

# Sustainability Annual Report 23/24





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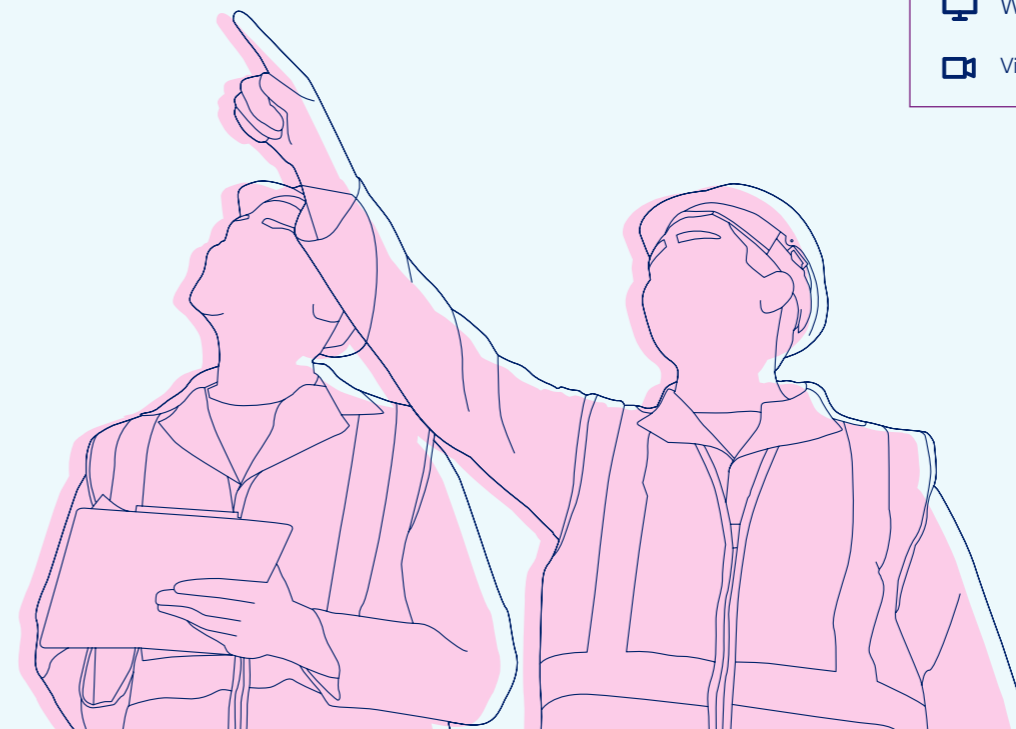
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## Introduction from our Chief Executive

As a socially-driven, commercial-minded organisation, I am proud that we remain recognised as one of the sector's leaders in sustainability and of the progress we continue to make in this important space.

Sustainability, including the delivery of social value to ensure we maximise the positive impact we can have on our communities and society as a whole, is rooted in our purpose, the commitment to which I see demonstrated every day by our colleagues.



We are proud to have delivered £61.5 million in social value since our baseline in 2020/21 and I am confident we will deliver on our target to deliver £100 million in social value by 2025. I am personally proud of the demonstrable difference we have been able to make to thousands of customers via the support offered by our Better Days programme and Tenancy Sustainment team. At a time when the cost of living crisis is still impacting our customers on a daily basis, being able to offer them the right help at the right time to support their tenancies and personal wellbeing, through financial inclusion, mental health, employment, skills and digital support has never been more important.

We are also making good headway towards decarbonisation, with 85.6% of our homes now rated EPC C or above, and we have achieved a 39.7% reduction on our 2018/19 carbon footprint baseline. However, we recognise that we're not quite there yet and the closer that we get to meeting these targets, the more challenging it is likely to become. Over the next 12 months, we will be reviewing our Orbit to Zero Roadmap to reflect the changing external environment, but more importantly to understand the actions we need to put in place to meet these targets and ensure we effectively support our customers in the transition to net zero.

This year, we have also continued our drive to improve the quality of our customers' outdoor spaces, maintaining compliance with ISO 14001 awarded by the British Standards Institute, and progressing towards our 30by30 biodiversity commitment. I'd like to thank all of our colleagues, customers and partners who have contributed to our achievements to date by participating in projects that support nature's recovery within our estates and their wider communities.

That said, there is always room for improvement. With this year's change government and the launch of our own 2030 Strategy, we are at an incredibly exciting point. Never has there been a more opportune time to start putting words into action and affect the change that is needed to address both the impact of climate change and the housing crisis.

The launch of our 2030 Strategy, which is underpinned by our Sustainability Strategy, enables us to begin the year ahead with a clear-cut focus on delivering our services and homes through the lens of our customers, supporting us in further increasing the positive impact we can make now and in the future. From delivering on our 30by30 biodiversity target, to improving energy affordability for customers today, whilst also providing energy efficient homes that meet the needs of the future, there's a lot to do, but the potential of what we can achieve is incredibly exciting.

I am looking forward to working with customers, colleagues and the government to further our Sustainability journey and delivering the positive change within our grasp.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Andrew'.

**Phil Andrew**  
Group Chief Executive

# 2030 Strategy

In 2023/24 we began developing our 2030 Strategy, which outlines our ambitions for the next six years and is supported by our Sustainability Strategy.

Replacing our 2025 Corporate Strategy from the start of the 2024/25 financial year, our 2030 Strategy was developed in close collaboration with colleagues and customers. It sets out how we will:

- Continue to provide safe, sustainable, and affordable homes that our customers are proud to live in, by delivering and regenerating new homes sustainably, investing in the safety, quality, and energy efficiency of our homes, and ensuring a laser-sharp focus on customers' priorities
- Enable customers to access affordable housing through a range of options; providing support with their home, wellbeing, money, and skills as their lives change; and listening to them to deliver great service and value for money
- Respond to vulnerability and additional needs
- Build on our commitment to deliver £100 million worth of social value by 2025 and optimise efficiencies and value for money enabling us to do more for our customers and society

We will also continue to focus on maximising our positive social and environmental impacts, from becoming net zero carbon and delivering on our 30by30 biodiversity target, to improving energy affordability for customers today, whilst also providing energy efficient homes that meet the needs of the future.



## Our 2030 Ambition

Our ambition is to provide amongst the best customer experience of any housing association in the country, whilst reshaping our approach to create a more sustainable and resilient model for the future.

Doing so will allow us to materially increase the positive impact we make now and in the future.



# Our 2030 Strategy overview



[Click here to read our 2030 Strategy](#)

## Our Sustainability Strategy

We recognise that sustainability is not a finite topic, which is why in September 2023 we published our updated Sustainability Strategy in recognition of the cost of living crisis, the impact of climate change on customers and recent world events.

We worked with customers, colleagues, and other stakeholders to listen to the issues that matter most to them, and then assessed our material impact against those issues, along with our ability to affect change. This shaped clear objectives and targets for each of the Strategy's four pillars: Our Customers, Quality Homes and Places, Our Planet, and Our People, with objectives ranging from delivering social value and positive customer interventions, to achieving net zero carbon, and delivering 30by30 and Biodiversity Net Gain requirements.

This Strategy enables us to build on the earlier steps of our sustainability journey, from being an early adopter of the Sustainability Reporting Standard (SRS), to the annual publication of our Sustainability Report, launching our Sustainable Finance Framework, embedding the steps within our 'Orbit to Zero' net zero carbon roadmap and reducing the carbon footprint of our operations by 39.7%.

In October, we agreed our second sustainability-linked loan, which offers a £115 million credit facility with Barclays Corporate Banking, under which the interest we pay is linked to us achieving certain sustainability Key Performance Indicators (KPI) such as managing 30% of our outdoor green spaces in a way which enables nature's recovery by 2030 and delivering on social value targets.



