

# Sovereign and Network Homes plan to come together



What the proposed merger  
means for you



# Our timeline for taking the best of both and making it even better

Merger proposals announced

March 2023

March to August  
Carry out legal, financial and other checks

June and July  
Gather feedback from residents and our partners to inform decisions and help to shape integration and future services

Create Sovereign Network Group, with Network Homes known as 'Sovereign Network Homes' during the transition

August 2023

August to September  
Final decisions on whether to merge

October 2023

October to March 2025  
Gradually bring people, processes and systems together

Fully merged as a single organisation

April 2025

# Introduction

Sovereign and Network Homes are proposing to come together as one organisation that takes the best of both and makes it even better. This will be called the Sovereign Network Group.

The aim is to do this in October 2023, when we will come together into a group structure. We'll then fully integrate both organisations over the next 18 months.

**This proposal won't affect your right to live in your home. You'll still have the same lease or tenancy agreement. There will be little immediate difference for residents: you'll still contact your landlord the same way and deal with the teams you do now.**

In the longer-term though, both housing associations believe that coming together will let us do more for all our customers and residents.

As one organisation we'll be able to invest more into existing homes, into services, into local communities and into building more homes.

## Find out more and have your say

This booklet tells you a bit more about the merger and how you can let us know your views. There won't be a formal resident vote but both Boards will take your feedback into account when they make their decisions.

We're committed to being open and honest and to strengthening the trust you have in us. This booklet, and our plans for gathering your feedback, have been checked by a group of residents from both associations and updated from what they said.



# Why are we doing this?

**We're confident the merger will deliver benefits to residents and put us in a better position to deliver on our social purpose and priorities.**

We want to give our current and future residents better-quality existing homes and build more new homes for thousands of people who still need one.

We want to get the basics right and give you great services and support if you need it. From repairs and safety checks to helping you access any financial assistance you're due. From training courses which help you get a great job to grants for local groups, so your communities can thrive.

As housing associations, we both face a challenging future (such as rising costs that affect our services and ability to invest in homes) at a time when we're trying to keep rents affordable for residents. These challenges could last for years. That's why we believe it's the right time to merge – and the right merger for both associations.

Together, we'll be in a better position to get through these challenges. Our bigger size will let us carry on providing locally focused services but make efficiency savings and have better access to new funding.

We can also keep investing in better services and doing more to make homes energy-efficient – so they're warm, more affordable to run and help fight climate change.



# What is our ambition for the new organisation?

## Provide better services for residents



- We can offer new and better digital ways for you to get in touch (and to keep you informed), so we can provide more accurate, personalised and efficient services.
- We can find new ways to listen and engage with you: building on the best of both groups of engaged residents to make sure more of you can shape what we do.
- We can have the scale to test new approaches in different places and learn from these to the benefit of all residents.

## Invest more in improving homes and building new ones



- We can invest even more (£9.2 billion over the next ten years) in improving the quality of existing homes, regenerating estates and building new homes.
- We can build 25,000 new homes over the next decade: that's 4,000 more as a combined organisation than we could separately.

## Invest more in supporting residents and communities



- We're committed to setting up a Community Foundation to invest £100 million over a ten-year period into our local communities, such as through charitable grants.



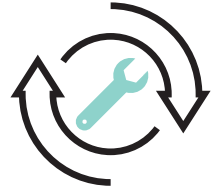
# Your questions answered

## What will this mean for repairs and services?

The top priority for both associations is to deliver great services and homes - and to keep improving on this. The merger won't distract us from focusing on this.

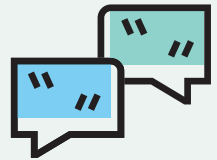
Because we work in different areas, we'll still be delivering services as we currently do. You won't see any immediate change.

Longer-term, the merger will give us more funding for repairs, maintenance, services and the communities you live in.



## If you're bigger, will we have less personal contact?

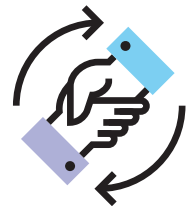
We're committed to having a local focus so that we're connected to residents and communities and can respond to the priorities and issues in different places. Network Homes has a local approach in its areas and Sovereign has ten locally focused teams to provide 'on the ground' services.



We've also agreed to keep our main offices, including in Basingstoke and Wembley.

## What do you mean by 'taking the best from both'?

Coming together over 18 months gives us time to learn from each other, so we can bring together the best aspects of both associations. For example, by building on Sovereign's experience of how to assess and improve the energy-efficiency of homes and Network Homes' experience in regenerating estates.



An integration team from both associations is in place to lead this work on bringing together key services and systems.



## Will your finances be more at risk if you merge?

Both Sovereign and Network Homes are financially strong. But we each have different types of homes, and work in different areas, which means there will be less financial risk for both if we merge.

Combining our resources will let us achieve our social purpose better through access to more funding and at better rates.

Combining central teams will also let us make efficiencies (but we've committed to employees there will be a role for everyone who wants one until at least April 2025).



