

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Council Housing

Asset Management Strategy 2024-2029



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1. Executive summary

1.1 Introduction & purpose

Cheshire West & Chester Council benefits from retaining ownership of 5,500 homes in the borough, concentrated in the areas of Ellesmere Port, Neston and Winsford. Although as a council we are both the owner and landlord, the management and maintenance of the stock is carried out by ForHousing who have signed a 10-year contract with the council which runs from 2017 to 2027, with the option to extend for a further 2 years.

This strategy describes the approach we will take to maximise the performance of our residential housing and other housing stock assets, deliver intelligence-based investment, maximise the positive impact of resources, and deliver sustainable neighbourhoods, thriving communities, and quality homes.

This strategy will, through the effective management of the council's own housing stock, support the wider objective as set out in the council's Housing Strategy, namely:

"To deliver homes of the right type, quality and cost in the right locations in line with the current and future needs of the population to ensure West Cheshire remains an attractive location to live and help ease affordability pressures."

There remains a desire to support sustainable communities and neighbourhoods, and alongside the provision of high-quality homes and investments, we will continue to ensure that all grant opportunities are grasped to support this ambition.

1.2 Context & priorities

At the time of writing, the country faces unprecedented challenges relating to climate change and a cost-of-living crises. The council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and this reflects the importance of reducing the carbon emissions including those from our own housing stock, with the ambition of achieving net zero by 2045. Meanwhile, pressure on individuals' finances from increasing fuel costs and high levels of general inflation mean that the energy efficiency of our homes has never been so important. Through proactive asset management and targeted investment, we will play our part in helping to address these pressures.

The additional inflationary pressures, labour shortages, and supply chain disruption are impacting on the cost of delivering works, meaning that the need to obtain value for money and deliver works which meet our objectives in the most efficient way possible remains essential. A clear understanding of our priorities will be invaluable in the coming years, and our approach to achieving this will be set out in this strategy.

The safety of our tenants has always been at the forefront of our asset management work, for example 99% of our homes have consistently met the decent homes standard and the introduction of the Building Safety Act 2022 has supported us in this aim. This approach has been strengthened further through the introduction of the Government backed compliance safety requirements, as well as the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023. Moreover, a recently formed in-house dedicated building safety team oversees all the day-to-day management for our high-rise buildings to ensure compliance with all safety legislation.

As a result of the death of Awaab Ishak due to significant levels of damp and mould in his parents flat, the condition of social housing has come under unprecedented scrutiny. We remain fully committed to ensuring that all our tenants are housed in homes that are safe and fit for purpose, and this is backed up in our new Tenant's Charter. In 2021, a damp and condensation task force were established, which revised our processes to ensure a robust response to any damp and condensation issues identified in our homes. The condition of our housing stock is a core requirement that the investment plan needs to meet. The continued focus on safety, decency and weather tightness already in place have put us in a strong position to manage our housing stock through the period of this strategy.

In 2019 a programme of neighbourhood schemes works were carried out to several areas most notably Sutton Way, Ellesmere Port. However, further work is needed to address the condition of some of our smaller neighbourhoods that deliver improvements to desirability and lettable.

In 2020, the council declared a poverty emergency, and developed 'A Fairer Future' - a strategy designed to guide the efforts of the Council, its partners, and local communities to help address the consequences and root causes of poverty and deliver a fairer future for all. Fuel poverty is only one element of poverty but ensuring our homes are well maintained and energy efficient will contribute towards our tenants enjoying a good standard of living.

As a council we have produced a Fuel Poverty Strategy in collaboration with our partners and stakeholders and in consultation with the public. This recognised how important homes are to health and wellbeing, including the risks that cold homes bring. We are working closely with internal and external teams to address the fuel poverty crisis and have developed an action plan that:

- Reduces debt and maximises household income;
- Improves our tenants' health and wellbeing by addressing cold-related illness;
- Improves the energy efficiency of our homes;
- Increases renewable and low carbon technology in domestic properties and finally;
- Encourages behavioural change to reduce energy usage.

This strategy will build on the above aims and ensure that our tenants live in homes that are energy efficient. To help us to deliver, we will use household profiles and the wider demographic in our approach to option appraisal, to ensure decision making supports the strategic vision for the borough and the needs of our tenants. We will commit to using supporting information to target additional resources intelligently, for example the installation of solar PV and battery storage where there are vulnerable tenants who have high energy usage from medical interventions at home.

1.3 Developing this strategy.

Over the duration of 12 months, we have worked in partnership with ForHousing the council's strategic housing partner, other partners and our tenants to develop a vision and plan that builds on the previous strategy, whilst meeting any new objectives identified in this strategy. In devising this strategy, we have been informed by the financial investment that has already been made in our housing stock, and what investment is projected to be available in the years ahead.

This strategy is closely linked with other council strategies that seek to deliver actions and improve the lives of residents living in the borough.

- Cheshire West Place Plan
- Cheshire West Council Plan 2020 – 2024
- Cheshire West & Chester Council Fairer Futures Strategy
- Cheshire West & Chester Council Fuel Poverty Strategy

This strategy also links with the Together with Tenants Charter which has been developed in partnership with tenants and details our five pledges: communication; responsibility; your community; quality of your home and finally; your safety.

2. Progress made so far

Since the last strategy was launched in 2018, we have made significant improvements to our housing stock, which in turn has been a positive benefit to our tenants' lives. This section outlines some of the improvements we have made.

Positive Outcomes Achieved So Far

- 100% gas safety compliance record.
- 99.4% decent homes standard rating.
- 98.43% tenant satisfaction rating with our capital investment delivery programme.
- 98.18% tenant satisfaction with the repairs service.
- 94% electrical certification.
- 196 properties benefitted from a European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funded solar panel & EWI project.
- Completion of a fire safety programme including sprinklers to our high-rise blocks at Joseph Groome Towers.
- Neston common area loft asbestos removal.
- Delivered a £15m neighbourhood improvement scheme in Sutton Way, Ellesmere Port.
- 380 new affordable homes have been built in the areas of Ellesmere Port, Neston and Winsford.
- Carried out a comprehensive review of our garage stock which will see demolition and new build housing delivered.

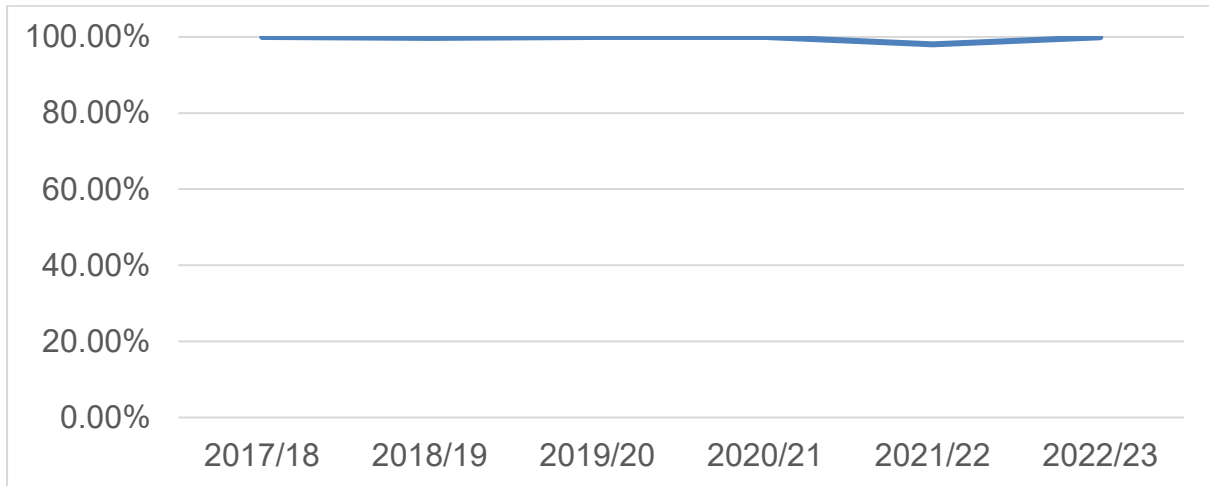
2.1 Compliance and Health & Safety

As a council we have always taken the health and safety of our tenants extremely seriously, and the last strategy aimed to increase standards around safety. As a result, over the last five years major investment to achieve decent homes compliance has taken place, with the current decent homes standard for our stock exceeding 99%. Throughout the duration of the previous strategy, we have consistently maintained very high levels of decent homes compliance, with minor exceptions where a need for work is identified and then completed, usually within the same year.

