

3 Theme 1 - Quantity

You told us

You said you want:

“Choice of quality affordable housing, with a range of house types for a range of different people with cross tenure integrated support”

“Community facilities within all new developments for residents to feel a sense of community”

“Homes linked to employment and services”

“Move away from boom and bust”

“Flexibility of tenure”

“Options for older people to down size - need to be aspirational”

And we need to take action to:

“Tidy up and get rid of all the empty flats/apartments”

“Give everyone a chance to get a property young or old family or no family”

“Resolve transport issues, housing congestion/glut in certain areas needs to be better balance”

“Refocus away from home ownership - unsustainable aspiration for many”

“Develop properties that are able to be used flexibly (akin to lifetime homes)”

“Focus on incentives to relet empties ...NOT penalties”

Source: actual responses given during the Housing Strategy Issues Paper consultation.

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Key challenges

Short term challenge - Responding to the economic downturn

Long term challenge - Meeting the need for additional housing

Responding to the economic downturn

In common with most areas in the country, there has been a rapid change in the housing market in Wigan as a result of the economic downturn. Prevailing trends of rising prices, increased house building activity and decreasing affordability have reversed in the past year. The length and severity of the recession are widely debated but the consensus is that there will not be a quick recovery and that activity in the housing market may not return to the levels seen in the last couple of years.

Demand for new homes has fallen and there has been a rise in the number of unsold and unoccupied new build homes over the last year. According to Hometrack data, house prices in the borough have fallen in 2008 by an average of 3.7%. However, price changes have not dropped uniformly across the borough and have held or increased in some areas and for some property types. Surrounding boroughs have seen similar drops, for example St Helens - 2.4%, Salford - 1.0% and Chorley - 4.4% with Bolton seeing a small increase of 0.2% over the year.

The number of sales transactions has fallen by over 72% in the last year. Job insecurity and financial uncertainty have certainly impacted on resident's desire to move. The restriction of mortgage finance at reasonable rates is considered by many as the single most important factor and despite the fall in house prices this has not eased the problem of affordability due to the lack of availability of finance and the need for larger deposits.

The impact of the recession is now also being felt by local businesses and employers, particularly in the construction and manufacturing sectors. Wigan Council is developing a wide ranging package of measures to reduce the impact of the recession and to maximise opportunities when the recovery begins. We have identified a number of housing priorities and have developed

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an action plan setting out how we will tackle the priorities over the next year;

- More affordable homes
- Tackling private sector empty homes
- Minimising repossessions and providing better advice
- Fuel poverty issues

Actions to address these priorities have been incorporated into our Housing Strategy Action Plan in Appendix 1 include:

- Working with house builders and the Homes and Communities Agency to direct grant funding at making unsold market housing available as additional affordable housing in the borough. Through this we have secured an additional 34 social rented homes and over 80 low cost home ownership units in 2008/09 to meet local need.
- Using the Council's land assets to support the delivery of affordable housing in partnership with RSL's and Wigan and Leigh Housing.
- "Fast tracking" our participation in the Government's Mortgage Rescue Scheme.
- Support for local businesses to retain and train their workforce
- Increasing housing options advice and advice available at court for those facing repossession
- Focus on developing a supply of suitable sites, infrastructure and skills base so that the local economy is not held back from recovery

We will continue dialogue and engagement with key partners such as developers and the HCA to develop new interventions and offer support where possible.

Planning for demographic change

Despite the recent fall in housing activity, particularly in new build development, the longer term trends are for rising population and demand for accommodation. The population of the borough is forecast to continue to grow from 306,000 in 2008 to 320,000 by 2026. Increases are due both to our resident population increasing and migration into the borough from elsewhere. In addition, our population is becoming more culturally diverse as asylum seekers, economic migrants and their families settle in the borough.

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Household formation rates are predicted to rise at a greater rate than overall population as the trend for smaller household size continues. Particularly there will be a greater number of single person households. We need to develop our evidence base and plan to provide the types of housing required by these newly forming households, however, when planning for the needs of smaller households, it is important to consider their aspirations in terms of size, accessibility and access to services.

Figure 7: Population Projections



Source: ONS 2006 data

Wigan is an ageing borough, by 2026 the pensioner population will have grown by over 20,000 as health and life expectancy increases. Over 65s will make up 21.5% of our population by 2026 and 2.7% will be aged over 85. Our research has shown that many people wish to remain in their own homes as they become older. Whilst we are developing policies to provide more support in the home we also need to consider the types of new housing required by those older people who wish to move to a more suitable home, particularly meeting the aspirations of the next generation of older owner occupiers. We need to consider suitable locations for specialist provision and ensure that high standards of design and accessibility are achieved both in specialist and mainstream housing.

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Planning housing delivery to support economic growth

The adopted housing targets for the borough within the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) is for an additional 17,600 homes by 2021, an annual average of 978, with 80% of provision targeted on brownfield sites. Although rates of completions have been high in recent years, the new target is a significant increase on the previous figure and will represent a key challenge, particularly in the current economic climate where rates of completions are likely to fall sharply in the short to medium term.

The emerging Wigan Local Development Framework (LDF) will set out the planning policy framework to support the delivery of the housing target and other policies within the RSS. The Core Strategy Preferred Options has now been published and sets out key issues such as;

- Spatial policy principles – including key development sites and zoning of development
- Core policy principles – on issues such as housing, economy, energy and waste
- Development management policy principles
- Alternative options

The Core Strategy will be crucial in establishing the framework for the future development of the borough in terms of meeting the future housing needs of the borough and facilitating economic growth and sustainable development. Through the Housing Strategy we need to work with planners to ensure new housing development offers the range of homes required by the population of the borough.

