

City of Wolverhampton Council

Housing Strategy

2024



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Foreword

Wolverhampton is an ambitious and diverse city built on the values of equality, fairness and inclusively, with a shared vision that speaks to all who live, work, study, invest and visit here.

These core values underpin Wolverhampton's Housing Strategy and our commitment to ensuring residents have safe and stable homes they want, need and desire.

As we navigate national housing challenges and the economic impact of a cost of living crisis, never has it been more important to set out our approach for housing in the city. We do this within the context of the council strategy, Our City: Our Plan, and draw on the priorities and strengths of associated local strategies.

We are proud of what we have so far achieved to create a better housing offer and service for people living in our city. Hundreds of new council homes have been developed; the council's own housing company, WV Living, has delivered new developments across the city; residents have moved into the first new council homes at Heath Town, while the high-rise blocks and estates have also seen major transformation; work has been completed on the first homes as part of an extensive retrofitting programme of ageing, non-traditionally built housing stock; further estate redevelopment at New Park Village is underway, and major city centre living schemes are in the pipeline. We are making progress. However, we recognise there is much more we need to do.

This new Housing Strategy confirms the importance of delivery plans to accelerate housing development that will support inclusive economic growth. It focuses on four priorities to address various housing challenges and is shaped by housing legislation, which is ever changing and evolving. Across different tenures, the strategy addresses the housing needs and standards across the city, along with our aim

to make the best use of our existing housing assets. The strategy also shows the important link between safe, secure and sustainable housing and good health, wellbeing and independence.

The priorities set out will require a multi-agency and collaborative approach to achieve the desired outcomes. We will work as a key partner and enabler to ensure we remain responsive to housing needs across Wolverhampton.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who have supported the consultation work and given us feedback that helps shape the development of this strategy. I can assure you that we have listened and will act upon your views.



Councillor Steve Evans

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member
City Housing CoWC.

The City Housing team is committed to working towards the priorities in the strategy, along with our partners and stakeholders. We will continue to engage with tenants and residents in different ways, listening to the resident voice so this can be reflected in the work we do. If you would like to get involved, please contact the Housing Strategy team. In addition, we will review the strategy on a regular basis to ensure it is still fit for purpose in the continuously changing housing landscape and in line with new legislation.



Jenny Lewington

Deputy Director of City Housing

Introduction

The City of Wolverhampton is going through a period of significant transformation with new investment, new opportunities, and new challenges. We are receiving record levels of investment and regeneration in our city, bringing new opportunities. However, we also know that many of our residents continue to face a range of challenges, particularly in the legacy of Covid-19 that has seen increasing levels of need and the cost of living crisis.

The home in which our residents live is one of the most important factors in determining their health, wellbeing and prosperity. We are committed to ensuring that every resident has a safe, stable and affordable home that they want and need - so they can achieve their full potential. We also understand the role that good housing plays in place-making and shaping communities. We want to forge inclusive, sustainable communities and neighbourhoods that people feel proud of. Good quality housing plays a fundamental role in developing Wolverhampton's identity and driving good, green economic growth. We are committed to providing enough good quality homes, including new affordable homes, in a way that will drive inclusive growth across the city.

Building on our previous Housing Strategy 'Better Homes for All', this housing strategy will recognise our achievements, acknowledge our challenges, but most importantly it will look to the future. We know that by increasing the provision and improving the quality of all forms of housing tenure that we increase choice and opportunity for those living in and coming to live in the city. This strategy will set out not only how we can deliver or support the provision of new affordable homes and improvements in existing council owned housing; it will set out how we can better support the private sector, both owner occupiers, landlords and private renters. To deliver on our vision for housing we have set out four overarching priorities.

Our priorities for housing are:

- Priority 1:** Right homes, in the right places
- Priority 2:** Make the best use of our assets and ensure high standards across all areas of council housing
- Priority 3:** Work in partnership to drive up the standard and quality of the private rented sector
- Priority 4:** Safe, secure and sustainable housing that supports good health and independence

Our priorities are supported by four cross cutting principles of Driven by Digital, Climate Action, Fair and Equal, and Wolverhampton Pound.



Our City: Our Plan

Our City: Our Plan is the Council’s overarching strategic framework, developed with over 4500 local people and stakeholders. It sets out how we will work with our partners and communities to build a more prosperous and inclusive Wolverhampton where everyone can share in the opportunities and success of our city.

The Housing Strategy is intrinsically linked to all of the priorities set out in **Our City: Our Plan** and is a key enabler of its delivery. The particular emphasis is on delivering ‘good homes in well connected neighbourhoods’ priority, whilst also recognising the role of good homes in strengthening families, enabling adults of all ages to live fulfilled and independent lives, improving health and wellbeing, and the knock on impacts on access to good work and inclusive economic growth.



The National Housing Landscape

The housing landscape continues to be shaped by a range of national drivers – which impact our approach to housing in Wolverhampton.

Navigating a national housing crisis

We continue to navigate a national housing crisis. Compared to other European countries, Britain has a backlog of millions of homes that are missing from the housing market. Building these homes is key to solving the nation's housing crisis. The Government is aiming to build 300,000 new homes every year to match demand and keep housing costs affordable, but less than 250,000 were built in 2022, the highest rate in a decade. Supply of housing isn't the only issue. The quality of housing, particularly private rented and social housing, has been put under the spotlight. The initial findings from the English Housing Survey 2022 to 2023 reveal a challenging landscape, with issues of damp and mould increasing, and 15% of dwellings failing to meet the Decent Homes Standard.

Legislative change

Legislative change over the past decade has also shaped the housing landscape, providing a backdrop to our new Housing Strategy.

The **Homelessness Reduction Act (2017)** placed new responsibilities on local authorities to take a strategic approach to homelessness, with responsibilities to provide anyone at risk of homelessness with advice and support to prevent them from becoming homeless.

The **Social Housing White Paper (2020)** set out planned changes to strengthen building safety, improve the quality of homes and neighbourhoods and strengthen regulation of the social rented sector, ensuring that complaints are dealt with promptly and fairly, that the resident's voice is heard and that residents are treated with respect. The resulting **Social Housing (Regulation) Act (2023)** shifted the landscape for social housing, putting increased emphasis on regulation, transparency, and accountability of social housing providers.

