2021/22 but remains lower quartile in our benchmarking group and below the sector average. The financial plan forecast shows an increase over the next five years, taking us to between the lower and median quartile compared to our Vantage peers. Our major repairs (investment) cost per home is set to increase from £1,252 per home in 2022/23 to £1,726 per home by 2026/27. Conversely our management cost per home will decrease from £780 per home in 2022/23 to £667 in 2026/27, illustrating our plan to work more efficiently to create capacity to invest in homes.

While Thirteen's operating margin in 2021/22 is in line with the sector average, we have ambitions to improve this. We have refocused our subsidiary, Gus Robinson, to provide internal housebuilding services. As a result of withdrawing from low margin contracts with external customers, we'll improve our overall operating margin and achieve group priorities. We're also aware of the economic environment and the board's decisions, as set out in this strategic plan, to provide additional support to our customers and invest in communities.

The final metric, which is return on capital employed, remains constant between 3% and 4% in line with the sector average.

The targets for each of the critical success KPIs later in this plan represent the steps to exceed these forecasts. They were set using the benchmarking data so that we can aspire to continually improve services and outcomes against the regulator's measures and achieve service levels that are truly best in class.

The executive and service directors discuss performance against the VFM metrics on a monthly basis and the finance director maintains oversight of delivery against a five year rolling efficiency target of 3% of Social Housing lettings income. Opportunities to increase income whilst streamlining services to reduce costs are a key focus of these discussions using the headline social housing cost per unit as the barometer.

Plans to delivery efficiencies in the next 12 months include:

- Learning from benchmarking peers
- Review of structures to identify and remove duplication and/or pool resources
- Digitisation
- Review of the development, investment and void standards to drive out buying efficiencies
- Stock acquisition to reduce FTE/1000 units
- Innovation projects – Reducing tenancy turnover/ Increasing income opportunities

4. Our digital journey

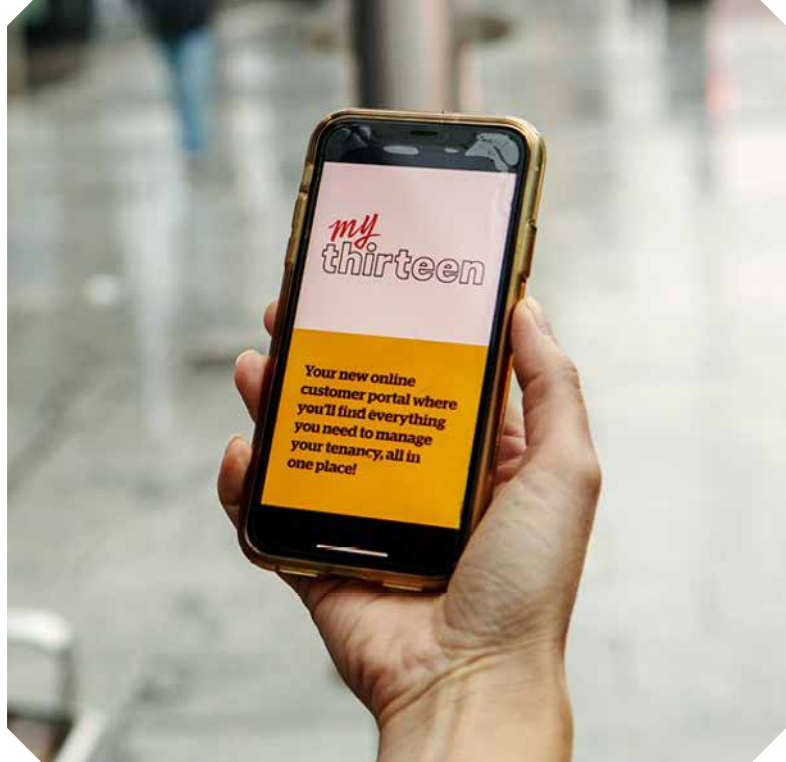
The pace of change in our lives continues to accelerate, bringing both opportunities and challenges. Delivering on our strategic aims requires significant change across our people, processes, technology and data. This means:

Our **people** are key to delivering success for our customers, and digital change will be critical. We'll build expertise and capability across the business to drive further use and maximisation of our digital tools and allow colleagues to suggest and lead on improvements to ways of working, so we benefit more from the use of automation and technology.

Our **processes** are how we deliver our work. We're identifying areas where we carry out repeat tasks. Where activities are routine and consistent, they're candidates for automation. This will help deliver services quicker, with fewer manual errors, and free up our people to deliver more complex and creative services. As a rule, we want people to do what people do best and automate things where machines perform better than people.

Technology change impacts every area of our business – from the hardware and systems used by colleagues to capture and use data, to the infrastructure we use, to emerging technologies that can provide a better customer experience. We're starting several programmes of work to keep pace with the sector in some areas and be more advanced in others:

- Projects and systems change – a transparent approach to developing and delivering a prioritised set of projects based on sound business cases
- Cloud migration – planned migrations that provide performance, security and resilience benefits and give us more flexibility in how we manage systems
- Automation and improvement – simplifying through automation and artificial intelligence will deliver performance efficiencies for customers and colleagues
- Cyber security - increasingly important and forms part of our business essential of everything safe. Cyber security and safety are built into our technology procurement procedures and projects



We're a very **data**-rich business, and this data is highly valuable in managing our performance and helping us make significant business decisions. We see three stages in the journey of our data:

- Data capture – most of our business data is held in robust systems and is accessible for further use. We're concentrating on improving data capture from customers and for our assets. Better customer data will allow us to really understand our customers better – to ensure that we're meeting their needs (and not discriminating against them) and offering them (with their consent) suitable and beneficial support, information and services. Better asset data will allow enhanced stock modelling to ensure we're investing in the right things, in the right homes, at the right prices. It will also help us develop our decarbonisation strategy to focus on the most beneficial properties and enable us to measure our progress.
- Data management – data quality is critical. Basing decisions on bad data leads to bad decisions. We're working to ensure every data point has a single source of the truth, with a clear owner accountable for ensuring its accuracy and integrity.
- Data use – Getting the capture and management stages right means we can trust what we use. We can join and visualise datasets and create management tools to provide insight to colleagues across the business. These can include both internal and external datasets, for example, demographic, economic, crime and mapping tools to see our communities in real time.

The delivery of our strategic plan requires progress in the following areas:

P1: Great Customer Experience	P2: Quality Places to Live and Improving Neighbourhoods	P3: Being Team Thirteen	P4: Delivering our commitment to net zero and reducing environmental impacts
<p>Customer-facing platform allowing a broad range of self-service options and for customers to own their data</p> <p>Intelligent automation to allow targeted, personalised debt recovery</p> <p>Data-led performance management</p> <p>Scalable services – increasing geography, service delivery, customer numbers and satisfaction while finding efficiencies</p> <p>Effective systems providing a good user experience, with minimal training requirement</p>	<p>Predictive customer analytics</p> <p>Efficient, automated processes</p> <p>Business modelling on investment and disinvestment</p> <p>Customer insight capture driving housing product development</p> <p>Environmental data capture, analysis and use</p>	<p>Cyber security and GDPR-compliance built-in</p> <p>People focusing on what people do best – automation of routine manual processes where possible</p> <p>Future-proof technology architecture</p> <p>The data warehouse at the centre of the business</p> <p>Great user experience of our tools and technologies</p> <p>‘Just enough’ rigour and governance</p> <p>Fully utilising the tools we have to provide a great ‘work anywhere’ experience</p> <p>Quick response and clearly prioritised work pipelines</p> <p>Master data management, providing a single source of the truth and clear ownership of data</p> <p>Digital skills growth across the business</p>	<p>Definition, capture, management and use of environmental performance data</p> <p>Data modelling showing priority decarbonisation property types</p> <p>Internet of things devices for environmental data capture</p>

Key Project 3.0 - Digitisation



The digitisation plans to transform our services for colleagues and customers alike, focusing on the capabilities we need to deliver our strategic priorities, using efficient work practices to help our people, processes and technology, so we give the best customer and colleague experience.

