

1. Introduction

Great Places recognise that we must achieve high environmental standards in all we do and that environmental awareness permeates across every service area within Great Places. We are witnessing the impacts of human activity on the earth through species loss, increased risk of flooding and poor air quality resulting in risk to the health and wellbeing of our customers and colleagues. This strategy presents our whole group approach encompassing all Directorates, operations and investments.

Through implementation of an active Environmental Strategy, the results for Great Places will be:

- Saving money through reduced use of resources
- Leading by example
- Ensuring compliance with legislation
- Ensuring we are socially responsible
- Improving our reputation
- Reducing risk of fuel poverty for our customers
- Be more prepared for extreme weathers such as floods and overheating
- Improving our employability
- Enabling us to respond to demand from stakeholders
- Improving engagement and awareness internally and externally
- A responsible and ethical business

In this strategy period we will focus upon some key environmental objectives to reduce our carbon emissions:

- Establish our Carbon Footprint and adopt a Carbon Budget to take responsibility of our emissions with the target of reducing emissions year on year
- Improvement of the energy efficiency of our existing housing stock, thereby improving the offer to customers, reducing carbon emissions and improving affordability
- Developing a minimum of 1000 new homes that meet current building regulations, whilst exploring how we can improve the environmental performance of future new homes
- Pursuing environmentally friendly procurement of materials
- Reducing colleague's travel emissions
- Reducing waste across the business
- Creating a carbon literate workforce

2. Context

2.1 External Ambition

There have been international and national agreements to reduce emissions and the risk of more severe climate change. Manchester city has set challenging targets to become a Carbon Neutral City region by 2038. This will require Greater Manchester businesses to take action and Great Places are positioned to be a leader in this sector.

2.2 Corporate Intention

Great Places have listened to Stakeholders and have formed an ambitious ten year corporate plan with challenging three year targets. This environmental strategy responds to the challenges of the Corporate Plan

through prioritizing carbon emissions reductions. Through this focus Great Places will become more effective and efficient particularly in the use of finite resources and focusing on our energy inefficient homes. We will continue to seek to be innovative and find solutions that work for our colleagues and customers. This will assist the delivery of great homes, great communities and great people.

3. What we do

Great Places has already invested in a significant number of energy efficiency improvements including high efficiency gas boilers, insulation, double glazing, internal and external insulation and installing renewable technologies such as photovoltaic panels. In the past the Development team has trialed a wide range of very innovative technologies and now employs a fabric-first approach. Great Places have invested in numerous ways to reduce our impacts including improving facilities to reduce the need for single occupancy car use; LED lighting in offices and schemes; right first time fixes; improve recycling options in offices and schemes.

We are aware that every colleague in Great Places makes decisions every day that have a Carbon impact and through our Carbon Literacy training we are seeking to ensure that our colleagues have the knowledge to be able to understand the impacts of their decisions.

4. Aims & Objectives

Principles underpinning our work –

4.1 Improve the Energy Efficiency of our buildings

Great Places own and manage over 19,000 homes and we have a target of improving all homes to a minimum Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of D by end of 2021 and a rating of C by 2028 and to Zero Carbon by 2038. This aim will reduce the running costs of our homes and reduce the risk of fuel poverty. To achieve these aims we are reviewing our homes and putting in place an action plan for every home that does not currently reach the C rating. In learning from our Development team this will take a fabric-first approach. This activity will improve the quality and quantity of energy related data held on our housing stock to assist future improvement programmes. We will also undertake the active review of homes which can not, economically or technically, be improved to our standard and seek innovative ways to minimise the risk of fuel poverty for our customers.

Great Places Corporate Plan sets out ambitious targets to build over 8,000 homes in the next ten years. To meet the 2038 target we will start to plan for building Zero Carbon Homes. This will be achieved through a fabric first approach, reviewing our new build standards and trialing new systems innovation such as modular construction. Part of this work will include reviewing the performance of our new builds and checking that indoor air quality is not adversely impacted.

