

# ANNEXE 2

## Preferred Partners Review 2009

It is good practice for the Council to periodically review the performance of partner Registered Social Landlords and carry out similar assessments with potential new partners. We want to ensure that the organisations we work with are well managed, demonstrate a commitment to meeting housing need within the Borough and provide a service with which its customers are generally satisfied.

The Council currently works with ten Registered Social Landlords to enable new affordable housing; six are large, general needs Housing Associations and four are smaller organisations, or have a specialist area of expertise:

<b>Accent Peerless</b>	Larger association
<b>Downland</b>	Larger association
<b>James Butcher (Southern Housing Group)</b>	Larger association
<b>Pavilion</b>	Larger association
<b>Raglan</b>	Larger association
<b>Thames Valley Housing</b>	Larger association

<b>Ability</b>	Specialist provider of housing for people with support needs
<b>English Rural</b>	Specialist provider of rural housing
<b>Mount Green</b>	Smaller association and rural specialist
<b>Surrey Community Development Trust</b>	Specialist provider of housing for people with support needs

Table 2: Waverley preferred partners since 2001

In 2009, Waverley's existing 'preferred partners' were asked to submit information across a range of relating to their;

- service delivery
- resident satisfaction
- approach to equality and diversity
- stock and development history in the Borough.

The Council is grateful for the help from its partners and the information they provided.

This 'desktop' review was undertaken using data provided by the Registered Social Landlord themselves, the Audit Commission, The Tenant Services Authority and the Homes and Communities Agency (formerly the Housing Corporation).

The key areas examined reviewed were

1. Commitment to development in Waverley and working in partnership with the Council (evidenced by the number of dwellings built since the last review),
2. The organisations' management and governance (evidenced by the Housing Corporation's 'traffic light' assessment system)

3. Customer satisfaction levels and the ease with which residents feel able to participate in decisions about their homes and the service (evidenced by the Registered Social Landlord own surveys).
4. Service delivery in key areas (evidenced by performance indicator data)

### **1. Commitment to development in Waverley and working in partnership with the Council**

Table 3 shows housing stock developed since the last review and the total stock holding of each Association in the Borough. All existing partners hold stock in the Borough, with most continuing to develop new homes that contribute towards meeting local housing need.

	<b>Total housing Stock in Waverley</b>	<b>Number of new homes built in Waverley since 2001</b>
Accent Peerless	29	14
Downland	206 (including 26 supported bedspaces)	79
James Butcher/ Southern Housing Group	159	21
Pavilion	513	36
Raglan	71 (including 10 supported bedspaces)	0
Thames Valley Housing	235	130
Ability	16	0
English Rural	76	54
Mount Green	78	28
Surrey Community Development Trust	72 supported bed spaces	17

Table 3: Stock and new development in Waverley since 2001. Source: Housing Association Partners (2009)/ [www.rsrsurvey.co.uk](http://www.rsrsurvey.co.uk) , Part O (March 2009)

Whilst we encourage Developers (i.e. builders and landowners) to work with Preferred partners, three schemes have been developed in Waverley by non-preferred partners since arrangements were established in place in 2001 (Table 4):

	<b>Housing Stock in Waverley</b>	<b>Number of new homes built in Waverley since 2001</b>
Sentinel	12	0
Bellways Housing Trust	21	21
A2	10 (including 7 supported bed spaces)	3

Table 4: Stock and new development in Waverley since 2001. Source: Housing associations (2009)/ [www.rsrsurvey.co.uk](http://www.rsrsurvey.co.uk)

## **2. Management and governance**

The Tenants Services Authority (TSA) was created on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2008, as the sole independent regulator for Housing Associations. The TSA is charged with raising the standard of housing services by putting tenants first. This function was previously carried out by the Housing Corporation, and pre-2008 data relies upon Housing Corporation Inspection reports.

Registered Social Landlords holding less than 1,000 stock are exempt from this inspection regime, but are still subject assessment of their viability, governance, management and development.