Key outputs/activities:

- o Ensuring our business systems and infrastructure are fit for the future
- o Improvement and efficiencies through process improvement and automation
- o Evolution in our collection, management, ownership and use of data
- o Digital skills and engagement
- o Improving safety, security and compliance

5. Have clear communication

Connecting with all our stakeholders is vital. We don't just want them to understand and support our mission, vision, values and priorities, we want them to be able to have a say, as well as show them how we're delivering and performing to meet the needs of the customers and areas we serve.

A major objective of our communications approach is to build Thirteen's identity, profile and brand image by using various methods to communicate with internal and external audiences and sustain a long-term positive reputation.

Understanding our stakeholder groups' communications needs and preferences is vital to ensure clear communication. We're constantly refreshing our stakeholder maps and using feedback to inform our approach, including their preferred methods, channels and timing.

We know one size doesn't fit all, and our approach means we tailor our communication style, format and method to suit our stakeholders and ensure our messages have the desired effect, whether the audience is a colleague, customer or partner.

A range of messages underpin our communications so that we're consistently telling the story of what we do as an organisation, the difference we make and how we respond to stakeholder feedback, whether that comes in through a planned survey or ad hoc thoughts, comments or requests.



To ensure we connect and raise our profile through clear communication we:

- Highlight the work we do and the impacts we make to communities and individuals, as well as the achievements of our business, people and customers
- Reaffirm Thirteen's mission that as a charitable not-for-profit housing association, we exist to provide housing and support services across the North East of England, Yorkshire and the Humber
- Share Thirteen's story with key audiences through a range of channels appropriate to their needs, including social media, website, print, broadcast, magazines, online media and our intranet
- Develop strategic and operational communications, content and campaigns that support our priorities and aid business growth aims
- Promote the Thirteen brand through a robust brand platform and a coherent visual identity system
- Protect Thirteen's reputation through effective and proactive issues management

Ensuring we plan, coordinate, deploy and measure our activity means we can constantly tailor and improve our approach to ensure it's as effective as possible and addresses customer, colleague and partner needs, such as targeted campaigns and updates.

We're now exploring how we can use data and systems to make our communications even more personalised to individuals and groups.



Key Project 4.0 - Reviewing our communications approach



We'll be reviewing how we communicate with our customers and how we can further simplify and streamline our approach and methods, ensuring the information they receive is accurate, timely, and in the right tone of voice while cementing the key messages about what we do as their landlord or service provider.

We'll also look at a more personalised approach to customer communication so we can provide even clearer information about the services they receive and what matters to them in a format that best suits their needs.

Key activities:

- Aligning with the digitisation project to assess our customer information so we can tailor or even personalise our communication
- Reviewing our customer communication framework directly with customers
- Reviewing and tailoring our partner communication to make it more targeted
- Further acting on our internal comms audit and review to define our colleague communication channels for different internal audiences



6. ESG and social value

Our commitment to ESG

We're committed to making a difference, and it's one of the many reasons our colleagues tell us they love working for Thirteen.

Feedback from many of our stakeholders shows they agree with our priorities and projects that will help us deliver them, and we want to ensure we can show the impact we make in terms of delivery and social purpose.

We were an early adopter of the environmental, social and governance (ESG) reporting standard for social housing, which was based on a rapidly growing interest across the sector, particularly how ESG factors are likely to form a more fundamental role in the credit process underpinning future investment decisions.

The ESG framework, a voluntary reporting standard, has now been renamed the sustainability reporting framework. So far, more than 70 organisations (39 housing associations and 31 lenders and investors), including Thirteen, have committed to reporting against the standards and criteria outlined. In 2020, we published our very first ESG report.

We know that housing is about much more than bricks and mortar, so we want to further build on our ESG credentials. By constantly striving to improve in all three areas of ESG, we can also have a positive impact in line with a number of the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs), a globally recognised standard.

Affordable housing is recognised as a universal social good within the SDGs and access to adequate, safe and affordable housing is a core target.

Having a decent, affordable home is an important element of:

- Providing a route out of poverty (SDG 1)
- Good health and wellbeing (SDG 3)
- Providing the base from which children can access education (SDG 4)
- Reducing carbon footprint through the right energy efficiency and construction measures (SDGs 7 and 13)
- Supporting people into stable and suitable employment (SDG 8)
- Contributing to reducing inequalities (SDG 10)

Feedback from many of our stakeholders is in line with the above goals and shows where we can make the most difference in our areas of operation and for the people we serve.

By firmly embedding ESG into our business practices, we can further help communities be more resilient, help people be independent, take on opportunities and show the difference we make to the committed people who work for us and to the external world.

Our first ESG report shows we're doing well against the criteria, but we know there are areas where we can improve and what needs to be even more of a focus, based on what people are telling us.

So, we'll be further cementing our approach and constantly monitoring our progress to see the impact we're making in line with ESG measures, aims and ultimately, this plan.

Our impact

What our stakeholders are telling us

Colleagues, customers and partners all value seeing the difference we make and how all our stakeholders, and most importantly customers, feel.

We understand there are inherent issues with measuring impact through financial returns alone. That's why we want to understand the difference we're making in terms of the economy, environment and people.

To better measure across this triple line, we're developing a model based on four clear stages:

- Identifying change - using the theory of change
- Measuring change - by having agreed measurement plans
- Claiming the net impact - by understanding the role that Thirteen plays
- Valuing the net impact - by measuring the importance that people place on changes they experience in their lives

Underpinning this is a new reporting tool that means we can record outputs from projects and procurement activities and evaluate the impact using models such as the HACT Wellbeing Bank or The National TOMS.

This approach, alongside our key performance indicators, plays a key role in understanding whether we're delivering what we said and getting a real return on our investment.



Section Four

Our priorities

Priority 1 - Great customer experience

Why it's important to us

Customers are the lifeblood of any business. Without customers, there is very little left. Housing, care and support are vital components in the communities we serve, and as we move through the course of our plan, we want not just to respect our customers but turn them into fans – that rave about and for us and our services. Being the housing provider of choice in the communities we serve matters, and we'll strive to become that. We also believe that everyone should get the same quality and consistency of service, no matter where and how they contact us.

In line with the social housing white paper, customers have told us they want to **feel safe in their home, be listened to and treated with respect**. We're also committed to resolving issues quickly and fairly and **being open and honest about how we're performing**.

What our stakeholders are telling us

Listening, responding and ensuring great communication and being able to get in touch with us quickly was a key theme, as well as embracing digitisation, all to improve our access, repairs service and offer to give the best customer experience



Outcomes we'll deliver

- o Improved customer experience (personalisation and choice through an appointment-based approach)
- o Maintain low levels of debt owed to Thirteen
- o Maintain customers staying for a period of five+ years with us
- o Letting more homes and in ways that work for our customers
- o Consistent, efficient, and effective service delivery regardless of channel access
- o Improved and consistent support planning for customers in need of support

Progress so far

Over the last twelve months, we've been building on our foundations. Our performance has improved across many key operational areas seeing us rated as a median to upper quartile. We've also learned a lot. Be that through making improvements or dealing with the global pandemic. Nearly nine in ten customers are currently satisfied with Thirteen, and a large majority of those customers are very satisfied.

