

Everyone has a home

our
vision

Everyone has a home.

our
purpose

We improve people's lives. We provide safety and security through our reliable landlord services and we supply a wide range of housing options in response to the housing crisis. Our strengths are our people and ethical approach.



our **corporate** strategy

our **culture**

The Aster Way will support us to develop an even fairer and more inclusive culture, which balances our social purpose and the need to work more commercially.

our **priorities**

Providing customer-focused, easily accessible, good and safe services.

We will achieve this through:

- Improving customer satisfaction
- Managing our homes proactively
- Using modern digital solutions
- Maximising our income and managing the impact of Welfare Reform.

Being an agent for change through the activities we choose to do through the Aster Foundation.

We will achieve this through:

- Working across the priorities of digital and financial inclusion, health and wellbeing, and independent living
- Acting as a catalyst to change communities for the better through social innovation.

Building as many homes as we can offering a range of housing options.

We will achieve this through:

- Maintaining a strong programme of affordable rented homes
- Supporting housing development in rural communities
- Promoting shared ownership as a mainstream tenure
- Building more new homes through our land-led schemes.

Delivering our Corporate Strategy quicker and better through growth.

We will achieve this through:

- increasing our financial capacity
- Ensuring growing the business never compromises our existing services
- Enhancing our social impact
- Supporting the delivery of new homes by working with partners and through mergers and acquisitions.

Ensuring we are ready for the future.

We will achieve this through:

- Being known and trusted
- Being prepared
- Being connected
- Being digital
- Being the best we can be.

Making best use of our assets whilst meeting the needs of our customers.

We will achieve this through:

- Ensuring that all our homes meet an agreed standard
- Meeting our legal and regulatory obligations and safety won't be compromised
- Investing in the estates in which they live and help create communities that people are proud of
- Dynamic asset management including the acquisition and disposal of assets that secure strategic, social or economic value.

Customer services strategy

our
vision

Customer-focused, easily accessible, good and safe services.

our
purpose

To improve people's lives, supporting people when they need it. We provide good, safe, reliable landlord services to our customers in rented, shared ownership and leasehold homes, and are committed to working in partnership with others to invest and create sustainable local communities.



Customer services strategy

our **key** objectives

our customers

We will improve customer satisfaction by:

- Developing a blend of highly specialised and centralised teams, with a growing network of local generic colleagues for our new or existing homes, delivering core landlord services to our customers
- Working as a network of teams to deliver efficient customer services across all of our operational teams
- Promoting the use of digital self-service for our high-volume transactions
- A clear focus on delivering our core responsibilities and obligations to a good standard
- A rebalancing of expectations, by clarifying and specifying our offer through customer voice, and in line with our published Customer Promises
- Using our range of customer voice and insight to understand our customers' needs more, enabling us to continually evolve and meet our customer requirements
- Offering a range of opportunities to encourage customer voice to shape and influence our services
- Through our Independent Living service, we will support the work of specialist care and support providers to enable customers to live independently in their own home.

our homes

We will manage our homes proactively by:

- Promoting and protecting the health and safety of our customers and colleagues
- Maintaining homes and communal areas to a safe and compliant standard
- Investing in improving our neighbourhoods within our communities through enhancements
- Delivering all identified repairs and investment / maintenance work
- Improving the energy efficiency of our homes and limit their impact on the environment
- Ensuring that our Group Asset Management Strategy is closely linked to, and supports the objectives of, the Customer Services Strategy
- Using smart procurement, working with partners where appropriate, to reduce costs, improve service standards and achieve social and environmental benefits.

digital evolution

We will embrace modern digital solutions to provide better services by:

- Simplifying how we work across our landlord services
- Developing the MyAster portal, providing the platform for intuitive and automated agile working
- Ensuring that our customers have access to digital training and support
- Developing our multi-media Contact Centre, enabling the reduction of demand and the provision of insight and intelligence to better understand the customer voice
- Developing access to connected living and aids & adaptations to ensure that the health and wellbeing needs of our customers are being met.

