



Corsham and West Wiltshire Plan

(Avon Area 1)

2012 – 13

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Introduction

Avon Area 1 encompasses Corsham, Rudloe, Box, Lacock and the smaller villages of Neston and Gastard and also the area to the West of Wiltshire; Melksham, Trowbridge, Westbury and Bradford-on-Avon.

The Neighbourhood Plan sets out our priorities for 2012/13. In accordance with the Greensquare Corporate Plan we aim to be a pioneering housing, regeneration and social investment agency working within the team's geographical area. As well as managing and improving our current homes and neighbourhoods, we aim to provide a range of new homes, from social and affordable rent, to market rent and homes for sale.

Above all we put residents at the heart of everything we do: looking to continually improve the quality of their homes; the services we offer; and the neighbourhoods in which they live.

About the Area

Corsham is an historic Saxon market town which prospered from the wool trade in medieval times and maintained its prosperity after the decline of that trade through the quarrying of Bath Stone with underground mining works extending to the south and west of Corsham.

The Ministry of Defence has operated at a number of locations in the vicinity of Corsham since the First World War. In the 1950's a 35 acre 'city' was built beneath Corsham to house up to 4,000 Government personnel in the event of a nuclear strike.

A large number of houses and flats were built in Corsham by the Council to house workers from the various local military establishments and the estate at Rudloe predominantly housed workers from RAF Rudloe Manor and the Royal Naval Stores at Copenacre.

These properties were transferred in December 1995 under LSVT to North Wilts Housing Association > Westlea Housing Association.

More recently, the Association started to develop new build estates in the West Wiltshire area at Bradford on Avon, Westbury Leigh, Trowbridge and Melksham.

We have also recently taken on management of a new development at Pound Mead in Corsham, built by our own construction company, Tidestone and are awaiting planning permission for a small development on the site of the old Spring Tinings Sheltered Housing Scheme also in Corsham.

Demand for social housing in the area is high with over 1,000 people seeking housing requesting just Corsham or Melksham area as their first area of choice.

Indicator	Corsham	Melksham
Number on register with a minimum of one bed need	259	336
Number on register with a minimum of two bed need	114	206
Number on register with a minimum of three bed need	48	106
Number on register with a minimum of four bed need	16	27
Number of households on register per area	437	675

However the above figures include Bronze bandings – most applicants in the Bronze category have no ‘housing need’ as it is considered that they are ‘adequately’ housed and therefore have little chance of securing social housing.

The exception to this is where we have a difficult to let or a less popular property; perhaps a bed-sit or sheltered accommodation and fewer applicants bid.

Our lettings plans for new developments would normally select a mix of applicants from Platinum, Gold Plus, Gold and Silver banding for each property size. This would usually give us a reasonable mix of employed, those seeking work, young families and those with older children and customers with disabilities.



One of our new properties in Melksham – a 4 bed property built specifically with adaptations to house a family with disabilities – it has a through floor lift and should provide a lifetime home for the family.

Indicator	Corsham	Melksham
Number of households on register per area	437	675
Number on register with a minimum of one bed need		
Platinum	0	2
Gold Plus	12	12
Gold	59	79
Silver	78	101
Bronze	110	142
Number on register with a minimum of two bed need		
Platinum	0	4
Gold Plus	4	8
Gold	25	42
Silver	34	46
Bronze	51	106
Number on register with a minimum of three bed need		
Platinum	2	1
Gold Plus	0	4
Gold	9	23
Silver	19	29
Bronze	18	49
Number on register with a minimum of four bed need		
Platinum	1	2
Gold Plus	2	5
Gold	4	9
Silver	5	7
Bronze	4	4
	437	675

Figures May 2012 from H4W register

Stock Profile

Locality Avon Area 1

Box	77
Bradford on Avon	18
Corsham	736
Lacock	39
Rudloe	137
Melksham	128
Trowbridge	26
Hilperton	18
Southwick	21
Westbury Leigh	46

Grand Total 1246

Property Type	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed	6 Bed	Total
Bungalow	27	64					91
Elderly – Ground Floor Flat	52	16					68
Elderly - Flat above Ground Floor	64	19	1				84
Gen Needs - Ground Floor Flat	48	100					148
Flat above First Floor	42	161	2				205
House	12	233	331	29	1	1	607
Maisonette		5					5
Studio Flat - Elderly	35						35
Studio Flat	3						3
Total	283	598	334	29	1	1	1246

We also have a Women's Refuge and Mother & Baby Unit within the area, but these properties have not been included in the stock figures as they are 'stand alone' units and managed by the Supported Housing Team. However 6 flats for temporary accommodation for Homeless applicants in Trowbridge have been included as they form part of the Sleightholme Court estate which is managed by the Neighbourhood Team.

