

Good to be home 2024-27

Corporate plan



Continuing our journey together

“We have an overwhelming feeling of contentment here. This is the right place to be; it felt right from day one.”

Peter and Jan, Grand Union customers



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Continuing our journey together



To prepare this plan, we listened. We listened to what customers say, to how colleagues feel and to what board members and external partners think. The result is a three-year plan that's tightly focused on our core purpose of creating homes for those that need them. It's driven by the priorities of the communities we serve, and the values we believe in.

The most striking and important message from all these conversations was to hear what 'home' means to people. Customers told us that home isn't just a place to live, but a **feeling** – of being safe, secure and having the opportunities to build a happy, healthy and successful life. They also stressed the importance of community – the sense of belonging and being part of something bigger. In short, it's good to be home.

This insight reinforces our vision to create and look after places that feel like home. And it validates our mission to build more homes, stronger communities and better lives. The plan sets out how we'll do this through six, interdependent strategies covering homes, customers, resilience, growth, green and people.

This has to be about much more than fine words. The commitments made here inject renewed energy and direction into our business, and pinpoint how we want to achieve tangible impact. For each strategy we've identified key performance measures that we'll regularly monitor and report upon, to track progress and share learning with the wider housing sector.

As the chief executive of a **PlaceShapers** housing association, I'm constantly reminded that it's my and my colleagues' privilege to walk alongside customers on their journeys. Every person's experience is unique, so it's our job to listen, offer choices and do all we can to meet people's needs and aspirations.

We believe in doing things **with** people, not for them. And we understand that trust is vital; we can only reach our objectives if those we work with trust our good intentions and ability to deliver. That trust has to be earned every day, in everything we say and do.

Our previous corporate plan, **Further together**, highlighted the responsibilities that we take seriously: to serve customers and communities fairly and with integrity, to support colleagues in their work and to be an honest and constructive partner. It also emphasised the crucial, enabling roles played by technology, culture and values. These pledges remain and underpin how we can make it 'good to be home'.

I look forward to continuing our journey together.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aileen Evans".

Aileen Evans
Group Chief Executive

The world out there

The need and demand for what we do have never been greater. Britain's decades-long problem of housing supply and affordability shows no sign of diminishing, and its effects have been amplified by a deep cost-of-living crisis, which impacts especially on people with low and fixed incomes. Times are undoubtedly tough, so we have to step up and rise to the challenge.

It's no longer just local or domestic issues, such as planning delays, that affect our business. We have to work with the impacts of global trends in politics, markets, wars, climate change and technology. Recent years have brought different expectations of national government, acute financial pressures for many local authorities and unprecedented calls upon the National Health Service. In this environment, there's more onus on not-for-profit organisations like Grand Union to fill the gaps.

The skills and materials we need to build and maintain homes have become much harder to obtain, while long-term borrowing rates have also increased. Hotter and wetter weather patterns and rising energy prices mean that we need to provide homes that enable people to live in ways very different to previous generations.

Increased media coverage and regulatory change have rightly put housing providers' performance under the spotlight, especially how we protect residents from the risks of fire, flooding, crime, and damp, condensation and mould. The Housing Ombudsman Service has gained new powers and taken on a more direct approach to holding organisations to account.

The world is in the early stages of another seismic revolution. Just as industrialisation, mass production, computerisation and then the internet fundamentally altered the way we live and work, new technologies will drive even greater and faster change. Artificial intelligence, genetic therapies and advanced automation promise huge gains, with the potential to transform people's quality of life. But they also present unfamiliar risks, for which we have to prepare and be ready to adapt.

We expect that the three-year lifespan of this corporate plan will see significant changes in all of these spheres, as well as challenges and opportunities that we're not yet able to predict. Grand Union's capacity to survive and thrive in times like these is built upon its financial strength, quality of people and depth of relationships. We cannot do everything or resolve problems by ourselves, but together we can do the right things to get the best possible outcomes for customers, communities and the future.

Our purpose, vision and mission

Good to be home is founded on Grand Union's business purpose, vision and mission. The 2022 **Better Social Housing Review** recommended that all registered housing providers should refocus on, and deliver against, their core purpose. We agree, and are resolute about responding through the strategies, commitments and measures set out in this plan.





