

SEEDA's Achievements for: Delivering Sustainable Communities - Housing 1999-2003



Ventura Homes on St. Mary's Island, developed by Chatham Maritime Ltd, a joint venture between SEEDA and Countryside Properties plc. The houses feature a very unusual architectural style, with butterfly shaped roof lines and strong use of colour and glass.

Introduction

Affordable housing is identified in the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) as one of the top three critical issues that the region must address. This is a shared concern amongst all the regional bodies such as the Housing Corporation, English Partnerships, the Government Office for the South East

(GOSE) and the South East England Regional Assembly. SEEDA's particular concern is that the lack of affordable housing is a threat to sustainable growth in the region. SEEDA will seek to add value to the work of partners to address this issue across the region.

RES Context

SEEDA's work to address housing issues across the region contributes to the Effective Infrastructure objectives of the Regional Economic Strategy (RES).

Key Facts

- With a population of over eight million, the South East is the largest English region.
- The dynamic economy of the South East is putting pressure on our housing market. Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) indicates a need for 28,000 new homes a year but only 25,000 homes were built in 2001-2002. RPG also sets a target of building 12,000 extra affordable homes a year but in 2002-2003 only 6,200 were built.
- In the majority of the region the price of a terraced house is more than four times the average earnings. For rural areas, house prices are the highest in the country.
- Recent research commissioned by SEEDA and the South East England Regional Assembly found that 78% of public sector agencies contacted reported difficulties in hiring staff, with 63% of interviewees attributing their recruitment difficulties to high house prices.
- The national target is to develop 60% of new housing on previously developed (or brownfield) land. This target is being met, and the National Land Use Database shows that there are a further 5,600 hectares of brownfield land with development potential for housing in the region. Overall, however, the region does not have significant numbers of large brownfield sites, and so we must maximise use of smaller sites where they are available.

Results

Since SEEDA was established in April 1999, its investment has been a catalyst for over 2,000 new homes built by the public and private sector and almost 8,000 existing homes improved.

Influencing Regional Housing Policy

Research commissioned by SEEDA and the South East England Regional Assembly found that housing affordability in the South East is affecting recruitment and retention. The report 'The Economic Impacts of Housing Affordability', for the first time provides evidence of the extent and nature of the economic impact of housing affordability across the South East. The report includes a number of practical suggestions for local authorities, employers and other organisations and its findings are being used to help shape the Regional Housing Strategy.

SEEDA is one of the members of the new Regional Housing Board for the South East (other members are the Government Office for the South East (GOSE), English Partnerships, the Housing Corporation and the South East England Regional Assembly). The Board is tasked by the Government to prepare a Regional Housing Strategy as the basis for advice to Ministers on strategic housing investment priorities in the region. Following consultation across the region, the Regional Housing Board submitted a draft strategy to the Government in July 2003.

Affordable Housing

SEEDA has been taking practical steps to encourage the development of affordable housing, particularly for key workers.

- **Essential Worker Demonstration Project**
SEEDA has supported an Essential Worker Demonstration Project in Brighton as part of the Brighton & Hove Regeneration Partnership's Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) programme. A redundant brownfield site is to be redeveloped by the private sector to provide a retail unit on the ground floor with 36 apartments on four floors above. Moat Housing Group proposes to purchase 14 units for affordable housing. The remaining 22 flats will be sold, and the retail unit rented to a business. The Project will provide housing at an intermediate level between open market price and social housing. SRB funding of over £550,000 will contribute towards the purchase of 14 apartments, enabling four apartments to be offered on a low cost shared ownership basis, and significantly 10 apartments to be offered to key workers at a below market affordable rent.



Ventura Homes on St. Mary's Island achieved a 'very good' BREEAM eco-rating.

- **Public Sector Land Holdings**
Meeting the Government's targets requires making optimum use of the region's existing urban assets including securing best value from public sector land holdings.