Query resolution, communication and experience of repairs are areas that customers see as vital to boost satisfaction with the overall service provided. Additionally, to counter dissatisfaction, there is also a pattern with query resolution, communication and quality of housing being what matters to customers. Taken together, these are all areas where we need to do better. We still have more to do and achieve, and everything comes down to these three factors:

1. Speed and convenience:

The ease and suitability of services

2. Responsiveness:

The flexibility of services

3. Quality:

The levels of excellence of services

Our operating ethos aims to put neighbourhoods at the heart to create an even bigger impact on our communities and give customers a greater voice. Although many customers are satisfied with us, we want to continue to be easier to do business with, and the three factors mentioned above will support us on this journey. Our customers are noticing a positive difference through My Thirteen and our Stockton Touchpoint store, and we'll continue to make even more great changes.

Our second Touchpoint store is opening in early 2022 in Hull, and as part of our approach to customers, we'll work tirelessly to enhance their all-round experience. We'll continue to offer various channels – face-to-face, telephone, and online to access our services and be consistent. We'll also strive to make services more local, and we'll continue to meet the demands of the Thirteen customer base.

Listening and responding is a constant for us, so we've implemented changes as a direct result of feedback and dissatisfaction, including creating a holistic tenancy support service, so people have one point of contact and aren't passed between teams.

We know safety is important to our customers and our asset management programme of improvements to homes ensures we meet secured by design standards. But not only that. It's not just within the home people need to feel safe, so we've reviewed the ASB experience for our customers, and we're ready to introduce a new model and even more streamlined service.

What will we do for customers?

We'll deliver simple concepts that will focus on customer service delivery.

We'll strive to provide services that:

- o Are personalised to the customer
- o Give choice for the customer
- o Are based on consistency irrespective of channel access
- o Are formed on resolution at the first point of contact with zero-repeats
- o Drive appointment, feedback and structure throughout
- o Promote the use of self-serve in every element
- o Empower colleagues and customers.
- o Signpost people to the best solution when that's outside Thirteen

What does this mean?

We'll embed the concept of resolution in all our dealings with customers. That's not to say we'll take away the personal touch. Our focus will be on the activity that customers and the business need, and we'll continue with our commitment to listening to the customer voice. This focus will lead us to move to an appointment-based structure throughout service delivery.

We currently offer appointments in key areas such as repairs where customers phone with an issue. The Touchpoint team diagnoses the problem, and an appointment is given based on customer and colleague availability. We'll replicate this approach for every customer service area going forward. Where we receive negative feedback from customers around timely responses, resolution and communication, we'll listen and aim to make access easier and more convenient.

What can be, will be answered within the Touchpoint centre either on the phone or online, to the point of resolution and where it cannot be, escalation to an appointment-based service will be made. This will always make our response to customers more transparent and make monitoring demand and workload easier, ensuring a resource and workload match. We'll promote the use of self-serve and support customers to utilise the services that matter to them when they need them most. Promoting self-serve through My Thirteen will enable us to free up time and resources, where and when it matters.

We will treat every customer as an individual and build relationships throughout their interactions with us. We'll offer customers a choice to deliver a service at a time and speed that suits them – true convenient access. This approach has been refined and embedded within the repairs service and has given us a structured and practical approach to adapt to other business areas. Our early work in repairs has seen the call on services reduce, performance improvement to levels that were not being met, and services delivered more effectively and efficiently than previously.

Whether we're being reactive to a customer request or proactive in working on debt recovery, lettings, tenancy management issues, or keeping estates tidy, we will be more efficient and effective.

Our approach to services will also be to deliver zero repeats. That is not to say all services will operate perfectly, every time, although that will be the aim – more that when there is an issue, customers only want to tell their story one time. They do not want to repeat it to multiple colleagues; they want it to be dealt with promptly and fairly. Through our omni-channel approach utilising My Thirteen, if the customer makes a complaint or raises one online, the colleague who takes over will ask questions about the complaint, not asking the customer to repeat the story – enhancing the resolution and communication experience.

Finally, all of this will drive operational consistency in service delivery both for colleagues enabling efficiency and effectiveness savings and for customers increasing brand value and, as a minimum, maintaining satisfaction with the overall services – and creating those fans!

Key partners we'll work with to deliver this priority

We'll work with major suppliers such as local authorities, registered providers, community groups/stakeholders, commissioners, National Housing Federation, Chartered Institute of Housing, Housing LIN, NHS, care providers, DWP and Teesside University.

Key Project 5.0 - Touchpoint programme



We believe everyone should get the same quality of service, no matter where and how they come into contact with us. We'll strive to make services local and connected. That's why we're investing in our Touchpoint programme, including our high street presence, enhanced digital approach and contact systems, to promote the range of services we have to offer and make our services more accessible, direct, quick and easy.

Key activities:

- o We'll embed an appointments approach within customer services
- o We'll improve and modernise support planning for those customers that require it
- o We'll continue the development of our Touchpoint offer through locality working
- o We'll continue improvements in our approach to feedback and satisfaction testing, ensuring we close the loop for customers
- o We'll introduce a customer committee into our governance arrangements that bring together our board members and customers

Key Project 6.0 - Exploring differentiated rents



As we move forward, we're acutely aware of the challenges that face our customers and the wider economy. The pressures on the cost of living alone are not something a housing association can resolve and are a role for the government. That said, we'll explore how we can differentiate rents

for our customers in the context of the regulatory framework and whether this will improve their perception of value for money whilst enabling us to continue to invest in the homes and communities we serve.

Investment in the priority

To deliver the progress to date we have invested an additional £5.4m in the projects outlined, which focus on digital access and supporting customers. We expect to spend a further £3.3m over the period of this strategic plan to deliver the key priorities.



Priority 2 - Quality places to live and improving neighbourhoods

Why it's important to us

The **quality of our neighbourhoods** is as important as our **housing quality** and, in turn, contributes to the quality of life. It's what our customers, colleagues, and partners tell us and fits with two of the themes in the social housing white paper. We can't create a sense of community, but we can help create the conditions to help make it happen.

That's why our operating model puts neighbourhoods at the heart of everything we do, ensuring we work with partners to deliver what's right to help communities thrive. But not only that, our customers create their sense of community and pride, and that's why our locality plans, which will help neighbourhoods help themselves, so they become more resilient, are at the forefront of our plans.

We know from our customers that fly tipping, parking and anti-social behaviour are important in terms of the services and support we provide. We'll continue to invest in these areas where we feel it will directly benefit our housing provision.

We'll continue to maintain and invest in our houses and estates as well as ensure safety is at the very top of our agenda. Our drive to provide a range of new homes and tenures to address the housing needs in our operating areas means our build numbers will grow and includes **supporting people in their first step into home ownership**.

By being more efficient, we'll invest in neighbourhoods to improve the housing offer and place and provide employment opportunities to make a major contribution to the regeneration of the communities we work in across the Tees Valley and in our expanding footprint areas such as West Yorkshire and Humberside.

Specialist homes for older people and those with learning disabilities or mental health issues are an important part of our development programme. Our recent consultation with partners, and our living well approach to gathering feedback, has given us a wealth of intelligence to help us shape our housing offer as people get older or have specific needs.

What our stakeholders are telling us

Customers and partners want to see great places to live, with quality homes, good decoration, tidy estates and safety measures, so people feel safe and happy and get value for their rent

Outcomes we'll deliver

- o More of our customers staying with us longer
- o Letting more of our homes and quicker
- o Fewer empty homes
- o Being the landlord/housing provider of choice
- o High quality homes
- o Increase in new homes – affordable rent, shared ownership and market sale
- o Reduction in our carbon footprint/reduced environmental impact
- o Environmental improvements (sustainable homes)
- o Increased local jobs and apprentices in construction
- o Continuous improvement and value of existing stock
- o Continuing to meet/exceed building safety standards.

Specialist homes for older people and those with learning or mental health issues are an important part of our development programme.