The **Levelling Up White Paper (2022)** outlined a new policy regime for 'levelling up'. The White Paper recognises how poor housing quality, overcrowding and a reliance on temporary accommodation for vulnerable families contributes to poor health and quality of life for many. The government committed to building more housing in England, including more genuinely affordable social housing; and launching a new drive on housing quality to make sure homes are fit for the 21st century. The White Paper set out the mission: By 2030, renters will have a secure path to ownership with the number of first-time buyers increasing in all areas; and the government's ambition is for the number of non-decent rented homes to have fallen by 50%, with the biggest improvements in the lowest performing areas. The **Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023)** provided the legislative basis for the commitments, and also made changes to the planning system to speed up planning decisions.

The policy paper **A Fairer Private Rented Sector White Paper (2022)** sets out how the Government would deliver on its intention to deal with poor, substandard housing and how it would support tenants who felt unable to raise complaints due to the fear of being penalised. Subsequently the Renters' Reform Bill (2022-2023) had begun to make its passage through parliament, this has now been replaced by the **Renters' Rights Bill (2024)** which will bring about an end to Section 21 'no fault' evictions and place certain obligations on landlords, whilst ensuring that landlords can recover their property when reasonable to do so. A further recommendation is that there would be a new independent Ombudsman established for the Private Rented Sector and the application of the decent homes standard in private rented homes.

In addition to housing specific legislative change, the **People at the Heart of Care White Paper (2021)** highlighted the importance of people having the right home to live in that would enable them to remain at home, living independently within their own communities. In particular, Housing will support social care in including decision making around housing when making health and social care decisions, in supporting to provide more specialist housing to meet the needs of residents and in continuing to deliver adaptations through the Home Improvement Agency.

We will continue to respond to – and, where appropriate, look to influence – the Government's national policy agenda as it evolves, to get the best outcomes for residents across Wolverhampton.



Our Place in the Region

The City of Wolverhampton Council played a pivotal role in establishing the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) in 2016. Since then, the city, alongside six other constituent authorities of the WMCA, have been at the forefront of devolution in England. In March 2023, a third deeper devolution deal was announced for the region, including:

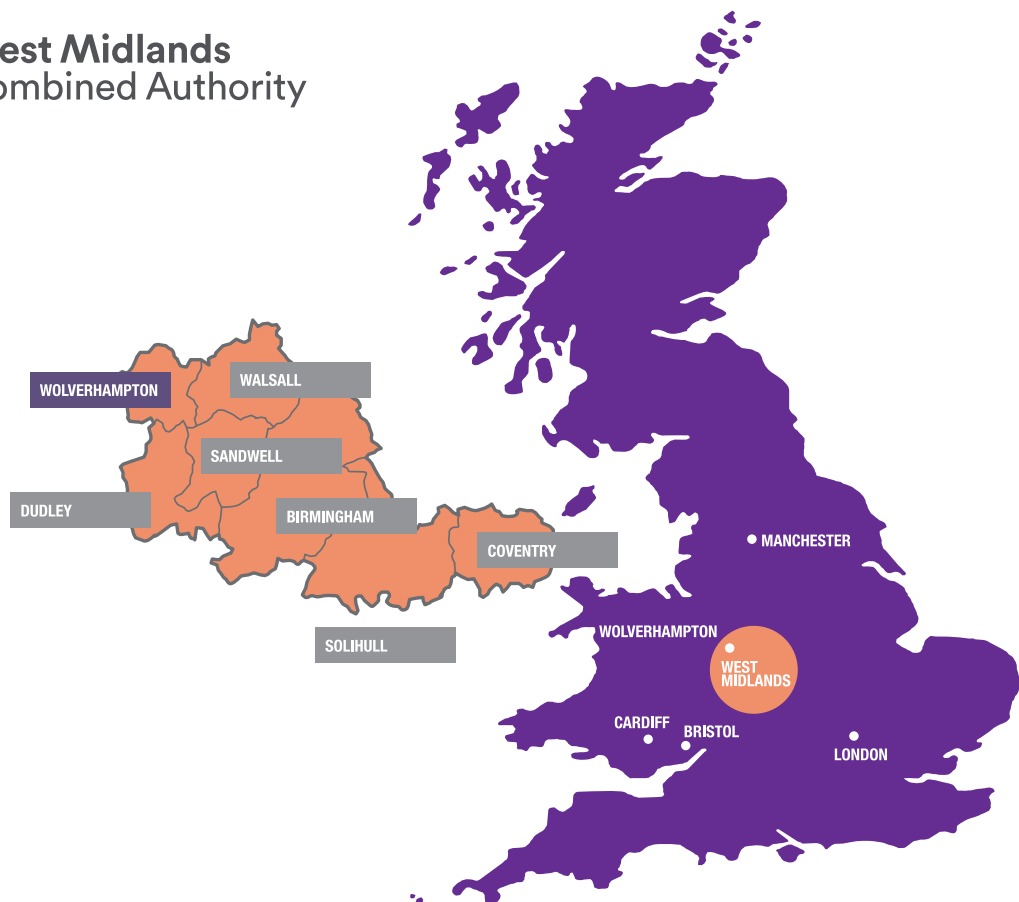
- A new Strategic Place Partnership between Homes England and WMCA, and local leadership of the Affordable Homes Programme for the first time outside of London – worth at least £200 million to the West Midlands.

- Devolution of £100 million brownfield land funding, joint working between the government and WMCA through the West Midlands Public Land Taskforce, and £3.8 million to support homeless families.
- Devolution of net zero funding, including for buildings' retrofit from 2025 onwards.

The WMCA are a key strategic partner in supporting our ambitions around levelling up and housing and will play a crucial role in the future funding landscape for housing across the region.