## Will you try to sell higher-value homes in London to build in other areas?

While both associations look at whether it's right and cost-effective to keep every single home, merging isn't about selling London homes to offset other costs or activity. Because we'll be bigger, we'll be more attractive to lenders so we can attract more money for homes and services.

Sovereign also has a 'Homes & Place Standard' which means that disposing of any homes can only happen where there's a plan to at least replace them with new local affordable homes.



## What could happen if there's no merger?

As we've explained, both associations could carry on as we are but there are more pressures and challenges on us. So, we may have to make more difficult decisions about some services and support if we don't merge.

It may take us longer to improve existing homes. And we won't be able to build as many new ones as we could by bringing our resources together.

# Alike but different

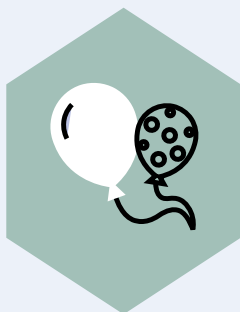
## We want to merge because we share the same vision.

We have a lot in common that will help us work well together, but with the strength and capacity to do more. We also have some differences where we can complement and learn from each other.

## This is what we'll be like as Sovereign Network Group.



Strong locally focused customer-facing services



Creating a Community Foundation investing £100m over the next decade



Proudly serving around 210,000 residents in over 82,000 homes across the South of England and London



Financially stronger so we can still be around in the future for our residents and communities



Savings and efficiencies from combining central teams, that we can invest into services and homes



# Some background information about Sovereign and Network Homes

	A bit about Sovereign	A bit about Network Homes
<b>Who are we and where are we based?</b>	Charitable housing association based in Basingstoke with various regional offices, including in Bristol, Christchurch, Newbury and Exeter.	Charitable housing association based in North-West London with offices in London and Hertford.
<b>When were we established?</b>	Set up in 1989 in West Berkshire as one of the first stock transfers from a local authority. Has grown through mergers and a strong building programme.	Set up in 1974 as Brent People's Housing Association. Has grown through the transfer of council homes, acquiring smaller associations and building new homes.
<b>How many homes do we own or manage?</b>	61,000 affordable homes across south and south-west England.	21,000 affordable homes predominantly across London and Hertfordshire.
<b>What kind of homes are they?</b>	Wide mix of houses and flats for social and affordable rent and shared ownership. Some key worker and private rent homes plus some for outright sale.	Wide mix of houses and flats for social and affordable rent and shared ownership. Some key worker homes and some for outright sale.
<b>Are we building new affordable homes?</b>	Built around 1,600 affordable new homes last year.	Built around 220 affordable new homes last year.
<b>Do we support our communities?</b>	Invested around £3.7 million into community projects last year.	Invested around £167,000 into communities last year, via a charitable fund.

# Tell us what you think

We'd like to hear from you about this proposal by **Tuesday 11 July 2023**, so the Sovereign and Network Homes Boards can consider your views when they make their decisions. Each association is also speaking to other groups, such as the financial institutions we have funding agreements with and to its local authority partners.

## Have your say

You can find all the latest information about the merger proposal on our websites. They're also a great place to find out more about both associations.

Each association is surveying its own residents and you can find a link to the survey on your landlord's website.

If you prefer, you can also scan the relevant QR code below with the camera on your smartphone or mobile device.

## Have your say in person

Come along to one of our events where you can talk to us about the proposal. We'll let you know about these, including sharing them on our websites.

## Next steps

In September we'll share a summary of the feedback and next steps with you - by email, on our websites and social media channels.

## Sovereign residents

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[www.sovereign.org.uk/  
better-together](http://www.sovereign.org.uk/better-together)

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Take our Sovereign survey



## Network Homes residents

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[www.networkhomes.org.uk/  
bettertogether](http://www.networkhomes.org.uk/bettertogether)

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Take our Network Homes survey





# Other formats and languages

Visit [www.sovereign.org.uk/better-together](http://www.sovereign.org.uk/better-together) or [www.networkhomes.org.uk/bettertogether](http://www.networkhomes.org.uk/bettertogether) and click on the 'Accessibility' button at the top of the page to translate the text, make it bigger on screen, have it read out to you and so on.

Please contact us if you would like a copy of this information in another language.

## Polish

Prosimy o kontakt, jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać kopię tych informacji w innym języku.

## Portuguese

Por favor, contacte-nos se pretender uma cópia desta informação noutro idioma.

## Somali

Fadlan nala soo xiriir haddii aad nuqul ka mid ah macluumaadkan ku rabto luqad kale.

## Bengali

আপনি যদি অন্য একটি ভাষায় এই তথ্যের একটি কপি চান তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।

## Cantonese

若您想獲得其他版本語言資訊，請與我們聯絡。

## Arabic

يُرجى التواصل معنا عند رغبتكم في الحصول على نسخة من هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى.

## Gujarati

જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતીની એક નકલ જોઈતી હોય તો કૃપા કરીને અમારો સંપર્ક કરો.

**Please let us know if you need us to supply information about the merger in another way.**



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