Progress so far

- o We have a long-term investment programme of over £1bn to update our homes by replacing roofs, kitchens, bathrooms etc. Over the last 12 months we've been focusing on setting out and agreeing on our five-year home investment activity. We've consulted with colleagues, customers and stakeholders to make sure the investment will be spent in the right areas, and we continue to improve our housing offer.
- o We have a standard specification across our home investment offer, called the Thirteen home standard. It demonstrates our commitment to investing in our homes and the communities we serve continually. It's currently under review to ensure it meets customers' needs, and we'll ensure they have their say in the next revision.
- o There's been further work completed to understand the potential cost of implementing the first stage of our stock decarbonisation strategy, which is looking at thermal improvements to the home. We're focused on delivering some small-scale pilot schemes this year that will help us firm up our approach and include within our financial plan.
- o To deliver our ambitious investment plans, we recently started a procurement exercise to appoint up to a maximum of three contractors within a new framework for our enhanced capital delivery programme through to 2026 and to develop a partnership approach to maximising the effectiveness of the delivery programme.
- o In addition to the core component replacement programmes, the new partnership is expected to have the capacity, skill and capability to deliver Thirteen's EPC C targets by 2030 and the emerging journey towards decarbonisation by 2050. The key focus will be on targeting communities in greatest need to create quality places to live and make a major contribution to the regeneration of the Tees Valley and beyond in terms of our footprint.
- o Associated with our investment and repairs activities is how we procure materials through the continued adoption of a managed services supply model. This decision, taken back in 2016, allowed us to focus on delivery rather than sourcing materials, and combined with eradicating a localised self-delivered approach, which was not efficient, saved on average £750k per year like for like. Our current model is a dedicated three stores set up in Stockton, Middlesbrough and Hartlepool. Last year we began looking at implementing a different approach which will focus on a hub and spoke concept that gradually changes activity from an 'operative to material' model to a 'material to operative' model from one central super site and localised sub sites - ultimately passing control to the operative on how/when they get the materials needed. This project underway, and we'll monitor its benefits during 2022/23.
- o In September 2020, the board approved the current asset management strategy (2021-26). The asset management strategy reflects the priorities within the strategic plan and is our response to current and future changes in our sector that specifically affects asset management. It sets out our long-term approach to providing well maintained, warm, safe and secure homes and high-quality living environments to meet the needs of our current and future customers. All key goals and activities within this strategy are either in progress or are considered business-as-usual activity within Thirteen, with other noteworthy achievements being the successful acquisition of 1,494 assets in Middlesbrough and Hull from Clarion Housing Group, the development of a disinvestment approach, approved by the leadership team, to either:
 1. Reduce investment and maintain regulatory compliance standards only
 2. Mothball
 3. Sell (ethically/Buyin4Less or open market)
 4. Demolish poorly performing properties that are not delivering the expected financial and social returns



- o In terms of disinvestment and associated regeneration, the demolition of Portland House, Milford House and Jupiter Court in Middlesbrough is now complete, and the contractor has returned the site. In parallel with demolition, our development team has obtained planning consent for a new-build scheme that will provide 110 units. This will be tendered in due course. Additionally, demolition work has recently started at Anson and Hudson House, Stockton.
- o We continue to place a strong emphasis on property compliance and building safety. Over the past 12 months, despite the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, we've remained 100% compliant throughout. Following the publication of the draft Building Safety Bill, we have continued to be proactive in identifying and progressing the expected changes to the regulatory regime for our high-risk, above 18m in-scope buildings, such as developing and drafting building safety case files, producing fire strategies, and introducing a fire door inspection regime. We're also developing a programme to roll out a similar bespoke approach to our remaining complex buildings, including sheltered and supported schemes.

What will we do for customers?

We'll focus on transparency of services and customer offer, including home and community investment intentions and provide customers with choice. In doing this, we'll strive to provide the following:

- o Continuous modernisation of homes through delivery of our investment plans
- o Clarity around home investment plans through various publications
- o Visibility of the Thirteen home standard and an opportunity to influence
- o Work with our neighbourhoods and community resilience teams aligned to locality plans to address local issues through delivering investment interventions in things like security, kerb appeal improvements and traffic/parking congestion
- o Providing the customer with choice around investment in their home
- o Work towards an ability to self-serve concerning plans and next date of modernisation
- o Continue to keep colleagues and customers safe through investment and proactively managing areas of risk such as fire, gas, electrical, legionella, and asbestos
- o Make homes warmer through the delivery of targeted energy efficiency improvements, targeting the worst performing stock in terms of fuel and thermal efficiency and working towards a target of every home reaching an EPC C by 2030, in line with our fourth priority
- o Ensure that value for money is continually placed at the heart of our investment decision making

What does this mean?

We'll continue to manage the quality of our homes by adhering to and exceeding the decent homes standard. Our annual capital investment spending is set to increase significantly from £36m in 2022-23 to around £60m in 2026-27. This is mainly due to increased home investment and component replacement and the next cycle of modernisation activity.

Over the next five years, we'll invest across 14 local authority areas (including Humberside). The spending reflects planned component works highlighted within our asset management system as requiring activity. The works include but are not limited to kitchens, bathrooms, heating, window and door replacements, with all externally facing improvements specified as secure by design, recognising the importance of home security to customers.

We recognise that customers' priorities within the boundaries of their home change over time. That is why when we set our five-year investment plan, we consulted with them around what should be included and prioritised. Likewise, we recognise that customers should have a choice in finishings when receiving modernisation work, so we'll continue to provide this and keep the standard under review to ensure its relevance and value for money.

Through stakeholder consultation, it's clear that not only investment in the home is needed to keep our neighbourhoods thriving. It's also the wrap around investment that's essential in improving the look and feel of our estates to ensure they continue to appeal to customers and provide a sense of pride within the community. Therefore, we're committed to community resilience-led investment and the plan and standard provide an opportunity to address key neighbourhood priorities as they're identified.

We've already begun to consult with customers around work planned for next year, including our contracting arrangements. We'll continue to consult with customers well before they receive investment works. We'll also publish our delivery plans annually on our website, so customers have an idea of when their neighbourhood is due for investment activity.

As part of the My Thirteen rollout, we're committed to exploring ways to provide more information to our customers around planned investment activities. As with our Touchpoint activity, we envisage moving towards a self-serve functionality so customers can easily see when their home is due for modernisation.

Aligned with our business essential of everything safe, we'll continue to prioritise and put safety at the heart of everything we do in delivering investment and compliance services. This means our plans will continue to address

building safety and compliance aspects before all else and with a continued focus on fire safety improvements across our high rise and complex buildings. For our colleagues we'll be investing in developing a competency framework to ensure they not only have the training they need but also embed that learning into practice which will lead to better outcomes for customers.

Over the next five years, our homes will continue to receive investment in energy efficiency measures, with over 12,000 homes receiving some form of investment aligned to this. We'll continue to look at carbon reduction initiatives along the way, having already introduced over 1,500 low carbon technologies across our portfolio, including solar PV and air source heat pumps.

As a responsible registered landlord, we place a strong emphasis on value for money and decision making around our longer-term investments. That's why we're committed to keeping our homes under review to ensure they're both sustainable and desirable places for customers to live. When homes are empty, particularly for lengthy periods, we'll assess their viability for investment and decide based on the neighbourhood's best interests. Where we decide that disposal is the best route for a particular home, we'll do so ethically, following a staged approach and looking to achieve the best possible outcome aligned with the recommendations from the National Housing Federation's Great Places Commission.

Key partners we'll work with to deliver this priority

We'll work with Thirteen Homes, Gus Robinson Developments, Combined Authorities, house builders, local authorities, major contractors and suppliers, Homes England, the on-site homes alliance, Homes for the North, North East England Chamber of Commerce and other large employers in the region.