Within the LDF process the council will be required to demonstrate that there is a sufficient amount of land available to deliver the housing requirement set in the RSS and to demonstrate that the land is developable and deliverable within certain timescales. A Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) has recently been completed and a draft report published.

Initial findings indicate:

- A large supply of land will be required to meet the RSS housing targets over the period to 2021
- The potential (unconstrained) supply of sites is in excess of requirements

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- There are considerable variations in the spatial distribution of potential sites, this does not necessarily correlate with the areas with most housing demand.
- Constraints on some sites could inhibit delivery if not addressed

As a consequence of Wigan's industrial past much of the older urban core is surrounded by areas of former industrial land, particularly coal spoils, flashes and landfill. Whilst the SHLAA indicates that the unconstrained supply of land is more than sufficient to meet long term requirements for housing and employment, the issues of remediation and infrastructure remain huge barriers to development in many areas of the borough.

The Local Development Framework is due to be published by the council by mid 2010 and is to be adopted by mid 2011, during this time we will continue to work together with planners to ensure that housing and planning policy work together to deliver our strategic objectives.

Investing in sustainable development

Wigan needs to be able to attract and retain a range of employers and to compete within Greater Manchester and nationally for investment and jobs. The recently published Manchester Independent Economic Review (MIER) has found that productivity and earnings in the borough are lower than the sub-regional, regional and national averages. This reflects the traditional manufacturing base of the borough and indicates that there has been little diversification since the decline in manufacturing, with levels of employment in manufacturing, retail and logistics above average and knowledge, financial and professional sectors under-represented in the borough.

The MIER findings highlight a number of barriers including lower skills levels, low supply of quality office accommodation and, despite being near the motorway network and West Coast Mainline, the existence of poor transport links in many areas. The report looked at the sustainability of neighbourhoods and classed 16 neighbourhoods in the borough as "isolated" where there was a degree of entrapment of poor households, unable to break the cycle of living in a deprived area.

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In order to initiate long term regeneration a co-ordinated approach to planning infrastructure, housing and employment is needed, by;

- Identifying strategic development sites and to assist in directing development and investment into these areas.
- Ensuring that investment in housing is linked to other funding in other areas such as education and training, health and economic regeneration in order to maximise the impact on communities.
- Closer dialogue within council departments
- Developing our relationship with housing providers, the Homes and Communities Agency and other regional bodies so that our aspirations for the borough are understood.
- The development of a local delivery vehicle that will co-ordinate master planning and funding for the development of strategic sites, working with both public and private sector partners to secure investment.

Maximising affordable housing provision

Whilst house prices have recently fallen this is unlikely to solve the affordability gap since high deposits are being demanded and a greater proportion of residents are likely to suffer financial insecurity due to the recession. Our evidence shows that the supply of affordable homes has decreased leaving chronic shortages, thus the need for affordable housing is likely to remain an issue in the longer term.

Findings from both our Housing Needs Survey 2008 and the Greater Manchester Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2008 show that the demand for affordable housing has increased substantially since 2005 and now far exceeds our current target of an additional 530 homes by 2010. Delivery against this target has been steady but it is clear that delivery will fall short of needs.



Elevation: Kay Close, Scholes

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Figure 8: Affordable Housing Delivery

Delivery of affordable housing (cumulative)

Target	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
530	197	226	287
Number of new affordable homes			
	1	20	69

Our current affordable housing targets have become harder to achieve due to the slow down in housing developments as much of our planned delivery was to be through planning obligations on new housing developments, which are now stalling.

We will need to develop more innovative solutions to funding and delivery of affordable homes if we are to meet our targets. By;

- Continuing to maximise the supply via supporting bids to the Homes and Communities Agency through Continuous Market Engagement
- Supporting initiatives to bring unsold market housing into the affordable housing stock where it will meet housing needs.
- Developing new opportunities with our ALMO, RSLs, developers and landlords to deliver affordable homes
- Encouraging the use of the councils own assets, such as land, to support affordable housing delivery.

In response to the changed housing market and identification of further needs in the Housing Needs Survey and GM Strategic Housing Market Assessment, we will need to review our affordable housing targets and delivery mechanisms and also review our Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) within the LDF process.

Making best use of the housing stock

We must develop a wider range of actions that reverse the trend of increased empty homes in certain areas of the borough. As well as addressing the

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environmental impact of empty homes, at a time when demand for social rented homes cannot be satisfied there is a renewed urgency to find alternative ways of re housing families.

Our allocations policy needs to reflect the changes in the housing market and to reflect the needs and aspirations of customers so that it both meets needs and makes best use of the housing stock.

Our research has shown that there are a number of types of empty homes including unsold new build stock, flats above shops and one off individual homes in family ownership, what is less clear are the reasons why some homes remain empty and what assistance owners may need to bring them back into use. We will develop a new Empty Homes Strategy that will develop a range of actions on empty homes, including;

- Improving our intelligence and monitoring of empty homes
- Developing a package of measures that will offer assistance to owners of empty homes to bring them back into use, including a new Empty Homes Improvement Loan and a private sector leasing scheme
- Strengthening the enforcement action against those owners who do not engage voluntarily.

2026 strategic aims and links to other strategies

In response to these challenges we have established a number of strategic aims for the year 2026, as set out in the table below. We will require a range of actions to achieve these strategic aims and they will take a considerable time to achieve.

The first set of high level actions that will contribute to these aims are set out in our Housing Strategy Action Plan 2009-11, this sets out how we will contribute to our strategic aims and the priorities of Sustainable Communities Strategy “Vision 2026” and also the housing targets contained within Wigan’s Local Area Agreement 2008-11.

The full Housing Strategy Action Plan is contained in **Appendix 1**.