**West Midlands
Combined Authority**



The Local Picture

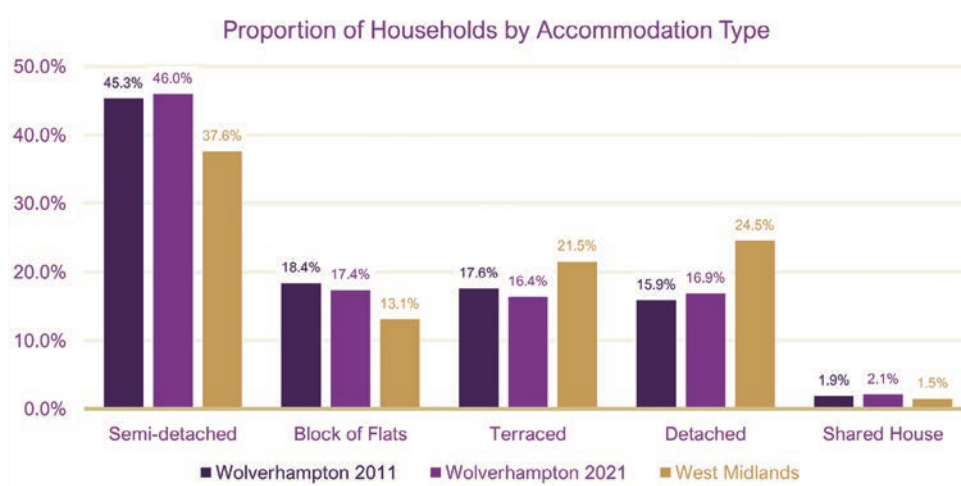
Accommodation Type

There are approximately 105,000 households across the city.

Across tenure, almost half of residents in the city live in a semi-detached house, a higher percentage than the rest of the West Midlands areas.

Wolverhampton also has more people living in flats than the rest of the West Midlands areas.

Where the Wolverhampton figures are lower than our West Midlands neighbours is for those households living in detached and terraced homes.

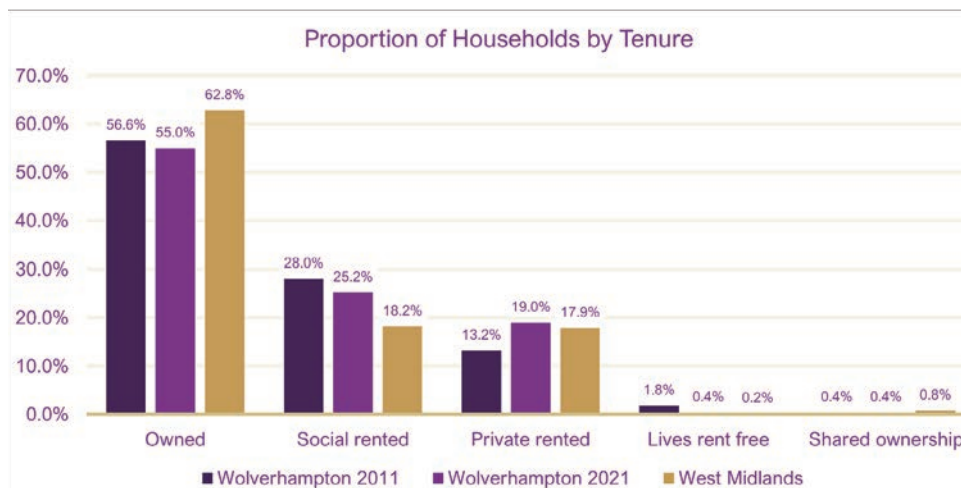


Tenure

More than half of Wolverhampton residents are owner occupiers, the West Midlands average is a little higher in comparison.

A quarter of all residents live in social housing and 19% are in the private rented sector. Higher than the West Midlands average

There are currently very few low cost home ownership opportunities with only 0.4% of residents living in this tenure.

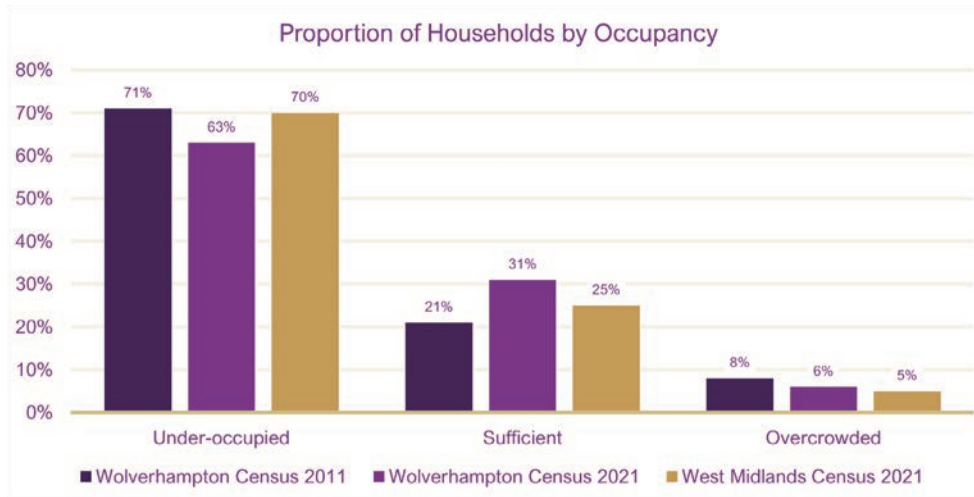


Occupancy

Wolverhampton has reduced levels of under occupation since the 2011 census and has slightly less under occupied properties than the rest of the West Midlands areas.

We have a higher rate of households living in homes that are the 'right size' compared to the West Midlands average.

Despite reducing overcrowding since 2011, our figures remain higher than West Midlands neighbours.

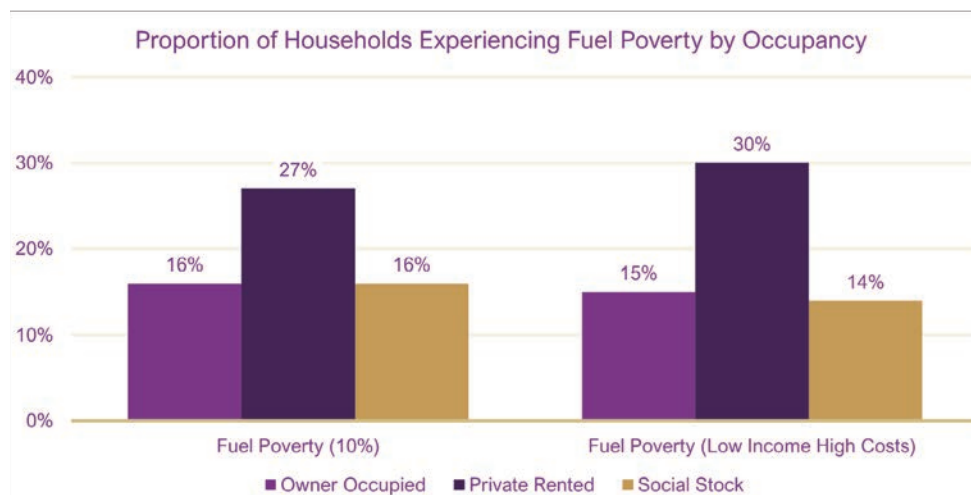


Fuel Poverty

Fuel poverty levels in Wolverhampton are considerably higher (21.6%) than the national average (13.4%) meaning Wolverhampton residents struggle more to heat their homes, this raises the risk of damp and cold health related conditions.

