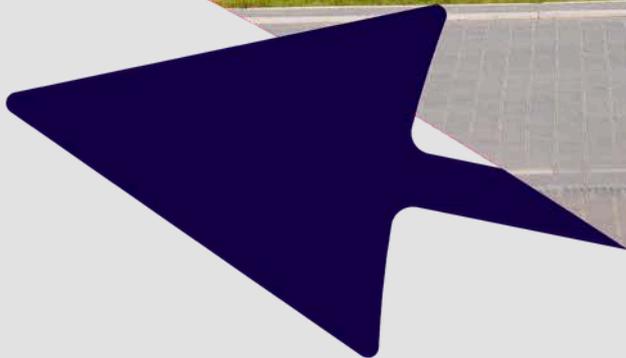


Accent



2023 ▶ 24
ESG Report



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Sarah Ireland

Executive Director of
Strategy & Growth

Introduction

Our commitment to Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles reflects our dedication to being responsible stewards of the environment, fostering positive social impacts for our customers and the communities we serve, and maintaining the highest standards of governance and transparency. This report outlines how Accent delivers on our core social values, while striving to meet the Sustainability Reporting Standard for Social Housing.

This report is the culmination of a year's hard work from colleagues across the business, and it enables us to monitor our progression in holding ourselves accountable to improve our approach to environmental, social and governance performance.

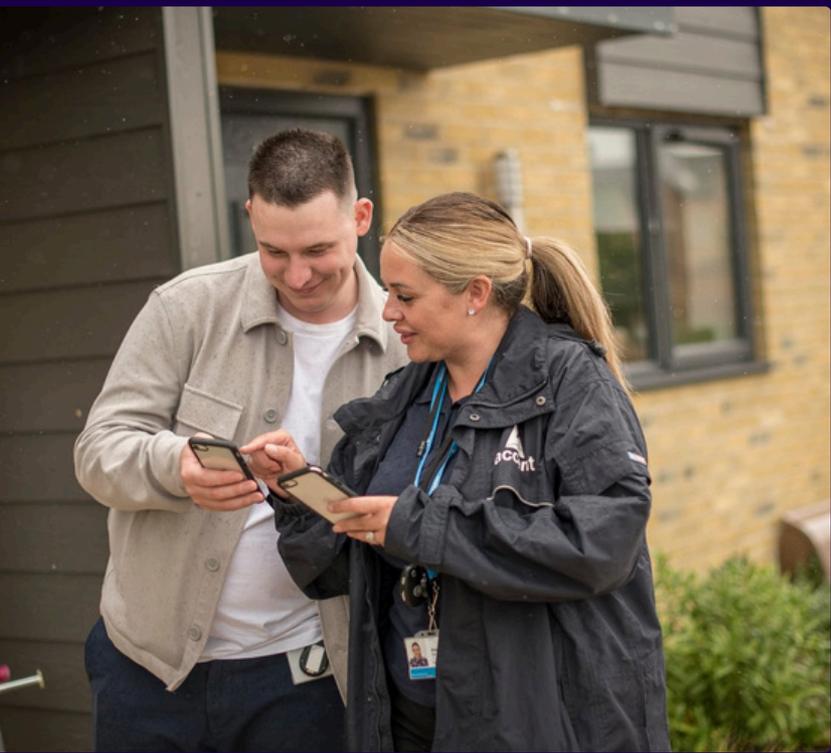
This ESG report outlines our efforts, achievements and ongoing initiatives across these three core areas. It provides a robust baseline to help us establish a strong foundation for future growth and the action plan will enable us to track our progress over the next three years. It serves not only as a reflection of our progress but also as a reaffirmation of our long-term commitment to creating value for all our stakeholders, including customers, colleagues, investors, and the communities in which we work.

This has been a key year for Accent as we have continued our journey of service improvements, retrofit works and ambitious development pipeline. We have launched our new 3-year Corporate Strategy, and our commitment to environmental and social impact will continue to be woven throughout everything we do – with our dedication to customers at the heart.

We remain focussed on maintaining our rating of G1/VI, which was awarded last year by the Regulator of Social Housing. We were delighted to achieve a SHIFT rating of Silver in our first year of being assessed against the sustainability standard.

I invite you to explore this report, which highlights how our strategic focus on ESG is integral to our vision and values, driving innovation, accountability, and sustainable development across our organisation.

Accent is a *forward-thinking* organisation, and a drive for improvement is intrinsic to our *culture*. So, our mission does not stop here, and we will continue to *learn and progress* as we build and deliver on our *values* in the year to come.



WE ARE *Team Accent*

We were formed in **1966** and have grown to now serve over **41,000 customers** across the north, east, and south of the country. Accent owns and manages over **21,600 homes**, and we are responsible for ensuring our customers live in high-quality and well-maintained homes.



At Accent, our core purpose is to help create a fairer society and we are driven by the fundamental belief that providing high-quality, sustainable and affordable homes is the best way to help our customers and communities. We are helping to solve the housing crisis by building new sustainable homes, and maintaining our existing homes, which give our customers stability and a foundation for better living – all of which contributes to the nation’s wider objectives for local and national growth.

We are clear on the impact we can make across our areas of operation and motivated by our values, strong vision and core purpose of providing high quality homes and services for our customers. We know that we have a large part to play in helping to overcome the difficulties that households on lower incomes face, and it is incumbent on us to deliver our core services to the best standard possible so that all our customers feel that it is ‘good to be home’.

Alignment with our *Corporate Strategy 2024-27*

Our approach to ESG has been developed in line with the new Corporate Strategy 2024-2027: Building on Strong Foundations, which provides a focus upon which we can build a sustainable, inclusive, and innovative organisation, committed to growth whilst continuing to provide good quality affordable homes and services for our customers.

As such, our approach to ESG runs throughout our priorities, plans, and day-to-day operations, and is considered in every action we take.

The diagram below sets out how our ESG activities and plans are aligned to delivering our 2024-2027 Corporate Strategy.

Strategic Priority

Where our ESG approach and plans will enable the delivery of key goals and targets



Quality homes
for the future

- 90% of homes at EPC C and above
- 85% of new land led homes constructed at EPC A
- Improve biodiversity at ten sites per year
- Achieve SHIFT gold standard
- Reduction in scope 1, 2 and 3 carbon emissions
- Increased focus on responsibly sourced materials
- Secure grant funding to support our decarbonisation works



Excellence through
customer influenced services

- An increase of 10% in overall customer satisfaction
- Develop and implement a new Customer Engagement Strategy
- Refreshed community development & inclusion team
- We will ensure we hear the voice of our customers through our governance mechanisms and reflect their needs in our business decisions



Investing
in success

- Retain G1/V1
- Colleague engagement score 8/10
- Integrate social and environmental benefits into our procurement processes and future contracts
- Modernise our systems and harness the power of our data and insights to make better decisions



Lasting
change

- Gender Pay Gap down to 5.5%
- Introduce a new social value measure to assess the impact our activities are having
- Collaborate with local organisations, partners, and stakeholders to amplify social value initiatives
- Maintain our position of being a Living Wage employer

Quality homes for the future

We will ensure our existing homes are safe and affordable for our customers, and sustainable for the future. We will do this through improving our understanding of our stock condition to better target our investment to maintain the safety of our buildings and increase their thermal efficiency.

We actively consider the costs of running our homes, enabling us to help reduce fuel poverty whilst working to meet the government's decarbonisation targets. Our aim is to increase the percentage of homes meeting Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C rating, in line with our target for all homes to meet this as a minimum by 2030. Investment in decarbonisation works will be targeted where it can deliver the greatest impact and value for the cost involved. We will take a measured approach to decarbonisation and secure our place as 'fast followers' in the market.

To help us ensure our approach to sustainability is making the impact we want, we will use the SHIFT sustainability assessment tool for Social Housing Providers on an annual basis to monitor how we're doing in delivering the key actions to which we have committed.

Excellence through customer influenced services

The challenges faced by the communities in which our customers live vary from region to region, and over time, so it is for us to ensure that our homes and services remain relevant and continue to meet the changing needs and expectations of our customers.

Collaborating with our customers to improve our services is fundamental to providing high-quality services and places where customers can feel 'good to be home'. Customer engagement is an ongoing relationship that we value and learn from, which is why we are committed to providing simple channels that empower and encourage customers to give us regular feedback and use this to co-design and make improvements to our services.

The new Consumer Standards, and specifically the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), will enable us to benchmark with other similar-sized housing associations how satisfied our customers are with the services and homes we provide, and how well we are doing in meeting our service level targets compared with our peer group.

Investing in success

We need to ensure that we have an engaged workforce which is equipped to deliver high-quality services. We will achieve this by improving colleague engagement, recruitment, and training for the right technical expertise. We will provide colleagues with easy-to-use, modern, integrated systems and efficient, value-adding processes.

'One Accent' is our way of coming together to create a workplace where all our colleagues can thrive. It's about removing barriers and giving everyone the tools they need to deliver outstanding customer service. Our simple ambition is to make it easy for customers, colleagues, and other stakeholders to do business with us.

Having good-quality data is fundamental in a modern organisation and so we will refine our data collection, storage, and management to ensure we have good quality, easy-to-access, secure data that is used to inform decisions and provide better information to customers and other stakeholders.

Contributing to lasting change

As an organisation with a strong commitment to continued growth, we will work with our stakeholders to achieve better outcomes for our customers by adding our voice to sector-wide lobbying activity. We will align with the key messages of our sector whilst presenting our own insight and expertise, utilising our customers' lived experience to support our calls for long term change.

We are committed to shaping a sustainable future, and we are acutely aware of our wider responsibilities to minimise our environmental footprint and increase the affordability of running our homes for customers. We will further develop our ESG framework, strengthen our reporting, and identify opportunities that align with our overarching strategic objectives.

ESG performance and targets for 2023-2024

Environmental



82%

of existing homes are **EPC C** or above



48%

of new homes constructed at EPC A

£1.3m

of grant funding received so far from SHDF and WYCA which has improved energy efficiency in 112 homes



Silver SHIFT Accreditation



Flagship regeneration scheme at Ripleyville to be delivered at net zero



Carbon footprint
Scope 1: 2,561 t/CO₂e
Scope 2: 842t/CO₂e
Scope 3: 205 t/CO₂e

Social



93%

of homes let at social rent



61%

overall customer satisfaction (TSM perception survey result)



In our Big Conversation
we knocked on 9,136 doors and had conversations with 1,597 customers



New development at Bottisham created £5.1M SVA



Security of tenure
100% of low cost rented homes on assured tenancy



Customer Champions
appointed to amplify the voice of the customer in our decision making and service improvement initiatives

£64.5K

additional income for customers raised by Financial Inclusion team

ESG performance and targets for 2023-2024

Governance

GI/VI

rating

8.9%

gender pay gap



Hive employee engagement index score is 6.6



Living Wage employer



33% of Board members are ethnic minorities



Gender balance on the board 56% men: 44% female

Our impact goals

(to achieve by March 2027)



100% of homes will be at least EPC C by 2030



100% of new land led homes delivered will be EPC A



Gold SHIFT accreditation

Environmental



Climate Change

Climate change is a pressing global issue characterised by the long-term alteration of temperature and weather patterns. Human activities, especially the burning of fossil fuels associated with construction and housing, have significantly increased the concentration of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere, leading to global warming and an increased risk of extreme weather events such as flooding and overheating. In response, Accent is increasingly focused on sustainability and climate resilience.

EPCs – New and Existing

In recent years, environmental sustainability has become a crucial focus for housing providers in the UK. As part of this shift, housing associations have been tasked with building homes that meet higher energy efficiency standards, particularly in response to the climate crisis and rising fuel costs. One key metric for gauging energy efficiency is the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating, where Band A represents the highest level of energy performance.

The significant increase in new homes built with an EPC A rating is reflected by growing efforts from housing associations like Accent to prioritise energy efficiency in new developments. Improving the energy performance of our homes is not only beneficial for the environment but also for our customers, who face rising energy costs and fuel poverty.

As part of Accent’s significant steps to mitigate our environmental impacts, we are committed to all our land-led new build homes being built to an EPC A standard. We are also working with partners on our S106 schemes to deliver homes at EPC A rating, and this will become a specific requirement in our future partnerships. In the August issue of Inside Housing, an analysis was shared in terms of how successful housing associations had been in delivering new homes to an EPC A standard in 2023–24. Accent was ranked second in the sector; an incredible achievement.

The delivery of EPC A-rated homes provides significant benefits, both for customers in terms of lower energy costs and for Accent in terms of reduced future liabilities related to retrofitting. Accent’s proactive stance on sustainability ensures that it is well-prepared to meet the housing challenges of the future.

Distribution of EPC ratings for our new homes

(those completed in the last financial year):



Accent Housing: a leader in sustainability

Accent delivers on its commitment to delivering EPC A-rated homes

Background

Building high-performance homes from the outset ensures that they are sustainable and affordable, both in terms of construction and ongoing energy costs for customers. With its EPC A commitment, Accent has decided to stay ahead of the curve and prioritise sustainability in its developments.

