

SUMMER 2016



HOUSING MATTERS



United front

Why the merger of our London and the South divisions is great news for clients

Mersey beaucoup

The unique housing partnership with big plans for Liverpool

Speed of lightweight

Light-gauge steel proves fast and effective in Royal Leamington Spa

Towering ambitions

It was a landmark issue during the mayoral election, but will Sadiq Khan end London's housing crisis?



Charlie Scherer is chief operating officer at Willmott Partnership Homes

New look, new challenges

Many of you will have noticed something a little different about this edition of Housing Matters. Although we remain part of Willmott Dixon, we are now rebranded as Willmott Partnership Homes, with a sleek new identity to boot.

This move reflects our desire to respond to the changing housing landscape within which we and our clients operate. With an even greater focus on public and private sector collaboration to build homes in partnership, this edition of Housing Matters explores our recent experience in crafting estate regeneration solutions and building shared-ownership homes. More locally, the move to bring together all teams in London and the South to form one new region (page 4) has been an obvious response to create better clarity and capacity for our clients.

Willmott Partnership Homes is now a core part of the newly named Willmott Residential business. This has brought together all of our residential businesses – Prime Place, Be:here and Willmott Partnership Homes – meaning we can offer a greater synergy to develop and build market sale, private rental and all tenures of affordable housing.

So what does this mean in practice? As we have highlighted in previous issues, we believe that innovation in technology and processes can play a large role in helping

the housing sector to meet the government's target of building 1 million homes by 2020.

We are all well aware of the skills shortages across the construction industry. Our belief is that the large-scale use of off-site manufacturing (OSM) can really help to address some of these issues, and increase quality and reliability into the bargain.

To ensure we are in a position to help our clients benefit from OSM, we have signed two exclusive, long-term deals with off-site experts: Robertson Timber Engineering and Fusion Building Systems. The latter provides lightweight steel frame construction and has led on our 81-home scheme with Warwick District Council (page 12). Although we have only recently agreed these partnerships, we are already collaborating on a pipeline of up to 5,500 homes.

Our OSM partners are also assisting with other innovations including our cross-tenure, standard house types and standard component designs. This will help to streamline the building process and realise more efficiencies. In addition, we continue to lead the construction sector in our use of Building Information Modelling and have

become the first housing contractor to be accredited by the BRE for our use of the more advanced BIM level two. This gives clients peace of mind that all homes will adhere to the requirement for government-funded homes to be built using BIM.

While it is clearly important to be in the best possible shape to build homes efficiently and to a high standard, this is only part of the 1 million homes equation. The other is working with partners and bringing together complementary expertise to make projects possible. I mentioned estate regeneration earlier and this is set to be a key focus of future projects in London. We asked David Montague, of housing association L&Q, for his thoughts on the future of London housing delivery, following the election of the new mayor, Sadiq Khan (page 6).

But London is only part of the picture. As we report from Liverpool (page 8), cities across the country are progressing down the devolution trail, in order to better address challenges and explore opportunities.

We may have a new look, but our commitment to delivering the best possible projects remains. I hope you enjoy this issue.

“We continue to lead the construction sector in our use of Building Information Modelling and have just become the first housing contractor to be accredited by the BRE for our use of BIM level two”

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Housing Matters is the magazine for Willmott Dixon's residential construction business



London university gears up for student homes revolution

A new model for student accommodation has been unveiled by Royal Holloway, University of London, as it announced plans to build 621 new homes for students.

Rather than develop two or three large blocks, Royal Holloway has opted for a different approach, with the accommodation arranged in clusters of three- and four-storey townhouses each providing homes for 8-12 students.

Michael Berry, director of estates at Royal Holloway, said: “This is a new model for student accommodation. Townhouses encourage communal living, with shared facilities and common areas, and our development among mature trees will include green spaces and sheltered paths connecting residences to the main campus.”

For added time efficiency, the university procured Willmott Partnership Homes to build the new townhouses through the Scape Major Works framework.

Charlie Scherer, chief operating officer, said: “This template for providing student accommodation is attracting interest from other universities looking to expand their estates with imaginative new designs. It plays well into our skill-sets, which include working on tight sites within live environments.”

The townhouses will be ready by September 2017 and will enable Royal Holloway to guarantee residential places to first-year undergraduates.



Universities are spending heavily on upgrading student accommodation as competition increases for new students. Recent projects by Willmott Partnership Homes include remodelling Mardol House in Shrewsbury and new residences at Moulton College in Northamptonshire.