The fuel poverty levels broken down at ward level correlate strongly with areas of deprivation.

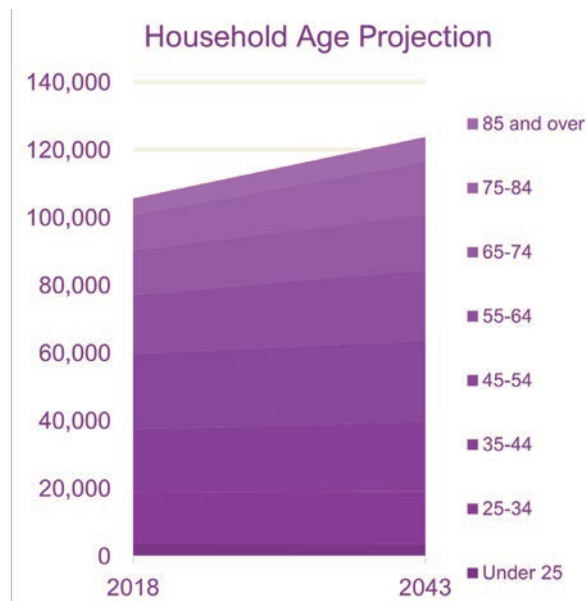
The tenure with the highest percentage of fuel poverty is privately rented properties.



Growing Population in Wolverhampton

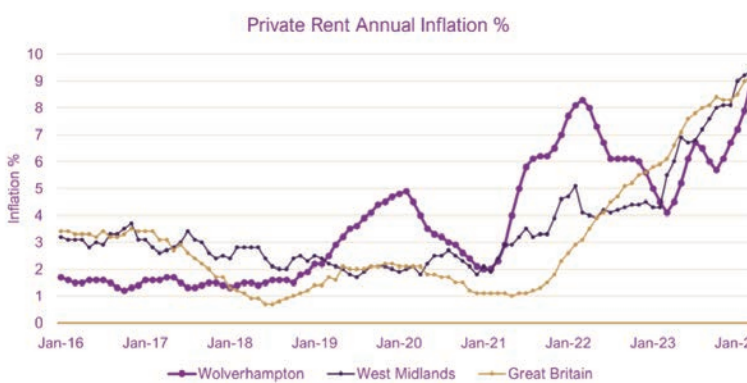
There is a predicted growth progression of 17.3% between 2018 and 2043 with the largest household groups being those over 55-84 years of age. Significantly lower growth is predicted in the younger under 34 age groups. This could be an indication that increasingly there is a lack of affordable housing for those groups who are key to the future growth and stability of the city. In addition, the younger population has higher rates of unemployment, specifically the 18-24 group.

Further correlation with the predicted growth of the over 55 age group is that household projection by household type shows a significant increase in the need for homes to suit adult households without children. Further commonality can be found in the significantly lower growth of the under 34 age group, the more popular age in which people start to consider having children.



Private Rents

Between 2011 and 2021 Wolverhampton saw the joint second largest increase in the proportion of privately rented homes, alongside this there have been significant rent increases making the sector unaffordable to many. The increase in the Local Housing Authority rates may have some effect on this but is unlikely to make a marked difference.



Home Ownership and Affordability

The house price to earnings ratio gives an indication of housing affordability; the higher the ratio, the less affordable a home is. Wolverhampton remains more affordable than the regional housing price to earnings ratio but has seen an increase in the last three years, though has remained steadier than the spike seen nationally in 2021.

The current house price to earning ratio in Wolverhampton is 7.4 : 1. This, coupled with the low rates of home ownership in Wolverhampton compared to regional and national averages, would suggest that housing overall is unaffordable for many in the city.



Housing Needs

The Draft Wolverhampton Local Plan estimates Wolverhampton needs 19,728 homes by 2042 (1,100pa).

The Draft Wolverhampton Housing Market Assessment estimates the household projections across all age demographics and shows that the greatest percentage change will be in the over 75 age demographic.

This may also account for the projected change in household structure where the projection is that the second largest change will be seen in one person households. However, the most

significant growth will be in 'other' households, this includes multi-generational households, student populations and shared accommodation.

The draft assessment shows the need for housing across tenure with Market housing (sale and rent) needing the most investment including a low cost home ownership offer. To meet the need for Social and Affordable rented homes, the projection is for an additional 3,309 homes over the plan period, this equates to approximately 200 homes per year.

Homelessness

Data tells us that the main reasons for homelessness are loss of a private rented tenancy (25.4%), family and friends no longer willing or able to accommodate (20.9%), and domestic abuse (12.3%).

The majority of households owed a duty during 2022/2023 were headed by a person under the age of 35 (55.3%), with young people more likely to be owed a duty in Wolverhampton than across both regionally (51.4%) and nationally (48.2%). 43% of households owed a duty

contain dependent children. This figure is again higher than both the regional (38.7%) and the national (35%) percentages.

Temporary accommodation placements have continued to rise, with 294 single households and 581 family placements made in 2022/2023. Between 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 there was a 32% increase in the total placements. In addition, there was an increase of six to eleven rough sleepers in the same period.



Ambitions for Housing Delivery & Improvement

We want to go further than simply committing to increasing the city's stock of available homes, we want to ensure that the housing that is developed meets the varying needs of residents. The city has begun the process of developing a Local Plan, which will provide the statutory framework to support the needs of our residents and businesses, supporting the delivery of new homes. This Housing Strategy will help to shape and realise that housing need, delivering tangible solutions to enable the development of new housing that meets the needs of the city and its residents. In doing so we pledge that where we are able to, we will deliver as many homes as we are able at a social rather than an affordable rent, this will be supported by the Government commitment to increasing the number of affordable homes delivered at social rents.

