



Vision 2026 Housing Strategy Action Plan 2011-13

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Wigan Housing Strategy Vision 2026. It sets out progress against the strategy achieved since its adoption in 2009 as well as setting new objectives and actions for the next two years in order to move closer to our long term vision and aims.

2 Housing Strategy Vision 2026

- 2.1 “Wigan is a place with a range of good quality, affordable housing that meets the aspirations of residents and supports sustainable growth. All areas of the borough are attractive places to live with neighbourhoods that are safe, clean and inclusive. People are healthy and active and receive the support they need. “

3 2026 Strategic Aims

3.1 Theme 1 – Quantity

- 3.1.1 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
- 3.1.2 There are a sufficient number of homes of the right type and location to meet needs of the community
- 3.1.3 Use of existing homes is maximised, with few empty homes
- 3.1.4 New housing development is well designed and safe, it supports active lifestyles and caters for the needs of vulnerable and minority groups
- 3.1.5 A range of affordable housing is available to meet the needs of emerging households and growing families

3.2 Theme 2 – Quality

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

3.3 Theme 3 - People

- 3.3.1 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.
- 3.3.2 People of all ages, cultures and lifestyles feel part of the community and vulnerable people and minority groups are supported
- 3.3.3 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
- 3.3.4 Agencies work together to provide advice and support to tackle the underlying causes of homelessness.

4 Progress on Outcomes for 2009 -11

4.1 Theme 1 – Quantity

- 4.1.1 **To meet the RSS target for housing delivery in the borough** - Since the Regional Spatial Strategy was adopted, the economic context has changed considerably and so far there has been no recovery in the housing market. As a result there has been major reductions in new build activity across the NW region , Greater Manchester and locally in Wigan. Current rates for 2010/11 are forecast to be in the region of 400 and not surprisingly we have not achieved the average of 978 units per annum needed to meet the RSS target of 17,600 homes by 2021. The coalition government is intending to abolish the Regional Spatial Strategy and the house building targets under the Localism Bill and require Local Authorities to set their own housing targets. Wigan is proposing to introduce an annual target of 1,000 homes up to 2026 through the Local Development Framework, as we anticipate that demographic pressures will in the longer term will necessitate housing growth.
- 4.1.2 **To continue to meet the target for 80% of new homes to be built on previously developed land** Development in the borough has tended to be on brownfield sites and this target has been exceeded. From the information on land availability in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, we anticipate this to continue.
- 4.1.3 **To deliver an additional 530 additional affordable homes (cumulative by 2010/11)** – Since the introduction of the Affordable Housing Strategy in 2006, we anticipate that delivery by end of 2010/11 will be 641 additional lettings. Of the 262 new affordable homes delivered between 2006 and 2011, 180 units were social rent via Wigan Council, Wigan and Leigh Housing or a housing associations. 82 homes were low cost home ownership, either shared ownership, shared equity or discounted sale. The balance being bringing homes back into use and securing access into the private rented sector.
- 4.1.4 **To have brought 8684 empty homes back into use** – 5,740 brought back into use as at 31st December 2010. This figure is lower than hoped due to a slow start in 2009/10, but targets were met in 2010/11. Critically this activity has helped to reduce the average number of long term empty homes in the borough over this period by 14%.
- 4.1.5 **All affordable homes are built to a minimum standard of Code For Sustainable Homes Level 3 regardless of how they are provided/ funded** - Steady progress has been made in increasing the sustainability of affordable homes. In 2009/10 38% of new provision was built to CSH Level 3, in 2010/11 this has risen to 71%. 80% of homes currently under construction and due during 2011/12 will achieve CSH level 3. The most common reason for non compliance is that homes have been acquired from market housing schemes, e.g. Homebuy direct, that have not been built to CSH standards.
- 4.1.6 **Maintain a sufficient housing land supply to meet the borough's RSS residual housing targets within the plan period** – The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment indicated that there is a sufficient supply of housing land across the borough.