Furthermore, work to ensure decent homes is achieved has included major kitchen and bathroom investment programmes. Other notable investments have included the installation of sprinkler systems to our three high-rise blocks, as well as the retrofitting of external wall insulation to our non-traditional stock.

A chart detailing our decent home compliance record is depicted overleaf.

Decent homes compliance

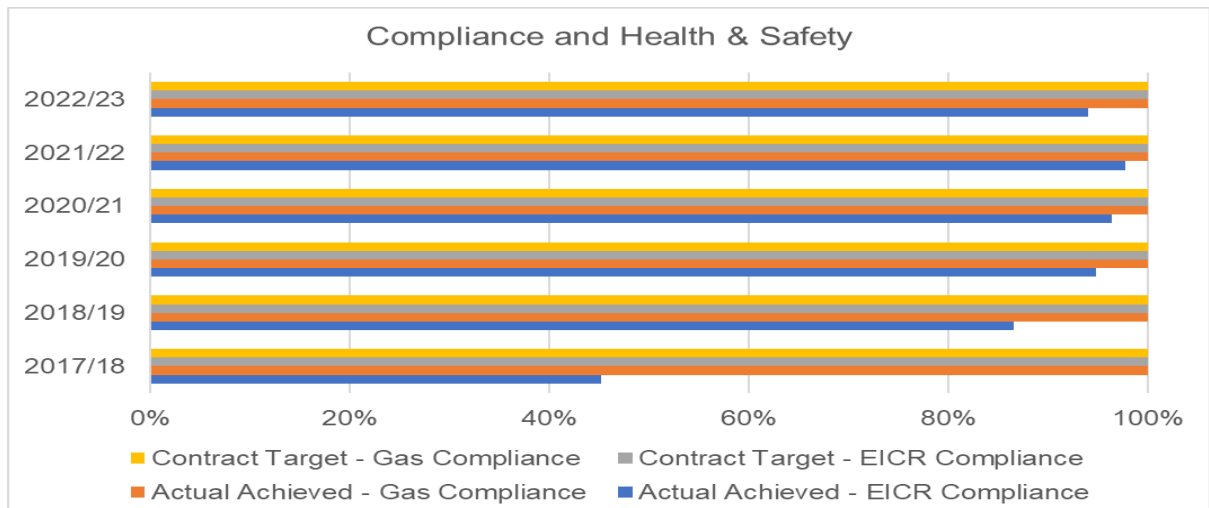


2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
99.98%	99.71%	100%	100%	98.06%	99.94%

The above chart and table show that we have consistently achieved decent homes compliance at 99% with the exception of financial year 2021/22 where there was a 2% drop due to the lockdowns caused by the Covid 19 pandemic.

In addition to the high decent homes compliance figure, we can report a gas safety compliance rating of 100%. At the same time there has been a significant increase in electrical inspection and certification from 45% in 2018 to 94% in 2023. We have also introduced enhancements to inspection regimes relating to water hygiene and contractor’s competence. Where appropriate, enhancements to building safety beyond the base requirements have been put in place, such as the introduction of arc fault detection devices into the specification for electrical installations to support fire safety.

A chart detailing both our gas and electrical safety compliance is available below.



	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Gas safety	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Electrical safety	45.2%	86.5%	94.8%	96.4%	97.7%	94%

The above chart and table show that our gas safety compliance record has consistently been rated at 100%, whilst our electrical certification has improved from a low of 45.2% in 2018 to 94% today.

2.2 Service Quality

In addition to the high levels of decency as well as gas and electrical certification safety compliance, we have also made significant improvements in the quality of our repairs and refurbishment service and this is evidenced through our customer satisfaction which has been steadily rising over the last five years, as depicted in the chart below:



2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
89.19%	87.56%	92.06%	96.14%	95.41%	98.42%

The above chart and table show that satisfaction with the repairs and refurbishment service has been rising steadily from 89.19% in 2018 to 98.42% in 2023.

2.3 Planned investment outcomes

With the decent homes compliance of the stock now maintained to a very high level, feedback from our tenants identified that the new priorities for tenants were improving the building fabric and external environment, and our analysis of stock data supports this. To help meet this new priority, it was identified that around 470 properties had roofs that were nearing the end of their lifecycle. This resulted in a five-year (2018-2022) roofing programme being rolled out with a total spend of

£3.5m to replace the roofs of those properties. In addition to this, tenant feedback also identified that a kitchen and bathroom refurbishment programme is their priority, as well as a replacement windows, doors and heating programme, all with the aim of improving the energy efficiency of our housing stock.

The table below shows the volumes of components installed over the last five years.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Roofing	138	87	148	0	97
Windows & doors	110	249	285	302	42
Kitchens	47	91	0	80	57
Bathrooms	88	81	9	70	43
Heating system replacements	290	346	229	248	342

The table above shows that over the last five years 470 properties have had their roof replaced; 988 properties benefitted from our new window and door replacement programme; 566 properties formed part of our kitchen and bathroom refurbishment programme and finally; 1,455 properties benefitted from our heating installation programme.

Example of a typical kitchen refurbishment



Example of a typical roof refurbishment



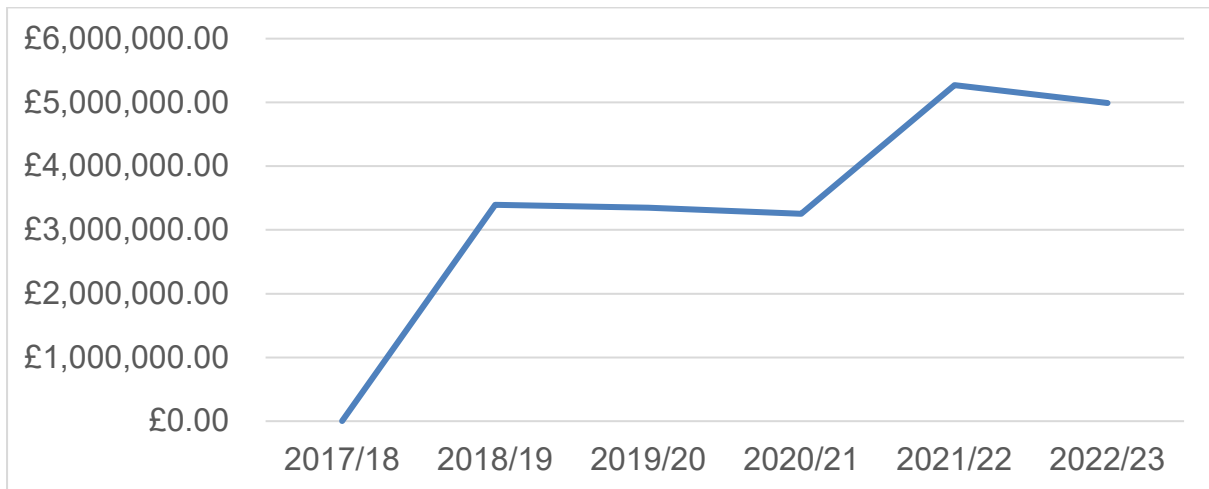
Example of our window replacement programme



The cost of the planned investment programme over the last five years has totalled approximately £22.7m, meaning an annual average spend of approximately £4.5m.