Our purpose (why we exist)

Homes for those who need them

This simple expression of what we're all about comes straight from our consultation with colleagues.



Our vision (our ultimate aim)

Homely places where people can flourish

This responds directly to customers' views about the meaning and importance of home.



Our mission (how we'll do it)

More homes, stronger communities, better lives

The three vital components of our business.

Good to be home focuses on home as the starting point for all of our work, lit up by customers' feedback, views and ideas. We will publicise the impact we achieve through this plan, and share learning with other housing providers, partners and industry groups.



Our values and voice

We believe that successful business isn't just about policies, structures, resources, processes and performance. More important than all of these are the things we stand for and those we stand against, plus how we think, behave and communicate. These elements are often portrayed as the 'soft side' of work, but actually they're the hard essentials – without them, there is no bottom line.



Our values (what drives us)



Driven

We're driven to do more

Empowering colleagues to achieve more and help us be efficient, flexible and ambitious to achieve positive impact with customers and communities.



Together

We're in it together

Bringing a can-do attitude and collaborative approach to provide what customers, colleagues and partners need from us.



Deliver

We deliver on our promises

Committed to making a difference to people's lives, by acting with integrity, being trustworthy, open-minded and taking ownership.

Our voice (the way we present ourselves and come across)

Guided by feedback from customers, we've sought to make a positive change to the way we communicate. In all our work, we aim to come across as:



Active –

bringing positive energy and determination to get things done



Ambitious –

setting high standards and striving for the best outcomes



Approachable –

being friendly, personal and conversational

Above all, we always aim to be (as one customer put it) **“nice and clear”**.

This voice applies to every colleague, every situation and across all communications channels, spoken, written and digital.

Six strategies for impact

Housing is a complex, costly and long-term business. There's no simple or single answer to getting things right – success depends upon the cumulative effect of lots of interlinked effort and investment. To capture and direct these interdependencies, this plan is driven through six core strategies. Together, they provide the focus and framework for everything we'll do over the next three years.





Homes

Safe and secure places for everyone



Customers

Services people trust



Resilience

A strong organisation
with healthy finances



Growth

More homes and impact



Green

Sustainable living and working



People

A values-led culture

These themes match the priorities highlighted by customers, colleagues, Board members and partners. The detailed strategies accompanying this plan show exactly how we intend to achieve our objectives in each area, including the crucial links between customer-facing functions and other parts of the business.

We will set annual targets for each of these strategies and measure our performance to gauge success. We'll use this evidence alongside customer feedback to ensure we're making a positive impact for our customers.

Homes

Safe and secure places for everyone



Homes are where we start from. We will provide high-quality homes that recognise and respond to people's individual needs, focusing on the top priorities of safety, security, repairs and maintenance. We'll also concentrate on the appearance of neighbourhoods, to create attractive local environments that reduce stigma and help people to feel comfortable. With police, health, social care and other partners, we'll promote healthy living, wellbeing and independence.



To achieve this, we will:

- Develop, agree and deliver an updated standard for all Grand Union homes, to create homes and neighbourhoods where people are proud to live
- Transform our repairs and maintenance service to offer greater flexibility, improve the condition of properties and meet customers' needs better
- Create and maintain attractive, peaceful neighbourhoods, where people can feel at home, settle and thrive
- Work in partnership with statutory services and specialist agencies to reduce anti-social behaviour and support healthy communities
- Review and reshape our supported housing to match local needs and offer improved living environments.



We'll measure success by:

- ▶ Compliance with the **Decent Homes Standard** and the decisions driven by active asset management – to maintain and improve homes, or sometimes dispose of empty properties
- ▶ Levels of safety compliance for gas, electricity, fire, Legionella, asbestos and lifts
- ▶ **Tenant Satisfaction Measures** and other indicators in the **Homes** and **Customers** strategies.

Customers

Services people trust



We will keep listening to, engaging and building relationships with customers so that we can support people on their life journeys. To offer a good customer experience, we'll improve digital access and provide inclusive, tailored services with greater choice and control. We'll do what we say we'll do, and build up a deserved reputation for trust and reliability. Through partnerships with the police and other agencies, we'll help people to feel physically and psychologically safe at home.