In support of the high level actions within this Housing Strategy, we have written a range of supporting housing sub-strategies setting out detailed policy areas and actions such as affordable housing and Older People. Throughout

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the period of the Housing Strategy we will regularly review our sub strategies and will refresh them or where new gaps are identified, add new strategies in order that they align with this strategy.

In addition our actions support a number of other strategies and plans within the Council and with our main partners. We will work closely with our partners to maximise opportunities to contribute to other strategic objectives and initiatives through housing actions.



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Strategic Vision - Wigan is a place with a range of good quality, affordable housing that meets the aspirations of residents and supports sustainable growth.

2026 Strategic Aims

- New housing development is linked to regeneration and growth to support the local economy to enable residents to access services easily and live more sustainably
- There are a sufficient number of homes of the right type and location to meet the needs of the community
- Use of existing homes is maximised, with few empty homes
- New housing development is well designed and safe, it supports active lifestyles and caters for the needs of vulnerable and minority groups
- A range of affordable housing is available to meet the needs of emerging households and growing families.

Objectives 2009 - 11

LAA headline outcome - Increase the overall supply of affordable housing to meet the needs of all our residents and local economy.

- 1 Ensure that the Local Development Framework and housing Supplementary Planning Documents support sustainable housing development
- 2 Work with housing developers and providers to deliver the types of housing needed to meet the needs of the borough
- 3 Work in partnership with developers, Registered Social Landlords and the Homes and Communities Agency to maximise the delivery of affordable housing
- 4 Support developers during the recession to minimise the impact and to prepare for recovery
- 5 Develop a strategy to reduce empty homes in the borough

Housing sub strategies and plans

Affordable Housing Strategy 2006-10
Council Housing Allocations Policy
Older Persons Housing Action Plan 2008-11
Learning Disability Housing Strategy 2009-14
Empty Homes Strategy (draft)

Other local strategies and plans

Local Development Framework Core Strategy Preferred Options (June 09)
Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document
Wigan and Leigh Housing New Build Business Plan
Worklessness Strategy "What Makes Wigan Work" 2008

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You told us

You said you want:

“

“Equality between estates - no pockets of deprivation”

“Safer communities”

“Opportunities to engage - employment, education and training”

“All areas of the borough are attractive places to live”

“Quality design... making people proud of their surroundings”

“Handyman/gardening schemes to keep neighbourhoods looking good”

“Greener homes surrounded by open spaces and countryside would benefit us all within the borough”

“Support for private landlords on right responsibilities and problem solving”

“Expansion of grants and loans to private landlords to improve homes”

”

And we need to take action to:

“

“Change aspirations to move out of the current deprived area by improving the existing stock and the neighbourhoods and investing in schools”

“Addressing problems in neighbourhoods Anti Social Behaviour etc. Ownership of community, young people etc”

“Rejuvenate current housing stock that is in a state of disrepair”

“Improve sustainability... and in particular on no energy/low energy housing”

“Support PACT process - key to neighbourhoods”

“Increase in facelift/block schemes/renewal areas”

”

Source: actual responses to the Housing Strategy Issues Paper consultation.

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Key challenges

Short term challenge - Neighbourhood issues

Long term challenge - Improving the housing offer of neighbourhoods

Improving housing standards

Traditional approaches to improving existing housing have generally concentrated on “bricks and mortar” issues such as minimising unfit and non decent homes. Such approaches in Wigan have proved to be successful and have resulted in huge improvements to the living standards of thousands of residents. The findings of a recent independent study on regional private sector decency published in August 2008 indicate that Wigan’s figures of 21% non decency is only bettered by 2 affluent rural districts in the North West Ribble Valley and Macclesfield, and is well below the regional average of 38%. However, in comparison with others, Wigan has more of a problem within the private rented sector as a proportion of failures against the decency standard.

Figure 9: Sub regional private sector housing standards

	Non decency (% of private stock)
Bolton	34%
Bury	24%
Manchester	34%
Oldham	78%
Rochdale	30%
Salford	35%
Stockport	37%
Tameside	48%
Trafford	51%
Wigan	21%
GM	37%
Region	38%

Source: 4NW Regional Study (August 2008)

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We now have some of the highest housing standards in the country both in the public and private sectors and in future years we need to ensure that decency levels are maintained through:

- Investment in both the social and private sector to maintain standards achieved
- Target additional resources to the areas of most concern, particularly in the private rented sector.

We will review our current Private Sector Housing Strategy to ensure that it tackles the most problematic areas. As a first stage we have made changes to our Housing Assistance Policy, introducing a new range of assistance to:

- Take account of the changes in the housing market,
- Target resources at the most vulnerable occupiers and neighbourhoods
- Achieve better value for money
- Support our new private sector initiatives such as the private sector leasing scheme.

Improving energy efficiency and tackling fuel poverty

Currently over 30% of carbon emissions in the North West are through the domestic sector, whilst adopting high environmental standards in new build properties will go some way to reducing carbon emissions, the largest potential impact can be made through improving the energy performance of the existing stock and developing alternative energy generating technologies. The government has recently published a consultation document on its “Heat and Energy Saving Strategy” setting out proposals for how its target for carbon emissions from existing buildings to be approaching zero by 2050. The strategy recognises that quick gains can be made in the next few years through improving energy efficiency advice services and ensuring that all homes have high levels of loft and cavity wall insulation, where practical, but in the longer term more innovative solutions and greater financial resources will be needed to reduce emissions further.

Currently 8% of homes in the borough have poor insulation values (SAP rating below 40), which is better than the regional average, However, despite relatively good performance we are falling short of our target to reduce the number of homes with poor energy efficiency to 3% by 2010.