This goal has already been acknowledged in the August edition of Inside Housing, where Accent was recognised as number 2 for the quantity of EPC A new-build homes in 2023-24, out of the top 100 housing associations; a tremendous achievement that positioned Accent as a leader in the sector.

Approach

Accent's approach to building energy-efficient homes reflects a deep commitment to sustainability and affordability. Over recent years Accent has transitioned to a predominantly land led development programme which enables greater control over the design specification. Where Accent is developing S106 schemes it is also working with partners to develop as many of these homes to an EPC A standard as possible. By working closely with development partners and focusing on long-term outcomes, Accent has played a key role in the UK's push toward greener housing.

Accent's commitment to delivering EPC A-rated homes has contributed to the broader trend of increasing energy efficiency in the UK housing sector. With 208 EPC A rated buildings out of 431 completions in 2023-24, 48.3% of the total, Accent has made remarkable progress in increasing the number of homes meeting EPC A standards.

Outcomes

1. Energy Savings for Customers: The focus on energy-efficient homes ensures that customers benefit from reduced energy consumption, helping to keep energy bills as low as possible, which is increasingly important as energy prices continue to rise. This also contributes to improved thermal comfort and reducing fuel poverty among customers with associated health and wellbeing benefits. In addition, this aligns with Accent's broader mission of providing affordable housing solutions and reducing carbon emissions.

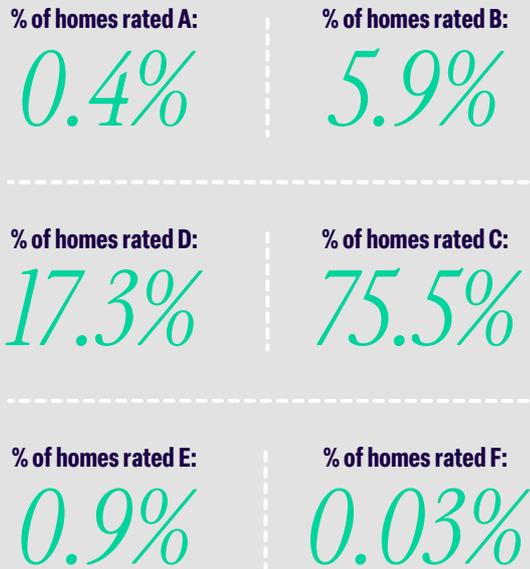
2. Cost Avoidance for Future Retrofits: By building homes to EPC A standards from the outset, Accent avoids the significant costs associated with retrofitting homes to meet future energy efficiency standards. Retrofitting is not only expensive but also disruptive for customers, making Accent's proactive approach more cost-effective in the long term.

3. Sustainability Leadership: Accent's success in delivering EPC A-rated homes demonstrates its leadership in sustainability within the housing sector. The organisation's ability to influence its development partners and work toward higher standards sets an example for others in the sector. By prioritising long-term energy efficiency, Accent is helping to future-proof its housing stock and contributing to the UK's broader environmental goals.

4. Alignment with National and Local Policies: By meeting and exceeding regulatory requirements, such as the Future Homes Standard, Accent ensures compliance with evolving legislation while also positioning itself as a leader in sustainable housing. This alignment with national sustainability goals currently helps Accent secure funding linked to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors.

Distribution of EPC ratings for our existing homes

(those completed before the last financial year):



EPCs of existing properties

Improving the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings of existing homes is a crucial target for the UK housing sector as it strives to combat climate change and reduce carbon emissions. With the government aiming for all homes to reach a minimum EPC Band C by 2030, housing providers face increasing pressure to enhance the energy efficiency of their current stock.

Accent is progressing well against the government target of all homes being EPC C or above by 2030, as currently 82% of our existing homes are already at this standard with investment provision included in the financial business plan to achieve full compliance.

Average Standard Assessment Procedure

Accent's average SAP rating of existing homes (those completed before the last financial year) is...

73.3 

Average Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) assesses energy efficiency in homes and high SAP ratings correlate with low CO2 emissions. The SAP rating refers to the cost per m2 of heating, hot water, lighting, pumps and fans (regulated emissions as opposed to 'unregulated emissions', i.e. appliances such as cookers, fridges and TVs).

In addition, we can disclose that:

- The average annual CO2 emissions from heating, hot water and lighting per square metre of the property are 37.6kg/M3
- The average annual CO2 emissions in tonnes from heating, hot water and lighting, calculated using SAP 2012 methodology are 2.2tonnes CO2/ per property
- The average Environmental Impact Rating, a rating based on CO2 emissions of a property ranging from 1-100 with 100 being zero net emissions for heating, hot water and lighting, is 72.0

Accent is currently aligned to the government's Net Zero target by 2050 and is in the process of developing a Net Zero & Sustainability Strategy, inclusive of Scope 3 emissions and aligned with Science Based Targets.

To help this process Accent is taking advice from SHIFT, who have highlighted that, given the Government's National Strategy is to have a net zero grid by 2035, electrically heated homes should be net zero by then. Accent's Net Zero and Sustainability strategies are being reviewed in the context of the wider ESG reporting alignment with Accent's Corporate Strategy and strategic period.

In the last year, Accent has delivered energy efficiency improvements to 112 homes.



Six of these homes received a whole house fabric-first approach including external wall insulation, reroof with loft insulation, new windows and doors and ventilation upgrades. This was delivered under Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF), to PAS 2030:35 standards.

Accent also received some co-funding from West Yorkshire Combined Authority to install loft and/or cavity wall insulation measures. 106 homes received measures including additional ventilation upgrades, LED lighting replacements and draught-proofing measures.

www.accentgroup.org/about-us/our-news/brighthouse-homes-retrofitted-to-improve-energy-efficiency/

The retrofit programme contributes to reducing Scope 3 emissions. For example, the SHDF Yorkshire project, which had a fabric-first approach, saved circa 8 tonnes in just 6 properties, an average on 1.4tonnes/year/per home.

One customer benefiting from retrofit work to their home in Brighthouse said:

"My home is *very warm* compared to before. I hardly have my heating on now and I am making a *saving on my bills.*"

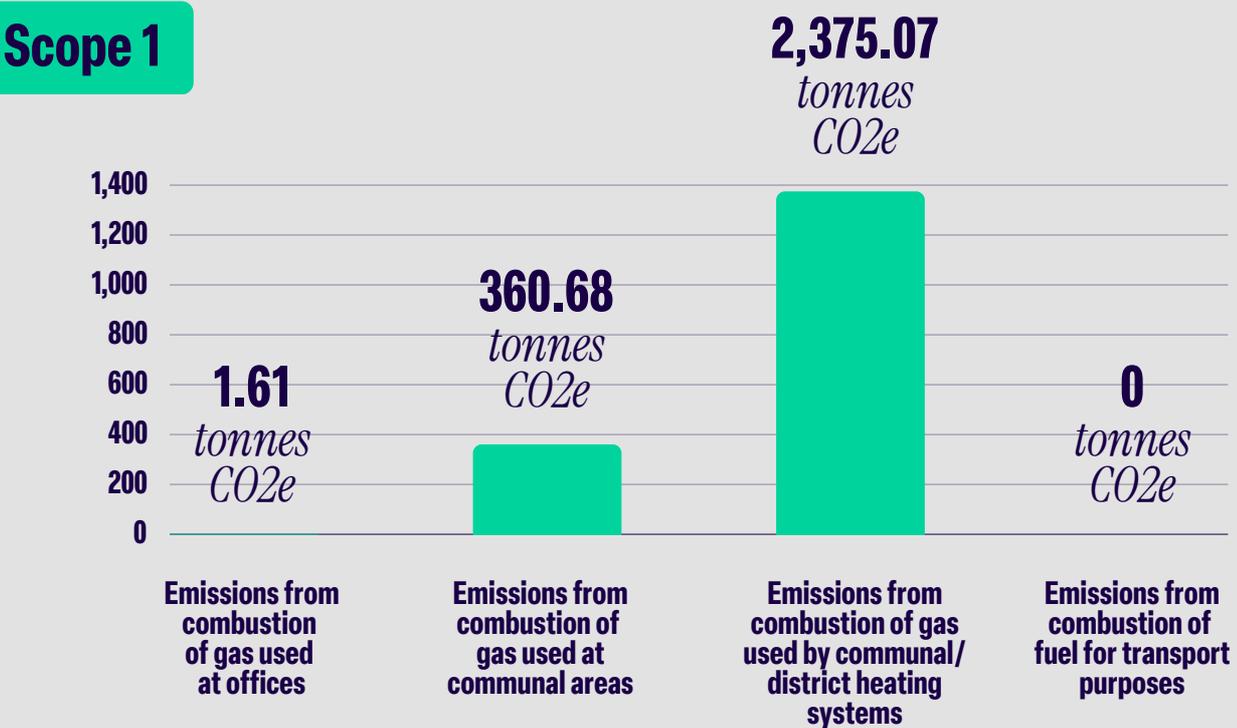


Carbon emissions

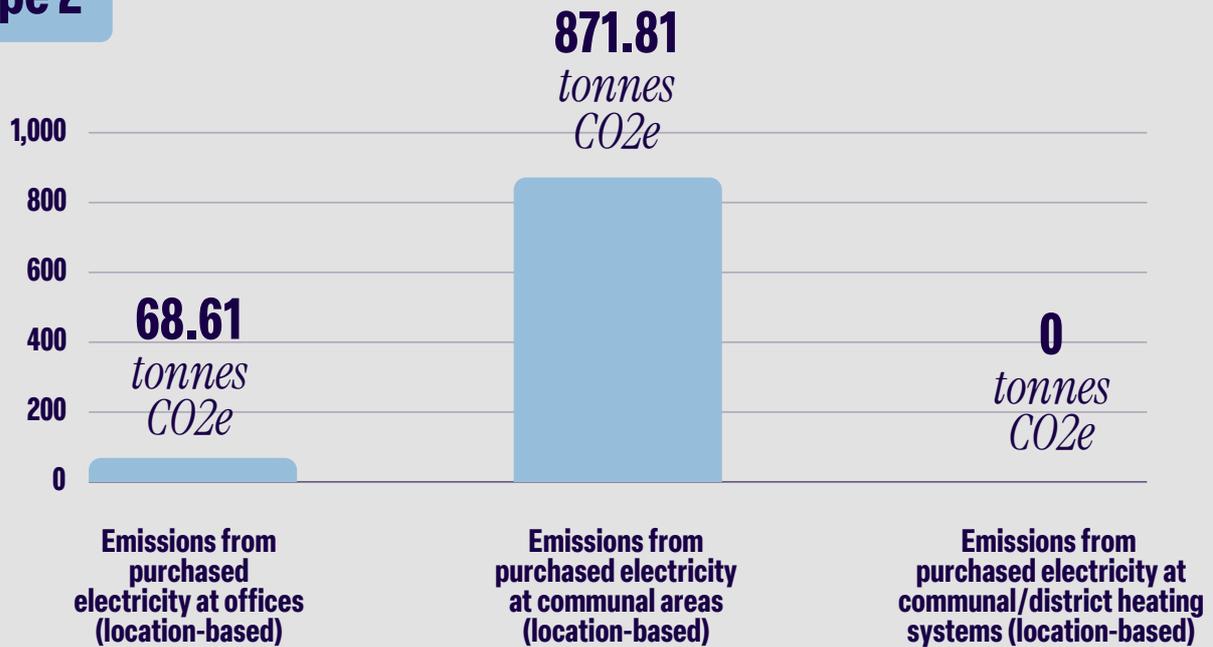
Carbon emissions, primarily in the form of carbon dioxide (CO₂), are a significant contributor to global climate change.

In Accent's case, they primarily arise from our homes, both from burning fossil fuels for heating and from the embodied carbon in construction materials (Scope 3). This is why we are targeting EPC A and already working with some of our contractors to explore a pilot using embodied carbon.