Key Project 7.0 - Maximising the investment in customers' homes

We have a continuous programme of improving our stock. A typical year sees 4,000 homes receive work, including new roofs, kitchens, bathrooms, windows and doors and energy-efficient boilers installed. Over the next five years, over 20,000 homes will see improvements. We continue to monitor the performance of all our assets, including our remaining high-rise blocks, paying particular attention to building safety and prioritising customer safety. As part of our investment and building safety programme, we're well on the way to installing suppression systems in all our tower blocks. We've completed suppression systems to eight buildings, with a further three planned for

completion in the next three years. The sprinkler systems add an extra layer of fire safety and enhance the existing fire safety measures already in place, giving customers peace of mind. VFM is a priority, and we're ensuring that our spending is targeted towards viable homes where there is a good demand for housing.

Key activities

- o 30-year investment programme
- o Partnership contracts – our places programme
- o Locality plans
- o Disinvestment strategy

Key Project 8.0 - Building and acquiring new homes

With the continued recovery of the economy in full swing, the long-term success of the national housing agenda will rely on us to play our part across the North in identifying opportunities and supporting housebuilders in successfully implementing schemes. Strategic planning lays the foundations for growth in providing new housing and supporting associated business development and infrastructure that help keep the economy moving.

Against the backdrop of the economic conditions, where we have seen challenges in the construction sector, we have already done a lot to help support the accelerated delivery of new housing in the North. By building on these foundations, our approach to development will enhance our offer even further.

Over the last few years, we've sustained our development programme by delivering 418 homes in 2019/20 and (despite Brexit and COVID-19) 355 in 2020/21.

We now have even greater ambitions to significantly grow this level of development over the following years to meet housing needs through a balanced and mixed range of tenure and property types. Our ultimate ambition is to build 4,500 new affordable homes over the next five years.

Our key priority across this business planning period is unlocking public and private land to get more homes built where they're needed. We'll do this through:

- Public sector land – we'll act more proactively to identify and drive opportunities to market and create new partnerships and delivery models
- Private sector land acquisition – we'll develop a focused approach, working closely with the private sector market on development opportunities
- Developing sites – we'll deploy our full range of funding streams, powers, and professional capabilities to bring place-based schemes to market

Key Project 8.0 - Building and acquiring new homes (continued)

- Diversify the market and increase productivity – using our land, including our portfolio of sites, we'll maximise opportunities in the house-building market and drive the take-up of MMC and build more homes at pace

The following principles will underpin our delivery approach:

- **Commerciality** – demonstrating VFM and professionalising our approach and engagement with the market to drive better delivery
- **Consistency** – delivering high quality schemes supported by clear policy, governance, performance and risk management and underpinned by accurate data and management information
- **Collaboration** – working smarter with colleagues, such as Homes England, local authorities and the private sector to unlock land for housing
- **Effective Communications** – promoting our work, influencing the market and showing real leadership in the sector. Building trust and confidence with Homes England, Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC), developers, contractors and consultants to enable effective delivery of our strategic objectives

Our priorities and delivery approach will form the heart of our work over the next five years as we bring forward thousands more new homes across the North of England.

Key activities:

- o We'll continue to focus on our key markets across the North
- o We'll focus expansion in existing areas or those adjacent where the opportunity is strong, particularly in Yorkshire, to enhance our presence
- o We're open to working across a wider geography where opportunities are of a certain scale and/or provide critical mass
- o We'll use our strong regeneration expertise to improve estates, areas and wider placemaking opportunities, like our continued efforts at Gresham and Grove Hill
- o We'll maximise our shared ownership offer to support lower cost home ownership in line with our new strategic partnership with Homes England
- o We'll ensure a minimum of 25% of our new developments are built using modern methods of construction to be at the forefront of innovative approaches of design and build, whilst also addressing a skills gap and giving the younger generation a route to employment
- o We'll ensure all the new homes we bring forward after January 2022 will be built to net zero carbon ready standards

Investment

The table below provides a breakdown of our level of investment in our affordable homes programme during the lifetime of the strategic plan:

Year	Completions	Spend (£m)	Grant (£m)
2022-23	517	116.6	9.0
2023-24	951	118.9	45.4
2024-25	1,033	155.9	86.6
2025-26	1,033	184.6	55.3
2026-27	1,033	187.4	0.0
Total	4,567	763.4	196.3



Thirteen Homes

Thirteen Homes will play a key role in our overarching development programme. As Thirteen Group successfully secured a strategic partnership with Homes England with a grant of £191m to build thousands of new affordable homes, a key feature of this is the requirement to increase shared ownership opportunities. The role of Thirteen Homes will be complementary in that we'll be bringing forward sites (between 30-45 open market homes) across the North East and Yorkshire area during the lifetime of this strategic plan.

Outcomes – impact of delivering this

Through implementing our affordable homes programme and delivering our Thirteen Homes brand across sites within our geographical reach, the outcome will be great placemaking and place-enhancing. The essence of our development programme and investing in places is to provide a genuine broad residential offer of choice for a wide demographic and ensure mono-tenure developments are avoided.

Our approach is embedded in our assessment of local market conditions. Our understanding of locations from the outset enables us to set out a clear vision at an early stage of the development process wherever we invest.

Our approach to broad tenure mix development will strengthen the integration of mixing income groups so that populations with different lifestyles and ages, household sizes and ethnic profiles are brought together through genuine sustainable development.

Thirteen’s approach to mixed tenure development advocates:

- Promotion of improved provision of facilities and integrated services
- Social cohesion, reduce social exclusion and create stronger communities
- Helping families with children to play a full part in building an inclusive community
- A full range of house sizes, types and tenures
- Good quality amenities and facilities
- Increases liveability through high quality design
- Facilitates innovative and responsive systems of management.

Investment in the priority

In the latest financial year, we have invested more than £32m in our customer’s homes and more than £107m in building and acquiring homes.

These homes comprise 420 affordable homes, 16 for market sale, and 1,494 homes acquired from another housing provider. Throughout this strategic plan, we expect to spend a further £287m of investment in our customer’s homes and £763m on delivering new affordable homes.

Priority 3 – Being Team Thirteen

Why it's important to us

At Thirteen, we believe that every relationship matters, choices can make a difference and that we can change things for the better. We know that our colleagues are key to us being able to do this and that without them, we wouldn't be able to meet our aspirations or our customers' needs.

We're clear that we want our ambition, energy and passion to make a difference and to be the reason our colleagues work for Thirteen, as we know this creates the best environment for success.

We want our colleagues to be ambassadors who deliver fantastic services, and we want to support them to do this by creating an environment where it's easy for them to be the best version of themselves at work; and have a great day.

We want them to feel energised, so they deliver high performance, live the values and reach the high standards we've set for ourselves whilst feeling proud, valued and happy to work for Thirteen. We also want them to feel connected, informed, challenged, yet in control, so they can play their part in continuing to raise our impact and reach in the Tees Valley and beyond.

What our stakeholders told us

Ensuring we become even more customer focused, that people have a great offer and are skilled to deliver the best service, and we embrace automation and digitisation

Outcomes we'll deliver

- Having the right workforce now and in the future: workforce planning, talent and succession
- Having an engaged, skilled and diverse workforce
- Valuing, promoting and supporting wellbeing
- Supporting inspirational leadership and management development
- Offering competitive, flexible and equitable reward and recognition
- Delivering great services to enhance Thirteen's performance



Creating an environment where it's easy for our colleagues to be the best version of themselves and have a great day at work is an approach that we've been looking to embed into our culture for a number of years now and have continued to do so when managing our approach to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout this time, we've delivered services in a covid safe way, amending risk assessments and safe operating procedures to take into account new guidance or research, ensuring that we keep our colleagues and customers safe. Through this approach, we've introduced arrangements that go above and beyond the government guidance, including providing PPE with higher levels of protection than what's being advised.