4.2 Theme 2 – Quality

- 4.2.1 **To have 50 landlords accredited under the new Landlords Accreditation Scheme by 2011 –** The number of accredited landlords is low and below our original target (22 with a further 54 pending). This is partly due to landlord reluctance and due to changes in our arrangements to comply with the new AGMA wide scheme. However this presents a false picture of progress in this area as we are now in regular contact with 533 Landlords and Letting Agents, communicating regularly with 410 landlords via our bi weekly email advice bulletin and monthly “Ask the Expert” column. We also produce a newsletter and the Landlord Forum was launched in September 2010 with 59 Landlords attending and over 90 attending the March meeting. A group of Landlords have volunteered to help us with developing new initiatives, an example of this is involving landlords in developing HB payment direct through welcome credit union.

This regular contact has helped us develop some very good relationships with landlords who are helping meet specialist housing needs. At the request of the Housing Strategy Team, landlords have bought / refurbished or built bungalows for people with disabilities where there is an acute shortage. In addition to individual properties, we are working to develop a group of 8 properties for people with autism (which is expected to bring about significant savings in care costs) and a block of apartments for women fleeing domestic abuse.

- 4.2.2 **To have 150 private rented properties managed or leased through Wigan Housing Solutions by 2011** Wigan Housing Solutions currently manage or lease 78 properties but also manage more clients through the Bond scheme than forecast. Their services were slow to start but are now progressing well with the innovative leasing scheme providing a good variety of property types and locations.

We have limited our marketing activity for the leasing scheme as long-term staff vacancies has meant that we have limited capacity to inspect properties offered by landlords, nevertheless there is currently significant interest in the scheme. Restructure is planned to take place in the Private Sector Housing Team early June 2011, after which we aim to significantly increase the rate new properties are leased.

Housing Benefit caps on local authority lease schemes mean that we are only able to take on properties at the cheaper end of the rental market. During 2010/11, we have helped set up 4 new non-registered Housing Associations who do not have such restrictions and as such are able to meet specialist housing need, including: people with disabilities, older people, young people with high support needs, people recovering from substance misuse problems.

- 4.2.3 **To have improved 460 homes in housing renewal areas –** 252 homes improved as at 31st December 2010. The shortfall has been due to reductions in Government resources for these renewal works.
- 4.2.4 **To have carried out adaptations to 3600 homes occupied by elderly and disabled residents –** Between April and December 2010, 486 adaptations were undertaken in private sector homes and 3,138 adaptations to council properties (all jobs). Note, this does not include properties bought / adapted or built by private landlords to meet specialist need as described above.
- 4.2.5 **A multi agency Affordable Warmth Strategy is in place by 2010 –** The strategy is now in place

4.3 Theme 3 - People

- 4.3.1 **To end the use of B&B accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds and, for all other groups, in all but exceptional circumstances, and even then for no longer than 6 weeks (by 31st December 2010).** Target achieved: In 2005/6 expenditure on B&B for homeless households was £183k; in 2010/11 expenditure was £3k. This has been achieved through a spend to save policy on homelessness prevention service which, in addition to saving money, has resulted in minimising homelessness and its effects on households (further details below)

4.3.2 **To meet the Government/ LAA target on use of temporary accommodation (by 31st December 2010).** Target achieved: Government set Wigan a very challenging target of just 19 households in temporary accommodation. We met the December target and have further reduced the number in temporary accommodation to 15 at the 31st March 2011 representing a 75% reduction over the last 2 years. This has been achieved by changing the focus of homelessness services from that of assessing the duty owed by the Council to those who are homeless to a more encompassing homelessness prevention approach. Homelessness acceptances peaked in 2005/6 at 1445 households, compared to just 223 in 2010/11. Homeless preventions each year have increased from virtually zero to 1120 over the same period. This is despite us now being in far more challenging times, which is reflected in the current pressure on services.