The chart and table below show our overall annual spend on planned investment over the last five years (2018-2022).

Overall annual spend on planned investment.



2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
£2,538,000	£3,391,722	£3,348,915	£3,252,434	£5,270,847	£4,991,857

In addition to our planned investment refurbishment programme, tenants also wanted the council to invest in local neighbourhood improvement schemes, which sought to find the most effective improvements to improve lettable, sustain asset performance, and improve overall tenant satisfaction with the built environment. Following extensive analysis of supporting data, as well as significant tenant consultation, a targeted investment project for Sutton Way, Ellesmere Port was realised. This £15m neighbourhood improvement scheme will complete summer 2024 and includes works to increase the visual appeal, lettable and liveability of the existing flats, free up space for new development which will add more variety to the local stock make up, and addresses aging components throughout the buildings.

Images of Sutton Way capital investment programme in Ellesmere Port.

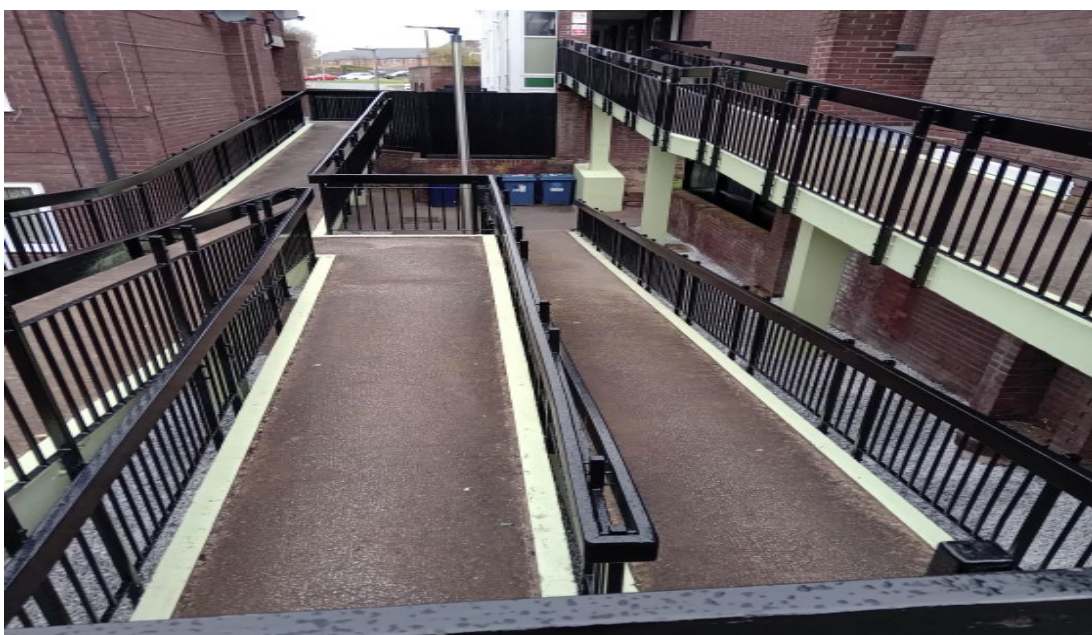


In addition to the Sutton Way improvement scheme, smaller neighbourhood improvement schemes have taken place on the Ringway estate and Churchill Court in Neston.

Neighbourhood improvements on the Ringway estate, Neston which were completed in March 2023.



Neighbourhood improvements at Churchill Court, Neston which were completed in October 2022.



2.4 Development of new homes

As a council, we recognise the important role we play as one of the largest social landlords providing affordable housing in the borough. Since 2017 we have made a significant investment of circa £13m in direct funding and £8.5m in land value, resulting in 380 new homes being built across the borough in the areas of Ellesmere Port, Neston and Winsford. Our development of new housing is based on carrying out housing needs analysis which identifies the type of properties we need as well as their location with a priority of helping to meet demand where the supply of affordable housing is severely limited.

Two and three bedroomed new build homes on the Riveacre estate in Ellesmere Port with tenants moving in December 2022.



Two and three bedroomed new build homes in Wharton Green in Winsford with tenants moving in March 2023.

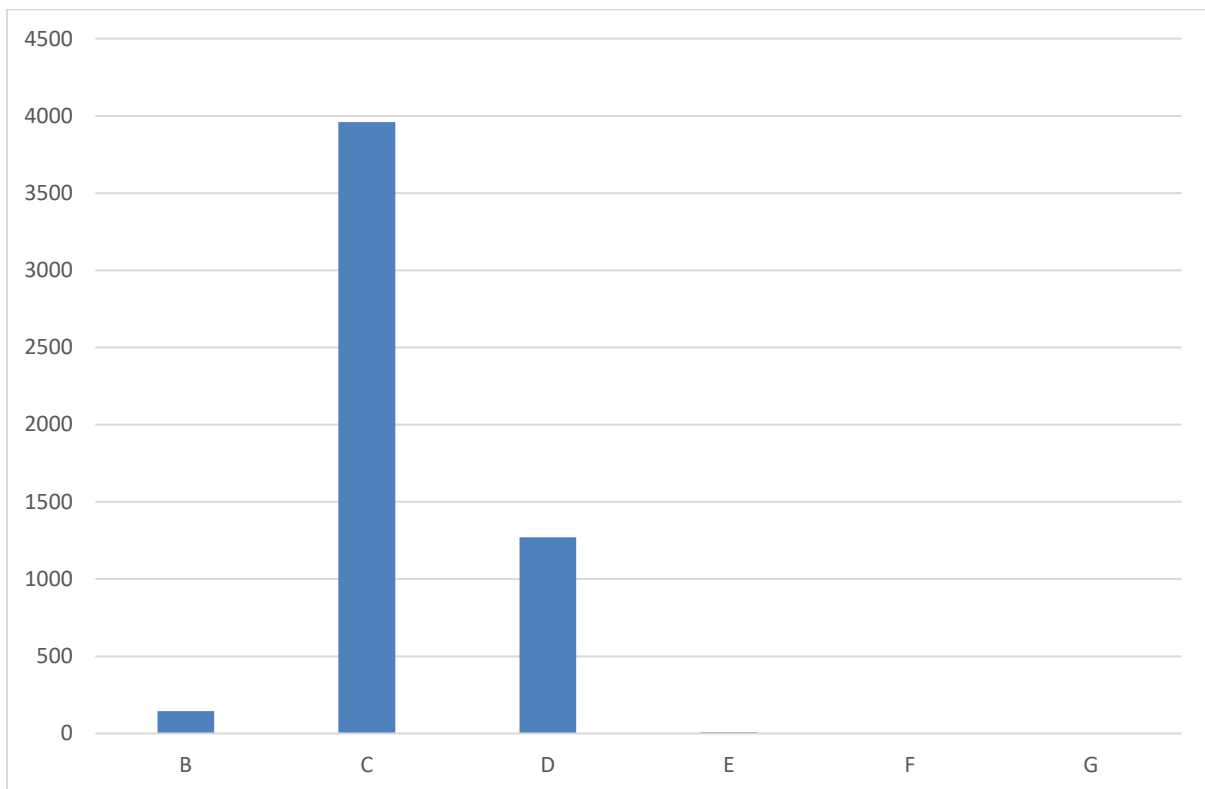


2.5 Energy efficiency measures

As previously stated, investment programmes have ensured that the non-traditional and solid walled homes in our housing stock have been part of an external wall insulation programme. In addition, our window and door replacement programme as well as the installation of solar panels to 196 properties in 2019 & 2020 have all contributed to significant improvements to the energy efficiency of those homes. We were able to lever in £0.5m of European Regional Development Funding (ERDF), which provided 50% of the funding for an external wall insulation programme to the remaining 21 solid wall addresses in the stock and for 196 Solar PV systems to be installed. At the same time, throughout the 2018-2022 period 1,455 new energy efficient boiler installations were completed at a value of £1.4m.