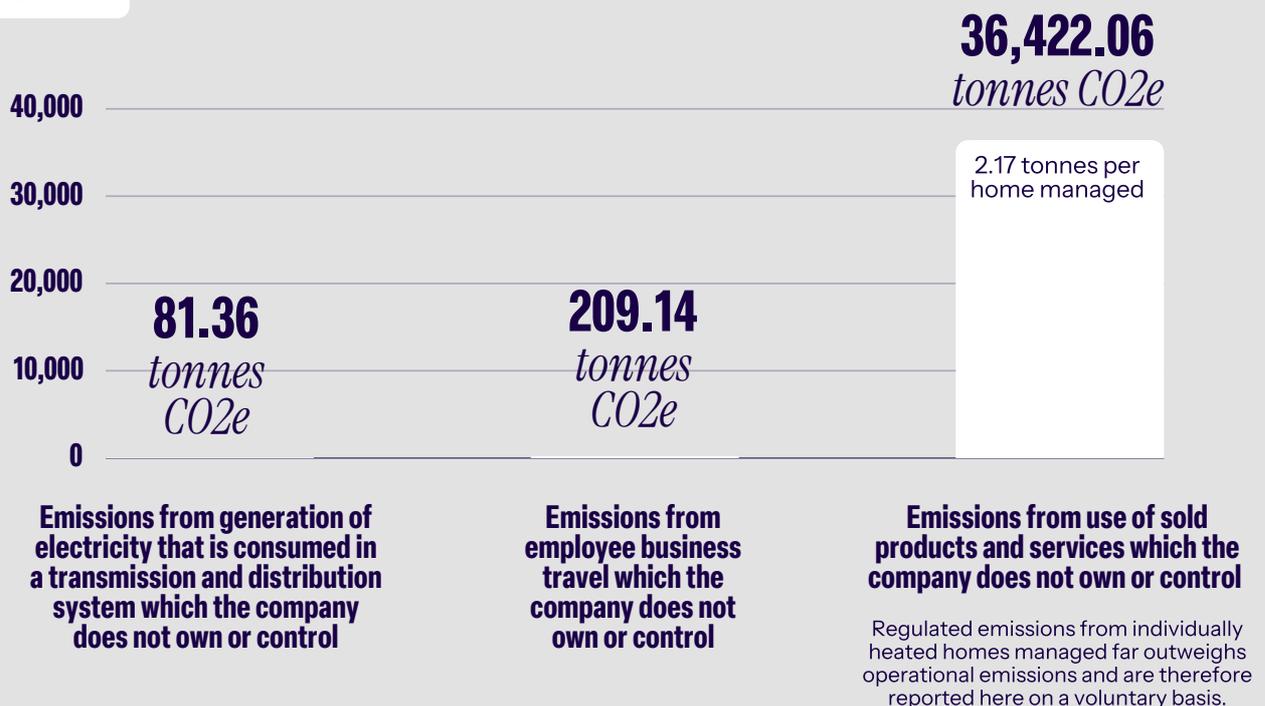
Scope 1, Scope 2, and Scope 3 green house gas emissions



Scope 2



Scope 3



As part of our efforts to report in an accurate and consistent manner with the rest of the housing sector, this year Accent has engaged SHIFT to produce its environmental impact report, including carbon emissions. The report spans existing homes, new build, facilities, transport and travel and supply chain, thereby providing a comprehensive overview of Accent's environmental footprint. Accent is pleased to announce we have achieved a SHIFT Silver rating in our first year of being assessed against the standard.



We've earned a silver rating in our first year with the SHIFT Sustainability Standard.

Scope 1, 2 & 3: Total Kg CO2 equivalent per home managed

2.17
tonnes



Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 green house gas emissions per home

In line with Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR) [AL1] requirements and good practice, Accent is using a number of intensity metrics, including Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 Green House Gas emissions per home as well as office carbon intensity – 36.51 kg CO2e per m2 – and tonnes of carbon per each million of turnover – 8.01 tCO2e/£1m turnover.

Overall carbon emissions reduction

Our carbon footprint calculations last year were done by a different organisation which applied a different methodology, so to remain consistent and transparent we have decided to choose this year's emissions as our baseline for the early adopters SRS database. From next year onwards, we will start reporting on our overall carbon reduction.

Climate-related risks

Climate risks in housing, particularly overheating and flooding, pose a significant challenge as the frequency and severity of extreme weather events increase due to climate change. Accent is proactively addressing climate risks by incorporating climate resilience into our long-term strategies. For example, through flood risk mapping we aim to identify vulnerable areas and prioritise mitigation efforts.

Accent is committed to ensuring the safety and sustainability of our customers and communities. We already collate flood risk information on our new build developments to verify the risk from all sources including rivers, seas and surface water (fluvial and pluvial). This helps us to make informed decisions that help shape the development areas we focus on, prioritising the wellbeing of our customers and neighbourhoods.

In addition, going forward we will gather flood risk data on our existing properties via the Environment Agency's long term projection maps and work with our Assets and Compliance team in introducing flood risk level into our property database. The climate risks will be shared internally to influence our Development and Growth Strategy, providing an insight into new schemes and allowing us to check whether existing homes can be protected.

Accent will continue to explore climate risks and will devise a risk management approach so that any homes at risk of flooding can be protected.

Accent also recognise the impact of quality green spaces and public open spaces in urban areas. Within our developments, we continue to incorporate ecological enhancements and consider the health and wellbeing of our customers through wildflower and informal areas of play. We regularly incorporate sustainable drainage systems in the form of attenuation ponds, swales, dry basins to address the climate risk of flooding, while simultaneously enhancing natural habitats.

Ecology

Biodiversity

Biodiversity draws our attention to the variety of all life on Earth: animals, plants, fungi, and bacteria. According to the Wildlife Trust, since monitoring began in the 1970s, 56% of our wild plants and animals have declined due to urban development and loss of habitats. For this reason, it is important that we recognise the balance between nature and green spaces and the wellbeing of our residents and colleagues.



Accent is committed to improving the *communities* and *environment* we work in. By seeking to enhance the open spaces within our development sites, we create manageable and *healthy spaces* that attract wildlife and benefit our *customers*.

Biodiversity targets

Green and blue infrastructure (GBI) are all the individual parcels of natural space and features within both our urban and rural spaces that when connected, deliver quality of life and environmental benefits for communities and are key for nature to thrive. As a housing provider, we are aware of the need for GBI to help reduce overheating, prevent flooding, and reduce air and noise pollution.



This is why we are committed to ensuring a *minimum of 10%* biodiversity gain in all our land-led developments from 2025. In addition, we are committed to publishing and resourcing our *Biodiversity Action Plan* no later than *2026-27*.



In the meantime, each year we will identify 10 existing schemes where we can improve biodiversity together with our customers, e.g. food growing projects, insect hotels, etc. We will continue promoting biodiversity to our customers throughout the year with campaigns and continue to partner with our supply chain, who are also committed to reducing their environmental impact.



At present we are already creating and enhancing habitats that are specific to the regions in which we operate. This includes efforts to preserve both flora and fauna, such as a maternity roost of brown long-eared bats in Little Downham (see case study) and habitat and wildlife enhancement areas, including hedgehog houses, bird boxes and hedgehog highways at our recently completed scheme at Cardinal Park in Godmanchester. In addition, we will continue to invite residents to community events such as the '[Home Grown Project](#)' in [Sudbury Court](#).



“The gardening project was very enjoyable; we did the activity out in the fresh air on a lovely day as a group, we all chipped in and got our hands dirty. The flowers that grew were beautiful and brightened the place up. It was a good laugh too.”



Accent's Efforts on Biodiversity

Bat Mitigation Strategy



Background

Accent's commitment to biodiversity is exemplified by our approach to protecting bat species during the development of affordable housing.

At the Hobbs Farm site in Little Downham, Cambridgeshire, an 100% affordable housing project was proposed involving the construction of 39 new homes. However, the site was home to a maternity roost for brown long-eared bats (BLE), a species that has seen decline due to habitat loss and modern land use practices. Accent incorporated a Bat Mitigation Strategy into our planning process, ensuring both the protection of local wildlife and the successful delivery of much-needed housing.

Approach

To balance development and biodiversity, Accent worked with ecologists to create a comprehensive Bat Mitigation Strategy, addressing the impact of the new housing scheme on the local bat population.

The strategy included several key elements:

- 1. Survey and Assessment:** Detailed surveys were conducted to assess bat activity. These surveys confirmed the presence of a brown long-eared bat maternity roost in the loft of an unoccupied building on the site. Additional species were recorded using the area for foraging and commuting.
- 2. Mitigation Strategy:** The strategy followed a clear mitigation hierarchy—Avoid, Mitigate, and Compensate. While avoiding disturbance to the roost was not feasible, Accent took steps to mitigate the impact by designing a replacement roost structure, incorporating it into the surrounding landscape to provide a suitable long-term habitat for the displaced bats.
- 3. Creation of a New Roost:** A dedicated bat roosting structure, or "bat house," was designed as part of the project. The new roost was located in an area less likely to be disturbed by the new housing development. It was designed to meet the specific requirements of BLE bats, including the provision of sufficient space for pre-emergence flight, optimal access points, and hibernation features.
- 4. Habitat Enhancement:** In addition to the new roost, Accent implemented habitat improvements across the site. This included creating new hedgerows, enhancing existing boundary vegetation, and establishing species-rich grasslands and wetland areas. These enhancements not only support bat populations but also contribute to wider biodiversity goals.
- 5. Lighting Considerations:** Accent also took steps to minimise light pollution, a key concern for nocturnal species such as bats. The lighting scheme for the development was designed to avoid illuminating key ecological features and flight paths, thus reducing potential disruption to bat foraging and commuting behaviour.

Outcomes

Accent's Bat Mitigation Strategy resulted in several positive outcomes for both biodiversity and the development:

1. Preservation of Local Bat Populations: By implementing a purpose-built bat roost and enhancing surrounding habitats, Accent ensured that the brown long-eared bats would continue to thrive in the area. The construction of the new roost and the retention of key trees and hedgerows provided bats with safe spaces for roosting, foraging, and commuting.

2. Integration of Biodiversity in Development: The project demonstrated how affordable housing can be delivered while safeguarding biodiversity. Through collaboration with ecologists and careful planning, Accent successfully balanced the needs of the local bat population with the goals of the housing development.

3. Long-Term Environmental Monitoring: Accent committed to ongoing monitoring of the new roost and surrounding habitats to ensure the success of the mitigation measures. This long-term approach will help maintain the bat population and contribute to broader conservation efforts.

Accent's efforts at Hobbs Farm highlight the importance of integrating biodiversity into housing developments. Through our Bat Mitigation Strategy, Accent not only ensured compliance with environmental regulations but also took meaningful steps to protect local wildlife. This approach sets an example for other developers, showing that environmental sustainability and housing needs can coexist.

Pollutants

As part of our Net Zero journey, Accent is currently installing electric vehicle charge points in all our new land-led schemes, giving our customers a choice not just to reduce CO₂, but to tackle other harmful pollutants derived from the use of combustion engines i.e. carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), fine and ultrafine particles, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), and formaldehyde.

In addition, Accent is gearing up to produce a comprehensive strategy to identify, manage and reduce pollutants in both our existing assets, for example cleaning products in offices and communal areas, as well as building materials that could cause material harm. For example, we are working with contractors to explore ways to lower Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) in paintwork.

Accent is currently exploring standards and methodologies to be able to target and measure performance in this area, including WELL Building Standard. This is the leading performance-based system for measuring, certifying, and monitoring features of the built environment that impact human health and well-being. We are also exploring Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) and Regenerative, Ecological, Social & Economical Targets (RESET) indoor air quality certification systems, amongst others.

Accent is committed to releasing a comprehensive strategy on pollutants no later than 2025-26.



Resource Management

Responsibly sourced materials

Accent is committed to incorporating ethical considerations in all aspects of its procurement, ensuring our suppliers adhere to comprehensive international standards, both in terms of materials having been manufactured in an environmentally sound way and in the fair treatment of workers. The use of responsibly sourced materials applies to both our building and repairs work.

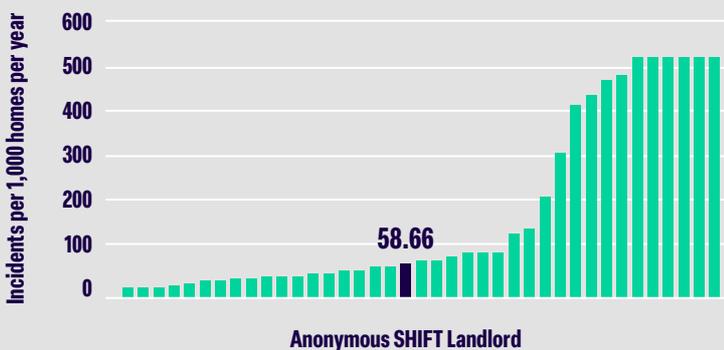
Accent is baselining its percentage of responsibly sourced materials in 2024-25 and committing to a 10% improvement, year on year, during the lifecycle of this plan (i.e. 3 years). We will follow SHIFT's methodology and Online Risk Assessment in line with BES6001, which covers environmental, carbon, waste, water, packaging, health and safety, timber, natural material extraction, conflict minerals, human rights, anti-slavery, anti-bribery, anti-corruption, quality assurance, chemical, management, and quality management.

We are committed to working with suppliers to measure, monitor, and improve our supply chain performance in this area.

Waste

Accent manages waste in an environmentally responsible way.

Number of flytipping incidents



CASE STUDY

WestPoint

Resource-efficient offices

WestPoint in Peterborough is our second largest office and home to over **30%** of our colleagues. Although we do not own the premises, WestPoint's *sustainability credentials* are something Accent is *proud* of.



The Decarbonisation Strategy of these offices is already underway, with an active reduction of electricity usage via various LED lighting applications and a 'Smart BMS', which controls plant running times: proprietary software is linked to the BMS to ensure efficient running times and air quality. A renewable electricity contract, backed by REGOs and quality-assured by Complete Energy is in place so we are able to claim zero Scope 2 emissions under market-based reporting. In addition, gas-powered chillers will be phased out in early 2025 and fully electrified.

Water management in the building includes a Smart Flow water monitoring and leak detection system, which enables early leak detection and real time water usage monitoring and reporting, resulting in water savings and world-class water management. A Waste Management Strategy is also in place, ensuring waste separation (including food).

