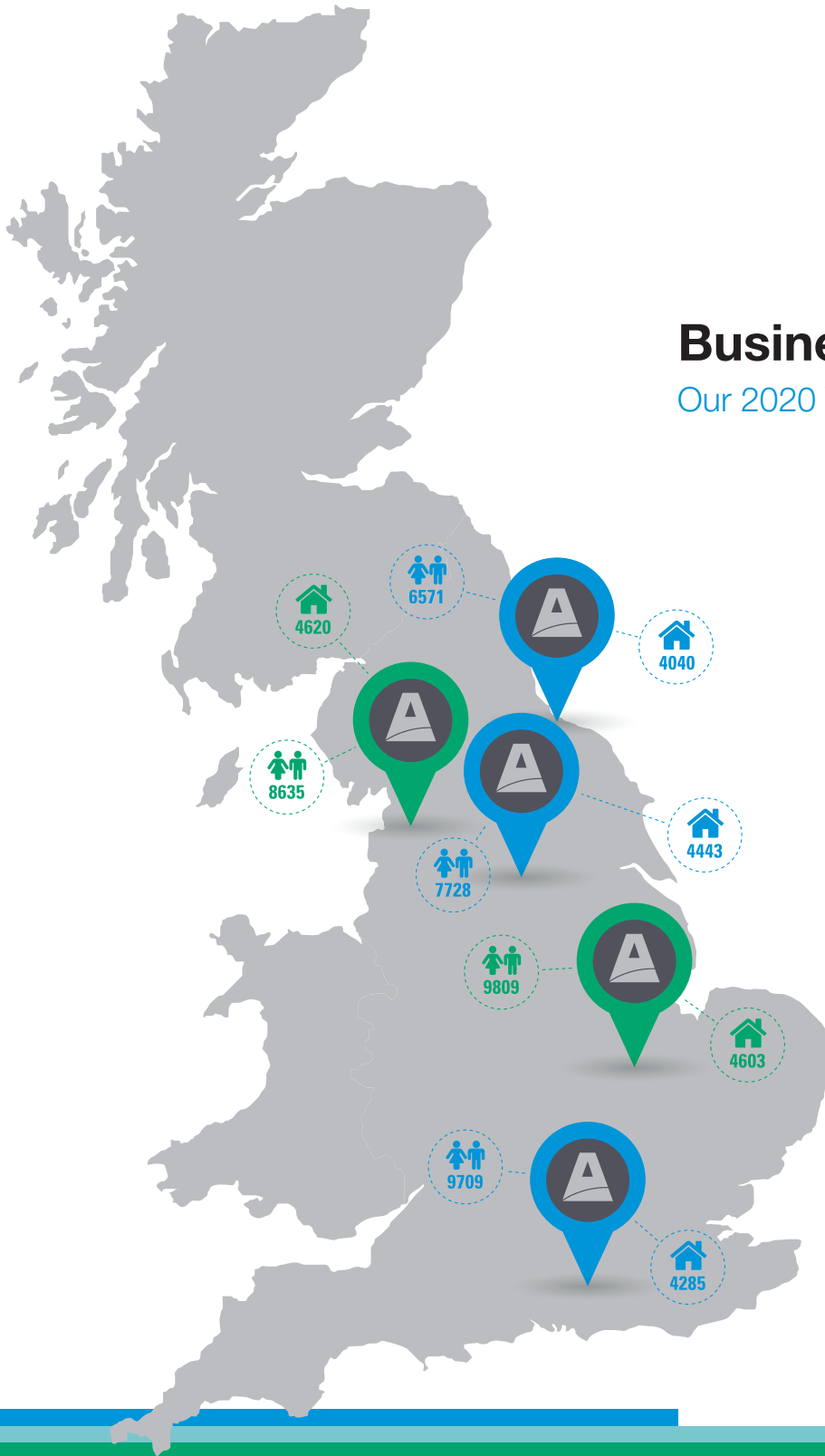


Business Plan

Our 2020 Vision





Beech Close, Harrogate



Fulbourn, South Cambridgeshire



Fairfield, Leeds



Station View, Barrow



Franklands, Addlestone

We've always known that a home is much more than a roof and four walls. It should be a high quality, affordable home, and a secure future for you and your family. It's the same for any of our residents no matter where they live – be it the north, the east or the south of England.