The achievement of this target has enabled us to redirect resources which should help further minimise homelessness: from July 2011, the Council's Homeless Person's unit at Platt Bridge will cease to be used for this purpose and instead be used to provide supported accommodation linked to training and employment for young people (who would otherwise be at risk of homelessness), i.e. an extension of the service provided at Coops Foyer.

4.3.3 **Transformation of housing and support services for older people has been completed –** Following the strategic review of sheltered accommodation, a new model of service is being implemented by March 2011 across all schemes and for older people in the wider community. A new Foundation Level Support Service Specification has been introduced for all sheltered accommodation providers. In addition, a new Enhanced Level Support Service Specification has been introduced and a new contract issued to a new support provider from January 2011. There has also been additional capacity for community alarms and assistive technology introduced plus other pilot projects around health and wellbeing.

4.3.4 **A borough wide advice strategy has been developed that adopts a holistic approach to advice** Whilst Housing Strategy play its part in this Corporate objective, progress on this has been delayed but the project groups have recently been re-established and progress is likely in 2011.

As mentioned above, significant effort has been put into homelessness prevention, housing advice and increasing the range of housing options available. This includes:

- Homelessness assessment service provided by Wigan & Leigh Housing has been refocused to prevent homelessness and is backed by a Homelessness Prevention fund.
- Court Desk: A duty advice worker is available at the County Court every day housing possession cases are heard. Despite the current economic climate, mortgage possessions have reduced by 3% over 2010/11. Whilst landlord possession claims and orders made have increased over 2010/11, the numbers per 1000 households are significantly lower than sub regional, regional and the national statistics. There will be a focus on earlier intervention looking to prevent possession claims reaching the courts. This will supplement the positive prevention work that has reduced the proportion of possession orders being made when a possession claim has been made over the recent years.
- Repossessions Advisor: The sooner debt problems are dealt with, the easier it is to prevent homelessness; on this basis this post was established in Sep 2010 to pro-actively target those who fit the profile of being most likely fall into arrears with their mortgage or rent, e.g. those with multiple debts, those facing redundancy, those who bought at the peak of the housing market.
- Local Housing allowance Liaison Officer: dedicated point of contact for landlords, providing support and advice.
- Housing Brokerage Service: 2yr funded project to improve choice and control people with learning disabilities have over where and how they lived. Over last 2 yrs, supported around 100 individuals to resolve their own housing problems, including helping 20 people with learning disabilities choose and buy their own home. Funding secured for a further 2 years from NHS NW and remit expanded to include people with physical disabilities and those recovering from mental health problems.

5 Resourcing the strategy

Update of all figures required

envisage different types of development to take place across the borough and how development will aim to address the main issues affecting the borough such as multiple deprivation, congestion and improving the environment. It will include a core housing policy that will set out the main principles for housing development across the borough.

6.2 Theme 2 – Quality

- 6.2.1 **HRA reform-** The government has recently announced proposals for the reform of the national Housing Revenue Account subsidy system, intending to give local authorities the opportunity to become self financing and have greater freedom over the use of its housing revenue funding in terms of future of council stock management, maintenance and new development.
- 6.2.3 **Increase in private rented sector homes** – There has been a substantial increase in the numbers of private rented homes in the borough over the last couple of years, this offers new opportunities to meet housing needs through this tenure and to work with landlords to increase the quality of management and improve property standards within the private rented sector. We have introduced a range of new initiatives and will continue to expand the range of services and support available to local private landlords.
- 6.2.4 **Reductions to housing capital programme** – The recent Comprehensive Spending Review has resulted in cuts to Local Authorities capital budgets, including the ending of housing renewal grant funding. As a result we need to reassess and prioritise our private sector housing programme and consider generating alternative sources of funding.
- 6.2.5 **Low carbon agenda** – There are new opportunities within the public and private sector to reduce carbon emissions through retro fitting, renewable technologies and green deal schemes.

