

# Vision 20**26**

## Wigan Housing Strategy



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# Introduction

Wigan Borough's housing situation has undergone significant and beneficial change in recent years with:

- Significant numbers of new homes created, many of which have played a key role in the transformation of communities.
- The condition of Council Housing has transformed since the formation of Wigan and Leigh Housing and access to additional funding.
- The condition of private sector homes has dramatically improved especially for the most vulnerable.
- The energy efficiency of homes has improved ensuring harm to the environment is reduced and residents are better able to afford heating bills.
- Support services to the most vulnerable have improved and seen more investment.

All of this activity has not occurred by chance and has been the result of effective Housing Strategies which have directed investment and encouraged partners to maximise improvement.

However, times change and so do the challenges we face:

- The current recession has had dramatic effects on the housing market and our residents ranging from increased need for advice, increases in empty homes and additional homelessness pressures.
- We are facing immediate need for more affordable housing and longer term pressures for more homes to accommodate our growing population.
- There is a need to improve the housing on offer in our neighbourhoods both in terms of conditions and desirability of the areas.
- We need to meet the needs of vulnerable groups, especially the growing number of older people.

The strategy seeks to achieve this by developing long term aims around three themes backed by shorter term action plans:

**Quantity • Quality • People**

It will do this in an integrated way, looking at how housing can contribute to the wider Sustainable Communities Strategy in Wigan, with the action plan relating directly to the Local Area Agreement. The role of the new Economy, Environment, Culture and Housing (EECH) partnership will be the key to ensuring delivery in combination with achieving wider regeneration and economic well being.

# Foreword

Our new Housing Strategy is set out within a new format and is designed to be clear and concise. It has been informed by robust research backed by extensive dialogue with partners and customers and provides an insight into our housing problems and most importantly, how these are to be addressed.

It sets out both the longer term challenges faced in the borough and recognises the challenging economic context over the short term. For these reasons it presents a future vision backed by a short term action plan.

Our strategy is designed to contribute to the transformational agenda set out in Wigan's Sustainable Communities Strategy Vision 2026 and the priorities within the Local Area Agreement 2008-11. These, along with other documents, such as the Local Development Framework and Worklessness Strategy will be used to drive our emerging Regeneration Strategy forward. This strategy is backed by more detailed sub-strategies, such as the Homelessness Strategy and Affordable Housing Strategy which are designed to be more operational in nature and will be used to drive the housing agenda forward.

We have seen that the housing market can change rapidly and so this strategy is designed to be flexible and the action plan will be refreshed annually to ensure it remains relevant.

It is hoped that this strategy provides a clear guide to how both the Housing Partnership and the wider Economy, Environment, Culture and Housing Partnership will transform the borough's housing, economic, environmental and cultural future.

**Miranda Allen** - Chair of the Economy, Environment, Culture & Housing Partnership

**Chris Harris** - Chair of the Housing Partnership

**Kevin Anderson** - Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing

# 1 The Role of the Housing Strategy

Our last Housing Strategy was prepared in 2002 in accordance with the Government's "Fit for Purpose" criteria. This was a very prescriptive approach that focused on processes rather than outcomes and adopted a relatively narrow role with an emphasis on existing and affordable housing.

The Government have signalled that this type of strategy is no longer appropriate and now expect a wider, more ambitious document. There have been significant changes to the housing issues affecting us locally and nationally, there has been transformation in our housing markets and the local and regional decision making context within which we operate has also moved on.

We now need to demonstrate how housing will achieve high level outcomes that contribute to the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular links to the priorities of the Local Area Agreement and Sustainable Communities Strategy Vision 2026 and other Regional and Sub Regional Strategies. We have consulted widely during the preparation of this strategy and we will continue to consult during the life of this strategy, so that our actions continue to reflect the issues and needs of the community and stakeholders.