[Click here to view our Sustainability Strategy](#)

Our strategy comprises four themes, each of which sets out our key objectives and is underpinned by a conscious approach to our supply chain:









 Our Customers	 Quality Homes and Places	 Our Planet	 Our People
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with our customers to shape our services and involve them in the decisions that affect their homes and communities</li> <li>• Support our customers to maintain their tenancy and fulfil their potential</li> <li>• Invest into our communities to deliver social value</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide high quality, affordable homes</li> <li>• Invest in the decarbonisation of our homes</li> <li>• Provide safe, healthy places to live</li> <li>• Create sustainable living environments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental stewardship to drive positive change</li> <li>• Climate action to become net zero carbon</li> <li>• Enhancement of outdoor spaces to promote biodiversity</li> <li>• Sustainable consumption to achieve a Zero Waste, circular model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create inspiring leaders and maximise our colleagues' career satisfaction</li> <li>• Provide high quality, safe working environments</li> <li>• Create a diverse and inclusive workplace</li> <li>• Skill and capability development with the customer in mind</li> </ul>

### Our 2023/24 targets

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with 1,000 customers across strategic Your Voice activities by 2025</li> <li>• Implement 90 improvements from strategic Your Voice activities by 2025</li> <li>• Achieve 15,000 customer support interventions through Better Days services by 2025</li> <li>• Ensure 80% of customers achieve a positive outcome through our Better Days services annually</li> <li>• Deliver £100 million in social value for our customers and communities by 2025</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building 4,210 new affordable homes by 2025</li> <li>• 100% of our properties to be EPC C or above by 2030</li> <li>• Implementing International standards ISO 22301 and 19650 by 2025</li> <li>• Net zero carbon in our homes before 2050</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To become net zero carbon in our own operations (Scope 1 and 2) by 2030</li> <li>• To become net zero carbon in our housing and supply chain (Scope 3) before 2050</li> <li>• For 30% of our outdoor spaces to be enabling nature's recovery by 2030</li> <li>• To reduce avoidable waste generated by 15% per direct build plot by 2030</li> <li>• To send zero non-hazardous waste to landfill or incineration by 2030</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To reduce our gender pay gap by 15% against a 2021-22 baseline by 2030</li> <li>• Ensure our colleagues share our values, remaining above 75% in our employee engagement survey for 'purpose'</li> <li>• Ensure our colleagues have confidence in our leadership, working towards 75% or above in our employee engagement survey for 'leadership' by 2030</li> <li>• Colleague satisfaction to remain above 75% in our employee engagement survey</li> <li>• RoSPA level 5 quality and safety audit by 2027</li> </ul>
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### 2023/24 performance tracking

2020/21 2021/22 2022/23 2023/24 2023/24 target

	Our Customers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with 1,000 customers across strategic Your Voice activities from 2022 to 2025: 956 (Target 1,000)</li> <li>Implement 90 improvements from strategic Your Voice activities by 2025: 63 (Target 90)</li> <li>Achieve 15,000 customer support interventions by 2025: 5,059 (2021/22), 12,682 (2022/23), 12,682 (2023/24)</li> <li>Ensure 80% of customers achieve a positive outcome through our Better Days services annually: 98% (Target 80%)</li> <li>Deliver £100 million in social value for our customers and communities by 2025: £23.5m (2020/21), £42.7m (2021/22), £65.1m (2022/23), £65.1m (2023/24)</li> </ul>
	Quality Homes and Places
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building 4,210 new affordable homes by 2025: 658 (2020/21), 1,394 (2021/22), 2,394 (2022/23), 3,116 (2023/24)</li> <li>100% of our properties to be EPC C or above by 2030: 79% (2020/21), 82% (2021/22), 83.5% (2022/23), 85.6% (2023/24)</li> </ul>
	Our Planet
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To become net zero carbon in our own operations (Scope 1 and 2) by 2030: 21% (2020/21), 33% (2021/22), 38.5% (2022/23), 39.7% (2023/24)</li> <li>For 30% of our outdoor spaces to be enabling nature's recovery by 2030 *: 17.8% (2023/24)</li> <li>To reduce avoidable waste generated by 15% per direct build plot by 2030: 12.3% (2023/24)</li> <li>To send zero non-hazardous waste to landfill or incineration by 2030 **: 72% (2023/24)</li> </ul>
	Our People
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reduce our gender pay gap by 15% against a 2021-22 baseline by 2030: 17.2% (2023/24)</li> <li>Colleague satisfaction to remain above 75% in our employee engagement survey ***: 83% (2023/24)</li> <li>Ensure our colleagues have confidence in our leadership, working towards 75% and above in our employee engagement survey for 'leadership' by 2030 ***: 63% (2023/24)</li> <li>Ensure our colleagues share our values, remaining above 75% in our employee engagement survey for 'purpose' ***: 79% (2023/24)</li> </ul>

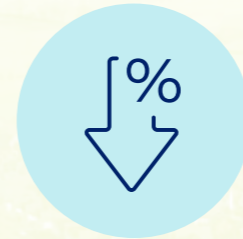
\* We have re-benchmarked our green spaces from our original 2022/2023 baseline and amended incorrect data resulting in a 3.4% reduction of the baseline originally based on 9 surveyed estates. The sample data has been extrapolated to the whole portfolio resulting in 16.68% alignment prior to any enhancements. With the 2022 - 2024 enhancements, 17.8% of our green spaces now align to 30by30.

\*\* The diversion from landfill and incineration metric includes demolition and excavation waste from construction activities. When excluding waste from these activities, the performance was 97.2%.

\*\*\* As at October 2023



## Key Highlights



39.7% reduction on our 2018/19 carbon footprint baseline



£61.5 million in social value delivered since our baseline in 2020/21



Generated over £1 million energy savings for our customers



1,598 customers supported into employment related training or volunteering



£4.6 million in debt relief and increased budgeting income for our customers



Co-launched the Green Spaces Stewardship Model



Continuing biodiversity planting. 5,000m<sup>2</sup> wildflowers and 3,000 hedgerow whips across the London Borough of Bexley



RoSPA Gold H&S standard for the 6th consecutive year



Second sustainability linked finance facility Barclays £115 million

## Cost of living support

Our commitment to social purpose goes beyond that of landlord and developer. We are committed to improving the long-term prospects of society and bringing our customers security and stability by investing in a range of projects to support the wellbeing of communities, families and individuals.

We're focused on offering customers the right help at the right time to support their tenancies and personal wellbeing. Delivering support via our free Better Days programme and Tenancy Sustainment team, we've made a demonstrable positive difference to the lives of thousands of customers this year.

As the impact of the cost of living crisis continues to bite, we have seen demand for support from our Better Days programme continue to increase, with 10,496 customers receiving support across financial inclusion, mental health, employment, skills and digital access in 2023/24.

In response to this, we mobilised a raft of new measures to sit alongside the existing programme of support including:

- Increasing our team of Community Connectors and Place Area Leads to engage with customers face-to-face within communities. Resulting in support being provided to over 2,813 customers via Better Days events
- Investing in underutilised community buildings, to create a network of Community Hubs for our customers, removing barriers to services and leveraging social value through partnerships with local authorities, voluntary sector organisations, and others. We've also piloted a mobile hub to ensure we reach residents in our more rural communities, and this has attracted positive customer feedback

“ I first joined the hub when I had lost my confidence due to a mental health crisis. I was facing poverty, debt and social isolation, making life pretty unbearable. The first few weeks were a little overwhelming, mixing with neighbours again, but it wasn't long before I began joining in and it gave me self-worth, a purpose and a reason to keep going. I was being valued as a member of the community. ”

Orbit customer



### Gorleston Hub

A former scout hut in Gorleston-on-Sea has been transformed into a new 'Better Days' hub where people can access free face-to-face support on a range of issues such as managing finances, health and wellbeing, employability and skills.

The hub also hosts sessions by local organisations including Cliff Park Community Church Wellbeing Group and Camerados, an organisation which hosts 'public living rooms' across the country to encourage social interaction. A 'playdate' session also takes place every Friday morning for children aged 5 and under.

We worked with social enterprise Volunteer It Yourself, to revamp the community space and enlisted the help of young local residents to gain hands-on work experience in trade skills to give the building and garden a new purpose.

Thanks to a successful application for Arts Council England funding we've been able to work with local residents and street artists Repraent Project to design and create a series of murals inspired by the history and diversity of the local area for display at the hub's outdoor areas.





## Supporting our customers day-to-day

We're proud of bringing support into communities and providing access to services for customers who otherwise may not have sought help or engaged with Orbit.

Key achievements:

- In 2023/24 Better Days has delivered 10,496 customer support interventions, including 2,813 residents engaged by our regional place team
- 109% year-on-year increase in engagement with Orbit's Better Day services and 98% of customers achieving a positive outcome
- An estimated £3 million of increased household income generated through our interventions
- £1.5 million of customer debt managed through our debt advice service
- Launched two further Community Hubs, with further spaces in development

“ My coach really helped me out of a dark place. After a traumatic event, I was suffering with PTSD and fell into a rut. I found it hard to cope with day-to-day things and everything just got to be too much to handle. My coach helped me set up a plan of action that would help. She also supported me in getting a management move out of the location that was the root of the issue. I am so glad to have moved and can start afresh. ”

Orbit customer

In addition to self-referral into our support services, our Tenancy Sustainment team uses a coaching approach to work directly with customers to identify financial, wellbeing, digital and employment concerns. Our dedicated Tenancy Sustainment triage team contact customers to discuss the challenges that they're facing in order to put the right support in place – whether that's a direct referral to one of our Better Days offers, to a trusted external partner, or to our Tenancy Sustainment Job Coaches or Employment and Skills training.

Customers who have been referred to a Tenancy Sustainment Job Coach receive coaching on employment and money management to improve their chances of successfully managing and sustaining their tenancy.