6.3 Theme 3 – People

- 6.3.1 **Welfare reform** – Radical changes to the welfare system are currently underway nationally, changes to Local Housing Allowance have already begun and further changes to Housing Benefit, pensions, disability benefits and out of work benefits are proposed. There are concerns regarding the likely impact of the changes on the local population in terms of increased debt, homelessness and deprivation.
- 6.3.2 **Strategic Tenure Policy** – Within the Localism Bill, Local Authorities will be required to produce a new tenure policy by April 2012 setting out local policies relating to proposals for flexible tenure, affordable rent homes, housing options and allocations within the social sector.
- 6.3.3 **Efficiencies and reductions in funding to advice and support services** - At a time when demand for support services is likely to increase, there are cuts being made to budgets at both a national and local level that mean that services are being asked to do more with less, to seek new funding sources and make more use of volunteers to deliver services.
- 6.3.4 **Joint services resources** – As efficiency savings take effect it will become increasingly important that we work with our partners to make best use of the resources through sharing and reducing duplication where possible.
- 6.3.5 **Health and social care reform** - Proposed changes to the way health and social care services are commissioned, including GP led commissioning and the new Health and Wellbeing Boards will lead to greater local flexibilities in how resources are allocated. Pressures on budgets due to forecast increases in need in coming years will mean new models for housing related support and specialist housing for older people and other vulnerable groups are likely to be developed to meet needs.
- 6.3.6 **Changes to homelessness duties** – The government's proposed changes to housing policy also include changes to the way in which the Local Authority is able to discharge its homeless duties by offering a tenancy within the private rented sector. This will mean potential changes to our homelessness procedures and increase the need to work closely with private landlords and support

providers to ensure any tenancies offered are sustainable.

- 6.3.7 **The Equality Act 2010** – New duties are coming into force regarding the duties of the Local Authorities and organisations providing services on our behalf with regards to promoting equality and ensuring that services and policies meet the needs of communities.

7 Strategic Objectives 2011 - 13

7.1 Theme 1 – Quantity

- 7.1.1 Integrate housing development with our wider regeneration strategy and spatial priorities.
- 7.1.2 Develop an investment strategy based on maximizing new funding opportunities.
- 7.1.3 Explore new models of financing housing delivery, both through the public and private sector, that may boost and sustain housing supply in the borough.
- 7.1.4 Review our approach to securing affordable housing provision on private developments via planning policy requirements in view of the recent Viability Study and emerging planning policy/ guidance.
- 7.1.5 Review the role of the Council and ALMO in developing housing, particularly in the context of the HRA review and other funding announcements.
- 7.1.6 Develop support for the use of the existing stock across all tenures to meet housing needs, including empty homes and the private rented sector.

7.2 Theme 2 – Quality

- 7.2.1 Increase the supply of good quality private rented accommodation.
- 7.2.2 Tackle re-emerging pockets of decline in poorer neighbourhoods.
- 7.2.3 Explore funding opportunities for retrofitting older housing, in both the public and private sector, to become more sustainable.
- 7.2.4 Develop a performance management framework for social housing.

7.3 Theme 3 – People

- 7.3.1 To develop an enhanced housing options approach based on a better understanding of residents needs in terms of affordability, tenure and incomes and developing new housing options that meet needs, particularly in the context of the ageing of the boroughs population.
- 7.3.2 To develop a strategy setting out our approach to developing new specialist and extra care housing for older people within the wider context of care provision for older people.
- 7.3.3 Develop a strategic tenure policy setting out our approach to the new flexibilities proposed by the government.

8 Measuring the Impact

- 8.1 Performance against the Action Plan 2009-11 has been measured against a range of indicators that were developed to reflect the housing and regeneration priorities set out in the Wigan Local Area Agreement (LAA), the indicators were a combination of National Indicators and some local indicators. This LAA has now ended and the government is proposing a new single data set for Local Authorities.