The 2024 UK Housing Review published by the Chartered Institute of Housing¹ states that although there is a need for all kinds of housing, in particular more social rented homes would generate a wide range of beneficial outcomes, including enabling more households to form and live independently. It would generate improved affordability of renting and homeownership and reduce housing costs so increasing income after housing costs. In addition to those predicted benefits, there would be a greater ability to accommodate more people with different needs with the benefit of being able to reduce household homelessness.

The 2024-2025 Housing Revenue Business Account Plan includes proposals for the Capital Programme for 2024-2025 to 2028-2029 and recommends investment of around £429m to build, refurbish, remediate and improve Council housing. This significant investment will not only deliver new homes but will improve the energy efficiency and quality of homes and people's lives.

Our ambitions to reduce fuel poverty in the city through making the homes we live in warmer and more energy efficient will increase in pace and scale over the term of this housing strategy. The WMCA will benefit from devolved funding for retrofit, this will give a greater control to West Midlands Local Authorities so we develop place based approaches for our areas. In reducing fuel poverty, we would hope to see an improvement in health outcomes as there is an unquestionable relationship between poor housing and health.

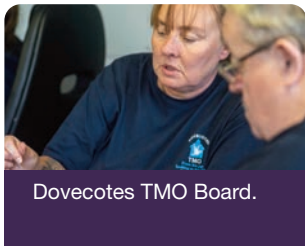
¹ Housing publications, briefings, consultations & reports | CIH

We aim to adopt an 'Invest to Save' approach by prioritising upfront investments in quality housing and infrastructure. This strategy will promote sustainable development and energy-efficient homes. We will be ambitious and innovative in providing housing solutions for vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and low-income families. This will lead to long-term savings by reducing future costs in maintenance, healthcare, and social care, while also offering environmental benefits, and enhancing the quality of life for city residents. Investing in housing will stimulate the local economy through job creation in construction and related industries, encouraging stable housing to improve residents' productivity and economic contributions. The strategy will lend support to the Night-Time Economy (NTE) with ambitions to support delivery of a range of development types, including mixed-use and affordable housing, creating neighbourhoods that thrive both day and night.

Developing our understanding of the housing stock in the city will help us to understand where resources are best placed. We are committed to improving private sector housing in the city and are already delivering on Government schemes that will improve the quality and energy efficiency in residents' homes having secured over 4 million in recent years to carry out retrofit measures to improve the energy efficiency of people who own their home. A new scheme is due to start in 2025 and we will be able to extend the support already being given. Our Private Rented Sector team continue to offer an exemplar service in tackling poor conditions in the sector and in ensuring that where illegal practice is identified, the full force of the council's powers is brought to bear. In addition, there is a commitment to ensuring that those in the poorest quality housing can access support when they need it.

We can and will replicate what has gone well and learn from where we could have done things better.





Dovecotes TMO Board.



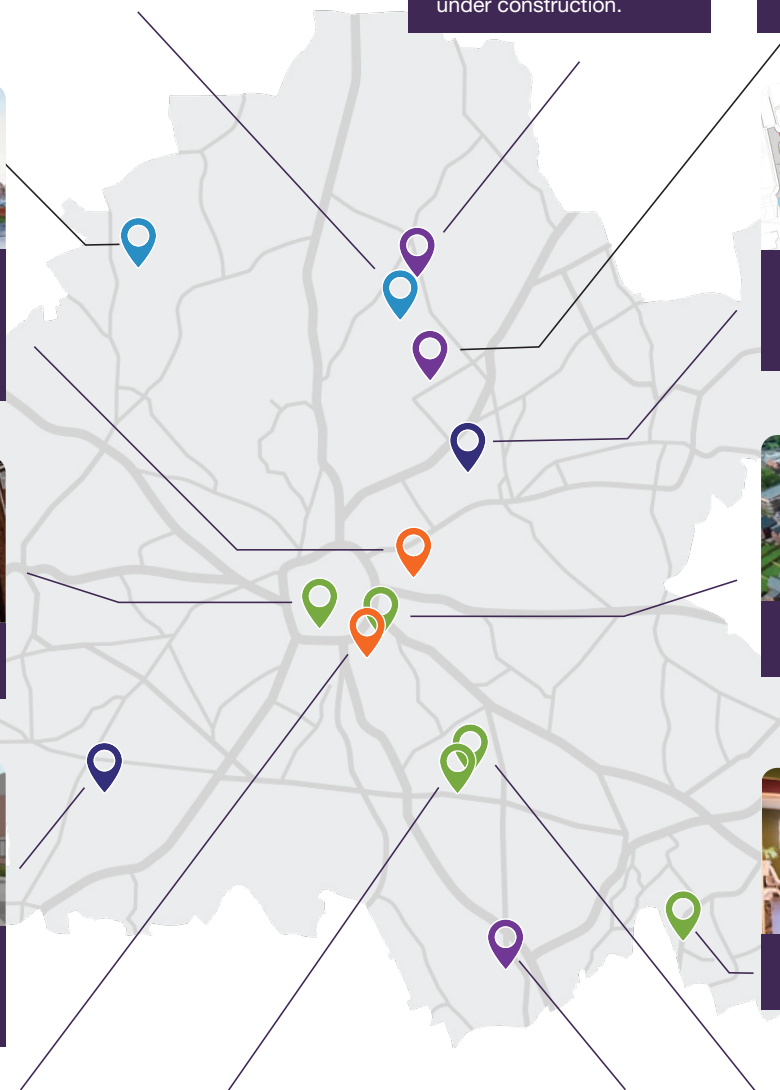
Bushbury Hill EMB Staff and Board Members.



Affordable Council Housing Development at Magic Gardens. 8 homes under construction.



Affordable Council Housing Development, 24 homes under construction.



Heath Town Council Affordable Housing Development and Regeneration, multi-phase construction programme.



New Park Village Estate Regeneration, 188 affordable properties planned for development.