Key achievements:

- 9,842 customers referred into Tenancy Sustainment
- 99% of House With Support customers who engaged with the service sustained their tenancies
- 63% of customers had an improved rent balance 12 months after support end
- 1,598 customers supported into employment related training or volunteering
- 191 customers moved into employment
- £667.93 on average, per month better off after moving to employment
- £284,351.80 recovered in rent arrears
- £9.73 Social Return on Investment (for every £1 spent we generate £9.73 return in social value)
- £12.8 million social value achieved
- 97% in customer satisfaction (real time feedback)

“ Thank you for helping me with my mental health, the referral for Breathing Space has really helped me with what I'm going through right now. It's just nice to talk to someone who isn't family or friends. ”

Orbit customer

## Increasing customer engagement

Over the last 12 months, our message to customers has continued to be that we're here to help. Ongoing cost of living challenges are still impacting our customers and it's been as important as ever to raise awareness of our free Better Days programme and the services offered by our tenancy coaches.

Customer engagement is key to every aspect of our organisation, from shaping services, policies and procedures to our governance, recruitment and procurement processes.

We encourage as many customers as possible to engage with us and share their views through participation in our Customer Engagement Strategic Committee, or more informally through regular meetings, bite-size evening sessions, events and estate inspections, Facebook discussion forums or attendance at one of our conferences. We also operate several customer diversity

groups including LGBTQ+, disability and future voices, to ensure we capture all voices on the services they receive, complete equality assessments and help to prioritise our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion programme.

Acting as an invaluable, critical friend, our Customer Engagement Strategic Committee is part of our governance and ensures the customer voice is heard and represented. It has helped us to deliver meaningful change for our customers, making sure we focus on what customers need and value, rather than what we offer.

Overseeing the strategy and delivery of our Your Voice customer engagement programme, the Committee's vision: "customer voices driving positive change", works to put our customers at the centre of our decisions, creating and maintaining long-lasting, positive relationships.



Net promoter score of engaged customers: 76



Identified 99 Service improvements to the customer experience, implementing 58% of these to date



No of customer engagement activities: 150



No of customers we engaged with via Your Voice: 956



## Using digital technology in a sustainable way to support wellbeing

Over 100 residents living in Orbit Independent Living schemes have been participating in a research project investigating the environmental impact of the digital technologies that are used to provide health and care services to people aged over 55.

The research, led by the University of Sussex with an interdisciplinary team from the University of Manchester, University College London, Imperial College London, Anglia Ruskin University and funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, and in partnership with Appello, sought to develop innovative solutions for healthy ageing and digital wellbeing, while protecting the environment.

Whilst we had always focused on the service delivered and type of system, this new research has given us additional detail that will help us achieve the best solution for customers from both a service and environmental perspective. We are already changing how we are procuring and specifying our services using this learning and building more around sustainability as well as usability and customer satisfaction in our processes to have the best outcome possible for the environment as well as our customers.

The research also showed a breadth of customer perceptions about digital technology, ranging from those who reject it entirely and don't trust it at all, to others who act as ambassadors for its use and are happy to mentor their peers. The strong beliefs and perceptions held by residents can have a significant impact on the digital experience of others in the schemes. Key to creating a positive experience according to the research is enabling and supporting choice, control and capability of living with digital technologies, facilitated by proactive, tailored and in-person support.

To encourage this, we've introduced 14 Digital Champions in our schemes to help us do some of this work, but this is just the beginning of our digital journey. Our Ageing Well strategy focuses on giving older people the opportunities to live independent, healthy and connected lives through new products and services, including new assistive technology and community.

# Making net zero carbon real for our customers

## Progressing towards decarbonisation

We continue to invest in the energy efficiency of our homes and have committed that 100% of our existing homes will be EPC band C or above by 2030. Good progress towards this target has continued with 85.6% of our homes now rated EPC C or above.

Following the completion of our Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Demonstrator project (69 homes) last year, we have now completed energy efficiency upgrades on a further 141 properties in the West Midlands under the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 1, and are completing final customer handovers and collecting feedback. We are also well underway with our SHDF Wave 2.1 project to upgrade an additional 212 properties, with 60 properties already completed.

Showcasing the works, we were pleased to welcome Lord Callanan, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Energy Efficiency and Green Finance) and representatives from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), as well as Andy Street, former Mayor of the West Midlands and chair of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), to see the progress of these projects.

Lord Callanan and his colleagues visited our Demonstrator homes in Kineton, which had undergone a deep, fabric first, retrofit approach using energy efficient doors and windows, along with loft and wall insulation and some low carbon heating, to increase the energy performance of the homes.

Andy Street, former Mayor of the West Midlands and chair of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), viewed a selection of homes that have been made more energy efficient under Wave 1 of the SHDF project. In this phase, we have worked with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to improve the energy performance of 75 properties across the West Midlands. As well as visiting homes, he also met with customers to discuss their experiences, hearing how the project will enable them to heat their homes more affordably.

We are committed to continuing to monitor performance to inform our future works and ensure customers and stakeholders remain happy with the works that have been completed.



“ These houses were quite cold in the winter. The work started with the loft being insulated, windows being changed, door being changed... it literally felt warmer as soon as it was done. Hopefully it will be cheaper on my pocket. ”

Orbit customer, decarbonisation project

[Click here to view our retrofit video](#)



### Liberty Park

Liberty Park is our first Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) powered development in the East. All 50 homes are fitted with solar PV panels, ground floor underfloor heating and enhanced cavity insulation. The installation of these renewable technologies ensures less heat energy is required to maintain a comfortable temperature in homes, supports energy affordability for customers and reduces their reliance on fossil fuels.



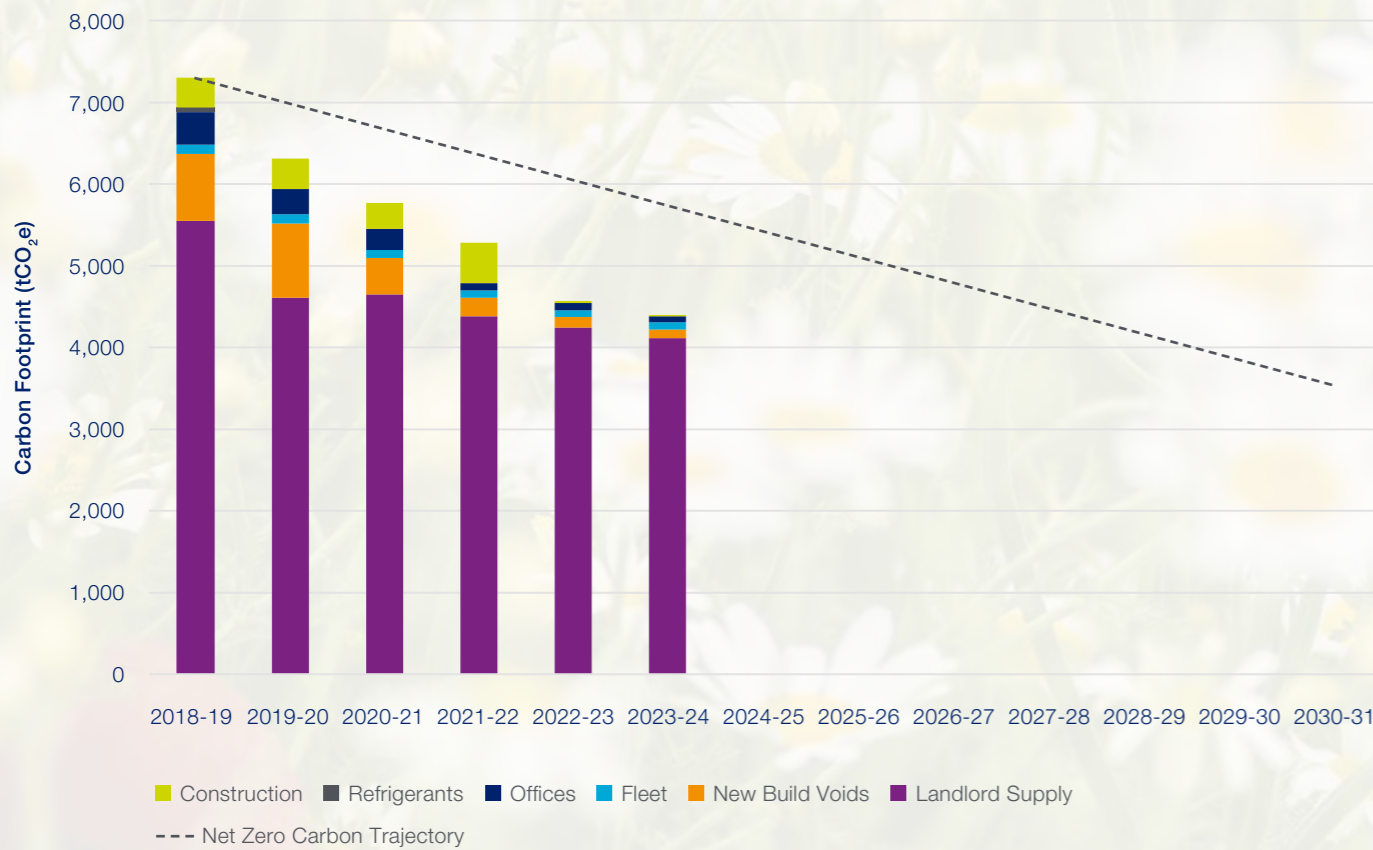
### Spotlight on our carbon footprint

We are committed to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and believe that measurement is key to informing our science-based approach to meeting our net zero carbon commitment. We are pleased to report a further reduction in our scope 1 and 2 emissions, which have now fallen 39.7% since our 2018-19 baseline. This is significantly ahead of target and represents the elimination of virtually all emissions, with the exception of those from the landlord supply of heating and hot water by the burning of natural gas. This is a difficult and costly source of emissions to tackle, but we are committed to doing so both to reduce our emissions but also to save our customers money. This is why we continue to deliver an energy efficiency programme for these properties and are aiming to retrofit our first zero carbon heating system in the next two years.