As a result of the above investment programmes, the stock is well placed to meet the current and upcoming Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard requirements. The current Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating profile of the stock is indicated in the chart and table below:

Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating



EPC Rating	Count
B	144
C	3959
D	1270
E	8
F	1
G	0

The above chart and table show that in total 4,103 properties have a high energy efficiency rating of EPC Band C or above. There are 1,278 properties with an EPC rating of D or E with 1 property having an EPC rating of F. It should be noted that the 1 property with an F were the result of previous refusals of investment work and these will be addressed as these properties become void.

2.6 Addressing fuel poverty.

By delivering a rolling boiler renewal programme and staying ahead of demand for renewals, we have been able to ensure that our homes have the most cost-effective form of heating in place. This has been supplemented by changes to other specifications, such as the inclusion of a power shower within the standard bathroom specification, meaning reduced water usage and a reduction to the cost of heating water.

The focus in recent years has been on the external fabric of the buildings and the annual programmes to renew roofs, windows and doors have contributed to a fabric first approach to providing warm homes. New loft insulation is included within the standard re-roofing specification to support this objective.

The planning of programmed works considers fuel poverty, making use of high-quality components to maximise energy efficiency, and using household profile information to inform retrofit schemes. For example, the 2019/20 ERDF funded Solar PV scheme considered which households were likely to have high or unaffordable energy usage when planning which properties were to benefit from this programme.

3. Our vision and objectives

This strategy reflects, compliments and supports our vision statement for all council owned housing which states:

“We aim to provide affordable homes of the right type and quality to meet the housing needs of those who are unable to meet their own needs in the housing market now and in the future. We will work in partnership to support our tenants to prosper and improve their wellbeing and ensure neighbourhoods and communities are sustainable, safe and pleasant”.

To help embed the above aim, this strategy details six objectives which will oversee our work over the next five years as follows:

- Ensure homes are fit for purpose;
- Ensure homes are safe to live in;
- Ensure homes help meet housing needs;
- Help contribute to social and environmental wellbeing;
- Reduce carbon emissions & environmental impact and finally;
- Ensure there is effective financial control overseeing our work.

3.1 Ensure homes are fit for purpose.

Maintaining the quality of our stock remains a core principle behind our approach to asset management and our investment plan reflects this. The plan ensures that our homes remain fit for purpose and the renewal of essential components is completed in a timely manner. This objective will help to ensure that all our tenants live in homes which meet and exceed the decent homes standard.

To ensure our homes are fit for purpose we will commit to:

- Maintaining our housing stock to the decent homes standard;
- Continuing to ensure our understanding of our housing stock is at a high level by conducting regular stock condition surveys that encompass 20% of overall stock per annum, and maintaining a stock condition database;
- Using information from other inspection regimes, responsive repairs data and local knowledge;
- Ensuring our maintenance investment plan is realistic, sustainable and achieves value for money for our tenants;
- Ensuring that the investment available reflects what we will do and that it considers the actual cost and availability of building materials;
- Working with our tenants to consult with them when we need to carry out any major maintenance and/or refurbishment work;
- Ensuring we do everything we can to make sure that all maintenance and/or refurbishment work is completed within specified time periods and where this is not possible, we will keep tenants informed;
- Ensuring that adaptations are delivered efficiently, simplifying the pathway for occupational therapists to assess and recommend adaptations to our

properties, so that our tenants can live well at home longer thus, avoiding the need to move home or secure supported living or residential accommodation;

- Adapting our investment plan to keep pace with technological development by understanding the latest and upcoming products and how they can help us to maximise the performance of our housing stock;
- Replacing any analogue signal-based technology such as that used in door entry systems with digital alternatives and finally;
- Replacing the aging components in our high-rise blocks at Joseph Groome Towers in Ellesmere Port. Refurbishment work will include: replacing windows; improving the external environment; replacing any internal doors which were not captured by previous fire safety led investment; infrastructure pipework where required; and replacing the heating system. Our ambition is to move to a more sustainable heating system with a communal heat source.

3.2 Ensure homes are safe to live in.

We are proud of our record of having consistently maintained compliance and driven improvements in the standard of safety in our housing over the duration of the previous strategy. We have extended our comprehensive approach around safety by ensuring full compliance with the Building Safety Act 2022. Our dedicated building safety team will ensure that our tenants live in homes that safe and that meet all the required health and safety compliance requirements.

To ensure our homes are safe to live in we will commit to:

- Maintaining statutory and regulatory compliance in relation to all our homes, including 100% continuous gas compliance;
- Target investment to reduce compliance risks where appropriate;
- Ensuring that we employ fully qualified and experienced maintenance staff that use robust processes and systems that comply with all regulations and safety legislation;
- Embedding a culture across our staff teams to ensure that damp and mould is treated as a core health and safety concern and that our staff understand the potential impact on our tenants mental and physical wellbeing. Moreover, we will consider new building safety statutory requirements in this service area and seek to ensure we are carrying out any appropriate building works to resolve damp cases where they occur. We will introduce a proactive workstream that makes our homes more resilient to damp, which will be led by analysis of data on the causes of damp within the stock.

3.3 Ensure our homes help meet housing needs.

As one of the largest providers of social housing in the borough we play a significant role in providing affordable housing to those residents who lack the ability to access owner occupation, or private rented sector housing. This strategy allows us to better understand the future needs of our housing stock that is based on predicted economic and demographic change.

By understanding our existing stock, we will be able to tailor our provision and direct people towards the most suitable accommodation for their needs, including reusing previously adapted properties. Our approach will consist of building new homes via our capital investment programme as well as buying back previously sold homes that were bought under the Right to Buy legislation.

3.3.1 Building for the future.

The Council continues to deliver new build homes within its strategic vision and is currently delivering 16 new homes within its Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to meet general needs demand at Sutton Way, in Ellesmere Port. This £2.4m project will complete in 2024 and all homes will be available for affordable rent. £193,000 of this project has been funded by Homes England.

The council's Housing Strategy has the aim of: 'Increasing and enabling delivery to provide homes that meet the needs of single people and those households requiring more than 4 bedrooms. We have identified several sites for housing delivery using funding from the housing revenue account over the next five years. For example, 8 former Garage sites across the Ellesmere Port area, which have the potential to provide 32 homes. Modular construction will be explored for these sites.

Over the next five years an evaluation of all housing revenue account land will be undertaken to identify whether there are further sites which might be underutilised and available for redevelopment. Recent changes to the Homes England Affordable Housing Programme 2021-2026 also present an opportunity to consider any housing stock in low demand, and consider regeneration opportunities, providing there is a net gain in the number of new homes being provided overall.

The Council remains keen to work with ForHousing, as its housing management contractor on other non HRA sites across the west of the borough and discussions are ongoing as to how these schemes will be brought forward to maximise viability and increase the overall available housing stock.

3.3.2 Council home buy back

The council's Strategic Acquisitions Policy includes both the buyback of ex-council homes and the acquisition of homes on the open market. The policy targets homes that will enable us to meet unmet or under resourced housing need identified through the housing register. Properties will also be considered where their purchase will

return to the council majority ownership of a block or street and where this would facilitate better housing management or refurbishment activities. Properties are assessed to establish:

- Potential housing demand for the property;
- Whether the property is part of a block or street that is owned primarily by the local authority and finally;
- Financial viability of the property considering initial cost, any repair costs and housing management fees against the income derived through rent.