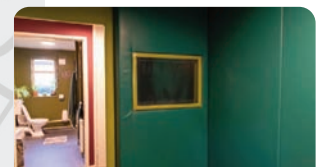
Single Persons Accommodation.



whg Affordable Housing Development.



Affordable Council Housing Development, 17 homes planned for construction.



Adapted Council Property.



whg 55+ Affordable Housing Wellbeing Scheme Development.



Retrofitted Council properties, managed by Wolverhampton Homes.



Affordable Council Housing Development, 11 homes under construction.



Retrofitted Council properties, managed by Wolverhampton Homes

KEY: Completed Under construction Planning Stages Ongoing Managing Agent

Delivering Change Through Partnership

In order to deliver on the ambitions for the city, it is essential that we are able to develop and sustain good relationships with a variety of stakeholders from developers to contractors, health and wellbeing services, retrofit specialists, our Managing Agents, our colleagues across departments and other housing providers in the city. Those relationships will serve to ensure that our residents receive the best possible service.

In building on existing partnerships and developing new ones, both locally and with our neighbouring authorities, we will not only be able to deliver more housing but improve the quality of existing homes. City Housing has several development sites which will be used to deliver new affordable housing, to help to achieve the provision of new homes, we will implement a framework so that our delivery partners are in place and can get started.

Already, plans are in place to redevelop our ageing and non-traditional homes, this will not happen overnight but by planning ahead and gathering the data and information needed, we can be ready to act and prioritise our resources, ensuring that the approach is the right one and allowing the time needed for residents to be involved in the process from as early as possible, only by working in collaboration can we overcome any obstacles and meet our priorities.

There is already in place a forum for Social Housing Providers from across the city, this forum gives a platform for providers to discuss operational concerns and share best practice. It is the intention to grow and develop this forum over the course of the housing strategy so that social housing providers are able to share expertise and ensure the provision of new affordable housing is a shared priority and that what we deliver is the 'Right Homes, in the Right Place.'

Rent with Confidence has undergone a refresh and is now the 'Call us First' service, proactively working with private sector landlords from across the city and regularly facilitating a Landlord Forum.

We are committed to building relationships with our tenants and leaseholders and have brought in Tpas, the tenant participation experts to support us in setting up tenant and leaseholder scrutiny panels both in the council and across all managing agents. This is so that tenants and leaseholders can be part of our decision making and hold us to account.



Homelessness

The Housing Strategy and Homelessness Prevention Strategy are closely interconnected and mutually reinforcing. The Housing Strategy focuses on offering a variety of affordable and secure housing options, ensuring that all residents have access to suitable accommodation. This approach helps mitigate the risk of homelessness by tackling fundamental issues like housing affordability and availability. Concurrently, the Homelessness Prevention Strategy emphasises early intervention and support services for individuals and families at risk of losing their homes. By providing temporary housing solutions, financial assistance, and access to support services, it helps stabilise vulnerable populations. Together, these strategies form a safety net that not only prevents homelessness but also fosters long-term housing stability and community well-being. This integrated approach ensures that housing policies are inclusive and responsive to the needs of all residents, promoting a more resilient and supportive community.

The priorities for the Homelessness Prevention Strategy include:

- **Advice and Guidance:** Encouraging City residents to make informed decisions about their own housing choices and options by providing access to a diverse range of advice and guidance services and tools that will alleviate homelessness.
- **Support:** Establishing quality and consistent support to prevent and relieve homelessness.
- **Emergency and Short-term Accommodation:** Enabling households who are 'roofless' to access a safe temporary place of shelter.
- **Move-on Accommodation:** Ensuring that safe, suitable and affordable accommodation is accessible to prevent and relieve homelessness and will be delivered working with City Housing.

The Housing Strategy will actively support the priorities and outcomes of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy. By collaborating, these strategies will assist residents at risk of homelessness by ensuring they receive the necessary help to prevent homelessness. They will offer comprehensive support for the homeless, including practical and emotional services. The strategies aim to reduce reliance on temporary accommodation by minimising the need for solutions like hotels and bed and breakfasts, except in emergencies, and to shorten the duration households spend in temporary housing.

Together, these strategies will ensure a cohesive approach to preventing and addressing homelessness, providing a robust support system for those in need.



Housing Strategy - Plan on a Page

Right homes, in the right places.



Make the best use of our assets and ensure high standards across all areas of council housing.



Work in partnership to drive up the standard and quality of the private rented sector.



Safe, secure and sustainable housing that supports good health and independence.



Driven by Digital



Fair & Equal

Climate Action



Wolverhampton Pound

Priority 1: Right homes, in the right places

Along with many local authorities in England, Wolverhampton is experiencing rising house prices and private rent levels and there is a lack of genuinely affordable housing to meet the growing need in the city. The city has an array of vibrant and diverse communities, each whilst often being very close together have marked differences in the type and tenure of housing and in their demographic.

There is a need for a range of social and affordable housing not least to meet the needs of an ageing population and to provide affordable homes to young people so that they have the opportunity to stay in the city. We need to work with our partners including Homes England, WMCA and Registered Providers to maximise funding opportunities to deliver more general needs, accessible and adaptable homes to rent and buy.

We need to build our temporary accommodation portfolio to stop the use of hotels for anything other than in an emergency situation. More importantly we need to be able to offer more support and guidance to prevent homelessness, and where homelessness is unavoidable be able to access more affordable housing so that time stays in temporary accommodation is as short as possible.

In addition to the absolute need for more genuinely affordable housing, we need to align our work with the councils plans for regeneration of the city centre, including how bringing forward a mixed tenure of new housing can support the Night Time Economy in the city centre. We can do this by working collaboratively with our Planning and Regeneration partners, using our extensive knowledge of the housing need in the city to ensure that any housing development brought forward has the needs of local residents at its heart as well as bringing forward opportunities to attract new Wulfrunians to the city.

We will ensure that new homes are built based on the needs of communities. We will engage with these communities and make decisions about housing needs guided by both quantitative and qualitative evidence.



