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MANAGING AGENTS PROMOTE ROUTE TO VIBRANT, MIXED-TENURE 'URBAN VILLAGES' OF THE FUTURE

Despite the credit crunch blocks of flats are still being built, flats are still being sold and the estates where they are located still need managing. But, as the complexity of new developments grows so there is a need to involve all those, who are going to manage them, at an early stage in the planning of a development.

To assist developers understand the need to involve their chosen manager at an early stage and to assist the manager to understand the many issues affecting how they will manage, the Association of Residential Managing Agents (ARMA) has produced a 12-page booklet called "Key management issues for new developments."

Mixed-tenure is also becoming an issue as most developments are subject to S106 requirements whereby a proportion of the development is 'handed-over' to affordable housing managed by housing associations (HAs). To help HAs understand the management process of the whole estate and its interface with their properties (let alone assist the overall manager to understand the special needs of HAs) ARMA, in association with the National Housing Federation, has also produced a 20-page booklet "A guide to the management of mixed-tenure developments." Both booklets are downloadable from the Downloadable Publications page of the ARMA website (www.arma.org.uk).

"People buying a flat as a home are also buying into a lifestyle, a lifestyle that will be heavily influenced by how the property is managed on completion," states Brett Williams, ARMA's chairman. "It is essential therefore that the future management of a development is considered from the outset to ensure delivery of the maximum service levels at the minimum cost to the flat owners, which, in turn, will have an effect on the price a purchaser is willing to pay."

The mixed-tenure booklet is about the management models used and the management issues arising on such developments. 'Mixed-tenure' refers to developments of one or more blocks of flats with social or affordable housing alongside private leasehold flats. Many such developments will also contain commercial, possibly freehold houses and will be influenced by buy-to-lets.

"It is essential that a developer of these schemes involves a managing agent and the partner(s) for the social housing at as early a stage as possible so that long term sustainable management arrangements can be set up," continues Williams. "There has been concern about the management of such developments, in particular about lettings. This booklet seeks to explain some of the issues that arise on such developments and offer some solutions."

“Before the credit crunch some 80,000 new leasehold flats were being built each year; even if that level is now halved that is still a great deal of new developments that need to be properly and professionally managed.

“Both booklets are intended to enhance understanding for all parties involved in the creation of new, vibrant, mixed-tenure and mixed-use developments – housing diverse communities in the ‘urban villages’ of the future.”

About ARMA

Formed in 1991, ARMA is the only body in England and Wales to focus exclusively on matters relating to the block or estate management of long leasehold residential property. With over 200 corporate members managing in excess of 800,000 units in more than 32,000 blocks of flats or estates (at least 60% of which are lessee-controlled properties), the Association’s founding principal aims are to represent the interests of and improve standards for lessees, resident management companies and investor freeholders.

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Attachments: The indexes of the two booklets – the full text can be downloaded from www.arma.org.uk/publications.cfm