The average recycling percentage is 79% (based on 2022-24 data).

In addition, the total amount of waste has been steadily reducing over the last couple of years, and it is now less than half that of 2022.

Finally, we have our own biodiversity initiative within the grounds at West Point, a beehive owned by our colleagues and fellow tenants, managed by Alveole. Their mission and our intent in participating in this initiative and their workshops, as well as to contribute to biodiversity, is to connect people with nature, reinforce the practical benefits of sustainability and give our colleagues a meaningful educational experience.

Across the housing sector, *affordability and customer support* remain pivotal themes in sustainability and social governance strategies. As an organisation, we strive to offer *affordable rent* options while assisting customers with comprehensive *support services* aimed at improving *financial wellbeing*.



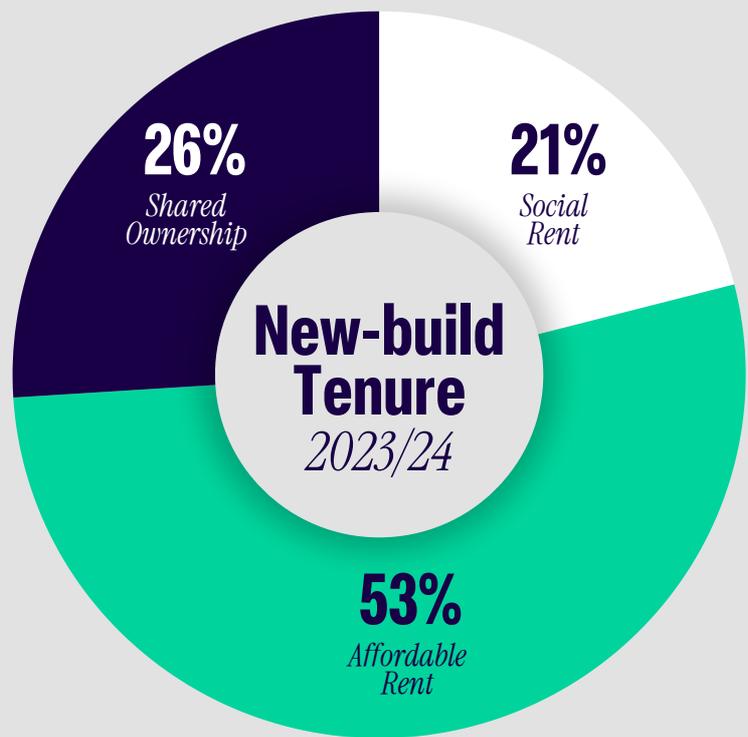
Rents

Most Accent properties are subject to the rent regulation regime, and we perform well against the two more common affordability metrics: rent compared to median private rental sector (PRS) where we can offer our customers low cost rent which is almost 50% lower than the private rented sector, and rent across the relevant Local Authority where, on average, our rents are 70% of the local authority average.

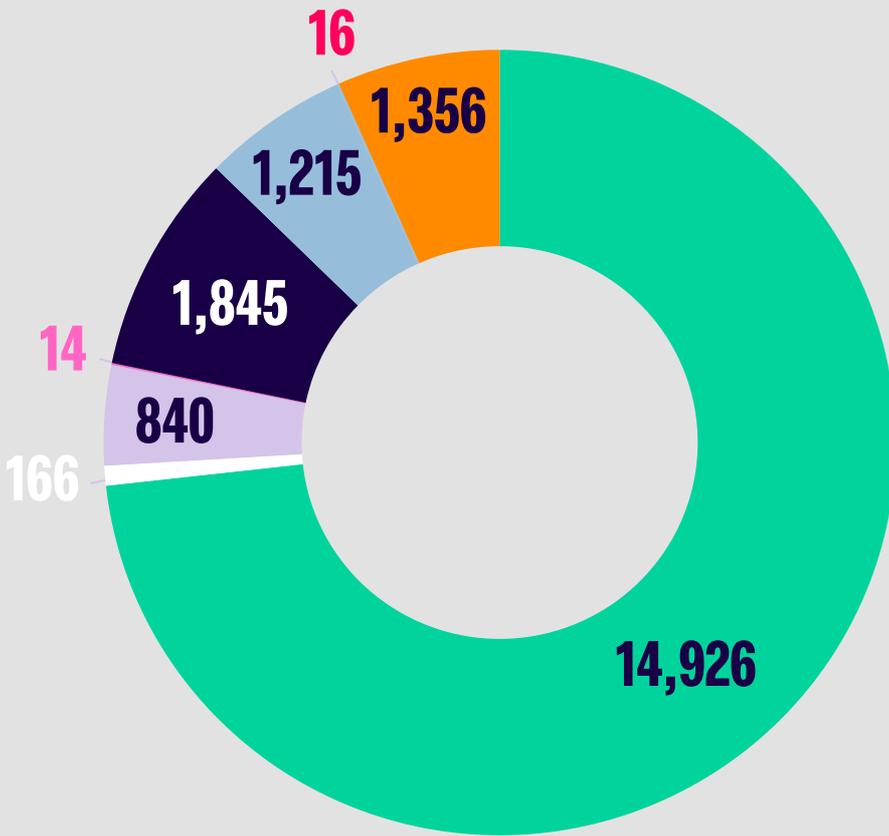
We are committed to delivering a range of tenures, including a high number of social rent homes. In 23/24, 21% of homes built were for Social Rent, 53% for Affordable Rent and 26% for Shared Ownership. Of our approved development pipeline of just under 1200 homes, 15% will be for Social Rent and all affordable rent homes will have rents capped at LHA.

Accent continues to place a significant emphasis on affordable housing, and in particular social rent homes, striving to deliver housing that serves a broad range of income groups. As per the below, the more substantial share of our portfolio is general needs homes, which include social and affordable rent options.

Despite general economic challenges, Accent remains committed to increasing the supply of affordable homes by expanding our development pipeline, with an aim to provide more social and affordable rent homes while ensuring that new builds meet stringent environmental standards, such as being net-zero ready.



Accent is on a mission to ensure that housing is *affordable, accessible, and sustainable* for a wide range of communities.

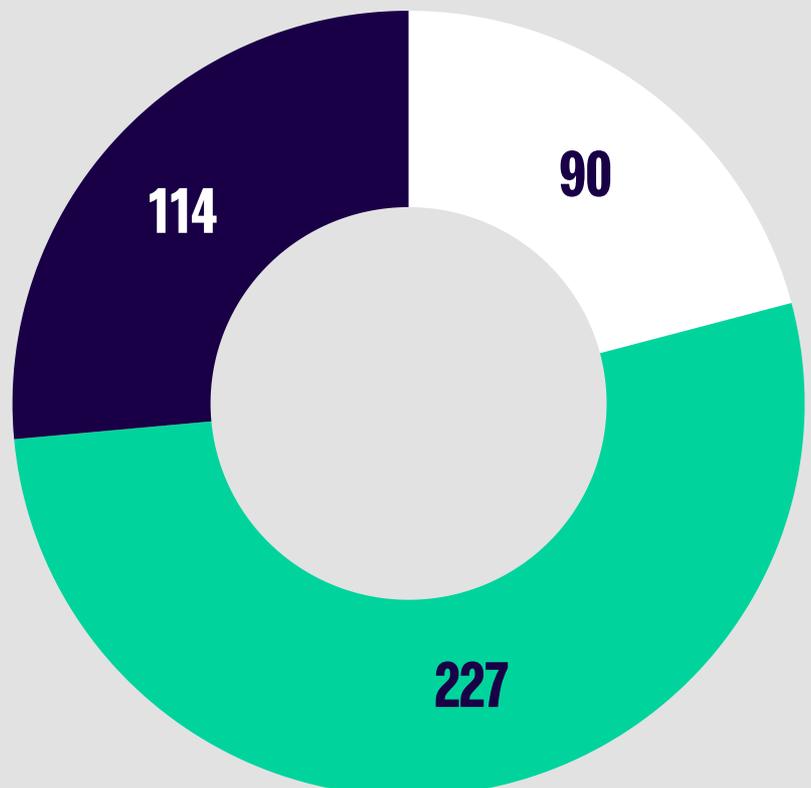


Number, and share, of existing homes (owned and/or managed and completed before the last financial year) allocated to:

- # of General Needs (social rent) units
- # of Intermediate Rent units
- # of Affordable Rent units
- # of Supported Housing units
- # of Housing for Older People units
- # of Low-cost Home Ownership units
- # of Private Rented Sector units
- # of Other units

Number, and share, of new homes (owned and/or managed, and completed in the last financial year), allocated to:

- # of General Needs (social rent) units
- # of Affordable Rent units
- # of Low-cost Home Ownership units



Helping customers with high energy costs

Since 2021, Accent has been committed to *supporting* our customers during these challenging times of *rising energy costs*. The proactive approach we have taken to delivering new homes includes:

1. Energy efficiency improvements – We have increased and upgraded the insulation used within the floors, cavity walls and roof of the new build properties. These measures are designed to retain more of the heat, to reduce energy consumption, thereby lowering energy bills for our customers.

2. Renewable energy initiatives – Accent has implemented renewable energy solutions including solar panels, in both new and existing homes, as well as heat pumps, flue and wastewater heat recovery systems to reduce reliance on traditional energy sources.

3. Futureproof measures – Where gas boiler heating systems have been designed, we have begun to review and implement spaces within the property that could be used for heat pumps and the associated equipment, to lessen our retrofit requirements.

4. Customer Support – We have updated our Home User Guide to reflect how our customers can apply for Smart Export Guarantee payments via their energy supplier. We are also looking to include useful tips on energy usage and management.

Accent remains committed to building better futures for our customers and will continue to seek out innovative solutions and support systems, including through our planned maintenance, which this year continued to target the energy efficiency of our homes.

Accent’s Planned Maintenance Team have installed the following measures to improve the energy efficiency of our homes:

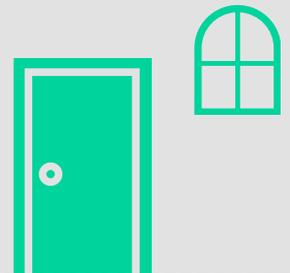
1,062

Energy efficient boiler replacement upgrades



941

thermally efficient windows and doors upgrades



13

loft insulation top ups



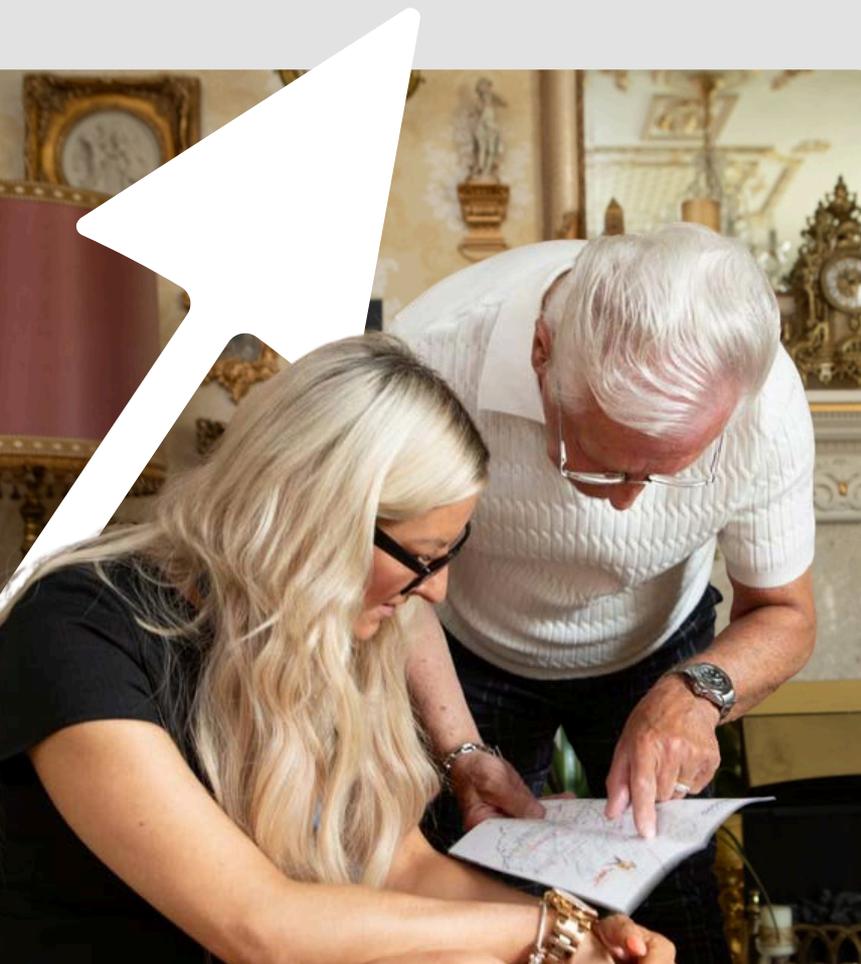
Fuel poverty is influenced by socio-economic and housing characteristics, such as *income, energy efficiency, and tenure.*

At Accent we are committed to supporting our customers and tackling fuel poverty.

