

## Housing Strategy Statement

142 – 150 Arlington Road  
London Borough of Camden

May 2013

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The A2Dominion Group is one of the country's leading providers of high quality housing, with over 33,000 homes across London and southern England.
- 1.2 The Group was formed in 2008, as a result of A2 and Dominion coming together to create an organisation with the financial strength and resources to deliver more homes and better services for customers.
- 1.3 The Group offers a wide range of housing options including affordable rented, temporary, student, sheltered, supported and key worker accommodation. It also has homes for sale and shared ownership through the A2Dominion New Homes brand.
- 1.4 The Group has built a reputation for delivering large numbers of quality affordable homes on time and on budget. We have worked on a number of high profile schemes in successful partnership with 92 local authorities, NHS trusts, the private sector and other agencies.

## **2. OUR VISION FOR THE SITE**

- 2.1** We aim to develop a high quality mixed tenure development, offering a range of housing opportunities to create a development appropriate to the site and that assists in meeting identified housing needs within the London Borough of Camden.
- 2.2** The existing building is to be retained, in the most part, and sensitively redeveloped to provide high quality, attractive residential accommodation that secures the long-term future of the building and its continued contribution to the character of the local area.
- 2.3** A2Dominion is committed to managing sustainable communities and fostering social and environmental sustainability.
- 2.4** The residential accommodation on the site has been designed to meet or exceed the Mayor's minimum internal and external space standards as set out in the London Plan 2011 (Table 3.3) and Housing SPG 2012.
- 2.5** The residential accommodation will achieve Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes and includes energy efficiency measures appropriate to the building.
- 2.6** There are two units within the scheme that are capable of easy adaptation to wheelchair accessible standards, representing 10% of the total number of units.

### **3. HOUSING MIX AND TENURE**

- 3.1** Our aim is to produce a truly sustainable and successful mixed tenure development, offering both private sale and affordable rent tenures and a range of unit types to meet local housing need.
- 3.2** The housing mix has been designed to reflect Camden's identified housing priorities, the characteristics and context of the site and analysis of the local property market.
- 3.3** A2Dominion will submit a bid for grant funding for the affordable housing units to the Homes & Community Agency under the 2011 – 2015 Affordable Housing Programme. We will continue discussions with officers at the London Borough of Camden to set rent levels in line with emerging policies.
- 3.4** One, two and three bed apartments are to be provided for private sale, reflecting market demand in the locality and Camden's housing priorities for private sale with over 40% of the units provided as two-bed.
- 3.5** The affordable rent provision will include a number of larger family units including 3 bed/ 4 person and 3 bed/ 5 person apartments to meet identified housing needs. In excess of 50% of the affordable units are to be provided as three-bed in line with Camden's identified housing priorities.
- 3.6** Camden's Dwelling Size Priorities Table identifies a need for four-bedroom affordable rented properties. However, owing to the internal configuration of the building and the need to balance the retention of features of identified heritage and architectural significance against the provision of residential units with appropriate standards of amenity, it has not been possible to provide four-bedroom units within the scheme. To account for this, in excess of 50% of the affordable units have been provided as three-bedroom family units, a notable achievement on a flatted conversion scheme of this type.
- 3.7** We have given full consideration to relevant policies including the Council's guidance and the London Plan.

- 3.8** The London Plan sets a strategic target of 50% affordable housing, however there is recognition that this should be applied flexibly, taking full account of the individual characteristics of each site. The London Plan also encourages boroughs to adopt an approach that encourages rather than restrains residential development. In this respect, Camden operate a sliding scale for on-site affordable housing provision on smaller sites such that schemes of 10 units provide 10% affordable, schemes for 20 units provide 20% up to 50% on schemes of 50 or more units.
- 3.9** In line with the above, the proposed development of 21 units would be required to provide 21% of the units as affordable. It is proposed that 5 of the units are provided as affordable, representing 24% of the total number of units and exceeding the minimum requirement. In terms of floor area, the affordable units also represent 24% of the total.
- 3.10** The scheme provides for a mix of private sale and affordable rented accommodation. Given the small scale of the development, it has been accepted by Camden's Housing Department that it would not be appropriate to introduce intermediate affordable units in this instance.
- 3.11** A summary of the housing mix is shown in the table below:

	1 beds	2 beds	3 beds	Total	% by Units
<b>Private Sale</b>	3	9	4	16	76%
<b>Affordable Rent</b>	1	1	3	5	24%
	4	10	7		