Townhouses like those being built now at Royal Holloway, University of London, could shape the future of student accommodation

Councils embrace cross-funding

As budget cuts restrict council spending on new public assets, more attention is turning to ideas for cross-funding much-needed assets through new homes.

One example is at Westminster City Council in London, which is using the development skills of

Willmott Residential and the construction services of Willmott Partnership Homes to renew two leisure facilities. Both Moberly and Jubilee leisure centres are being funded through creating over 200 homes, giving local residents a cost-neutral upgrade on

two popular facilities.

Also in London, Ealing has recently had cabinet approval to press ahead with plans to cross-fund a new 50m pool and leisure facility by using Willmott Residential to develop homes for private rent, providing an affordable offering to attract key workers and professionals to the area. Both Ealing and Westminster are using the Scape framework for the public assets.

Andrew Telfer, deputy chief executive at Willmott Residential, said: “With austerity cutting deep, councils that think entrepreneurially about working with housing providers to fund new assets will be placed to meet the needs of their community.”



Westminster City Council is renewing Moberly leisure centre at no cost by using Willmott Residential's development skills

Purple patch!

The change in name from Willmott Dixon Housing to Willmott Partnership Homes will see dozens of construction projects across the country turn purple, literally.

The familiar yellow hoardings will soon be history as project signage is switched this summer to reflect Willmott Partnership Homes' distinctive new purple branding.

It follows parent company Willmott Dixon's decision to bring together its three residential companies, which also include Prime Place and Be:here, under Willmott Residential. This will help to make better use of synergies.

Charlie Scherer, chief operating officer of Willmott Partnership Homes, said: “This is a new era for us within a residential-focused company combining development with contract building.

“We're adopting purple as a warm colour that will give us a very visible place in the market, and it's been a popular choice with our customers.”



Capital connections

Willmott Partnership Homes' decision to merge its London and the South divisions is all about offering clients the best possible service



Left to right: Peter Corbett, Mark Chamberlain, David Smith, Steve Kitchen, Mark New, David Issott, Steve Skuse, Sally Ingham, Steve Mullins and Sabah Abed

F

or David Smith, the managing director of the newly formed London and the South division of Willmott Partnership Homes, there is one word that sums up the move to join the two teams together: clarity.

"Clarity for our clients, supply chain and staff," he says. "We are one team with great strength and depth in leadership, able to operate even more efficiently. We have the key supplier relationships to build on the excellent work we have done recently with, among others, Thurrock Council and the City of Westminster.

"In addition we have introduced a technical director position, filled by the experienced Steve Skuse," he adds. "This strengthens our offer to ensure we eliminate all potential mistakes from a project during pre-construction."

Smith, a 28-year veteran of Willmott Dixon, says the launch of the combined London and the South team had to happen as "we cannot afford to stand still – survival comes to those most adaptable to change".

And change is something the affordable housing sector has seen plenty of in recent years. As a result of the greater operational efficiencies that councils and housing associations must now find, Smith sees this as the perfect time to ensure the 270-strong team in London and the South can offer clients the best possible service.

Smith adds that, by building "really close relationships" with key suppliers around its bases of Hitchin, London and Basingstoke, Willmott Partnership Homes is able to address construction sector capacity issues and offer greater value for money to clients.

The aim of the drive to offer greater clarity is simple: "To be number one by reputation with our clients, our supply chain, our people and, most importantly, the people who live in the homes we design and build."



Steve Skuse, technical director

How long at Willmott Partnership Homes?

14 years

Favourite project in that time? My most recent favourite is Derry Avenue, where we built 25 older people's flats for Thurrock Council. It was great to see a team of former Willmott Dixon management trainees delivering this project
Best place in London and the South in the summer? The New Forest, which I have just moved from to be nearer work!



Sally Ingham, new business director

How long at Willmott Partnership Homes?

Seven years

Favourite project in that time?

Too many to choose from!

Best place in London and the South in the summer?

Dunstable Downs for large-scale picnics with friends and family. Great views and loads of space to exhaust lively little ones!

Key fact

Willmott Partnership Homes is a carbon-neutral business



Steve Kitchen, operations director

How long at Willmott Partnership Homes?

20 years

Favourite project in that time? Twelve apartments and nine five-storey town houses at Woking Close in Barnes, west London. A demanding project, but the quality achieved by my team was exceptional

Best place in London and the South in the summer?