We have developed our own Fuel Poverty Matrix which takes various factors into account to give a fuel poverty risk score for each property. Factors include property EPC rating, occupants at the property (scoring higher for single person or single parent), debt and length of time in arrears and receipt of benefits. This tool has been used to aid property selection for retrofit measures. Housing Partners will also be able to access the matrix to target support, especially as the heating season approaches. The tool also has a mapping function to easily identify areas and properties with higher risk fuel poverty scores. Our team will be able to provide additional support to customers identified, including signposting to partner agencies and help ensuring they are receiving full financial entitlements.



As a *Registered Provider* of homes, we recognise the need to *balance* our responsibilities to *support* and *manage* tenancies and licences with our responsibilities to our wider customer base.



We will provide a flexible, effective and efficient tenancy service that reflects best practice, complies with legislation and recognises the rights of our tenant customers.

We provide a starter tenancy to all new customers entering one of our social rented properties. A starter tenancy is a trial tenancy that lasts for 12-months. Where starter tenants successfully complete the 12-month trial period, the tenancy becomes a lifetime tenancy. Lifetime tenancies are assured tenancies where, with some limited exceptions, if tenants do not breach the conditions of their tenancy agreement, their tenancy will last as long as the tenant would like it to be.

Building Safety and Quality



100%

% of homes (with gas safety checks)



100%

% of homes (with fire risk assessments)



99.9%

% of homes (with electrical safety checks)

At Accent, the *safety* and *quality* of our homes are fundamental to our mission of providing *safe, affordable, and sustainable* homes.

With over 60% of our homes being less than 40 years old, we are proactive about maintaining and enhancing building safety. Our homes are regularly inspected, and stock condition data is continuously updated to ensure compliance with the Decent Homes Standard, alongside planned work programmes to address any safety or quality concerns.

In line with broader sector standards, Accent has implemented rigorous fire safety protocols and gas safety measures, with 100% of our buildings having up-to-date and compliant fire risk assessments. Similarly, 100% of our homes with gas appliances have received in-date, accredited gas safety checks, underscoring our commitment to customer safety.

Moreover, we are committed to enhancing the overall quality of life for our customers through continuous improvements in housing standards. Accent strives for all of our homes to meet the national housing quality standards, with 99.99% of our homes already compliant with Decent Homes. (In 2023/24 only 2 properties failed the standard in 2023-24 due to an individual velux window requiring replacement in each, both of which are due for completion this financial year.)

This includes focusing on retrofitting and modernising homes to improve energy efficiency, thus contributing to sustainability goals while maintaining high living standards. By embedding a strong culture of safety and quality into every aspect of our housing management, Accent remains dedicated to delivering safe, secure, and sustainable homes for all its customers.

Damp and mould

Accent mitigates the risk of damp and mould in our properties by following the requirement F1(1) of the Approved Document F, Volume 1, 2021 edition of the Building Regulations on means of ventilation. This means new build properties are normally supplied with extract ventilation to extract water vapour and indoor air pollutants, typically in the kitchen, bathroom, cloakroom and ensuite.

We are also beginning to see an increase in the use of whole dwelling ventilation in order to mitigate the risk of overheating. Purge ventilation helps to dilute indoor air pollutants and disperse water vapour when necessary in habitable rooms, for example when an occupant is drying clothes in their living room.

The ventilation strategy is always carefully considered and factored in the SAP calculation, which helps to mitigate the risk of damp and mould. Since 2016, there is a requirement to test the fans prior to handovers to ensure they are providing the correct air changes, which Accent makes sure it complies with.

Accent uses new build construction methods including damp proof membranes and damp proof courses to mitigate rising dampness. Cavity trays, weep vents, flashing details to deflect water away from the property too.

Regarding managing damp and mould when this affects existing homes, Accent has the following approach: with every repair job our main contractors complete, a damp and mould questionnaire is undertaken, allowing the customer to flag any potential damp and mould cases. This is then fed back to the team, where we put the property through our 'damp and mould procedure' should there be a potential issue.

The damp and mould procedure outlines specific actions on dealing with damp and mould, such as undertaking prompt thorough inspections of the property where required, supporting customers with the provision of specialist damp and mould treatment kits, and suitably remedying any issues identified. In addition, we report on damp and mould cases to our Customer Experience Committee and our performance is recorded on our health and safety scorecard, for high level oversight.

We provide hygrometers within void properties so that incoming customers can be aware of the level of humidity in their homes, to help them manage this and prevent condensation occurring.



In order to manage damp and mould we need to access our customers' homes. We work closely with our Housing Partners to support customers where needed, particularly with factors that affect access. As a last resort, we can use our access policy to help our team gain entry to a property that requires important work to maximise customer safety and wellbeing.





Customer Voice

At Accent we are aware that the value of *customer feedback* and active participation are central to fostering *vibrant, sustainable communities*.

Customer voice is a cornerstone of effective community building, aimed at ensuring that customers play an integral role in shaping the decisions that impact their homes and communities.

At Accent, customer voice goes beyond consultation: we embed customers' perspectives into the governance of our organisation. Initiatives such as The Big Conversation (see spotlight below) illustrate how we are seeking views from customers that can be used to influence policies and services.

Our new Customer Engagement Strategy sets out our commitment to gathering and acting on the thoughts of our customers to drive service improvements. We understand that true customer engagement is not a transaction; it is an ongoing relationship built on trust, transparency, and a shared commitment to customer and community wellbeing.

Our new strategic approach to customer engagement sets out a number of key objectives, with the overall aim of empowering our customers to have two-way conversations with us, co-design how our services are delivered and shape Accent's direction.

By amplifying customer voices, we aim to build trust, ensure transparency, and drive long-term social value. Customer voice is at the heart of creating homes that are not just liveable but are reflective of the people who reside in them.

Tenant Satisfaction Survey

The Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) are designed by the government to hold housing associations like us, and local councils, to account for the quality of homes and services provided. They are in place to provide customers with the knowledge and understanding of how we are performing as a business.

The TSMs cover low-cost rental accommodation (LCRA) owned by the housing provider (including general needs, affordable rent, independent living, supported housing, intermediate rent and temporary social housing) and low-cost home ownership (LCHO) which are Accent's shared owners.

There are 22 TSMs in total (some with subcategories), and they are split into two parts: 10 Management Information Measures (MIMs) measured directly through information we hold on our systems and 12 Tenant Perception Measures (TPMs) measured through an annual tenant perception survey.

In September 2023, our customers who rent their home from us and our shared ownership customers had the opportunity to take part in the first annual satisfaction survey. We were pleased that over 5,800 people took part, which represents over 34% of our customers.

This insight has given us a clear understanding of what customers think of the services we provide and highlighted where we must focus more attention to improve.

Our results are summarised on the following page and are very much aligned with the sector results where satisfaction rates for shared ownership are significantly lower than those for rented properties and regional variations exist.

In line with the sector, results were better for rented accommodation, where participation was also higher: **5,531** people took part, which represents over **34%** of our customers, making these results more representative.

Overall Satisfaction: 63% of customers expressed satisfaction with the overall service provided by Accent.

Repairs and Maintenance: 62% of customers were satisfied with the repairs service over the last 12 months, and 58% were satisfied with the time it took to complete repairs.

Safety: 68% of customers felt their home was safe. Accent achieved 100% compliance with gas safety checks, fire risk assessments, asbestos management, legionella risk assessments, and lift safety checks.

Customer Engagement: 65% of customers said they were treated fairly and with respect, and 61% felt they were kept informed about important matters. Only 52% felt that Accent listened to their views and acted on them though. Accent responded by creating a new customer engagement strategy, recruiting customer representatives, and introducing “Customer Champions” to improve services based on feedback.

63% 

of customers living in rental homes said they are ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied with the overall service provided by Accent.

62% 

of customers were satisfied with the overall repairs service they received over the last 12 months.

63% 

of customers were satisfied their home is well maintained.

58% 

of customers were satisfied with the time it took to complete their most recent repair.

Accent completed non-emergency repairs within target timescales **80.4%** of the time and emergency repairs within 24 hours **89.5%** of the time.

Significant investment has been made in property maintenance, including the replacement of...



200
heating systems



750
boilers



640
kitchens



645
bathrooms

Neighbourhood and Anti-Social Behaviour:

57% of customers were satisfied with the cleanliness and maintenance of communal areas, and 50% felt Accent made a positive contribution to their neighbourhoods. 51% were satisfied with how anti-social behaviour was managed.

Complaints Handling:

Only 26% of customers were satisfied with how complaints were handled. Accent has made significant improvements to the complaints system, increased staff training, and introduced new policies to ensure complaints are resolved more effectively in the rented sector as well.

Accent introduced a new inspection process,

“My Estate Walkabout,”



and formed an anti-social behaviour task group to address neighbourhood and anti-social behaviour concerns.

Accent TSM results on Low Cost Home Ownership

Participation in this year's Tenant Perception Survey was low, with a 29% response rate. Of those who responded, only 33% of shared ownership customers expressed satisfaction with the overall service provided by Accent which, even in line with trends across the sector (satisfaction rates for shared ownership are significantly lower across the sector), indicates significant room for improvement.

Satisfaction with customer engagement was low as well. Only 37% felt they were treated fairly and with respect, 38% felt informed about matters important to them, and only 23% believed their views were listened to and acted upon. In response, Accent has recruited more customer representatives and created new leadership roles to focus on customer relations and engagement.

The lack of satisfaction with customer engagement might help explain why only 48% felt their home was safe despite Accent achieving 100% compliance in fire risk assessments, asbestos management and water safety. Most shared owners are responsible for the upkeep of their home.

Satisfaction with Accent's handling of complaints was particularly low, with only 8% of customers satisfied. Accent has responded by updating its complaint management systems, offering more staff training, and recruiting more people to improve the complaints resolution process.

Only 34% of customers were satisfied with how communal areas were maintained, and 24% were satisfied with how anti-social behaviour was handled. In response, Accent formed an anti-social behaviour task group and introduced a community development team to improve neighbourhood management.

Accent's response to TSM results

While Accent has made progress in areas such as repairs and safety, there is still work to be done to improve customer satisfaction, particularly in complaint handling and customer engagement. The initiatives outlined in the next section are designed to address these challenges and improve overall service delivery in the coming years.

Whilst we acknowledge the challenges Accent faces in improving customer satisfaction, particularly in the areas of communication, complaint handling, and neighbourhood management, we are taking concrete steps to address these issues and improve service delivery for all our customers. In addition to the improvements mentioned above we now have:

Customer Champions: Accent has introduced "Customer Champions," a group of long-standing customers who will review key areas of dissatisfaction such as anti-social behaviour, complaint handling, and communal area maintenance. These Champions will work with Accent to improve services based on customer feedback.

Leadership and Strategy: Accent has created a new senior leadership position, Director of Customer Relations, to better manage customer engagement and service improvements. The team also developed a new customer engagement strategy, aiming to provide more opportunities for customer involvement.

“I am *pleased* and *proud* to take up this new role. I have worked closely with customers for many years and my *passion* is to make sure Accent delivers the absolute *best service* it can to you. I look forward to speaking and meeting with as many of you as possible and continuing to ask for your *feedback* so we can be sure we are listening closely to you and acting on what you tell us to *improve* the service for all customers.”

John Place,
Director of Customer Relations



The launch of the *Customer Champions* and the focus on *leadership* in customer relations are expected to drive future improvements.

But we do not stop there...

Accent is using feedback from *surveys*, both Accent's and those across the sector, to adjust services and track results.

Other actions in the pipeline include:

Customer voice getting a makeover: Accent will be rebranding our customer voice to better reflect our commitment to customer engagement.

Online customer engagement platform: We are in the process of reviewing and refreshing our current platform to make it easier for customers to engage with us in a timely way to share their views.

Updated website: Our new website will allow us fresh opportunities to grow our digital methods of customer interaction. Customers were consulted in the design of the new website to ensure it meets their needs now and in the future.

Rant and rave: During the year, we use transactional surveys to understand how customers feel about the services they are receiving.

Insights Team: Our Insights team is growing. They are rolling out new questions that will be linked to the TSM outcomes. Accent is committed to ensuring decisions we take are informed and influenced by our customers and the insights we have.

Working with suppliers: We are looking at working with our suppliers to improve participation rates in our surveys to ensure we are hearing more of our customers views and to ensure we have balanced representation from each demographic group across all the regions we operate in.

The Big Conversation

In December 2023, close to *200 colleagues* went to visit customers with the aim to speak to as many as possible about the *TSMs (Tenant Satisfaction Measures)* over the space of two days.



Accent is responsible for delivering positive customer experiences and The Big Conversation showed the power of our increased presence in communities.

In the words of one of our Housing Partners:

“During the Big Conversation event, I managed to speak to a customer who had been too afraid to engage and ask for help before. Seeing our **commitment** that day to building personal, strong relationships with customers gave him the **confidence** to open up and ask for help with low level hoarding. I visited the following week and worked with him to get on top of the problems he was experiencing. He could not have been more **grateful**. The new structure, with smaller patch sizes allows for this personal intervention to support people when needed to live **happily** in their homes.”