The Housing Green Paper "Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable" (Communities and Local Government 2007) set out a new agenda in terms of higher overall housing targets, increased investment in affordable housing and new partnerships and delivery mechanisms, setting a new vision for strategic housing;

*"The Local Authority Strategic Housing role is made up of a series of strategic decisions and activities associated with effective planning and delivery, in order to meet the housing needs of all residents across the tenures. Strong performance in this role will support effective place making and help the delivery of the wider sustainable community."*

*CLG 2007*

We also need to respond to the changing funding, enabling and regulation frameworks resulting from recent legislation, including the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, and in particular the formation of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and Tenant Services Authority (TSA). These

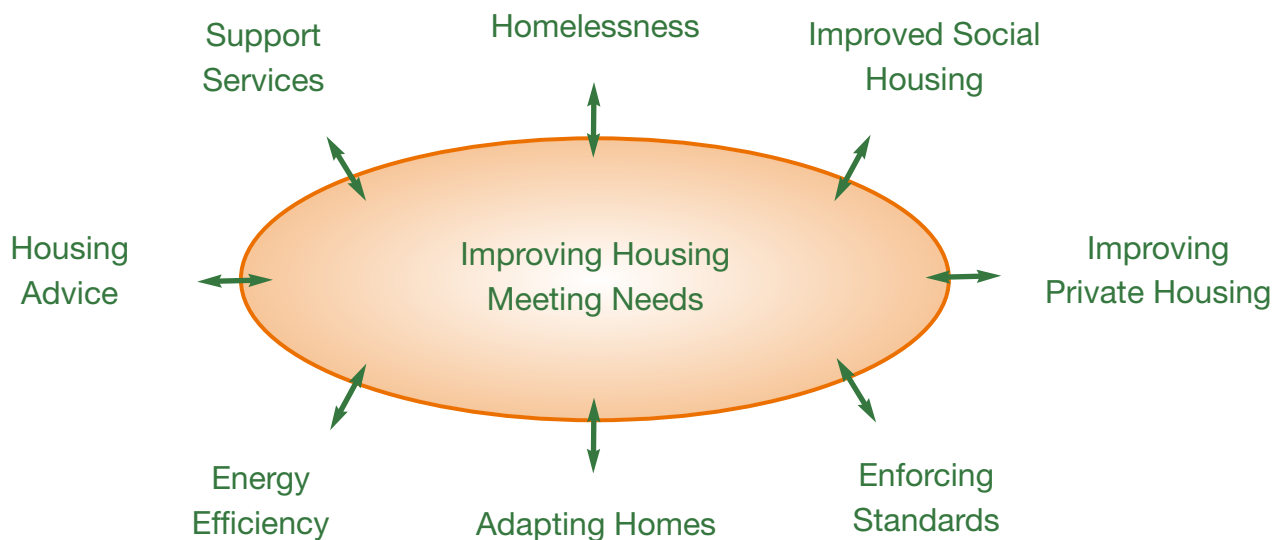
# 1 The Role of the Housing Strategy

changes will drive housing in new and different directions which are more focused on integrated priorities aimed at wider regeneration/sustainability ambitions, regulating social landlords and ensuring high standards of service within the housing and regeneration sectors.

Particularly important will be the changing regional and Sub-regional policy and decision making frameworks, which will become increasingly important for us in demonstrating our contribution to achieving growth and increasing economic prosperity in the borough.

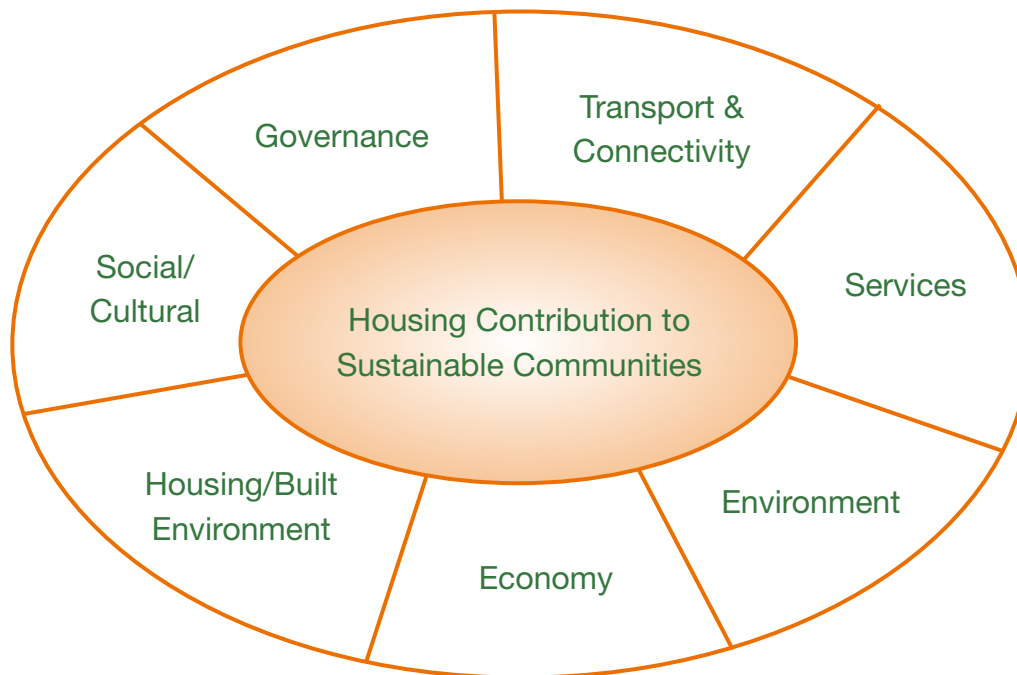
Against this background it is clear that this Housing Strategy will be very different from past templates, needing to be more widely based and integrated within a range of local, sub regional and regional objectives. As illustrated opposite in **Figure 2**, the new strategy focuses on how housing contributes to the “place making” of the borough, in terms of improving the build environment, supporting the wellbeing of residents and providing services that meet needs.