income maximisation

We will continuously refine how we manage the impact of Welfare Reform, so that we maximise our income by:

- Promoting financial independence whilst supporting customers to pay their rent and service charges to sustain their tenancies
- Working with other agencies such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), support agencies and local authorities for the benefit of our customers
- Promoting a variety of digital payment methods, whilst making sure that our offering is as accessible, quick and easy for all
- Promoting financial inclusion, wellbeing and into work services for our customers, including the suite of customer services delivered through the Aster Foundation
- Raising re-charges where appropriate and chasing former tenant debts to maximise income owed to us
- Making reasonable and sustainable payment plans with customers who have developed a debt with us.

our **corporate** strategy
2020/21

Aster foundation strategy

our
vision

Everyone has a home and the
opportunity to improve their own lives.

our
purpose

Investing in communities and in their future.



Aster foundation strategy

our **key** objectives

improving life chances & removing barriers

- Empowering customers to sustain homes and improve life chances, through delivering services which offer a consistent customer experience and measurable life improvements (Into work / Mental wellness and resilience / Financial wellbeing / ILS / Switch and save / Volunteering / Housing First)
- Enabling independence for customers through addressing a range of exclusion challenges, whilst exploring what housing for 'older people' could look like in the future
- Sustaining a workforce of the future through developing skills within our communities, and working to reduce unemployment and skills shortages through targeted work in areas of need
- Creating a lasting legacy through our thriving communities through delivering targeted local interventions, which improve satisfaction to neighbourhoods, in collaboration with frontline colleagues and customers.

social innovation for the benefit of our communities

- Develop an approach which enables social innovators/ entrepreneurs to work with us to tackle social challenges across our communities that align to the Aster Foundation priorities
- Create a culture of enterprise and innovation across our people and communities to enable all to participate in the Foundation's work
- Develop the grants and funding process with value-based grants from our colleagues, contractors and suppliers on offer to benefit our communities
- Develop our approach to social value ensuring it's manageable and measurable, and delivering value for money through our procurement practice
- Develop innovative ways to create environmentally active partnerships and embed our sustainability approach across our communities.

Development strategy

our **vision**

To build as many homes as we can through a range of housing options to support the vision '**everyone** has a home'.

our **purpose**

That Aster actively contributes to solving the housing crisis through maximising the number of homes we can build recognising that strong partnerships and a positive cultural approach is integral to our success.



Development strategy

our **key** objectives

our priorities

We will focus on:

- Raising our external profile as a developer and build relationships making us the development partner of choice
 - Continue to promote shared ownership as a mainstream tenure
 - Monitor the housing market and develop our product offer to be able to respond to a change in market conditions and mitigate risk
 - Continue to support housing development in rural communities
 - Build upon the partnership opportunities with our local authorities (LAs) with the vision to develop better together
 - Retaining our relationship with Homes England and develop a new pipeline of funding opportunities to add to the Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme (SOAHP)
- Ensure that all our homes meet an Aster agreed quality with appropriate measures to ensure on site supervision and technical support is provided to our project team
 - Ensure that the team is supported and valued; to be able to capture their untapped skills through proactive opportunities to 'grow our own', and promote and retain our inspirational people.

our approach

We will aim to:

- Increase the number of affordable homes developed on land we have acquired and land already in the Group's ownership (non Section 106 delivery)
 - Pursue land opportunities which may introduce open market sale, but underpinned by an approach to maximise grant to promote tenure flexibility
 - Consider opportunities to provide all types and tenures of homes, including extra care and specialist accommodation where financially viable and sustainable in the long term
- Develop a 'One Aster' approach to improving our digital journey from planning to managing and maintaining our homes
 - Explore and inform our business with market advancements in smart technology, modern methods of construction (MMC) and zero carbon homes
 - Ensure our offer is financially sound and based upon due diligence undertaken with our preferred partners, to ensure we secure the right sites at the correct price
 - Not be influenced by market competition from new players joining (registered providers / local authorities).

our beliefs & assumptions

Our offer is built on the strengths we have within the business and assumes:

- There are sufficient funds and the structure of the business allows for the development of a range of tenures
 - There isn't any significant change in the operating sales environment, or we have an ability to mitigate the risk through additional grant funding
 - The Group's existing policies on maximising its income through the current active asset management strategy remains in place
 - Planning policy will still allow for affordable housing to be provided through a Section 106
- Developers are still offering affordable housing through a Section 106 - viability tools not being implemented
 - The Homes England Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme (SOAHP) continues to support us with the opportunity to secure grant funding for our rural programme and support our land-led opportunities to ensure we can be competitive when bidding for sites.

Asset management strategy

our
vision

Provide safe, well maintained homes supported by long-term investment in communities where people choose to live.

our
purpose

To support the delivery of our corporate strategy through dynamic asset management that maximises returns and makes best use of our assets, whilst ensuring the needs of our customers are met.



Asset management strategy

our **key** objectives

our beliefs & assumptions

- There is sufficient funds and resources within the business to support the long-term investment in our retained stock
- We will continue to maximise income through dynamic asset management including the acquisition and disposal of assets that secure strategic, social or economic value
- Develop and adopt an Asset Management Plan that sets out a range of projects, initiatives and measures of success that support this strategy.

our homes

- Ensure that all our homes meet an agreed standard, meet our legal and regulatory obligations and safety won't be compromised
- Continue to manage new or existing risks within our stock and take appropriate action to limit the impact they have on our customers or our business
- We will improve the quality of shared communal areas as an extension of our customer's home, and invest in the estates in which they live to help create communities that people are proud of
- Maximise the use of our land to deliver more homes and community facilities
- Identify poorly performing low demand homes for disposal, to contribute to funding new developments and reinvestment in existing homes and neighbourhoods, taking into account local need
- Ensure our Group Asset Management Strategy is closely linked to, and supports the objectives of, the Customer Services Strategy
- Underpin our investment decisions with an independent stock condition survey in line with our 30-year investment programme.

our customers & colleagues

- Invest in the skills and experience of our workforce, to maximise the social and economic benefit they bring to the business and communities in which we work
- Invest in digital solutions that enable our colleagues to work flexibly and support customers gaining easy access to key information about their home
- Increase customer satisfaction with maintenance services and create more opportunity for customer voice to shape the services we deliver.

our communities

- We will ensure that service standards are developed in partnership with customers and we aim to achieve the right balance between customer satisfaction, cost and expectation
- The majority of our stock will continue to be located in high demand areas, with both existing and future housing development supporting our corporate objectives and needs of our communities
- We will make a positive contribution towards a net carbon reduction, improve the energy efficiency of our stock and limit the impact it has on the environment.

Growth strategy

our
vision

Delivering our corporate strategy quicker and better through growth.

our
purpose

That Aster ensures long-term sustainability by undertaking an innovative and holistic approach to growth that is centred on a strong offer both internally and externally, and is supported by evidence-led decision making.



Growth strategy

our **key** objectives

our priorities

To ensure that growth can support our strategy and vision it is supported by a clear articulation of our priorities.

- Increasing our financial capacity – our growth strategy supports building financial capacity within the Group for the long-term; we'll make commercial decisions that ensure profit for purpose
- Development – working with partners or through merger and acquisition (M&A) growth can support delivery of more homes
- Services to customers – successful growth which isn't detrimental to our existing services
- Social Impact – growth supports our commitment to do things in an ethical way, and we consider a range of options to work in partnerships to enhance our social impact in our communities and beyond
- Value for Money – our approach will deliver value for money to the wider sector and our customers.

our growth model

Our approach to growth is flexible and is grounded by lessons learned from our own experience and from across the sector. Our approach is multi-faceted and contains several key strands.