I am a Londoner born and bred. My favourite part of London is Covent Garden – I love the vibe in the square



David Smith, managing director

How long at Willmott Partnership Homes? 28 years

Favourite project in that time? I am always keen to show our clients what we can do. Our latest innovation is the Project Blueprint standard and I am pleased to say that two projects in Thurrock have now met this demanding threshold, with more set to follow

Best place in London and the South in the summer?

My garden with friends and family, food, drink, and there must be music! Or the Suffolk countryside where I am originally from, with our new puppy!



Man for a crisis?

New London mayor Sadiq Khan has set out some bold measures to boost housing in the capital. Stuart Macdonald reports on what this means for housing providers

In his manifesto, new London mayor, Sadiq Khan, could not have been any clearer about his number-one priority: “The housing crisis is the single biggest barrier to prosperity, growth and fairness facing Londoners today.”

As a result the mayor set out a range of eye-catching measures to not only double annual housebuilding in the capital to 50,000, but to ensure that half of these homes are “genuinely affordable to rent or buy” (see box, right).

So how are these plans unfolding now that Khan is in City Hall, and what do housing providers think?

During the campaign, the G15 group of large London housing associations, which houses one in 10 Londoners, was forthright in its offer to the successful candidate. Its chair, and chief executive of L&Q, David Montague (see comment, right), said that G15 members were prepared to invest £50 billion to double housebuilding to 180,000 homes over the next decade. To do this, Montague said the G15 needed backing from the Greater London Authority to ensure a pipeline of sites ready to develop, and greater certainty and some flexibility on rents.

Since taking office, Khan has appointed James Murray as his deputy mayor for housing. Murray is a former lead member



Khan he?

The new mayor's housing pledges:

- To double housebuilding to 50,000 a year, with half “genuinely affordable to rent or buy”
- To establish Homes for Londoners to work with housing associations, London boroughs, developers, builders and others to build homes for social rent, London Living Rent and shared ownership on GLA land
- To “tackle the scourge of homelessness” by establishing a “no nights sleeping rough” initiative
- To write new rules with councils to ensure “greater transparency” on developer assessments of the financial viability of projects
- To create a not-for-profit lettings agency for “good private landlords”
- To name and shame bad private landlords online
- To ensure that estate regeneration only proceeds with resident backing and no net loss of social housing.

for housing and development at Islington Council, which has had a 50 per cent affordable housing target since 2011.

The mayor has also conducted an audit of City Hall's plans to “tackle the housing crisis”. In announcing the results of this, Khan said he had his “work cut out”, but that plans would quickly be developed and a first step would be to work with Transport for London to “fast-track numerous sites for development”.

Murray said: “The mayor has immediately started to work with local authorities, developers and housing associations to deliver the new homes that Londoners so desperately need. This includes bringing forward public land for development, raising investment, and making sure we have an efficient planning system that helps boost the number of genuinely affordable homes in the capital.”



The power of three

L&Q's proposed merger with Hyde Group and East Thames will create a social landlord with the scale to make a difference to London's housing crisis, writes L&Q chief executive David Montague

Housing associations are the most successful public-private partnership on record, providing homes for one in 10 Londoners and building a quarter of all new homes in the capital. As chair of the G15 group of London's largest housing associations, this is the most exciting time I've ever experienced in this sector: a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get together to solve the housing crisis.

The national focus away from rented housing towards home ownership, Right to Buy and Starter Homes, together with social housing rent reductions, has presented all housing associations with real challenges over the next few years.

It is one reason why L&Q, The Hyde Group and East Thames decided to merge – but not the only one. Together, we will increase our capacity to build, house and help thousands suffering from the housing crisis in London and the South-east.

It's big stuff – we will be Europe's biggest asset-owning landlord with over 135,000 homes and a pledge to build another 100,000 over the next 10 years.

“We will be Europe's biggest asset-owning landlord with over 135,000 homes and a pledge to build another 100,000 over the next 10 years”

However, it's not always the case that big is beautiful – no matter what our size, our core purpose is anchored in our charitable purpose.

At our heart, our mission is to help those who need it most, where the market has failed them. We create profits for purpose, and reinvest all our surplus into our charitable mission.

It's a badge that we have worn proudly on our arm for the last 50 years and one we will continue to wear with pride as our three organisations come together. Yes, we will need to drive through efficiencies; however, any charitable organisation that is developing at a rate of 10,000 homes a year has a whole host of career opportunities to offer.