Research has indicated that we need to target future activity on:

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- Private rented sector
- Certain property types
- Certain geographical areas
- Older and vulnerable households

Participation in the Greater Manchester Energy Efficiency Advice Centre has seen an increase in take up of assistance for energy efficiency measures and we have now joined the AWARM referral scheme, which allows assessment and referral on fuel poverty issues via a number of agencies including Health Visitors, Social Workers and voluntary agencies working with vulnerable people.

We are developing a multi agency approach to tackling fuel poverty in partnership with the Primary Care Trust, Age Concern, Adult Services, housing providers and other voluntary and community groups. The strategy focuses on the wider impact of fuel poverty such as tackling chronic illness, excess winter deaths, debt and low incomes/ benefit take up.

Addressing fragile neighbourhoods

The recent history of house price increases has tended to mask the existence of under-performing housing markets. Recent evidence has shown a continued divergence between different areas of the borough in terms of popularity and house prices.

We have also found that action to improve the physical standards of properties alone, does not tend to change peoples perception of neighbourhoods or to create sustainable communities. Our future regeneration strategies need to focus on the underlying causes of deprivation, such as poor health and financial exclusion and to encourage residents to be able to have an influence on the future of their community.

Wigan is developing a partnership approach to neighbourhood management and community engagement through the PACT (Partners and Communities Together) process. The process aims to identify local issues through a bottom up approach that will link in to the business planning processes of the council and the LSP.

The community engagement PACT process aims to:

- Increase participation in community and cultural activities
- Reduce crime, anti social behaviour, drug and alcohol related harm

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- Improve cleanliness and greenness
- Improved public confidence and perceptions
- Join up local services

Issues are identified at ward level on a quarterly basis, priorities are then set at a local level through the ten Township Forums and addressed through an action plan agreed with an Area Manager Group, which is a multi-disciplinary group of local managers including housing, police and education. It is hoped that in the future joint accommodation for teams will be made available locally to better facilitate partnership working.

Increasing the quality and environmental performance of new housing development

Research by CABE - Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment in 2005 found that the majority of new housing development in the north west was of poor design. Accessibility of homes will become a pressing issue as the number of older and disabled residents increases, the Regional Spatial Strategy sets the aspirations for driving up the design quality of the housing stock and to support the Lifetimes Homes Standard. We will work with Planners to produce SPDs that focus on quality and accessibility within housing developments and the wider community through:

- Improved transport links for sustainability – internal links and out of borough
- Focus on walking and cycling
- Needs of disabled people in terms of design
- Road safety, noise etc
- Parking provision
- Design codes and master-plans for large scale development
- Inclusive design
- Quality of public realm, focus on mixed uses, safe and vibrant
- Listed buildings
- Conservation areas

The introduction of the Code for Sustainable Homes represents an opportunity to increase environmental performance within the housing stock, with the target of all new homes being “zero carbon” by 2016. The code assesses the

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environmental performance of homes over a range of design principles, such as water use, materials and ecology not just in emissions levels.

Bickershaw South, a development of 650 homes in the borough is due to be developed under the Carbon Challenge initiative run by the HCA (formerly English Partnerships) this development will offer an opportunity to develop expertise in building homes with high environmental performance and developing new environmental technologies. We will support the development of this site and encourage the sharing of good practice with other developers.



Plan: Bickershaw South

Currently, all social rented homes funded via the HCA are to be delivered to the Code Level 3. We will encourage all affordable housing providers to adopt this minimum standard, regardless of whether homes are funded via the HCA and we will encourage higher standards to be adopted where feasible.

Improving standards within the private rented sector

There remain some areas, especially in the older urban cores, where there are

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less housing choices available, areas where too much of the housing is sub standard and in poor environments, where it seems that poorly managed private renting has begun to grow. Sustainable, long term recovery is unlikely in these areas without targeted and sustained intervention.

The role of the private rented sector in meeting housing needs has become more important as affordability issues have increased with the resultant pressure on the housing register and social stock. Despite the size of the private rented sector in Wigan being relatively small in comparison to other areas of Greater Manchester, we have seen a rapid increase in activity in this sector, partly as a result of the recent buy to let boom and an increase in amateur landlords.

We need to make use of the potential of this sector to meet housing needs, particularly to support economic mobility within the borough, and to house those in need but with insufficient priority for re housing from the housing register and thus preventing homelessness. The private rented sector is often seen as the least secure form of accommodation, therefore, we need to prevent the loss of private rented accommodation and improve its image. However, as well as potential benefits, the private rented sector can create additional problems that need to be tackled. Investment in buy to let property has resulted in a number of areas where there are concentrations of properties bought by investors, often with a number of properties standing empty and also areas with a proliferation of inexperienced landlords with one or two properties. This can contribute in complaints regarding empty homes, poor environmental standards and anti social behaviour.

We intend to work with private landlords to improve the standard and accessibility of the private rented sector in the borough through:

- Offering more support to landlords to become accredited
- Developing new housing management and private sector leasing schemes
- Linking our Empty Homes Improvement Loan into the private sector leasing scheme.
- Consider selective licensing of the private rented sector in certain localities.

2026 strategic aims and links to other strategies

In response to these challenges we have established the following strategic aims that will contribute to achieving the Vision 2026.

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Strategic Vision - All areas of the borough are attractive places to live with neighbourhoods that are safe, clean and inclusive.

2026 Strategic Aims

- Greater integration between housing and wider regeneration strategies to improve neighbourhoods and address deprivation.
- Neighbourhoods are safe and clean with a high standard of housing management.
- Residents feel that their concerns are addressed locally through targeted activity to strengthen vulnerable areas.
- Homes are safe and healthy and are easily adapted to the needs of the elderly and disabled.
- High standards of decency and energy efficiency are achieved and maintained across all tenures.

Objectives 2009 - 11

LAA headline outcome - To strengthen our weaker housing markets by increasing the choice and quality of the housing on offer in these localities.