**Figure 1: Old role of the Housing Strategy**



# 1 The Role of the Housing Strategy

**Figure 2: New role of the Housing Strategy**



Transformation of our communities and the services we provide will not happen overnight and in order to achieve real change this strategy sets a long term vision for housing up to 2026. We also recognise that certain issues require more immediate action and so we set out our “first steps” towards the vision in a series of realistic actions over the short term. We have developed our Housing Strategy Action Plan to cover the period 2009-11. We will monitor progress against this action plan before setting a new action plan in 2011 that will illustrate our progression towards the housing vision.

## **Demonstrating our contribution to Wigan’s local priorities**

This strategy demonstrates how our housing actions contribute to a range of wider priorities of the Council and its partners such as sustainability, safer communities, worklessness, health and social care. The main reference documents are the Sustainable Communities Strategy - Vision 2026 and the Local Area Agreement 2008-11 but there are links to many other corporate and

# 1 The Role of the Housing Strategy

departmental plans and strategies, such as the emerging Local Development Framework and the Supporting People Commissioning Framework.

Our Local Strategic Partnership has agreed a Sustainable Communities Strategy and a Local Area Agreement designed to deliver a more integrated approach to place making and developing more sustainable communities.

The Sustainable Communities Strategy sets a vision for 2026 built around 4 key priorities that will be the big issues for the next 18 years or more.

1

**Ambitious Communities**

3

**Living Longer**

2

**Realising Aspirations**

4

**Strong Communities**

They will require long term commitment and investment from a wide range of people and organisations, ranging from education to spatial planners to housing all working together to create long term change.

The Local Area Agreement (LAA) 2008 -11 has set out the first milestones towards achieving the Vision 2026, delivery will be overseen by the four new Delivery Partnerships.

The agreed LAA housing measures being;

- Increase the overall supply of affordable housing to meet the needs of all our residents and the local economy.
- To strengthen our weaker housing markets by increasing choice and quality of the housing on offer in these localities.
- To better meet the needs of vulnerable and homeless people by investing in better prevention and support services.

These LAA priorities have been developed through our improved information base and through a series of discussions at various forums and partnership events. Progress is being measured against agreed performance indicators and



# 1 The Role of the Housing Strategy

targets by the new Economy, Environment, Culture and Housing Partnership, of which the long established Housing Partnership forms a part.

This strategy sets out our high level actions which will contribute to achieving a number of LAA priorities and this strategy reflects our contribution to other agendas such as worklessness, tackling anti social behaviour, improving health and environmental performance.

The Housing Strategy will be our overarching strategy but it will be supported by a series of housing sub strategies, focusing on individual issues and setting out more detailed actions.

**Figure 3: Housing Strategy and Sub Strategies**



# 1 The Role of the Housing Strategy

## Linking with National, Regional and Sub-regional agendas

Wigan Borough interacts with and is affected by wider regional and sub regional issues and this strategy demonstrates how our priorities reflect priorities set across Greater Manchester and the wider area.