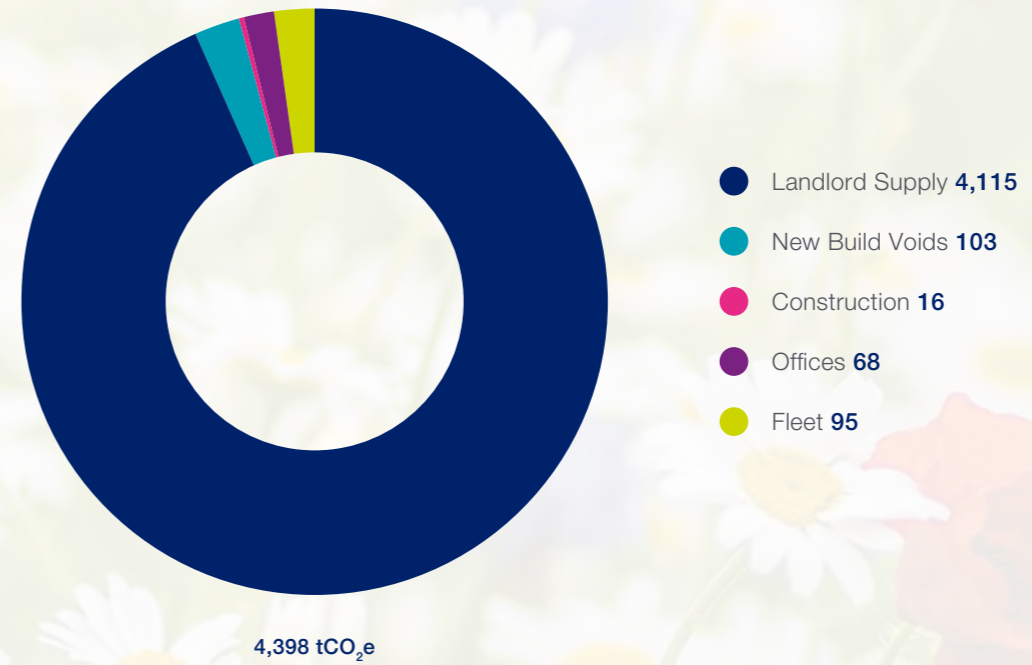
We have also published our updated Scope 3 emissions, which continue to show the significant impact of our supply chain and customers' use of energy in their homes. In the future we will be able to report better on the impact of our domestic decarbonisation works and supply chain partner engagement on this element of our carbon footprint as well.

Orbit has made significant progress in line with our Orbit to Zero roadmap, published during the November 2021 climate conference. We are aiming to publish an updated version of this roadmap in the next 12 months. This will provide more detail on our progress to date and measures still to be taken. Greater detail will be provided on carbon offsetting and climate adaptation as well, as part of our wider approach to taking positive climate action.

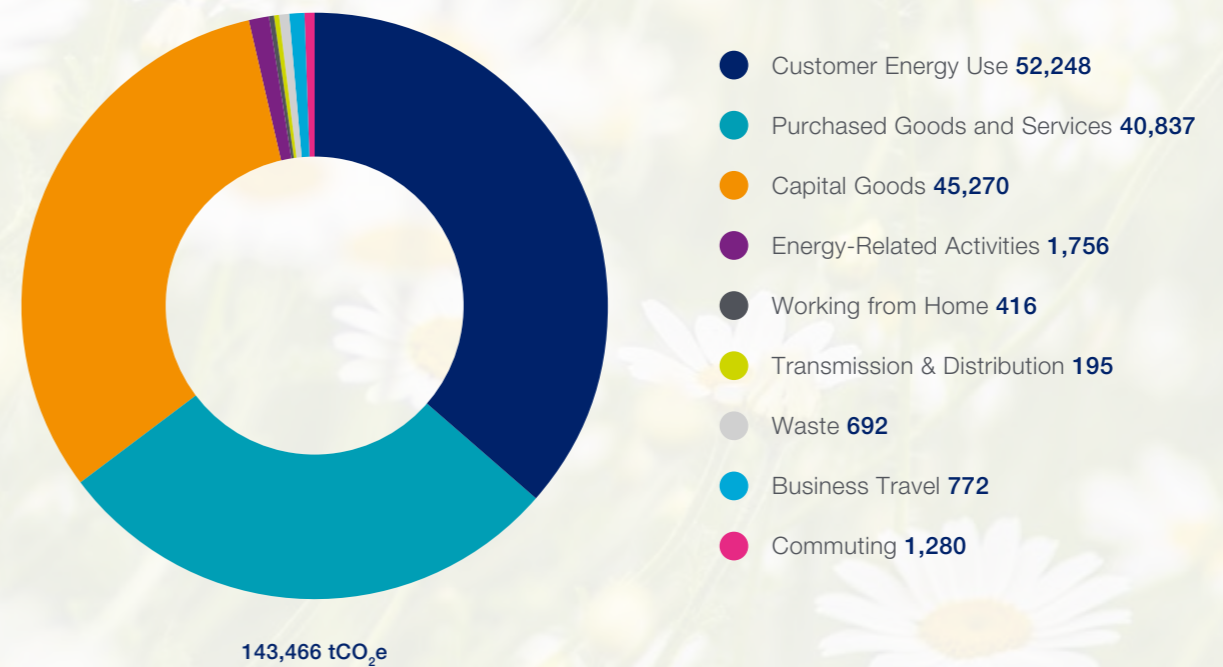
### Decarbonisation journey 2018-2030



### Scopes 1 and 2



### Scope 3



## Further improving energy efficiency

In 2023/24, our total carbon footprint was 4397.62 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>e), which captures our total scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions from our offices, fleet, landlord supply and new build voids, as well as our construction activities.

Against our target to become net zero carbon in our own operations by 2030, in the past year we have reduced our carbon footprint by 3.3%, marking a 39.7% reduction on our 2018/19 baseline.

Key initiatives which have driven further reduction this year include:

- Our continued purchase of clean and renewable electricity across our portfolio. In 2023/24 this has avoided 2,564tCO<sub>2</sub>e from being released and prevented an additional 56% on our overall carbon footprint
- Our use of biofuels at our construction sites has avoided 458tCO<sub>2</sub>e of carbon emissions in 2023/24 preventing an additional 10% on our overall carbon footprint



In 2023/24 we reduced our electricity use by 43% against our baseline at our Garden Court office in Coventry and 21% at our office in Stratford-upon-Avon. We also decreased our gas use by 28% against our 2018/19 baseline.

We have also continued to complete further projects to improve energy efficiency and affordability for our customers, including LED lighting replacements across several of our schemes, solar PV (Photovoltaics) installations at schemes and new build developments, as well as energy awareness workshops.



### Smart Meter roll out

Nearly 68% of Orbit's properties now benefit from electricity meter remote reading capability following a successful smart meter pilot programme. Electricity meter remote reading capability improves billed accuracy so customers only pay for what they use, and allows us to more efficiently respond to customers' billing and service charge queries. It also provides greater insight into customer energy usage, enabling us to make practical changes for the benefit of our customers such as upgrading lighting and heating and help us to work towards decarbonisation.



### Savings for customers

Through our energy savings initiatives we have helped generate over £1 million of added value for our customers including:

- Saving £577k for customers across 922 cases through our NEA energy advice service
- Helping 331 Independent Living customers apply for the Energy Bills Support Scheme, saving £132k

Via the energy saving projects we have implemented this year, we also expect to generate estimated energy savings for customers at relevant schemes of:

- £168k per annum from our LED lighting upgrade projects
- Between £2.4k and £8.9k per annum from solar panel projects
- £61k per annum from capacity changes



We undertook a lighting improvement programme across 11 of our Independent Living schemes, replacing existing fluorescent lighting with LED technology to reduce energy use, with some schemes also benefiting from sensor control. It is anticipated that these improvements will generate an estimated energy saving of around 60-70% depending on the scheme.