We knocked on
9,136
doors



had conversations with
1,597 *people*



Accent will carry out its next TSMs survey from *Mon 2 September* and a second Big Conversation event will take place on *Fri 1 November* and *Mon 4 November 2024*.

Case Study 1

Financial Inclusion

Mental Health conditions can often lead to our customers struggling to manage their finances and this leads to multiple levels of debt, which creates a detrimental impact in the lives.

Our customer had fallen into rent arrears and advised the Housing Partner that she was feeling overwhelmed and did not know where to turn to get herself back on track and was ignoring knocks on her door and leaving mail unopened as she had other debts she could not afford to pay.

Our Inclusion Partner visited and identified that our customer had several health issues which put additional strain on her ability to cope with everyday life as she was unable to afford to attend medical appointments due to her low income. Our Financial Inclusion Partner worked with our customer to set financial and wellbeing goals tailored to her needs to help reduce her anxieties and improve her physical health. A referral was made to the Social Prescribing team who have helped her with arranging her medical appointments and improving social isolation.

Our customer had a beloved pet who needed veterinary care which she could not previously afford, and we referred her to RSPCA who provided financial assistance for the veterinary bill ensuring her pet was also cared for.

Our customer was supported to claim Personal Independence Payment which increased her monthly income by £290.00, which enabled her to attend medical appointments.

A referral was also made to the United Utilities Trust fund who agreed to write off her utility debt of £1,200 and they introduced her to their payment match scheme which has helped her to manage her utility bills in the future.

Our Financial Inclusion Partner supported our customer to submit a council tax and discretionary housing payment application to help reduce her council tax and rent arrears. The council tax support cleared her debt of £529.88. The Discretionary Housing Payment reduced rent arrears of £597.26. She is now able to manage her finances and can afford to remain in her home and attend medical appointments to improve her physical and mental wellbeing.

Our customer said:

“The increase in income from receiving Personal Independence Payment has really helped, I feel more in control of my finances, and I am in a much better place mentally. Jemma has helped very much, many thanks.”

Case Study 2

Improving Glen's financial situation

In August 2023 it became apparent that independent living customer Glen was only claiming State Pension and Housing Benefit. He was in debt with his utilities by over £1000, had bailiffs coming to his address for council tax and had rent arrears. Our Scheme Manager supported him to claim attendance allowance and pension credit. This increased his income by over £300 per week, and he also qualified for warm home discount and the winter fuel payments.

Glen received a back payment from Pension Credit and Attendance Allowance, enabling him to address the debt. As a result, his quality of life significantly improved.

Glen said:

“I thought I was getting everything I was entitled too. Without the support from the staff on the scheme I would have continued to get into further debt, I am incredibly grateful.”

Case Study 3

Helping Mr A manage his first tenancy successfully

A new resident signed his tenancy with Accent in February 2024. Mr A moved from supported housing and this was his first tenancy on his own. He attempted to apply for the appropriate financial support, however after completing and submitting forms he was told that he was not eligible to benefits that would meet his living costs. This resulted in increased debt on his rent account, not to mention wider financial impact which also caused him to feel a lot of stress.

Mr A engaged with the Scheme Manager and Independent Living Coordinator who also requested more specialist support from the financial inclusion team.

With the combined approach from the teams, several applications to Universal Credit were successfully put in place resulting in a back payment of £3,673.02 followed by monthly payments of £612.17. In addition, PIP was applied for and access to white goods including a cooker and fridge.

Accent had a bank of ex-staff phones, which have been allocated to customers in need, so that they only needed to put in their own sim. Mr A was given one of the phones, helping him to remain connected and supporting his wellbeing. He was able to access key appointments, improve his isolation and boost family connections.

Enhancing Tenant Experience: A Multi-Faceted Approach

Accent is implementing a new Customer Charter to reset expectations and elevate the overall customer experience. This initiative focuses on:

- Fostering positive neighbourhood relationships
- Enhancing tenant engagement
- Ensuring fair and respectful treatment for all customers

The structural changes implemented last year (better resourcing, Customer Champions, community partnerships and complaint handling overhaul amongst others), are anticipated to yield positive results in the upcoming 2024 annual perception survey. These combined efforts aim to create a more satisfying living environment for all tenants and give Accent a more local focus as a national provider.



Optimising Complaint Resolution Processes

Accent has put in place a centralised complaints resolution team to streamline complaint management. Early results are promising: Q1 performance metrics show notable improvements as the new system demonstrates increased efficiency in handling complaints. This strategic change is already yielding positive outcomes, indicating a successful approach to enhancing customer satisfaction through improved complaint handling.

Data-Driven Continuous Improvement Strategy

Accent has implemented a new Performance Review Framework (PRF) to enhance data-driven decision-making. This system allows for swift identification of underperformance, facilitating timely interventions. By creating a continuous feedback loop, Accent can consistently inform and improve its services. The goal is to maintain high standards and quickly address any areas falling below expectations.

Empowering customers to have a voice

Accent has undertaken work to develop a new *Customer Engagement Strategy* which will see more opportunities for customers to get involved. In the meantime, Accent has made some key changes to *improve our services*.

Over the past 12 months we have involved customers to work alongside us to improve our work. Some examples include:

- The recruitment of key, senior roles across Accent
- The review, procurement and development of our new website (which launches in October 2024)
- Shaping our service charge communications (we approached a selection of customers who had previously expressed dissatisfaction to collaborate on a new way forward).

Our *Customer Experience Committee* have delegated authority from the Board to provide scrutiny for services that we deliver; this includes reviewing and approving certain *policies and procedures*.

The Customer Experience Committee have recently approved a Customer Engagement Strategy that sets out several ways that we will engage with customers, and this includes the introduction of Customer Champions mentioned above.

The Customer Champions are members of the Customer Experience Committee, and they have been tasked with reviewing our complaints, anti-social behaviour and grounds maintenance service in 2024-25.

Local Customer Groups: Accent has 3 local customer groups already established – South which has been running for over 12 months, the East group (which was started at the end of 23/24) and national specialist group which came into existence last year. This initiative has also got future plans – the Northwest regional group starts in October, and Northeast group starts in December.

Customers from these groups have supported recruitment of senior roles (including the appointment of a new permanent CEO) and recent staffing restructure inclusive of supporting recruitment panels. We held a workshop recently with customers to review our rent letters and plan to do more subject specific workshops throughout the year, for example a workshop to review our rent booklet.

Developing our customers

Five of the customers participating in the Customer Champions and the Local Customer Groups have begun or completed their Chartered Institute of Housing Level 2 Award funded by Accent. This has allowed customers to gain a better understanding of housing law and legislation, ultimately meaning they are in a better position to challenge us and hold us accountable. Accent plans to offer more customers these qualifications and to offer the level 3 to those at a governance level.

Customer Champions

The new *Champions* are long-standing Accent customers who are already members of our *Customer Experience Committee* and have responsibility for reviewing how we perform across all our housing and customer-facing services.



They will work with Accent to help drive improvements in areas that customers have told us we need to do better. In our 2023-24 TSM survey, our customers expressed dissatisfaction with the way we manage anti-social behaviour, how we deal with complaints, and how we provide estate services, such as cleaning of communal areas and grounds maintenance.

The Champions will review customer feedback, assess, and scrutinise performance, and most importantly, present opportunities for change to improve services for customers, based on customer feedback. They have started their new roles and will be reporting on their progress over the coming weeks and months.

The Champions will help ensure that customers' voices are not only heard but are integral to shaping and improving service delivery and our decision-making processes.

Complaints

Everyone at Accent is responsible for delivering excellent services to our customers and for ensuring that when things go wrong, we respond positively, professionally and put things right. We encourage customers to use our complaints policy if they are unhappy with our services.

We use customer complaints as an opportunity to understand why things go wrong and to put measures in place to prevent them happening again.



Response from: **Helen Jaggard**

*Member Responsible for
Complaints, Accent Group Board*

The Board and Customer Experience Committee are assured that there is a focus across the organisation to hear and proactively respond to customer dissatisfaction, both individually to the customer, and to ensure we are learning from complaints themes to identify, implement and embed service improvements.

We are committed to strengthening our approach to complaint handling and have recently appointed a Director of Customer Relations who will head up our new centralised complaints resolution team. We have also appointed a resident Customer Champion who sits on our Customer Experience Committee and is responsible for overseeing our work in this important area from a customer perspective.

In the last 12 months we received 15 determinations, following investigations carried out by the Housing Ombudsman Service:

- In 10 cases there were findings of maladministration or service failure,
- In 1 case there was a finding of severe maladministration.
- In 4 cases the Ombudsman found no maladministration.

We received our first finding of severe maladministration in March 2024. This case related to a complaint made by a customer in February 2023 about repair responsibilities. We were very disappointed with the finding and, although a number of changes to our policy and procedure had already been made since the complaint was raised, there was valuable learning for us to take on board.

Response and changes

After this Ombudsman ruling, we made immediate changes to our repair responsibilities guidance. In accordance with the orders and recommendations made by the Housing Ombudsman, we carried out an independent, detailed review and produced a learning report to confirm the actions being taken to address the issues raised in the complaint.

The learning report is available on our [complaints webpage](#) and the actions are included in our [action plan for the coming year](#).

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Customer Support

Supporting Customers

The Inclusion Service was introduced in July 2023 and started to take referrals to support our customers in October 2023. There are three Community Development Partners and two Financial Inclusion Partners. They will undertake a broad range of support services that will be defined by the needs of the area such as benefits advice, youth engagement, community cohesion activity. These needs will be identified using a combination of public data and local consultation.

The Partners will provide a range of interventions which have easy to measure outputs and outcomes. The outcomes range from “feeling a relief from anxiety/depression” to “belonging to a good neighbourhood”.

THE OUTCOMES ARE GROUPED INTO THE FOLLOWING BANDS:



Employment



**Local
Environment**



Health



**Financial
Inclusion**



Youth



**Social Groups
& Hobbies**



**Physical
Activities**



Homelessness



**Maintenance of
the household**



**Maintenance of
the local area**



Environment

In *April 2023*, we introduced the role of a generic *Housing Partner* who would support customers to maintain their *tenancies* and reduce their *rent arrears*.

In June 2023, we introduced **Voicescape** which is a social housing management software that increases **efficiencies**, improves **service levels**, and helps social landlord build **sustainable tenancies**.

Our Housing Partners provide additional support to customer with complex cases through signposting to support agencies and working with our newly-formed Inclusion Service to support customers who require additional support. From June 2023 we supported customers to reduce their rent arrears by £389,860.94.

To date, the Community Development Partners have been arranging a variety of activities that are intended to increase the sense of community within local areas, and to provide residents with opportunities to understand more about Accent and support available. Over the next year, there will be a more targeted approach to initiatives that will be defined by local need as per the above categories.



CASE STUDY

Mindful Motions

Community Development



Background

This project focuses on supporting older adults living at Sudbury Court and the wider community in Whittlesey to be more socially and physically active, so that they can live more independently and in good health. Customers previously had no ‘active’ sessions at the scheme as previous external activities were too expensive and thus unsuccessful.

Social wellbeing surveys undertaken at coffee mornings within schemes and consultations with customers showed there was a keen interest in this project. Accent sponsored two taster sessions delivering exercise and mobility sessions. Due to the success of the taster sessions, we were successful in our funding bid in conjunction with Peterborough United Football Club through the Cambridgeshire County Council’s ‘Care Together’ programme ‘Older Adults Social Inclusion Grant’.

Outcome

Funded ‘Mindful Motion’ sessions started in April 2024: 2 hour sessions, twice a week, which has been funded for three years. Averaging 8-14 attendees per session, these sessions are mostly made up of Sudbury Court residents. However, they are advertised via Peterborough United Foundation website and social media posts inviting new members to join.

Customer Feedback

We have had very positive feedback from customers and the Specialist Housing Partner has seen a real improvement in engagement, with friendship groups developing and customers’ confidence increasing.



“The exercise sessions are great! They have really helped with my osteoporosis in my neck and shoulders, and I would love this to keep going”

“I love the classes; it is so much fun and I am feeling physically better health wise makes me feel like I have so much more energy”

“We look forward to this class every week, we have lots of fun and laughter, it helps mentally and improving health wise and with arthritis”



Placemaking

Placemaking takes place through the design and delivery of *new developments*, and how they impact on the surrounding *community*. When designing new or regenerated developments, this impact should be taken into consideration and be reflected within that *design*.

At Accent we focus on more than providing homes: we look to **transform spaces** into places where people feel included, connected, safe and **empowered to thrive.**

We have agreed a 10-year Investment Plan which highlights the areas across our operations most in need of placemaking. This development framework highlights the early decision around where to develop, how much to develop and which uses to include, all working alongside our customers and neighbourhoods.