We've also improved our ways of working to support colleagues working from a place that makes sense for them and their customers and developed a more tailored offer for our colleagues. By doing this, we've been able to ensure that our home, hub, roam, and operative colleagues have access to the right equipment to work comfortably, safely and confidentially, whilst at the same time ensuring that they continue to have access to what they need to do a great job. This doesn't just mean access to systems, data or kit, but access to learning and development opportunities, alongside personal support from colleagues, managers and other leaders across the business, as this all goes towards ensuring that we have happy, healthy and connected colleagues.

Progress so far

Throughout the year, we've been working hard to ensure our frameworks that support colleagues are the best that they can be, including:

- Talent and succession, where we've implemented a new framework to help ensure we can plan effectively for the future whilst at the same time meeting our colleagues' aspirations. We've identified our critical and specialist posts; alongside those colleagues who have the potential and aspiration to succeed in different and sometimes more senior roles, and we're working to provide development experiences to support that.
- Finalising our pension offer, ensuring that it continues to be attractive whilst affordable for the business. Having finalised our offer, we're now able to confirm that we can retain a defined benefit scheme for our current employees, even when considering the increased costs linked to the SHPS 2020 valuation. We can also offer a competitive defined contribution scheme for all new starters.
- Implementing our 'great leadership at Thirteen framework' to support our senior leaders to be the best version of themselves. As part of this, we've rolled out development experiences to our executive and service directors, including 360 appraisal and psychometric assessments alongside individual and team sessions, all done with a positive psychology mindset.
- Promoting our health and wellbeing aspirations even further, which has included a mindfulness programme, menopause in the workplace sessions and supporting key issues such as suicide awareness week.
- Looking more closely at our approach to diversity, which has included introducing an LGBT forum and looking at the diversity of our workforce so we can set appropriate targets for the future.



- Reviewing our approach to pay and reward, which has involved introducing job families within our base pay structure; looking at retention frameworks; and introducing a new salary sacrifice scheme for colleagues which promotes the use of electric cars and thereby supports the green agenda.
- Reviewing our approach to change management to support service transformation in the best way possible and we've used different ways to reshape our staffing structures during the year, to ensure that we've got the right people, right skills and capacity to deliver what's needed; whilst at the same time avoid placing colleagues at risk of redundancy unnecessarily.
- Taking further steps to integrate Gus Robinson into our culture, systems and processes to help them feel part of the Thirteen family and remove any barriers to success. This has included offering the majority of such colleagues Thirteen's terms and conditions. We've also incorporated our Gus Robinson colleagues on our HR system Itrent to help streamline and provide a better experience for them.
- Providing better experiences to hiring managers and candidates by further automating and streamlining our recruitment process. We're making it easier for great candidates to apply for roles in the business through this approach.
- The reaccreditation of our Investors in People Award with an uplift from Silver to Gold demonstrating that we have the right policies and systems in place to help employees develop. It also shows that everyone – from the CEO to the latest apprentice – takes ownership for making these policies come to life and improve life at work.

We're confident that our approach to supporting great days at work is working. When we asked our colleagues in our more recent HIVE survey how positive they were about the changes made to our working arrangements, the average score came out at 7.1 out of 10. Similarly, when we asked whether they felt mentally well, the average score was 7.3 out of 10, which was a slight increase from the previous survey.

In addition, when we asked our colleagues how likely they'd recommend Thirteen as a good place to work, the resulting eNPS score was +19, which places us just inside the 'normal' score for employers (+20 would have been very good/excellent).

That said, this is a reduction from the previous year's result of +38 (which also resulted in us being recognised as a "very good/excellent" employer). As it's clear that our colleague experience is often different depending upon the area of business, we'll be using the next 12 months to target those areas where scores are lower; and deal specifically with the issues that might be affecting our colleagues' ability to have a great day.

Other figures that suggest our approach is working include voluntary employee turnover, which remains low at 7.8%.

Whilst our average days lost per employee is slightly above target at 11.5 days, given that covid related sickness is the biggest cause of absence, it appears to confirm that Thirteen is suffering in much the same way as others have in terms of the impact that this pandemic has had on colleagues' ability to attend work.

It goes without saying that as an employer, we'll be using the next 12 months to improve on our employee offer even further so we can be sure that we continue to attract and retain the best colleagues. We genuinely believe that happy colleagues = happy customers = successful business; and will use this mindset when looking at the areas of focus to help us consider what further value could be gained.



Key priorities for 2022/23 and beyond

The areas that we'll be looking at over the next 12 months include:

- How we embed our 'great leaders at Thirteen framework' with our senior leaders; and introduce it to colleagues who are senior managers across the organisation.
- How we recruit to be sure we give our candidates a great experience while also being confident we've got the best person for the role.
- How we reward our colleagues; so, we can be sure we have the most attractive offer that we can give. We'll be looking at market rates for posts alongside our terms and conditions. As part of that, we'll consider whether it's possible to reduce our working week to 35 hours or introduce a four-day week and provide increased flexibility for those roles that might not have been able to access this in the past and will also look at any suggestions our colleagues might give.
- How we manage talent and succession, so we feel confident we've got the right systems and processes in place across the organisation to identify colleagues with high potential and aspirations; and provide the right development opportunities. We'll also ensure we have great systems to identify the skills and resources we might need for the future, to give us the best lead in time. We'll also look closely at our apprentice, graduate and work experience framework to ensure it fully complements our talent and succession arrangements.



- How we offer mental health support to our colleagues, so we feel confident they are best equipped to deal with the increasingly complex and wide-ranging issues they may face when delivering services for the group; and/or events that may be happening outside work.
- Our pension offer and specifically setting up our own defined benefit (DB) scheme, so we can continue to offer these arrangements for our current employees; whilst at the same time setting up our new defined contribution (DC) scheme for new starters.
- Our approach to diversity and inclusion so we feel confident we have the right approach to attract and retain a truly diverse workforce. This will include us using benchmarking tools and external accreditation to give us the reassurance or tips that we might need to ensure we're on the right track.
- Our learning and development offer so we can be confident that it's meeting the organisation's needs.
- Our key HR systems, to ensure they provide us with the best frameworks to deliver a streamlined, user-friendly HR service.
- Implementing any recommendations that we receive from our IIP assessment.

What will we do for customers?

Our colleagues consistently tell us they love seeing the difference they make to customers and their lives at Thirteen. We'll use feedback and evidence to ensure people have great days at work as often as possible and that we invest in their development in future.

What does this mean?

We know that happy staff equals happy customers and leads to a successful business, meaning we can do even more to build personal independence and resilient communities.

Key partners we'll work with to deliver this priority

We'll work with our training providers, our regulator and associated trade bodies to ensure people have great days, develop and succeed into new roles, and ensure professional standards are met for customers that are in line with the social housing white paper.

Key Project 9.0 - Great days at work



We're constantly listening to what our colleagues tell us to ensure that while they focus on helping address housing needs and improving services for the people in our area, they have a great day doing it. We want to attract and retain excellent colleagues, be the employer of choice, and continue to evolve the **Working at Thirteen offer**.

Key activities:

- o We'll continue to deliver against our pension strategy with our own DB and revised DC schemes offering a range of options for colleagues
- o We'll conclude our Total Reward offer review and will implement the best agreed outcomes for colleagues
- o We'll further extend our Health & Wellbeing offer to include support for colleagues throughout the organisation who may suffer a traumatic event
- o We'll continue to rollout our Health & Safety training in a way that is accessible to all colleagues, virtually or classroom based
- o We're committed to providing continued learning and development and to exploring all options that will ensure we have the skills and talent for the future
- o We'll celebrate diversity and promote inclusivity across the workplace

Investment in the priority

To deliver the progress to date we have invested an additional £0.3m in specific projects targeted at the colleague experience and expect to spend a further £3.3m over the period of this strategic plan to deliver the key priorities outlined.