These upgrades not only improve the aesthetics of the schemes, but more importantly deliver a reduction in electricity service charges and maintenance costs for customers.

We have also completed a solar installation at Caesar Court, which is expected to provide around 7% of the scheme's electricity going forward, generating further savings for customers.

“ Thank you so much for our LED lighting, it's so much improved the appearance of the building and my wellbeing. In the past when you came in from outside feeling very happy, the more you got into the building the darker and dingier it got, which immediately deflated you. Now it's so light and bright especially when the lift doors open. The brightness keeps you feeling good - not to mention the fact it's saving us money. Well done. ”

Pam, Queensway Court customer

# Improving the quality of our customers' outdoor spaces

Our environmental sustainability programme works to actively enhance our environment by creating and improving places for our communities to thrive.

## Environmental Stewardship

We have maintained compliance for 2023-2024 with ISO 14001 awarded by the British Standards Institute, following their assurance checks that we have controls in place to ensure we do not harm the environment and that our approach to achieving our environmental targets meets their standards. We also continue to see a positive environmental compliance culture across our construction sites. Our Orbit Homes Site Managers have been implementing wildflower areas on our grassland areas and are striving to find innovative methods to reduce waste.

The wildflower mix contains 28 native flowering species. The species chosen should provide the best habitats for our native wildlife and produce a flowering spectacle across the spring and summers with blossom on trees and wildflower meadow areas.

Over 20 volunteers from across our teams also came together to plant over 1,000 UK native hedge plants at one of our estates in Clifton, Rugby. Volunteers worked alongside customers to add hedge plants, which provided customers with access to better outdoor green spaces that can help to improve their wellbeing.

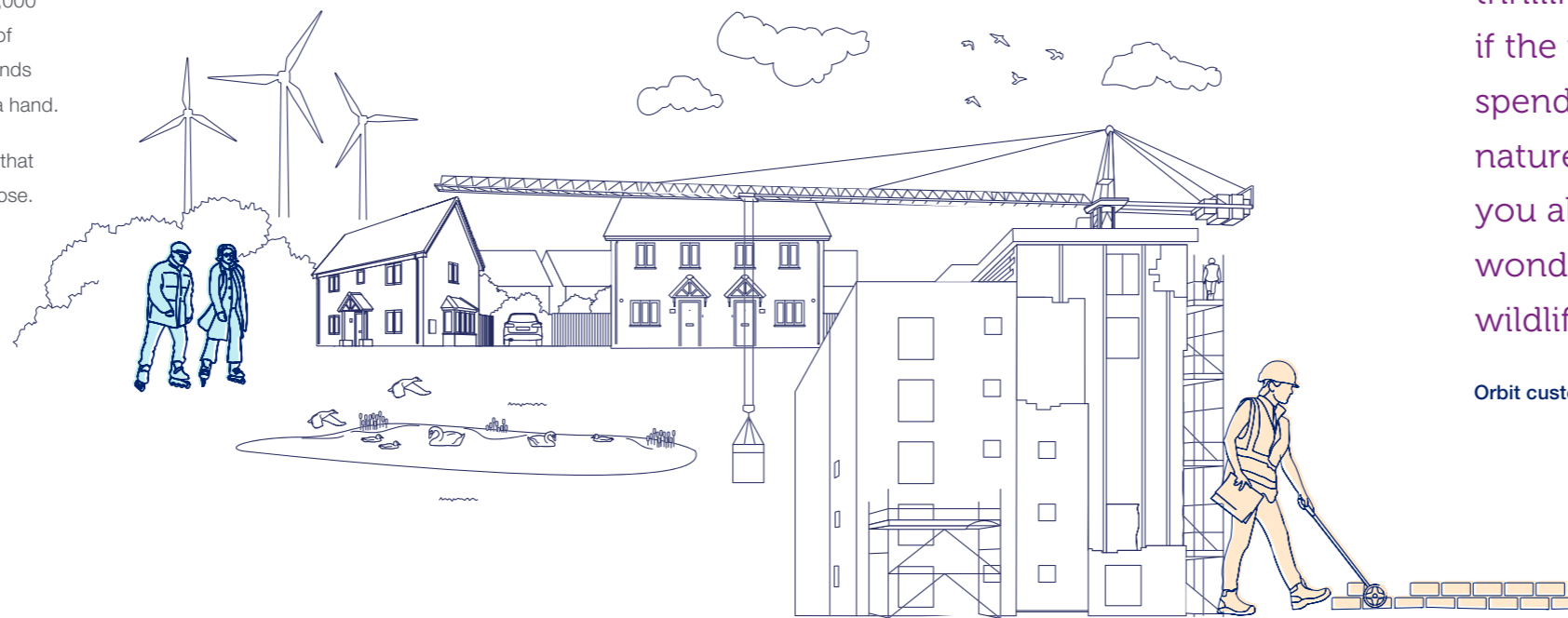
These projects have all contributed to ensuring 17.8% of our outdoor green spaces currently meet the supporting nature's recovery criteria, and more importantly, provide valuable insights into how we need to share our approach to more sustainable estates management moving forward.

## Progressing towards 30by30

Against our commitment to the UN's Biodiversity Plan '30by30' campaign to enable nature's recovery in 30% of the outdoor green spaces we manage by 2030, we have been strategically planning how and where to enhance habitats across our estate to maximise the benefits for nature.

This year we've planted 15 trees, 5,000m<sup>2</sup> wildflowers and 3,000 hedgerow whips in five estates across the London Borough of Bexley with around 20 colleagues from Orbit, MPS and Grounds Maintenance Contractor SLS volunteering their time to lend a hand.

All tree, wildflower and hedge species are UK native species that include Field Maple, Crab Apple, Pear, Hawthorn and Dog Rose.



“ This morning, when I was watering the hedge planting, there was a robin already hopping among the branches - how thrilling is that? I would be super chuffed if the robins were to decide to come and spend more time here with us. How quickly nature returns, given the chance. Thank you all, again, so much for giving us all this wonderful gift to enjoy and share with our wildlife and one another. ”

Orbit customer



## Green Spaces Stewardship Model

We were proud to launch the Green Spaces Stewardship Model as part of our role on the Green Spaces Advisory Board. Collaborating with sector leaders, this offers a practical guide for teams to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain in eco-friendly spaces that are both economically and socially rewarding.

Within the model we created a free, first-of-its-kind Habitat Condition Assessment Tool in partnership with The Wildlife Trusts. This allows users to assess their green space and generates an approach tailored to their habitat.



[Click here to find the habitat condition assessment tool](#)





## New-look garden for supported housing scheme

We worked together with Southern Land Services (SLS) to create an even more colourful space for residents at Wheelock Close to enjoy.

The team installed new garden furniture, cleared weeds and enhanced flower beds, and fitted a watering hose alongside the vegetable patches and wildflowers. Neighbours of the supported housing scheme also donated plant pots, seeds, and solar-powered lights.

The renovation was welcomed by Orbit customers, who now have volunteers looking forward to upkeeping the garden, with a daily watering rota and various meetings in plan to encourage residents to contribute ideas to help enhance communal spaces.

“ SLS were delighted to support with improving the gardens at Wheelock Close alongside Orbit. The residents were keen to make better use of the outdoor space, grow their own vegetables and encourage wildlife into the garden. The sunflowers and lavender brought welcome colour into the gardens and we are thrilled to see the residents have planted up their vegetables again for this summer. Residents informed us one area of the lawn is under-used and they would love more wildflowers to attract pollinators, so we tilled and seeded the area with wildflowers. We look forward to seeing what flowers come up in the future. ”

John Hesse, Southern Land Services





# Health and safety

Providing customers with a safe place to call home remains our number one priority and we are proud to be known as a leader and innovator in the building safety space. Through the appointment of our Head of Property Safety and Technology as chair of the National Housing Federation (NHF) Building Safety Group, we're helping to shape the sector's response to the new system of building regulations proposed by the government, and to support housing associations towards a smooth transition into a new regulatory environment.

Key focuses for the group include sharing experiences and lessons throughout the sector on implementing the new safety regulations and providing housing associations with opportunities to hear from the new Building Safety Regulator.

In line with our commitment to building safety, we successfully registered our high-rise buildings with the Building Safety Regulator ahead of their deadline date and have completed safety case reports for each building. Safety case reports are an important new mandatory requirement of the Building Safety Act 2022 and set out the major fire and structural hazards associated with our buildings and how we are managing the risks to prevent a major accident. The information that we've provided to the Building Safety Regulator via these reports will help them to prioritise buildings for the building assessment certificate process from April 2024.



An important part of navigating this new regulatory environment is making sure that customers understand the actions that we're taking to keep them and their homes safe and the role they have to play. That's why this year we've created a new building safety customer engagement strategy to ensure they understand what information is available about building safety, how it can be accessed, what we do to keep buildings safe and how they can raise queries about safety issues.