To achieve this, we will:

- Build relationships and trust by ensuring customers influence all parts of our work, and responding quickly and positively if something goes wrong
- Improve the way we collect and use data and insight to meet customers' needs
- Provide more tailored, inclusive and flexible services that cater for people's differences and preferences
- Provide accessible, easy-to-use digital services that make it easy and satisfying for customers to deal with us, offering greater choice and control
- Continue transforming our business so that we have the people, culture and processes that make it easy for colleagues to help customers
- Identify what most helps customers to feel safe at home, and pursue this with our statutory and community partners.



We'll measure success by:

- ▶ Trends in complaints, service failures and customer feedback
- ▶ Take-up, use and satisfaction with digital services
- ▶ Evidence of customer influence and use of customer and community insight
- ▶ Customers' access to and take-up of opportunities, and feelings about the future
- ▶ Tenant Satisfaction Measures and other indicators in the **Customers** strategy.



Resilience

A strong organisation and finances



We'll focus on three core areas:

- **Financial Resilience and Treasury**
- **Governance and Risk**
- **IT, Data and Transformation.**

We will build on our existing strengths and regulatory ratings to comply with loan covenants, and balance risk with responsible financial management. To increase resilience, we will look to accelerate our transformation programme, giving colleagues better access to reliable data, insight and systems. We'll continue to recruit motivated and effective Board members who can positively contribute to Grand Union's strategic direction and leadership. All of this will enable us to build more homes and provide better support services to meet customers' needs.

To achieve this, we will:

- Maintain full regulatory, financial and operational compliance, while mapping and managing new and emerging risks
- Prioritise our transformation programme to provide more robust, effective and efficient processes and technology that support good data management and insight, reliability and quality of service and effective cyber security
- Strengthen the membership and effectiveness of our Board through recruitment, training and development
- Take a holistic view of risk and encourage collaboration across different business areas for the purpose of mitigating and better managing risks
- Proactively manage our relationships with funders
- Maintain financial resilience.

We'll measure success by:

- ▶ Actual yearly operating margin compared to forecast
- ▶ Our long-term financial capacity, including responsible borrowing, covenants and loan security
- ▶ Average costs per home of management and maintenance
- ▶ Our preparedness for a changing risk environment, including new risks and movements between risk categories
- ▶ Progress with transformation to enhance business processes and technology
- ▶ Other detailed indicators in the **Resilience** and **People** strategies.

Growth

More homes and impact



Creating more homes to meet local needs is right at the heart of our purpose, vision and mission. To improve access and affordability, we will prioritise new building for social and affordable rent. We'll also continue to provide homes for shared ownership, and review the quality and effectiveness of the supported housing we offer.



To achieve this, we will:

- Build up to 900 new homes by 2027, to help reduce homelessness and improve people's life opportunities
- Maximise the number of new homes we provide for social rent (around 50% of local market rent levels), alongside development for affordable rent and shared ownership
- Develop partnerships to continue delivering high-quality homes and services
- Work with other housing providers, statutory services and specialist organisations to check how well our supported housing meets local needs.

We'll measure success by:

- ▶ Actual numbers and types of homes built compared to target
- ▶ Evidence of changes in local housing needs from partner councils
- ▶ Property investment and disposal decisions guided by our active asset management model
- ▶ Partnerships created, strengthened or extended
- ▶ Evidence of our influence in the housing sector and partners' Net Promoter Scores (how likely they are to recommend working with us)
- ▶ Other detailed indicators in the **Growth** strategy.



Green

Sustainable living and working



We will take an environmentally responsible approach to every part of our business, making the comfort, energy efficiency and affordability of existing homes our top priority. We'll also take action to cut the carbon emissions and waste we create. To map out our future path, we'll develop and begin to deliver a plan to achieve 'net zero' homes and services by 2050.

Our responsibility isn't confined to our own environmental impact. We will continue to raise awareness with colleagues and customers to encourage sustainable choices wherever possible.

To achieve this, we will:

- Bring all Grand Union homes up to a minimum **Energy Performance Certificate** (EPC) level C rating before 2030
- Make sure all new-build properties achieve at least EPC level B and meet the **Future Homes Standard**, with a clear plan to work towards net zero homes
- Reduce the carbon emissions and waste from our business in each year of the plan, with increased recycling and use of recycled products.