Understanding this comes from doing much more than simply building and renting homes, it comes from being a trusted and valued landlord. We provide high quality homes in communities where our residents want to live and we work with them to provide the services and support

they need to have a stable and secure future. In delivering great landlord services, we also support our residents' aspirations into home ownership if that is their aim. In short, we aim to be a landlord of choice wherever we operate.



Our new state of the art national contact centre opened in 2015

The journey so far...

In 2013, we set out on Fit for the Future, a large scale change programme. We improved our services by simplifying our governance structure, removing operational complexity and achieving organisational consistency. With the same nine board members on all five company boards, we consider issues just once, so reducing delays and complexity in decision making. Our efficiency savings in time and duplication are significant and we believe this to be the most effective example of 'virtual governance' in the sector.

One Accent – Stronger Together

Operating as one organisation has brought about huge cultural change. As 'One Accent', we are much more connected. We have a single operational management structure across our five regions, and our staff work to one set of service standards, policies and procedures.

We are 'stronger together' and fit for the future. Our governance is stronger with a clear split of responsibilities between the Accent Board; which develops our key strategies and policies and ensures we are well run and financially strong, and our five regional compliance and scrutiny committees, which provide assurance of compliance with the consumer standards and drive performance improvement at a local level. Our G1 and V1 assessments from the HCA are maintained and we have risen to the challenges of the new regulatory code. As members of the HCA Regulatory Advisory Board we are also consulted on changes to the regulatory framework.

The Accent Customer Portal

Launched in 2015, this new service gives residents convenient access to their on-line account



The Accent offer

The Accent Offer is central to the delivery of our ambitious 2020 business plan. Our offer is built around three key themes: personal, modern and better. Together, these form our future vision of Accent – a thriving, successful organisation:

Personal

Our customers play a key role in shaping our services, from the members of the regional compliance and scrutiny committees who help draw up our business plan priorities, to the individual residents and communities who will help drive our improvements into the future. Over the next four years, our focus is on providing support to our residents if they need help to manage their tenancy or in times of crisis, and developing a service offer which meets their needs and aspirations as their circumstances change.

Through technology and through our tenancy sustainability teams, we are developing new opportunities for our residents to talk to us about what matters to them. We are also improving local scrutiny arrangements, with our compliance and scrutiny committees leading the way. They use customer insight and data to ensure we gain the views of many, so all our residents and communities can have their say.

Modern

We are a modern, forward-thinking business, focused on our customers and ready to take on new opportunities where they are of real benefit.

We have improved customer contact with our new, 'state of the art' national contact centre, which is delivering significant savings, and improving performance and customer satisfaction. Our aim is to extend the range of services delivered, the connectivity between teams and to establish a unified platform for integrated communications. This provides the great opportunity for us to deliver contact services for other organisations – an idea we will actively pursue. Combined with our interactive customer portal, and our plans for digital customer service, our residents will be enabled to do business with us at a time, and in a way, which suits them.

Better

We want to ensure Accent remains a well-run organisation which provides great services, so we need to be financially robust and focused on efficiency.

Value for money is crucial in allowing us to deliver more for our residents at a time of tightening public spending. We have already achieved annual savings of some £7m over the last three years, through efficiencies and structural streamlining. Value for money will remain a key priority in the years to come. We look to achieve the best outcome from every pound we spend, seeking out big and small efficiency opportunities. We make sure we use our housing assets in the best possible way.

We invest in our homes sustainably, disposing of them where it makes sense to do so and ensuring any proceeds go into acquiring new homes. We look to make further savings on the goods and services we buy, using Procurement-for-All when we can benefit from efficiencies and economies of scale.

Our most valued resource is our people. We will continue to invest in training to support their professional and personal development.

Supporting aspirations

The next few years will be challenging for all social landlords and, more importantly, for their residents. Austerity measures, welfare cuts and reform, changing patterns of demand and the ageing population will all impact on our business and our communities. We will focus on ensuring our residents are able to sustain their tenancies and support those with aspiration for home ownership. We will prioritise those services which support our residents in tough times. We will also invest in our specialist income recovery and tenancy sustainability teams to help us meet the challenges ahead.

There are opportunities to be grasped. Meeting the aspirations of our current and future customers is also part of our ambition for the future. Whilst the Government's definition of aspiration is inextricably linked to home ownership, we see it as multifaceted,

with our customers' aspirations ranging from the ability to access a secure and affordable tenancy; to being able to manage it well; to being able to move onto a different tenure when the time is right. By supporting aspirations, we will build a long term sustainable relationship with our customers.