Proportionately Avon Area 1 has only 56% of houses and bungalows with the remaining 44% being made up of flats and bed-sits.

If we compare this with Avon Area 2, Chippenham and Villages; approximately 74% of the stock comprises of houses and bungalows and only 26% made up of flats and studio flats.

The majority of two bedroom flats are typically in three storey blocks with little outside recreational space. Many of the blocks have hard tarmac areas to the rear and often the areas are dominated by either bin stores or stone sheds.

In 2007 the areas to the rear of the similar type flats in Rudloe were improved with hard and soft landscaping, forming seated areas and plant beds.

A lesson learned was that members of the community must feel a sense of ownership, as unfortunately very few of the residents show responsibility in keeping these areas tidy – a large part of the Corsham and West Wilts area plan is to work together with the residents in the community to make the estate a nicer place to live.



Dicketts Road Flats – typical of the three storey blocks of flats in Corsham and Rudloe

Our newer developments of flats have a much more modern feel and we are working closely with the Development team to get the balance right, allowing residents ample storage, sufficient parking, spacious living areas and some pleasant out door space.



Example of new build flats at Skylark Road in Melksham



Sleightholme Court, Trowbridge – a mix of 1 & 2 Bed flats all with their own front door!

Comparison of Lettings – [New Build and Re-Lets] Avon Areas 2012

Avon Area 1 – Corsham & West Wiltshire		Avon Area 2 – Chippenham & Villages	
March	24	March	3
April	17	April	11
May	18	May	12
Total	59	Total	26

We are expecting a further 100 new properties to be handed over from the Development team before April 2013 in Avon Area 1

Avon Area 1 also has a large number of garages – approximately 540 garage units across the area many of which are in central Corsham and Rudloe. An estimated 26% are currently vacant thus losing revenue; however the Development Team is looking at some of the garage sites to use as small development sites – where we build just a couple of houses, if there is need in the area and the proposition is viable.

Rent Arrears Profile

Arrears Category	Number of Cases	Amount
General Needs	444	£181,481.77
Older Persons	5	£1,338.18
**Supported	10	£3,276.07
Total	459	£186,096.02

Figures at 22/05/12

** Supported includes Mother & Baby Unit; Temporary Accommodation; Women's Refuge and properties for People with Learning Disabilities.

The arrears figures shown [in simple terms] are possibly the truest reflection of the arrears situation for Avon Area 1 as Housing Benefit had been paid up to 20th May, however there may be some late Standing Order or Direct Debit payments due and particularly in the supported units, outstanding benefit claims waiting to be processed.

Approximately 60% of residents claim full or partial Housing Benefit.

There is a risk to the business that the Universal Credit proposal of paying Housing Benefit direct to the claimant and the non-payment of benefit for under occupancy [*bedroom tax*] will cause an increase in arrears.

It is important that we work closely with the Customer Accounts Team to ensure our customers are receiving all the support they may need during these times of Welfare Reform.



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Management Profile

One challenge for the team is that whilst Corsham is only approximately 4 miles from the office at Methuen Park, our more distant properties can take up to 40 minutes to travel to, therefore appointments must be carefully planned to ensure time isn't wasted on unnecessary journeys.

Where we have a majority of new build developments in the West of the area, we ensure that we have robust lettings plans to ensure we get a mix of both employed and non employed; mix of ages of children and a mix of bandings of those on the Housing register.

Pivot table for ASB goes here

Working with others

Working in partnership with other agencies is an important part of building sustainable communities – Avon Area 1 team has built strong working relationships with many of the agencies listed below.