SEEDA, working with the National Health Service Estates, has commissioned consultants to undertake an appraisal of the potential contribution that surplus NHS land could make to the Government's targets and to meeting the need for affordable / key worker housing in the region. An initial pilot focuses on Surrey where key worker housing provision is a priority issue for the NHS and other public services.
- **Brownfield Land Assembly Trust (BLAT)**
Identifying and making optimum use of small sites can help to meet both housing demand and Government targets. SEEDA has developed a model for acquiring small sites in urban areas for redevelopment to provide new plots to tackle the issue of affordable housing and key worker accommodation. The Brownfield Land Assembly Trust (BLAT) has been developed in close partnership with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), other Government Departments and the Housing Corporation. SEEDA completed the purchase of its first five Brownfield Land Assembly Trust sites in Hastings and the Thames Gateway at the end of March 2003 representing a total of 1.5 hectares for recycling into the affordable housing market during the next 12-18 months.



www.sustainability-checklist.co.uk

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“The Sustainability Checklist for Developments in the South East is an excellent initiative and one that offers a useful tool to assist the industry in delivering Sustainable Development,” Lord Rooker, Minister of State for Regeneration and Regional Development.

Fundamental to the issue of quality and sustainability of the region’s housing is ensuring that new homes are well designed and flexible to meet changing needs, use appropriate materials and have a minimum impact on the environment.

SEEDA and the Building Research Establishment have developed a Sustainability Checklist for Developments in the South East that provides information on good practice and helps planners, developers and land owners assess how close their own proposals are to achieving best practice (www.sustainability-checklist.co.uk).

SEEDA uses its own developments and those it provides a financial contribution to, as a way of demonstrating to the wider housing industry that speculative housing schemes built to a very high design standard and EcoHomes rating can recover the additional costs involved through higher sales.

The ‘Green Lung’, an open space in the middle of the St. Mary’s Island development at Chatham Maritime, providing river views and an attractive natural area for the benefit of residents.



- St. Mary’s Island, Chatham Maritime, Kent
Chatham Maritime is SEEDA’s flagship development in the Thames Gateway. 850 units have already been built out of a projected 2,000 on the 60 hectare St. Mary’s Island site, with another 200 under construction. The scheme is being developed by Countryside Maritime Ltd, a joint venture between SEEDA and Countryside Properties (South Thames) plc. Individual housing developments are being designed in a contemporary fashion and in keeping with the area’s maritime heritage. A number of housing schemes have already been released to the public including the award winning Fishing Village, Ventura, and the latest scheme, Northshore.

The St. Mary’s Island development at Chatham Maritime demonstrates that quality public space can be provided adjacent to high-density housing schemes (average densities comply with the Government’s guidelines of 30-50 units per hectare). Running through the development is a central park, raised to enable views to the river to be maintained, and connecting to 2 km of river walk and cycleway. SEEDA is working to raise the ecological balance of the park through different planting schemes and allowing meadow grass to grow.

- **Hastings Millennium Community**

In March 2002, the Government confirmed its commitment to the comprehensive regeneration of Hastings and Bexhill and its facilitation through a £38 million allocation to SEEDA.

The Hastings Millennium Community is an exciting project to create vibrant neighbourhoods on under-used land near existing and planned railway stations. It is one of seven projects in England selected by the Government to demonstrate new, sustainable approaches to 21st Century living from which others can learn.

The development of a new Millennium Community in the heart of the Ore Valley will start by the end of 2003. Brownfield land will be redeveloped to provide over 1,000 high quality homes with new infrastructure and extensive green spaces. It will provide innovative homes, integrated with the existing communities and approximately 8,000 square metres of mixed business/education/commercial space. A Millennium Community is also planned at Hastings Station Plaza (120 homes) and at West Marina (100 seafront homes). All the Millennium Community sites are linked by the rail network.

The project is one of many that will be delivered by SEASPACE, the new name for the Hastings and Bexhill Renaissance Ltd, an Executive Delivery Vehicle (EDV) comprising SEEDA, Hastings Borough Council, Rother District Council, East Sussex County Council, the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) and other leading partner groups within the towns.



Illustration of the proposal for the Millennium Community in the heart of the Ore Valley, Hastings.



The Fishing Village, St. Mary's Island, Chatham Maritime designed by award winning architects PCKO.



Archaeological investigations at SEEDA's Ropetackle site in Shoreham have uncovered a number of artifacts including this aquamanile, a jug for hand washing at the table, thought to date from the 13th Century.
Picture copyright Mark Victor Leatherbarrow.