The former Housing Corporation have inspected all larger RSL preferred partners in Waverley and gave green lights to all signifying that they met requirements for:-

- Viability (i.e. the organisation was financially stable)
- Governance (i.e. that the business was properly governed and the managing board properly constituted)
- Management (i.e. that systems and procedures for the running of the organisation were satisfactory)
- Development (i.e. that the association met the criteria set down for ensuring that new development schemes were efficiently and effectively carried out and that the type of development met the needs of the area)

The data used to 'award' green light status is historic as the Housing Corporation transferred its regulatory functions to the Tenant Services Authority in 2008.

Raglan Housing Association was subject to a 'short notice' inspection by the Audit Commission in 2009. Weaknesses were found to outweigh strengths in; access and customer care, value for money, responsive repairs, void repairs and gas servicing. The Audit Commission asked Raglan to work with its residents to develop an action plan showing how it intends to implement their recommendations.

## **3. Customer satisfaction levels**

The Council needs to be satisfied that the Associations it works with as preferred partners are well managed and provide services with which their residents are reasonably happy.

Figure 1 (overleaf) illustrates resident satisfaction levels in three key areas among the larger of Waverley's Preferred Partners and landlords with stock in the borough. Sentinel has been included, because although it is not currently a Preferred Partner, the association has a scheme with planning permission and several schemes at the pre-application discussion stage.

This information was obtained from the former Housing Corporation's website in 2008. The results are also compared with Waverley's resident satisfaction levels and the national mean.

These three areas form part of the Housing Corporation's prescribed satisfaction survey data, which is required from larger Associations (owning over 1,000 dwellings). Larger associations are required to undertake satisfaction services on a range of prescribed questions. However, smaller associations are not required to canvas residents in such a set format and are able to survey their residents on subject of their own choosing. Therefore, it is of limited use to compare.

As with all raw statistical data, care is needed in interpretation. For example, Waverley Borough Council achieves a significantly higher score than many of its partners for 'levels of satisfaction with the opportunity to participate'. Waverley has a 68% satisfaction rating, as opposed to the major RSL average of 51.3%. The figures do not, of themselves, suggest that the RSL's policies and mechanisms for participation are not as good, but merely that residents' felt that engagement is not as easy. Factors such as geographical spread of the housing stock may affect residents' perceptions.

#### **4. Service delivery in key areas**

An organisation's commitment to equality and diversity is not easily quantified. However all of Waverley's Preferred Partners and Sentinel have clear and robust policies relating to equality and diversity and have demonstrated their commitment in various areas of their performance.