There is no doubt that as housebuilders we will be competing with others to attract the skilled labour needed, which is why we are investing £5 million a year in a training academy. This will be targeted towards our residents, so they can find job opportunities with us as well as a place to live. We need bricklayers and hundreds of other skill sets and if we can't find them out there we will train them ourselves.

In addition, we will invest in the off-site construction industry offering them the certainty of an order book, therefore providing them with the security to invest.

We are in this for the long term and we can't do it by ourselves. We will deliver through joint ventures with local authorities and other developers, funded through the bond markets and by using our skills and expertise in regenerating land. The focus over the next few years will be on partnership – we have an L&Q model that is successful and we want to build on that.

In London, we have a new mayor who we are keen to do business with. Don't get me wrong – I am keen to build the numbers we have committed to but not for numbers' sake. These are homes, not units. I am committed to quality and we will build beautiful, desirable, thriving, affordable places to live.

In some areas we might regenerate, in others we will build new towns and villages. L&Q staff care as much about the communities we create as the houses we build.

The population in London alone is due to pass 9.5 million by 2025. By being progressive and ambitious we can and we will do so much more – the challenge has never been greater, but nor has the will to succeed.





Mersey paradise

Liverpool mayor Joe Anderson has pledged to develop 10,000 new homes over the next four years. Denise Chevin reports on how the council and its partners plan to deliver

Liverpool's Labour mayor Joe Anderson swept back into office on 6 May declaring that building more homes would be his top priority.

In his new term in office, Anderson has pledged to build 10,000 homes, many of which will be Rent to Buy, a scheme intended to help ordinary working people onto the property ladder. The pledge is part of a continuing narrative from the administration of increasing both supply and home ownership. Only about half of Liverpool's housing stock is currently owner-occupied, a low figure compared to other cities. A quarter is social rented and a quarter is private rented – hence Liverpool's drive to set up a registration scheme for private landlords too.

So how will Anderson set about delivering his election promises and what does this mean for housing providers in the city?

Speaking to Housing Matters, the mayor says: "My intention is to start the development of 10,000 new homes in the city during the next four years. I don't expect all of those homes to be complete by then but I would expect to have a significant number completed and to be well on with developing the rest."

Anderson says there will be a focus on developing Rent to Buy homes – properties where people start off as a tenant but can become a home owner through an agreed purchase option during the life of their rental agreement. "In many cases, this will enable people to move into home ownership with a reduced need for a deposit and so make home ownership more accessible than is currently the case."

Many of the homes developed will be new-build, but the administration is also looking at options to remodel and redevelop existing

housing stock. Anderson adds: "We will be establishing a Local Authority Housing Company to lead on delivering these new homes and will be seeking finance from both the investment markets and the government."

Since he first came to power four years ago, Anderson's focus has been on increasing overall housing supply and at different price levels – including £350,000 "executive homes" to tempt more people to stay in the city. The last census in 2011 showed there had been a 5.5 per cent increase after decades of declining population.

Darren Hardy, head of housing at Liverpool City Council, says: "We have a reasonably affordable housing market, great transport connections, and we're the second greenest city outside London so we think we can attract people from outside of the city boundaries."

During the last decade the city has seen the emergence of a vibrant housing market, with the construction of new apartment blocks in the centre and waterfront areas, and an influx of foreign investment. However, it was hit hard by the recession and, according to consultancy Hometrack, the current average cost of a home in Liverpool is 11.7 per cent down on the 2007 peak of £124,000.

But there is confidence to create a new



"I don't expect all of those homes to be complete by 2020 but I would expect to have a significant number completed and to be well on with developing the rest"

Joe Anderson, Liverpool mayor



Talkin' about devolution

Liverpool mayor Joe Anderson (above) is expected to stand for election next year in a bid to become mayor for the Liverpool City Region, a new geographical territory being created as part of the devolution programme in English authorities.

The "metro mayor" will have powers over transport as well as strategic planning as part of the £900 million 30-year deal. Further powers may yet be granted, including control of housing, though this is more likely to be transferred in stage two of the devolution.

Darren Hardy, head of housing at Liverpool City Council, says there is already a degree of collaboration over housing with neighbouring boroughs. "If we do get greater powers, it'll certainly give us more flexibility and ability to drive the agenda, with greater say over what housing associations do."

