Creating more opportunities together



Corporate Strategic Plan 2026-2031

POPLAR HARCA

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Our purpose

Fairer futures through housing, regeneration, and transformative community impact

Introduction



This plan is the product of bold hopes and frank feedback. Community, staff, and board members told us what matters. And what needs to change. We listened, really listened, and this strategy is the result.

It's not only a five-year plan. It's a declaration that Poplar HARCA won't settle for business-as-usual in a world that doesn't stay still. Things shift. Risks appear. But so will opportunities: some we can glimpse, others that will surprise us. We're building in flex to move fast, stay sharp, and never lose sight of why we're here.

Everyone – community, staff, and our Board – has a stake in the next 5 years. Turning strategy into something real, something felt, something that changes lives, takes all of us working together.

Our story

Poplar HARCA was voted into existence by residents in 1998, people who were tired of being told “this is just how things are.” We started with a bold, audacious idea: what if housing wasn’t only bricks and mortar but the foundation for something bigger? A thriving, resilient, proudly East End community.

Fast forward to 2025. We own and manage over 10,000 homes, lead a £2.5 billion regeneration programme, and invest £4million every year into community opportunities. From day one, Poplar HARCA has been about change: about using housing as the launchpad for opportunity, ambition, and collective progress.

We don’t do top-down transformation. Ours has been a successful experiment in genuine collaboration and shared power - community, partners, businesses, Tower Hamlets Council, and us, figuring things out together and rolling up our sleeves to act.

Social justice is our operating system. We’re here to break, not maintain, cycles. To champion equity. To build a place where opportunity isn’t rationed by postcode or luck or who you know.

And it all starts with the basics – warm, safe, and secure homes. Without a home things don’t work. But with a home? That’s when the real transformation begins.



What we do and why we do it



Poplar HARCA is a community-led engine for change in East London.

Yes, we provide safe, affordable homes – but we also deliver essential services, unlock opportunities, and help shape places. Neighbourhoods where people connect, belong, and call home.

We believe in placemaking. In what's possible when communities are equipped, not managed.

We're here to build resilience as a lived reality. A future where every resident has a safe home, a voice that counts, and feels included in opportunities.

The Poplar HARCA Way

Innovative

We're not here to tinker at the edges. We are innovative. We think big, act bold, and lead from the front – reimagining regeneration, disrupting old models, and making social change not only possible, but inevitable.

Inclusive

We're stronger because we're different. Our community and workplace reflect the East End: vibrant, diverse, and full of character. We make sure everyone has a seat at the table and a voice in the conversation. Whoever you are, wherever you're from, you belong here.

Outcome-focused

Tower Hamlets is our home turf, and we're in deep. Because real impact doesn't happen in isolation, we build trust, alliances, and shared outcomes with our community, Tower Hamlets Council, partners, businesses, and each other.

Resilient

We are in it for the long game. We are resilient, positive and focused. We invest in solutions that outlast headlines. Legacy isn't what you build today, it's what still works tomorrow.

Resident-focused

We co-create. Every decision, every project, every brick is shaped by the people who live here. We're accessible, inclusive, and unapologetically community-first.

Accountable

Being accountable means we move with resolve. We are purposeful and guided by our values. We take time to think, listen, balance trade-offs, and adapt – all with care. The goal? Progress that's principled.



Our ambitions



These goals are grounded in what we know is possible. Beneath them sit operational priorities: tangible steps that turn ambition into action.

Each year we'll sharpen our focus through smart performance goals – ratcheting up delivery, tracking progress, and holding ourselves to account.

Service Satisfaction

Service Satisfaction means delivering on promises, listening with intent, acting with integrity.

- **Empowered residents:** Putting residents in the driving seat, shaping and co-designing services, governance, and investment decisions. We'll shift power, not just consult.
- **Feedback into action:** We'll turn feedback into action: closing the loop by showing residents how their voices drive change, improvement, and impact.
- **Inclusive, empowered communities:** We will be the UK's most inclusive place to live. Anti-racist; every woman safe, every day; a listened-to youth voice; and digital inclusion are non-negotiables.
- **Community wealth-building:** Enabling local economic growth that benefits residents directly, keeping value rooted in our neighbourhoods. We'll invest in opportunities that promote wellbeing, open pathways to jobs and training, and empower young people to shape their futures.

Successful Places

Successful Places means creating places of pride, equity, and sustained opportunity.

- **Homes that set the standard:** Everyone should have a home that's warm, safe, and genuinely affordable. We'll build, buy, and maintain high-quality homes across all tenures, reducing overcrowding, and meeting net-zero carbon standards.
- **Community-led regeneration:** Proving that transformation strengthens community power, protects affordability, and preserves identity. Residents are not just included, they lead the change.
- **Connected, thriving neighbourhoods:** Creating complete and connected places where education, health, work, green space and transport are within easy reach. We'll embed wellbeing, safety, and community infrastructure into the social and physical fabric of our places.
- **Regenerate for the future:** Delivering sustainable homes, retrofitting existing, and investing in green, resilient infrastructure. In effect, developing vibrant neighbourhoods for generations to come.





Our ambitions

Strong Foundations

Strong Foundations means smart finance, purposeful people, and governance that enables bold decisions.

- **Catalyst for the sector:** Sharing what works. Testing bold ideas to model nationally and internationally so others can replicate our success. Building Poplar HARCA's reputation as a benchmark – bold, credible, and always community-first.
- **Leading with integrity:** Strengthened governance, diverse and reflective leadership, and a workforce that mirrors and champions our community.
- **Stronger together:** Delivering growth by working with partners who share our purpose, amplifying community power, and bringing new opportunities to our community.
- **Every pound counts:** Making smart, ethical financial choices that protect affordability, unlock investment, and deliver the greatest value for our residents and community.

Achieving ambitions



2026: Year 1 priorities

These priorities will inform our 2026 annual service plan.

Service Satisfaction	▸ 3 service redesigns co-delivered with residents ▸ Performance data available to more residents more often ▸ Property MOTs and Internet of Things offered in all tenants' homes ▸ Increase in the diversity and number of residents benefiting from wellbeing, employment, and community opportunities
Successful Places	▸ Meaningful regeneration progress ▸ Community-informed transport strategy
Strong Foundations	▸ Staff-informed professional development framework ▸ Reduction in the average per-home overheads cost by 10% ▸ Increase in the diversity and number of residents involved in governance ▸ Progress the partnership and growth strategy

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