We may also consider the purchase of properties to meet specific, high specialist housing for households whose needs are such that they cannot be met through the usual housing stock. It is expected that this will involve significant partnership working with colleagues from health and social care.

The number of properties purchased each year will depend on:

- The agreed budget;
- The priorities identified and finally;
- The availability of suitable properties.

We will consider every offer of buy back made to us however, there is no obligation on us to purchase properties including those where we have the right of first refusal.

To ensure our homes help meet housing need we will commit to:

- Monitoring local demand, using demographic data, and analysing demand levels for our various types of property by area;
- Ensuring that the size, type and location of existing and new homes meet the need of the population;
- Maximising the availability of housing to existing and future tenants;
- Reviewing opportunities to ensure that the homes we provide closely match our tenant profile, including considering altering existing stock where it is underperforming, buy backs of former housing revenue account homes where they contribute to the profile we need, and the new build programme and finally;
- Working closely with the independent living services including Homekey+ to help our tenants to enjoy maximum possible independence.

3.4 Contribute to social and environmental wellbeing.

Our approach to planned neighbourhood investment is led by each neighbourhood scheme where our housing is located. We have set aside a budget to focus on the external environment and the common areas of the homes we manage, assessing the most beneficial set of works to a specific neighbourhood each year and providing proactive works.

The garage sites remain a challenging element to address as the income generated is unable to repay the cost of investment. They also present challenges due to the limited use of these spaces. The neighbourhood scheme approach is an opportunity to address these sites in the context of broader investment into an area, designing the overall package of works to provide a combined benefit to a locality.

- Ensuring that any improvements made are adapted to maximise the benefit in each neighbourhood;
- Carrying out meaningful consultation with our tenants to ensure that our plans respond to the things tenants care about most in their local area;
- Valuing the social model of disability, which suggests that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference. We will design our investments in the built environment with consideration to this model;
- Understanding the impact of our wider investment programme on the quality of neighbourhoods and finally;
- Carrying out an options appraisal of our current garage sites and considering developing sites that are no longer fully occupied and are causing a blight to the surrounding area.

3.5 Reduce carbon emissions & environmental impact.

In 2019 the council voted unanimously to declare a climate emergency and focus on climate change as an organisational priority most notably, to become carbon neutral by 2045. At present around 14% of the borough's carbon emissions are from domestic properties, a proportion of which will be derived from our own housing stock. To meet national and local carbon reduction targets, developing low-carbon housing and retrofit schemes will be pivotal to our future delivery plans.

By maximising the efficiency of our investment in our own housing stock and planning our investment programmes using neighbourhood sustainability measures we can support our tenants housing needs whilst also becoming carbon neutral. Our approach to improving the energy efficiency of the stock will help us to combat the risk of damp and condensation by balancing the need for ventilation, insulation, draught proofing, and efficient heat sources.

To ensure we reduce carbon emissions and environmental impact we will commit to:

- Seeking out the most effective ways to reduce the carbon footprint of our housing stock;
- Targeting the least efficient homes for improvements starting with those with an Energy Performance Certificate rating of below band C;
- Combating the risk of damp, mould and condensation by balancing the need for ventilation, insulation, draught proofing, and efficient heat sources;

- Developing scenario plans which will consider the investment required to deliver EPC Band C rating by 2028 and net zero by 2045;
- Considering the environmental impact of all improvement works we carry out to include for example installing showers as part of our standard bathroom specification, helping to reduce water consumption, lower carbon emissions and cost of living impact;
- Seeking out opportunities for efficient practices, such as installing solar PV installations whilst roofing repairs are carried out;
- Minimising the carbon footprint of our maintenance activities by working with delivery partners to be efficient in how we travel to appointments, and how we use and recycle materials;
- Keeping abreast of changing regulation and new technology to ensure we provide the most appropriate heating to the homes we manage;
- Working in partnership to achieve the best outcomes for the housing stock generally and following this philosophy to maximise the funding acquired to deliver energy efficiency investment works;
- Investigating the feasibility of introducing a low carbon heating system for our high-rise blocks at Joseph Groome Towers, Ellesmere Port and finally;
- Working with our tenants in addressing fuel poverty by supporting them in maximizing their income and reducing their consumption of energy where possible.

3.6 Ensure there is effective financial control overseeing our work.

There is a need for us to balance competing demands on our investment programme, particularly at this time where inflation and supply chain disruption has increased the cost of building works. The quality of our homes impacts their financial viability, and through proper investment we can improve void turnaround and reduce repair costs.

To support this, we will monitor data from sources including stock surveys, repair enquiries and complaints, as well as our stock condition database, to ensure the year-on-year budgets can support well timed investment. We will ensure our software is up to date and fit for purpose and use these tools to ensure our analysis of investment options is intelligent.

To ensure we maintain effective financial control overseeing our work we will commit to:

- Working within our tender procedure to ensure we are obtaining value for money;
- Regularly review our specifications to ensure that we are balancing financial efficiency, climate impact, and robust products which will repay the initial investment with longevity;
- Ensuring our tendered works deliver lasting value by including weighted quality assessments in tenders;

- Analysing both the financial performance of our homes, using a net present value model, and the non-financial performance, via neighbourhood indicators;
- Identifying groups of homes which negatively impact the viability of our housing stock and appraise options to improve the performance of these homes or replace them where this is deemed appropriate, following consultation with tenants and other stakeholders and finally;
- Returning maximum benefit from our investment by targeting works intelligently, maximising the lifecycle obtained from components without reducing the quality of the homes we manage.

4. How we will get there

To ensure we achieve both our aim and objectives, we have developed an action plan which details specific actions to be achieved over the lifespan of this strategy. We have also developed the following performance indicators:

- Average Net Present Values* of the existing stock
- Average tenancy length
- Level of existing property turnover
- Property bids on existing stock
- Average property letting period
- Average SAP ratings of homes
- Level of customer satisfaction for maintenance and investment related services

*Net Present Value is a measure of the performance of a home which takes account of its income versus expenditure. A positive NPV means that the council is receiving more income in the form of rent and service charges than it is expending in repairs, maintenance and management of the dwelling.

4.1 Action Plan

Objective 1 – Ensure homes are fit for purpose.

Action	Outcome	Lead	Target date
Carry out a review of the current stock condition survey and update as required.	Understand housing stock, recommendations, capital delivery requirements and ensure that 100% of the HRA properties are inspected during the lifetime of this strategy.	CWAC ForHousing	March 2024
Carry out a quarterly review of the percentage of decency achieved against targets set in performance management framework dashboard.	Initial reduction in decent homes compliance as works are identified, followed by a return to high levels of compliance as they are completed.	CWAC ForHousing	Quarterly

Objective 1 – Ensure homes are fit for purpose continued.

Action	Outcome	Lead	Target date
Review the revised lettable standard for both void and occupied properties to ensure it aligns more closely with tenant aspirations	Reduce the number of refusals when tenants are bidding and accepting homes.	ForHousing	April 2024
Continue to work in partnership with occupational therapists when a major and minor adaptation has been requested by a tenant.	Continue to ensure the adaptation identified and proposed by the OT is delivered to the timescale.	ForHousing	Ongoing
Deliver and keep under constant review the demand for capital investment works that reflects the budgets confirmed for 2024-2026.	Gain an understanding of more intense and higher volumes of capital delivery to ensure the level of decency is achieved in the correct area of investment (kitchens, bathrooms, roofing etc.)	ForHousing	Ongoing
Work closely with tenants to try to ensure acceptance of capital works following any initial refusals and inform tenants on why the works need to be completed.	Ensuring the home is fit for purpose and all components within the home are adhering to compliance and regulations	ForHousing	Ongoing

Objective 2 – Ensure homes are safe to live in.