Key fact

Willmott Partnership
Homes builds 2,000
homes each year



“We have a reasonably affordable housing market, great transport connections, and we’re the second greenest city outside London”

Darren Hardy, Liverpool council

housebuilding pipeline and to bring some of the 4,500 empty homes around the city back into use. Between 2011 and 2016, 5,000 homes were built and 1,500 empty ones brought back into occupation. Another 5,000 new homes are under way, with potentially more to follow if Liverpool is successful in reaching a deal with Whitehall to establish a city region (see Talkin’ About Devolution box, previous page).

The housing goals are partly being executed through the formation of the Liverpool Housing Partnership in February 2015, which brings together Liverpool City Council, Redrow Homes and Liverpool Mutual Homes (LMH), with Willmott Partnership Homes as its lead contracting partner (see Marwood Tower box, right). The partnership is intended to deliver 1,500 new homes over five years around the city and for LMH to bring up to 1,000 back into use as part of a combined £205 million investment.

Under the terms of the partnership, Liverpool City Council supplies land through a variety of market deals and helps the partners to acquire additional land. It then recycles its profits to replace or refurbish social housing stock or bring homes back



Marwood Tower

One of the first projects of the new Liverpool Housing Partnership is the £8 million renovation and new-build extension of 15-storey Marwood Tower into 81 apartments for over-55s. Willmott Partnership Homes [chk] was the contractor, acting for Liverpool Mutual Homes. Fifty-seven flats are being refurbished and 24 new apartments are being constructed to provide a mix of one- and two-bed properties. The project also involved the formation of a courtyard garden and covered walkways which link the old and new buildings together. It is expected to be completed in autumn 2016.



into use. The innovative element of the partnership is that partners have a direct influence about where, when and what type of housing is to be built in the city, and it prioritises the use of local labour.

Within the Liverpool Housing Partnership, half the homes are expected to be built by Redrow and half by LMH. To date, most LMH homes have been for affordable rent, but in future the housing association expects to build more shared ownership and market

rent dwellings. Homes built through the partnership account for about a third of LMH’s ambitious programme, which aims to provide 2,000 new homes over five years.

Though output has been increasing according to plan across the city, it has not been without controversy, with some critics accusing the council of concreting over Liverpool’s parks and open spaces. A review in December last year, commissioned by the mayor in response to concerns, called for all of the city’s parks to be withdrawn from the development process, which has resulted in several projects being halted.

Longstanding Liberal Democrat councillor Richard Kemp is one critic of the council’s housing policy, saying the administration should focus on tackling deprived areas just outside the city centre such as Toxteth, Everton and Kirkdale, rather than building on the greenbelt. “There is simply no housing strategy or plan to tackle these poorer areas – 70,000 more homes could be built in these areas here and we could keep out of the greenbelt,” he says.

The council says that there is improvement in these areas. “What we’ve seen in the last few years is the emergence of a vibrant city centre/waterfront market – and strong demand in the more affluent areas,” says Hardy. “But there has been a ripple effect. A few years ago, for example, you’d never have got Redrow building in the north of the city.”

Hardy says that looking at how to deliver the Rent to Buy product is high on his priority list, and that may well mean signing a new partnership agreement.



Liverpool Mutual Homes’ scheme at Larkhill Library will consist of eight affordable homes



Shared experience

The government has made £4.1 billion available to build at least 135,000 shared-ownership homes across England by 2021. The Office for Budget Responsibility has estimated that as much of 90 per cent of this funding could come to housing associations. Willmott Partnership Homes has worked with social landlords for many years to build successful shared-ownership housing developments. Some examples of our recent work are shown below.



Quayside House Canning Town, London

This 44-home project for Sanctuary Housing contains a mix of tenures, including 11 shared-ownership properties. Not only was it delivered on time and on budget, but our approach was recognised as one of the best in the country, coming runner-up for the “Most Considerate Site” at the Considerate Constructors’ Scheme awards 2015. We were ranked second out of 8,000 schemes, scoring 10/10 for “valuing its workforce”. Innovative measures that we implemented included helmets with added protection against skin cancer and soft wood chippings on the site ground to mitigate against sprains and falls.



Ely Court South Kilburn, London

This is another 44-home, award-winning development. This time it is for our client Catalyst Housing and forms part of a much larger, long-term regeneration project of more than 1,000 homes across south Kilburn in partnership with the London Borough of Brent. Ely Court contains a substantial number of shared-ownership homes and received the RIBA London Award 2016. The RIBA’s Architecture.com website said the development was “an accomplished, stylish scheme that far exceeds the request that it be ‘tenancy blind’”.