We completed 100% of all 26,189 domestic and commercial Landlord Gas Safety Records within timeframe for the whole year. As well as delivering 5,577 Electrical Installation Condition Reports, electrical safety compliance levels for all dwellings have also increased to 97.16%.

Furthermore, we remain the only national affordable housing provider to have achieved BS9997 British Standards in fire risk management systems and were this year awarded a Gold Medal Award from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) for the sixth consecutive year in recognition of our ongoing commitment to health and safety excellence.



## Awards

- RoSPA Gold (6 consecutive years)
- RoSPA Commended in the Public Service and Local Government Sector Award
- Housing Digital Awards: Best Asset Management Innovation
- AICO Community Awards – shortlisted in the Woman in Fire Safety Category
- Plus: Finalists in the following Association of Safety Compliance Professionals (ASCP) Safety & Compliance Awards categories:
  - Safety & Health Excellence Awards (SHE) Awards: Health and Safety Campaign Award
  - SHE Awards: Team of the Year



# Building an inclusive business

Being fair and equitable to all, irrespective of age, gender, disability, race, caring responsibilities, religion/belief or sexual orientation sits at the core of our purpose. Embracing a diverse and inclusive workplace, where colleagues feel motivated in their work, feel valued, respected and are united in achieving our purpose and mission, not only enables us to unlock our colleagues' full potential, but allows us to deliver accessible services and equitable outcomes for the diverse communities we serve.

We have been working to embed our Diversity and Inclusion framework with highlights including:

- Introducing colleague-led diversity networks focusing on Neurodiversity, LGBTQ+, Women in Business and Armed Forces support
- Launching our series of Neurodiversity listening sessions for all colleagues to share their experiences and make suggestions as to how we can further improve, along with a neurodiversity session for managers to seek advice if needed
- Updating our mandatory Diversity and Inclusion e-learning
- Implementing a new accredited recruiter training programme, which aims to enhance the skills of our hiring managers, improve the candidate experience, and, ultimately, build effective teams. The course covers key aspects of the recruitment process, including removing unconscious biases, recruiting within the law, and honing great interview skills
- Celebrating the positive value our colleagues bring during International Women's Day and International Men's Day, by asking colleagues to nominate positive role models



## Mates in Mind

Orbit Homes hosted 'butty and brew' events for construction colleagues to raise awareness of men's mental health, in partnership with wellness company Bluecrest, health and safety consultants R G Wilbrey, and construction industry charity Lighthouse. The purpose of the events was to create a safe environment where our construction colleagues feel comfortable taking about their mental health and wellbeing, as well as seek the help they need if they are struggling.



## Cost of living support for colleagues

We have continued to support our colleagues through the cost of living crisis including maintaining a scaled approach to pay reviews and offering a temporary support allowance to colleagues in lower salary bands, alongside introducing a refreshed benefits platform that can help colleagues easily navigate and interact with the benefits and wellbeing offer at Orbit. Our scaled pay review and temporary support allowance are also two of the positive steps we have taken which have positively influenced our gender pay gap.



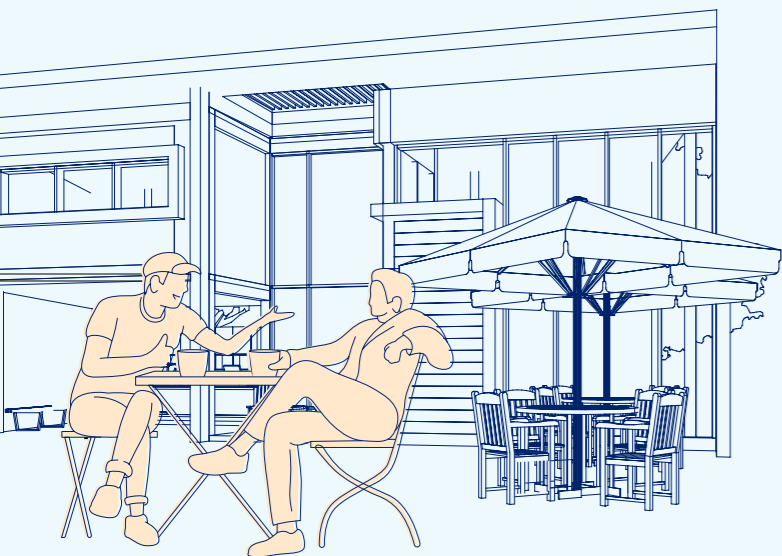
## Empowering colleagues

- Our Orbit Earth e-learning has now been completed by 721 colleagues (58% of all colleagues)
- Two energy e-learning modules have been introduced for frontline colleagues to equip them with energy saving knowledge of benefit to our customers

## Delivering social value

Social value is an impact measurement of the additional benefits our services and products bring from the perspectives of the individuals and communities benefiting from them. It enables us to measure the value for each improvement we make, allowing us to understand the positive outcomes we generate for customers and communities. It is measured as a financial value.

This year we generated a social value of £22.4 million. We calculated this using industry recognised social value tools such as the Social Value Bank (HACT) and National TOMS and our resulting social value is independently assessed by HACT. This approach allows us to understand the positive impact we are generating and monitor progress towards our target of delivering £100 million in social value by 2025.



### HACT Certification

We have continued to work in partnership with HACT to ensure we demonstrate best practice in social value. As part of this, we invited HACT to undertake a review of our approach to data collection and social value calculations, following which we were delighted to be certified by HACT For the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years. We are looking forward to continuing to work with HACT to inform our journey towards becoming a best practice social value business.

## Social Value Framework

Our Social Value Framework has been developed to embed social value across our organisation, better capture our impact and support business decisions based on the impact we have. The framework provides a guide for our colleagues and partners on how we can:

- Create a more impactful and sustainable organisation
- Demonstrate value for money and drive efficiencies in our operations, systems and processes
- Make the best resource and person-centred decisions possible
- Influence policymakers and stakeholders
- Increase our localised services and impact
- Look for opportunities and partnerships to increase the positive impact we make and the number of people we directly support

Through our social value programme this year we have:

- Provided 1,592 people with jobs or training
- Supported 440 people with debt or budgeting support which has had a positive impact on their financial situation
- 543 customers have reported improved health following our support including mental health services
- Moved 598 people out of temporary accommodation and into secure housing
- 907 customers reported we had a positive impact on their neighbourhood following our support in reducing ASB, crime or vandalism
- 428 attended social and hobby groups within our Independent Living schemes

## Social value outcomes



- Homelessness **£232,000**
- Employment and training **£5,149,000**
- Social groups and hobbies **£418,000**
- Financial inclusion **£5,037,000**
- Health and wellbeing **£8,335,000**
- Neighbourhoods **£3,209,000**

“ We are extremely grateful for the generous donation of a barn, hand built on our school playground by Orbit Homes. This vibrant space has quickly become a sanctuary for our children, fostering creativity and meeting sensory needs daily. The personalised touch, by allowing our children to choose the paint colours has made it uniquely theirs. Thank you, Orbit Homes, for enriching our school community and providing a safe haven where imagination and friendships can thrive. ”

Rhiann McGarrity, Stoke Primary School



### Sensory space for Stoke Primary School

Our team at Orbit Homes teamed up with our partners and contractors to donate a colourful new sensory barn for pupils at Stoke Primary School in Coventry. Working together, the team built and furnished the new space, starting by knocking down an old existing garage to make way for a wooden-framed barn-style structure. Pupils were left to choose the colours and Orbit Homes colleagues brought their vision to life by volunteering to paint the barn. Students now have another place to play, and can enjoy a peaceful, calming environment to learn in when they feel overwhelmed.

# Volunteering

We take responsibility to actively give back to our communities and good causes through volunteering. Volunteering helps our colleagues be a part of making a difference, develop new skills, and build relationships with others. That's why we offer colleagues eight hours per year to invest in a cause of their choice.

In 2023/24, colleagues contributed 1,788 volunteering hours, an increase of 55% from 2022/23, either directly in Orbit communities, independent living or supported housing schemes or through other opportunities with local and national charity organisations. In the coming months, we will also be launching our MyVolunteering platform to make it even easier for colleagues to take up volunteering opportunities which help to support our customers and improve our communities.



**Volunteering this year has included:**

- Planting shrubs, bulbs and bedding plants at Hayley House in Beleverde, along with reshaping borders and painting outdoor furniture to create a new-look garden for residents
- Working together with Southern Land Services to enhance the garden for residents of Wheelock Close
- Volunteering for the Samaritans 'Operation Christmas Child'
- Volunteering to be an Involvement Champion at The Brain Tumor Charity



“ I've signed up for a two-year volunteer role and what's great is I get to choose what I want to work on and support. This could be helping at local fundraising activities, speaking on behalf of the charity at high profile events, campaigning and lobbying for change, supporting the design of pages on their website, reviewing publications and lots more.

The charity is so supportive and lets me contribute as much or as little as I want - I recently took on the role as Route Marshall at the Twilight Walk in London – the day raised over £400K.