The new North West Regional Housing Strategy 2009 is an economically and market focused strategy which is not primarily driven by need, this is expected to be addressed at a more local level and via specialist strategies such as the Regional Strategic Framework for Housing Support in the North West . The North West Regional Housing Strategy seeks to support the wider ambitions of the North West and positions housing to assist in bringing about long term structural changes and to support the development of an integrated Regional Strategy, drawing together housing, economic development and spatial planning strategies in the North West.

This strategy will demonstrate how we contribute to achieving the overall vision of the North West Regional Housing Strategy.

*“To create balanced housing markets across the North West that support economic growth, strengthen economic and social inclusion and ensure that everyone has access to appropriate, well designed high quality, affordable housing in sustainable, mixed and vibrant communities.”*

It sets three key objectives, namely:

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>Quantity</b> | Achieving the right quantity of housing   |
| <b>Quality</b>  | Continuing to raise the quality of the existing housing stock                       |
| <b>People</b>   | Connect people to the improved offer by helping increase access to affordable homes |

# 1 The Role of the Housing Strategy

Wigan Borough forms part of Greater Manchester and is participating in its ambitious attempts to transform its economic and development aspirations, with both our Leader and Chief Executive having high profile roles within the sub region. This is being taken forward by the development of a Greater Manchester Strategy which is drawing heavily from the recent Manchester Independent Economic Review (MIER). The strategy will set out a series of strategic priorities that are designed to help draw forward the sub regional economy in a sustained way.

The housing element will centre on it becoming more flexible to changing market demands and the need to create more sustainable neighbourhoods. A sub regional housing strategy is due to be completed by the end of 2009. Its priorities are expected to be similar to those in the Regional Housing Strategy but it will provide a local context and will prioritise different areas of the sub region to meet the broader aims.

The objectives of the Greater Manchester Strategy will be driven forward by the recent designation of Greater Manchester as a City Region Pilot, this will give Greater Manchester more powers to make local decisions over a range of issues such as transport investment, employment and skills and investment in homes and communities.

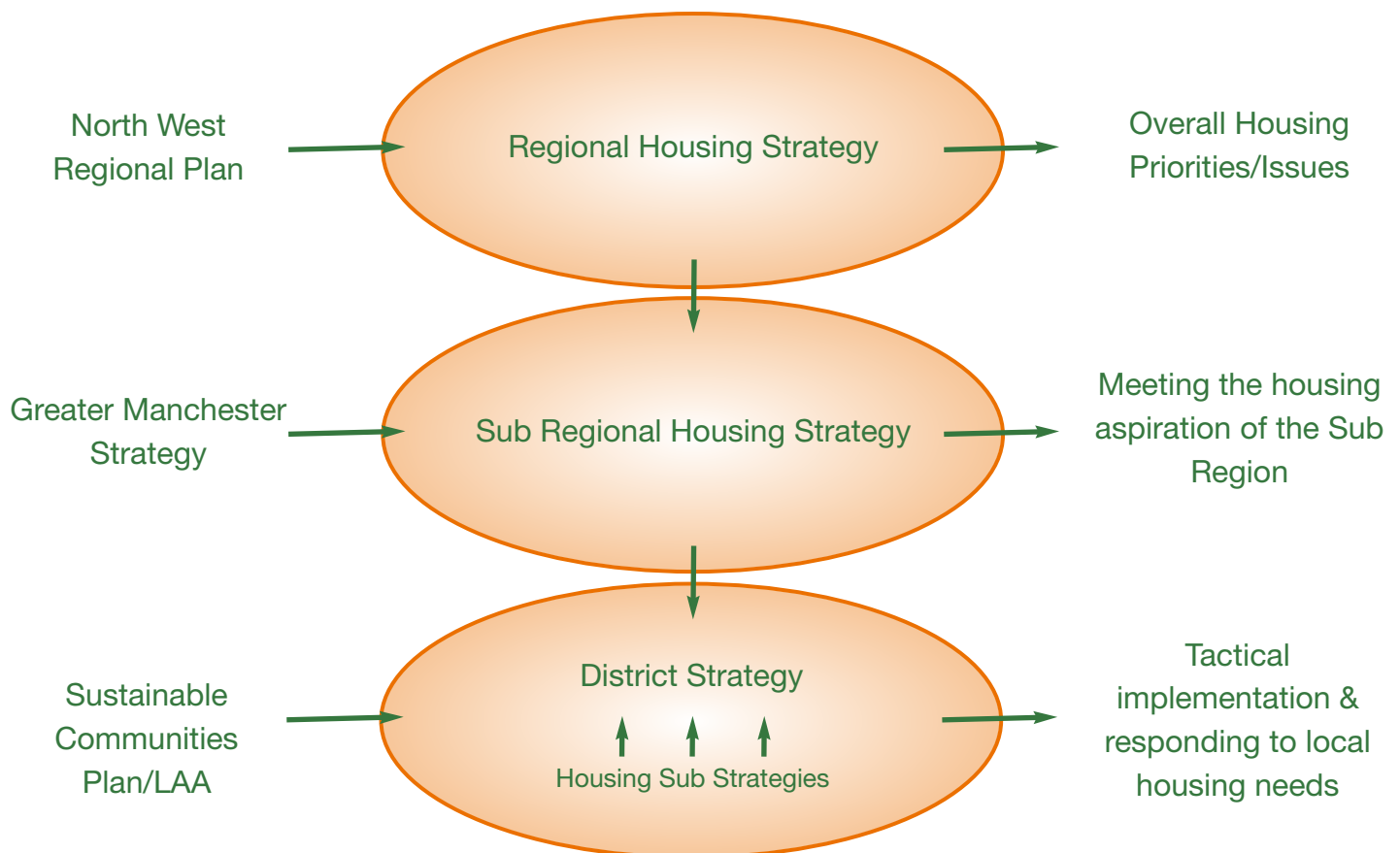
Despite being within Greater Manchester, Wigan has long established strategic links with Merseyside and Lancashire and we are mindful of our strong links with St Helens and Warrington. We will continue to maintain links with the “Mid Mersey Housing Market Area” particularly in relation to the development of their housing Growth Point.