- 6 Ensure high standards of design and environmental performance in new developments and regeneration schemes.
- 7 Target action in Housing Renewal Areas linked to wider regeneration strategies.
- 8 Continue investment in social rented stock to maintain decency standards.
- 9 Develop a range of services and support for private sector landlords.
- 10 Support the development of a multi agency Affordable Warmth Strategy.
- 11 Support the development of the PACT neighbourhood management approach to tackling local issues.
- 12 Improve decency, accessibility and safety in the home for elderly, disabled and other vulnerable residents.

Housing sub strategies and plans

Private Sector Housing Strategy 2006-10

Empty Homes Strategy (draft)

Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

Disabled Facilities Grant Policy

Older Persons Housing Action Plan 2008-10

Private Sector Housing Assistance policy

Homelessness Strategy "A Place for All" 2008-13

Learning Disability Housing Strategy 2009-14

Other local strategies and plans

Wigan and Leigh Housing Business Plan

Wigan Housing Solutions Business Plan

Wigan Borough's Affordable Warmth Strategy (draft)

Community Engagement Strategy

"Routes to Involvement".

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You told us

You said you want:

“High quality of support services to ensure people can remain in their own homes”

“BME Communities totally integrated as a result of better support services, a revised infrastructure resulting in more cultural awareness and increased access to ESOL classes”

“Support & advice for people without apparent vulnerability especially in current economic downturn - a little bit of help”

“For everyone to have the resources (skills, money, confidence) to be able to live independently and securely”

“Better help looking for a place to live”

“Homelessness prevention linked to school and PSHE & C classes”

“Education of 16-18 year old on housing and financial responsibilities”

“An allocations policy that is sensitive to promote mixed communities not inequality”

And we need to take action to:

“Link quantity and quality to the broader needs of vulnerable people (including the very many young people who are struggling to live independently)”

“Develop family support services in order to prevent homelessness”

“Focus on tenancy management of young tenants with appropriate support to enable a sustainable tenancy to be achieved”

“Encourage people to find work so that they can get nice homes”

“Take on board the needs of disabled people. It is not just people in a wheelchair or people with learning disabilities but people who are blind or partially sighted; deaf and hard of hearing etc”

“Provide more homes and hostel for homeless people”

“Raise awareness of cultural differences to enable people to get on with each other”

Source: actual responses to the Housing Strategy Issues Paper consultation.

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Key challenges

Short term challenge - Homelessness/support needs

Long term challenge - Meeting the long term needs of specific groups, especially older people

Access and choice

Efforts made to increase the quantity and quality of our housing stock will not be realised if people still struggle to access better homes or to maintain independent living. Giving customers the information and support that they need to make choices regarding the most appropriate housing option for them is essential to address housing need most effectively. In the current climate customers need to be realistic about their housing options. As well as housing, customers should be able to easily access information on financial support available, employment opportunities, availability of local schools etc in order that they are fully informed before making a decision to move or resolve problems in their current home.

In order to support this agenda we have begun to undertake a full review of our allocations scheme in order to:

- Support choice and mobility, particularly through the sub regional choice based lettings scheme, Pinpoint.
- Better meet housing need.
- Maximise the use of the housing stock, eg. tackling overcrowding and under-occupation.
- Reviewing move on protocols and needs assessments for supported housing schemes.
- Supporting the development of our housing options approach.

Specialist housing and support

Since the introduction of the Supporting People programme in 2003 there has been increasing needs for housing related support services and pressures on

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funding of services due to a curtailed budget. The Supporting People service was inspected by the Audit Commission in 2007 and since then there has been a recognition of the need to transform housing related support in the borough, resulting in an increase in funding in the period 2008-11. The three main issues to be addressed are:

- Under developed short term services, addressing the needs of socially excluded groups including, homeless people, people with drugs/alcohol/mental health issues, young people and offenders.
- Over commitment in long term services which are jointly funded, providing support combined with care. The Wigan Supporting People program currently dedicates 43% of the annual spend in this area.
- An outdated model of older people services, based on vertical model of delivery that depends on location based staff, often one person, delivering services across a range of issues.

The new Supporting People Commissioning Framework seeks a move away from long term support services to greater investment in short term services, focusing on excluded groups, such as homeless people and those with complex needs. A transformation of services for older people is proposed from a “vertical” service tied to tenancies within the social sector to a “horizontal” service that is able to address low level needs across all tenures. Services will be needs led, offer choice and flexibility and achieve greater outcomes in terms of promoting independence.

The funding for services is to increase in the period 2008 -11 and the following levels are proposed.

Figure 10: Supporting people funding levels

Spend levels	2003/04		2007/08		2010/11	
	£m	%	£m	%	£m	%
Service areas						
Long term services	£3.44	46%	£3.17	43%	£2.63	27.5%
Short term services	£2.62	35%	£2.87	39%	£4.78	50%
Older people’s services	£1.42	19%	£1.62	22%	£2.15	22.5%
Total	£7.48	100%	£7.36	104%	£9.55	100%

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We need to ensure that the actions within the Housing Strategy support the Supporting People Commissioning Framework through:

- Ensuring that capital investment in accommodation supports the strategic commissioning of Supporting People services
- Working with housing providers to transform their services in line with the commissioning strategy.
- Working in partnership with colleagues in health and social care to meet a range of needs presented by vulnerable groups, such as those with disabilities, with a focus on individualisation and choice.
- Meeting the expectations of the next generation of older people by offering more choice of quality accommodation with flexible support services. Also increasing the advice and preventative services available for older people.

Prevention of homelessness

Wigan has high incidence of homelessness and despite limited funding has made good progress in reducing the numbers of presentations, these are now at a ten year low, however, the pressure on services is likely to increase in the current economic climate.

