

CREATING HIGH QUALITY 'DECENT HOMES' IN THRIVING, INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES



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Rebecca Bennett-Casserly
Partner, Head of Affordable Housing

One Vision Housing (OVH) is a registered provider of affordable housing which was created in 2006 as a result of a stock transfer from Sefton Borough Council. Its vision is to provide high quality homes in thriving, inclusive communities where people have a sense of pride and place. It owns over 11,000 properties predominantly around the former docklands district of North Liverpool.

EC Harris is working in partnership with OVH to deliver its Decent Homes programme across both its low-rise and high-rise accommodation. The firm is also providing project management services to help effectively deliver the works across its occupied high-rise accommodation, with the minimum amount of disruption for residents.

The aims of the programme are to: improve building efficiency and improve value for money, whilst delivering 'Decent Homes' below current benchmark costs. For OVH the ultimate aim is to create desirable homes for its residents whilst achieving the 'Three Star' audit rating in the process.

Creating solutions

The EC Harris team - based in OVH's office - quickly developed close working relationships with the internal project management teams together with its other external consultants.

The main objectives were to: ensure service delivery was of an extremely high quality; and identify substantial costs improvements. To achieve this, the project team initially worked closely with the design team, providing best practice design guidance and benchmarking previous projects to identify areas of improvement, which could deliver better value going forward.

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Effort was then focused on ensuring a transparent and effective procurement route was established. This was achieved by adopting a partnering approach to the procurement and delivery process with the main contractor for the remaining works under a framework agreement.

This ensured accountability for the partnering arrangement between the contractors and the client and provided a baseline to deliver future improvements in relation to site productivity; performance; and financial accountability. Significant effort was also put into establishing improved relationships with the main contractor’s key suppliers to ensure surety of supply.

An ‘open book’ policy was adopted, enabling the anticipation of potential construction issues at an early stage so corrective procedures could quickly be implemented. This approach, coupled with the efficient packaging of construction works ensured OVH had certainty of delivery.

Adding value

The processes established by EC Harris ensure a consistent approach to working across project teams and managing suppliers in complex structures. This has generated significant benefits for OVH:

- £300,000 of savings have been identified in preliminary costs alone
- The off-site pre-fabrication of construction elements has improved quality control and on-site efficiencies
- Significant M&E savings were also achieved by closely monitoring the supply chain management process.
- Considerable control over contractor performance and spend has been achieved using a profit share arrangement within the contract underpinned by a forensic style audit.

Collaborative working between EC Harris and the client and the proactive sharing of skills has helped establish individual ‘ownership’ for aspects of the Decent Homes Programme and should add significant value to OVH in the long-term. The establishment of robust financial accounting principles for auditing purposes should enable OVH to achieve its aim of gaining ‘Three Star Status.’

EC Harris continues to work in partnership with OVH to ensure it delivers high quality and sustainable homes that can be efficiently and effectively managed and maintained for its tenants.

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