Wiltshire Police Neighbourhood Policing Team & Associated Departments: Domestic Violence Unit, Public Protection Teams, Vulnerable Adults Team and Safe Guarding Units. Drug Intelligent departments, Firearms & Warrant officers. Wiltshire Bobby Van.

Wiltshire Community Mental Health Partnership including CPN's, Crisis Teams, and Hospital based Mental Health Support officer, Floating Support Workers & Contacts at Residential Care Homes and 24/48 Hour assessment Accommodation:

Social Services - Children & families, Adult Care, Learning & Disabilities, Over 60's, Vulnerable Adults, Health Care Advisors, Carers, Cleaners and Domiciliary support. Local Schools & Pastoral Managers:

Drug / Alcohol Support - Many listed agencies - from Badas (New Highways, Gloucester House, Community 4, Doorway, and Bridge Centre Direct Access through GP's for 1-2-1 Counselling, Local AA Meetings. Self Harm - P.A.S.H - Partnership working to offer 1-2-1 support to deal with Self Harm issues - Mainly cutting & body neglect. Several successful cases to date with on going support in place.

Job Centre Plus - Employment opportunities, Wiltshire College to assist with Job Centre Application and CV Preparation. Partnership working with Lifetime careers and Lucy Kitchener (Reading & Writing)

Wiltshire Council to deal with many aspects of the community from Refuse collection, grass cutting, Highways issues, Environmental Health. Benefits claims & advice, Housing options advice and support - access to Temporary accommodation. Youth Workers, Street based and organised events. Family in Focus. Dog Warden & Access to the **RSPCA** officers based locally. **Homes4Wiltshire**, Community & Engagement department – Asset Design & Regeneration. Chippenham Town Council & Youth Action Wiltshire:

Barnardos (Jigsaw), Community 4, Credit Union, Money Friend & CAB, Doorway, Local Charities, Neighbourhood Watch, The Rise Trust, Project Inspire, Adults Carers Partnership with Carers Support Wiltshire, Partners in Literacy, Youth Outreach Team, Employment & Training Opportunities and link Scheme.

Greensquare's in-house Tenancy Sustainment Team may also sign-post our customers to these agencies. If we have a new applicant with apparent support needs, we try to engage the Tenancy Support Officer as soon as, or even prior to the tenancy starting.

Getting Residents Involved - Developing the Neighbourhood Plan

We will provide a “menu” of ways to get involved so that residents can participate as much or as little as they want to, it will also give residents the opportunity to help us make decisions about their local services, set standards and check how we are doing.

Suggestion Cards/ Local Facebook Page/Twitter - are good options if residents don't have much free time.

Surveys – if residents only have a little bit of time to spare, taking part in a survey is a good way of giving us useful information.

Neighbourhood Wardens/ Village Wardens – Offer local residents a casual contract of employment with Greensquare to carry out campaigns like Stop Dog Fouling, Community Clean up Days and liaising with the Neighbourhood Teams on local issues.

Young Advisors - Young people that are aged 16 to 21, live in Greensquare Homes that are currently not employed, education or training, they will speak up for young people, making sure their thoughts and feelings are considered in local decisions that affect them.

Focus Group/Working Group - sometimes we want to look at specific topic in detail, and may ask residents to join a focus group to give us their views. This group of people who might be particularly relevant to the subject

Community Events/ Campaigns – Residents can volunteer it's an opportunity to meet other residents; these events are good for finding out information and building on community spirit.

Specialist Forums – We have the following specialist forums. These groups are very popular. Different guest speakers give presentations to the groups on things that interest them, and people who attend can tell us what they think about our services and how we can improve them.

- Disability Forum, which meets twice a year
- The Older Persons Forum that also meets twice a year.

Local Residents Business Plan - The local Residents Business Plan is part of Greensquare business planning process and gathers resident's priorities so they can be fed into Greensquare Corporate Business Plan, prior to it being submitted to the Communities Board.

Meet the Team

The **Neighbourhood Manager Karen Williams** will retain the overview for all the services within the area.



Karen has worked with the Association since 1996 starting as a Housing Assistant at the Malmesbury Area Office and covered various patches in the South of the area as Housing Officer and later as Team Leader for the South.