Our recent Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 recognises that homelessness is often a symptom of other problems, such as unemployment, ill health, substance dependency or multiple debt, rather than a problem in itself. Those experiencing homelessness often have developed a range of issues over a long period of time and that as well as housing these complex issues need to be addressed to improve people's ability to cope with everyday living and to avoid further crises. Its vision is:

“To prevent homelessness by tackling the main causes within the borough and to minimise the impact of its effects.”

More specifically it seeks to:

- Minimise the numbers of people that become homeless and those that sleep rough
- Reduce the need for temporary accommodation
- Ensure that where the use of temporary accommodation is unavoidable, the accommodation and support is of good quality and suitable for people's needs

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- Ensure that when people are ready to move on, they are able to do so in a timely manner and with support to prevent them becoming homeless again

Early intervention is key to preventing homelessness before crisis point is reached, which can only be achieved through a partnership approach.

Addressing worklessness in deprived communities and vulnerable groups

The economic downturn has been seen to impact in the borough in a number of ways, including its effect on local businesses and in increased benefit claimants. The borough has seen an annual increase in the Job Seekers Allowance claimants of 70% between January 08 and January 09, this is substantially higher than the regional average. There are now 12.5 job seekers for every vacancy advertised in the Job Centre Plus, compared to 4 per vacancy a year ago.

Wigan has produced a Worklessness Strategy to address the issues of lack of vacancies and poor skills base and to promote the start up of new businesses. The strategy is currently being reviewed to also focus on safeguarding jobs and offering support to local businesses during the recession.

The strategy is supported by funding over 3 years from the Working Neighbourhoods Fund to begin to tackle some of the issues around intergenerational worklessness, multiple deprivation and low aspirations seen in some areas of the borough. Initiatives are planned at a local level and through a multi-agency approach to identify and support the workless to train and access employment. We will develop links with this strategy through;

- The work of housing and support providers are already working in these communities and with target groups such as BME groups, ex offenders and young people
- Developing schemes that link housing, training and employment opportunities
- Developing advice services that offer joined up advice on housing, finance and employment.

2026 strategic aims and links to other strategies

In response to these challenges we have established the following strategic aims that will contribute to achieving the Vision 2026.

The full Housing Strategy Action plan is contained in Appendix 1.

5 Theme 3 - People

Theme 3 - People

Strategic Vision - People are healthy and active and receive the support they need.

2026 Strategic Aims

- Residents are able to make better choices about where they live and work through a holistic approach to advice and information services that help tackle deprivation.
- People of all ages, cultures and lifestyles feel part of the community and vulnerable people and minority groups are supported.
- A choice of specialist housing and support is available to meet the needs of the elderly, disabled and other vulnerable people in order that they can live more independently.
- Agencies work together to provide advice and support to tackle the underlying causes of homelessness.

Objectives 2009 - 11

LAA headline outcome - To better meet the needs of vulnerable and homeless people by investing in better prevention and support services.

- 13** Support the implementation of the Supporting People Commissioning Framework and ensure that capital investment supports its priorities.
- 14** Develop new housing and support models for vulnerable groups.
- 15** Improve housing options, advice and information.
- 16** Support the development of a holistic advice network for the borough.
- 17** Target intervention with those most at risk of homelessness.
- 18** Work to minimise the impact of the recession, particularly on repossessions and homelessness.

Housing sub strategies and plans

Homelessness Strategy "A Place for All" 2008-13

Learning Disability Housing Strategy 2009-14

Older Persons Housing Study 2005 and Action Plan 2008-10

Supporting People Strategy 2005-10

Supporting People Commissioning Framework 2008-11

WARM "Wigan Welcomes Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrants" 2009

Other local strategies and plans

Worklessness Strategy "What Makes Wigan Work" 2008

SHAPE Getting Wigan Borough Active Strategy 2006-12

Adult Services Commissioning Plan (Wigan Council/PCT)

Wigan Advice Strategy (proposed)

Children's Plan

6 Measuring the Impact

It is essential that in assessing the impact of our interventions we don't just count the amount of housing built or the number of homeless cases, but demonstrate the contribution made over a wide range of areas that make a real difference to the places where people live and the lives they lead.

The Housing Strategy provides a housing linkage to the wider aim of realising the Vision 2026 in supporting economic growth and tackling deprivation and at the same time our action plan sets out housing's contribution to the shorter term Local Area Agreement 2008-11. Therefore, we provide both a longer term vision of housing's contribution to the borough wide Sustainable Communities Strategy and yet set out realistic steps in the next few years aimed at achieving this. The Housing Strategy and the actions within the Action Plan are supported by a range of more detailed sub strategies and policy documents.

To support this corporate approach a new performance framework has been introduced for the Council and our key partners. The focus of the framework is the "place making" role of local authorities as demonstrated in Vision 2026. The framework gives us more freedom to agree key targets that reflect local priorities through the Local Area Agreement.

