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## **Pioneer Landlord Praised for Cantril Farm Improvements**

Pioneer social landlord Villages Housing has been praised for improvements on an estate once known as the most notorious on Merseyside.

Housing watchdog, the Audit Commission, said Villages had played a 'crucial role' in improving the community and homes of tenants on Stockbridge Village – formerly part of Cantril Farm.

The Commission added that Villages was effective in supporting vulnerable tenants, committed to tackling anti-social behaviour and delivered quality improvements to tenants' homes.

It also highlighted the association's impact on Oldham's Fitton Hill estate and noted that it has delivered on key promises made within just two years of taking over the homes from the local authority.

However, the Audit Commission said that Villages needed to address some inefficiencies in its service and establish a more planned approach to its work.

Villages Housing chief executive Vernon Jackson said: "We're proud of what we've achieved both in Stockbridge Village and on Fitton Hill and proud of our success in tackling the issues which matter most to tenants.

"It's great that the Audit Commission recognises this work. Equally, we welcome the constructive criticisms made and are already following the Commission's recommendations to ensure that the same level of quality applies to all aspects of the organisation."

The Audit Commission said that Villages delivered a 'fair' service but had uncertain prospects for improvement. The Commission awarded Villages a one star rating, the same rating received by more than half the 108 social landlords inspected in the last two years.

Criticism included complaints that the landlord was not doing enough to fill vacant properties, did not always issue tenant satisfaction surveys and sometimes paid for repairs which could have been charged to others.

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### **Note to Editors**

- Villages Housing was launched on part of Cantril Farm in 1983 and was technically the first ever stock transfer housing association to be set up in England.
- It has 2,648 properties divided between Stockbridge Village, Knowsley, and Fitton Hill, Oldham. Villages took over as landlord on the Oldham estate two years ago after an overwhelming vote of support from tenants.
- A special care scheme set up by Villages in St Helens won a major national award in 2004.

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