Housing at West Quay, Newhaven, East Sussex - SEEDA's £2 million contribution enabled this high quality mixed-use scheme to go ahead.



Public realm improvements, part of the SEEDA-funded West Quay development in Newhaven.

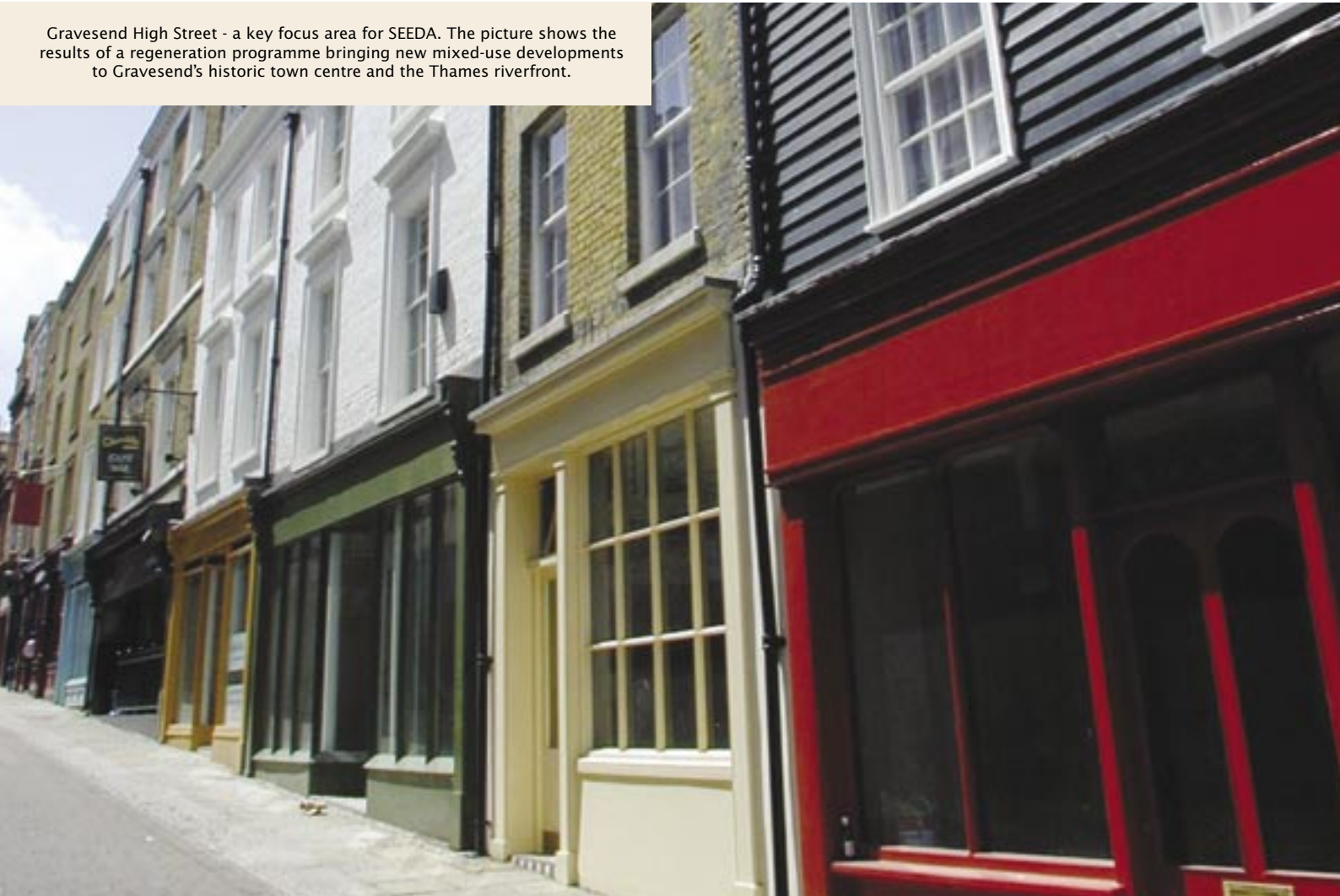
■ Ropetackle, Shoreham

This new mixed-use scheme is a joint venture between SEEDA as landowner and Berkeley Homes as developer. Detailed planning permission was received in January 2003 for the construction of 177 flats and townhouses including 40 affordable homes and 10 live/work units with work facilities at ground floor level and residential accommodation above. The scheme will also incorporate office and retail space, a bar/restaurant and a community arts and education facility. Railway arches to the northern edge of the site will be developed to accommodate retail and general business uses. It is the mixture of living and working space that will help ensure the sustainability and vibrancy of the community. SEEDA is aiming to achieve excellent standards in both EcoHomes and BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) ratings for properties on the site.

■ West Quay, Newhaven

The West Quay development at Newhaven was completed in 2002-2003. SEEDA's £2 million contribution to this project enabled a high quality mixed-use scheme to go ahead, incorporating riverside walkway and cycleway, public open space, new fishermen's facilities and 66 houses and flats.

Gravesend High Street - a key focus area for SEEDA. The picture shows the results of a regeneration programme bringing new mixed-use developments to Gravesend's historic town centre and the Thames riverfront.



In February 2003, the Government published its Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future document (The Sustainable Communities Plan). The document identified four areas for major growth. Thames Gateway, together with Ashford, Milton Keynes and London-Stansted-Cambridge were targeted to deliver substantial employment and an extra 200,000 homes (above planned levels) within the next 15-20 years.

SEEDA has been working with partners in the proposed South East Growth Areas to develop practical programmes to deliver the Government's aspirations. SEEDA's role in the Growth Areas has focused on using its specific expertise to bring forward key sites with complex land ownership, Rochester Riverside is a good example, working jointly with Medway Council. By the end of March 2004, SEEDA aims to have started a programme of strategic site acquisition and comprehensive town centre schemes in order to stimulate investor confidence that in turn will stimulate economic growth and boost housing completion rates.

■ Thames Gateway, Kent