Outcome	Objectives
Effectively align our available land and assets to meet housing need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the Wolverhampton Local Plan to make sure we use our land and assets in the best possible way to meet our long-term housing needs. • Continue to review our evidence base, and engage with our residents, to understand and act on changing housing needs across the city. • Work with our developers and through our council owned housing vehicle WV Living to create the new homes the city needs. • Align our assets, planning system, and investment approach to effectively support good public and private residential development in the city. • Maximise the delivery of Affordable Housing through S106 agreements.
Accelerate the delivery of genuinely affordable housing across the city to meet demand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and make use of HRA land to support the provision of affordable homes including home ownership. • Using our development framework, our Housing Development Team will create and build the affordable homes that the city needs. • Work closely with the private rented sector to gain access to more affordable homes. • Work innovatively to provide benefits for residents by building the affordable accommodation they need.
Varied, mixed-tenure housing offer which suits the housing needs of different demographics across the city.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a strong aspirational offer which retains and attracts talent and young professionals in the city. • Ensure fair and equal access to housing, where those with the greatest need have access to suitable homes. • Increase the supply of appropriate housing for homeless households to reduce the time spent in temporary accommodation

Priority 2: Make the best use of our assets and ensure high standards across all areas of council housing

Significant investment has been made to the council's stock in recent years including the refurbishment of Heath Town and the improvements made to homes in areas such as Rough Hills and Bradley. The work of our Managing Agents in ensuring our homes are safe, and in particular the work around the Building Safety Act (2022), has ensured there is extensive knowledge across housing services and residents, particularly in relation to fire safety. There remains much more to do in order to fulfil our aim to have homes of the highest possible standard which are safe, comfortable, and modern. In the coming years there will be heightened activity in both the refurbishment and redevelopment of existing homes beginning with the major redevelopment of estates such as New Park Village and the Tarran bungalows.

In addition, Housing owns various assets that we continue to review to ensure they reach full potential use. Dedicated officers are in place to carry out this work and during the course of this strategy there will be a full understanding of our non-residential assets and a plan for their use. We will also see the implementation of a Housing Asset Management Strategy which will set out the direction for council owned housing assets.

Setting high standards is not just bricks and mortar, we also want to ensure that we deliver the highest standards of customer care to all that need to access housing services including those that need access to advice and guidance on their housing options. This work has already started with improved access to housing advice, with the council and its managing agents each establishing their own Tenant Scrutiny Panels. Tpas the Tenant Participation and Advisory Service continue to work with us to ensure we deliver the very best service to both tenants and leaseholders.



Outcome	Objectives
Understand and best utilise our HRA assets including council housing and non-residential housing assets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a Housing Asset Management Strategy for Council Housing – and develop intelligence led asset management initiatives. • Maintain a thorough understanding of the stock condition of all council housing. • Carry out an annual audit on all HRA non-residential assets.
Increase the supply of good quality council housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where appropriate, bring forward additional properties on existing redevelopment sites. • Fully utilise all available HRA land to increase the supply of council homes. • Reduce under-occupation and overcrowding in social rented stock. • Use all available powers to ensure that properties that should be exempt from Right to Buy are.
Drive up the quality of existing council housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use our responsibilities and powers as a landlord to ensure we offer good quality housing. • Put residents at the heart of our work, with a strong focus on building safety.
Deliver safe and healthy homes through proactive resident engagement and empowerment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed robust Tenant Scrutiny across all Managing Agents and the Council as Landlord. • Ensure all tenants and leaseholders receive equality of opportunity to engage and influence the services they receive. • Deliver effective, accessible, and timely complaints processes for all tenants.

Priority 3: Work in partnership to drive up the standard and quality of the private rented sector

The private rented sector makes up around 20% tenure mix in the city, whilst there are many excellent landlords in the city, there remains a significant number of non-compliant landlords. The highest concentration of private sector housing is within three city wards, all with over 30% of homes being privately rented. Overcrowding in the private rented sector is also becoming increasingly common. During the course of this Housing Strategy we will seek to better understand the needs of private renters.

The Private Sector Housing Service (the Service) is proactive in ensuring housing standards and tenancy security in the private sector. They are responsive to dealing with serious complaints and in taking out enforcement action against those landlords who ignore their responsibilities.

Their work in ensuring private high-rise buildings meet fire safety standards has enabled many households to continue living in flats safely. The Service has also developed several processes to address with damp and mould in private rented homes and works closely with partners to identify households who are vulnerable to the effects of damp and mould.

The Service also operates a licensing scheme for large rented house shares, known as 'Houses in Multiple Occupation' (HMOs). Their work includes fully inspecting and ensuring these properties are safe and professionally managed for renters who share their accommodation with others.

To protect renters' rights, the Service adopts a robust approach to dealing with illegal evictions and landlord harassment practices. They form a pivotal role in the prevention of homelessness.

There are approximately 2,995 empty homes in the city, some are short term empty for a variety of reasons whilst others have remained empty for significant periods of time. Currently, around 536 homes have been empty for two years or more. The Service is committed to working with colleagues and partners to develop ways in which we can bring more of these homes into use.

The Council operates a Call Us First service, whose purpose is to not only prevent tenancy breakdown in the sector but to also forge links and relationships with landlords who operate in the city. We will build on this work during the course of the new Housing Strategy, adapting where we need to, in order to develop the relationship between landlords and their tenants.

Outcome	Objectives
<p>Understand and monitor housing conditions in the private rented sector.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop ways in which housing standards can be improved in areas where there is a high concentration of private rented homes. • Continue to build links with health and social care to ensure a speedy, coordinated response where there is evidence of home conditions affecting the health of householders. • Develop robust intelligence mechanisms to identify priority risks in the marketplace.
<p>Use our regulatory powers and relationship with landlords to drive up the quality of private rented housing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in partnership with landlords to embed good practice and improve standards in the private rented sector. • To improve the safety and quality of private rented homes through the use of enforcement powers, ensure they are managed professionally, and tenant rights are protected. • Ensure private landlords are held to account where there is failure to provide appropriate standards in private rented housing.
<p>To develop schemes to better utilise empty private properties in the city.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make best use of legislation with regards to charges for council tax to discourage long term empty properties in the city to increase housing stock in the city. • Improve communications with empty homes owners to encourage bringing empty homes back into use. • Further develop the approach to minimising the impact of empty homes on the surrounding area. • Explore the potential to bring empty homes back into use that supports meeting housing demand in the city.