- 8.2 A new Wigan Corporate Strategy, Connecting People to Opportunities will be adopted from April 2011. The strategy will be underpinned by and delivered through our key strategic plans (CYPP, Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Economic Framework, LDF etc), alongside a single portfolio of programmes that will focus upon delivery of the budget reduction programme and wider improvement and efficiency agenda.

The strategy proposes four key priorities;

- Great Places for Great People
- Better Life Chances
- Economic Prosperity
- Radical Efficiency

The Housing Strategy Objectives and Actions for the period 2011 -13 will contribute to the key corporate priorities

A single indicator set is being developed by the council in order to measure outcomes under the four themes. Our proposed Housing Strategy Indicators, as set out in the Action Plan 2011-13, will feed into the corporate suite of indicators.

- 8.3 The government is also proposing significant changes to the inspection and regime for Local Authorities and registered providers with the abolition of Audit Commission and transfer of TSA role to a HCA board. The Strategic Housing KLOE is to be abolished and currently there is unlikely to be a national inspection regime for strategic housing functions going. With regards to the co-regulation of social landlords, it is unclear what the role of the LA will be, and how Local Standards may develop.
- 8.4 With the regional government framework also ending the focus has moved more to the role of the Greater Manchester sub region and Greater Manchester Strategy in setting the direction for the sub region. Targets and an indicator set is currently being developed by AGMA to measure key priorities.
- 8.5 We will continue to work with our local and AGMA colleagues to develop appropriate indicators and monitoring arrangement as the position becomes clearer.

9 Housing Strategy Performance 2009-11

Theme 1 Quantity										
Indicator	2008/09	2009/10		2010/11						
	Outturn	target	Outturn	target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Outturn	
NI154 SHI1	780	400	433	600	124	75	114	TBA	TBA	
NI155 SHI2	38	85	42	157	11	37	25	89	162	
LAA Local	264	400	311	530	327	368	408	641	641	
SHI6	2.56%	2.50%	2.44%	2.40%	2.39	2.34	2.29	2.24	2.24%	
LAA Local	64*	2500	1525	6120	1431	1469	1400	1440	5740	
RSS	87.30%	80%	91.50%	80%					TBA	
Theme 2 Quality										
Indicator	2008/09	2009/10		2010/11						
	Outturn	target		target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
NI158 SHI3	5%	3%	3%	2%					1.63	

NI160	Local authority tenant satisfaction with landlord service	87%	87%	87%	87%					87%
LAA Local	Number of non decent homes belonging to vulnerable owner occupiers made decent	80	80	70	80	6	16	15	11	48
SHI4	Percentage of private sector stock having Cat 1 hazard under HHSRS	n/a	Baseline to be set following 2010 PSSCS							PI deleted
SHI5	Average SAP rating of private sector housing	60	62	60	64					PI deleted
NI187	Percentage of households on income related benefits in fuel poverty	5.11%	5.05%	3.80%	5.00%					PI deleted

Theme 3 People

Indicator	2008/09	2009/10		2010/11						
	Outturn	target		target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
NI156 SHI8	Number of households living in temporary accommodation	59	30	22	19	18	19	18	15	15
LAA Local	Percentage of households whose homelessness is prevented or relieved through positive action	43.8%	45%	76%	50%	81%	83%	85%	84%	84%

NI141	Percentage of vulnerable people achieving independent living	84.1%	79.0%	84.5%	83.6%	81.9%	81.8%	85.0%	91.8%	98.9%
NI142	Percentage of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living	98.2%	98.7%	97.7%	98.8%	97.0%	98.2%	98.4%	98.9 %	98.1%
SHI7	Net additional housing support services provided	202	700	452	495					TBA
SHI9	Percentage of social tenants of working age in work, education or training	32.25%	32.25%	32.25%	35%					32.25%