Local and sub-regional monitoring structure

The Wigan Borough Partnership leads on the delivery of the wider Sustainable Communities Strategy and Local Area Agreement 2008-11. It is led by the Partnership Board who are leaders drawn from a range of local organisations. It is supported by:

- Four Delivery Partnerships
- Township Forums
- Neighbourhood PACTs
- Community Networks

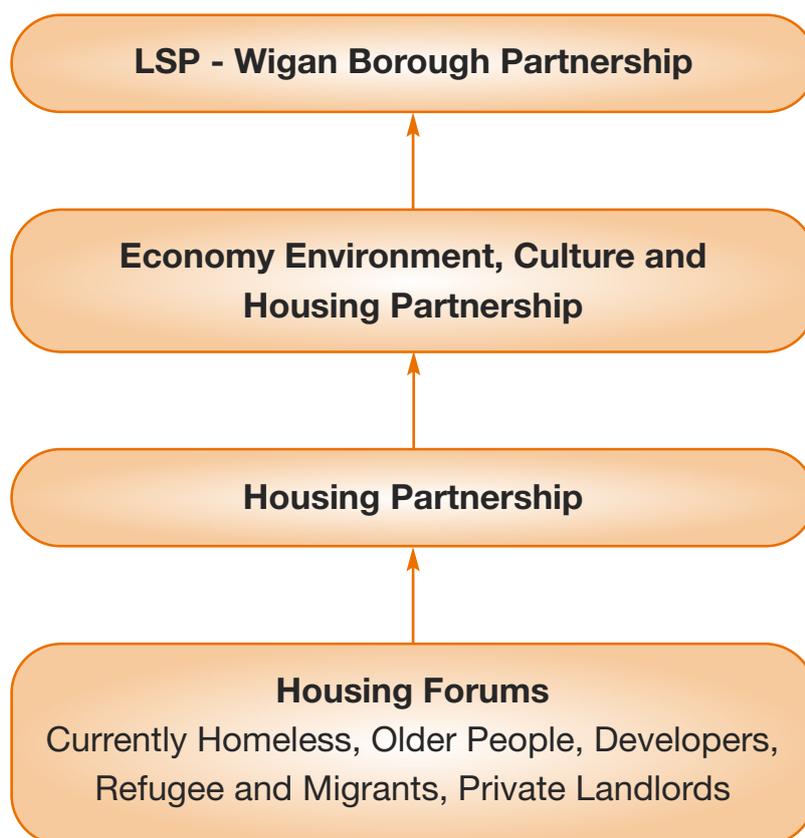
Our Housing Partnership has been in existence for a decade and has monitored progress against our previous Housing Strategy and one of the previous goals of the old Community Plan. As part of the need to integrate strategies and work more effectively together this Partnership now contributes to the wider Economy, Environment, Culture and Housing (EECH) Delivery Partnership concentrating on delivering the 2026 priority of Ambitious Communities. Thus housing will work more closely with economic, transport and environmental services as part of a wider approach to creating sustainable communities.

6 Measuring the Impact

The Economy, Environment, Culture and Housing Partnership will have a role in monitoring and updating this strategy and action plan and also ensuring that it is integrated with other strategies eg. worklessness, transport and the Local Development Framework. It will also have a more ambitious role in terms of commissioning services to support its aims.

We will of course continue to have links with other Delivery Partnerships in delivering other priorities most notably the Living Healthier and Longer block. The relationship between the various Partnerships set out below, which also includes the forums which develop and monitor the more operational housing sub strategies.

Figure 11: Wigan Partnership Structure



As the role of the sub-region develops, it will play an increasing role in setting priorities for Greater Manchester, it is expected that it will include high level monitoring of the contributions made at a local level to the priorities.

6 Measuring the Impact

Performance Indicators

We have selected a range of indicators to measure our performance against the actions set in the Housing Strategy Action Plan. These indicators will also measure our performance against the National Indicators (NIs) and local indicators set in the Local Area Agreement 2008-11 and against the Regional Strategic Housing Indicators (SHIs) set in the North West Regional Housing Strategy 2009. We will review these indicators at the end of the current LAA period to ensure that our indicators align with the wider corporate aims and national priorities.

Figure 12: Housing Strategy Performance Indicators

Quantity

Quantity - High Level Performance Indicator

Number of net homes provided (NI154) (SHI1)

Supporting Indicators

- Number of affordable homes delivered (NI155) (SHI2)
- Number of additional affordable lettings (LAA local)
- Percentage of private sector homes empty for more than 6 months (SHI6)
- Number of empty homes returned to use or demolished with Local Authority advice or action (LAA local)
- Percentage of homes built on previously developed land (RSS target)

Quality

Quality - High Level Performance Indicator

Percentage of non decent Council homes (NI158) (SHI3)

Supporting Indicators

- Local Authority tenant satisfaction with landlord services (NI160)
- Number of non decent homes belonging to vulnerable owner occupiers made decent (LAA local)
- Percentage of private sector stock having Cat1 hazard under HHSRS (SHI4)
- Average SAP rating of private sector housing (SHI5)
- Percentage of households on income related benefits in fuel poverty (NI187)

continued...

6 Measuring the Impact

People

People - High Level Performance Indicator

Number of households living in temporary accommodation (NI156) (SHI8)

Supporting Indicators

- Percentage of households whose homelessness is prevented or relieved through positive action (LAA local)
- Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living (NI141)
- Number of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living (NI142)
- Net additional housing support services provided (SHI7)
- Percentage of social tenants of working age in work, education or training (SHI9)

We will also measure performance through achieving significant milestones and through evidence of achievement highlighted through periodic research such as stock condition surveys and Strategic Housing Market Assessments. The impact of our actions in addressing inequality, health and sustainability will also be assessed.

As well as the indicators measuring our outcomes directly, we will contribute to a wide range of priorities within the LAA 2008-11 and Sustainable Communities Strategy Vision 2026.