Rohan Gardens Warwick

Twenty-one homes in this award-winning, 42-home older person’s project for Housing & Care 21 were built for shared ownership. The high standard of the building – with a particular focus on sustainability and energy affordability for occupants – was recognised by Inside Housing when it named Rohan Gardens as one of its top 50 developments in 2014 and one of the five most sustainable. The project used 55 per cent local labour, from within 20 miles of the site.



Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme 2016-2021

£4.7 billion

will provide “at least” **135,000** shared-ownership homes, **10,000** Rent-to-Buy homes and **8,000** specialist homes

£4.1 billion

for the shared-ownership element

Bids are due in to the Homes and Communities Agency **by 2 September 2016**



Test of metal



Willmott Partnership Homes has turned to an innovative off-site steel-frame solution for an 81-home development in Royal Leamington Spa. It is efficient, quick, and might just provide an answer to the UK housing crisis, writes Josephine Smit

Every week brings fresh reports charting the crisis in UK housing. Planning and housing minister Brandon Lewis has set an ambition for 1 million new homes to be built across England by 2020 to meet demand, but the plain fact is that the industry is short on the people and the skills to deliver such numbers of homes using existing methods. Some 300,000 fewer people are working in the industry than at the economy's peak more than seven years ago, with bricklayers commanding high salaries as their skills are

in particularly short supply. At the start of this year the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) warned that skills shortages could cause housing programmes "crippling delays and spiralling costs".

But a new housing development by Warwick District Council and Willmott Partnership Homes in Royal Leamington Spa points to a solution. This scheme, procured through Scape Group's Major Works framework, is showing how homes can be delivered fast and to a high quality by taking more of the housebuilding process away from the building site and into the factory.

Sayer Court is a development of 81 affordable homes in two medium-rise blocks – containing 23 and 53 one- and two-bedroom apartments – as well as a cluster of five two- and three-bedroom bungalows, most of which are targeted at active elderly residents. The homes, designed by BM3 Architecture, replace an ageing housing complex and a pub in a busy street-corner location, close to Royal Leamington Spa's town centre.



Top: The development is on a busy street corner, which meant it was vital to reduce lorry deliveries

Above: The light-gauge steel frame was erected in 73 days for the larger block and just 35 days for the smaller block and bungalows

The scheme is an important one for Warwick District Council, says Matt Jones, building construction and surveying manager. "This is the first residential scheme to be developed by Warwick District Council for a number of decades, so it is a flagship scheme for us, providing much needed council housing for the local people."

It is an equally significant project for Willmott Partnership Homes for different reasons, being the first project it has constructed using light-gauge steel frame, following a business commitment to off-site manufacturing (see box, right).

The company has taken a long, hard look at how it could beat the skills shortages and deliver homes quickly and efficiently, says Tim Carey, product director responsible for innovation and improvement. "We addressed key questions, such as how we could deliver with less on-site resource,

and how we could de-skill without having a negative impact on quality." One outcome of that process is a strategic agreement with light-gauge steel frame specialist, Fusion Building Systems.

There are obvious benefits to using factory-made components, says Carey. "Efficiencies come from the fact that this is a factory-assembled product, manufactured in a controlled environment." As well as speed of build and efficiency, the system offered two more benefits for the Sayer Court scheme: reducing foundation loads on the steeply sloping site and lorry deliveries to the busy location. "Light-gauge steel frame is so much lighter than traditional construction that it can be a particularly good solution when building with challenging ground conditions," explains Carey.

The frames are manufactured at Fusion's factory in Northampton and erected on site by its own teams, with the aid of a tower crane. The frame for Sayer Court's 53-apartment block was erected in 73 days, and the frames for the 33-apartment block and bungalows were up in 35 days. The frame is now concealed behind the development's exterior of grey brick, white render and colourful cladding.

Willmott Partnership Homes construction manager Ken Millar had not worked with the Fusion system before, and says he was impressed, even though delays caused by the demolition of the pub on the site pushed construction work from summer to winter. "Generally the frame went into place well and I can't fault Fusion's performance, although you have to plan well to take advantage of the quick build and release following trades."