For me personally I have the added benefit of meeting up with people who have a similar 'lived experience' so this is a safe space to really share how I feel and a great support network on both good and bad days.

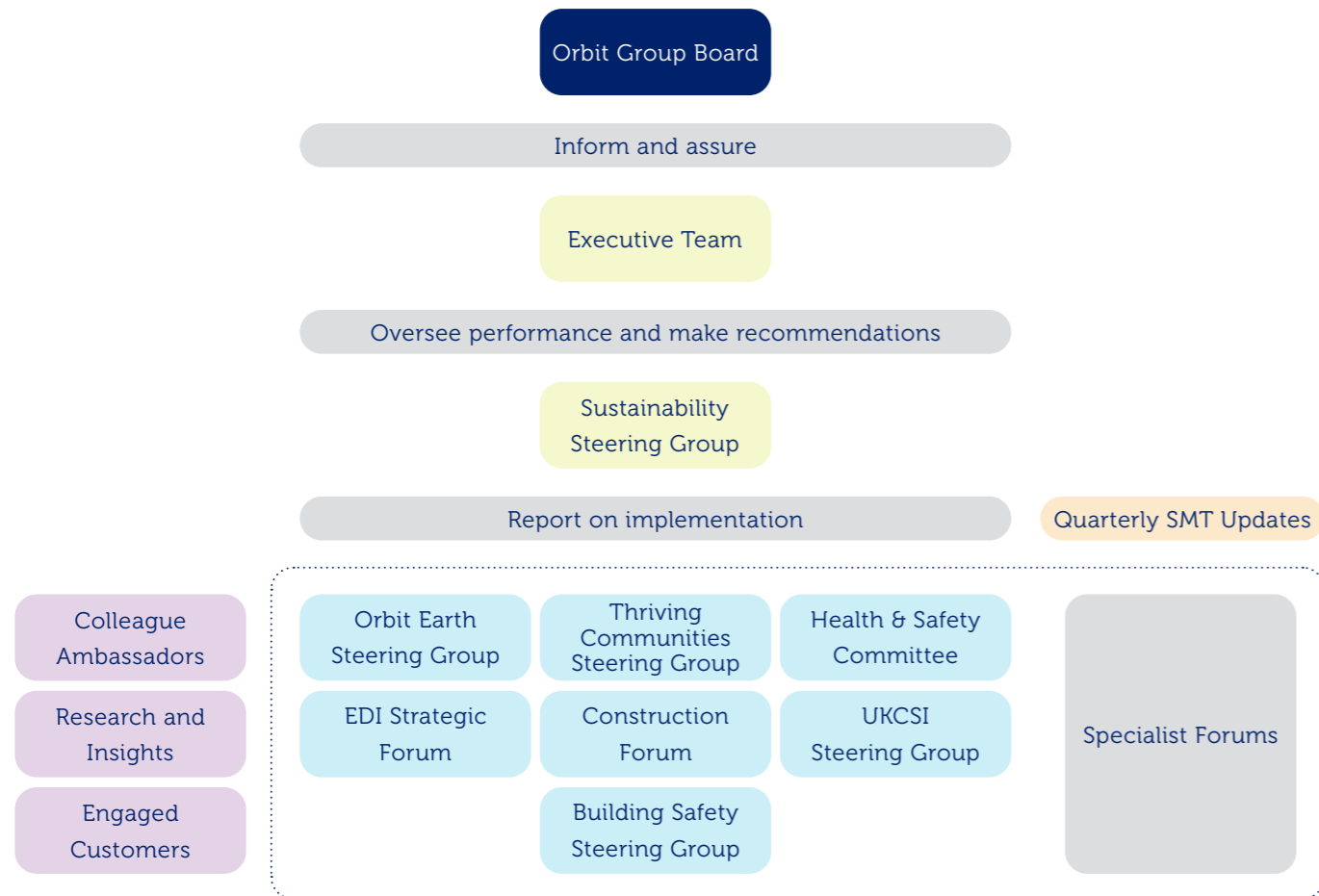
Volunteering is a really positive experience and it's great that I can use my volunteering hours if I wish - thank you Orbit for providing the opportunity for colleagues to give something back. ”

Orbit colleague who volunteer's for The Brain Tumour Charity

# Governance

Our sustainability commitments adhere to our robust performance management framework and are overseen by both our Executive team and Orbit Group Board to ensure we stay true to our Strategy. This is also supported by our Sustainability Steering Group that regularly reviews our Sustainability Strategy to ensure it evolves alongside our Vision and Values, stakeholder expectations and the external environment.

Regular engagement with our stakeholders and specialist forums, such as our EDI Strategic Forum, Carbon Forum, Health & Safety Forum, continue to evolve our commitments to ensure they remain relevant and sector leading, and to provide input and oversight of our Sustainability Reporting Standard for Social Housing (SRS) and Business in the Community submissions.



## 2024/25 Focus

Over the next 12 months we will continue to work towards ensuring everything we do maximises our positive social and environmental impacts, as set out by our Sustainability Strategy and new 2030 Strategy.

### Social value

Embedding our Social Value Framework further will be a key focus during the next 12 months. In addition to ensuring we deliver £100 million of Social Value by 2025, we will be working with our customers to set new targets, to commence from April 2026, ensuring that we focus on delivering services that support our communities and diverse customer-base where statutory provision does not meet need. We will also look to further improve our social value reporting to fully capture the impact we achieve and use this insight to inform more effective outcomes for customers.

### Orbit to Zero

We recognise that a lot has changed since we launched our Orbit to Zero Roadmap in 2021, so we will be reviewing our approach to decarbonisation and updating our roadmap to reflect this, and how we can continue to support our customers in the transition to net zero.

### Our new homes

We will continue to invest in our homes; develop the right homes in the right places and to the right standards to support the needs of customers; and work with communities to regenerate our poorest performing homes. This will include working to achieve an 'A' Environmental Impact Rating for all direct build developments from April 2026 and identifying ways to ensure we design new developments to deliver a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain, aligning with our 30by30 commitment to support nature's recovery.

### Plan for 2050

In 2024/25 we will be looking at further developing our 2030 and 2050 decarbonisation plan, using learnings from the early phases of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and integrating decarbonisation works into existing programmes of work to ensure a better customer experience.

### Waste

Delivering on our waste targets will be a continued focus for 2024/2025 as we look to publish a Zero Waste Strategy that will set out what actions are required to deliver on our targets. We will focus on continuing to drive down office waste whilst seeing an increase in headcount in our offices against the 2022-2023 baseline and review how Modern Methods of Construction affect our construction waste across the next year.

### People

For 2024/25 we are changing the leadership perception measure with an all-encompassing measure to encourage building individual and collective capability across the organisation with a focus on customer. As the sector is evolving and is requiring a focus on professionalisation, as well as aligned with our newly launched corporate strategy, it is crucial that we focus on raising the bar of performance whilst creating rewarding careers for colleagues at Orbit. Thus, we are introducing our ambition that by 2030 all our colleagues have access to an individual development plan designed to raise their capability and ultimately their overall contribution to our purpose.

We will continue to monitor our progress against the targets set out in our Sustainability Strategy as well as introduce new ambitions for those which expire in March 2026. Widening our customer engagement to better involve customers in the decision-making that informs our Sustainability Strategy objectives will also be central to determining any next steps to ensure that everything we do in relation to Sustainability is looked at through the lens of our customers.

“ We have made good progress against the targets set out in our Sustainability Strategy but we recognise we still have more to do, both in terms of evolving our approach in response to the ever-changing external environment, but also in making further progress in areas where we haven't yet achieved what we set out to do.