Figure 4 on the next page illustrates how emerging needs and priorities will be embedded from the local level upwards and that strategic planning will work from a regional level downwards.



# 1 The Role of the Housing Strategy

**Figure 4: Housing Strategy Hierarchy**



## **Informing funding allocations and discussions with the Homes and Communities Agency and other bodies**

As investment priorities are increasingly being determined by the regional and sub-regional strategies, we need to demonstrate how our strategic priorities meet the regional and sub regional investment priorities in order to maximise investment in the borough, both through housing and through linking with other investment in infrastructure, economic development and environmental improvement.

An important mechanism will be the “Single Conversation” with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). The Single Conversation will be a comprehensive discussion regarding the development and investment needs of the borough

# 1 The Role of the Housing Strategy

for housing, infrastructure and regeneration in the context of our role within the sub region. We will need to demonstrate that our local actions support their North West regional priorities to:

- Link housing and regeneration resources to support growth, deliver housing renewal, tackle affordability issues and create sustainable communities where people want to live and work
- Adopt innovative approaches to investment in order to increase housing supply and deliver new and improved infrastructure.
- Reinforce quality, design and environmental standards for all new and existing developments.

## Demonstrating that we are meeting the needs and responding to communities

This strategy has been prepared following an extensive consultation period earlier in 2009, where we sought the views of a range of stakeholders and individuals within the borough including, with a variety of means;

- Issues paper and questionnaire available on the internet and at many locations throughout the borough
- Consultation with specialist groups and organisations - such as the Township Forums, housing providers and voluntary organisations
- Housing Partnership consultation event held
- Written requests for comment to key stakeholders
- Partnerships and Communities Together (PACT) consultation

This strategy has been developed from the views given during the consultation on the Issues Paper, see appendix 2 for full details.

We will continue to demonstrate the effectiveness of this strategy in achieving our vision and contributing to other outcomes by developing a robust performance framework and developing our engagement activities so that we can judge our progress better against the impact upon residents. We will also assess our strategy to judge its impact upon equality and diversity, health and sustainability by monitoring the outcomes for a range of groups and making use of existing mechanisms such as the Place Survey and the Council's engagement strategy "Routes to Involvement".