Sayer Court's precision build should ultimately provide residents with warm, comfortable, high-quality homes. "When you can get the structure right, the rest of the building follows on. There is a world of

Key fact

We're going to build over 1,000 homes a year using off-site technology



Better, safer, faster

Willmott Partnership Homes has set itself the target of using factory systems to build up to half of the 2,000 homes it delivers every year. The company has signed three-year strategic agreements with Fusion System Build and with timber frame supplier, Robertson. The deals are part of the company's capacity building strategy, a People, Technology and Innovation programme aimed at addressing the industry's resource challenges and keeping the buildings it delivers cost-effective and sustainable.

There is a weight of industry evidence supporting a shift to factory manufacture across construction, but higher initial cost remains a barrier to client uptake. A report published earlier this year by business consultant KPMG, however, says that time savings in the build programme can help produce net financial savings of as much as 7%. The report highlights a range of benefits to taking more of the build process into the factory. These can include improved time and cost predictability, reduced noise and traffic disruption during construction, improved health and safety, better quality and reduced whole-life costs.

difference between this and a conventional block and plaster building," says Millar. But that doesn't mean that light-gauge steel frame is not a tried-and-tested build method, adds compliance director Peter Walton. "Although this is considered an innovation, what we have here isn't new. It has been well used in the industry."

As Sayer Court approaches its September completion date, Willmott Partnership Homes is evaluating the experience from this project to benefit upcoming schemes, which include a 620-unit student accommodation development. "We're aiming to build the learning into future schemes," says Walton. "Our aim is to get supplier relationships, standards and methods in place so that we can really focus on the bits that matter."



"Light-gauge steel frame is so much lighter than traditional construction that it can be a particularly good solution when building with challenging ground conditions"

Tim Carey, Willmott Partnership Homes

Perfect harmony

The Music Box project near London Bridge needed a rigorous health and safety approach, and close relations with the neighbours, writes Josephine Smit

London is full of constrained sites, but they don't come much tighter and more challenging than this 55-home, mixed-use development in Southwark. The Music Box is being built by Willmott Partnership Homes for Taylor Wimpey Central London and is being constructed with a busy street on one side, a council estate on another, and a main railway artery directly behind.

"We are working literally two or three feet from the main railway line," says Steve Harris, health and safety manager with Willmott Partnership Homes. So how did the company approach such a tough build and ensure that it was as safe as possible?

Getting every element of the 13-storey building in place, from its double basement and first four storeys that will house the London College of Contemporary Music, to the vertical fin cladding, has presented challenges on this confined site. But a comprehensive health and safety approach is helping the project to make smooth progress, as well as winning awards for the build team.

That approach is based on partnership, with the client, authorities and neighbours. "We have a close working relationship with Taylor Wimpey," says Michael McDonnell, senior build manager on the project. "This is a high-profile project for us, and for the client, so it is a matter of meeting expectations."

He adds: "We also made early efforts to develop good relations with all our



neighbours because we were aware of the challenges we would face. This building has a very small footprint, with no external storage space, so everything that is delivered has to be on the footprint of the building."

The presence on the site's eastern boundary of a relocatable equipment building (REB), containing signalling and services for the rail line, as well as the services crossing the site itself, demanded careful planning in piling and construction of the double basement. A detailed services avoidance plan and intense monitoring during the groundworks ensured safe working during this crucial early stage of the build, while the cladding work also benefited from an innovative approach (see box, right).

The Music Box is Willmott Partnership Homes' fourth project with Taylor Wimpey, all with a faultless safety record. On Greenwich Millennium Village, over 1 million hours of work were recorded without a single accident.

At the Music Box, the regular checks by Willmott Dixon's arm's-length health and safety inspection house have repeatedly earned high scores, and the project has won recognition in in-house safety awards. It has also been recognised by the Considerate Constructors Scheme awards – testament to the early investment in community relations.

That effort is reflected in the attitude of the 120-plus workers across the site, says Harris. "There's not one feature to health and safety; it's about overall culture. Everyone has to play their part."



Above: The building makes the most of its tight, city-centre site
Below left: The Willmott Dixon health and safety team conduct an inspection



Hitting the heights

When construction work is undertaken alongside one of the capital's main railway lines, it is vital that risks are minimised. For that reason, the building's storey-height cladding is being put into position with the help of two mobile elevating work platforms (MEWPs), unusually located inside the building itself. Cladding units are prepared and assembled on the ground, before being craned up and installed by the team, working from the building and MEWPs. The MEWPs themselves are controlled remotely by trained operators. "The solution was more expensive, but MEWPs were a much safer option here," says health and safety manager, Steve Harris.



People make our business!

