

## Doors open at cutting-edge Walsall factory set to produce 1,000 homes a



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The first house is set to roll off the production line of a state-of-the-art new factory, which has capacity to produce more than 1,000 new homes every year.

The new 56,000 sq ft plant is being launched by LoCaL Homes and will be officially opened today (Thursday 25 October) by Housing Minister Kit Malthouse MP.

Part of Accord Housing Association, this is LoCaL Homes' second offsite factory in the West Midlands and is the result of Â£1m of investment from the organisation. It is expected to create 75 new local jobs and increase Accord's delivery of new homes by 300 per cent.

The launch of the innovative manufacturing plant has been welcomed by ministers.

"Innovation is crucial to delivering the homes communities need, which is why Â£2.5bn of our **Home Building Fund** provides support for modern methods of construction," said Mr Malthouse.

"This new factory is great news for the West Midlands and a clear example of the potential for modern methods of construction to support more, better, faster housebuilding."

The investment marks a significant step forward for the housing sector in its drive to support the government's ambitions to deliver 300,000 homes per year by the mid-2020s.

Chief Executive of Accord Housing Association, Dr Chris Handy, said: "The knowledge and experience the team has been developing since the launch of our first factory over seven years ago means we have been constantly innovating and improving when it comes to providing the homes the country needs quickly, without compromising on quality.

"Whilst we have big ambitions to produce more than 1,000 homes per year, we require a collaborative and strategic

approach across the country to meet housing need. That's why we have developed an approach which can be replicated and we'll be working with housing and local authority partners to make this a reality.

I am immensely proud that we've been able to create career opportunities for local people as well as creating affordable, beautiful homes that people love to live in.

As a housing association, we are run on social purpose principles and ultimately this is about creating the best homes and communities, boosting local economies and improving people's lives. We will be recruiting up to 75 more people to work in the new factory. I am genuinely excited about what this new factory signifies for the future.

One of the people who is working at the factory and has benefitted first hand from the training offered with Accord is Jenna Webster. Seven years ago at the age of 22, Jenna applied for a job at LoCaL Homes after her mum got a flyer through the door from her housing association, Accord. She aspires to be a team leader at LoCaL Homes' new factory.

Jenna said: I absolutely love it. I've been with LoCaL Homes since the very beginning and have seen it grow from a small, innovative company to what we are now. The fact we are opening this new 56,000 sq ft factory proves how well we have done.

I am so glad I applied for the team member role at our first factory. The company has really invested in me, helping me to grow and develop in my role. I have undertaken lots of training courses including getting my forklift licence last year.

She added: Seeing the finished home leave the factory gives me a huge sense of pride and achievement. And knowing that people are actually living in the homes we've made is amazing.

Having started out as a trainee, I now help to train up our new team members, leading courses like manual handling and am on track to become the next team leader. And then after that, who knows!

Lucy Blasdale, Head of Land for Homes England in the Midlands, said: Homes England is committed to driving innovation and encouraging more widespread use of modern methods of construction to help increase the speed of construction and build out.

We are delighted to see the investment from Accord along with funding from Homes England and the Black Country LEP enabling the opening of this new timber frame manufacturing facility in Walsall, which will not only increase production to over 1,000 homes per year but also provide employment opportunities for local people.

LoCaL Homes uses the latest modern methods of construction to manufacture high quality, super energy efficient houses in its factories which can be transported anywhere in the country and then built in as little as one day.

To date LoCaL Homes has developed more than 1,000 homes across the country in places ranging from Preston to Cornwall. The closed panel timber homes cost no more than a traditionally built house, are quicker to build and are much more energy efficient.

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