4.2 Deliver more through working with trusted partners

We will work with partners such as Warm Homes Oldham, the Energy Saving Trust and the Low Carbon Hub to give assistance to our customers. Through signposting our customers to local services such as tariff switch and behaviour change Great Places can then focus on improving the physical fabric of our homes and heating systems used.

4.3 Reduce the impacts of our transport

Like the majority of companies Great Places are heavily reliant on single occupancy car travel for the commute to work and business travel. Within the North West, particularly Greater Manchester, car use is a significant contributor to our poor air quality impacting the health of our customers and colleagues. By improving alternatives for colleagues such as mobile working, video conferencing, pool bikes & cars and improving facilities and working with partners will assist to reduce these costs and the associated environmental impacts.

4.4 Resource efficiency

4.4.1 Purchase of goods

Great Places purchase a wide range of goods on a daily basis which will be reviewed as part of this strategy to assess if there are financially viable environmentally friendly alternatives. We will work to ensure that the environmental impacts are considered in all procurement decisions.

4.4.2 Waste generation

Waste is a significant environmental issue, we will work to reduce the waste produced and set reduction targets with defined responsibility. This will enable clear waste stream segregation and ensure we can work with our suppliers and partners to reduce the overall volume of waste created and thus reduce costs. We recognise that we must work with partners to help our customers reduce their waste to landfill.

4.5 Directorate Environmental Awareness

Great Places recognise that environmental impacts can be assessed by every Directorate, every team and every colleague therefore it is up to every colleague to reduce their own impact, a lynchpin to Carbon literacy training. Through Carbon Literacy training we can ensure that all staff have a good understanding of environmental impacts and how they can reduce them at home and in their roles in Great Places. We will establish Carbon Literacy refresher training by way of team meetings / team training activities.

4.6 Invest in our Green and Blue Infrastructure

Great Places have extensive areas of land that are viewed as assets in providing; reduced flood risk, improved health and wellbeing, biodiversity, climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as improving the image of the area. Using the GIS software we anticipate Great Places will be able to manage and maintain these spaces to the benefit of all in a cost effective manner.

5. Financial / Value for Money implications

We will continue to work hard to achieve increased environmental standards combined with high quality and cost savings. The improvements across the group due to successful implementation of this strategy will result in increased affordability for our customers in a period which is likely to see increasing living costs.

We will build on the success of the Carbon Literacy training programme working to engage all colleagues to save Great Places time and money. We will continue to develop clear procedures and policies to minimise costs to the organisation.

6. Risk

There are many external risks that may make this strategy difficult to complete including policy decisions at national and regional level. Internally the greatest challenge is engagement (with colleagues and customers alike) to ensure adequate colleague time and resources are included to complete the actions of the strategy. There is a risk of increased costs of meeting higher environmental standards. These standards are for the benefit of our customers, colleagues and stakeholders and the risk will be mitigated through planned improvement works and planned changes to our design and infrastructure. Great Place's colleagues and customers will be able to see savings in the long term through reduced operating and maintenance costs.

To be a success it is essential that environmental impacts are embedded and mitigated against across all Directorates.

The external pressures will continue to be a risk as there is lack of certainty of environmental objectives at international, national and even local levels. Through setting internal standards Great Places will ensure they are prepared for external policy changes and ensuring we are up to date with potential changes.

7. Performance monitoring

7.1 Critical Success Factors (CSF)

The CSF approach provides an overview of performance and regular reporting across the organisation. Delivery against the CSF is monitored by Great Places' Board.

7.2 Progress against wider performance indicators

Progress against the wider performance indicators and targets will be monitored by the Great Places' Affordable Warmth Group with regular reporting to Directors.

The progress of this strategy aligns with a number of performance indicators including;

- The aim to have 100% accurate housing stock data and we will have 100% EPC data which will assist with future energy improvement decisions.
- To achieve a minimum C energy efficiency rating for our housing stock.
- To develop homes via modular construction techniques.