- Organic growth – we will seek to grow the business through our ambitious development plan, we will improve and develop existing services and business areas to ensure long-term, sustainable growth
- Growth through M&A – our approach will be flexible and based on risk and reward, and will be underpinned by the agreed Aster Merger Code
- Growth through additional services – we will seek to expand and strengthen in areas of augmentation, whilst still considering opportunities for diversification
- Growth through partnerships – proactively working with current and new partners to develop a range of approaches to partnership working, including strategic partnerships that unlock new capacity and geography
- Balancing risk and reward – ensure that growth can clearly support one of our business priorities and strategy and enhance the financial business plan. Our risk appetite sets out our parameters
- Core and non-core growth – core growth is defined as adding overall capacity to the business plan, while non-core growth encompasses a holistic range of opportunities, but should be grounded by financial viability and balancing risk and reward
- Market based opportunities – We will further develop our approach to distressed businesses and will seek to maximise our potential to take advantage of changes in markets.

our offer

- Our offer is built on the strengths we have within the business, and our reputation in the sector and beyond
- A well run business – a strong focus on Governance and our G1 rating
- Our financial strength – we must harness our strong business plan
- Our culture – we are a cultural leader in the sector, and our offer to others is supported by our outstanding employment offer
- Our products and services – the quality of our product, and our sector leading expertise in specific products

- Our approach – our culture of openness and innovation
- Our red lines – we will not invest in an opportunity without the knowledge that it must contribute to the achievement of our strategy, we will ensure that any offer of investment does not have a negative impact on strategy elsewhere.

The Aster offer should be flexed to incorporate different approaches. Specifically the agreed approach to small housing associations (HAs) and distressed businesses.

internal capability & capacity

To ensure that our approach to growth can be truly flexible and our offer to partners is clear and transparent, we have built our capability and capacity internally.

- Mobilisation resource – to ensure maximisation of opportunities, resource is required to deliver both the offer and the implementation of the project. Our approach needs to be agile to take advantage of short-term opportunities
- Clear oversight and responsibility – clear distinctions between M&A, core and non-core growth that enables oversight and accountability
- Networked team – draw on expertise from across the business
- Business intelligence – build our capacity to use intelligence to lead on a more evidence-based approach to growth
- Clear understanding – demystifying growth, and creating a clear understanding across the business.

our **corporate** strategy
2020/21

Transformation strategy

our
vision

We are ready for the future.

our
purpose

Enabling sustainable transformation across the business and our communities. Ensuring people have the technology they need, proactively communicating internally and externally and empowering our employees to create a fair and inclusive culture.



Transformation strategy

our **key** objectives

being known & trusted

- Developing an evidenced-based approach to influencing stakeholder groups
- Creating wider brand awareness where it supports our corporate objectives
- Enabling our employees to have influence over decision making
- Building a future talent pipeline that's fit for the future and inclusive
- Being recognised as an organisation that is environmentally sustainable and where staff who care about the environment are proud to work
- To further enhance Aster as a great place to work, through development of The Aster Offer.

being digital

- Supporting business service and community transformation through digital and technology enhancements
- Ensuring all colleagues are comfortable working digitally
- Equipping our people with the right tools they need to do their job
- Supporting colleagues as we move forward as a Microsoft First organisation
- Enabling significant service transformation as we look to change the way we work.

being connected

- Connecting everyone with our corporate strategy and social purpose
- Keeping people connected with one another while working or living remotely
- Ensuring colleagues have access to all the systems they need to do their job
- Developing our Welcome and Alumni offerings
- Increasing connectivity and collaboration to help our people work more sustainably, and reduce our collective impacts on the environment.

being prepared

- Understanding what work and our natural environment will look like in the future and how it impacts our business
- Inspiring and enabling innovation across the business
- Preparing our colleagues for change and developing more resilience
- Addressing the needs of a multi-generational and diverse workforce
- Knowing and using talents we have across the business.

being the best you can be

- Creating the right environment where coaching is our default management style
- Ensuring all colleagues have what they need to succeed in their role
- Giving colleagues better insights about themselves and their colleagues to enable better working together
- Giving colleagues the right insight and skills they need to understand how to deliver a great experience for others
- Continue to develop our wellbeing offer
- Using restorative practice as our default approach.