Place-shaping initiatives:

- Involvement and commenting on Council Local Plans and Tenancy Strategies
- Membership of housing alliances across the areas we work in, to lobby changes
- Attendance of Regional and National Housing Strategy Forums
- Participation in Council Boards and Groups to discuss and shape policy and procedure

Placemaking initiatives:

- Public planning consultation events to illustrate the project and seek input to the site plan
- Community events to invite local knowledge to help steer decisions
- Information events, e.g. the Phase 2 development at Little Downham event for residents and local groups
- Working with our Housing and Sales Teams to steer where we develop, including assessment of factors such as ASB heat spots, amenities, transport and property values

Accent has invested in a Community Development and Inclusion Team, comprising of 1 Manager and 5 Community Development Partners to cover the areas we work in.

Our community investment activities include:

- Inviting feedback from Customer Experience Committee meetings
- On new build developments, presenting careers in construction seminars to primary school children
- Street naming competitions involving the neighbourhood
- Arranging CV writing workshops in our communities
- Housing Partners working with existing customers to improve estates through a number of initiatives.
- Community fayre/BBQ's (Alma Road Peterborough and Trelowen Way, Peterborough)
- Opening ceremony at St Mary's Road, Ramsey
- Attendance of job fayres working with local groups to promote jobs within Accent and the housing sector
- Removal of fly tipping
- Team litter picking of estate
- Home Grown projects. Providing starter gardening packs to promote health eating and learning
- Partnership working with Peterborough Football Club – chair based exercises and mobility to promote active lifestyle
- Newton Hall redecoration and transformation of community centre working with Tesco and our repairs maintenance contractors, Ian Williams
- Women's Aid housing drop in
- Cost of living events
- Youth consultations to understand what they would like to see – working with 4 secondary schools in Cambridgeshire
- CGL Conference
- Trussel Trust Food Bank – donations and delivery of food at Christmas
- Wellbeing events. MOT health checks for our customers
- Century Square initiative to address ASB and violence
- Consultation events on the retrofit works – education on heat pumps x2 schemes to date
- Learning and skills project to Independent Living Scheme and wider public
- Good Neighbourhood Award submission
- Digital and financial inclusion (helping customers with benefits)

CASE STUDY

Ripleyville, Bradford

Placemaking



Background

Ripleyville is a regeneration project designed to target high heating bills and anti-social behaviour in an area where there is an oversupply of flats and strong demand for family housing. Following a significant appraisal of the site and evaluation of the living environment, Accent will deliver 73 EPC A rated new homes, representing £21.5m worth of investment in the local area.

Approach

Early on in the project, we held a consultation event including 2,000 members of the surrounding community. They were presented with a number of options and encouraged to be part of the project. Out of those consulted 79% responded, with 87% of the scheme's customers voting in favour of regeneration. By working closely with the community, we wanted to identify which types of homes are needed most in the area, ensuring we meet both the immediate and long-term needs of customers.

Outcome

The layout of the scheme and plans underwent changes to reflect comments made by customers to support multi-generational spaces, together with the incorporation of additional green areas, wider pedestrian footpaths for formal and informal activities. During the pandemic, the floor spaces were altered to include a home office area to provide greater flexibility in the way people work. A request was made by the wider neighbourhood for a sensory area to enjoy and socialise. This was made a planning condition. Accent and the Council are liaising to explore areas where this could be provided.

Going forward, Accent will be looking at *impact* through a scope of tripartite analysis looking at *benefits* to *individuals*, *society* (also known as the Exchequer) and the *organisation*.



Individuals

- Real-time financial benefits such as reduction in debt, reduction in arrears, increase in income etc.
- Wellbeing measures using financial proxies derived from the UK Social Value Bank to quantify outcomes such as reduced anxiety and stable employment

Society

- Government published Exchequer values for savings to central government, local government and the NHS for outcomes such as increased physical activity, reduced anxiety etc.

Organisation

- Internally defined cost-saving measures around outcomes such as reduced arrears, reduced evictions, reduced ASB etc.

Using Homes England methodology, we would be able to put a figure onto the societal benefits of placemaking around future developments. However, there are significant variables in play resulting in a very complex calculation requiring external data.

It is unlikely that this kind of calculation could be done without investment into outside expertise, or significant internal resource so this is not something Accent can commit to at present.

Street Naming Competition

Placemaking

Background

In partnership with Burmor Construction, Accent ran a street naming competition at a local primary school which backed onto our new Norwood Road development.

This initiative was part of our Social Value promise for this project with Burmor Construction, investing in our local communities.

Approach

We attended Year 5 classes (120 pupils) at a local primary school in March which backs onto the development site and required 3 streets to be named.

The children were really engaged with the activity; they were given site plans and could write down all their ideas. They also had the opportunity to ask questions about housing and construction and future career goals.

Outcome

After going through hundreds of ideas, Accent and Burmor put forward a selection of 20 to the Parish Council for consideration.

Winners were announced at a school assembly hosted by Accent and Burmor and were awarded with a mini street plaque of their own for their classrooms.

- Toadstool Lane
- Wildlife Close
- Feather Fall Close



We hope by involving young children of the community in street naming decisions, it brings ownership, pride and a sense of contribution that they can look back on in years to come.

As the development progresses the school are keen to be involved. Shortly there will be an on-site visit for pupils as well as the unveiling of the new street names.

CASE STUDY

Tree Planting and Cheque Presentation

Placemaking

Background

Seagate approached our Community Development Team and wanted to add social value as part of their new development at Cardinal Park in Godmanchester, to leave a legacy in the area.

Approach

Contact was made with a local school, Godmanchester Bridge Academy, who were invited to be involved in a tree planting ceremony at Cardinal Park with Seagate Homes Group. Seagate also kindly donated £250 to Godmanchester Bridge Academy.

The school were very appreciative and announced that the donation would go towards their outdoor learning area, repairs on school pond and to build an allotment. Seagate Homes presented the cheque to the outdoor learning lead Emma Ripley, and the Year 6 pupils helped plant a tree. They even got to take back to school their very own shovel for the school's upcoming allotment.

Outcome

The school were extremely grateful for the donation as well as for being invited to be involved in this ceremony. They are keen to work with Accent in the future, within the open space and wildlife area on this beautiful development. "It was great to see developers so keen to give back, delivering environmental and placemaking benefits to the local community."



Outdoor Learning Lead Emma Ripley added: "This green space will give GBA students the opportunity to observe and study wildlife in their local area. We will be using the kind donation from Seagate Homes to support the school's outdoor learning. We intend to repair our school pond and build an allotment. We are looking forward to building the relationship between GBA, Accent and Seagate Homes and the community moving forward."

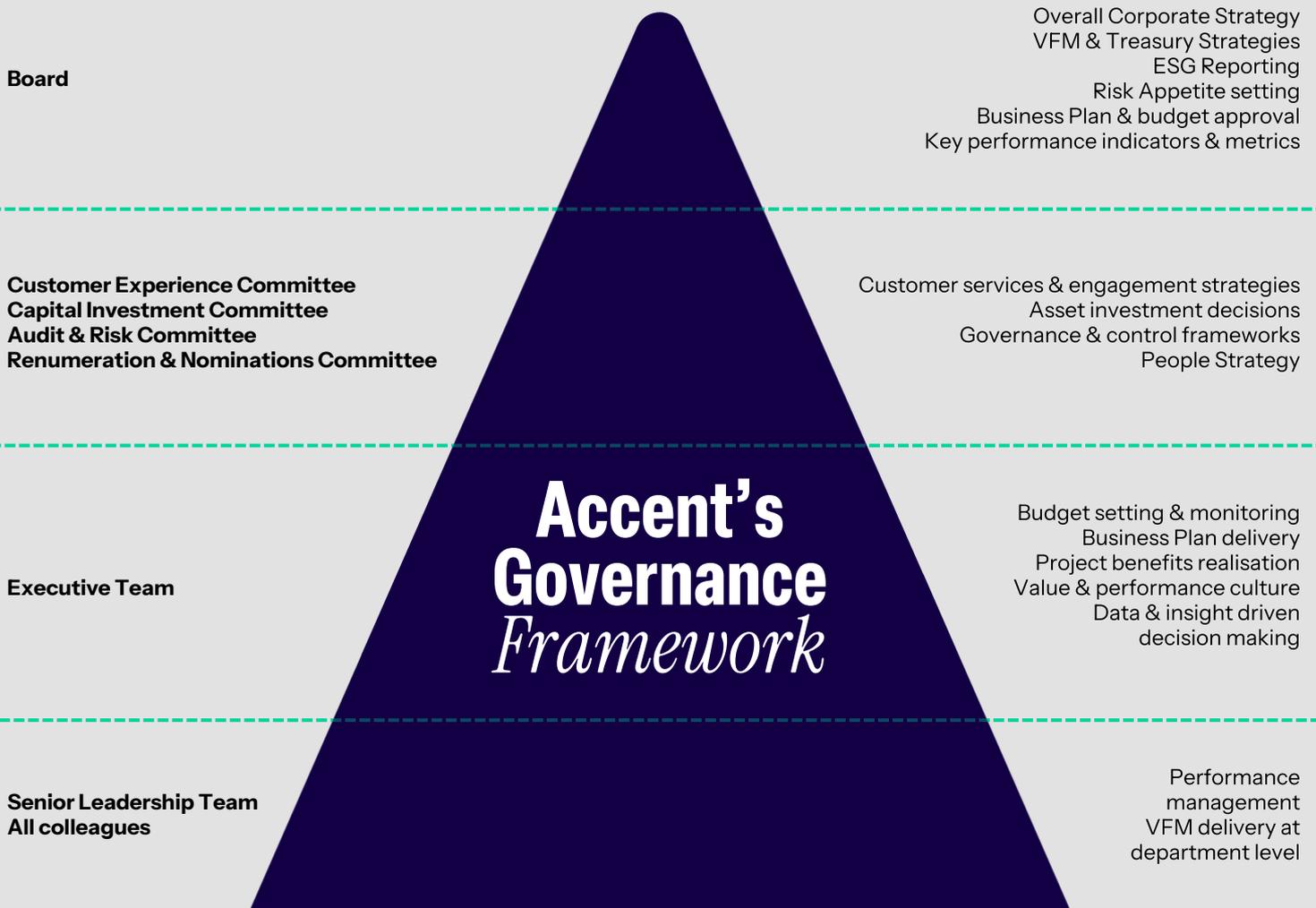
A further visit to the school was planned for the new school year to see how the pond and allotment is progressing.

Governance

Structure and Governance

The governance frameworks at Accent reflect a *deep commitment to transparency, accountability and strategic oversight.*

We recognise the importance of robust governance to meet the evolving challenges of the social housing sector, from sustainability initiatives to resident engagement and social impact. A high level summary of our governance framework is set out below.



Across the sector, there is a focus on aligning governance structures with Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles. Accent's ESG reporting framework is designed to align with regulatory compliance and to enhance long-term value creation for customers and communities. For this reason, the ESG reporting framework will continue to be closely aligned to the overarching Corporate Strategy and woven into our key strategic goals and targets.

Diversity and inclusion are also key governance priorities for Accent, as we strive for a leadership team and a board and leadership team that reflects the communities we serve. Gender balance, racial diversity, and inclusion of diverse perspectives ensure that governance is not only representative but also better equipped to make informed, equitable decisions.

Through these governance frameworks, Accent is committed to driving positive outcomes for customers, maintaining financial resilience, and adhering to the highest standards of regulatory and ethical responsibility.



We have retained our

**V1 / G1
Rating**

Accent is registered with the Regulator of Social Housing and has maintained its top regulatory grading of V1/G1. Accent also took part in the consumer regulation pilot in 2023.

Accent is a not-for-profit housing association that follows the National Housing Federation's Code of Governance.

Accent & ESG Risks

Accent holds a strategic risk register, which holds risks that are related to ESG. Operational risk registers are also in place, as well as theme-based registers such as Health & Safety and Fraud. Accent is planning to review its risk environment over the next 12 months, to ensure that it is up to date and that ESG considerations are built-into this review.

Accent has not been subject to any adverse regulatory findings in the last 12 months that resulted in enforcement or other equivalent action.

Board and Trustees

Accent's governance processes ensure engagement from a *diverse* range of people across its wider *Leadership Group, Senior Leadership Team, the Executive and Board and Committees.*



We have an externally facilitated recruitment process that is based on a succession plan and skills matrix, to ensure that we have the right mix of skills for the Board, and to meet the requirements of our committee structure in terms of knowledge, skills and experience. As with any recruitment, this is an objective, merit-based process. We seek to actively encourage applications from as wide and diverse a community as possible. This may mean diversity in terms of personal characteristics as well as knowledge, skills and experience (including lived experience as a customer of social housing).

Customer voice at board and senior management level

Customer voice has been strengthened at Accent via our Customer Experience Committee and newly engaged Customer Champions who oversee specific projects and report into the Group Board. The Board have appointed a customer member to the Group's Capital Investment Committee which oversees development plans and strategic asset management. A customer engagement initiative is undertaken on a frequent basis to seek customers direct views which is reported into Board.

Our recruitment process is fully aligned with Accent's **publicly visible commitments around EDI.**



**% of board
that are
women**

44%

**% of board
that are BAME**

33%

**% of board that
are residents**

11%

**% of board turnover
in the last two years**

11%

**Average age of board
members (years)**

59.8

**Average board
tenure (years)**

6.7

**Exec turnover in
the last two years**

40%

EDI is a priority at Accent and is actively managed in all Board and Committee recruitment processes.