Action	Outcome	Lead	Target date
Ensure a 100% achieved target for gas servicing	Full compliance with gas safety regulations and legislation	ForHousing	Monthly
Ensure a 100% electrical safety compliance (EICRs) per home and communal area.	Complying with best practice electrical safety regulations and legislation	ForHousing	Monthly (adhered to compliance of 5 years or new tenancy)
Keep under review the percentage of asbestos surveys we hold on our housing stock adhering to all required legislation.	Clear position of the asbestos surveys held on the housing stock and any remedial / removal works that needs to be completed prior to capital investment works.	ForHousing	Monthly
In partnership with the Council, ensure that ventilation is a key priority when installing energy efficiency measures and that tenants are aware of the need to use installed ventilation to reduce damp and mould	Encourage behavioural change to reduce energy use.	CWAC ForHousing	Ongoing

Objective 3 - Ensure homes help meet housing needs.

Action	Outcome	Lead	Target date
Devise a council home buy back Policy.	Increase the supply of affordable housing within the borough.	CWAC	April 2024
Identify an annual budget for council home buy back	Reduce the loss by acquiring the asset and being able to approve the buy back quickly through an approved budget limit.	CWAC	April 2024

Objective 3 Ensure homes help meet housing needs continued.

Action	Outcome	Lead	Target date
Determine whether a joint venture agreement between ForHousing and the council and be put in place to develop homes on HRA and other land.	Reach a legal agreement which sets out the preferred delivery mechanism for new homes.	CWAC ForHousing	April 2024
Ensure appropriate financial resources are in place alongside borrowing and external grant to bring forward new developments.	Increase the supply of affordable housing within the borough.	CWAC	April 2024
Carry out a review of our housing stock to see if any properties could be adapted and converted into high demand housing for example, one-bedroom flats.	Making better use of our housing stock through conversion and adaptation where appropriate.	CWAC ForHousing	August 2024
Work with partners to bring forward sites that are best suited for general housing needs.	Increase the supply of affordable housing within the borough.	CWAC	October 2024
Set an annual budget within the HRA capital programme for pre-development activities.	Seek out all opportunities within the existing HRA land and property assets to provide new homes.	CWAC	April 2025
Bring forward the development of 8 former garage sites to provide new homes as a pilot to any new joint venture agreement.	Increase the supply of affordable housing within the borough.	CWAC ForHousing	April 2026

Objective 3 – Ensure homes help meet housing needs continued.

Action	Outcome	Lead	Target date
Conduct a review of all underdeveloped land within the HRA to determine sites appropriate for new development.	Provide a test bed for house building either using HRA land or other assets as appropriate.	CWAC ForHousing	March 2027
Use housing demand data to determine what properties are required (location, adaptations, bedrooms etc.)	Gain a better understanding of the housing needs of those residents on low incomes.	CWAC	Ongoing
Make best use of housing revenue account land to provide additional units of accommodation.	Increase the supply of affordable housing within the borough.	CWAC	Ongoing
Explore working with private developers to provide additional affordable housing on developments offering 30% affordability scheme.	Increase the supply of affordable housing within the borough.	CWAC	Ongoing
Consider the benefits of introducing an incentive for tenants to downsize where they are under occupying their property	Increase the availability of larger affordable housing within the borough.	CWAC	April 2024

Objective 4 - Help contribute to social and environmental wellbeing.

Action	Outcome	Lead	Target date
Ensure social value and environmental wellbeing considerations form part of all contracts.	Greater opportunities for local residents to gain qualifications and work experience.	ForHousing	April 2024
Review and identify any neighbourhood schemes through identifying priorities and engaging with local tenants and members.	Our neighbourhoods are maintained to a good standard which is pleasing to tenants.	ForHousing	Ongoing

Objective 5 – Reduce carbon emissions and environmental impact.

Action	Outcome	Lead	Target date
Implement a data platform to accurately model sustainability data for various scenarios to include required capital investment and achieving net zero etc.	A detailed options appraisal is carried out that depicts various scenarios and their required investment.	CWAC ForHousing	April 2024
Liaise with Scottish Power Energy Networks reference grid capacities.	Identification of areas where grid capacity may impede installation of renewable technologies, impacting on development and investment plans.	CWAC ForHousing	July 2024
Investigate the options to roll out affordable clean heat technology post 2026.	New and replacement boilers to be replaced with fossil fuel alternative technologies to reduce carbon emissions.	CWAC ForHousing	May 2024
Increase the amount of energy used in domestic properties produced from renewable sources.	Increasing renewable and low carbon technology in domestic properties.	CWAC ForHousing	December 2024
Ensure all stock achieves a minimum EPC Band C rating by 2028.	Work towards decarbonisation of our own housing stock is achieved by 2045.	CWAC ForHousing	March 2028

Objective 5 – Reduce carbon emissions & environmental impact continued.

Action	Outcome	Lead	Target date
Keep under review all our current stock condition data.	The condition of our stock is regularly updated.	ForHousing	Ongoing
In partnership with the Council, explore where funding could be provided to support simple home improvements such as draught proofing, LED lighting, insulation, foil backing for radiators etc.	Increasing renewable and low carbon technology in domestic properties.	CWAC Forhousing	Ongoing
Explore and identify potential funding opportunities for whole house retrofit schemes.	Appropriate funding streams are realised and taken advantage of in a timely manner.	CWAC ForHousing	Ongoing
Explore Invest to Save opportunities such as Salix or similar.	Additional support from external financial models to help reduce funding pressure to achieve net zero targets.	CWAC Forhousing	Ongoing
Identify any forthcoming regulations, standards and legislation and detail their impact.	Align policies to meet all national requirements.	CWAC Forhousing	Ongoing
Identify the current carbon footprint of our stock.	Work towards decarbonisation of our own housing stock is achieved by 2045.	ForHousing	Ongoing
Ensure our activities are aligned to achieving the goals set out in the Council's Climate Emergency Plan and meeting Net Zero targets.	Work towards decarbonisation of our own housing stock is achieved by 2045.	CWAC ForHousing	Ongoing
Work with partners to address the Green Skills Gap.	Increased employment opportunities for our tenants and benefits to the local economy.	ForHousing	Ongoing

Objective 5 – Reduce carbon emissions and environmental impact continued

Action	Outcome	Lead	Target date
Work with suppliers to identify supply chain issues and mitigation.	Reduced risk of scheme delivery failure.	ForHousing	Ongoing
Investigate collective purchasing opportunities.	More efficient procurement of energy efficiency measures.	CWAC ForHousing	Ongoing
Commit to moving away from fossil fuels by exploring options for future proofing homes through adoption of Electric Vehicle charging, solar, hydrogen etc.	Work towards decarbonisation of our own housing stock is achieved by 2045.	CWAC ForHousing	Ongoing
Improve our engagement with those tenants who are resistant to energy efficiency improvements.	All our tenants benefit from an increased awareness and understanding for the need of energy efficiency improvements and the benefits to them.	ForHousing	Ongoing
Work with our tenants to help them address fuel poverty.	Reducing debt & maximising household income	ForHousing	Ongoing

Objective 6 – Ensure there is effective financial control overseeing our work.