We get on our bikes to raise over £20,000 for charity, and find a novel way to support a Liverpool community



Pedal power nets charities thousands

A crazy idea led to our team raising £1,500 for Shelter. While most people attending CIH Brighton travelled by train, they tackled the 60-mile trip from our north London office by bike. But not any bike – they used Boris bikes, leading to some sore body parts, as well as a big cheque.

Meanwhile, chief operating officer Charlie Scherer joined his two MDs Simon Leadbeater and David Smith in Willmott Dixon's team for the Cyclotour du Léman. This involved cycling 120 miles around Lake Geneva on one day! The hard work paid off – the Sir Simon Milton Foundation and Cystic Fibrosis Trust are better off by nearly £10,000 each.

Main image: Ian Kelvington, right and David Smith, second from right, present Shelter with the cheque
Inset: Charlie Scherer, second left, with David Smith, second right, and Simon Leadbeater, right



Friends in need

With over a quarter of our work creating homes for those in elderly care, we like to get close to our market. This includes some our team in the Oldham office attending a training session by Pozzoni Architects on how to become a "dementia friend".



Liverpool team has real heart

Our team refurbishing the 15-storey Marwood House for Liverpool City Council had the idea to purchase a defibrillator that will be available to local residents when the project is complete. Project manager Andy Armer (middle) teamed up with the Oliver King Foundation, which provided training to site staff, such as trainee Liam Doyle (right), and will also train local people in the defibrillator's use.

Key fact

A third of our work is for the retirement sector



Willmott Partnership Homes: Regions



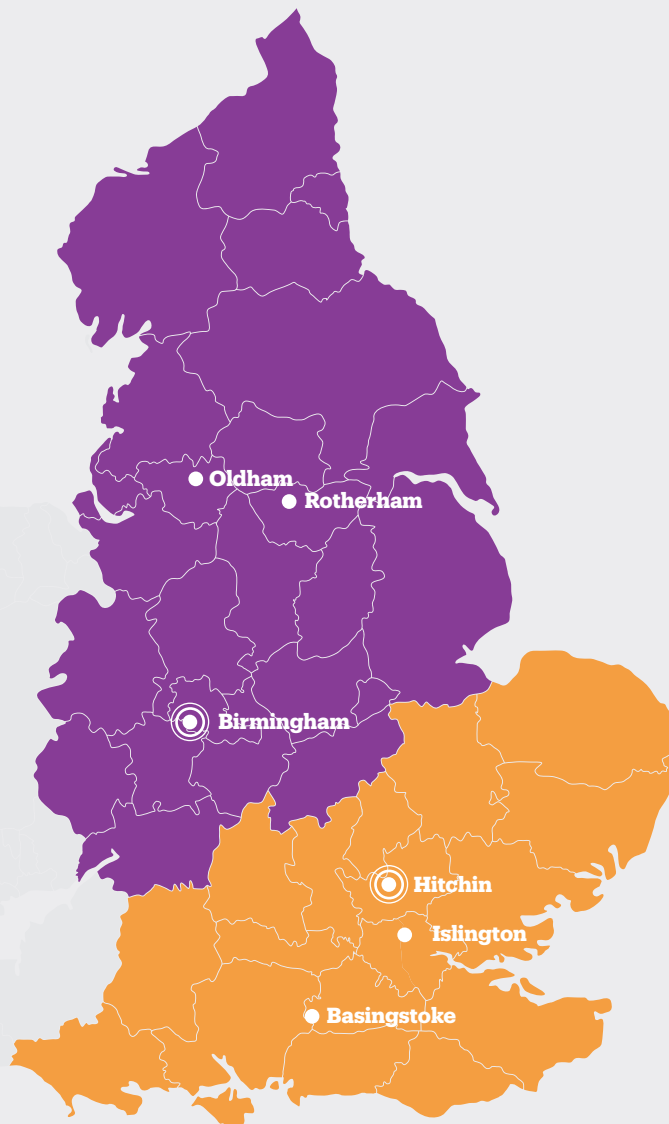
Midlands and the North

New business director:
Frances McConnell
Central Office
Bromwich Court
Gorsey Lane
Coleshill
Birmingham B46 1JU
Tel: 01675 461700



London and the South

New business director:
Sally Ingham
Central Office
Willmott Dixon House
80 Wilbury Way
Hitchin
Hertfordshire SG4 0TP
Tel: 01462 814455



For further information on Willmott Partnership Homes in your area, please contact the relevant office above.