Figure 13: Other LAA indicators that we can contribute to that we will not measure directly

LAA 2008-11 indicator	How housing actions contribute
Vision 2026 Theme - Ambitious Communities	
<p>NI167 - congestion - average journey time per mile during the morning.</p> <p>NI175 - % people who have access to services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling.</p> <p>NI198 - children travelling to school, usual mode of transport.</p>	<p>By planning new housing development in sustainable locations, ensuring accessible design of new housing developments and regeneration schemes to cater for the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. Ensuring that new developments incorporate adequate provision of local services and employment opportunities for residents.</p>

6 Measuring the Impact

LAA 2008-11 indicator	How housing actions contribute
Vision 2026 Theme - Ambitious Communities	
<p>NI153 - working age people claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods.</p> <p>NI163 - % of working age population qualified to at least Level 2.</p> <p>NI164 - % of working age population qualified to at least Level 3.</p>	<p>By housing providers working with partners to support residents into training and employment.</p> <p>By linking supported housing schemes to training and employment.</p> <p>By supporting local construction firms and workforce.</p>
<p>NI117 - % of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, training or employment.</p>	<p>By linking supported housing schemes with training and employment.</p> <p>By increasing the number of apprenticeships available with the council and housing providers.</p> <p>By providing advice and support to young people.</p>
<p>NI188 - Planning to adapt to climate change.</p>	<p>By increasing energy efficiency measures in existing homes across all tenures.</p> <p>By encouraging house builders to adopt Code for Sustainable Homes in new build homes, in terms of energy use and generation, sustainable use of materials and water usage etc.</p>
Vision 2026 Theme - Strong Community	
<p>NI1 - % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well in their local area.</p>	<p>By ensuring that vulnerable people are supported in the community.</p> <p>By ensuring that a variety of homes are available to meet the needs of all residents, including minority groups.</p> <p>By tackling the causes of homelessness</p> <p>By supporting the actions contained in the WARM strategy</p>

6 Measuring the Impact

LAA 2008-11 indicator	How housing actions contribute
Vision 2026 Theme - Strong Community	
<p>NI4 - % of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality.</p>	<p>By consulting and seeking customer feedback on ours and our partners actions. By responding to the concerns of local residents in service planning.</p>
<p>NI195 – Improved street and environmental cleanliness.</p>	<p>By adopting high environmental standards on council estates and taking action in the private sector, particularly private rented homes.</p>
<p>NI32 – Reduction in repeat incidents of domestic violence to those victims who are being managed by a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference system (MARAC)</p>	<p>By ensuring specialist supported housing schemes are made available. By providing specialist support for victims in their own homes. By housing providers working with other partners to support victims and their families.</p>
<p>NI21 - Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by local council and police.</p>	<p>By taking tenancy enforcement actions against perpetrators of crime and anti social behaviour on estates. By working with partners to tackle local nuisance and crime. By adopting “secure by design” standards in new housing development and regeneration schemes.</p>
Vision 2026 Theme - Living Healthier and Longer	
<p>NI120 – All age, all cause mortality rate NI124 – % of people with a long term condition who are supported by people providing health and social care services to be independent and in control of their condition.</p>	<p>By ensuring that homes are decent and safe and can be adapted easily. Developing more care and support options for vulnerable people. By ensuring that new housing development and regeneration schemes encourage a healthy and active lifestyle.</p>

6 Measuring the Impact

LAA 2008-11 indicator	How housing actions contribute
Vision 2026 Theme - Living Healthier and Longer	
NI138 - Satisfaction of people over 65 with home and neighbourhood.	<p>By providing services that enable older people to continue living independently in their own home.</p> <p>By providing more choice of specialist accommodation for older people.</p> <p>By working with other agencies to ensure older people are able to access advice and information.</p>
NI7 - Environment for a thriving third sector	By working with third sector organisations to provide advice, support and training.
Vision 2026 Theme - Realising Aspirations	
NI112 - Under 18s conception rate.	By providing advice and support to young people including existing teen parents.
Mandatory education and early years National Indicators.	<p>By tackling overcrowding.</p> <p>By preventing homelessness amongst families and young people.</p> <p>By ensuring that homes are decent and safe.</p> <p>By providing support and mediation services to families and young people.</p>

Measuring our impact via the Comprehensive Area Assessment

A new inspection process has been introduced from this year. The Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) is an assessment of how well the Council and its partners deliver services that meet local needs.

The assessment is undertaken in a series of stages on an annual cycle and asks three key questions;

1 How well do local priorities express need and aspirations?

We will answer this by;

6 Measuring the Impact

- Consulting widely during the formation of our strategies and plans.
- Undertaking periodic needs assessments and studies.
- Developing a robust data set, tracking key trends, both across the borough and within the sub region and region.
- Regularly reviewing the Housing Strategy and Action Plan with reference to the Sustainable Communities Strategy, the LAA and the Sub Regional Housing Strategy.
- Undertaking equality, health and sustainability impact assessments of the Housing Strategy and Action Plan.

2 How well are outcomes and improvements being delivered?

We will answer this by;

- Monitoring the corporate housing priorities within the LAA.
- Annual evaluation of our progress against our 2026 priorities.
- Conducting customer feedback and satisfaction exercises .
- Producing regular reports /newsletters setting out good practice and case studies.
- Considering value for money and efficiency of services.

3 What are the prospects for improvement?

We will answer this by;

- Demonstrating a track record of setting and meeting challenging targets.
- Building on the wealth of skills, expertise and good practice already existing within our local partnerships.
- Contributing to the many examples of good practice frameworks.
- Joint working with other Councils/Partnerships on specific projects, where appropriate.
- Contributing to the development of the Greater Manchester Sub Regional Strategies and the various Regeneration Commissions.
- Co-operating and contributing to the new capital allocations monitoring framework developed by the Regional Housing Board.
- Engaging with the various regeneration agencies such as the new Homes and Communities Agency.

6 Measuring the Impact

- Reviewing the structure of the Housing Partnership and sub Groups in order to develop better relationships within the different partnerships with the LSP to ensure maximum impact

Conclusion

This strategy clearly sets out our long term aims in achieving our Housing Vision 2026 and what our first steps will be in the period up to 2011. We will continue to monitor the delivery of the actions set out in the action plan (appendix 1) to ensure that we are able to respond to changing needs and that we maximise our contribution to the creation of sustainable communities across the borough.