## 2 Housing Vision 2026

The Wigan Borough Sustainable Communities Strategy - Vision 2026 was developed following wide consultation across the borough. It asked the question;

### What might Wigan look like eighteen years from now?

During the spring of 2008 the residents of Wigan were asked to imagine the eighteenth birthday party of a baby born in 2008, what are their hopes for their children? What kind of place would they be living in?

The homes and communities that we live in by 2026 will be crucial in realising these aspirations. Housing can contribute in many ways to achieving the type of place that residents of the borough aspire to live in for example through giving families a better choice in where they live, by building homes that are energy efficient and ensuring that vulnerable people are supported in our communities.

We have established a vision for housing that the Council and its partners can work towards in the long term and that will support the overall Vision 2026.

Earlier in 2009 we published a Housing Issues Paper and held extensive discussions with partners and residents of the borough and asked them what housing issues were most important to them and what their aspirations for housing in 2026 would be. A summary of our consultation responses is attached in appendix 2 but some responses were:

*“A stable housing market where everybody can afford a home. Good quality design in new developments and the regeneration of parts of the borough that are suffering at the moment”*

*“Greener homes surrounded by open spaces and countryside”*

*“A good variety of affordable housing, close to amenities, enabling sustainable communities. Housing designed to help the environment and design out crime”*

*“Every Wigan resident regardless of socio-economic status is living in a property in a safe and secure neighbourhood of their choice with access to essential support services and local amenities and transport”*

## 2 Housing Vision 2026

From the comments made we have adopted our Vision 2026 for Housing.

*“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.”*

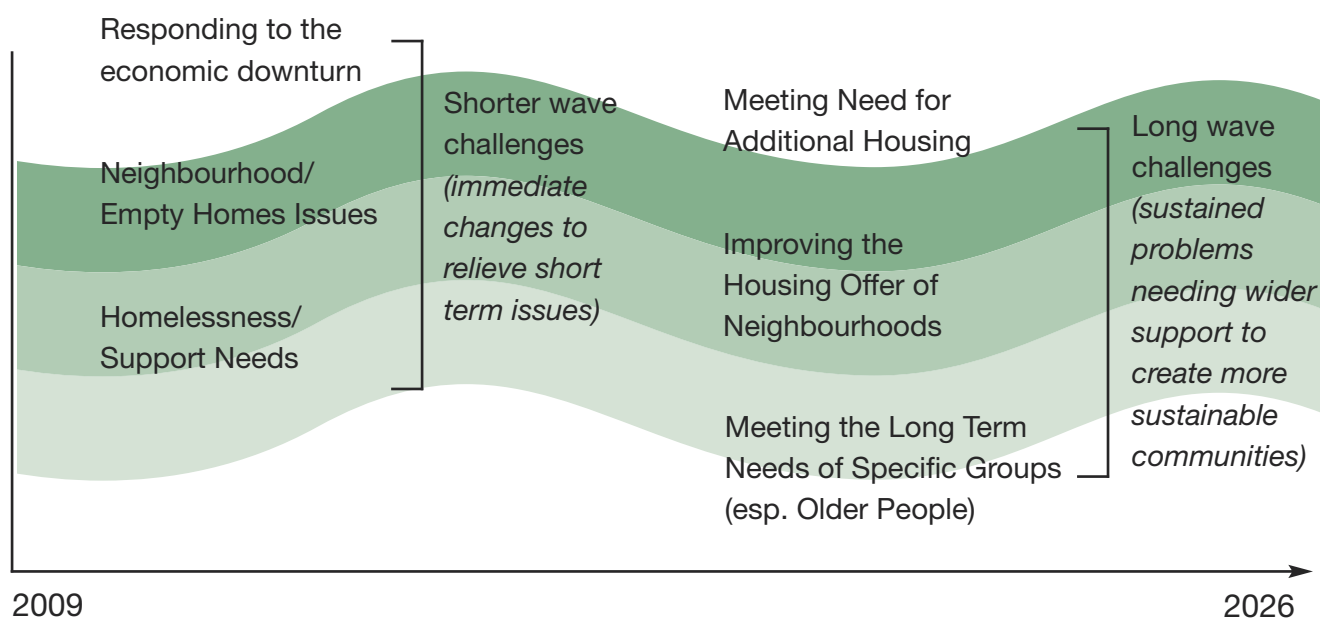
Our housing vision sets out what we hope to achieve in the long term but we will need to establish a series of actions over time that will contribute to realising the vision and also respond to current challenges. These will be delivered in the short term through the three housing strands of the current Local Area Agreement and the Housing Strategy Action Plan will form the basis of the LAA action plan against which our performance will be measured

From our analysis of evidence collated and from the comments received from partners and members of the community we have identified a number of challenges that need to be addressed in order to achieve our long term vision. These issues are wide ranging but there are linkages between them.