Priority 4 – Net zero and reducing environmental impacts

Why it's important to us

We recognise that as a large business, employer and landlord, we have a responsibility to do what we can to protect the local environment, improve our performance and reduce carbon emissions. Improving our environmental sustainability cuts across everything we do. We're taking action to reduce our carbon footprint and deliver on our commitments to be net zero on our direct carbon emissions by 2035 and all emissions by 2050.

The Take Control campaign will see the organisation achieve its goals of becoming much greener. To reduce our environmental impacts, we need to think of the bigger picture and develop our approach to understand the effects on our customers, homes and business. We'll be working across our business to understand what action needs to be taken to reduce emissions and improve environmental impacts.

We'll be looking at what needs to be done to deliver sustainable homes that are fit for the future and right for our customers. We'll also discover how to add value through initiatives to tackle fuel poverty while continually supporting and empowering our customers.

What our stakeholders told us

Embracing green technology in homes, ensuring energy efficiency, increasing understanding of environmental impacts and carbon literacy, ensuring links to training and skills to deliver net zero and dealing with physical issues in communities, such as fly tipping.

Outcomes we'll deliver

- o Environmental impacts will be considered in all business decisions
- o Net zero carbon emissions from our direct business emissions by 2035
- o Deliver sustainable homes: new and existing homes will be fit for the future, net zero by 2050
- o Increased sustainable travel – green alternatives to carbon fuel
- o Source materials responsibly, reduce waste and increased recycling
- o Climate change adaptation – protecting our customers, assets and investments
- o Develop sustainable supply chains and partnerships
- o Increase biodiversity, protecting and enhancing the natural environment
- o Support skills growth needed to meet the needs of the green economy
- o Effective colleague, customer and partner empowerment and engagement with our net zero journey

Progress so far

- o Over the past few years, we have been building our understanding of our environmental impacts, where we need to improve, and what a net zero journey should look like for Thirteen. We have taken time to measure and understand our carbon footprint, providing us with a baseline to measure our journey and insight into our more carbon intensive activities and highlighting areas for improvement.
- o We have committed our business to reach net zero emissions by 2035. Our emissions are measured and reported annually, meeting the Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting Regulations (SECR) requirements. We're investing in community woodland development, offsetting 10% of our carbon footprint.



- o We have invested in an environmental sustainability team to develop and deliver our net zero approach. The team have begun to work across the group, recruiting environmental champions to support our priorities and delivering carbon literacy training to help all Thirteen colleagues understand the part they have to play.
- o We have introduced an environmental management system, which we're developing to meet ISO 14001 standard, to assure the business and our stakeholders that environmental impacts are being managed and improved.
- o Our innovative environmental centre allows us greater control of our waste, and we have committed to reducing waste to landfill by 95% by 2025.
- o Our environmental centre has an ecology focus with beehives, nature pond, wildlife garden and community classroom, providing colleagues and customers with the opportunity to learn how they can contribute to a cleaner, greener environment.
- o We have delivered a programme of community investment projects, working with local partners and customers, to develop our communities with community gardens, trees, and natural habitats.
- o Our ways of working empower our staff to work flexibly and remotely, reducing the need to travel.

- o We have developed an understanding of what our net zero journey looks like for our existing homes and those we plan to build. Through the delivery of pilots and learning from our investment activity in installing renewable technologies, we have begun developing our future investment approach to increase the energy efficiency of our stock.

What will we do for customers?

We recognise that to deliver on our commitments to reduce our environmental impacts, we need our customers to be engaged on the journey with us. We'll strive to:

- o Place the customer experience at the heart of decisions made to make Thirteen a greener organisation
- o Learn from the experience of those customers whose homes have already received focused energy efficiency investment
- o Empower customers and communities to understand their environmental impacts and the difference they can make
- o Signpost customers to the best solutions when that's outside of Thirteen
- o Actively engage with our customers on the future development of our approach

What does this mean?

- o We have made good ground on our understanding of what we feel our journey to reduce our environmental impacts and meet our net zero commitments looks like. We recognise that this emerging landscape will change and develop over the coming years, but we need to start our journey now.
- o We'll use the insight from our journey so far to develop a planned approach to decarbonising the carbon intensive areas of our business delivery and weaving the understanding of environmental impacts into all the decisions taken across the group. We seek opportunities to remove carbon from our delivery where possible and innovative ways to offset net zero where this is not possible.



- o We recognise to succeed in our ambition to hit net zero, we need all our colleagues to be engaged. We'll continue to develop our colleague engagement in our net zero journey, enhancing the impact of the Take Control campaign and encouraging more colleagues to benefit from our carbon literacy training to help all Thirteen colleagues understand the part they have to play.
- o Our ways of working empower our staff to work flexibly and remotely, reducing the need to travel. We'll continue to work with our colleagues to understand further opportunities to support them to remove carbon from their role delivery.
- o We'll continue to embed our environmental management system to ISO 14001 standard, to assure the business and our stakeholders that environmental impacts are being managed and improved across the business.
- o We'll work with our customer champions to increase the delivery and impact of the carbon literacy training, supporting our customers and the communities to understand the part they have to play.
- o Through our locality plans, we'll work with our communities and partners to develop a focused green plan for the area, understanding what it means for each area and the community. Using the learning from our existing community investment projects to support them in improving green spaces, recycling, developing food partnerships and community gardens while promoting health and wellbeing.
- o We'll continue to actively collaborate with other registered providers, local authorities, combined authorities and partners, to work together and learn from the development of our approaches. All housing providers need to develop and deliver their approach to net zero, and it makes sense for us to work together to maximise resources and the impact of delivery.



- o Our development strategy sets out our commitment towards decarbonisation to net zero and ensuring we meet future homes standards and building safety standards. We'll continue our home of 2030 project to design, enable, and deliver a range of homes. Through the project's formative stages, we identified three clear and constituent parts; design and layout, MMC, and energy strategy. The energy workstream has identified the most efficient way to heat our homes in the future without gas appliances. By focussing on a fabric-first approach, we've identified appropriate and cost-effective ways to increase the thermal performance of our homes. Our strategy involves increasing the U-value of external envelope components to a level that means, by default, all new homes built after January 2022 will be built to net zero carbon ready standards.
- o Our asset management strategy sets out our commitment to reach EPC C by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050. We know that the decarbonisation of our homes in a single phase would prove costly, problematic and disruptive to customers. So, it's proposed that we adopt a three-phase approach, incorporating key elements that would firstly reduce the energy demand, then balance the demand against the grid, and finally generate energy where necessary.

- o To decarbonise our assets to the required standards, we must address six key improvement elements. The first four address the thermal efficiency of our homes to reduce the energy demand under what we call phase one. These improvements are insulation - improving the thermal efficiency of the home's walls, floors, roofs, lofts and windows. Continuity of insulation - minimises the 'thermal bridging' and creates a 'blanket' around the house. The importance of reducing 'thermal bridges' increases as the level of insulation increases. Airtightness - ensuring we reduce any draughts that could leak heat; and ventilation - as airtightness improves in a home, it is also vital that suitable approaches to ventilation are considered so there is no impact on customer health or building structure.
- o The next key element requires that we balance the energy demand against the decarbonisation of the grid and optimise the carbon reduction through the integration of innovative technologies. These use sustainable, renewable heat sources to replace historic carbon producing technologies such as gas boilers. This phase will also ensure homes are smart enabled to access digital platforms and intelligent learning. The final element is generating energy to offset any shortfall in properties that have not yet achieved net zero. We'll achieve this by utilising technology such as solar technology and battery storage.

Key partners we'll work with to deliver this priority

We'll work with all our partners, including local authorities, combined authorities, BEIS, other registered providers, community groups/stakeholders, commissioners, National Housing Federation, Chartered Institute of housing, Northern Housing Consortium, Northeast England Climate Coalition, major contractors and suppliers, Homes England, Homes for the North, North East England Chamber of Commerce and other large employers in the region.