Priority 4: Safe, secure and sustainable housing that supports good health and independence

The World Health Organisation published guidelines in relations to Health and Housing in 2018. The overview of the report highlights how improved housing conditions can save lives, prevent disease, increase quality of life, reduce poverty and help in mitigating climate change. The overview goes on to express the importance of collaboration between the various sectors, for us here in Housing, it is continuing to further grow and develop our understanding of the relationship between health and housing by working alongside our public health department and health providers. We can then establish how we can best improve our housing to reduce the impact of housing on resident's health and wellbeing. In addition, we are committed to working with social care colleagues and housing providers in ensuring that our independent living offer gives residents the opportunity to live comfortably and independently in a home that meets their current and future needs. In addition, we want to support children in having the best start in life and understand that their home environment is integral to their development. We acknowledge that we need to better understand the needs of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and commit to developing that understanding, we will respond by ensuring that our housing offer for people with disabilities takes account of individual need and is fair and inclusive.

Improvements we have already started to make is in our commitment to supporting the city in its net zero goals, we are already delivering on Government schemes to retrofit existing homes and anticipate this will be ready for a significant acceleration in the pace of delivering energy efficiency improvements in existing homes. This will not only support the City plans for decarbonisation but directly impacts on the health and comfort of residents. A further benefit is the financial savings for city residents in the reduction in their energy bills.

In recent years, we have also delivered on a more flexible Housing Assistance Policy and through our Arms Length Management Organisation, Wolverhampton Homes, have put significant investment into the development of a Home Improvement Agency, making it quicker and simpler for residents to get advice and support to receive aids and adaptations in their homes.

This Housing Strategy commits to working holistically with partners and colleagues in understanding where housing can best help to enable positives outcomes for our residents.

Outcome	Objectives
<p>Enable residents to stay in their own homes for longer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the development of a full range of housing options in the city that enable choice and good health, including level access/adapted properties. • Use the power of digital and technology to support independence and embed as standard into our adapted housing offer. • Promote and deliver older people's housing which provides choices and independence later in life. • Improve the Private Sector Housing Assistance offer to ensure those that need adaptations can access them at the point they need to.
<p>Work in partnership to maximise the housing sector's role in reducing health inequalities across the city.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen housing pathways in place for people in need of additional support. • Reduce the incidence of damp and mould through proactive and effective regulation and monitoring of council and private rented housing. • Develop a housing and health community champion scheme in the city.
<p>An increase in the provision of high quality accessible and supported and specialist accommodation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that residents who require specialist housing provision have access to homes and support services in an area that is right for them. • Continue to develop a full range of housing options that promote good health and wellbeing including accessible and adapted homes – and support people to maintain and adapt their homes to meet current and future needs. • Understand the diverse needs of our residents, including those with disabilities, care leavers, homeless families, and older people, to ensure they have access to homes and services right for them.
<p>Improve the energy efficiency of homes across all tenures of housing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed sustainability and energy efficiency as key principles in new housing development and ensure estate regeneration and place making (including demolitions) is directed by zero-carbon principles. • Drive forward large scale retrofit programmes to improve both energy efficiency and affordability of the existing stock. • Continue to capitalise on funding and schemes to improve energy efficiency performance in housing across the city. • Promote and facilitate funding and opportunities for retrofit or adaptations to improve the energy efficiency of owner-occupied housing across the city.



Our Role as a Landlord, Partner and Enabler

The City of Wolverhampton Council is one piece of a complex housing system which operates across a range of organisations on the local, regional and national scale. Locally, we have four managing agents that manage the housing stock on the council's behalf. They are made up of an Arm's Length Management Organisation who manage the majority of the stock and three Tenant Management Organisations. Aside from council owned housing, we are supported in accessing affordable housing by our registered providers who bring much needed housing into the city, including low-cost home ownership schemes. This is not all that we do, we work closely with our partners across the local authority and in the health trust as well as facilitating improvements and adaptations in the private sector.

We fully understand the crucial role that we play not only as a landlord, but also as a partner and enabler.



Landlord

As a landlord, we take great responsibility in providing safe, secure and healthy homes for our residents, and we continue to work to establish and embed ways to pro-actively hear our residents' voices and understand their experiences. We will ensure that:

- All tenants receive equal opportunity to be engaged with and influence the services they receive.
- We deliver effective, accessible, and timely complaints processes for all tenants.
- We understand the diverse needs of all our customers through making the best use of customer data.

Partner

We recognise and embrace our key role as a partner on the local, regional, and national scale. We will work effectively with partner organisations and registered providers, as well as landowners and developers, to ensure that we respond appropriately to local housing need and deliver safe, healthy homes to suit a broad range of housing needs across the city.

Enabler

As a key enabler we will align our assets, planning system, and investment approach to effectively support and enable good public and private development in our city. We will also use our regulatory powers and relationship with landlords to drive up the quality of the existing housing stock. We will also work across services, such as public health and adult social care, to provide a holistic approach to housing.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This strategy will be supported by a Delivery Plan which will identify and align the areas of work and specific tasks needed to deliver our priorities for housing.

The strategy will undergo annual refresh to account for any changes to legislation as well as changes to National, Regional and Local priorities.

Subgroups will be created for all priorities and performance will be reported to the Strategic Housing Board.

Key Performance Indicators have been developed to support both the Council Plan and the four priorities within the Housing Strategy:

Priority 1: Right homes, in the right places

- Net additional dwellings
- Number of developments across all tenures
- Number of households in temporary accommodation

Priority 2: Make the best use of our assets and ensure high standards across all areas of council housing

- Percentage of council stock that have had a stock condition survey carried out
- Tenant satisfaction overall percentage
- Increased opportunities for face-to-face engagement for tenants

Priority 3: Work in partnership to drive up the standard and quality of the private rented sector (PRS)

- Number of PRS tenancies sustained
- Increase in PRS engagement
- Number of PRS properties improved and/or brought back into use

Priority 4: Safe, secure and sustainable housing that supports good health and independence

- Adaptations completed through the Home Improvement Agency enabling residents to remain in their homes
- Retrofit funding and programmes across all tenures
- Developing and strengthening housing pathways to better support residents across all tenures

These KPIs will be built upon and a clear vision for what success will look like will form part of the Delivery Plan.





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City of Wolverhampton Council, Civic Centre, St. Peter's Square, Wolverhampton WV1 1SH