The **Customer Manager Cheryl Scratchley** will be the senior tenancy management specialist within the team and will deal with more complex issues. Her primary concern is dealing with the people element of the neighbourhood.



Cheryl has a vast experience of working in Social Housing joining the North Wilts District Council from Kennet and over the years has covered most areas as Housing Officer right across the district. Cheryl has an excellent rapport with her customers and always goes the 'extra mile' to ensure their needs are met.

The **Neighbourhood Officer Alison Weston** will have more of "place" focus and will ensure that there is good effective liaison with Asset Management and that our estates and neighbourhoods are clean, tidy and well managed as well as providing support to the Customer Manager.



Alison joined the Association as a Lettings Assistant and progressed to becoming a Customer Services Advisor. She has recently been successful in securing the role of Neighbourhood Officer in the new team structure. Alison is looking forward to the challenge!

The **Neighbourhood Team Administrator Amy-Louise Webster** currently works closely with the Home Mover to ensure that paper work is prepared in readiness for property letting, appointments for viewings and sign-ups are organised and is lead officer for 'Homeswapper', the local and national vehicle for residents who wish to Mutually Exchange or 'swap' their homes. Ultimately she will be responsible for 'organising' the team and ensure calls are returned, appointments are made and also help with organising events and meetings.



Amy-Louise is a great ambassador for the 'Whatever' project, joining the Association under this scheme and proving what a success it is by securing a part time position in the H & S Facilities team. She was later

successful in joining the lettings team as an administrator and now spends one half of the week in each team.

The Home Mover Belinda Emm will ensure that properties are let with the minimum void time, liaise closely with the Development team for all new build properties in the area and help in writing lettings plans to ensure we have a good mix of residents to create sustainable communities.



Belinda transferred to the Association at LSVT in 1995. She has a wealth of knowledge of all of the properties right across the district. Her excellent organisational skills are paramount to the team, in keeping up with all the new developments on the patch and she works closely with Cheryl to ensure we get a good balance of residents on the estates.

Caretaker Nigel Lambert



Whilst Nigel is not managed by the Neighbourhood Manager he works predominantly in Avon Area 1. He is an important and respected member of the team, dedicated to keeping our communal areas in the flats and on the estates clean and tidy and is always happy to help if we have any issues or emergencies on the patch.

The team has over 70 years experience in Social Housing between them!

Challenges & Opportunities

The Corsham Housing Management Team has been set up at a time of significant and rapid change in the housing sector such as:

- Radical Welfare Benefit Reform/Introduction of Universal Credit
- New forms of flexible tenure with new homes to be let as Affordable Rent set at 80% of the private sector levels
- The opportunity to dispose of properties and to build for out right sale creating capital to enable Greensquare to continue with its development programme.

These changes are set against the backdrop of substantial challenges to the wider social economic landscape that have significant impact on our customers. These include:

- Lack of employment opportunities
- Greater levels of benefit dependency during a period of benefit reform
- Fuel poverty.
- Less support from other agencies such as Social Services and Mental Health teams in helping our residents to sustain their tenancies.
- More vulnerable tenants living in the community without family support.
- Impact of the '*bedroom tax*' which may be contrary to building mixed and sustainable neighbourhoods.

It is imperative that we tackle these challenges as a major housing provider in the area, and support and enable our residents in the wider community.

The new team places our services closer to our communities. The Communities Boards give greater representation for our customers and can monitor, improve and make key decisions for the community.

Successes for Avon Area 1 Team

- We have implemented lettings plans for our new developments to ensure that we have a mix of residents of all social statuses, and refer every family with a child under 5 to the appropriate local Children's Centre, to ensure that young families are supported not only by Greensquare but by the wider community.
- We have arranged for a new build property to be adapted specifically for a family with a disabled child who was originally housed as a baby in one of our properties, but as he has grown so have his needs and he should now be able to grow up without further adaptations being necessary or the need for the family to move again.
- We were successful in a bid to gain funding to run a 'Pigeon Project' in order to disperse and deter the numerous pigeons in Corsham and Rudloe. With a holistic approach, we have netted balconies, caught

and relocated approximately 100 pigeons and deterred them by flying birds of prey. Whilst there are still a few 'pockets' of pigeons in the area, we will continue to try to clean up the area, as the damage to our buildings and general mess the pigeons cause has been a major nuisance for many years.