# 2 Housing Vision 2026

**Figure 5: Waves Diagram**



There are shorter wave challenges largely driven by the current economic position and partly due to rapid changes in the local housing market, creating situations that requires short term intervention.

**1 Responding to the economic downturn**

**2 Neighbourhood issues/empty homes**

**3 Homelessness and support needs**

These types of pressures tend to be cyclical and are likely to occur again before 2026. Whilst it is important to respond quickly and effectively to these acute issues, we need to consider the fundamental challenges that if addressed will make a real contribution to creating sustainable communities that are more resilient to short term pressures such as those above. The long term challenges we have identified are:



# 2 Housing Vision 2026

- 1 Meeting the need for additional housing**
- 2 Improving the housing offer of neighbourhoods**
- 3 Meeting the long term needs of specific groups, especially older people**

In the following chapters we will set out in more detail how we plan to address these issues under the three themes of:

- 1 Quantity**
- 2 Quality**
- 3 People**

However, whilst we set our actions under these themes, the themes are often interlinked and many of our actions will contribute to more than one theme. For example action to bring empty homes into use can contribute to all three themes by increasing the numbers of homes available to meet housing need, improving the appearance and safety of neighbourhoods and giving more choice of housing and helping reduce homelessness.

## Resourcing the strategy

There are a number of direct funding streams that will contribute financially to achieving the actions within the strategy.



## 2 Housing Vision 2026

**Figure 6: Housing Strategy Resources**

Funding Source	Amount	Period	Area Funded
CLG: Homelessness Directorate	£230k	2009/10	Tackling and preventing homelessness
Disabled Facilities Grant	£2m per annum	2009/10	Aids and adaptations
Supporting People	£8.7m £9.3m	2009/10 2010/11	Housing related support
HCA National Affordable Housing Programme	£4.76m	2008-11	Affordable housing provision
Housing Capital Allocation	£4.5m	2009/10	Renewal areas, alleygating and Ince remediation
Gypsy and Traveller site improvement grant	£180k	2009/10	Site improvement works
S106 Commuted Sums (NB projected income remains uncertain in the current economic climate)	£1.125m	2009-11	Affordable housing provision
CLG	£50k	2009/10	Tackling overcrowding
Learning Disability Development Fund	£62,772	2009/10 & 2010/11	Housing options development for people with learning disabilities
Wigan Council	£51k	2009/10	Private sector leasing scheme
Housing Benefits	Est £250k (income generated depends on no. of units leased)	2009/10	Private sector leasing scheme
DWP/Wigan Council	£57,174/£85,761	2009/10	Discretionary housing payments/homeless prevention
Wigan Council	£52,275	2009/10	Homelessness prevention/ B&B costs

*Figures quoted are subject to change.*

## 2 Housing Vision 2026

Whilst these funding streams are extensive, we recognise the financial contribution of partners across the borough and the flexing of their spending towards achieving the shared objectives contained within this strategy. We also recognise the significant contribution made to meeting our objectives in the private sector, particularly individual residents investing in their properties, and the role of public investment in acting as a catalyst to further encourage and direct private investment.

We will ensure that we make best use of all available resources and highlight areas where we need to attract additional resources or increase efficiencies, for example through participating in the Greater Manchester Council's with ALMOs. We will continue to maximise investment by proactively seeking additional funding streams, when opportunities arise, with our partners.

Our resources will be used to best support the corporate priorities of the Council contained in the LAA and Sustainable Communities Strategy, with some decisions being taken on the priority of spending across areas. There may be some areas where resource increases are prioritised, whereas, in others there is a recognition that existing services are being delivered in an efficient manner given the resources available.

It is becoming clear that reductions in public spending will become necessary in future and this may well reduce the sources of funding available to us. We will seek to reduce the impact through developing value for money in procurement, and maximising the potential of other assets, for example through public/private partnerships to achieve our wider aims.