We'll measure success by:

- ▶ Progress against our Green action plan, including reduced carbon emissions and sustainability targets for re-letting empty homes
- ▶ Increased maintenance/construction recycling and less waste through our materials and supplier partnerships
- ▶ Other detailed sustainability indicators in the **Green** strategy.



People

A values-led culture



To motivate and help colleagues achieve high levels of performance and success in their jobs, it's vital that they feel understood and that they belong as part of Grand Union. We'll work with colleagues to shape our desired culture, and create the organisational climate to support it. To promote diversity and wellbeing, we'll focus on and share learning about how colleagues' experiences affect customers' experiences – and vice versa.

To achieve this, we will:

- Work with colleagues, customers and other stakeholders to determine the consistent culture we want to work by, with a clear programme to embed this throughout the business, supported by strong and visible leadership. We'll test how we're doing with colleagues by creating regular opportunities for feedback so that we can make sure we stay on track
- Specify and communicate what's expected of colleagues and what they can expect in return, to help us become an attractive employer-of-choice
- Invest in people through well-targeted training and development that helps colleagues and customers to realise their potential, and directly supports our purpose, vision and mission
- Work with all our stakeholders to educate, prevent discrimination, take positive action, provide inclusive services and champion diversity
- Complete an independent review of our culture and act on its results.





We'll measure success by:

- ▶ Colleagues' Net Promoter Scores (how likely people are to recommend us as an employer)
- ▶ Maintaining the **Investors in People** Silver standard
- ▶ Pulse surveys to measure how we're living our values
- ▶ Analysis of capabilities and gaps in skills and qualifications
- ▶ Other detailed indicators in the **People** strategy.

Making it all happen

The changes and commitments set out in this plan and its supporting strategies will not happen by accident. They can only be achieved by design and disciplined effort from every part of the business, and with the active support of customers and partners. We will align all of our engagement, governance, communication, partnerships and transformation behind this plan to make it happen.



Engagement

The collaborative approach we've taken to producing this plan demonstrates our commitment to listening and empowerment. We'll continue to involve and seek the advice of customers, colleagues, Board members and partners in how we implement it.

Environmental, social and governance (ESG)

Modern business demands a wider view – taking proper account of how our work impacts on the environment and promotes positive social outcomes. Our ESG commitments apply to everything we do. Strong, capable leadership is another essential part of any enterprise. Grand Union's Board will continue to provide the strategic direction, support and resources needed to fulfil the pledges and targets in this plan.



Finance and value for money

To attract and safeguard investment in building homes and communities, we will maintain strong financial control over our loans, capital spending, costs and revenues. Through efficient procurement, contracts and management, we'll aim to make every pound and penny count – delivering the maximum benefit for customers.

Communication

Whatever their role, every Grand Union colleague and Board member is a professional communicator. The words we choose and how we use them directly impacts on our prospects and ability to deliver the commitments in this plan. We'll take a strategic approach to identifying the audiences we need to reach and the messages we want people to hear. What we say is important, and the way we say it even more so.



Partnerships

We will continue to work constructively with other housing providers, local authorities, funders, the Regulator of Social Housing, Housing Ombudsman Service, contractors, suppliers, the voluntary sector and membership bodies. We're proud to be a PlaceShaper housing association that's committed to broader social impact, including support for skills, jobs, health, diversity, and financial and digital inclusion.

Transformation

We will continue our programme to modernise key parts of the business and make sure that it's fit for purpose and the future challenges we expect to face. We'll give special emphasis and urgency to improving our use of technology, alongside enhancements to performance monitoring, processes, people and culture.

The 'ideal state' we're working towards is where we're able to anticipate and meet customers' needs in the right ways at the right times, involving the right people to achieve the best possible results. We need to be able to make decisions and implement them at pace.

Diversity, equality, inclusion and fairness

We believe in working with people as friendly equals, respecting and catering for individual differences and preferences as much as we can. We take our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 seriously and seek to build positive diversity, inclusion and fairness into everything we do and say.

Monitoring and reporting

We'll measure and publicise progress towards the objectives in this plan through our performance framework, Board reports, annual reports, ESG updates and benchmarking.



Contact us

If you need more information about our plans for 2024-27, think you can support our work in any way, or would like this plan in a different format or language, please get in touch:

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