Key Project 10.0 - Embedding environmental impact in decision making



We'll be looking at what we need to do to ensure both negative and positive environmental impacts are understood and considered in every decision we make. This could be during proposals for future growth, a new opportunity or changes in how we deliver services. We need to understand the environmental risks, how we'll manage them and reduce any impacts.

Key activities:

- o Empowering our colleagues, customers and stakeholders to be part of our net zero journey. Increasing engagement, understanding and the difference we can make
- o Working with our supply chain to build sustainability and reduce emissions
- o Protecting, enhancing and increasing the natural environment
- o Understanding the risk climate change presents us, both now and in the future, and mitigating these risks. Protecting our customers, assets and investments
- o Measuring, reporting and tracking our net zero journey in line with our commitments and to meet government legislation and the expectations of our colleagues, customers and stakeholders

Key Project 11.0 - Net zero on business emissions by 2035



We'll be looking at what we need to do to deliver on our commitment to being net zero for all direct business emissions by 2035. We have established what carbon emissions are released due to our direct business emissions, so we know where we need to take action to meet this commitment.

Key activities:

- o Develop and deliver a net zero emissions plan for energy use in our offices and the buildings we manage
- o Develop and deliver a net zero fleet plan, moving away from the use of petrol & diesel fleet vehicles and looking at alternatives such as the use of an electric fleet
- o Continue to reduce the waste produced through the delivery of our services, increase recycling and reduce waste to landfill
- o Work with our supply chain and partners to support them in their journey to net zero
- o Explore net zero investment opportunities to generate clean energy and offset our emissions

Key Project 12.0 - Sustainable homes. New and existing homes fit for the future, net zero by 2050



We'll be looking at what we need to do to deliver on our commitment of all our homes, for rent and sale, being net zero by 2050. We need to develop our approach to reducing carbon emissions, while reducing energy costs and fuel poverty. We need to ensure we protect the long-term sustainability of the stock and mitigate future risks from climate change. We actively seek to secure funding to support our journey, maximising opportunities such as the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and others. We'll also look at how we can support the development of the new skills needed to deliver sustainable homes through the building and investment works and ongoing repairs and maintenance.

Key activities:

- o Understand what the customer wants from the home of 2030, identifying the skills and experience needed to build it
- o Research into the supply chain and procurement of suppliers, products and materials relating to future design models. Understand the costs incurred for ensuring the continued maintenance of the asset
- o Further develop and deliver our plan to decarbonise our existing homes
- o Understand how we can maximise the benefits to our customers from our investment, reducing energy costs and improving the overall sustainability of the homes
- o Maximise the funding opportunities available to us

Investment in the priority

To deliver the progress to date we have invested an additional £0.6m in specific projects targeted at the reducing our environmental impact and expect to spend a further £2.8m over the period of this strategic plan to deliver the key priorities outlined. The ultimate journey to net zero carbon by 2050 will require significant further investment, however, given unknowns around the optimal technology, the impact on customers and the potential funding available this quantum is not yet known. Greater clarity and visibility on the investment required is expected over the next 12-18 months.



Section Five

Measuring success

Critical Success KPIs	Actual Outturn	Targets					Lead
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	
Satisfaction with our services overall	85.5%	84%	85%	86%	87%	88%	DCE
Customer Net Promoter Score (would recommend Thirteen)	72.07	55	55	55	55	55	DCE
Number of Households accessing services digitally	32,063	37,000	40,000	42,500	44,500	46,500	DCE
Total current tenant arrears (amount)	£4.40m	£5.62m	£5.62m	£5.62m	£5.62m	£5.39m	DO
Total former tenant arrears (amount)	£2.00m	£2.04m	£1.94m	£1.84m	£1.75m	£1.64m	FD
Net Movement in Former Tenant Arrears before write off (New 2022)	New	£1.0m	£1.1m	£1.1m	£1.0m	£1.0m	FD
Voids – Vacant and available to let. Standard portfolio	118	200	180	170	170	170	DO/ DR&M
Void relet times, standard properties excl. major repairs	19.06 days	25 days	25 days	25 days	25 days	25 days	DO/ DR&M
Tenancy turnover (rolling 12 months)	7.71%	9%	9%	8%	8%	8%	DO
% of support plans in place	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	DO
Satisfaction with repairs services (overall)	89.2%	>=86%	>=87%	>=88%	>=89%	>=90%	DR&M
Wave units developed (Phase 1)	184	246	428	218	0	0	C&BD
Wave units developed (Phase 2)	N/A	88	434	557	737	775	C&BD
New supply delivered: absolute Social Housing	420	517	951	1033	1,033	1,033	C&BD
Avg first tranche sale (%) (affordable programme)	37%	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%	C&BD
First tranche sales receipts (affordable homes)	£4.294m	£9.0m	£8.2m	£25.1m	£30.0m	£32.1m	C&BD
Thirteen Homes: Sales income	£4.329m	£13.1m	£9.5m	£5.7m	£5.0m	£5.7m	C&BD
Thirteen Homes Profit/(Loss) before Interest and Tax	(£0.570m)	£3.5m	£1.7m	£0.5m	£0.4m	£0.4m	CD
GRD (Loss) before Interest and Tax	(£2.312m)	(£0.6m)	(0.2m)	-	-	-	CD

Critical Success KPIs	Actual Outturn	Targets					Lead
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	
Headline Social Housing Cost per unit	£3,401	£3,919	£4,030	£4,021	£4,130	£4,222	FD
Average days lost to sickness per FTE (rolling 12 months)	12.32	13.0	12.5	12.0	11.5	11.0	DP
Voluntary staff turnover	10.0%	11.1%	11.1%	11.1%	11.1%	11.1%	DP
Colleague net promoter score	19	40	40	40	40	40	DP
Employees (FTE) / 1,000 units	37.3	42.1	41.3	40.5	39.6	38.7	FD
EBITDA/MRI Margin	24.5%	19.8%	19.8%	20.1%	20.2%	19.9%	FD
Interest Cover (Golden Rule)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	FD
On Lending (Golden Rule)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	FD
% of stock at EPC C or above	60.90%	65%	70%	75%	80%	85%	EDA

New Metrics for 2022/23*

Repairs completed within target timescale	90%	92%	94%	96%	96%	DR&M
Homes meeting the Decent Homes Standard	>99%	>99%	>99%	>99%	>99%	DA
Gas safety checks (domestic)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	DA
Gas safety checks (commercial)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	DA
Asbestos safety checks	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	DA
Fall arrest systems	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	DA
Electrical Servicing (domestic)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	DA
Electrical Servicing (commercial)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	DA
Fire safety checks	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	DA
Lift safety checks	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	DA
Water safety checks	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	DA
Active FRA Actions	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	DA

*The metrics added above, have routinely been reported internally at Thirteen, as part of the operational performance metrics, but in line with the expectations of the white paper, we have added targets for these to our strategic measure using the recommended technical definition

Thank you to...

Each of our customers and colleagues who took the time to give feedback on their priorities for us as their landlord or service provider.

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- Enterpen Limited and The Land Exchange Limited
- HACT
- Hartlepool NDC Trust
- Hartlepool Borough Council
- Lumsdon Wood Partnership
- Natwest Group plc
- North Star Housing Association
- Middlesbrough Borough Councillors
- Middlesbrough Borough Councillors
- Middlesbrough Borough Council
- Positive Individual Proactive Support
- Redcar & Cleveland Borough Councillors
- Redcar and Cleveland Council
- Recognition PR
- Rod Brasington
- Safe and Sure Fire Protection Ltd
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- South Yorkshire Housing Association
- Tyne Group
- Tees Valley Combined Authority
- Travis Perkins
- Ventro Ltd
- xsite architecture



Strategic Plan 2022-27

Contact us

-  0300 111 1000
-  www.thirteengroup.co.uk
-  @Thirteen_Group
-  ThirteenGroup