- We are currently letting properties on Greensquares' first true multi-tenure site in Southwick, Nr Trowbridge where there is a mix of social housing; market rent properties and homes for outright sale.
- We have completed the decant of Spring Tinings, a former Sheltered Housing unit in Corsham, which will now enable us to redevelop the site with more affordable housing on a mixed tenure site.
- We have successfully dealt with a customer complaint from a resident in Corsham where the Ombudsman stated.... ***"In dealing with Mrs J's complaint and concerns it has gone over and above what would be expected of it in such a situation"***.
- We have recently gained possession of a flat in Corsham where the resident and her visitors caused noise nuisance, were abusive and intimidating to other residents in the block and despite applying our Anti-Social Behaviour procedure, would not change her behaviour. The property has since been re-let applying a 'sensitive let' with the help of Homes4 Wiltshire.
- We carried out a successful Stock Tour with members of our Board, demonstrating the quality of our new build homes and estates and giving a taste of the different ways we deal with challenges on the estates as per the Pigeon Project.

Changes in the Corsham & West Wilts Area

In order to adapt to the changing environment we need to have a greater understanding of the specific challenges that our communities face. We will do this in a number of ways:

- Asking ourselves what we already know about communities; what is good/what can we improve?
- Asking our residents what is good/what can we work together to improve?
- Analysing existing data specific to a local community

- Using information from other sources such as the indices of deprivation from central government and the local government area boards
- Incorporating suggestions from the Residents Business Plan
- Working more closely with Homes4Wiltshire to ensure we create sustainable neighbourhoods

Plan for 2012/13

In order to understand the needs of our customers and communities we need to know more about their circumstances. We are not yet able to fully profile our Neighbourhood, as such the objectives reflect the journey we need to travel to realise our ambitions.

The headline plan is:

- ✓ Conclude the Neighbourhood Plan but remember that this is a *living document*
- ✓ Ensure that we know our customers and use profiling information to tailor our services accordingly
- ✓ Map appropriate data onto GIS and analyse key service areas and customer profiles for hot spots

Corsham & West Wiltshire Plan Actions 2012

Issue	What will happen	
Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour	What	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Work in partnership with local Policing teams to develop a joint approach on tackling ASB issues. ❖ Enforce by way of Injunctions ❖ Formulate robust lettings plans
	Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Neighbourhood Manager; Customer Manager; Neighbourhood Officer ❖ Home Movers Team
	Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Monitor reduction in complaints of ASB ❖ Develop Local Lettings Policy & Develop Good Neighbour Agreements ❖ Build Stronger local Partnerships
	Community Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Develop a Local Community Action Plan agreed with local residents and partner agencies ❖ Link local residents into the Greensquare Academy
Sleightholme Court, Trowbridge – A relatively new build [2007] but looking ‘tired and un-cared for’	What	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Involve the community in tidying up the area and instil and renew a sense of pride in the area
	Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Neighbourhood Manager; Customer Manager; Neighbourhood Officer ❖ Community Involvement Team and Young Advisors
	Community Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ To continue to work with residents and partnering agencies to agree & deliver priorities for their area
	Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Less dependency on Greensquare to keep the estate tidy.

Renaissance at Rudloe	What	❖ Work closely with Asset Management and Head of Regeneration to make further improvements at Rudloe, to create a 'Rudloe Village' feel.
		❖ Ensure that residents are committed to developing a stronger community and sense of responsibility in keeping the estate tidy.
	Who	❖ Neighbourhood Manager; Customer Manager; Neighbourhood Officer; Neighbourhood Involvement; Young Advisors; Regeneration team; Asset Management
	Community Work Future	❖ Consult with residents and the wider community and involve the local school located on the estate. ❖ Less dependency on Greensquare to keep the estate tidy

Longer term aims are:

- To improve the quality of the areas around the three storey blocks of flats in the Corsham area to make them a more appealing place for people to live
- To work with the Neighbourhood Involvement Team to hold community events on the newer estates in the West of Wiltshire area to ensure longer term sustainability
- To work with our residents to encourage a sense of pride in the street they live in and the wider community area