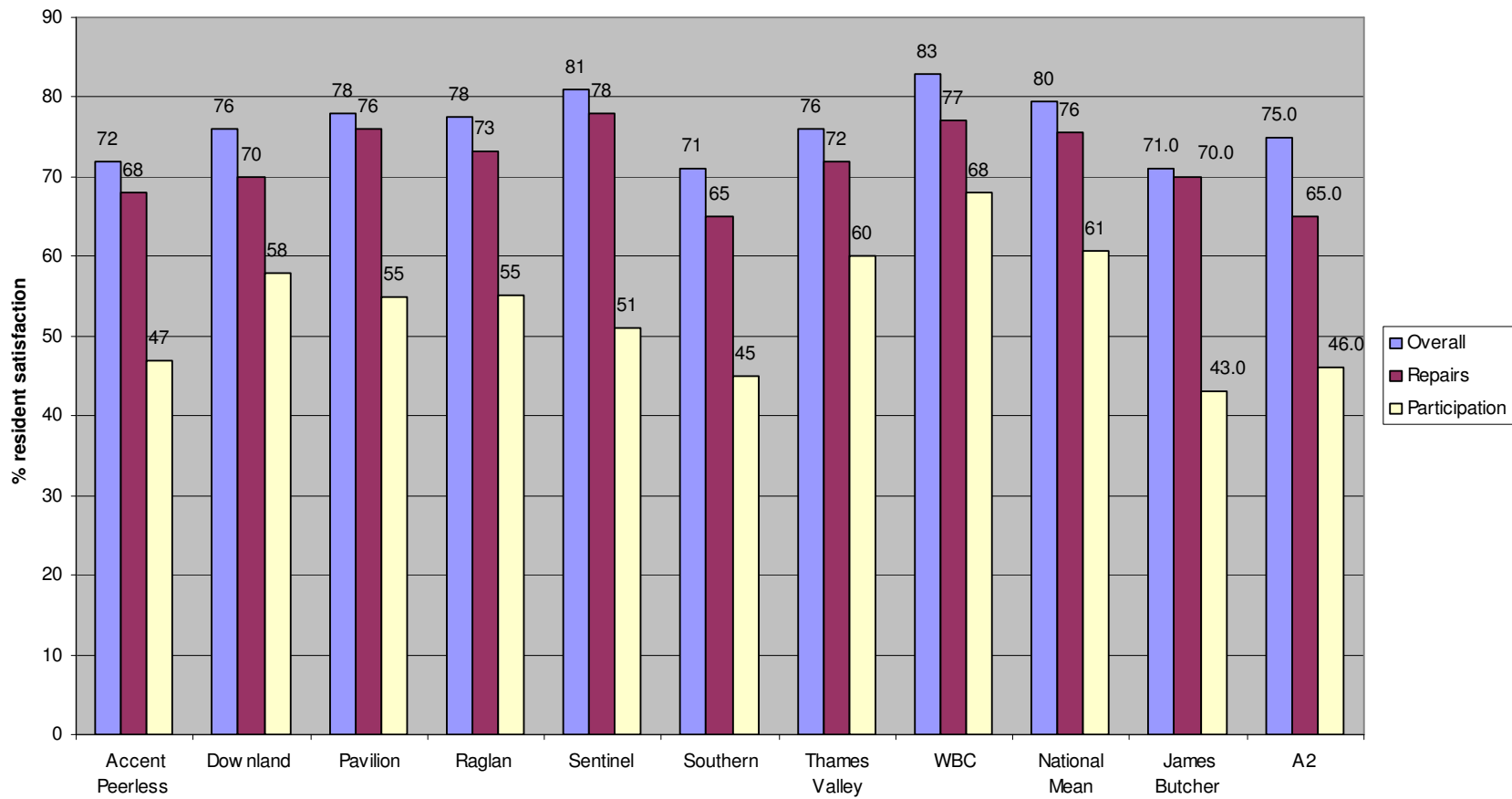


Figure 1: Resident satisfaction levels with Waverley's larger landlords. Source Housing Corporation's website (2008)

## **Medium to Large Registered Social Landlord Preferred Partners**

### **1. Accent Peerless Limited (APL)**

APL is a large Association based in Camberley (Surrey), formed to accept the transfer of housing stock from Surrey Heath Borough Council. It is part of the national Accent Group. APL owns just over 3,000 homes with a small percentage in Waverley.

The latest inspection by the former Housing Corporation carried out in July 2008 gave APL 'green lights' in all areas

In June 2009 the Audit Commission (AC) carried out an inspection and its recommendations were: -

- ✓ To improve the Association's approach to access, equality and diversity
- ✓ To improve performance in the key areas of Planned Maintenance, Repairs and Housing Management
- ✓ To strengthen the strategic approach and performance management

Levels of residents' satisfaction are reasonable with 72% of residents generally satisfied with their landlord, 68% satisfied with the repairs service and 47% satisfied with the ability to participate. While this latter figure seems low it is broadly in line with the average for the rest of Waverley's larger RSL partners.

During the period the partnership, 14 one and two bedroom homes for rent were developed at Midhurst Road in Haslemere in 2007-2008.

### **2. Downland**

Downland is part of the Affinity Sutton Group, which operates in the southern counties of England.



**Photo 1: New homes under construction at Wyphurst road in 2005**

The last inspection by the Audit Commission in 2003. It found that Downland provided a 'Good' service and suggested some areas for minor improvements, with 'Promising' expectations that these would be achieved. As a result, an action plan was drawn up to address the areas highlighted by the Audit Commission, which has now been implemented.

The Affinity Sutton Group were also assessed by the Housing Corporation in May

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