Building and improving our homes

The government plans to build one million homes and extend its options for home ownership by 2020. We will play our part in helping to achieve that target with the commitment to deliver 1,250 new homes, to rent and to buy.

We believe there will be increasing demand for good quality rented housing, particularly as access to home ownership is squeezed, and for flexible and mixed tenure developments. We will look to deliver new homes, both for rent and for sale, in the communities that need them, not simply the areas where we want to grow.

Our consolidation aligned our legal and financial structure with our operational structure, it has also improved our gearing position and our capacity for further borrowing to support our ambitions. Our commitment to funding an increased development programme also strengthens our position when exploring mergers and potential new partners to help us make even more of a difference in the future.

Above our development ambitions, we will focus on our existing homes and communities. We provide services to over 21,500 rented and leasehold homes. We work across approximately 70 local authority areas, mostly in the north. We have a particularly strong presence in Yorkshire, Lancashire, Teesside, Surrey and the east. We will continue to work nationally across varied housing markets to develop locally appropriate housing solutions and will seek new partnerships to achieve this.

We will target our spending on driving up the quality and sustainability of our homes. Within our portfolio we have 2648 homes for older people, which represent 15% of our stock. We will develop our services for older people, to allow older residents to stay in their own homes for longer, and to those who need extra support with managing their tenancies. We are also reviewing our offer of supported housing. With 428 properties we are a relatively small player in this specialist field which is becoming ever more financially challenging and high risk service to deliver.

New Opportunities and growth

Investing in our homes to a high standard, remodelling our sheltered and supported accommodation to 21st century standards, and developing badly needed new homes all cost money. This has led to a review of our merger strategy and a target to increase in size to at least 30,000 homes by 2020. Although we can achieve all of our 2020 business plan ambitions within our current financial capacity and without any merger or acquisition, we recognise that we could achieve even more with the right partner. We believe that there are increasing opportunities for new development and improved VfM for our customers from the right merger, and we will actively pursue appropriate opportunities during 2016/17.

We also see an opportunity to promote our own low cost back office services as a VfM alternative for smaller organisations, or for those who have decided that a merger is not an option for them at this point. This would include building on our state of the art contact centre and our digital services model to offer efficient customer contact management.

We are ready to face the future, as one Accent – Accent Housing. We are ready to meet the challenges and grasp the exciting opportunities that will help us deliver our vision of making a difference, improving homes, communities and lives.

I look forward to us working together to deliver that vision.



Gordon Perry

Chief Executive, Accent Group - July 2016

Our achievements

Highlights:



£100m

Invested in our homes



348

new homes developed

Over the last three years we have:

- Made efficiency savings and reduced our operational costs by £7m per year.
- Bought the goods we need more efficiently, making £3.9M of savings as the leader of procurement for all in 2014/15.
- Achieved full, legal consolidation and launched Accent Housing as the group's single housing association following the merger of Accent Nene, Accent Peerless and Accent Foundation.
- Adopted a new resident engagement strategy to allow more of our residents to get involved in shaping our services.

Our targets

Over the next three years, we will:

- Invest £150m in our homes, communities and services to ensure our residents are proud of living in an Accent home. We aim to ensure that 100% of our homes meet our enhanced Accent standard by 2020.
- Grow and develop our business where it is sensible to do so, delivering 1,250 new homes in our priority areas where they are needed most.
- Continue to manage our assets to ensure good value for money from our stock, investing across our communities and seeking new partnerships, but also disposing of stock and re-investing the proceeds when it is sensible to do so.
- Continue to make the best use of mobile working and digital technology to provide accessible, high quality services.
- Improve tenant and staff satisfaction levels to above 85%.
- Continue to invest in our staff team, focussing on training and development, comprehensive performance management and leadership to maintain our target of 15% staff turnover.
- Ensure we run a robust and successful business, maintaining our top governance and viability status with the regulator.
- Improve performance in our key areas of rent arrears and voids, aiming to cut current rent arrears to 2.5% and voids to 0.8% by 2020.



If you have any queries regarding this document please contact:

Rachael Walsh, Head of Strategy & Regulation | Email: rachael.walsh@accentgroup.org

 [@rachaelwaccent](https://twitter.com/rachaelwaccent)