We also look forward to working more closely with our customers so that we can ensure our sustainability actions to maximise our impact and deliver the most value to as many people as we can. ”

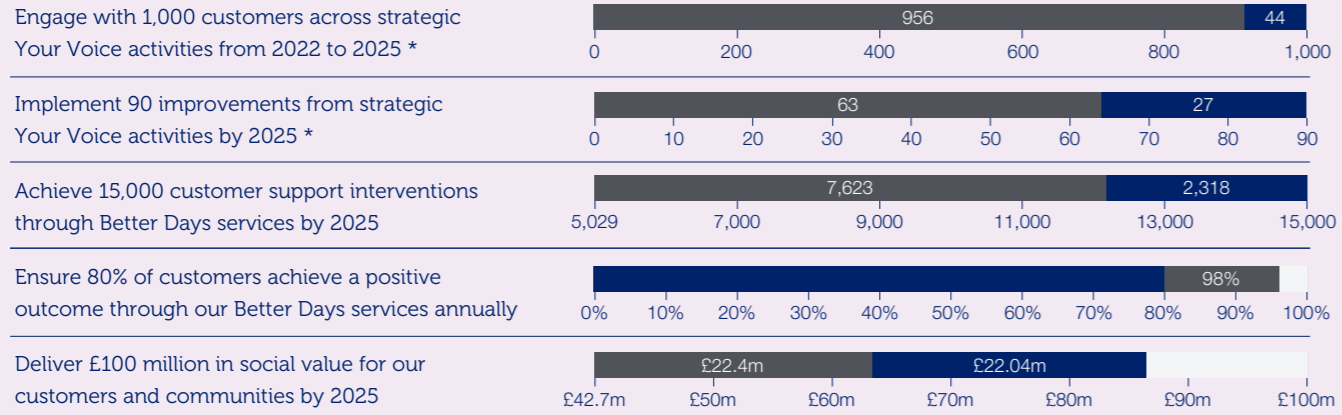
Afzal Ismail, Chair of the Orbit Sustainability Steering Group

## 2024/25 Targets

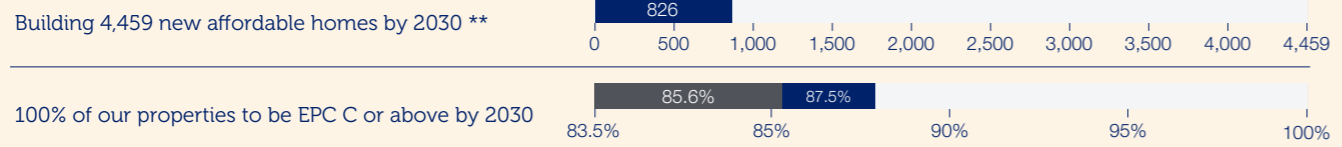
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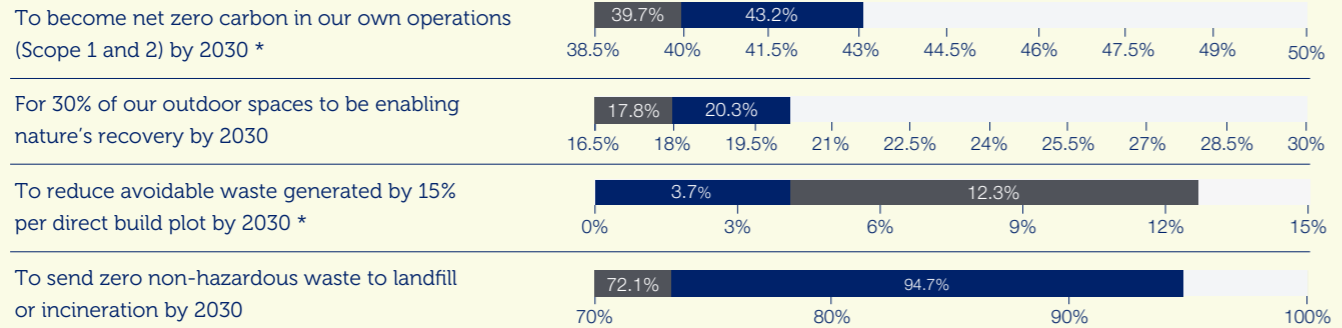
### Our Customers



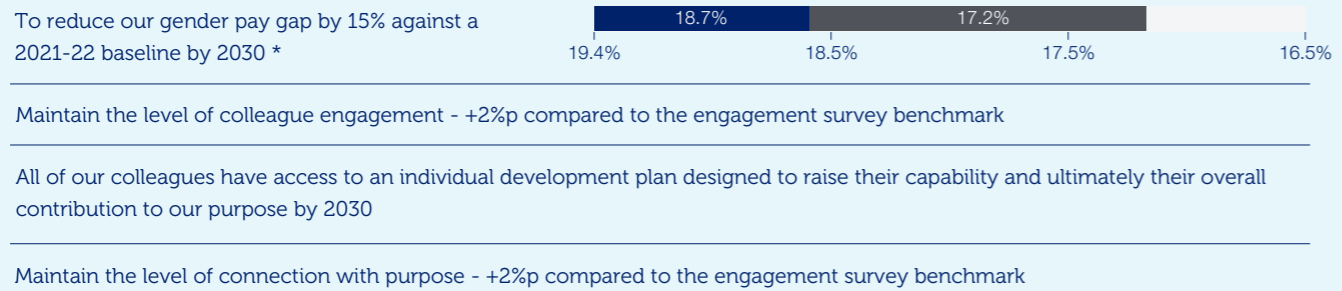
### Quality Homes and Places



### Our Planet



### Our People



\* Ahead of target

\*\* The original 2025 target has now been superseded by a new, more ambitious target, running from April 2024 until March 2030





# Glossary

<b>Air source heat pump</b>	A heat pump that can absorb heat from air outside a building and release it inside. It works much like air conditioning but in reverse. Heat pumps offer high efficiency and can be low or zero carbon depending on the electricity source. <a href="#">Click here</a> for a handy introductory video by the Energy Saving Trust.
<b>Biodiversity</b>	The variety of plant or animal life in a particular area.
<b>Carbon footprint</b>	A measure of the carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere as a result of the activities of an individual, organisation or country. Usually measured either in kilogrammes or tonnes of CO <sub>2</sub> . When shown as CO <sub>2</sub> e the "e" stands for equivalent and refers to the conversion of other greenhouse gases into CO <sub>2</sub> for ease of accounting.
<b>Carbon offsetting</b>	The compensation for carbon emissions released into the atmosphere with activities that will absorb the equivalent amount of carbon. An example of this would be tree planting.
<b>Climate change</b>	Refers to long-term shifts (usually 30 years or more) in weather patterns. Whilst these shifts can be natural, the impacts of humans particularly since industrialisation has seen climate change accelerate through the burning of fossil fuels and land use change.
<b>Decarbonisation</b>	Eliminating carbon from an activity, operation, or product.
<b>Energy performance certificate (EPC)</b>	A rating system to score energy efficiency and energy affordability of a home or building. The highest EPC level is A and lowest G. The certificate will include recommendations on how to make the building more energy efficient and save money.
<b>Fossil fuel</b>	A natural fuel such as coal or gas, formed from the remains of living organisms millions of years ago. Fossil fuels are non-renewable energy resources which are harmful to the environment because they release carbon emissions when they are burnt.
<b>Global warming</b>	The increase in the earth's temperature generally due to the greenhouse effect caused by increased levels of GHGs and other pollutants in the atmosphere.
<b>Greenhouse gases (GHGs)</b>	Gases released into the atmosphere by natural or man-made causes that have an impact on our climate.
<b>Net zero carbon (NZC)</b>	The reduction of greenhouse gas emissions as much as possible and the offsetting of any remaining emissions. Under the later international standards this is taken to mean a 90% or greater reduction in emissions by 2050.
<b>Photovoltaics (PV)</b>	Photovoltaics, also known as solar panels, or solar PV. A technology installed on a roof or on a self-standing structure (large-scale versions are often called solar farms) which enables sunlight to be converted into electricity. Solar power is a renewable source of energy.

<b>Renewable resources</b>	A natural resource or source of energy that can be repeatedly used and replaced naturally, such as water, wind, or solar power.
<b>Science based targets</b>	A target which aligns with a future global warming of no more than 1.5 degrees centigrade. Typically interpreted as a 90% reduction in emissions by 2050.
<b>Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions</b>	GHG emissions are categorised into three groups, or "scopes", by international reporting standards such as the GHG Protocol. Scope 1 and 2 cover our own operations, whilst Scope 3 covers our housing and supply chain.  <b>Scope 1 emissions:</b> direct emissions from resources that Orbit directly controls (such as fuel used in company vehicles and natural gas in our buildings).  <b>Scope 2 emissions:</b> indirect emissions from energy bought for use in Orbit's operations (such as electricity in our offices).  <b>Scope 3 emissions:</b> indirect emissions outside of the operational control of Orbit. This includes our customers' energy use in their homes, purchased goods and services, business travel and employee commuting.
<b>Social housing decarbonisation fund (SHDF)</b>	A government fund that aims to upgrade a significant amount of the social housing stock – currently below Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Band C – to increase energy efficiency, tackle fuel poverty and reduce carbon emissions.
<b>Sustainability</b>	A balance between economic, social, and environmental needs to ensure the needs of today do not compromise those of future generations.
<b>Sustainability Linked Loan</b>	A loan that pays a preferential interest rate to organisations that achieve agreed sustainability targets. Orbit currently has two sustainability linked loans covering 3 targets, of which the reduction in our scope 1 and 2 emissions is one.
<b>Tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>e)</b>	The total greenhouse gases emitted, measured in tonnes of carbon dioxide. Other greenhouse gases, such as methane, are converted to CO <sub>2</sub> according to their global warming impact to allow for a single figure to be presented.
<b>Whole house retrofit</b>	A complete approach to making homes more energy-efficient and limiting their impact on climate change, focusing on the fabric of the house first, including the walls, roof, floors, windows and doors, to strategies for ventilation, heating efficiency and cooling in the summer months.



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Orbit Group Ltd and Orbit Housing Association Ltd are registered societies under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 and are exempt charities registered with the Regulator of Social Housing.