Accent's Board subscribed to Accent's Publicly Visible Commitments up to April 2024, one of which is a commitment to building a more representative board, leadership and organisation, reflecting the diverse makeup of the areas in which we operate.

Board members' financial experience

Three board members on Accent's Audit and Risk Committee have recent and relevant financial experience. Two of them hold senior positions, one within the private capital investors group of a global asset management firm, another at an international financial services provider, and a third brings extensive financial experience in central government and public services.

Board succession, auditing & conflict of interest handling

All our board members are non-executive directors. A succession plan has been provided within the last 12 months for all Board and Independent Committee Members.

Accent's current external audit partner been responsible for auditing the accounts for the last two years. Board Effectiveness was last independently reviewed as part of the Independent Governance Review in February 2023.

Board and Committee members must declare any potential conflicts on an ongoing and annual basis. The conflicts of interest policy is incorporated into the organisation's standing orders.

A conflict check is carried out at each Board meeting by the Chair of the meeting.

Colleague Wellbeing

Colleague *wellbeing* is a key *focus* for Accent.

We recognise that the wellbeing of our colleagues is integral to delivering high-quality services to residents and fostering a positive organisational culture. As such, we have developed comprehensive wellbeing strategies designed to support mental and physical health while creating inclusive and supportive work environments.

By prioritising our colleagues' wellbeing, Accent fosters a supportive work environment that drives employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention, ensuring a more resilient and effective workforce dedicated to serving customers and communities.



Accent is a national living wage payer and a real living wage payer

Median gender pay gap:

8.9%

Accent's CEO: median-worker pay ratio

Six to one

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

EDI is integrated into the People Strategy, which was approved in December 2023. The organisation has a dedicated EDI Lead who works closely with regional and national network groups to ensure best practice. Through programme of regular subject-specific cafes, colleague-led live experience sessions, support spaces and bespoke training programmes, we ensure that EDI is prioritised as core pillar of our organisational culture. An EDI policy that emphasises an intersectional approach to customer and colleague engagement guides decision-making in this regard.

Accent have already made good strides in narrowing the gender pay gap. In 23/24 our gender pay gap reduced from 11.2% the previous year to 8.9%. The Board have agreed our new People and EDI strategies, which demonstrate Accent's commitment to further reducing the gap. We are building on a strong base - 44% of Board members are female, 60% of our Executive Team are female and 45% of SLT are female.

In our Development Team, traditionally a male-dominated area, we have achieved a good balance of female colleagues at all levels of seniority. In our technology teams, whilst senior roles are all filled by males we have great female talent who we are developing to progress.

Our recruitment processes are fair and ensure we are robust and open to receiving a balanced pool of candidates. The coming months present us with an opportunity to further develop our wider leadership group and ensure this group has a balanced representation too. We are committed to developing our internal talent and have recently launched a new Learning and Development system to support personalised learning and career progression. There is no silver bullet, but the amalgamation of implementing our strategies, a balanced approach to recruitment, fostering internal progression and actively targeting applications from females in male-dominated professions will help us close the gap.

Physical and mental health of colleagues

In terms of physical help, Accent has a dedicated Health and Safety Team who actively engage with colleagues to ensure their health, safety and welfare as far as is reasonably practicable. This includes risk assessments and implementing controls, training and advice. Regular engagement sessions are held with colleagues to understand areas of concern, and adverse events are thoroughly investigated to ensure a culture of improvement.

Regarding mental health, we run a full colleague engagement survey every 6 months as a part of our 'listening strategy' to ensure we enable colleagues to feed back about their physical and mental health. We have 16 Mental Health First Aiders, a comprehensive Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and a benefits platform to support colleagues.

Professional development of colleagues

A new Learning and Development Strategy was launched in 2024, which includes a leadership development academy, bitesize performance sessions, team development, externally delivered courses, and formal qualification support. Accent has also introduced a new learning development platform, called Unicorn.

Unicorn features an extensive library of compliance-related training, and a personalised learning space with over 600 personal development modules for colleagues to utilise. Unicorn will also contain custom-built training modules that grow colleague knowledge and skills in relation to changing regulatory requirements (such as current approaches to handling ASB).

Although Accent actively supports the professional development of its colleagues, historically we have not systematically recorded this information. However, as part of our new Learning and Development Strategy, we are committed to implementing a structured system to ensure all professional qualifications are accurately documented and regularly updated. We expect to be able to start reporting on this on 2024-25.

Supply Chain Management

Social value creation in the procurement of goods and services

Social value is an important consideration in our tenders and one of the ways in which Accent engages with our supply chain to increase the *positive impact* of our projects.

Our Procurement team follows the guidance in the Government's published 'Procurement Policy Notes', the National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS) and actively considers the following Social Value Model themes: fighting climate change, wellbeing, equal opportunity, and tackling economic inequality.

Our Procurement team is working towards ensuring that social, economic, environmental, equality & inclusion requirements are considered during the procurement process.

We actively encourage suppliers to maximise social value in the communities where we have homes. In order to do this, in contracts where it is appropriate to generate Social Value, proportionate weightings are allocated during the procurement process: 5% minimum in contracts over £60K (inclusive of SV, Sustainability and EDI) up to the PCR threshold, and a 10% minimum (inclusive of SV, Sustainability and EDI) for contracts over the PCR threshold (£214,904 at the time this report was written), considering that each procurement has different aims and objectives.

A range of procurement questions pertaining to social value are included in the relevant tenders. As well as expecting suppliers to comply with all applicable legislation, these questions and weightings are aimed at identifying what additional value suppliers will offer Accent as they perform the contracts we award. In that way, social value pledges form part of suppliers' tender response, thus becoming a contractual obligation to deliver outcomes in line with submitted tenders, and an expectation to report quantifiable social value benefits to Accent.

Monitoring the delivery of Social Value

In addition to asking suppliers to state what they will do to deliver social value and how, we are starting to work with contract managers to ensure key suppliers regularly measure and communicate to Accent any added value benefits. Our new procurement software has an embedded contract management tool that allows suppliers to provide this detail directly into our portal for review by the contract manager and the procurement team.

In addition, our Head of Procurement and Supply is now an active member of Accent's ESG Strategy Group, which was created in 2024 to promote continuous improvement and knowledge in this area of work. This is a forum where specialists and senior management discuss ESG strategy and review progress against our ESG objectives. As part of this process, the evidence presented by suppliers will be reviewed on a quarterly basis to ensure alignment with best practice and propose any relevant targets.

Lindum at the Bottisham Development

Social Value Creation

Background

The Bottisham development project, undertaken by Lindum, aims to address the growing demand for sustainable housing in the Bottisham area, located near Cambridge. The village has seen substantial growth, especially among families and retired individuals, resulting in high housing demand but limited supply. The development on Bell Road aims to provide sustainable, affordable housing that meets the needs of the local community, while also contributing to the vibrancy and stability of the area.

The project aligns with Accent's *Corporate Strategy 2021-2024*, which emphasises the importance of high-quality, *sustainable homes*. A total of *600* homes are being built to an *EPC A* rating, featuring high thermal efficiency and solar panels to reduce fuel consumption and running costs for customers.



Approach

The approach to creating social value in the Bottisham development was multifaceted, focusing on community engagement, economic impact and environmental sustainability. The key strategies implemented included:

1. Community Engagement

The Lindum project team actively engaged with local residents by hosting a coffee morning on-site. This event allowed neighbours to tour the new homes and interact with the project team, fostering a sense of community involvement and transparency. In addition, the project site manager Justin Moore took it upon himself to fundraise for a defibrillator to be installed in the community, demonstrating a commitment to local health and wellbeing.

2. Economic Impact

Lindum prioritised local hiring and supply chain engagement, with over 85% of supply chain spending occurring within 50 miles of the site. They collaborated with local Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), such as electricians, painters, and masonry contractors, boosting the local economy. The project also created significant employment opportunities, with over 20 full-time equivalent (FTE) local employees hired or retained on the contract. Additionally, 13 apprentices gained valuable experience by working on-site.

3. Environmental Sustainability

The new homes are designed to achieve an EPC A rating through the installation of solar panels, enhancing energy efficiency and reducing environmental impact. The project reported 93% waste recycling, demonstrating a strong commitment to minimising construction waste and promoting sustainable building practices.

Outcome - Social Value Created

The total Social Value Added (SVA) amounted to £5,100,645 representing 53.2% of the project's overall contract value of £9,589,000. Key contributions to this value include the employment of local workers, engagement with SMEs, and the provision of apprenticeships and work experience opportunities on-site. Over £2.6 million was spent in the local supply chain, with a focus on SMEs, fostering local economic growth.

The project saved
over **71,080** car miles
through **car sharing**



Methodology and Monitoring

Lindum measured the social value created by the Bottisham development using the National TOMs (Themes, Outcomes, Measures) framework, a recognised methodology for assessing social value interventions. Social value creation is also monitored through the National TOMs framework, which quantifies the impact of various social, economic, and environmental activities.

Conclusion

Overall, Lindum's strategic approach to the Bottisham development has resulted in substantial social value creation, supporting local employment, economic growth, and environmental sustainability, while also strengthening community ties and enhancing the quality of life for residents. The ongoing monitoring of these outcomes ensures that the social value created is sustained and maximised throughout the project's lifecycle.

Sustainability in procurement

Sustainability in procurement is an area Accent is starting to develop. Sustainability has already been introduced into major asset management programmes, particularly retrofit, where Accent has been successful in securing Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund grants.

Accent always works with reputable builders who we know have a strong track-record in sustainability, e.g. the great majority are ISO 14001 accredited. Also, opportunities for integrating sustainability in the tendering process for new developments are increasing as we move away from 'package deals'.

Accent is incorporating sufficient cash allowance in development appraisals to achieve *EPC A* rated new homes. Accent was named as *number 2* for the number of EPC A new build homes in 23-24, of the *top 100 housing associations*.

Within sustainability, a key priority for Accent is the reduction of carbon emissions. Given our Scope 3 emissions, we are acutely aware of the critical role procurement plays in reducing our environmental impact. In order to prioritise the reduction of carbon emissions through sustainable procurement, Accent is looking to introduce a responsible sourcing target for materials, and it is targeting the use of low embodied carbon materials from next year. In addition, our Asset team includes sustainability questions as standard in retrofit tenders.

In fact, Accent already have a database of nearly 100 ESG questions ready to use in future contracts, including IT, which are used as appropriate and applicable, i.e. there are certain contract thresholds that apply. We think that remaining flexible in our approach will help us prioritise sustainability or social value where most appropriate, depending on the project. We are also aware of the need to balance sustainability with other factors like quality and price so we can continue to offer value for money to our customers. Please see combined and interchangeable weightings for Sustainability, Social Value and EDI in the previous section.

Through sustainability-focused procurement strategies, Accent hopes to lead the way in creating long-term value for both customers and the environment.

Sustainability questions included at tender stage aim to investigate both what the company is doing to tackle their own operational emissions and the future reduction targets they have adopted. In addition, we also enquire about how they can help us further reduce emissions from the project being tendered, e.g. retrofitting homes with environmentally friendly materials, ensuring waste is recycled, etc. We also ask about how they are working to reduce emissions from vehicle fleet, etc. and found that one of our contractors has recently introduced over 50 electric vehicles into their fleet and invested in solar-powered welfare facilities on-site.



Monitoring our supply chain's sustainability

Accent is aware that governance and oversight of procurement processes are also crucial for successfully embedding sustainability in the supply chain. This year Accent engaged SHIFT to give a baseline of where Accent is with our supply chain and what opportunities we have to improve.

Using some of the recommendations from the SHIFT assessment, Accent will feed into a new procurement strategy that is currently being developed, with more of an emphasis on sustainability. The medium-term goal is ensuring that sustainable practices are embedded throughout our supply chain.

Accent recognise the importance of building on this work to ensure sustainability performance reporting is carried out on large projects and reported annually under our Scope 3 emissions. We are committed to implementing supplier reporting on carbon emissions, waste and embodied carbon of materials they have used in maintaining and building our homes.

Reporting might be aligned with ISO14001 as the majority of the supply chain already holds it and it is universally accepted. The monitoring of these commitments will ensure that procurement decisions not only contribute to financial resilience but also support broader environmental and social objectives.

We are already working with our primary repairs and maintenance contractor to implement this. Some of the data available demonstrates great performance in some areas. For example, this contractor has successfully diverted 99.79% of waste from landfill since April 2022. However, other areas such as responsibly sourced materials will need to be further developed.

Accent's Performance Reporting Framework already contains key targets and monitoring for sustainability through various strategies. Accent is committing to regular monitoring by developing an ESG Dashboard by the end of 2026-27.

Accent has now got an ESG Action Plan, which is in the process of being agreed and adopted by the newly created ESG Strategy Group. As per its Terms of Reference, the ESG Group will have oversight of the development of Accent's approach to ESG going forward, ensuring we deliver on the commitments set out in this report and stated in the ESG Action Plan.





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