The Thames Gateway is Europe's largest regeneration initiative. North Kent, comprising Dartford and Gravesham, Medway and Swale, is a key component of the Thames Gateway and new delivery organisations are proposed for these areas. SEEDA has worked closely with partners to develop investment plans for Thames Gateway, Kent that culminated in the launch of an Area Investment Framework (AIF) in April 2002. This work put local partners in a strong position to respond to the launch of the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan. SEEDA was actively involved in the development and submission of the Priority Investment Programme to deliver the Government's aspirations produced by the Thames Gateway Kent Partnership (TGKP), submitted to the Government in May 2003, and which has resulted in £143 million being allocated to new regeneration projects.



An aerial view of the SEEDA and Ashford Borough Council gateway site at Victoria Road, Ashford, Kent, where plans are in place for a mixed-use development including 112 two-bedroom residential units.

■ Ashford

SEEDA has taken a leading role within the Ashford Delivery Board, in co-operation with key partners including Ashford Borough Council, Kent County Council, the Highways Agency, English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation.

SEEDA identified key town centre sites that it would be beneficial to secure as part of the Ashford Delivery Plan. In conjunction with Ashford Borough Council, SEEDA has brought forward a key town centre site at Victoria Road.

This gateway site, situated directly opposite the International Passenger Station, was previously in multi-ownership but is now under the control of SEEDA. A preferred developer has been selected to take the development forward. Work during the past year involved agreeing the development proposals that include 112 two-bedroom residential units, speculative office accommodation and a 100-bedroom three-star hotel. Construction of the first phase is expected to start in 2003-2004. The scheme is expected to achieve an "excellent" rating in terms of BREEAM requirements.

■ Milton Keynes/Aylesbury

While English Partnerships has a lead role in many of the developments in Milton Keynes, SEEDA's role in ensuring a holistic approach with links made to addressing the needs of deprived communities has been welcomed. Following on from the Milton Keynes / South Midlands Study and the publication of the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan, SEEDA has become closely engaged on the means to accelerate sustainable growth, working with Milton Keynes Council, Aylesbury Vale District, Buckinghamshire County Council, English Partnerships and with the neighbouring Regional Development Agencies.

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