- 3.12** The five affordable units are to be provided as affordable rent. Affordable rented properties can be let at up to 80% of open market rents. To ensure affordable rented properties are truly affordable A2Dominion have an internal policy of limiting rents to no more than 65% of open market rents with lower rents charged on properties in more affluent areas and/ or on larger properties.
- 3.13** The affordable rent units proposed at Arlington Road are to be charged at between 40% and 65% of open market rents. In light of the recent welfare reforms, the larger three-bedroom units are to be charged at approximately 40%

of open market rent which is closer to the previously grant subsidised social rent levels and is equivalent to Local Housing Allowance for properties of this size. Through email dated 28 May 2013, Officers confirmed that the rent levels proposed for the properties would be supported and that there may be a possibility of additional subsidy for the larger units to reduce rent levels further. Discussions on this basis are on-going.

## 4. HOUSING MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

**4.1** A2Dominion has experience of developing and managing mixed use schemes in Camden namely Tally House Fortress Road, 74 Holmes Road, 16 St Pancras Way, and 32 Holmes Road.

**4.2** We will act as landlords to residents of both the private and affordable elements of the scheme. This approach will ensure consistent standards of service delivery to all tenures together with the financial efficiencies of having a single landlord.

**4.3** We will work closely with the London Borough of Camden's Housing Team to ensure that a sustainable, well balanced and sensitive lettings plan is developed and implemented for the affordable rented housing.

**4.4** We will offer a lettings and management service to the private units to help avoid the problems associated with private units being let/ managed by different agencies.

**4.5** We will manage and maintain the scheme using the following dedicated resources:

- Housing and Leasehold Management Officers
- Tenancy/ Welfare Support Officers
- Customer Services Centre – a single resource available to all residents to access services and information, including a 24 hour emergency repair phone line
- Community Development Officers.



**4.6** We are committed to creating a mixed and sustainable community at the scheme and will arrange the following:

- **Pre-tenancy training** – An opportunity to ensure all residents are clear about how we provide services, how the particulars of the scheme work and our shared roles and responsibilities.
- **Resettlement volunteers** – Volunteers to support vulnerable families to ensure appropriate links are made with support mechanisms, such as doctors, schools and community services.
- **Good Neighbour Agreements** – Agreements signed by all residents identifying how they will ensure that the shared principles agreed with each other will improve the neighbourhood.
- **Income maximisation** – Early identification of assistance to residents in order to maximise benefits uptake.
- **Employment and training** – Provide opportunities through A2Dominion programmes such as DIY training, computer training, working with partners on employment initiatives and apprenticeships.

**4.7** We are committed to encouraging residents to be involved with influencing and shaping the services provided by the organisation at a variety of levels, including:

- **Group Customer Service Committee** - The Committee works with the group board, so their views are heard at the highest level.
- **Regional Resident Executives Groups** - These groups enable informal discussion around performance, service improvement and provide a structure to hold the organisation to account at a regional level.
- **Services Improvement Group** - This is a group of residents working with staff to improve specific service area across the group Customer Services, Property Services and Estate Services
- **Diversity Panel** - The diversity panel ensures that residents across all of the diversity strands are consulted when developing policies and procedures and makes sure that we are doing everything we can to remove barriers that may prevent residents from getting involved.
- **Disabled Peoples Forum** - This is a forum for residents with disabilities to discuss the services provided by A2Dominion and to monitor the impact of these services on residents with disabilities. The group focuses' on improving services, through better understanding of their issues/needs and monitors the progress of the Disability Equality Scheme.
- **Neighbourhood Improvement Budget** - The Neighbourhood Improvement Fund is a pot of money residents can use to make a small scale improvement to the shared areas of their estates that will improve residents' quality of life.
- **Resident Quality Assurance Programme** - This programme provides residents with an opportunity to check the quality of the services we provide. This includes Mystery Shopping, Complaint Scoring, Estate Inspections and Void Inspections.

## 5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 A2Dominion is committed to developing a high quality scheme which will offer a range of quality new homes to meet local housing need. A robust management strategy will be implemented to help the development thrive and evolve and successfully integrate in to the existing community. A2Dominion's continued involvement in the management will help ensure the sustainability of the scheme over the long term.
- 5.2 We have worked closely with officers at the London Borough of Camden to refine the approach and detail of the scheme and we are confident that the completed development will add value to the surrounding area and offer accommodation of the highest standards to residents with affordable homes that will be truly affordable to those in need.