Action	Outcome	Lead	Target date
Carry out a review of procurement and tender processes to ensure they support the capital programme and encourage better delivery over the lifespan of this strategy. For example, tendering for a multi-year contract to encourage a wider group of subcontractors to bid for works and more competitive prices to offer value for money on the works.	Ensuring value for money is achieved, and the budget and programme being achieved to the maximum.	ForHousing	April 2024
Close monitoring of investment works where tendering and procurement exercises are required to ensure we are achieving value for money and soft market testing to provide further assurances.	Ensuring value for money is achieved, and the budget and programme maximises the investment made.	ForHousing	Ongoing

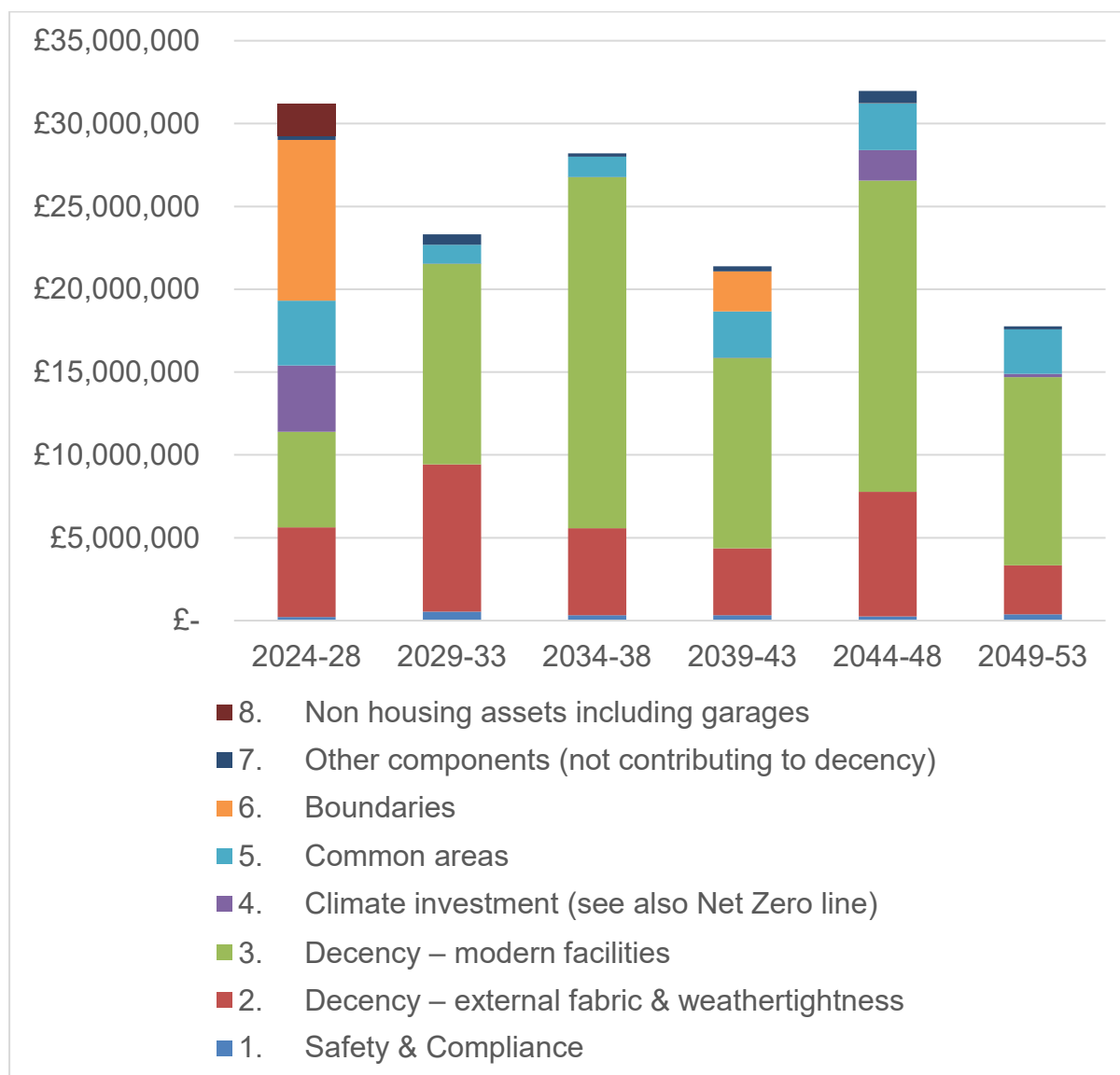
4.2 Investment Plan

We have assigned the investment activities in our capital plan to priorities as follows:

1. Safety & Compliance;
2. Decency – external fabric & weathertightness;
3. Decency – modern facilities;
4. Climate investment (see also Net Zero line);
5. Common areas;
6. Boundaries;
7. Other components (not contributing to decency) and finally;
8. Non housing assets including garages.

The 30-year investment plan is illustrated below, which illustrates the investment plan without the inclusion of assumptions for achieving net zero.

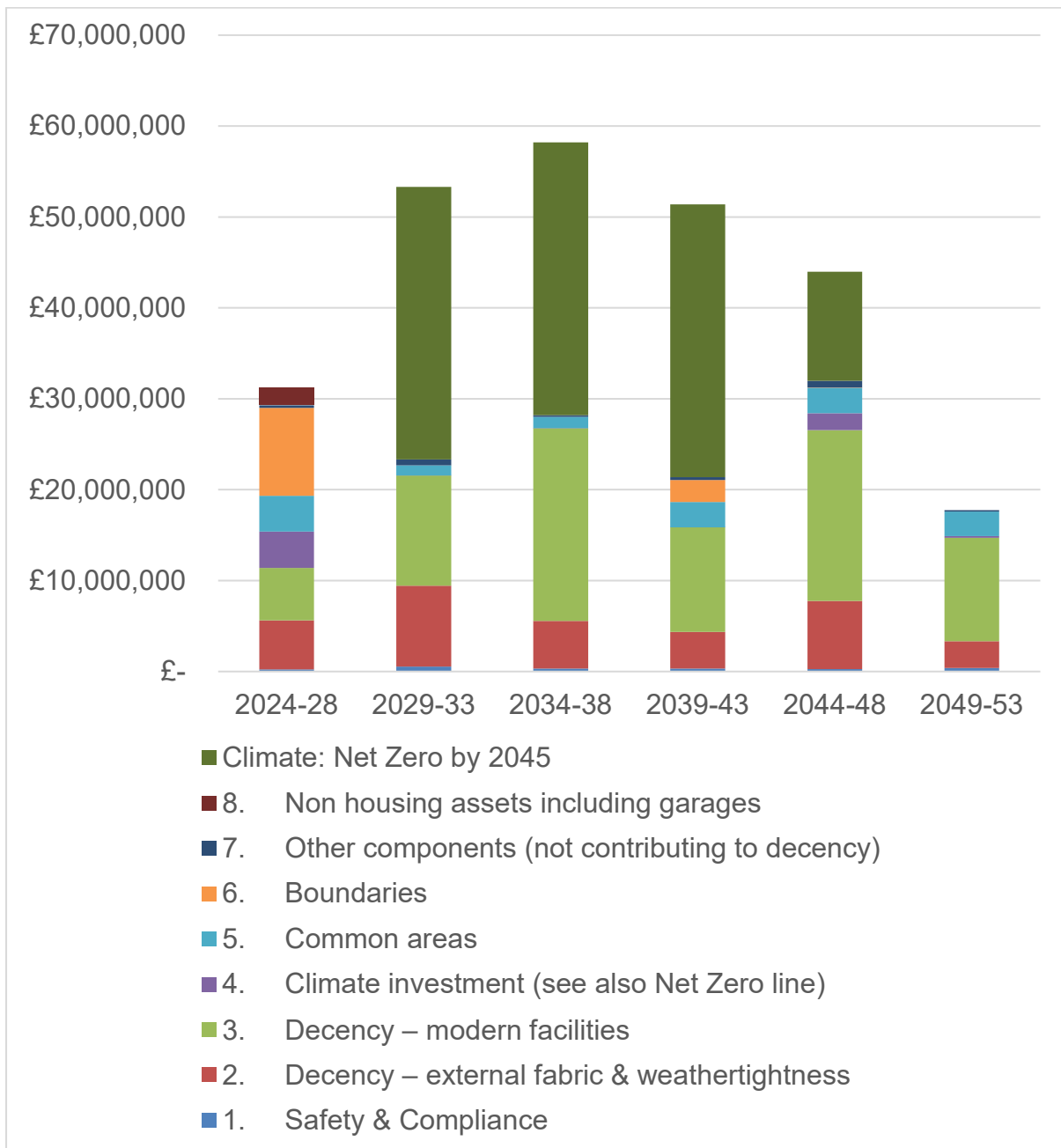
Spend profile



2024-28	2029-33	2034-38	2039-43	2044-48	2049-53
£1,216,961	£23,320,679	£ 28,192,888	£ 21,377,408	£ 31,974,679	£ 17,758,420