7.3 Colleague resources and training

Colleague development across the group is of corporate importance. All new starters attend the Carbon Literacy training within six months of starting with Great Places. We will develop refresher training for Directorates to ensure the wider corporate requirements and best practice is shared. We want to develop the skills and expertise of our colleagues and particular training will be developed for our operatives to enable them to assist with the management and servicing of equipment such as air source heat pumps and ventilation units. Over the longer term this service could be developed as an income stream providing repairs and maintenance to other companies with similar equipment installed.

8. Implications for customers

Our new homes and retrofitted homes help to reduce energy consumption while helping to ensure the homes can be kept at a comfortable temperature and thus increase customer satisfaction with Great Places' homes.

We will ensure that our energy efficiency improvements take into account the needs of our customers through prior consultation and engagement.

We also impact the lives of people beyond our immediate customers. The most straightforward example of this is if we have vans idling in congestion, they will be reducing air quality while wasting resources and having a direct impact on the lives of others. The vans fleet has stop/start technology already fitted which is reducing emissions. The next step is to progress alternatives such as electric vehicles.

9. Equality & diversity implications

The geography of our homes means that Great Places influence a wide range of communities. We will ensure we have an inclusive approach to stakeholder involvement based on local information for example targeting our most vulnerable customers in key areas along with partners.

10. Environmental implications

Great Places, its stakeholders, suppliers and customers have a significant environmental impact. Through working together we can reduce our environmental impacts to ensure we develop communities and people who truly care and want to make the world a better place for now and future generations. Implementing this strategy will enable Great Places to reduce its Carbon impacts to the benefit of Great Places and beyond.

11. Conclusion

Every decision within Great Places' has an environmental impact which must be balanced against other pressures including economic impact and social value. Through this strategy we will focus on the areas of our work which have the largest impacts:

- Energy efficiency of our homes
- Transport emissions
- Working with partners including suppliers
- Resource efficiency
- Raising awareness and engagement of colleagues, customers and partners

12. Key Milestones

Year 1

- Implement the strategy
- Produce a deliverable action plan
- Develop our reporting structure based on Manchester Housing Providers Partnership requirements
- Develop the affordable warmth team to enable reporting on targets
- Work with partners to improve the energy efficiency of our homes
- Develop our customer involvement in our focus and target setting
- Develop the profile of the environmental team and the importance of environmental awareness across all parts of the business

Year 2

- Continue to report on targets

- Develop the CSF reporting using an agreed method of calculating the energy performance of our homes
- Raise the profile of the Affordable Warmth Team
- Ensure environmental issues are embedded in procurement
- Develop our environmental awareness training programme (internal and external)

13. Equality Impact Assessment

1. Is this a key strategic document, major policy or procedure or service change? Examples may include: Homeless Strategy/ Customer Involvement Strategy	YES		NO	
	Yes			
2. What impact will your document or service delivery change have on the public or staff, giving particular regard to potential impacts on minority groups? Issues to consider include race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, carers and other socio-economic factors	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	DON'T KNOW
			X	
3. Please explain your answer: Provide a narrative explaining why you gave the impact rating above.				

Strategy Approval Date:	February 2019
Equality Impact Assessment Date:	Not applicable
Safeguarding impact:	Not applicable
Strategy Review Date:	February 2022
Lead Team:	Environmental Team
Level of Authorisation Required:	Executive Directors

Action	By When	By Whom	Success Measure
Improved energy performance of worst performing homes in line with Corporate Plan	End of 2021	Environmental Manager	Number of homes below a C and number of homes below a D reduced
Deliver Whole House Retrofit works	End of 2021	Environmental Manager	Number of homes piloted and performance monitoring undertaken
Develop reporting structure based on Manchester Housing Provider's Partnerships	March 2019	Environmental Manager	Structure created and reporting to Affordable Warmth Group
Develop Affordable Warmth Team to enable reporting on targets	June 2019	Head of Assets	Affordable Warmth group to have good representation from across departments
Work with partners to improve the energy efficiency of our homes	March 2021	Environmental Manager	Number of homes improved, range of innovation measures implemented
Develop the work of the Environmental team and importance of environmental awareness across all parts of the business.	March 2020	Environmental Manager	Number of colleagues completed Carbon Literacy training