The chart and table above depict the total spend commitment for the remaining period of the investment plan. The spending takes into consideration the investment required for how we will achieve the target of all our stock meeting the minimum EPC band C rating by 2028. An additional illustration is provided overleaf which shows an early analysis of the cost of achieving net zero by 2045:

Spend profile with net zero



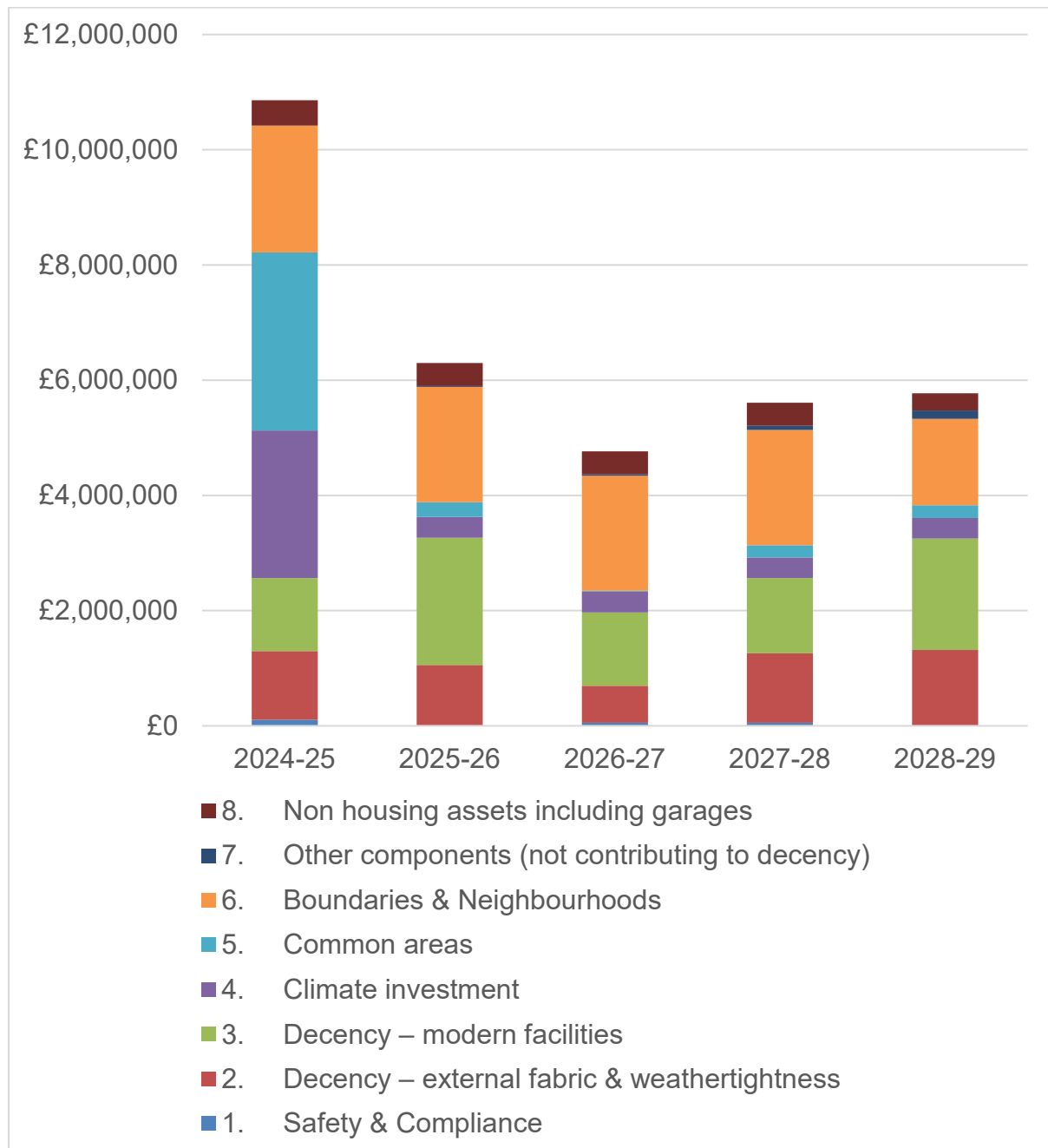
2024-28	2029-33	2034-38	2039-43	2044-48	2049-53
£31,216,961	£53,320,679	£58,192,888	£51,377,408	£43,974,679	£17,758,420

The chart and table above illustrate the amount of spending required to deliver net zero. The 30-year cost for the investment profile is £153,841,038, which rises to £255,841,038 with the inclusion of assumptions for achieving net zero.

At a 30-year cost of £153,841,038 and a stock size of 5,317 homes, we have a forecast capital cost per unit over the period of £28,934 which is in line with expectations.

The net zero assumptions are modelled on published typical costs for net zero retrofit and do not include reductions for funding. It can therefore be assumed that delivery of this would be dependent on securing additional funding mechanisms. A further illustration of the plans for the first 5 years 2024/25 to 2028/29 that are aligned to the period of this strategy is provided here:

Five years of the strategy



2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
£10,861,085	£6,296,842	£4,763,995	£5,608,672	£5,773,790

The chart and table above depict the level of allocated spending to cover the five years relating to this strategy.

Contained within the prioritised categories in the charts above are the following works:

1. Safety & Compliance
 - Carbon Monoxide Detectors
 - Fire Suppression
 - Fire doors
 - Smoke Detectors
 - FRA Remedial Works
2. Decency – external fabric & weathertightness
 - External Doors
 - Patio Doors
 - External Wall Finishes
 - Pitched Roofs
 - Flat Roofs
 - Windows
 - Lintols
 - Pro-active damp works
3. Decency – modern facilities
 - Bathrooms
 - Bathroom adjustment - remove double count for adaptations.
 - Central Heating Boiler/Source
 - Central Heating Distribution
 - Saving on heating from GSHP project
 - Electrical Upgrades
 - Kitchens
 - Adaptations
4. Climate investment
 - External Wall Insulation
 - Roof Insulation Thickness
 - Solar Panels
 - Dedicated JGT Project - GSHP
 - Band C by 2028
 - Net Zero by 2045 - shown below main plan in other assumptions section.
5. Common areas
 - JGT Project
 - High rise general investment plan
 - Low rise common area component
6. Boundaries & Neighbourhoods
 - Neighbourhood Scheme Plan
 - Future investment
7. Other components (not contributing to decency)
 - Canopies
 - External Lighting
 - External Sensor Lighting
 - Secondary Heating
 - Soil & Vent Pipes
8. Non housing assets including garages.
 - Garage rationalisation linked to neighbourhood scheme.

4.3 Equality and diversity

The Council is committed to ensuring that all its strategies are non-discriminatory. A full Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment has been carried out which is available upon request from:

Housing Strategy and Policy Team

Telephone: 0151 356 6410

Email: housingstrategy@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

4.4 Governance

The Council Housing Management Board will provide effective governance in relation to the achievement of both the commitments and actions outlined in this strategy.